

WORK ORIENTATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERFORMANCE OF LEADERS

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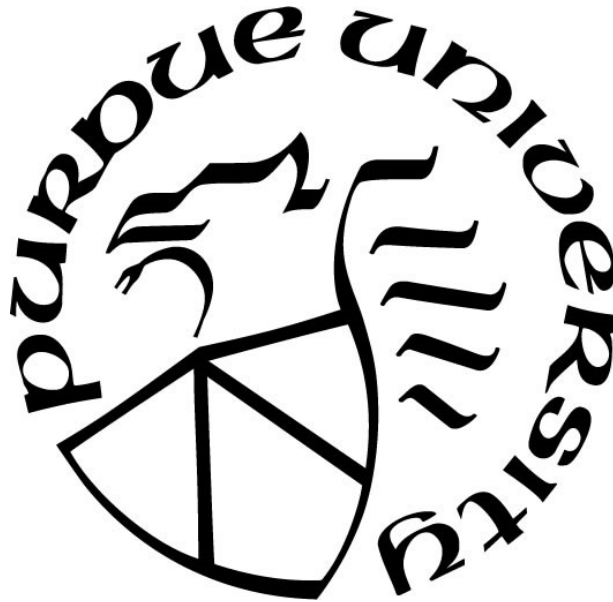
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Dedicated to:

My beloved children Clara and Guilherme who supported me in my journey,

My love Genisson who helped me to pursue my dream,

My mom and dad (in memoriam) showed me the value of education in my life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	8
LIST OF FIGURES	9
ABSTRACT	10
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	11
1.1 Background	11
1.2 Significance	14
1.3 Statement of Purpose	15
1.4 Research Questions	15
1.5 Assumptions	15
1.6 Limitations	15
1.7 Delimitations	16
1.8 Definitions of Key Terms	16
1.9 Summary	17
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE	18
2.1 Leadership	18
2.2 The Meaning of Work	20
2.3 Work Orientation	28
2.4 The Work Orientation Measure	33
2.5 Work Orientation and Performance	34
2.6 Work Orientation and Leadership Development	36
2.7 Summary	36
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	37
3.1 Research Framework and Methodology	37
3.1.1 Approach to Research	37
3.1.2 Phenomenology and Interview	38
3.2 Population	40
3.3 Sampling Approach	40
3.3.1 Sample Size	41
3.3.2 Human Subjects Approval	42

3.4	Data Collection and Measurement Instruments	42
3.4.1	Interview Procedures	43
3.4.2	Work Orientation Survey.....	44
3.4.3	Performance	45
3.5	Data Analysis	45
3.5.1	Data Analysis and Phenomenology	45
3.5.2	Procedures.....	47
3.5.3	Personal Journal and Epoche Sessions	48
3.5.4	Credibility	51
3.6	Summary	52
CHAPTER 4.	CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF DATA	53
4.1	Epoche session – Before the interview	53
4.2	Participants Descriptions	54
4.3	Interview Participants	57
4.3.1	Participant 1	57
4.3.2	Participant 2	65
4.3.3	Participant 3	75
4.3.4	Participant 4	82
4.3.5	Participant 5	97
4.3.6	Participant 6	108
4.4	Epoche session – After Interview	126
4.5	Epoche session – After transcription	128
4.6	Summary	129
CHAPTER 5.	THEMES AND ESSENCES	130
5.1	Role Models	130
5.2	Background, Work Experience, and Career decisions.....	132
5.3	Leadership.....	136
5.4	Feelings and Meanings of Work	140
5.5	Perception of Performance.....	144
5.6	Reflections on Work Orientation	148
5.6.1	Job Orientation.....	148

5.6.2 Career Orientation	151
5.6.3 Calling Orientation	153
5.7 Summary	159
CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY, OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS	160
6.1 Research Question	160
6.2 Significance of this Study	160
6.3 Methodology of this Study.....	161
6.4 Data Analysis	161
6.5 Invariant Themes	161
6.6 Outcomes and Essence.....	161
6.7 Implications for Executive Coaches, Counselors, and Organizations	166
6.8 Recommendations for Future Research	167
APPENDIX A. SURVEYS.....	171
APPENDIX B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	175
APPENDIX C. CONSENT FORM	178
LIST OF REFERENCES	182

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Job, Career, Calling	55
Table 2. Performance	56
Table 3. Themes.....	130
Table 4. Participants Statements about career change	134
Table 5. Self-perception as a leader.....	139
Table 6. Statements on the meaning of work.....	141
Table 7. Participants' statements on current career	143
Table 8. Participants statements on performance from the teams' perceptions.....	145

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Cycle of Meanings.....	165
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate how work orientation (job, career, and calling) affects the professional life of leaders; and how leaders perceive their work regarding these three dimensions. In addition, this study aimed to relate work orientation to performance. For this purpose, two surveys were used; one was on work orientation and the other on performance. After completion of the surveys, six participants were invited to participate in an in-depth interview. The participants were aligned with the calling orientation and had a high performance at work. They described their work as integrated into their lives, involving their families in decisions, helping people, and desiring to make a difference in this world. Also, the findings showed that people who live a calling feel that work and life have intertwined meanings. The motivation, well-being, connection with an organization, engagement with work, and having a purpose were factors that had significance for those who perceive work as a calling. The main results were that the participants faced new challenges, built new meanings and understandings about work during their careers. Each experience helped them to improve the next, while also improving their performance. The relationship between these factors revealed a cycle of meanings. The cycle represents the evolution of the creation of new meanings which defines how people perceive their work and how that influences performance. Furthermore, this study showed that it is possible to change the perception of work through goals, achievement, working context, the adversities faced, stages of life, and the work environment. All of these lead to new meanings and becoming aligned to different dimensions of work orientation.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of this research study, establishing its significance within studies with leaders and the meaning of work. This chapter describes the purpose that led to the research questions. Furthermore, it defines the boundaries of the study.

1.1 Background

Ever since I began to work in organizational psychology, I have always been interested in exploring what meanings people make for their work and career. I have desired to understand how people make their choices and what kind of assumptions or factors interfere with work-life decisions. For the last 26 years, I have been working with many professionals who were seeking meaning for their life and they wished to find “fulfillment“ at work. They have been dealing with many issues centered around work, career, choices, and meanings. As a psychologist and executive coach, I developed a sincere interest in studies that bring insights and improvements to support these professionals.

Baumeister (1991) stated that meanings are related to concepts, ideas, image, relationships, and also how people share in these understandings. As I mentioned above, my work as a psychologist supports professionals in understanding issues related to the meaning of work. For this, I review assumptions, develop new concepts or ideas, and I propose to them an opportunity to create new possibilities for their careers. Then, with a desire to help my clients, I designed this research project to bring more reflection to my work and, I hope, more questions about my own journey in these directions.

I have had the opportunity to work with many leaders. Thus, this study focused on professionals who are in a leadership position. I believe leaders play an important role in organizations that are in a competitive and dynamic context. Leaders work in this context, supporting organizations to be successful and they learn to survive in challenging environments (Nguyen, Kuntz, Näswall, & Malinen, 2016). They influence and define the directions of organizations which in turn affects results. Leaders must to solve problems in accordance with the

vision of an organization. They develop skills to implement strategies and create plans to face challenges and adversities. In their daily activities, they need to work with budgets, people, teams, labor markets, as well as economic and politic situations. Leaders juggle with many variables and are expected to achieve great results (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013; Vecchio, 2007).

Leaders also have a great responsibility with their teams. If they have a sense of work – if the work is meaningful for them – then it is possible to develop significance in their followers and the daily tasks that helps leaders and followers reach organizational goals (Lysova, Allan, Dik, Duffy, & Steger, 2019). Consequently, organizations seek leaders who are high performance that also have the ability to deal with the competing demands of the workplace. To be successful, leaders need to develop skills in management, business, human relations, strategies, culture; they must lead and practice behaviors that produce observables results (Bass, 2008).

Concepts about leadership and management appear in the literature with different meanings but they are complementary systems of action and both are necessary for the success of an ephemeral business environment (Vecchio, 2007). Leaders are focused on the group process, at the intersection of influence and persuasion. Managers are focused on the process and procedures of an organization. Managers develop efficient structures to control quality and profitability (Vecchio, 2007). I use the term leader to encompass both perspectives. Leaders are working with process and procedures and those, both individually and with groups.

Organizations need leaders that make a difference, bring innovations, and achieve results and profits. Within these organizations, some leaders try to meet these expectations, working to achieve the profile required. Many of these leaders try to fulfill organizational requirements by attending courses and reflecting on assessments received from their bosses. These, in addition to other actions, aim to improve professional performance.

However, these leaders are not always prepared to face the challenges or the necessary change. They may have to deal with cultural conflicts, relationship problems, and other issues within the organization. Leaders may be limited in their ability to bring a sense of meaning for themselves or their teams. It is common that situations like these can cause problems for leaders

and consequently reduce their work performance. When it happens the sense of work meaningfulness decreased (Bayley & Madden, 2016). Then, a mismatch between the organizational expectations and the leader's performance arises, and it may cause stressful situations.

Furthermore, some leaders have problems such as difficulties in communicating with their team, superiors, or peers; unsuitable behaviors like aggressiveness or passiveness, impulsivity, insecurity, intolerance, and indecision among others may emerge as a result. They need to develop an understanding of how their activities are connected with personal values and how those values align (or do not align) with the organization's mission. If there is misalignment between beliefs, organizational culture, and attitudes, the progress of teams and organizations may suffer (Lysova et al., 2019).

When leaders face these problems, usually organizations seek tools to encourage the change in these leaders. Usually, leaders desire to adapt to the environment, to be successful, and to find ways to live in harmony with themselves and the corporate context (Baumeister, 1991). Coaching is one process that can help them. I have been working as an executive coach with leaders who desire to improve their performance at work. Working with leaders in different hierarchical levels, I have observed that among the many factors that affect leader performance, including personality traits, cultural differences, and interpersonal skills, leader work orientation (job, career, calling) may play a paramount role, not only as sources of "conflict" within organizations but also a way to help executive coaches in addressing solutions to the problems mentioned above.

The model of work orientation proposed that people see their work from three perspectives: a job, a career or a calling (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). A job means that the professional's objective is to get money; a job is a way to have financial resources. Work is not integrated with life. Usually, for people that focus on the job, pleasure activities are in another place of their lives.

Career means people work for not only money but also advancement within an occupational structure. They want promotion, prestige, and status. Finally, people who see their

work as a calling focus on the fulfillment that the work can bring for them. Work is integrated with life. People with a calling orientation desire work to contribute to society, making better things for the world.

1.2 Significance

Organizations need leaders that bring solutions and outcomes for their processes. Furthermore, leaders need to improve and innovate with original ideas to keep organizations growing and achieving their goals.

How leaders perceive their work regarding the three work orientation dimensions (job, career, or calling) has important implications for leaders, organizations, and executive coaches. Leaders and organizations can improve their process and create new ways to solve problems when they know what work orientation leaders identify with. Leaders can assess the consequences of their choices. When they understand in what dimensions they are living, they can keep or create new goals. They can make a plan. Leaders have an opportunity to develop new skills and think about the meanings of their work. Usually, when leaders think critically about their work, they find new solutions for their problems.

Organizations can change strategies of development by creating new training programs. Human Resource Departments can make assertive interventions by choosing leaders to fill positions in the occupational structure based on work orientation. It is assumed that leaders will have different results if they address their work orientation as a job or a calling, for example. Other processes can be restructured with new strategies, plans and actions grounded in work orientation, such as recruitment, admissions, reward systems, development of talents, job descriptions, and relocation of leaders.

Executive coaches can make appropriate interventions when the leader work orientation is clear. They can help leaders recognize their own work orientations. Leaders can build a solid career with plans and effective actions. Some issues can be aligned to their real needs and values. Leaders can keep, adapt or change their careers based on a perspective that brings meaning for them. These findings can be a bridge between leaders and organizations.

In conclusion, the results of this study will support leaders, organizations, and executive coaches by helping them to plan, develop, and conduct new professional development programs.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate how work orientation (job, career, and calling) affects the professional life of leaders; how leaders perceive their work regarding these three dimensions. In addition, this study aims to relate work orientation with performance. For this purpose, I applied two surveys: work orientation and performance. After completion of the surveys, some participants were invited to participate in an in-depth interview.

1.4 Research Questions

The research question in this study is:

1. How do work orientation and leader perception of performance interact?

1.5 Assumptions

The following assumptions were inherent in the pursuit of this study:

- There is a need to examine the work orientation and its relation to performance because there were no other studies relating these concepts and leaders.
- The participants had the liberty to answer the surveys (work orientation and performance) and interview. They received an invitation by email.
- The participants could be at different levels of the organizational structure.
- The participants answered the surveys honestly and as completely as their knowledge and ability allowed.

1.6 Limitations

The limitations associated with the study were:

- The research was conducted with the database from LinkedIn and the network from advisor and researcher. It may limit the number of participants. The research study was conducted in the United States.

- The participants who answered the survey and interviewed were not from the same hierarchical levels. It was not possible to assure that the respondents were equally distributed on the top levels of the organizational structure.
- The sampling was not diverse regarding age, gender, and field which the participants were working.
- Some participants did not respond to the survey completely.
- There is a possibility that many participants had changed their emails over time. If this happened, some participants may not have received the email with the invitation to the research study.

1.7 Delimitations

The delimitations of this research study included:

- This study did not consider if the organization is profit or non-profit. If profit organization did not consider the profit of companies, also the type of product/service, or the size of companies (small, middle, or large business).
- This study was delimited by work orientation and performance.
- This study did not assume other professionals that did not have experience in leadership.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

Calling - focuses on the fulfillment that work can bring for people. The work is integrated with life, people want to contribute to society, and they want to make better things for the world (Rosso et al., 2010)

Career - people want not only money but also advances within the occupational structure. They want promotions, prestige, and status (Rosso et al., 2010)

Epoché – to analyze data in phenomenology method the researcher in a self-conscious process records ideas, assumptions, values, and impressions which may emerge during the research, allowing the researcher to understand the experience of participants and conduct a reliable data interpretation (Bednall, 2006; Moustakas, 1994).

Job – the professional's objective is to get money; a job is a way to have financial resources. Work is not integrated with life. Usually, people that focus on the job do not care about pleasure doing the job. (Rosso et al., 2010)

Leader – people that lead changes and strategies about people, processes/procedures, budget, commercial, and product or service in organizations (Vecchio, 2007).

Phenomenological study – a study that brings meanings from experiences of people, seeking the essence of phenomenon (theme, idea, concept).

The meaning of work – refers to some factors that influence perceptions of people about their work. People give significance to work, make meanings. These meanings are based on different factors that will define choices, decisions, and attitudes to organizations (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010).

Work orientation - refers to how people see their work and defines what focus people give to work. It can be divided into three dimensions: job, career, and calling (Bellah et al., 1985).

1.9 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the research project, including background, significance, purpose, research questions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The chapter reveals the importance of this study for leaders and organizations. The next chapter focuses on the review of previously explored aspects about the meaning of work, work orientation and its relationship with performance.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This literature review examined studies in work orientation and its dimensions: job, career, and calling. Understanding these three dimensions may have important implications for both leaders and organizations. Indeed, organizations can improve their processes and create new ways to solve problems when they know the work orientation of their leaders. Leaders can assess the consequences of their choices. Counselors and coaches may also benefit from this knowledge to better inform activities that promote professional development. Organizations can change strategies of development, creating new training programs. Other processes such as recruiting, admissions, reward systems, talent development, job descriptions, transfers and the relocation of leaders can be restructured with new strategies, plans, and actions.

Work orientation is a new concept within the meaning of work that brings a different perspective for professionals and organizations. Knowing what work orientation a professional identifies with may help organizations manage professional development.

This chapter provides a discussion on the relationship between work orientation and the performance of leaders. The first section explains how literature defines the conception of leaders. The second section presents the concept of the meaning of work and discusses some of its sources and mechanisms. The third section explores the construct of work orientation and its dimensions: job, career, and calling. The fourth section discusses the relationship between work orientation and performance. Finally, a summary of the main points is presented to clarify the importance of this research.

2.1 Leadership

The focus of this research is on how work orientation and leader perception of performance interact. Thus, the definition of a leader is essential. The study of leadership and its implications for society and organizations has a long history. Leadership is a universal phenomenon. Leaders have a significant role in the hunting and gathering period (Bass, 2008). Over the ages, this role evolved from defense and protection to more advanced activities such as decision-making and

changing in organizations (Vecchio, 2007). Maybe, as a consequence of this broad range of leadership roles, the definition of leader varies from author to author. Also, different definitions of leadership have changed each decade, bringing new findings and new aspects of leadership.

According to Bass (2008), the definitions of leadership “tend to concentrate on the leader as a person, on the behavior of the leader, on the effects of the leader, and on the interaction process between the leader and the led” (p. 15). In other words, in an organizational environment, leaders lead group processes, with personal characteristics, coping with power relations, using the influence and persuasion to achieve goals.

Vecchio (2007) claimed that there are differences between leadership and management. These differences are particularly important when one is studying companies and business organizations. According to Vecchio, leaders and managers play different roles in organizations but have complementary systems of action.

A leader is related to changes in organizations. The focus is on the group processes and strategies. The leader is a protagonist who plays at the scene, starting and changing a situation. Leaders act to affect others and produce effects, modifying a structure. Leaders interact with expectations from all members of the organization. Also, they face international competition, the deregulation of markets, economic and politic instability, and technological change. To Vecchio (2007), leaders define strategies and make complex decisions. They link organizations with the world. Also, leaders search for different references about issues and ideas and try to predict the future.

Management, on the other hand, relates to processes and procedures. Thus, managers focus on the development of efficient structures to control, foster quality, and increase profitability (Vecchio, 2007). Managers are focused on executing a plan and problem solving, organizing staff, defining processes, delegating responsibilities, and controlling implementations.

Leaders and managers are in a different hierarchical position in an organization. However, both have goals to achieve, both need to make decisions, both lead people and develop relationships, and both encourage the team to perform very well the job.

I used the term leader to refer to the person that focuses on aligning people, motivating them, inspiring them, and also who plans, organizes, controls related processes. In other words, in this study “leader” encompasses not only those responsible for change (leaders) but also managers who create processes and procedures. These leaders play a significant role in organizations and face different challenges. It is imperative for leaders and managers to connect people, lead processes, increase profits, and bring benefits to organizations. Their work includes the development of policies and strategies, as well as the management of the organizational processes.

Also, leaders provide meaning in the organizational setting, clarifying what is confused, vague, or uncertain to the followers. Leaders may support their team with information, explanation, interpretation, and discussion about what is happening and about the future (Bass, 2008).

2.2 The Meaning of Work

Meaning connects things, it “refers to concepts and symbols, to relationship and distinctions, and to shared understandings” (Baumeister, 1991, p.16). Therefore, what sense do individuals give to something, that is, for this study, what kind of significance does the work have and what role does the work have in the context of life? This field is broad and there are many perspectives; many types of research explore the meaning of work, the meaning of life, and its derivations. This study adds to that body of work.

Perceptions and meanings of experience are developed by individuals and are influenced by the environment. The meaning of work, from a psychological perspective, is the perceptions that the individuals have about their work. It includes how people understand and interpret their experiences at work and how people perceive the importance of the work in their life. Usually, people use their beliefs, values, and assumptions to assess the meaning of work (Baumeister, 1991; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). From a sociological perspective, the culture and the value system in a community influence how people perceive the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010).

The nature of work has changed quickly and undergone profound transformation. The development of technology, economics and political pressures, and globalization create new directions and meanings to work. Consequently, each generation lives new experiences at work and creates new meanings (Guevara & Ord, 1996).

The meaning of work has importance to individuals, considering that the work impacts life satisfaction (Brown et al., 2001). Also, the meaning of life and the meaning of work are related to human well-being, subject to change over the lifespan. The work meaning may play an important role for people because it encompasses a sense of life meaning (Allan, Duffy, & Douglass, 2015)

The meaning of work not only has changed with each generation, or each decade, or each year but it changes during the lifetime and during the career of an individual. Allan et al. (2015) researched if the presence and search for meaning in life was related to age. They found that work meaning and life meaning have different significance depending on the stage of life, not necessarily related to the age. These authors supposed that for people who the work is high in meaning may have more opportunities to have a life meaning.

Also, people who found meaning in work, mainly in middle age and older adults, are not going to search for more meaning in their life. This study concluded that although the presence of life meaning did not differ by age, people between 20 and 50 years old who find meaning in their work, probably will find high levels in life meaning. This study assumed that work meaning is one of these moderators and may explain the absence of the relation between age and life meaning. Also, people can perceive different levels of work and life meaning in different ages. Also, people that consider their life meaningful may desire more sources of meaning (Allan et al., 2015).

Indeed, the meaning of work may be the moderator for the meaning of life (Allan et al., 2015). My experience showed me during these years that the meaning of work changed during a career of an individual depending on the phase of life, not depending on gender or age (Baum & Steward Jr, 1990). People search for meanings at work during periods of life as beginners or in the middle of a career. Also, this meaning change during a career (Prager, 1996). I had clients that when they were beginners in career found meanings and purpose in work. Afterwards, in the

middle age of their career, when they achieved some initial goals such as material needs, success, or acknowledgments, they faced other issues. They desired something else from work such as new challenges or new meaning. They asked what intrinsic reasons there were to keep working.

Also, when they are the owner of a company, sometimes the position in the company, the power, and status are transferred for heirs or other executives. They feel lost and begin to search for new meaning. Sometimes they are confused if this meaning may be found at work or in other activities (Allan et al., 2015). Individuals assess experiences and try to integrate them with self-concept to support who they are and how they perceive themselves (Prager, 1996). Then, during a career, this meaning changes and an individual keeps searching for purpose, direction, and goals.

Prager (1996), in an exploratory study on personal meaning, found that age differentiated Australian and Canadian groups. He found that personal growth, for young or old people, was the main source that people feel that their life is meaningful. This author explained that personal growth is a source of personal meaning. It showed that people want to create and desire meanings for their lives regardless of age.

With these studies, there is something interesting about work and life meaning. First, people desire that their work has meaning, whether young or old. Second, life meaning is based on different sources, assumptions, values, and beliefs that bring a sense of directedness to life and career.

Martela & Riekkari (2018) researched what makes work meaningful. Meaningful work for these authors is a subjective experience of how individuals value their work, that is, how it is significant. Usually, people keep a job if the work is perceived as valuable. These authors studied how much meaningfulness an individual gets from work and if the work affirms well-being (Martela & Riekkari, 2018). Based on self-determination theory, these authors proposed four psychological factors that influence work meaningfulness, which may be predictors of meaning in life. They are autonomy (sense of volition), competence (sense of efficacy), relatedness (sense of caring relationships), and beneficence (sense of making a positive contribution). I realized in my experience that many professionals have issues in their jobs when they do not have the autonomy,

or they do not feel efficient in their work (competence). Sometimes the lack of autonomy brings low self-esteem, a tense environment, and fear of making mistakes. Consequently, there is no motivation to solve problems. Because these factors influence decisions and choices, it is essential to consider what influences the meaningfulness of work.

Other research studies assessed the amount and origins of the most meaningful events in a person's life. Baum & Steward Jr (1990)) found that among the themes that people considered significant in their life, love and work were the most meaningful.

In another seminal study, meaningful work was measured. Steger and colleagues (2012) proposed a multidimensional model, showing a psychological measure of the core dimensions of the experience of meaningful work and demonstrated that the work influence the well-being. (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). The different experiences that people have in their work and their different understandings or perceptions shows that they do not want only something to give meanings but they desire for work to bring significance and a positive disposition to address to growth and to a purpose (Martela & Pessi, 2018; Steger et al., 2012). Many professionals try to find purpose and significance for themselves or society (Willemse & Deacon, 2015). Steger et al. (2012) study showed that work influences the psychological health of people. Meaningful work appeared relevant to workers' well-being, job satisfaction, and contentment with their organizations.

Although life meaning is defined by each person, meaning itself is essentially social. The culture offers a broad set of options for values and beliefs that may define goals and careers (Baumeister, 1991; Prager, 1996; Rosso et al., 2010). Many times, I heard clients say that their career was influenced by values and beliefs from their families. Mainly when they were choosing their majors and jobs. Sometimes it was helpful. However, these influences may address suffering because these choices or options based on families do not bring meaning for them. These choices are not matched with their desires because it was imposed by their families, groups, or communities.

Thinking in connections and sharing, meanings can be shared and understood in the same way from different people, insofar they can see the world with the same meaning. However, many times people share different meaning about the same situation or event. When this is the case, it is impossible that people have the same vision of the world (Brown et al., 2001). Therefore, the discussion about meaning of life and work occupy many types of research but many questions not only provide answers but also bring more questions.

Rosso et al. (2010) provided a literature review about the meaning of work and categorized it in terms of the main sources and mechanisms of the meaning of work. These authors considered that the meaning of work is a social and is individually constructed.

These sources are self, the other people, and the work context (Rosso et al., 2010). The first source of the meaning of work was the self. For many psychologists, the self is the primary and determinant agent of behaviors (Bandura, 1991). In this context, self-refers to values, motivations, and beliefs that influence the perception that people have about their experiences in their work. Work values shape the meanings. Person, culture, society are sources of those values. Values act on the individual in how they see the world and how they perceive the work. Value is intertwined with meanings (Baumeister, 1991; Rosso et al., 2010). This sense of values guides people to support perceptions and behaviors in terms of consistency and agreement. Work motivation affects the way people engage with and commits to their work (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Finally, work beliefs, including the concept of work orientation, refer to the beliefs that people have about the role or function of work in their life. Values and beliefs shared within a culture influence the perceptions and meanings of work. Due to the centrality of the idea of work orientation to the present study, it will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.

The second source of the meaning of work addressed how individuals interact with other persons or groups. According to Rosso et al. (2010) coworkers, leaders, groups and communities, and family influence how people view work, how they make their choices, and how they realize their work. The “others” influence people in their interactions and relationships. A coworker can be an example of behavior that an individual adopts in a specific organization. Leaders have an important role, and they influence people positively or negatively (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013).

Groups and communities are connected by tasks, objectives, values, and beliefs. The family also can influence their members at work. For example, a family can provide financial resources, time, and support for its members in their work. By doing this, the family may persuade these members to behave or think in a particular direction.

The third source was the work context. In fact, researchers considered that the design of jobs such as tasks, the mission of an organization, financial issues, non-work domains, and the culture of a country affect the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010). Each factor has intrinsic characteristics that influence people's behaviors, decisions, and performance, as well as the outcomes, ideas, and insights about their lives. Organizational culture is represented by patterns of assumptions, values, and meanings about how people are doing their tasks. Some cultures are more innovative and support their employees in their needs, consequently, they have feelings of belongingness and meaningful existence (Lysova et al., 2019).

Besides the sources of the meaning of work, Rosso et al. (2010) examined the mechanisms of the meaning of work. These mechanisms are perceptions that an individual has about the work under the intrapsychic perspective. This perspective is focused on the fulfillment of the self and what transcends the self entirely. These mechanisms are identified in seven categories. This study discussed four including authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and purpose (Rosso et al., 2010). These mechanisms were not studied exhaustively but they were important for this context of this research as a concept that may affect the meaning of work.

Authenticity was defined as the expression of the behavior of an individual. For this conception, an individual is authentic when there is consistency between values, beliefs, and attitudes. It means the degree to which people believe that they are being coherent with their behavior, values, interests, goals, among others. It also includes when an individual perceives that determined values or skills are recognized by others, and when an individual is engaged and motivated with the work. The activities are perceived as relevant, authentic and meaningful (Rosso et al., 2010). Regarding values, my experience showed me that many professionals recognize a gap between what they do and what they believe that they need to do. Consequently, it generated a discrepancy between what they believe and what they are doing, affecting the degree of

authenticity. As a mechanism intrapsychic professional were confused between their beliefs and attitudes because other forces as rules, emotional pressure, stress affected the authenticity.

Self-efficacy has been used as a mechanism of the meaning of work when individuals feel that they have control and autonomy or perceive and believe that they are effective in a work environment. (Rosso et al., 2010). Also, self-efficacy is a mechanism of the meaning when an individual has experiences of competence resulting from successful challenges. When an individual has a perception that he or she is learning, growing, and facing the adversities and challenges. Bandura (1991) explained that beliefs that a person has in his or her efficacy influence choices, aspirations, efforts to achieve goals, perseverance to face adversities and stress. Also, these beliefs influence how people cope with demands from the environment. Self-efficacy has a impact on “thought, affect, motivation, and action” (Bandura, 1991).

Self-esteem, the third mechanism of the meaning of work, was related to the assessment that individuals make about his or her self-worth. Self-esteem is linked with achievements that an individual reach. Also, this mechanism is related to personal experiences and their results. Some achievements provide a sense of value and self-worth for individuals. Consequently, individuals are more motivated because they believe that they have value and worth. They believe that may contribute to groups and organizations (Rosso et al., 2010).

Purpose referred to the directions and intentions that people give for their life. Meanings are related to objectives. People that find goals to pursue feel that their lives have a purpose (Prager, 1996; Rosso et al., 2010). Individuals with a sense of purpose put efforts to work, and it makes meaning for their work. As an executive coach, I have faced these issues with clients because some of them have difficulty in defining a sense of purpose for their work. As a result, they have been unmotivated, and sometimes they manifest feelings of depression and other illnesses.

Belongingness was a concept that discussed the sense of significance for individuals related to the relationship. When individuals perceive and feel that they belong to a workgroup and organization, the work has more significance for them (Rosso et al., 2010). Professionals who

establish a positive relationship at work and feel connected with a determined group live the “sense of belongingness” and bring meaningfulness at work. For many situations, the sense of belongingness helps to solve many issues in an organization.

Furthermore, there is a research on the meaning of work which revealed that performance might be affected by the way in how people perceive and value their work (Lan, Okechuku, Zhang, & Cao, 2013; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997).

My experience has shown that people are living with many issues related to work. However, these issues are based on beliefs and values. Many times, people are seeking new meanings or want to review old beliefs to create new significance. Besides, they are seeking a sense and a path to follow (Lysova et al., 2019). Meanings are part of life and influence well-being and health. Researchers have addressed some ways to understand it and they proposed that meaning in life means coherence, purpose, and significance (Martela & Steger, 2016). It means people desire a life with values and significance beyond trivial things. They want purpose and sense in life, living coherently. (Martela & Steger, 2016). Thus, it is essential to understand how people perceive their work, what they want from work, and what sources of meanings they consider critical in a work environment (Brown et al., 2001).

Then, the meaning of work is relevant to human motivation, well-being, and health (Martela & Steger, 2016). People desire and seek meanings to their lives and work meaning may affect them positively or may drive people to depression, panic, anxiety, and other psychological issues.

In conclusion, there are many types of research exploring the meaning of work, the meaning of life, and its derivations. However, there are some researches that are complementary but there are no conclusions on how the meaning of work is created, what kind of main factors may influence and define this concept (Lysova et al., 2019; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Indeed, there is a net for meaningful work which may include cultural/societal factors, organizational factors, job and tasks, and individual psychological factors (Lysova et al., 2019).

2.3 Work Orientation

The concept of work orientation refers to the different ways people make meaning of their work. This concept came from a study of Bellah et al. (1985) who discussed issues about private and public life, individualism and commitment in American life. Also, the significance of success, freedom, and justice for American people was investigated. They interviewed 200 people and chose four as representative of the American life that are described in the book. The stories of these people tell us about values, beliefs, family, work, and why and how these people made decisions.

Regarding work, the authors considered that different orientations of work indicate that the choices express “who people are.” These authors suggested that work orientation can be conceived in the following dimensions: job, career, and calling. (Bellah et al., 1985; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

People with a job orientation aim to make money and support their material needs. “It supports a self-defined by economic success, security and all that money can buy” (Bellah et al., 1985, p.66). In other words, people with a job orientation see their work as a financial source. People who have this orientation use money to appreciate their life away from the job. Pleasure activities are in other spaces. Work does not have significance for life beyond the making of money. Also, work is not integrated with the individual’s life (Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

People who have a career work orientation want to grow in their work; they want to achieve new positions in an occupational structure of organizations. “It yields a self-defined by broader sort of success, which takes in social standing and prestige, and by a sense of expanding power and competency that renders work itself a source of self-esteem“ (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 66). For this dimension, people work to win awards and money. They intend to be successful. Prestige, status, and power are factors important for these individuals who are identified with this work orientation. These people aim to advance in their careers, to achieve success, and develop a sustainable career.

To people who live a calling, the last dimension of work orientation, the work has huge significance. Work is part of the life of people. They see the work not only as a source of money, or advancement in career but also to contribute to the betterment of society. Bellah et al. (1985) define a calling as “work constitutes a practical ideal of activity and character that makes a person’s work morally inseparable from his or her life. It subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it” (Bellah et al., 1985, p.66). Furthermore, the calling cannot be merely a private life because it is a link between the individual and public life.

Bellah et al. (1985) stated that in the mid-nineteenth century usually in the small towns in the United States, the work contributed to all communities. The work of each person was useful for society. When the work was transformed into a large scale in an industrial society, it became a self-interested activity. People wanted to gain a new position, and they wanted to grow in their careers. The motivation was not in a community but the own goals. The work seems to be close to the sense of self and “what we do often translate to what we are” (Bellah et al., 1985, p.66).

These researchers concluded that it is not enough to be a job or a career. Commonly, people seek for meanings in their work. “The absence of a sense of calling means an absence of a sense of moral meaning”(Bellah et al., 1985, p.71).

According to Dik and Duffy (2009), the conception of calling came from the Christian religion. In it, God calls someone to specific work. Besides this, Rosso et al. (2010) argued that, despite its religious origins, “calling” is now treated as “the expression of one’s deepest self in work” (p. 98). This modern approach usually associates calling to fulfillment and happiness (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013). People who have a calling in their work have more significance for the whole individual’s life.

On the other hand, Hirschi (2011) considered calling in another perspective. Usually, most of the researchers understand a calling as a dimension with positive implications for individuals. However, this author showed in his research that a calling has intense self-exploration promoting career confidence and engagement, but it is not necessary for having a pro-social orientation. He

discussed what a calling is and what it is not. He proposed that there are different types of calling for different people.

All the definitions of calling (Hirschi, 2011) converged to agree that calling is a “sense of purpose and meaning in work.” However, this concept diverges if the stem of calling is from external summons or if it is from an intense self-reflection of the individual. According to the author, it is contradictory because he hypothesized that self-exploration may be an option of people who live a calling, considering that external summons promotes a calling.

Then, Hirschi (2011) studied a diverse group of German undergraduates, and he identified three distinct “types of calling such as negative career self-centered, pro-social religious, and positive varied work orientation” (Hirschi, 2011, p.60). It means that some characteristics that can be defined as calling may be applied for some people, for another are optional. All kinds of calling could be categorized as “the achievement of vocational identity”, that is, “the possession of a high degree of career goal clarity/commitment, which is based on intense self-exploration” (Hirschi, 2011, p. 70). Thus, he concluded that is necessary that professionals engage in self-exploration about preferences, interests, ideals, attitude, and if he or she wants to achieve a sense of calling in his/her career.

This study brought a significant issue around calling’s concept. The findings that the calling is not entailed a centrality of work or religion. People that live a calling may have a different role outside one’s paid job. Another aspect, a calling is not restricted to “pro-social and self-transcendence work values”. For some people, callings serve the “fulfillment of personal interest and are not primarily directed towards the greater good” (Hirschi, 2011, p.70). It means that calling may be seen as a purpose of life.

Dik and Duffy (2009) discussed the distinction between calling and vocation and they considered there is a overlap of calling and vocation but both concepts connect the work to a “sense of purpose and meaningfulness toward other-oriented ends”. They defined calling as “a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness

and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation”(p. 427). Vocation for these authors is defined as “an approach to a particular life role that is oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p.428). However, they considered only who is a calling perceive their work how a source external to the self. It implies that calling and vocation are processes that include career choice and also how people may to integrate their work activities to a “sense of purpose and meaningfulness toward other-oriented or procial-ends”(Dik & Duffy, 2009).

In a seminal paper (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), developed and applied a questionnaire to assess people’s work orientation. The questionnaire was applied to 196 employees at two work sites. They measured the work orientation and correlated it with life satisfaction and physical health. The findings indicate that higher levels of work satisfaction and health are related to people who perceive their work as a calling. In this study, respondents, in lower-level occupations, see their work having either a job or a career. One explanation can be the age. Career respondents were the youngest. It may imply that younger employees want to work harder to advance in their career, they want to be promoted to another position. Participants who were aligned with job and calling orientation were older than those were aligned with the career orientation (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Then, it is challenging for a leader to keep motivated people with different purposes and work orientations at work.

Another important study was applied to accounting practitioners in China. Lan, Okechuku, Zhang, and Cao (2013) verified the impact of job satisfaction and personal values on work orientation (job, career, and calling). These authors argued that the three dimensions of work orientation could be found in almost every occupation, to different degrees. In the reported research, they found that 41.9% of the participants perceived their work as a career, 37.6% as a calling and 20,5% as a job. Again, job satisfaction was found among people who were living a calling. The lowest levels of job satisfaction were account for people who were living a job. They did not find differences between genders. Also, based on the results of their study, Lan, Okechuku, Zhang, and Cao (2013) suggested further research to investigate how work orientation relates to job performance and other factors.

Among the three dimensions, calling seems to be the most controversial. Indeed, calling causes many controversies regarding its history, conceptions, and research. Usually, most of the researchers understand calling as a dimension with positive implications for individuals, a “sense of purpose and meaning in work” (Hirschi, 2011; Allan & Duffy, 2014; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010). Some authors investigate the implications and effects (positive or negative) calling dimension on the people lives (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). Other researchers diverge if the stem of calling is from external summons, if it is from an intense self-reflection of the individual, or if it is toward society. Hirschi (2011) showed in his research that a calling has intense self-exploration promoting career confidence and engagement, but it is not necessary that people have a pro-social orientation.

Rosso et al. (2010) argued that, despite its religious origins, “calling” is now treated as “the expression of one’s deepest self in work” (p. 98). This modern approach usually associates calling to fulfillment and happiness (Duffy & Dik, 2013). People who have a calling in their work have more significance for the whole individual’s life. Berkelaar and Buzzanelli (2015) argued that calling may not be necessarily associated with a positive experience, but maybe problematic for people. They explained how different characteristics of callings may interfere in results, and how features such as source, meanings, and context, are structured by whom, by different material sources, and what probability of career agency (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015).

My experience with leaders and professionals has revealed that people maybe are living in two work orientations at the same time such as calling and job, job and career, or calling and career. Maybe there is another dimension of work orientation between career and calling, for example. The work may be part of the life of people, but it does not necessarily bring benefits, at least not directly, to society. Alternatively, people perceive themselves as in a calling, but not because the work helps others, because of their own goals. Also, people may be living a calling, but the money may be considered when they are accepting a job. Also, they may want to grow in their career, but not necessarily in positions in determined time, but to have more challenges and learning.

2.4 The Work Orientation Measure

Wrzesniewski and colleagues (1997) developed an instrument to measure the work orientation, the concept created by Bellah and colleagues (1985). These authors created three paragraphs describing a different person with one of the three orientations (job, career, calling). The participants answered using a four-point response format, reporting the degree that each paragraph described their relationship with the work. Also, was included 18 first-person statements that use a binary response format. There are seven items to assess the job orientation, eight items to measure the calling orientation, and three items to measure the career orientation (see Appendix A).

For this study, this measure was a way to understand the meanings and work orientation leaders are making for their work. Each paragraph was created to explore job, career, and calling concepts, describing assumptions, perceptions about work. The participants chose what dimension they felt identified.

The important part of this study was the interview, insofar a semi-structured interview reported details about their choices. The interview promoted clarifications about meanings that a survey did not allow to know. The answers to statements to each work orientation was an opportunity to understand what they were thinking and how they assessed their experience related to work. Another point to analyze through the interview was the relationship between work orientation and performance. If they experienced different work orientation during their career, what kind of relationship between it and their performance.

Interviews were analyzed from a phenomenological perspective bringing meanings from personal experiences of participants. This method seeks to understand the phenomena in its own descriptions and in a more precise way. Phenomenology is one theory to treat descriptions, narratives of people (Giorgi, 1994). I will discuss the phenomenological method in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.5 Work Orientation and Performance

In a broad sense, performance can be defined as “the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed” (BusinessDictionary.com, 2017). In organizations, performance is associated with an employee's ability to attain organizational goals. Due to the pressures to achieve positive results, organizations normally expect higher levels of performance from their professionals. As previously discussed, sometimes differences may arise between the level of performance required by the organizations and the self-perception of the performance of the employees. These differences cause tensions that undermine employee motivation and satisfaction.

Due to the centrality of employee performance for the attainment of organizational goals, there are several studies investigating how different factors impact people's performance (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013; Fossen & Vredenburg, 2011; Judge, 2009; Judge, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Cleavenger and Munyon (2013) explored how leaders may influence the meaning of work of employees, and consequently foster the level of motivation and performance. Fossen and Vredenburg (2011) explored work orientation, examining how some attributes such as “proactive personality, concern for others, concern for self, preference for challenging work, and work enjoyment” are related to job, career, and calling orientations. They surveyed blue-collar and corporate employees in the auto industry. They found differences between job, career, and calling related to the reasons for preference for challenging work. People who avoid challenging work had high job orientation. People who did not avoid challenging work had a high calling orientation, and people who did not avoid or pursue challenging work had high career orientations. In addition, Fossen & Vredenburg (2011) suggested that people with job orientation might be associated with lower performance.

Some studies explored how performance is related to other attributes such as personal traits, self-efficacy, self-esteem, work environment, job satisfaction (Fossen & Vredenburg, 2011; Judge, 2009). Judge (2009) reviewed the literature about core self-evaluations (CSE). Core self-evaluation is a broad construct that integrates self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. People who have a high score level of CSE present a better performance on the job, in addition to being more satisfied with work-life, having lower levels of stress and conflicts, and

capitalizing on more opportunities. As work orientations are also related to personality traits, this author hypothesizes that CSE may also be related to the leader's work orientation, which indicates that work orientation might correlate to performance. This is just a hypothesis that needs further investigation.

Duffy & Dik (2013) studied the relationship between calling and life satisfaction, focusing in the distinction between “perceiving a calling” (sensing a calling to career) and “living a calling” (actualizing one's calling in one's current career). People who were living a calling have more satisfaction in their lives. The respondents who were perceiving a calling to some degree was not correlated with age, income level, or educational attainment. However, these factors were related to people who were living a calling. Living a calling is correlated with work meaning, career commitment, and job satisfaction, too. Moreover, as job satisfaction correlates with job performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990), it is likely that people who are living calling might have higher levels of job performance.

Another research study demonstrated that work meaningfulness has a relationship with job performance and that meaningfulness interfere in the relationship between task significance and job performance (Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2016). These authors used the job characteristics model and its dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) to study psychological states (meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results and then to high work performance and job satisfaction). Task significance is defined as “the degree to which work is perceived as impacting other people's well-being, both inside and outside of an organization” (Allan et al., 2016 p. 173). This study showed a strong relationship between task significance and meaningful work, insofar that work had a purpose to support others or help positively others. When the work is a benefit for others it brings feelings that the work is meaningfulness and likely to perform better at work, improving the performance. Meaningful work is part of the life of companies since it influences and keeps the high performance of employees bringing perspectives of the future to the company (Brown et al., 2001).

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between work orientation and performance of leaders. How can a job, career or calling influence the leader's performance?

2.6 Work Orientation and Leadership Development

It is important to notice that studies on the relationship between leadership and work orientation may lead organizations to a higher level of performance. Indeed, as discussed in the previous sections, work orientation might be related to different outcomes such as motivation, performance, and success. Moreover, literature also says that leaders can be trained (Vecchio, 2007), and this training can be used to change a leader's work orientation or seek new meaning at work (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Thus, by well-structured and focused professional development programs, companies might change their leaders' work orientations, and consequently, help them reach higher levels of performance.

2.7 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on the meaning of work, work orientation, and leadership. It reviewed some definitions of leadership, provided a broad introduction to the meaning of work and work orientation, and described different studies that explored relations between work orientation and performance.

Notwithstanding studies on work orientation are relatively recent, they revealed that work orientation might become a relevant vein to support companies in improving important organizational outcomes. The review revealed the relationship between work orientation and employees' performance. It is important to notice few, or no studies directly investigate the relations between work orientation and leaders. In most of the studies, the goal was to investigate how work orientation correlates with employees in general, not leaders. These studies explored only the relations between work orientation and outcomes such as job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between work orientation (job, career, and calling) and the performance of leaders. The literature review revealed that work orientation may affect employee performance. These studies explored the relations between work orientation and outcomes such as job satisfaction and life satisfaction. However, few if any studies directly investigate the relationship between work orientation and leaders. Thus, this study will focus on how work orientation can be related to the leaders' self-perception of performance.

This chapter includes a definition of the research framework, methodology, population, sampling approach, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Framework and Methodology

As mentioned above, this study explored the relationship between work orientation and leaders' self-perception of performance. The goal was to understand how leaders construct and make meanings of their work, and how this process was related to their performance. Thus, a qualitative research methodology with phenomenology based design is appropriate.

3.1.1 Approach to Research

Phenomenology has its origins in works of several philosophers that aimed to study the structures of consciousness as experienced by the individuals. Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre were some of the philosophers that contributed to phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013).

Phenomenology focuses on individuals and their lived experiences. The goal is to understand how people make meaning of their lived experiences. In other words, phenomenologists want to know how such experiences are perceived and translated into the individuals' consciousness (Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013).

As a qualitative methodology, phenomenology investigates the realities lived by the individuals. This method explains the meaning of human phenomena and understands the lived structures of meanings (Manen, 1990). Thus, phenomenology is the study of lived experiences (Giorgi, 1994; Manen, 1990; Seidman, 2013). The product of a phenomenological study is a description of the essence of phenomena. It “represents the structure of the experience being studied” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.27). In practical terms, phenomenology focuses on the experience itself. The understanding of a human phenomenon is achieved through the analysis of the individuals’ reflections about their lived experiences and how these experiences are transformed into meaning and consciousness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Consciousness in phenomenological analyses brings meanings about phenomena varying in modes, styles, and forms (Giorgio, 1997).

In this study, phenomenology allowed a deep investigation of the experience of leaders with regard to their work. I investigated how leaders make meaning of their work and how these meanings may be related to self-perceptions of performance at work.

My interest was to study how leaders perceive this phenomenon – work orientation (job, career, calling) and performance – how they feel, perceive, judge, remember it, and create a sense of it.

3.1.2 Phenomenology and Interview

Interviews are at the core of any phenomenological study (Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013). Based on the phenomenology theory, Seidman (2013) stated that the nature of human existence is temporal and transitory. The human experience is “fleeting” and defined by the time. In many situations that an individual lives, the future “will be” becomes “is” (present) and then “was” (past) quickly. For example, in an interview the participants are reconstructing their experience, they go to the past experience and search for the essence of what they lived. Past experience is retold and resignified, creating a new perspective for the individual. The experience lived in their minds may be “taken” or “given” anytime, with different meanings each time.

Another aspect important of phenomenology interviews is the point of view of the participant. What are the “views and meanings” that the participant is reporting from experience (Seidman, 2013). Thus, my interest was in the experiences of leaders. What are the meanings that they identify from their choices at work? The phenomena are seen under the “eyes” of the participant.

Also, understanding what was true for the participant. “subjective understanding” means to explore subjective ideas and its implications is important (Seidman, 2013). In this study, leaders were identified with at least one dimension of work orientation and my interest was to know what it meant.

Therefore, the experience lived and remembered by the participants may be reconstituted. The complexity of the leaders’ experiences was constituted by elements that was the phenomena. The phenomenological interview explores meanings, ideas, and assumptions (Seidman, 2013). The interviewer is seeking the essence of the lived experience with questions that lead participants to express their experience.

Leaders many times reported old experiences and brought new meanings. It means that they analyzed a lived experience from another perspective. Sometimes they transformed it into new possibilities of answers for new or old issues. It is a reflection on a journey and how choices transformed life.

Then, the lived experience of leaders related to work orientations and performance may be a source of growth and meaning. Within a phenomenological approach, the work orientation can be seen as a set of possibilities. The perception of leaders has many possibilities, which lead them to make choices. These choices define actions as Carel (2013) explained, “ a choice of one action over another will, in turn, open another set of horizons, which then opens another“ (p. 346). The capacity for action, the ability to do things, the knowledge and the reflection create new possibilities to be in the world (Wilson, 2014). A choice leads to a situation that may bring new answers supported by reflection and consciousness. In this study, I investigated the choices leaders

made during their professional life, how they were related to their work orientations, and how these choices were related to their perceptions of performance.

Also, the emphasis on meaning and meaning-making is important to mention (Seidman, 2013). A phenomenological interview promotes meanings for the individuals insofar they are talking about what they lived. It may be viewed as an internal process. The individuals make meanings about what happened. At the same time, they are answering the interviewer's questions and are reflecting and remeaning their experience. The focus is on the "act of attention" (Seidman, 2013). How do leaders are connecting, reflecting, understanding their experience related to work orientation and performance?

Furthermore, it was important to consider the context that the leaders are living and how it creates a significance and sense for them. The interview allowed participants to put "actions" in a context and access an understanding. Each interviewee used a different approach to explain an experience. To access the essence of this experience was necessary to understand the context of each participant. For this purpose, the interviewer needed to discern means of language, values, knowledge, beliefs, and which references the interviewee was talking about, seeking the point of view of the participant.

3.2 Population

The leaders who participated in this research are from the United States and Europe. They were working in profit or non-profit organizations. They were part of a network of the advisor. These leaders were from different organizations. Most of them were on top positions at the occupational structure of those companies and were from different areas, age, gender, ethnic groups, and education. The main criteria to choose them was leadership. They should have more than five years in leadership positions and worked at least two companies.

3.3 Sampling Approach

The participant received an invitation by email to contribute to this research. The body of the email described the objectives of the study, how important it is for leaders and companies, and

inform participants that their responses will be kept private and confidential. The data was reported in aggregate form, without disclosing any personal information from participants. The participants who accepted to contribute with this research signed up the consent form and received a link to answer demographic questions, work orientation and performance questionnaire. The participants took three minutes to provide demographic data, and around 15 minutes to answer work orientation and performance's questionnaire. Detailed information about the questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

Also, the participants who answered the surveys received an invitation to participate in an interview. These interviews were conducted in a place that was convenient for the participant. It was in person or online. I offered them a room at Purdue if they did not have a private place. They chose what day and time they preferred. The interview took between 60 minutes and 90 minutes. Data records and written information was de-identified by using fictional names. I used Qualtrics to host surveys. Audio records will be destroyed by December 31st, 2019. The audio data will not be used for any further studies. The de-identified, transcribed data was kept indefinitely. The written documents had no identifying marks.

3.3.1 Sample Size

The phenomenological approach is a deepening of the experiences lived by leaders. As qualitative research, I could not generalize the data because it was not an empirical-analytic. My interest was to find what was essential and what made the difference (Manen, 1990). Each question was intended to unfold the phenomenon of work orientation and performance and its structure through the lived experience of participants.

At the end of this study, my question should be answered. However, the interest was not to reduce phenomena or simplify them. Then, I analyzed the structure of the essence of phenomena. Then, choose the participants for this approach was relevant. First, I chose leaders with more than five years working in a leadership position because I believe that they had the experience, ideas, values, assumptions developed during their careers that may provide data and answers to my research question. I think that they were building reflections about their work to bring significance to this study. Also, as I described in my background I have been working with these populations

and there are no studies with work orientation and leaders. I am looking for insights and new knowledge in this field, then I needed a “purposeful sampling” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For a qualitative study, the participants could be exemplars in some way to answering the research question. In a phenomenological approach if the researcher has a lot of data from interviews is possible use fewer participants, between six and ten (Creswell, 2014; Mohler, 2006; Patton, 2015).

I invited 29 leaders, 15 answered the email accepting or no accepting to participate, two began to answer the survey and gave up. I selected six participants to interview and analyzed it.

3.3.2 Human Subjects Approval

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Purdue University. The participants were volunteers. They did not receive any payments.

The most significant risk to participants was if they did not like or had issues in their current job. If disclosed, this information could be damaging to the individual. To mitigate this, the surveys were delivered using Qualtrics. The interview occurred in a private place or room so that other people did not have access to and did not hear the conversation. The surveys and recording are temporarily kept on a laptop that is maintained by the researchers. The name of the participants is not identified in the interviews. I used fictitious names. Appendix C provides the Research Consent Form approved by the Institution Review Board at Purdue University.

3.4 Data Collection and Measurement Instruments

The research questionnaire had three parts. The first part was collected demographic information such as age, gender, educational degree, years in leadership, as well as the participant’s current position at the organization. The second part contained questions about work orientation (job, career, and calling). The third part assessed the participant’s self-perception of performance.

The other source of data collection was a semi-structured interview exploring the answers from the survey. With the semi-structured interview, I elicited the choices that leaders made in their answers on job, career, calling work orientation, and performance.

3.4.1 Interview Procedures

The semi-structured interview guide included questions that were pre-predetermined before the interview. These questions were the same for all participants. These questions, open-ended, “allow the participants to create the options for responding” (Creswell, 2014, p.218). However, some questions were added during the interview; it depended on the answers, and sometimes it was necessary for additional clarifications. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible to adjust questions. During the interview I analyzed the responses, and also other indicators such as vocal tone and body language. Then, I decided to do more questions or not. It depended on the necessity of clarifications (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This interview was divided into five groups of questions (see Appendix B). First, the participants were asked about their careers and when they began. Questions about their dreams when they were a teenager in terms of career were posed. Also, what person or persons were important for them in their choices, and currently, what career they are pursuing. It purposed to warm up them to the following questions as they revisited their assumptions about work.

The second group of questions were about work experience. What companies they worked, what they liked in each job, why they chose each job, and when they changed it and why were included.

The third group of questions were about leadership. When they began their career as a leader, what they thought about leadership when they started in this role and now, and what they would say about them as a leader as examples.

The four groups of questions were about the meaning of work. At the heart of study is understanding what drives them in their current career, what is the meaning of work, if they would

you like to change their career, and if they perceive different meanings between the first job and current job.

The five groups of questions were also about performance at work. How they assess their performance at the current job and what their team and boss would say about their performance.

The last group of questions was about the work orientation survey. They were wondered about their choices for each work orientation's descriptions. Also, I asked clarifications if necessary on the 18 statements related to the job, career, and calling orientation, and those options related to performance.

With this interview, I strived to understand how professionals come to understand their work regarding job, career, or calling, what are the assumptions drive their choices or perspectives, and if the professionals changed their work orientation over time. Also, questions related to work orientation and performance were asked.

3.4.2 Work Orientation Survey

Leader work orientation was evaluated using the version of the work orientation scale of Wrzesniewski and colleagues (1997). They developed an instrument to measure the work orientation, describing three paragraphs that represent each work orientation. Each description of the terms job, career, and calling did not appear for respondents. The respondents indicated after reading, how much the respondent was like each on a scale ranging from “very much,” “somewhat,” “a little” or “not at all like me” (Appendix A).

Also, 18 first-person statement that used a binary response format (true or false) were included. There were seven items assess the job orientation (e.g., “I am eager to retire”), eight items measured the calling orientation (e.g., “I find my work rewarding”), and three items measured the career orientation (e.g., “I expect to be in a higher-level job in five years”).

3.4.3 Performance

The performance of leaders was measured using the technical and social performance scale created by Abramis (1994). It was a self-assessment. Job performance for Abramis (1994) is defined as “a worker's effective execution of tasks or job and useful contribution to the social work environment” (p.176). Supported by this definition this author refers technical performance to a “worker's handling of demands, making correct decisions, and performing without mistakes”. Social performance refers to a “worker's ability to get along with others at work, make compromises, and avoid fighting or arguing” (Abramis, 1994 p.558)

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted with a rigorous review of all research data. This data was analyzed in three different steps to answer the research question. In the first step, the participants' work orientations were identified. Second, the participants' self-perception of performance was related to their work orientations. Finally, the interviews were transcribed, coded, analyzed and triangulated with the data from the survey.

3.5.1 Data Analysis and Phenomenology

For phenomenology, meanings of thing are given by the experience of an individual, through his or her conscious thoughts about something that was lived. I based work on Giorgi (1994, 1997) to analyze the data. Then, the phenomenological method followed three steps: the phenomenological reduction (intuition), description, and search for essence (Giorgi, 1997).

This method seeks to understand “how phenomena come to be what they are” (Giorgi, 1997, p. 239). For this research, how leaders currently think about their past and current experience at work, that is, what kind of causes and conditions that they lived that become the events/things as they are.

Leaders brought to conscious what they lived, their experience. What happened became the present. It means what was the past came up to the present with new significance. When leaders were talking, they were giving meanings for each event or things. It is beyond the existence, it is

beyond space, time, and empirical sense of things. The presence brings meanings. All experience of leaders was present in a “natural attitude” and it was retained within the phenomenological reduction (Giorgi, 1994). For that, I analyzed each interview as distinct. After the data analysis, I compared or made conclusions for experience’s leaders, but I could not generalize the data.

Reduction implies bracketing the past knowledge about an experience describing as it is intuited. It means to retain what was lived as it is given, as presence, or phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997). Moustakas (1994), based on Husserl’s work, explained that phenomenology is an approach that brings the knowledge of human experience and offers many possibilities like a “science of actualities” (p.28). Leaders worked in different positions and in different companies. This approach is further a concrete situation (job position, company). This is what was perceived by leaders for each concrete situation lived, their perceptions, feelings, thoughts, conscious of the experience. There is intentionality directed toward to the “object” and does not matter if it is real or imaginary. Moustakas (1994) reflected that phenomenological reduction is “not only a way of seeing but a way of listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to phenomena as phenomena, in their own right, with their own textures and meanings” (p.92).

Each leader created intentionality about his or her work experience. On the day of the interview, they brought the internal experience, which was conscious. If I asked them the same questions again in other day maybe new meanings and intentions they would explain about the same experience lived. It is a recognition of themselves in this world. It is an internal act of consciousness, not how the object appears, or one sees, but the relationship between phenomenon and the self. When leaders are talking, they are reviewing the past, comparing, including new meanings, making the connection between experiences, and also signifying their story.

The second step was the description. It means to describe with linguistic expression what was reported by participants, precisely as it appeared within in an act and described the meanings in which leaders were communicating on things/events in accordance with their consciousness. The researcher explained the experience as it was given by participants, as they were presented.

The description describes the concrete experience and aims to bring what was present and what was meaningful. A description of this method is not an objective account of what really happened. I listened to what they were saying and how they built their career, choices, how they understand their work process to get at the description of it.

The last step is the search for essence. It means to seek for the meaning in the context of experience lived. Even using the “free imaginative variation” (Giorgi, 1997) or change aspects or parts of the phenomenon there is something which remains the same, it is the identity of think/events/experience of each leader. There are many possibilities, however, there are also features that cannot be removed because they are essential “for the object to be given to consciousness” (Giorgi, 1997, p. 243).

3.5.2 Procedures

For qualitative methods, there are some procedures or practical ways to follow to analyze the data. Giorgi (1997) proposed five procedures that I used in this research.

First was the collection of verbal data. For this part, I interviewed participants who agreed to participate. The questions were open-ended and the participants explained and expressed their ideas, viewpoint, reflections about work. I sought what was concrete, details, leaders ‘experience, actions, and what was lived for them (Giorgi, 1997).

The second procedure was to read the data. Before analyzing the data, it is necessary to transcript it and to read all the interviews. For the phenomenological approach, the researcher cannot thematize the description before reading the whole interview of each participant. It is necessary to have a global sense and then is possible to highlight the relevant parts.

The third procedure is dividing the data into parts (bracketing). My interest was in finding meanings for each individual. For this process of meaning discrimination, I analyzed the entire description and divided it into “meaning units” (Giorgi, 1997). To find meaning units I read the full descriptions and each time that I found a transition of meaning I marked the place and continued to read until a new meaning, new unit was evident. Transcripts of the interviews were

bracketed for phenomena in a textural description. These units are grounded on the attitude and activity of the researcher, depending on his or her approach. It is a “discovery-oriented” through the meanings, what kind of meanings are emerging (Giorgi, 1997).

The fourth was the organization and expression of raw data into disciplinary language. In this part the researcher examined the units, probed, and redescribed each unit to be explicit. It resulted in the structural description. It was an intuitive and “free imagination” variation process. (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the narrative description of meaning units develop into the structural description. If textural description is the “words” of the leaders about their experience, the structural description is “the narrative that ties together the meaning units derived from the former” (Mohler, 2006 p.76).

The fifth procedure was expressing the structure of the phenomenon. This part of the research aimed to find the essentials in each unit's meanings. The structure are the essences and their relationship (Giorgi, 1997). It was the result of textural and structural descriptions. For this research, there is more than one participant and it produced many typical structures rather than only one. An important point to discuss is the structure is not relevant by itself, it makes sense when there is interrelationship among the parts of the structure.

Giorgio (1997) compared the structure with the measure of central tendency in the statistic. The structure is not the end itself but is the central expressing how the phenomenon coheres or converge. The phenomenon investigated should be coherent and converge to be significant. To phenomenological scientific analyses, the structure should be in “relations to the varied manifestations of an essential identity” (p.249).

3.5.3 Personal Journal and Epoche Sessions

Epoche was part of this research process to analyze data. It “requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). It is a function that is called intuition that precedes empirical knowledge because of the search for the essence of knowledge, a natural attitude. It is a process to intuit on something, to reflect, to judge, and to understand.

However, this process also included the researcher's attitude. A researcher must to leave his or her assumptions, values, beliefs, and try to see the experience under the participant's perspective. Then, reduction tries to understand the natural attitude. The bias and prejudices from a researcher need to be understood. The description that an individual is saying should be precise in detail avoiding generalities or abstractions.

Epoche means to help the researcher to be opened to his or her thoughts, perspectives, values and biases which may affect the approach and analysis of a study. Some paradigms can be elucidated and are useful to analyze data.

The researcher has a thesis and it is natural. There are many meanings that I built during my career related to this research. Then, these assumptions needed to be clear. It is nothing wrong just is necessary that these thoughts emerge. When the researcher is writing his/her feelings, values, and assumptions he or she is clarifying ideas and presuppositions which may affect the interpretation of data. To become present the thoughts, feelings and put them apart, in brackets. The researcher can trust in intuition, own ideas, and different structures to get a picture of the experiences that are considered in the study (Bednall, 2006).

Then, epoché is a process of the researcher, is a personal reflection that is written in a journal/diary. During my journey, I wrote my impressions, feelings and tried to identify my assumptions. I wrote about my career, how I started, my dreams, and thoughts about the meanings of work in my life, what kind of work orientation I experienced. Indeed, the researcher includes and seeks to understand the impact of past and present experiences on data interpretation rather than to avoid it. (Bednall, 2006).

I conducted four epoché sessions during this study. The first was written about my paradigm on work, my career, and my beliefs. It is described in section 3.5.3.1. The second epoché occurred before the interview. It was attempted to review the questions and prepare for possible uncertainties. The third epoché was written after the interview and I tried to solve any issues that happened during the interviews. It was to evaluate my performance. The last session was conducted after the transcription of the data sources. This epoché was aimed at revisiting my

assumption of the meaning of work, work orientation, and performance and how may be affected during the data collection. I did it before of data analysis. The three last epoché sessions are presented at appropriate points in Chapter 4. The first epoche session is presented in the next section.

Epoché session – Before to begin

My career has been building in learning and helping people. Remembering how I began and what kind of values and beliefs my career is grounded, I wrote:

I am passionate about helping people to achieve higher levels of personal and professional development. This passion has guided all of my professional decisions. First, at fourteen years old, I volunteered in a program that aimed to provide religious education to children from low-income communities. During my high school I remembered supporting at least three girls in their issues with family, boyfriends, studies, and so on. My first approach with my friends was to listen, to make questions, to suggest something and to pray together. After high school, I became a teacher at a private elementary school in my city. The opportunities to work with children from different socioeconomic levels, cultures, and races shaped my view of society. I learned that while all of us must fight to eliminate socio-economic differences in society, diversity creates opportunities to make the world a better place to live.

When I can help someone, it makes me feel better. I like not only to help people but to understand how they make decisions, why they are suffering, what they can do better, what is the best way to follow, what questions they still did not answer in order to reach their goals.

After two years of teaching, I decided to major in psychology. I left my hometown to study at the biggest university in my state. I realized that my role as a psychologist offered me meanings in my life. Also, I left my career as a teacher because I had an assumption: “If I do not feel well and happy to be a teacher, then I have to leave because my students deserved a lot more than a frustrated teacher. So, for me, choices are an important part of my life. Choices build our path and feelings.

After graduating in psychology, I started to work selecting professionals to different companies. I interviewed a lot of people. For me, it was an interesting process. Besides looking for a professional that fit a specific profile, I tried to understand how these professionals made meanings of their career, what were their beliefs and assumptions which they based their decisions on. Also, what kind of skills they had developed to keep or change their jobs, how they cope with conflicts, frustrations, challenges, and other issues.

When I married, I moved to a city where most of the population has different origins such as Portuguese, Spanish or African. Then, I learned new things about the meanings of work. First, it was a challenging move because I grew up in the south of Brazil in a city colonized by Germans with a completely different culture. In the beginning, I was afraid of not being accepted because I had a different accent, and skin color than the local people. None of my concerns were realized, and I was more than welcomed. Second, I became immersed in that culture in a very short period. I perceived how rich such a place was, and precisely what made that richness was the diversity of people, ideas, and cultures.

My past work experience prepared me to start my own business focused on development professionals and leaders. I have consulted companies and leaders in dealing with diversity, multiculturalism, management, choices, behaviors, future, and other issues related to career development and leadership. I noticed that one of the main causes of low performance is their inability to deal with differences among people. Apart from issues related to their leadership skills, many of those professionals had difficulties adapting to the new location, culture and work environment. In such a challenging context, my coaching approach focused not only on developing new competencies but also on leading those professionals to develop new attitudes toward different issues.

Now, living in the US, I am facing the challenges of adapting to a new culture. I seek to integrate and understand the nuances of American culture and values. Therefore, I volunteer in different places, such as Friendship House, Purdue Coaching Community. I taught Portuguese to an American student, and I was a Coach to a doctorate student. Attending lectures, classes, and events at Purdue is also part of this learning repertoire.

I worked at the Latino Cultural Center as a graduate assistant. It was a big challenge. I needed to adapt my skills and learned how people work, what is they value? The multiculturalism and diversity in the Purdue community fascinate me and motivates me to continue studying toward a higher degree.

Now with this study I am looking for new knowledge. I need to plan a new stage of my life after 50 years old. I want to keep learning and helping people. I want to continue to make a difference for others as I have done throughout my life.

3.5.4 Credibility

Qualitative research is a way to ask questions in-depth but the results also depend on credibility. Also, after a qualitative study is possible to transform quantitative scales focused on validity and reliability (Patton, 2015). If in quantitative research, there are variables in a static state in qualitative research there is a description of an individual in action. The understanding is the

primary rationale for a study in qualitative way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The conclusion of the researcher should make sense, answering the research question.

Qualitative research focuses on a worthy topic. Also, on the transparency of methodology, credibility of research and researcher, a significance contribution, and if the study has meaningful coherence with findings, interpretations, and conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To analyze data, my approach using Phenomenology sought to discovery, account, and systematize the meanings which are present in the experience and consciousness of an individual (Giorgi, 1994). Qualitative research and phenomenology method offer a possibility to the researcher to engage with the participants in their experiences. It provides value and depth exploration of the phenomenon, from an exclusive perspective (Mohler, 2006).

Also, phenomenological psychology consists of an exploration of consciousness and experience, the phenomena are analyzed, described, and coded as they are brought from an individual, without any preconceptions (Misiak & Sexton, 1973). The researcher takes away from her or his viewpoint and tries to see the world with the eyes of the participant. Based on my own experiences using this approach helped me to explore through the interview words, experiences, values, assumptions, understandings from the perspective of the participant.

About the credibility of the researcher, my experience as a psychologist using Psychodrama as a framework, which is based in phenomenology, was helpful. I analyzed the data bringing significance for this study. I used my experience to listen, to figure out the essence of data. Also, as a researcher I brought to conscious my assumptions, bracketing (epoché) or setting aside these assumptions about the phenomenon seeking not to influence the constructions by participants and the analysis of their responses. I used the “eyes” of the participant. I focused on the participants’ stories, on their ideas, and not in my stories, presuppositions or beliefs.

3.6 Summary

This chapter explained the research design, methodology, and data analysis method were used in this study. Also, it described the credibility of research/researcher.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF DATA

This study proposes to investigate the relationship between work orientation (job, career, and calling) and the performance of leaders as described in the previous chapters, how leaders understand and perceive their work, what kind of work orientation they are aligned with, and how work orientation is related to their performance at work.

For this reason, work orientation and performance questionnaires were applied. In addition, interviews were used to educe the research question and to clarify the leaders' perspective on their work.

This chapter presents data from individual sources. Each participant is introduced and both textural and structural descriptions are presented. Also, epoche sessions are presented.

4.1 Epoche session – Before the interview

After some reviews of the semi-structured interviews in detail, I made some reflections and wrote some of my feelings and concerns before interviewing the participants.

First, I am a non-native English speaker and I am feeling a little bit nervous about the interview not being in my mother tongue. Although I have a semi-structured interview to follow, I know that there are some questions that I will need to develop when I am interviewing. My concern is that I may not go deep enough into some questions which could be strategic or meaningful for this study. However, I have searched for some examples in literature, and I have concluded that there are many possibilities to deepen the questions and ask extra ones at any time. In addition, I am confident in my experience as a psychologist, interviewing many people. I just need to keep that confidence in my heart.

Second, I am excited to meet the participants. Before the interviews, I checked some information about them. I looked for their names, background, current job, work experience and other information that could be useful on LinkedIn. They were open to the invitations by email responding that they were glad to help with the research. I am trying to be prepared for this interview. I also know that at the beginning of it, it is crucial to warm them up well, and prepare them to feel comfortable to answer the questions. I am usually a good observer and to break the ice I may begin to talk about something happening around that time, their

expectations or curiosities. However, I need to be absolutely attentive and feel what is the best way to go about it. It is a sensitive and intuitive approach. I plan to begin talking about my objectives, and what kind of questions I will ask. I decided that in the first part of the interview I will ask them about their career dreams when they were children and how their careers began.

Another concern I have is that it is essential to keep my focus on my research question and my role as a researcher. My role is not to be a Psychologist or an Executive Coach. I will not be there to find a problem, think about the solution, or develop people. I will be asking questions to understand their stories, their work and their performance-related meanings. As an Executive Coach and Psychologist, I feel comfortable to make interviews, but the role for me to play this time is different. I remember the first time I did a pilot interview. When the interview finished, I felt as if I had not played my role accordingly as I did not make a diagnosis, nor did I give them possibilities to think and to develop their ideas. However, it was right because as a researcher my role is only to listen and to be focused on my research questions.

4.2 Participants Descriptions

The following sections introduce each of the participants. The participants are leaders and work in different companies, profit and non-profit organizations. They filled in the demographic questionnaire, work orientation, and performance questionnaire. After that, they were interviewed.

These leaders have worked in different companies through their lives and they have been in leadership positions for many years. There are four leaders who are men and two who are women. They are between 51 and 60 years of age. One of them is over 61 years old. In terms of education, one of them has a Ph.D., four leaders have masters degrees, and one has a postgraduate degree. Currently, four of them are working in a non-profit organization and two are working in a for-profit organization. They are in the organizational structure as Directors, Vice Presidents, Chief Executive Officers, and Chief Financial Officers. Two leaders have between 21 and 25 years of leadership experience, one between 16 and 20 years, another one between 6 and 10 years, and the other two have more than 26 years.

Below is a table with the answers to work orientation. Mr. A is aligned with job work orientation, Mr. B is aligned with career work orientation, and Mr. C is aligned with calling work orientation. The 18 statements, which follow the paragraphs of Mr. A, B and C in Appendix A,

represent the three work orientations. The statements were used to confirm what type of work orientation each participant was identified with.

Table 1. Job, Career, Calling

Participants	Mr. A Job	Mr. B Career	Mr. C Calling
P01	Not at all like me	Little	Somewhat
P02	Not at all like me	Somewhat	Somewhat
P03	Not at all like me	Not at all like me	Very Much
P04	Somewhat	Not at all like me	Very Much
P05	Not at all like me	Not at all like me	Somewhat
P06	Not at all like me	Little	Somewhat

The questions about performance were (Appendix A):

- 1- “Handling the responsibilities and daily demands of your work?
- 2- Making the right decisions?
- 3- Performing without mistakes?
- 4- Getting things done on time?
- 5- Getting along with others at work?
- 6- Avoiding arguing with others?
- 7- Handling disagreements by compromising and meeting other people” (Abramis, 1994 p.558)

Below is the table with the answers concerning performance.

Table 2. Performance

Participants	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
P01	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Very well
P02	Very well	Very well	All right	All right	All right	All right	Exceptionally well
P03	Very well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Very well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Very well
P04	Very well	Very well	Very well	Exceptionally well	Very well	Exceptionally well	Very well
P05	Very well	Exceptionally well	Very well	All right	Very well	Very well	Very well
P06	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Exceptionally well	Very well

4.3 Interview Participants

The information provided in the following sections describes each participant based upon the data collected through a demographic questionnaire, work orientation, and performance survey. Also, this information is shown in a textural and structural description from the interview of each participant.

4.3.1 Participant 1

Participant 1 (P01) is a male, over 61 years of age. He was born in the United States. He is an engineer and completed a master's degree. Currently, he is the Director of a non-profit organization. He has had leadership experience for more than 26 years. During his career, he worked for 35 years in the industry sector and over the last 15 years he has been working in a non-profit organization.

Participant 1 Textural Description

Career - At the beginning

He reported that when he was a child, he thought that he wanted to be like his father. His reference was from a small city where he lived. He thought about working in the same field as the people in his community. He loved to take things apart and work with tools. He remembered:

I had my own coveralls, my dad had tools. I just thought I would do something in that area.

However, after some reflections, he realized what not to be. His father worked for the money and he did not like to take risks. He said:

My dad ended up being an example of what I did not want to do, as I observed him and his behavior. He was a very talented and capable guy, but no leadership, no stretching himself, taking risks of getting a better job. He ended up working for his brother, my uncle, pretty much all of his life, right? Work was just something to earn money, to stop and have a beer after work with his buddies. I got some good traits from him, but it was not for leadership.

Then, he thought about being an engineer. However, he did not have enough money to pay for a university course. A high-school teacher advised him to study drafting technology. He said

that his math teacher was a good influence and also some coaches, who by example, showed him how to be successful. At college, the professor “drilled” into his head:

Here's what you need to do when you leave here, to be successful in your career.

Career – Work Experience

When I asked him about work experience, he mentioned two important jobs, one in an industry and one in a non-profit organization. He began working as a draftsman in an industry. At that time, he was taking classes in engineering, but he had more interest in operational things. So, he decided not to be an engineer.

Furthermore, he had some jobs during high school and college before he turned to the industry sector. He worked for money in a gas station, a farm, and in a newspaper agency. He said:

First, they say money isn't a motivator /unless you don't have any.

However, he acknowledged that by having those jobs he learned many skills, such as how to have a “good attitude, to be positive, fun to be around, and get things done”. He also said that his job in the industry prepared him for the current job, where he has been 15 years. He learned technical and leadership skills. ...“35 years of steady progression”.

As for career changes, he stated that before changing anything in his career he assesses the impact on his family. He reported that he usually goes home and talks with his wife about any change. He mentioned his wife many times during the interview as a person who supports him in work decisions. He always assessed what kind of impact his decision have on his family.

That was a big important thing about changing jobs... total impact on your life and your family's life ... but never turning down an opportunity within an organization. Always be open to that.

He was promoted many times in that industry, what he enjoyed very much. What’s more, he learned many other skills, apart from technical and leadership skills. He began working as a draftsman engineer, after that he became a designer, a checker, a senior checking engineer, a design engineer, a senior design engineer, an assistant buyer, a buyer, a commodity engineer, a

procurement management. In 1982 the industry went through a recession and not only did he keep his job, but he also got promoted. He started working in a global area, purchasing, and travelling a lot around the world.

During those years while working in the industry, he realized that he needed to get a bachelor's degree, so he decided to take a Business course. Once a headhunter asked him about his education and as he did not have the right qualifications then, he was not contacted anymore. He believed that the reason was because he did not have a bachelor's degree. As a result, after his graduation in Business, he started to attend a master's degree program.

The last boss that he had that industry was not what he expected. He mentioned that he realized what leaders should not do with their teams. Then, he decided to accept the retirement package and left that industry. One year before to leave that industry, he began teaching in a non-profit organization and then he got a job there. He stated:

All those 35 years were preparing me for what I've been doing in the last 15 years. I haven't had ... I've had to be a leader of the project, and a leader of change with people that didn't report to me. That's been a great experience.

First, he taught different courses. Later, he was involved in a project to get more clients and then he got a contract with a big company. After that, he was involved in many projects between a non-profit organization and some companies. Besides that, he was talking with students to assess what kind of program would fit for each one, as he was a mentor to the students. He really enjoyed interacting with people.

For him, education is really important. Currently, he has the opportunity to take different responsibilities, and he feels excited even after having worked for 50 years. He likes having an impact on other people. He admitted that he feels well being challenged and that he is able to contribute to the organization. He commented:

I like having an impact on other people, and right now I see a real opportunity where my experience over all these years, could really help us as we transform our education part. I believe it.

Career – Leadership

As for leadership, he began his career when he was an assistant buyer in that industry. He was enthusiastic because he felt that it was of great value for him as a person. He considered that he became a leader at that time, because his efforts had been worth it. Although, he considered a challenge to manage it:

I was excited because I felt that it was valued for me as a person. There would be a reward to take what they call more responsibility. One of the metrics that they always use to establish salary grades and rates, how many people reported to you, how big was your budget that you managed? How many, all of those projects that you're completing. Whatever the metrics were of success, right?

He explained that the first time he became a leader it was a real challenge. On one occasion a woman was crying and he did not know what he could do. So, to understand that woman he talked with his wife. In the beginning, he observed the other leaders, and as a consequence he started to improve his performance as a leader as well. For him, it is important to empathize with people:

There are lessons, upon lesson, upon lesson, of just experiential growth as a leader. You observe others, what works, and what doesn't work, and adopt. If you're not a sociopath, and have empathy for people, you can be a good leader.

I asked him about his view of leadership in his current job. Besides his current job, he talked about some positions in which he has worked as a leader. Now, he is a leader in an association. He has been on the board of directors for 10 years. He was able to bring together a team with some of the employees of the Association. In 1997 he started working on a project to set up a for-profit company to assist with the funding within the non-profit classification. He learned how to get people motivated to do things when he did not have great authority, what he considered to be a valuable experience. Also, he was a homeowner association's leader. He was the vice president of the board when a hurricane hit their condominium association in Florida. What was important for him was to learn something with each of those experiences. ” He added:

If you can remember those things, and remember what worked, and what didn't work, and do good for people, then they understand what their purpose, and what their role is.

Everybody wants to be appreciated, feel like they add value. It can be a blessing and a curse to be a leader, but if you can persevere, if you will, and not be too hard on yourself, because we're all not perfect. We all are still in progress, trying to become better at whatever we do.

When I asked about the assessment of his team on his leadership, he said that he has a positive perception. He reported that the team recognizes him as a leader who cares about the team, who is honest, and transparent as well. He mentioned:

I think you would never believe that I don't care. He cares. He cares about me. He cares about what we're trying to do. He's dependable, honest, is transparent, maybe too transparent sometimes. Takes time every morning to see what I'm doing. Knows about my family. Knows if I'm dealing with special issues, and tries to support.

Career – The meaning of work

What drives him in terms of career growth is self-worth. He mentioned that he likes to feel that “feed the ego“, he likes to be healthy, and able to achieve his goals. In addition, he wants to have time flexibility to do things and enjoy life, and still accomplish things. The meaning of work for him is to develop and maintain programs that will benefit his customers and students, to be a good employee when interacting with other people and to build friendship. He stated that he does not see work as a necessary “evil“. He said:

I think the meaning of work is very broad to me. What I need to do, to maintain our household, you could classify it as work. Being here, and developing, and maintaining programs that provide educational benefit to our customers, and students. Being a good employee in interaction with other people that are here, and work here. Build friendships. Work is, when you're younger, and the model I saw from my dad, is a necessary evil, and something he hated. "I hate to work. I don't want to work. My boss doesn't understand me.“

He mentioned that he feels empowered with his current work, and with his job at the Association. He explained that the exciting part of his current job is to be different. Currently, he does not plan any significant change to his career:

At this phase of life, any significant change, I do not right now have in my mind, an eye on something other than this opportunity to have a more people leadership influence in this transition within (the non-profit organization). Doors are opening, and it's ... I'm not out knocking on doors or looking at job postings, or whatever,

but I did realize that I felt like I was getting a little stable. My work in (association) keeps me vibrant. Some of our programs are so cumbersome, the approval processes, the length of time, getting people to cooperate. The exciting part is that this could be different.

I asked him about the differences that he noticed concerning the meaning of work between he began and now. He pointed out that at the beginning, the job was just for the money and he compared himself to his friends. After some time, he realized that he was enjoying his job and earning money to do something he liked. He was always able to interact with the people that he was working with, mainly when he worked in that industry. He said:

...when you first start, and you're comparing to what your buddies are, that have also gone to college or whatever, how much they're making. You talk about all that stuff, right? Then when you find things that you kind of enjoy, and they're paying you to do... Always having the social side of the people you work with. That was an important thing, where they all felt like they were part of a family, a broader family if you will. Those are things that I particularly feel good about, and wanting to do. It's harder to do here. It was part of the networking that I did when I was in the industry, but I did do a little bit here.

Career – Performance

When his performance was assessed by his boss, he received a very positive feedback. He stated:

Well, we just had performance evaluations. My boss thinks I'm outstanding, and I agree with him.

Factors that may affect his performance. He mentioned that when he feels that he is making the difference, it affects positively his performance. Negative things he shared when he has a lot of emails and he had other things to do. Also, negative ways affect his performance when people are oppressive or treat others with disrespect. He commented that he likes to be out interacting and learning

He realized that he is in his best performance when he is interacting with someone on a certain topic. Also, he reported that he is good at communicating ideas and that he likes to help people, creating connections, supporting them. He said:

... I think when I am interacting with someone on any topic, whether it's talking about this program, or a new project, or ... The feeling comes over me like I'm really enjoying this, and I really think this is what I'm good at, is this communication piece, and working with others to accomplish something. I feel, great success, at making those connections. That's why I'm here. I always felt when I was a leader, initially, that it was my goal to help others be successful. If I didn't worry about me, and help them.

Regarding his performance from a team perspective, he realized that they look up to him, perceiving him as a person who is open to changes and new ideas. Also, as he mentioned before his boss gave him a positive feedback on his performance:

If they are, my belief is that they are happy to work with me, that I'm open to new challenges, or changes, or things that we need to do. I'm reasonably responsive as long as I'm here, and not distracted with other projects. I know my boss openly compliments my performance. Like I say, he augmented my performance evaluation in a very positive way.

Career – Work Orientation

I questioned P01 about each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). “ Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?”

Mr. A - Job orientation – He answered - Not at all like me.

Currently, he explained that he enjoys his job and it has been like this his whole life. He mentioned that he is financially independent. He retired in 2002 from the industry sector. He does not need the money and he does not have to be at work. This money helps him to make improvements in his house but he could do that without having his current job. He seemed to enjoy his career. Even when he began as a “ printer’s devil “ or when he was working at a gas station or on a farm. He said:

I was the first guy that ever worked for this guy, that owned the gas station, where he felt comfortable taking his wife and daughter on vacation, and let me run it for the whole week, ever, of anybody that he had had working there before me.

He considered that he had been learning, not working just for the money. He mentioned his father as an example of whom had worked just for the money. Then, he did not identify himself with Mr. A (job).

I'm financially independent. I don't have to be here. I could walk out of here today, lifestyle wouldn't change. That's not likely, but first you have to be able to image, "If I don't have money," like it says, "You are working primarily to earn enough money to support your life outside of this job. It's just where the source of revenue would come for, and would really do something else instead. Right now, I don't know what else I would want to do, rather than what I'm doing.

And more:

Mister A's job is basically a necessity of life, life breathing or sleeping. This is so not me. It's never been that way, ever. It's always I like my job, and what's the next step, and how do I do more? Yeah, I will get a raise, which I'll let happen.

Mr. B – Career orientation – He answered - A little

He described that he does not expect to be promoted or to be in another job in the next five years. In five years, he will be 77 years old. For him, to change his job in five years, will depend on having a new proposal. He likes his current job and he thinks that at his age he does not know what may happen in 5 years' time. He never felt like he was competing with his coworkers. He described that he feels that his work keeps him mentally active. During his explanation, he admitted to some extent to wanting to be in a higher level job in five years' time like Mr. B.

Mr. C – Calling orientation – He answered - Somewhat

For this participant, his family is a priority, not work. He reported that "vital" is a strong word to describe his job, this is how he described it:

Let's talk about that. "Work is one of the most important things in his life." It's definitely up there. My wife is ... My family is my number one priority as you see here.

He showed me pictures of his whole family, wife, children, and grandchildren. Also, as Mr C. he does not intend to retire soon. He confirmed:

“Very pleased that he is in this line of work.” I believe that my whole life has prepared me to help people that I can do from this position. “Takes his work home with him and on vacations.” I will take my laptop when we go there, or wherever we’re going. I keep it in perspective. If there’s something urgent, I always know that there are people here that can handle it. “He feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place.” That, I can agree on. Upset if he were forced to stop working.” I’m not particularly looking forward to retirement. That’s not me.

Also, he shared that he has friends in many places, not only at workplace. He loves his job.

Participant 1 Structural Description

He is aligned with calling work orientation. He answered “not at all like me” to job orientation, “a little”, to career orientation and “somewhat” to calling orientation. He considered himself fortunate because he has always liked his jobs, even when he worked for the money when he was in high school and college. He needed the money, but he was learning, and it was very important to him. It was like a preparation for his major experience in the industry sector. He is proud of his career. He grew in his career all those years due to the promotions, challenges, and experiences. He described the meaning of work as developing, maintaining programs, interacting with people, being different, helping people, and feeling that working is worth. Currently, he considered himself highly efficient. Usually, to improve his performance as a leader he employs observation and the experience he has acquired to improve his next task, that is, he benefits from self-assessment. He had got a positive feedback from his boss and his staff and customers admire him. In the performance questionnaire, he assessed himself as “exceptionally well” in most of the questions.

4.3.2 Participant 2

Participant 2 (P02) is female and she is between 51 and 60 years old. She was born in the United States and holds a master’s degree. Currently, she is the Director of a non-profit institution. She has had leadership experience for over 26 years. She has been working in different departments in a non-profit organization for the last 35 years.

Participant 2 Textural Description

Career – At the beginning

She reported that at first she wanted to follow a career in the psychology field. She intended to be a psychologist because she liked to help people. P02 reported that when she was a child, she was always observing how people behaved. Through her high school years, she became more and more curious about “why do people do that“. She told me that she grew up in a family in which the women are very strong. Her grandmother was a music teacher, her mother always worked out, then she was interested in what people did to advance in their careers. At the beginning, when she went to college she did psychology. During that time she had extracurricular work opportunities and she turned to higher education. Once she had the opportunity to work as a junior-senior during a summer with new incoming students. She felt it was exciting and she liked what they were doing. She thought that that working field was narrow and to continue in the psychology area she would be too old. She would be almost 30 years old when she majored. Therefore, she decided to take to a little different career in high education. She expressed:

They're so happy. This looks like this could really be a lot of fun. They're caring about what they did and caring about the students excited me and I thought, "Maybe this is something I would like to do.

She mentioned that some people had an impact on her career, such as some bosses and coworkers and some professionals external to the non-profit organization. She acknowledged that there was a faculty helped her in terms of supervision and its issues. Also, there was a woman who helped her a lot, sometimes just by listening to her.

She reported that she is in the students' service professional, administration position. She has been at this job for 35 years. Most of the years, 33, she has worked in engineering:

I would say I'm pursuing a (non-profit organization) administration career. I truly like it.

Career – Work experience

I asked her about other jobs during her life. She reported that when she was in high school she worked washing dishes and mowing grass. She said:

I had a lot of time to think and I did not have anything to bring to the home.

She acknowledged that she is the kind of person that “ if I see something that needs to be done I'll do it or they hand it to me and say, Could you take care, I do it.”

As an undergraduate, she worked in a research work program. After her masters degree, she worked as a secretary for a labor union on an hourly basis. She mentioned that she learned accounting skills very well. When she came to a non-profit organization, she received the best advice from the person who had interviewed her: “Why are you apologizing for doing an hourly clerical job? Those jobs have value, they contribute, you did the best you could choose.”

Then, she was hired for this job and at first, she worked in an office. It was on hourly rates of pay as a secretary. During that time, she was open to other opportunities and she applied for another job.

After nine months, she changed into engineering in a job on a monthly basis. After that, she worked in a hospital for one year but she did not like it. She admitted that she cannot handle life and death.

Later, she looked for another position and she went back to distance learning, what she had done for about 15 years. She loved that. She commented that she likes to see how different students become when they get their degrees, promotions, and so on. Then, she turned to engineering. She has been supervising staff for most of the time, and she feels she has the power to help them get the tasks done.

Currently, she is the director of academic affairs. She manages the staff and the processes that affect the students directly. There is some variety in the job, and in this unit she works with all other engineering schools, not just one. However, there has been a reorganization of this department and she and her team have been facing many difficulties. She manages her team by trying to talk openly with them and trying to solve problems together.

I asked what kind of things she does not like at work. She pointed out that she does not like it when the faculty leaders think that they can ask for anything and they can do it without limits. Usually, she talks to them and shows them what is feasible to do and what is not.

She claimed that there are many things that she has done to the students helping them with their careers. She mentioned that she has skill sets to support the students and she has been constantly learning some new ones. She considered herself as an academic coach. She has also learned, by watching the students and the faculty staff, about how the environment affects them. She said:

we say students are a priority, sometimes our behavior... don't reflect that... I watched those transitions and they're tough when you're the one that's the cheerleader for the student.

Career – Leadership

In terms of career and leadership, she was first a leader at college. She was a graduate assistant and she made some decisions that she realized had a good influence on the others. In addition as a leader she may include people in a team. She said:

...leadership isn't just the salary and the title, but it's a way of thinking and it's a way of being inclusive.

As a leader, she used to look for the team members who she felt that did not interact well with the team. She tried to work on this dynamic to improve their relationships.

As far as leadership is concerned, in the beginning, she thought that any leader had to know everything instantly and she or he could not make any mistakes. Also, when a leader gave a command “everyone would do exactly what you said.” A leader should never say to their team, “I have no idea.” She stated:

I think that's with maturity when you get older that you're a little more open to saying, “I don't know,” and you don't beat yourself up for it.

Along those first years, she realized that when leaders talked in a too authoritarian manner towards their teams, they did not really know themselves. She thought that her staff appreciated

her and they would say: "She'll let us come into meetings and she'll let us just rumble on say anything and we don't have restrictions in our staff meetings."

At that moment, she was going through many challenges as a leader. She mentioned:

I think it's incredibly difficult. Right now for me personally we're going through a reorganization where my leadership responsibilities are being pulled away step by step. When I came over here I was from the school of engineering and I was director of their programs, so I was like here and I knew I would be coming down to about here based on reporting lines and things like that and the staff that I'm responsible for.

As for what she perceived as being a leader, she reported that she was “ kind, pretty nice, and a very human type of person”. She reported that she was a cutting-edge leader and her leadership style “is my example“. She said:

I'm probably seen as too nice, but I'm a pretty nice, kind, I'm a very human type of person, to begin with. I would say as a leader that's the forefront. I don't, I think my leadership style is my example. I don't like pounding on people, I don't like berating them, I don't like destroying them this is their job. My first attitude is everybody comes into work planning on doing the best they can do and sometimes that doesn't work out. Then as a leader you got to watch that and make sure is it the environment doing that. You've got to figure those things out and maybe help them, but I think I'm a kind person.

She reported that when there is a conflict she likes “to give people the benefit of the doubt and look for the positive sides first and then weigh the negative things towards the positive. Sometimes the negative things are just minor in lenses.”

Career – The meaning of work

I asked what drives her in her career. She acknowledged that learning continuously is important. Also, being busy, being around people, and being engaged. She said:

I like to work. There are days when I wonder if maybe I should go apply for a job on the grounds crew to mow and plant flowers, because I really like immediate gratification, but I'm a worker. I like to learn, I like to constantly learn, I like to be busy, and I like being around people. I don't know that I could ever work remotely. I think it's what drives me, the engagement.

She stated that she wants to make a difference for the students, to be part of the difference:

I think the fact that I feel like I'm part of the difference, not the difference. I'm part of the difference and I think that keeps me going.

Regarding the meaning of work she felt well when she was part of the difference of student's life. This is what she said about the meaning of work:

I hate to use the word impact because it seems like it's overused, but I think I've stayed in higher ed because bottom line I feel like what I have done has somehow changed somebody's life for the better. People not everybody goes to college, so if they get to come here they're wanting to better themselves and you want to be a part of that experience. I love being a part of that experience and I want to make sure I'm a memorable positive part of it.

She mentioned that she is facing great difficulties at work and she is looking for another job or work environment. Something different because it has been hard to cope with her current situation. She feels that she is going "down the track", maybe she thinks about turning to the medical field. She still believes that people who are making a decision are doing the right thing. She reported:

I think I'd go back to that medical field just for something different. Maybe I don't know if it's been at (non-profit organization) for a long time and I'm just getting or if it's this reorganization is, this is hard, this is making it hard to motivate myself because this is July 1 right here and right now I'm about here. All of us in this box are watching us, ourselves come down the track. This is probably motivating me the most to look for a different environment and I've never been a part of something like this, but I have to believe that everybody who was a part of this decision making thought they were doing the right thing. The way this is being implemented is very, and remember I'm a kind person and the way I treat people it's not happening that way. I would say yes, most definitely I'm looking for a different.

She stated that she is not pursuing another career maybe another context, place, or company. She is not sure about what is happening to her job. Maybe she is going to do some similar things but with some more training.

I asked her about her perception of the meaning differences when she began to work and now. She reported that at first, she thought that working was about money, and the meaning of a successful career was how much money she made. Now, for her it does not matter how much money she makes:

Honestly, I think I have just learned by watching what other people do in my most recent experiences in the last two years it doesn't matter how much money I make to be successful. If I go home and I feel like I've had a good day, I dealt with this problem well, I think this went well that means more than what my paycheck is going to be.

She has learned that people are pretty approachable if you respect them and they feel that you respect them and let them maintain their dignity. Also, a good relationship at work is very important to P02:

I think of it, and the openness that you can talk to people about difficult things. I have learned over time if a confrontation has such a negative aura around it, but not all confrontation is negative it's how you handle it and how you do it.

Career – Performance

I inquired about her performance at work. She reported that she does perform the "best that she can do". However, right now, she admitted that she is not at her best. She thinks this is because she has been facing a new situation at work. She does not know what is going to happen and she is not looking for a new job. However, she does not know if she is going to continue in this job.

I've got one staff person though that's going the other direction, but most of us are just like sitting still. We're just doing what comes at us and we're not going after anything to say, "What if we do this, what if we do that, maybe this," we're not doing that. I would say. I'm about middle of the road.

She described that she believes that the factor that can affect performance positively or negatively is the culture in the office. Also, people's personal life may have a negative effect on people's performance. She mentioned that when there is great leadership, a great mission, a vision, and a good relationship with people, these aspects can affect the employees positively.

I was curious to find out what helps her keep a good performance and she said:

I would say my move from my other job to here, the culture here is 180 degrees different. It's very different and I didn't expect that. The culture here is very, I don't know. Not having faculty in this unit surprises me we have the kind of culture that we have, but right now for me it's the office culture.

She realized that she performs best when she is working and interacting with the faculty and the students. She mentioned:

With faculty, just sitting with faculty and working out what they want to do with a class or a student, I would say that's when I'm at my best.

In terms of performance, she reported that her team liked her and they were glad that she was there during that reorganization. She remarked:

I would say they would probably put me in middle of the road, because they've seen me make some mistakes and they've also seen some things with the culture that's affected me. I would say they wouldn't give me a super great review, they wouldn't give me a bad one. I think they'd say, "Yeah, she's doing okay."

Career - Work orientation

I asked P02 about each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). “ Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?”

Mr. A – Job orientation – She answered - Not at all like me.

She acknowledged that she works because she wants to do it. She remembered that she received advice from a mentor at college and he told her: “go to work because you want.” She admitted that if she won the lottery maybe she would keep her job, maybe half time, to have the medical benefits, and then work in other activities like in her current job as a volunteer. She said:

I would say the point in my life now I don't work to make money. I went into this field and I think most people that go into education, because my husband is a teacher, is we don't go into it for money. We know from the very beginning in college and our instructors told us, "You're not going to make any money. As a matter of fact you might struggle to make ends meet, but you go into it because it's what you want to do. I'm active in the community and these are volunteer jobs and I can do more there, but still get my medical benefits and still have the directed problem-solving.

About retirement she expressed:

I mean because one part of me has to decide what's going to be my fun retirement activity, is it going to be a job or is it going to be, I can't figure that out and I'm not in a hurry to figure it out but you know.

I asked her if along her career she felt like Mr. A. She acknowledged that right now she is feeling a little bit like Mr. A.

A little bit like this one right now. This one isn't, this one doesn't have the focus on students, this unit doesn't have the focus on students that I thought it would. It's got a focus on students but in a different way. Me and my team look at students as that's a human being...The culture here is very different in how they see students. They see them as income. They're a revenue stream, and I've never ever, ever seen a student. I didn't go into education for the bottom line, so I don't ever put a dollar sign on a human being's head that's a student. ... I want to get back to where your mission is the student.

Mr. B – Career orientation – She answered - Somewhat

She mentioned she is as competitive as Mr. B because she also understood that a promotion is the consequence of good work. However, she does not know if her job will still exist in some months due to her department's reorganization. She stated:

I am competitive, I do see promotions as a recognition that you're doing a good job, you're doing a little better job than everyone else and I do pretty much enjoy it. Watching myself go down this little track here I'm worried about what's going to happen here. I'm worried that within a year my job won't exit and I was reading that thinking that. That yeah, I'm watching the leaf. That logic when you go into education you don't think like that. Faculty don't think like that. When we talked a lot over in (the department) not arguments, but animated discussions it was over a student not the money. When I answered that I'm very much like that, that I was thinking to leave to look for something better, now at this point in my life I need job security and this is not a secure path right now.

Mr. C – Calling orientation – She answered - Somewhat

She argued that she does not want to retire. She does not socialize with her workmates like Mr. C does. She would recommend people to follow this line of work because it can be lots of fun. She pointed out that in this job people are not making a lot of money but they usually have some job security. She feels proud of her work in the non-profit organization. It is an intellectual environment and she likes to be around. It is part of the identity that she has been building along her life. She stated:

I do identify with, I do relate to a big part of my identity is working at (non-profit organization). Nine times out of 10 when I introduce myself that's what I say, "I work at (name of non-profit organization), I do this," and now my son, everyone knows my son in the community so when I say my name they say, "Oh you're so and so's mom," yeah okay, but that part really connected with me, but some of the other no.

The reorganization has left her in a difficult situation, and she has a lot of issues concerning that. Maybe her position will be taken by another person. She did not know until the time of this interview what her department would be like. She said:

I see how big of an impact the reputation (name of university) has and I'm very proud to say I'm a part of it. I've been here for 35 years and I've seen the progression, but I feel as though my complaining compared to theirs is more, but I want to be here to fix it. I want to be part of fixing it.

I inquired her if the current situation affected her performance and she agreed with it because the culture in the office there is the opposite of what she was used to thinking. She realized that the organization goals are its revenue, investment and profit. She and her team are scared.

Participant 2 Structural Description

She seemed proud of her work and she was aligned with calling orientation. However, she answered some questions agreeing with job orientation and career orientation. She has been facing many issues at work and she does not know if she will stay in that job. There was a reorganization. The meaning of work for her is making the difference, having an impact on people's lives, supporting people in their objectives. Also, she values good relationships at work, coping with disagreements, and leading confrontations in a positive way. She said that in this context (reorganization) her performance has been affected, although she tries to keep her work and solve many problems. She reported that many people in her department have not been feeling well because there are too many uncertainties. In the performance questionnaire, she answered all right for most of the questions such as performing without mistakes, getting things done on time, getting along with others at work, and avoiding arguing with others. She has a self-perception of her performance as being exceptionally good at "handling disagreements by compromising and meeting other people".

4.3.3 Participant 3

Participant 3 (P03) is male and he is between 51 and 60 years of age. He was born in Ireland. He came to the United States to get a college degree and he has been working in this country since then. He has also attended a Ph.D. program. Currently, he is the Director of a non-profit organization, a consultant, and an entrepreneur. He has had experience in leadership for between 16 and 20 years. He has worked in different companies in the digital technology field.

Participant 3 Textural Description

Career – At the beginning

P03 did not remember anything about what he thought in terms of a profession when he was a child. He reported that he did not have any ambitious role models in his family. He did not have any dreams such as to become a professional when he was younger because he believed he did not have examples, as his relatives did not go to high school. A teacher influenced him to come to the US to study because here he would have opportunities. He knew that he wanted to be different from his family. He liked science and he read a lot.

This is what he said about what he is pursuing in his career:

...several. One of the features of my career is the breath. The number of different things, different industries I've worked in different roles.

Currently, he is an academic, but also a consultant, and an entrepreneur.

Career – work experience

He began to work in a company developing communication softwares for personal computer networks. However, within 6 months he went to another company that developed the internet. At that time he knew what he wanted his career to be like. Although he had a Math degree, he wanted to work with technology and computer science. He also worked on a project to do military simulation and training for two years. He considered it to be revolutionary. After this experience, he decided to take his Ph.D. which took seven years. Then, he worked in a corporate research company. It was a major player in the computer space. However, this company began to

have some troubles and then he started working in a big company. He stayed there for 12 years, seven of them as a researcher and five of them running the research lab. There, he began to work in management. He realized that he performed better than he did as a researcher. After that, he worked in a big entertainment company for more five years. This company was setting up a new research organization.

During that time, he was an adjunct lecturer teaching computer graphics and he also taught adults. Then, he realized that one area of locus of innovation that he had not experimented with directly was startup entrepreneurialism. He left the entertainment company and began a startup that did not work out well, but he had a great deal of fun working on it.

Nowadays, he is working in a non-profit organization and he runs this center that takes money from sponsors. With the sponsor, he decides who will take the projects, trying to pick the ones that have the best chance of spinning out startups. Now he is working on his second startup, but he realized that instead of taking investment money, he could fund the startup through an academic job and consulting.

When questioned about a career change, he commented that the most important thing for him was his work in industries, where he changed a lot. Although they all used computer technology there were some similarities, but some differences as well. Also, he often changed roles there. He said:

And then I've changed roles. I've written software, I've been a sales person, I've been a manager. I've been a teacher, I've been an entrepreneur, all of that. So, yeah change is my career is about change.

Being curious about why he changed, this is what he said when asked:

The opportunity was growth. When I noticed at various places that I was stagnating, or that I wasn't going to be able to do more of what I wanted to do. And I was kind of lucky early on. It's very hard I think for most people to embrace change because it's frightening and things can go wrong.

He loved to work in the entertainment company but there he felt that he needed to learn more. He was running into difficulties. He realized that he did not have the skillset for that job and he believed that he needed to learn something else. He thought that he needed to keep moving. For him, he was getting older and the opportunities were becoming less frequent. He realized that he was competing with younger people. He believed that one way to counteract that was to continue to grow, and not stagnate:

But then, after I got to a mid-point in my career, after that I realized the benefits of change. And so, there it wasn't so much fear, just a certain sadness of I loved working at (profit company). (profit company) was great, but I had reached a plateau there.

Career - Leadership

During the questions related to leadership P03 began to explain that this topic was “one of the things that were not planned”. He began working as a leader when a director left a company all of a sudden and then he make an assessment of the situation. He said:

We've put too much time into this. There's more potential here. We have to do something." And I kind of gave a speech. And then at the end of the speech, I realized everybody was looking at me. And in hindsight I realized I had volunteered to take on the job.

All through his career, he has seen a lot of good leaders, and a lot of bad ones. A lot of good decisions, and a lot of bad ones. He virtually made a list of things he had observed and decided “that's what I will do differently“. He had to persuade some people to do some things differently, he had to hire some people. So, people began to believe him and he said:

I had to communicate upwards on what the plan was. And I had to get ab particularly in the research world, everybody you're managing is a really high-powered individual.

He sees leadership primarily as a technical lead. Mainly, that leadership in technological innovation is inherently risky. He shared:

So, 80 to 90% of what you do, won't work out. If you are trying to invent new things, you've got to be a risk-taker. And the leader's role is to foster that culture. And to protect the people who are taking the risks and to help them.

He used a metaphor for leadership in the research area and added:

... like a gardener. So, I pour water on the good ideas. That means giving resources and encouragement. And then on the ideas that I think are bad, I pour dilute weed killer. So, not enough to kill the plant but enough to make them have to push back to do that.” Once he poured a little bit of weed killer on. And I was wrong, but I take credit for not having killed the project.

He explained that to begin a startup in a non-profit organization he feels safer, because there is money, equipment, people, and a structure to support the entrepreneur.

If you are alone, you need to answer all crisis. That's been different but it's also been energizing, and innovating” ... about crisis “ ...you just got to be ready for it. And you got to deal with it. And you have to be the leader, people have to look up to you and not see panic.

He saw himself as a leader to nurture careers and ideas. In first management job his boss told him that a leader should do “well at this job, that you have to be content to shine through others.” He explained this citation:

I have no problem taking great satisfaction from seeing somebody else do well if I've helped them.

He shared an example of a person that he had hired in a company, who he watched talking at a TED Talk and this person became something special in his field:

it's a little bit like it's part of the professor's job. It's part of the athletic coach's job. The coach doesn't run the race, or play or score the goal. But it helps the players who actually do.

Career – The meaning of work

I asked him what drives him in his career. He answered that it is to have entrepreneurial success. He wants to set up a successful startup, which is maybe only one out of twenty. That's hard to do. He would like to achieve that. Not so much he means that money would be a product of that. Money is not the main motivation. He mentioned:

So, I would really like to have an entrepreneurial success. It's one thing to say you've done multiple startups. But a startup with a good exit, which is maybe only one out of twenty. That's hard to do. So, I haven't had that yet. I would like to achieve that. Not so much I mean money would be a by product of that. But money

doesn't motivate me. As long as I've got enough to feed myself, and pay for electricity, I'm good. But the success of having a successful startup would be great. I also do get pleasure and satisfaction out of running a good consulting practice.

The work is the reason of his life and he is focused on a staged startup to raise money and make a profit. He said:

Then after that, I don't know. Maybe more of the same, I can't imagine ever retiring. I just don't think that's, work to me is sort of the reason to live.”

He shared that for his future he wants to create other startups, but not to go into a venture investment, unless it is investing his own money. He may do it by working to a big company or going back into corporate Research and Development with what he has learned from the entrepreneurial world. He would also like to write. Actually, he has begun writing a novel.

I asked him about the different meanings of work in his career. He acknowledged that he is trying to change the world by inventing something new. “That's really the common thread of technological innovation“. He described that his role is as a contributor, writing codes, and inventing things himself. And then to will go on to being a manager or coach, “shining through others“.

Career – Performance

In the questions about his performance he mentioned that he always tries to do his work better. He usually celebrates the victories and focus on his weaknesses to improve them. He described that he thinks of very specific tasks that he has not done and that he wants to do. For example, he desired that a startup becomes profitable or wants to bring more sponsors in or have client for his consulting again. “ I always think I can do better” he said.

Some factors that can affect his performance he described as some stress related to people, relationships, and others. Concerning challenges, it is demanding to keep high performance. He admitted:

There's some kinds of stress that I thrive under. And there's some kinds of stress that clearly I have a difficulty. So, I think that the stress of challenge, you know will the thing work? Can we sell it? Those kinds of things I thrive on. The kind of thing where that I have difficulty with is personalities.” When people elevating the problem to a personal level , personal stress, that detracts from his performance. “ When it gets personal and subjective, I tend to shy away from those situations because I find those personally stressful.”

He recognized that he has the best performance when he brings out the best in others, and then “a lot of other positive things will come from it.”

As for the assessment from his team he described his perception as being creative, determined, pleasant to work with, respectful of them and helpful to them. He thinks that they probably also think that he and his co-founders are a little “delusional“ at them. He explained:

Yes, some of them are repeaters. So, they obviously liked what they saw. Or they've stayed with us for quite some time. I think they would look at me and (partner) and say that we're creative, determined, pleasant to work with, respectful of them and helpful to them. I think they probably also think that we're a little delusional at them. But everybody startup is delusional until it's successful. And then everybody says, "Oh, I knew all along." Probably a little they might think of us as a little disorganized. But yeah, I think most they I have not over the course of my career had too many people quit on me. And certainly not quit unfriendly, kind of exceptional other opportunities. In which case I've usually helped them.

Career - Work Orientation

I asked P03 about each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). “ Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?“

Mr. A – Job Orientation – He answered - Not at all like me.

P03’s parents and relatives lived like Mr.A. He felt sorry that they had to live their lives that way. He acknowledged that it was not the way that he was making his choices.

Mr. B – Career Orientation – He answered - Not at all like me.

He considered just one thing that he has in common with Mr. B. Mr. B expects he will be in a different job in five years. It is reasonable for him but not because he is not satisfied with his job, but just because he wants a better one. Only because he wants another job in which he will be really happy in. He wants to try new things to challenge himself, to learn new things, and be himself.

Mr. C – Calling Orientation – He answered - Very much

He answered very much to calling orientation except for encouraging friends and children to join the workforce. He would encourage somebody to figure out whether they are Mr. A, Mr. B or Mr C. and do appropriately. “There is a lot of people who would not enjoy my life”. He said:

But I wouldn't necessarily recommend for other people depending on their personality. Or I mean, there's a certain... I sort of look laid back and I'm certainly pleasant to deal with. But there's also a certain ruthless ambition that's also there. I want to succeed, not at the expense of others. I won't walk over bodies to get somewhere. And it doesn't have to be immediate. But yeah, I do want to leave my mark and not everybody is like that. Not everybody and I don't find that stressful. I find that enjoyable.

He never lived as Mr. A or B's views on work. He mentioned that he felt like Mr. C during his whole career and choices. He described:

I mean going to a foreign country at the age of 18 with no experience, no money, no nothing. Looking back on it, I sometimes wonder about myself. That even seems very risky to me in hindsight, but that's Mister C. I was just driven by work and enjoyed work. So, yeah I'd been Mister C for as long as I'd really been aware.

He changed his job usually because he had reached a plateau. He liked to have new directions, new ideas, new challenges, and learning. He said:

I had stopped growing within that particular job. And that's yeah. So, that's basically the common theme and that's totally consistent with Mister C there. Enjoy what I'm doing, but want to constantly be challenged. And if I get to a point where I'm comfortable, then that means I'm not growing.

Participant 3 Structural Description

P03's answers were brief and he seemed completely sure about his work orientation. He was aligned with calling orientation and did not identify with job or career orientation. Sometimes, as he mentioned, he felt identified with one feature from each work orientation. The meanings of work for him had to do with learning and challenging. His choices were based on what kind of things he needs to learn. Currently, his main goal is to create something new for the society. His performance is affected by relationships and the nature of challenges, as he described that there are a lot of uncertainties each time he faces new challenges. He assessed himself as doing very well and exceptionally well in the performance questionnaire.

4.3.4 Participant 4

This participant (P04) is male, between 51 and 60 years old, and he has a masters degree. He was born in the United States. Currently, he is a Chief Financial Officer and an Executive Director of Administration of a non-profit organization. He has had leadership experience for between 21 and 25 years. He has worked in the industry and government sector, and in other nonprofit organizations.

Participant 4 Textural Description

Career – At the beginning

When he was a child he wanted to be a fireman. Also, at that time a lot of exploration of the moon was taking place, then he thought about being an astronaut. What he later really considered was to be a veterinarian. He worked for a veterinarian before going to college. This veterinarian was a kind of a mentor to him and offered to help him get into veterinary school. He ended up not heading for that path. Sometimes, he wondered what life would have been like if he had done that because he is still very passionate about animals and taking care of animals.

He started taking classes at university and got really interested in computer programming and ended up graduating in computer programming. He loved it. He remembered:

Everything clicked about it. I loved the technology side, learning about business, learning about management and leadership, and it just felt like a good place.

The first person who had an impact on his career was his father who advised him on how to do things and how to treat people. Later, he worked in the industry and had more than one mentor. One of them he still keeps in touch with and they talk about career until now. When he was working in a non-profit organization, he had a mentor too. He admitted:

I've been blessed there. I called them like mentors. I've had several good ones. I would say the first one was my dad. Before when I was in college, and even before I went to college because he was an executive at General Motors. More than one at industry... He's still alive ... he was an information technology professional but he was a real leader of the people so not a real technical person but a real people leader. ... a Indian man that I worked with that was my manager, he was the vice president..., was a great mentor and still is. He's one that I'll call up sometimes or email. We stay in touch or I'll ask him questions about my career, or not really my career, just issues I'm facing. He'll help me. He's continued to be a good resource.

Career - Work experience

He did an internship in a company while he was still at college. After that they offered him a job. He had other opportunities in other companies, but he chose this one because he really liked the company. He liked the way they operated, their values, and the way he could apply information technology to more of a kind of a business area and not to a heavy technology area.

He really liked how they mentored and trained people to become leaders and managers and it was exciting to him. He worked for them for six years, progressing up to different levels.

After those six years, he was also deeply engaged in the German culture and even learned to speak German. He decided that when the wall came down he would like to go over and help his industry set up its German subsidiary. However, they offered him to open a subsidiary in another country in Europe.

I flew over, fell in love with (the country), and so went with a very small team. Went to live there. I was an American doing all the IT work. We brought in some people from India, some people from Italy, and then we hired I forget 60 or 80 young native people and started the subsidiary. That was still when I look back on my career so far, that was one of the most exciting times of my career to be working with such talented people,and then to be working with such a fine management team and people that could mentor me to become a better manager, a better leader, it was a beginning good experience.

Then three of them from this industry left after ten years and started their own internet marketing software company. He liked the company where he was working but he wanted to take it to the next level and try it on his own. His first attempt failed. “ It was a horrible failure“.

The first company failed, then two of them started a new company and it was succeeding and then he decided to come back to the United States because his father passed away. He moved back basically to help his mom with her affairs. He had to take care of her a year later and he did that for about seven years.

Then he was really engaged in working in the community in different non-profit organizations on the side. People suggested that he should consider running for mayor. He explained:

I had never thought about being mayor in my life, but I sat down and started talking with some people and they thought I could do a good job so I got in the race, ran for mayor, and won. Nobody expected I would win. I was kind of the outsider, and won, became mayor, and likewise for the good or bad, I think it was for good, but it's so different. “ Tried to really apply the same kind of business and leadership skills that I had been taught at (industry) and I had used in my own startup to running government. It's different. You can't do it exactly and maybe I made some mistakes trying to, but so did that.

After being the mayor, the man that he worked in Europe invited him to be the CEO of a US organization that they were launching. He said:

I started with them ... and a year into that venture is when the real bad recession hit in 2009. They had to close down everything in the United States for the most part. I learned a lot, but that was just a hard experience to see people lose their jobs and customer who I had built relationships that wouldn't be able to get the products and the people that we were working towards. That was kind of a sad experience, although I learned a lot.

Then, he made a consulting project for a non-profit organization and was invited to work and help them improve the work with the industry. He worked there for 10 years.

Which I did, but then when I was there for a while, it more and more grew back to entrepreneurship. I worked within the (non-profit organization), to help start-up several entrepreneurial efforts that are still going to this day.

He mentioned that he has always been engaged in and passionate about his non-profit organization. They approached him with the proposal to coming here as the chief financial officer. They basically ran the finances and all the kinds of core business processes from this office for those facilities. At that time, he assessed that he had a lot of varying experiences in his career. Then, he changed jobs. First, because he was very passionate about the purpose of his organization. Second, he loved working in a non-profit organization (the job before his current job) and the work that he developed in an entrepreneurship area. However, for various reasons, including political ones, and mostly because it was not going to work out well, he decided to change jobs.

In fact, there was a time early in my life where I even thought about becoming a priest. The faith has always been kind of a strong part of my life. Well the values are consistent with my values, which makes sense because of my strong faith, but it also just the way it's run and their care for people, their concern for the dignity of all people reminds me a lot of (the industry) when I started there back in 1986.

He reported that a lot of businesses today are for the money and the profits and not enough thought has been given to people.

both the people being ... Well there's usually got to be some focus on the customers or they wouldn't sell their product, but the employees are not as valued as what I recall back in the 80s. That's what really attracted me to the organization, not so much the role but the organization.

About what he likes and dislikes in his job he mentioned that he does not like to drive from a small city to work every day. He spends two hours per day because he lives in a city taking care of his mom. Also, this organization is a non-profit one and very understaffed. He said:

What I don't like is that like here's my big here's a list of my major projects and here's a list of my small projects. That list never gets done. I mean there's always new projects coming on, and some of them are higher priority, so they pop in in front of them. I think what I don't like is that I'm the kind of person that wants to get everything done and I just can't because we're understaffed. Not enough money and not enough staff to deliver everything. Most of the things I really enjoy about the job are the people.

He mentioned that he had several career changes in his life. First, when he was getting his degree in technology, second when he moved to Europe, an international experience, for which he did need to change many thoughts and behaviors. He loved diversity and international cultures and currently he has influenced his family because they put up and help international students. He

considered that his career was varied because he worked to own a startup, a governmental position, and non-profit organizations. He has been learning and helping people. He pointed:

I think it just means a variety of experiences. Well and I really think each one has allowed me, and maybe each one has made me, allowed me to do it more, impact the lives of other people I think. Not only of those working around me, but what you might say as our customers and things like that. Each one has allowed me to interface with and learn more from but also help more people I think. Might be kind of a consistent.”

Career - Leadership

He began his career as a leader in the industry when they were looking for somebody with leadership potential. He became a leader when he was a full-time employee after he graduated. He described:

...they were giving me projects and experiences to test my leadership skills and then to allow mentors to help me develop further in those skills. I suppose they suspect they wanted to see their hunches were right and I could be a good leader.

First, he was in a group that they called responsibilities management where he was working on technical projects and interfacing with top executives. When he participated in group management he led a small team of people.

He explained that what he thought about leadership when he began he did not know that he had ever consciously thought a lot about. He shared:

I mean I could have probably told you who different leaders were. I probably didn't think it was as difficult as I realized it is to lead and kind of help, well I'll say set the overall direction.

He recognized that a leader does not work alone but encourages a group of people to go in the same direction. He acknowledged that he did not realize that about leadership then but he does now. He reported:

That's probably something now I realize it and saw it shortly after how difficult that really is and how much time you need to spend with people to make that happen and develop good relationships with people.

He mentioned that through mentoring he got to be a good leader and that to be a leader is hard work:

Again, my training and my background, I was more of a technologist. You would think it might not come naturally, but I think just with good mentoring it did. I probably viewed leadership of just people get promoted for doing a good job and they become leaders and I didn't realize really how much work goes into identifying people who might become leaders and then mentoring them and how hard it is to really do it.

Currently, he thinks that leadership is crucial. For him it is necessary to find leaders who share the same values of the organization, he said:

...the organization's values are set by its leaders too so you get a group of leaders together that have some common values, that's extremely important.

Also, he recognized that he learned very early in his career about the role of a leader. Leaders need to lead the diversity within the organization, especially among the leadership team. He explained:

To me, we always had better projects, better outcomes when we had men and we had women and we had different races and we had different nationalities. Again, everybody brings their own strengths and viewpoints to the table. But I see it now too because now I work for a global organization that has faced a lot of challenges.

As a leader he answered that he is “blur and it is not good“. He considered himself as a manager because he manages the financial and executive departments, and as a leader because he discusses values and how to deal with people. He described:

I think as a leader most folks would say that I'm very fair, I'm very consistent, I'm very empathetic, but also that I set high standards for myself and that because of that ... I do for my people too or our people. It's not something I have to impose on them. I think they see it in how I operate and they want to be part of that team to help deliver that same kind of work methodology.

He reported that is not possible to be an authoritarian leader especially in the non-profit world. He also experienced that when he worked for the government. Currently, there are nine people working with him. He said:

You have to really be empathetic. You have to be participating and ask folks what ... These two people that you saw when you came in, they know a lot more about the

day to day operations and how to get things done than I do and they know that. They know that I trust them completely to do it. They know that I have given them or empowered them to make virtually every decision. They don't have to come to me for very many decisions. I think all of that leads to a better team and allows me to get things done here. Then also as a leader, I have other leaders in this organization that I need to work with.

He answered that he thinks that his team assessed him as a leader that helps them, mentoring and valuing their strengths. He reported:

I hope that would be one of the things that they would say about me, that I have mentored them, that I've helped find their strengths. I really believe that you build up people's strengths and they become better employees. It's not very often that you can fix somebody's weaknesses, so you have to find the strengths that somebody has and use those.

P04 had some assumptions about strengths and weaknesses. He worked with his team to understand their weaknesses, he calls meetings to talk with them, provides feedback and give them opportunities to develop different skills. He described:

I'll use the word exploit. I don't really like that word but make sure they get opportunities where they can use their strengths and then where they are weak you've got to have other people on your team that have some strengths in those areas that the other person's weak. It's not very often that, I just don't believe that you can improve weakness.

I think they would say that, that I create opportunities for them to use their strengths to lead. I'm not the only person that can represent this organization. The two right out there can represent this organization well so I give them opportunities to go to conferences and go to meetings..., so give them an opportunity to build some leadership skills or have some our vendors report to them or some of the other staff report to them."

Career - The meaning of work

I asked him what drives him in his current career, and he pointed out that it is the "shared values" because his business is unique and it is about changing lives. He shared:

That drives me to think that some of what I am doing in stewarding the financing of the (non-profit organization) ... I think that's very rewarding and that comes down to values. ... we've got very limited resources so we have to decide right away where the buckets, where the money should go and shouldn't go and most importance. I think it really is really about shared values, and about the importance

of the mission and the organization and really believing in that mission. That drives me on the snowy nasty days driving in for an hour. That's why I do it because I believe in the mission.

He acknowledged that the meaning of work for him is a fulfilling mission. He said:

To me, it's something that completes you, that makes you feel valued. I certainly feel valued and think that I'm working on something of importance. It's kind of an inside ... I know we're not meant to necessarily feel good or feel happy, but it makes me feel good to know that I'm helping in this mission. That to me is the value that I'm contributing in some way to the mission of this organization.

Also, he mentioned that the work allows him to give a good life to his family. Not only to provide resources to his family but also to other people like students and organizations which need support, and so he can help. He reported:

Now that doesn't discount some of the other stuff I said on your survey, the value of work also to me is it allows me to take care of my family and to provide for my family and to help them learn to become people and live a decent standard of living. I don't want it to be extravagant ... I still like to mentor people a lot outside of work and help students and so the job gives me some flexibility to do that, the monetary resources to help out other students that need help or nonprofits that need help which is to me just all part of the mission.

He expressed that he does not want to make changes to his career but he will consider giving it a thought depending on its purpose and if it is in line with his objectives. Sometimes he wonders what would have happened in terms of change if he had followed a career in veterinary. He stated:

I wonder if I've sometimes wondered what would have life been like if I'd have taken the veterinarian route? That's been the only time I've ever, the only thing I've ever thought about. What if I'd have done a different career?

I asked him what happened when he changed his major to technology instead of veterinary, an area that in which he had worked for many years. He explained that he changed his mind. Although he liked to work with animals he thought that he was immature. He was scared to go to college and then he decided to stay at home and do some courses. Then, he stumbled on information technology and realized that he had a talent for this area. At that time, in the early 80s, money and a successful future career were associated with this field. He acknowledged:

I was young and immature going off to college and that's when I decided to stay home and wait a few years and kind of flounder not knowing what I wanted to do and just took various courses and then I kind of stumbled on the information technology that I really liked and I was good at it. This would be the one piece of advice I would give young people. I was good at it, and also this is what, the early 80s? Yeah, early 80s. The money sign, the dollar signs were all over information technology. If you want to make money, information ... That's partially what drove me. That's a mistake.

He shared that he did not regret his career. He liked and still likes his choices. He just advises young people not to follow their careers on money-basis.

...my counsel to young people would be never ever ever let money change your mind about what you might want to major in or what passion you might want to pursue. But I think about had I pursued veterinarian medicine, I'd probably be, which isn't bad, I'd probably be a veterinarian in my hometown. I probably would have never left. I wouldn't have had international experiences. I probably would not have met my wife. It's just those things with change everything about your life, so I'm sure there's a reason why it's all happened the way it did.

I was curious about how he views his future and he remembered that his boss once asked him how long he thought he would stay in his current job and he answered that he thought he would end his career in that position. Maybe now, he shared that he thinks about going to another organization, bigger in terms of size, with more departments and responsibilities.

I can see finishing my career in this position. I think if I changed, it would be the same kind of job, maybe a bigger organization..., another organization similar to that nonprofit organization. That would be an option but that would just be because maybe then I could have even more impact than I'm having now.

He shared that he likes his current job and he has been learning a lot because every day there is something new and that he likes to work with.

I'm fortunate.... I work for is always just as I am he's looking at my strengths and where I can help him (the boss) more because he's overworked so where can I help him more? Where can he give me more things that I can do and take on for him? Grow a lot and I've still got a lot to learn. I mean I'm only a year in this job, and every day something comes across my desk. I'm thinking well that's something I haven't seen yet. I need to work with it.

Career - Performance

I asked him about his performance and he mentioned that his organization did a 360 degree assessment and his performance score was nine. He recognized that he is stricter with himself than others are with him and confessed that currently, he needs to give more attention to his team. Usually, he is too much focused on tasks and many other things that he wants to accomplish. He described:

I'm always pretty hard on myself. I think right now the deficiency would be that maybe I allow the fact that we are understaffed to cause me to sometimes focus more on the to-do items, and not enough on the people and leading the people. I've got to watch that, kind of balance that out and make sure I'm working with and leading the people, and not so focused on these lists...

He reported some factors that interfere with his performance as being not getting enough sleep, at least seven hours, and feeling tired which affects his attitude as well. Also, if he does not eat right and exercise there is an interference. He mentioned that if he is not very joyful at work and he notices it, he usually thinks about what is happening, what he is not doing very well. He believes that there's a need to balance activities among family, friends, and work, to have a harmonious relationships with everything . He said:

I don't get enough sleep, I think people underestimate how important sleep is. I feel it because I'm getting tired during the day and it can affect my attitude. I notice I'm not as positive and kind of joyful in the work. If I'm noticing, I'm sure the people around me are noticing that I'm not as joyful.I'm going to say if I don't exercise enough. I think what I'm kind of getting down to is not leading a balanced life. Balance is an odd term, because then everybody thinks you've got this pie and it's divided into equal pieces, but the size of those pieces can change on a given day. I'm just saying if all you do is work in your job I think it makes you a bad leader. You've got to have good relationships, both at work but even more important at home and with friends, and you've got to have enough sleep, you've got to eat right.

He mentioned that he performs the best in two situations. First, if there are important decisions to be made about money, deadlines, major projects or initiatives which are critically important for the future of an organization. Another situation is when he is managing those projects and sorting the people to develop it. Also, when he adjusts resources, funding, and time to achieve the desired results. He said:

One would be kind of deciding upon and leading some major projects or initiatives that are just critically important, whether it's deadline important, whether it's money important. The other one would just be the whole kind of people leadership and management side of it. I can't do it without a lot of people. I think I'll still say it's the major initiatives and like this morning I was taking those lists and prioritizing them and moving them around and thinking about what people I needed for each one and I think that's kind of ... Now the next step is picking a few and mobilizing the resources around and the money and the people and the time to make those happen. I think I'm pretty good at kind of picking those, mobilizing the resources, and pulling it together to get it done.

I asked him what his team and boss would talk about his performance. He said that they are glad that he is working with them. He is exceeding their expectations because he is working in other areas. He assessed that sometimes he needs to listen to all the viewpoints and then make decisions. He said:

I think ...they're glad that I came in and that I'm in most areas exceeding what their expectations were of me when I came in. I could do a better job of, and I think one would be kind of listening, sitting and listening to all the viewpoints of something and taking all of those viewpoints in very deeply before I make decisions. "They probably would say sometimes I'm a little bit quick at making decisions and they'd like me to ... I think the results show that in the end my decisions are pretty good, but maybe I don't bring some of the other department heads along with me. ...I'm not taking the time sometimes to bring those other folks along. That can get a little bit into some communication, taking the time to listen to those folks and understand and also have them listen to me and why I think the decision needs to go a certain way.

Career - Work Orientation

I asked P04 for each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). " Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?"

Mr. A - Job Orientation – He answered - Somewhat

He described that he thinks that money is important to support his family. He recognized that money does not bring fulfillment, but he considered it to be a requisite. He said:

I mean yes there's a part of me that says I want to make enough money to support my family like I said earlier so that financial security but I'm not thinking about doing anything else. To me, that's not ... That doesn't bring me fulfillment in my job. That's almost like a necessity in terms of a hierarchy. It's at the bottom. It's not at the top of the hierarchy.

Mr. B – Career Orientation - Not at all like me.

He reported that “to be in five years in another place“, he had never thought this way because for him five years is a short time. He assessed his job as a mission to help accomplish the organization's' goals. He does not see his career as a ladder to climb up. He described:

It says I expect to only be here five years, that's just nothing I've ever done in any of my jobs. I've never gone in with a short term thinking. ...but in my mind I'm always coming in for the mission and to help accomplish goals. I've never viewed my work that way, that it's a ladder and I've got to climb up the ladder.

Mr. C – Calling Orientation – He answered - Very much

He acknowledged that his work is very important in his life. He feels that he has a mission to share values, and he mentioned that he has a good relationship with the organization. Also, he is proud of all the jobs that he has had during his career.

I'm pleased with this because of the mission. Like I said, I believe in the mission. I share the values of the organization. I think likewise the organization shares mine, so it's a good relationship for both of us. It's a vital part of who I am, yes. I've seen that in all of my position and I was proud ...

On analysing work and private life he said:

Take my work home with me, now I'll be honest there, I don't do that as much. I try to get it done. I take it home in my mind. It's in my mind but I'm not the type anymore that goes home and opens up my computer or that starts opens my briefcase. The other thing I talked about balance in life, my kids need me when I'm home. They don't need my briefcase. On vacation, I would also say rarely. I mean to me that's part of that balance. When I go on vacation, I try to turn work off because that allows me to come back to work fully charged up to do it.

About friends from work, he shared:

Yes, most of my friends have always been from where I'm working and I still have some of those older jobs good friends that came from those jobs. I can't think of too many that haven't come from work lately.

He added that he tries to make the world a better place like Mr. C. He does not want to retire and he cannot imagine doing that.

I think because of the mission and my help against that mission we're making the world a better place. Yeah encouraging to ... Well and the fact, encourage people. I recruited another guy, a very professional and good person that came here to work about two months after me. That was it. I was selling him on the organization and the mission. Would I be upset if I had to stop working? Yes. Yeah I can't imagine ... I mean I can imagine retirement if it's like a vacation, but if it just means sitting home doing nothing, no I can't imagine it. I would be involved some place. Yeah that's closer. There's bits and pieces of these, of other ones that I sometimes ... That this is the overall vision that I like the mission of the work, I like what I can put towards it. It's a major part of my life but I've got other parts too. That's why I try not to let work go into those other parts too much.

He reported that he did not feel like Mr. A or Mr. B during his career. He mentioned that he worked for the money when he was in high school with a veterinary and he liked that and he also worked at McDonald's. He said:

I worked with the veterinarian some in high school and then I also worked at a McDonald's. That was one of my early jobs. I did some construction work for a while, so putting roofs on houses. Those jobs I would have said I was doing it just to earn money.

Just to make money and to get a little bit of work experience. I was a teenager and I wanted to make money to buy a motorcycle or to be able to go to a movie when I wanted to go to a movie. ... I just wanted money so I could have some fun.

He described that during his career he felt the most of time as Mr. C. He said:

I think pretty much it's always been like mister C ever since. I can't remember any of my jobs where I just said oh I'm just doing this for the money. No. No. To me, it has to be rewarding. It's at least eight hours a day, if not more, in the job and you want that to be a joyful time, a rewarding time internally as well as how you're helping other people. I can't imagine it any other way.

I asked a question about the relationship between performance and Mr. A's, B's, and C's profile. He experienced that he worked for a reason and has always tried to do a good job. He admitted:

I also worked in a nursing home. That's probably when I was in high school. That's probably when I started to see work that was fulfilling versus not. ... I've always felt like whatever I do, and I talked this with my son and daughter all the time, whatever I take on regardless of the reason, I want to do a good job at it.

He reported that besides the money and a good reason to take a job there is a career which is been built and there is a reputation to keep for a high level. He added:

If the reason I took it on which was to make money, I'm going to do a good job. Yeah because that to me is kind of like my reputation. I want people to know James does a good job when you bring him on. Whatever his motivation is for being on your team or whatever, you can count on him to do good work. Yeah so that's always been a driver for me.

I asked him what features seen on Mr. C may affect his performance. He reported that when he likes the work, he enjoys it, and it leads to accomplishing the mission, then it is possible to have a good performance. He shared:

I think again those other two didn't affect it in a negative way, but I think when you're doing something you enjoy, it brings you joy, and that leads towards a mission you are passionate about, to me, it's natural. You're going to like doing it and your performance is going to be better than the other two scenarios.

As for work and its boundaries, he perceived that a job should affect people positively. However, bringing work home affects private life and the family; for him it is a mistake. He tries to work and also to perform other roles in other contexts and keep a good performance. He said:

It's going to be good. It's always affected it to the positive. It's never been a negative at all. I think to pick a job where it's one of the most important things of your life, it's going to be positive. There's some people that might answer that and they do take it home with them and they allow it to consume all the other hours of the day. They might end up coming back and saying well it causes me to ... I love it so much, it causes me to ignore my family. Then it's a mistake. Then I don't ... But for me it's not the case because I don't allow it to creep into those other areas of my life too much. That's just always allowed me to keep the performance and motivation up.

I asked him what reasons made him change jobs, if it was because he had another opportunity or because he was not feeling well. When he changed it he described that he understood that he did it first because he wanted to try something else and second because he needed to do it, the choice was to have another opportunity. He exemplified:

Yeah it's usually I wanted to try something else. Like when I left (industry), an outstanding company, I wanted to try my own startup. There was one time that I mentioned I was (at the government) of my hometown. There was one time there I ran for reelection to another term, and I was defeated in the election. I lost the election. There it was not a matter of choice that I was changing jobs. It was suddenly I lost the election. In a couple months, I'm going to be out of work. I have to find some other work to do. That was a little bit scary at first because I was getting older, not real old, but older, and I know people, when you've got young people you're competing against.

When he experimented with his last job, he enjoyed it, but something changed over the years and he was not feeling well in terms of values, then he had an opportunity to change to the current job.

We had kind of nurtured it along through its infancy and then to have somebody kind of take it away from us, that left a bad feeling in my mouth. I didn't like that and I didn't think my skills were being recognized. That wasn't the only reason, but then when this opportunity came along I thought okay well here's a good opportunity again."

When he talked about changing his career, he mentioned that he does not want to change his career, he realized that he is doing very well. He just has some thoughts on how his choices could have been different. He does not have any regrets in his life. He said:

There are times when I think about because when I was leaving (the industry), they really did not want me to leave. They offered me some wonderful opportunities. They offered me to go to Brazil and be the IT manager for all of Brazil or the Russia was already opened up. They offered me to go to Moscow and be a manager in Moscow. They were just ... Or to go back to (United States) and a very high level position. There's days when ... I've always been well compensated and never lacked for money, but there's days when I think oh if I'd have stayed with (the industry), I'd be making whatever. I know what it would be, or I'd probably be retired now.

He added:

But then I think no then I wouldn't ... If I'd have stayed in (Europe) or gone to Moscow, I wouldn't have been home to take care of my mom. I wouldn't have met

my wife because we met walking dogs in the park in my hometown. I wouldn't have my beautiful my daughter. Now we're adopting a (age) boy. He's brought a lot of joy to my life and I think we're helping him. I think where would he be? He would be on the streets or someplace else. It's all happening for a reason. We're here to talk about leadership. A lot of priests, most of them, have great leadership responsibilities thrust upon them. They're not all good leaders by any means, but there was a sense of that too. That may even be one of the reasons I didn't pick it because I was trying to think am I doing this because this is something god wants me to do? Or am I doing this because I see this as a great leadership opportunity? I think I was coming down partially on the side of I think I'm leaning too much to seeing this as an opportunity to be a real respected leader of a community rather than because this is what god wanted. That would not be a valid reason to do it.

He agreed with Mr. A's sentence "is my primary reason for working is financial", and he answered that it is true. I asked him why and he said:

I don't know. No I mean my primary reason is fulfillment, is personal fulfillment. Now like I said, you've got to have the financial. That's kind of a must.

Participant 4 Structural Description

Participant 04 was aligned with calling orientation. He considered his work to be a mission, he wants to bring something good to society and the work has value to him. The reason is the fulfillment mission. Although he tended somewhat to job orientation, he explained that he works also to have money to support his family and to help other people. The meaning of work to him is focused on doing something that has importance, so it is a fulfillment mission. In the performance questionnaire, for most of the questions he answered very well and exceptionally well.

4.3.5 Participant 5

Participant 05 (P05) is male, between 51 and 60 years of age, and he has a postgraduate degree. He was born in the Netherlands. Currently, he is the Chief Executive Officer of a for-profit company. He has leadership experience between ten and twenty years. He worked in schools, insurance companies, and software companies. His company is based in Netherlands.

Participant 5 Textural Description

Career – at the beginning

When he was a teenager he wanted to be a biologist because he loves the nature. Actually, he lives in the middle of a forest. He did social studies for a year. Then, he perceived that his course was a really bad one . So, he decided drop out because he believed that he would not learn that much there to become a teacher.

I asked about a person that impacted on his career. He explained that he thinks that he has not had very planned career choices. He reported that “things“ came on his path and he took upon the opportunities that were presented to him. So, he was very often asked to play certain roles. He believes that he has been very lucky. He said:

My first job I was still studying. And I just was approached because they were having a group of people who were unemployed and needed to be taught for six months for certain certificates. And it was the approach will a Friday and the course started on Monday. And what I always did is in those opportunities I always made the most of it. And then I did it for five years and I managed that... And when I stopped, five years after, we had 15 groups all over the country doing the same training.

Currently, he does know which career he is pursuing. He explained that he does not have personal goals to achieve on any specific roles. Now, he is a CEO and he took it up five years ago. He shared that he wants to grow and prosper. He stated:

And we are becoming more and more successful. So we're now with 40 something people. And I really want to bring that to yeah. So that it becomes a grown up company that's actually... When I would decide that I would stop, would still live on and grow and prosper.

He reported that he has learned during his career and created softwares that people are using around the world and that has been very rewarding for him. He said:

There's also the second driver is that I put my ideas in it, that I learned over my career in the past 20 years or so. And it's also really rewarding for me. It's now being used all over the world. From Australia to Hawaii and everything in between. There're thousands of people's working with the software based on my ideas. So I think that making sure my company grows and prosperous also without me in a couple of years and spreading out of my ideas.

Career - Work Experience

His first job was as a teacher and he worked teaching unemployed people and when these students finished the course, they got a job. He worked with it for five years and then he began to write books for these courses.

But I really liked that. Because the big driver there was there were people there in my classroom who fell... So there were people who were unemployed for long time. Or had a disability where and they couldn't get to perform their old job. Or women returning to work after having children. And for Damage was, "If they focus for six months on the course, they would have jobs.

After five years he felt that he wanted more challenges. Then, he talked with a company that was looking for writers in the technical area. However, he was hired as an information designer. They were creating online health systems. Later he was a manager in this job. He reported:

So I was a designer of knowledge management system, performance courses and stuff like that. But I didn't have any experience whatsoever. So it was completely different than my previous job. Had nothing to do with anything I knew. And this was also... We just came up with the title information designer during my interview. And we're talking of you need to go how long. And I really, really liked it. I worked there for eight years. But we also were building an internal system to the documentation. So for example, if we made online health systems, we used to have internal system that in short of short designing with a group of people. And building with a group of people to support our work. And then after couple of years, our customers started asking, "So how do you create it? Because it looks great and then we want to maintain it ourselves. So can we get that?" Some people were starting to ask asking for that software. Some customers asked how they created the software because they wanted to manage alone and then he became the manager of their department. So it was a system recall that... First it was called Dock Later Seven Steps. Because with the approach you get to take seven steps. Work like a newbie to write good documentation, for someone right here. ... And I really learned a lot. And it was my first real management position. I started taking courses there. So I did change management courses and then influence of extra education to build up my management capabilities.

After eight years the company was separated. He explained:

And the point was that we were not allowed to build out that company the way that I wanted it. So I really thought it had great potential, but to the owners. Because it was a company that I used to work for. So it was still part of... They own that 100%. They were not allowing us to move forward in the right way. So I decided that this was... I got stuck there. So I wanted to do something new.

In his third job, he began to work in a company that was looking for software developers. At that time internet was being introduced to the world. Also, he was just thinking, "Should I change something in my career?" Because I was not... I was in a dead-end. So I didn't know where to go.“

Although he was not a software developer, he called them and then he began to work there which lasted for five years, developing a map like Google Maps. This system still exists. He worked with other software developers. Out of curiosity, he called them and then he got the job. He described:

I started with a map where you could look for zip codes. And I built Google Maps basically. And then that works. And it's still there. It's still live. And it looked like Google Maps five years before Google came as Google Maps.

After that, there was a company that was in trouble and he was asked by the shareholders to try to save it. They were making audio online help systems. He was the COO (Chief Operating Officer). As they fired the CEO on the spot, they asked him to finish up some products as well. He said:

It was really, really tough. So I ended up buying a couple of things out of that bankruptcy basically. I bought the solution and continued working on that by myself.

So, he had his own company. For a couple of years where he had been expanding that software solution. It was just a one-man company developing the project. Involving other people like programmers only if he needed to. He sold that software to a couple of companies. And then he was asked to work for another company. This company was using his software and he started working together. He stated:

And I ended up working there for a couple of years and basically with my own solution. But that company was sold after a couple of years. And they went into direction that I didn't really like.

During his career P05 experienced many challenges and his reflection was:

So what I did, I sold of my software to somebody else. One of the customers bought basically my software solution. And I decided I want to do a bit more useful things. Because I was really in online health and the idea that I always had was fun. But if

people make better software, my system would not be necessary. So it's not really making the world a better place or something like that. Then I thought so. One of the things that I always liked and it's also one of my roots is education. So I think that education is meaningful and important. And I was asked by a company called... At that time, Still was Learning. The night name is now changed. If I wanted to start working for them.

He began to manage the learning tools that they were reselling. After some time, the company wanted to change its culture because it adopted a really formal style.

And I started the journey together with the CEO and it was a lot of fun. Then I did that for I think five years or something. And it was the start... Let's say my international career. Until then I was really focused on the Netherlands. But because all the vendors that we were representing were either Australia or America. I started going to the conferences, started presenting on that. So I started building up a really international network. Okay, so you're selected for this job. You are the new CEO. If you say black, I think white and the other way around. So I don't think this will work. And so I will start looking for another job. I think that I don't want to be in your way. But I don't think it will be a success. So go ahead.

He started looking for another job and then he was hired to his current job. This company is a representative of all kinds of software tools. One of the solutions that he mentioned was an e-learning altering tool. It is more like a content management tool. A really complex tool where people create and maintain e-learning content. He stated:

And there we also have an interesting adventure. Because first we had a tool focused on professional e-learning designers. And my first mission was to make that an international success. Because I build up my international network that was why I was asked. And I had a background in software development.

Within this time there, he has created new things, given new directions to the company and he has been making the impact the he wanted to. He has been working there over the last eight years. He admitted:

And it's really took off. So we grow every year. At least 100%. So I now have a company of about 40 people I think. We only have 5% of our customers within the Netherlands. I think 95% it's outside the Netherlands. America is by far our biggest market. UK is second. The Netherlands I think is the third market. Closely followed by Australia. And yeah, so that's is like really cool international.

He has a team of around 20 people, working from the marketing to the sales. These people come from nine different countries. He said:

So it's really diverse, really cool team. I have a development team and support team in Ukraine. Somebody in India, somebody America that we're building out as we speak. And so yeah. That's now my mission to make that into a full grown stable company that can grow alone.

He reported that he likes a lot of things in his job. First, he has the ideas and then, he has to translate them into the software. He has to develop a team in Ukraine, but they are a bit Russian old-school minded there. Second, he enjoys the idea of starting to expand the company. He stated:

So, it's really difficult to build a team there that is really working the way that I want. And I knew... So I did a lot of sales in the past. I can manage, I can build software, I can manage building software. But I didn't know anything about marketing. So what I did, I got a guy in for just one day a week who was really experienced at that by marketing as far as ours. Also the language of my company. So we don't speak Dutch. That is why we have so many people for so many nationalities. Because it's just an ad is we want you to be native speaking English or near native. So you need to be fluent in English. And you don't have to speak Dutch.

He mentioned that building the team is a challenge, but it is also rewarding. He added:

Because I think the average age of my company is below 30. And I'm the only one above... There are now two or three people above 30. But there's 31 and 32. Most of them are 25, 26 so. And I'm 56 so, 57 almost.

He has been experiencing many challenges to form a good team, to expand the company, and find solutions for the products. He reported that not only does he need to be a leader but he also needs to be a manager. He acknowledged:

But my role is changing. So I write a lot. I speak a lot. And I turned from a manager much more into a leader. So I give the direction where we want to go and explain the vision and why we are doing things. Making sure that people are like behind that idea.

About his career change, he acknowledged that in the first 15 years of his career he was a specialist, a consultant. After that, he became a manager and he thinks that right now his approach is different. He is a leader instead of a manager. He described:

And I think that the third step in my career is I became a leader instead of a manager. So for me that's a different definition of the role that's quite significantly different. So I think that, yeah. I think that is the development that I see from specialist to a manager to a leader.

Career - Leadership

He probably began in a leadership position in 1995 and after 1998 he got managing jobs all the time.

About ideas related to leadership when he began and now, he mentioned that in his current job he needs to find solutions, explain, write them, and be clear with his team. He also recognized that there is a difference between being a manager and a leader. He said:

So automatically I'm much more in a role that I have to convince and steer people instead of managing them. And I think that is the key difference between my previous role where I was selling a solution, building that out. Managing a company, making sure that everything works. And right now it's much more than making sure that we are... Well followings. And I think that we have great potential. Makes sure that we fulfill the potential is a really different kind of job.

As a leader, he reported that he thinks about taking things forward. Also, he feels that he needs to believe in certain things, the solutions, for example. The way that a leader thinks is the way that will get him/her motivated. He said he behaves the same way he does as a friend, a leader, a father, or husband. He said:

So my son works for me for a couple of years as students and he... Sorry. He was in the office also. And he also gave me that as feedback that I'm exactly the same in the office as I can be at home. And I think that being really natural, really upfront, honest and transparent. That is, I think those are really important features. I want to have people with certain spirits and certain energies, certain... And because you can learn to be how to sell and stuff like that. But the way that you think and the way you're motivated that is for me really crucial.

The company was moving from a startup to a scale-up. He reported that it is really where his role has changed because the company needs to be independent, moving alone:

So two years ago we didn't have a management team. We now have that at base. So building the organization basically independently for me. So if I would go away or I would fall away, that will still be able to survive.

Career – The meaning of work

The meaning of work for him is related to “never seek a job for money.” He received a proposal to earn five times the money that he was offered for his current job. For him, the meaning of work is to build something and have a good effect on people’s life. He stated:

I can have a huge effect there. I can really work on my dream. So yeah. For me, I think that is the most important.

He reported that he does not want to change his career. He said:

Which doesn't mean that it will not change. But it's really something that's not a goal. So for example, it's very likely that this company will be bought by an American company. So there are already companies interested in us and so far we are holding off. But it will probably happen between now and let's say three years. And for me that is where I worked.

He mentioned some questions or reflections about changing:

What kind of role is there for me? Is there a role for me? I make a decision is there something for me to pursue or do I need to start thinking about other things? Right now I'm just focused on the success of the company. And the next goal is basically to make sure that it is as sold or gets an investment. That brings us to the next level.

I asked about his perception of the different meanings between his first jobs and right now. He described that now it is quite different because his first job was as a teacher and now he is a CEO. During his career, he has had opportunities and then he changed jobs because he loves challenges.

So I really like to build and challenge myself. I need a lot of change. So I really like when things are dynamic and changing and fluids and so, yeah.

Career - Performance

About his assessment of his performance at work, he answered that it depends on the skillset. However, he feels that he has a good performance when he is providing guidance to the company staff, and when he is interacting with young people. He mentioned:

So I think I'm quite good at that. Getting people getting their buying in the company. Also so for the people we hired in the last four years nobody left. Everybody is still working at the company. And that is not a goal. But it because we do... I completely

understand they are young and probably want to move forward and the hat and do other stuff. But nobody left. And I think that is a huge compliment to the company.

The factors that can affect his performance were shared. He mentioned that he needs to believe in what he is doing because he trusts himself and in his personal energy. He reported that he does not get convinced by some ideas that do not work, consequently he does not follow them. He admitted:

But if that would change. For example if it would forced to a company with really different ideas that don't match mine, I would definitely... My performance would go down significantly so much that I would upfront decide, "I will not go downwards. I will just leave right then."

I asked what he has done that had the best outcome. He acknowledged that he is proud of the team that he is building. The atmosphere and the commitment of people. He believes he is a big part of that:

So they have to sit down with me and I explain to them what our world is. And what our position is in that world. And I think all those things together make a company how it is. And also everybody was working there I selected them personally. So it's also my selection of people that we're building. I really liked the diversity that we have. So we have people from nine nationalities. We have men, women. We have gays. We have everything you can come up with. Are there colored people, white people. I really like that. And that whole mix of people give some energy that I really love. And building that is I think my strong support.

I asked him about the assessment of his team. He said that people from Ukraine hardly ever criticize him. They will say that he is good. However, his management team criticizes him when they do not agree with him. He thinks that he is very approachable. He knows some people have better skills in specific areas than him and he thinks it is a benefit for the company. He said:

I think everybody will give me direct feedback on what I do or what I don't. ... But I think that I think they're really positive on how approachable I am and how I involve people decision. I'm not sure if everybody's as happy with me all the time. Because I make lot decisions for (name), the sales manager. He's a really critical guy. So we have a good working relationship. But also sometimes we really have fights. Because he really believes he wants to move the company another direction and I'm not allowing him. So I think it depends a bit on who you're talking to. But in general I think people will be positive about me.

About the assessment from his boss. He described that the company has three owners. Two of them are a bit younger than him and the other is around his age. His boss is younger, around 35 years old. He thinks that he is really happy with his performance. But he will also have a lot of situations where he would act differently from P05. He shared:

...so I think that on one hand he really admires me because of success how I can keep on driving the company. Also in hard times and making sure... So basically he doesn't have to do anything. So I will just make sure it's a success. ... he will be really critical of me. Because he's a perfectionist and I'm not. So in his eyes, I make a lot of errors that he should not be making. But on the other hand, I think I make more progress than he sometimes move faster. But we are really different.... Like an interesting collaboration between the two of us.

Career - Work Orientation

I asked P05 about each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). “ Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?”

Mr. A – Job Orientation – He answered – Not at all like me

P05 does not work for the money like Mr. A – job orientation. He mentioned that he wants to earn enough money to make a living. Money is not his main goal. He had opportunities where he was not paid very well and he went to work there to build up on his own success. He acknowledged that he never worked for the money.

Mr. B – Career Orientation – He answered – Not at all like me

He reported that he does not want to move to a better higher-level job, or to go to another company. He wants to make the company in which he is working successful and independent. He commented that he has never experienced something like he does now. Then, he wants to keep this position. He has received other job offers but he he has never even considered them for a minute.

He did not feel like Mr. B – career orientation - during his career. He thinks that he assessed what he wanted in his path. If there was something else to learn then he changed it. He likes challenges. He said:

And I am so lucky that the moment that I started thinking about, "Oh, maybe I should consider do something else." Something came on my path. And I was able to do something else really quickly. So it's not like a deliberate action that I worked on, training for it or doing things. But it was more like when I was ready for it. I was lucky enough to find an opportunity really quickly to grab it. But it's not like a planned career path.

Mr. C – Calling Orientation – He answered – Somewhat

He described work as being very important. However, he considered a major thing to have a balance between work and personal life. He chose to live in a forest and not in a city because he loves being out there and he loves the nature. Although he loves his work, he reported:

I need that balance in my life. So on one hand, I recognize, yes, work is really important for me and I do it with all my heart. But the other hand I really need to be able to get away with my family and my wife and just joy being outdoor, biking, walking, working the garden.

He shared:

Just I think I have been very lucky because I have been able to do work all the time. So I started working when I was 22. And so now for a 35 years. Wow! I'm doing work that I really like. I have been lucky enough to switch between jobs. Very different jobs. Because the roles I had were very different in their nature. So I learned a lot of that. And it also enabled me to build up a good life for my family which is also important. So, I have three sons. They're now on their own. They all studied and they all have jobs and girlfriends and houses and so I think that is a... I'm still there with the same wife I had 40 years ago. So I consider myself being really lucky. Both in work and private life.

Participant 05 Structural Description

Participant 05 was aligned with calling orientation. He mentioned that he has never worked for the money. However, he thinks it is necessary to have a balance between work and private life. He needs the money to support his family, but he needs to feel that work is challenging and that

he is learning. The meaning of work for him is to make something that impacts people. He considered very important to work to achieve dreams, have a positive effect with his work, and create new things. He answered for most of questions very well in the performance questionnaire

4.3.6 Participant 6

Participant 06 (P06) is female, between 51 and 60 years old. She was born in the United States and she has attended a masters degree program. Currently she is the Vice President of a global company. She has leadership experience between 21 and 25 years. She has worked in industries, universities, and for-profit organizations.

Participant 6 Textural Description

Career - At the beginning

The first thing that she remembered was that she wanted to work with hair because her babysitter had long hair. After that, when she was a teenager in high school she began to consider attending college. She had a teacher who encouraged her to think about that. She was the first person in her family that went to college. She shared:

So everybody I knew, the adults I knew who had jobs were... My mom was a waitress. My dad was a carpenter. Their friends' dads were bricklayers and plumbers. So I don't think I really had much of an idea. I grew up in a family where I had two younger brothers. So there was kind of this expectation that they would go to college and do things, but that they could have paid for me to go to college because I was a girl. I was going to get married and have kids, and what was the point of me going to college?

She began to work with this Math teacher as a work-study trainee and he gave her names of schools offering computer science programs. She graduated in this field and she has been working in computing science since then. 12 years after getting a college degree, she took an MBA and began to work in leadership positions. She considered that this teacher was the person that impacted her decision on her career. She had some managers who helped her but he was the main one and the most important person to her. She stated:

So that's really when I started thinking that I might be able to do something like that. I always kind of liked math and science things more than the social sciences, right? But I never really knew what you did. I didn't know anybody who did something like that for a job. I mean, I didn't really know what jobs might even be there. So he encouraged me to think about going to college to do computing.

Right now, she is working in the information technology field and she is like an advisor, or a coach. She works in a global company and her clients are chief information officers and heads of IT department. They get access to all the researches that her company provides. She said:

It's like a retained service, so but then I'm assigned to them as their partner to coach them. So I do coaching, helping them with specific, developing a strategy, what's a digital strategy? Well, here's what it is. Here's how you do it. If they tried to develop their teams, I help them do that. So really kind of as a former CIO, coaching and helping others, newer CEOs and more experienced people how to do their job.

Career - Work experience

I asked her about her professional experience and she started babysitting when she was 16 years old. Also, she worked in a nursing home and a car dealership. She stated:

So I worked all through school. I worked afternoons after school. I worked in the summers and worked through college.

About that job, she shared that she did not like some of them there and she considered that just a job. She explained she needed the money if she wanted to buy something. She worked during the summers to make money to pay for college. She said:

I didn't like... Working at the nursing home, that was a job, right? I mean, I just did that as a job. I think I found working in the office, I discovered I did like... I mean, I was fine. I didn't mind interacting with the customers when they came in. But I actually more liked doing the detailed work. I used to type up blurred loan papers and things like that. When people bought a car, and I would type up the paperwork. I liked doing those kinds of things or verifying the bank statements, balance, and things like that, right? I mean, it was very much an administrative role, but I liked that kind of thing.

Also, she said that some friends got jobs which she did not want to work in:

I remember a lot of friends worked as waitresses, and that's what my mom did. I couldn't imagine doing that. I could not imagine having to talk to people all day

like that. I would hate it, which is funny because I talk to people all day every day now.

Through college, she started working as a programmer for the university. She mentioned that it was the first job that she did not work for the money. She was actually doing what she was being trained to do. So she worked as a programmer within her last two studying years at that college. She said:

It was PL/I language programming. I was writing software for their financial aid programs for the students. So I worked for university computing.

I asked her about this job. What kind of things she liked and she reported that she thought it was a good choice for her. She stated:

Yeah. I mean, it was clear when I started this was a good choice for me. For programming, I liked the puzzle nature of it, right? It was kind of figuring out. It was like figuring out a puzzle where I was given a problem, and then I had to go fix it. I was like playing the computer trying to figure out why the program wasn't working the way it was supposed to work and then fix it. I liked that problem-solving puzzle part of it.

Also, during the summer, before her junior and senior years, she worked writing programs for a company. Then, when she graduated, she went on to work as a programmer for that for-profit company. She mentioned:

So I was writing programs for there. I worked on the customer service system. So it was the first time they were doing really online screens rather than batch overnight programming. So I got in there and learned how to develop software that was for screens. I was doing a lot of problem-solving in debugging of code like you do when you first start out. But then I'd be given small projects to write software. So I mean, I was writing software. That's what I did.

She worked for them for one year and moved to another city because his husband changed his job. Then, she started in another company as a programmer and worked there for two years. Again, she needed to move and then she worked for 10 years in another for-profit organization. In this company, she began in a leadership position. She said:

So that was really the first time I went from... I started at that job as kind of a systems analyst. I was working with helping define requirements but still writing some code but supervising somebody for the first time really. Then from there, I

basically just progressed from systems analyst up to project manager to a manager of an IT department while I was working there and running large projects for them.

As for this job, she noted that she learned a lot and she had managers who encouraged her to take new responsibilities. She described her achievements:

I think I changed a lot during that time. I had both my kids during that time. So yeah, my job changed a lot. I learned for myself that it was okay to be out working with people and not just sitting in the corner coding in the cube, which I didn't expect to like that. I never really thought that I would go into management and managing people. ...actually multiple managers there who were really supportive and encouraged and coached me and mentored me to take on additional responsibilities. So from a career perspective, it was a very good place to be kind of advancing my career, and the company gave me lots of opportunities.

She was promoted many times in this company. She was an assistant analyst and progressed up to a senior analyst, then to a project manager and she then got promoted to be a manager. She explained:

I had multiple people reporting to me in that company, I couldn't do their performance reviews because I wasn't a manager. So moving to a manager was a big distinction, and it was the first time I had an office with a door, that kind of thing." So I had a real office and had management responsibility. I was responsible for hiring and firing my staff and doing their performance reviews, independent. I mean, I still had my boss, obviously, but I had independent.

She left this company because her husband's grandfather passed away and they decided to go back to the city where her grandparents were living. She and her husband wanted their children to live close to their grandparents. She stopped studying for one year and then, she began taking her MBA. She decided to take an MBA full time for two years and then went back to work after that.

After her MBA she worked in a big company for ten years. She went into a leadership position in their corporate IT organization, working with international distributors around the globe to help them. She said:

So I literally started work on a Monday and on Saturday was on a plane to Europe for my first international business trip. So I worked with that, did that for a few years, and then we moved over to the UK. I ran Europe, Middle East, Africa IT for

two and a half years for (profit organization) and then came back into the global CIO world and led global IT for six years before I left there.

She left from there because as a CIO she disagreed with the new direction of the company. Then, she was going to work at the company's foundations, but she talked with someone from the university and she decided to work as a visiting professor. She shared:

...it was a reverse sabbatical. I was pretty burned out of the CIO role, and I needed to make a change. So I went and did something completely different that was interesting to me. I mean, I enjoyed my time when I come to campus on the dean's advisory board and decided it would be kind of fun to try that, so I did.

She developed a couple of courses, taught global IT, and global leadership. After she was the director of a program. She described:

I was out there and then still worked and developed study abroad, took students to India for spring break to teach them about IT outsourcing and developed the global CIO course and teach students about IT leadership.

He reported the differences between working in a for-profit organization and a non-profit organization. She said:

I mean, everything about the job was different, right? The expectations were different. I mean, I went from leading. I mean, I was responsible for IT for a \$12 billion business. My budget for the year was \$400 million probably. I had employees all over the globe, right? Thousands of people all over the globe and went from that and working all the bloody time, right? Traveling all the time, working all the time, and then went from that to being a professor who wasn't teaching a full load. So that was helping people... That was mentoring students, spending a lot of time with the women students trying to figure out, how could we do more to encourage more women students to come, how could we do more to retain them? So I was doing a lot of that type of work. But it was a complete change.

I asked how she was feeling with so many changes and she expressed that it was good because she needed a break. She stated:

I mean, I felt it's like you got in the rushing river, and you didn't know you were in it, right? So it was good to get out of that. I mean, it's interesting. I guarantee I didn't get as much done in terms of quantifiable I put, but it was good to be in a role where I could...I remember it was like the first week. He said, "You don't have to work these long hours." I'm thinking, "8:30 to 4:30 is a pretty short day." It seemed like a really short day to me. I was usually at my desk by 6:00 or 6:15, and I rarely left

just before six. So this was a big change. So I had to really adjust to that. But it was good. It was good to be able to do that and to be home more.

She described that she left this non-profit organization because they will employ just a professor with a Ph.D. and she did not have. She stayed more focused on a specific project to women and then she moved to another city because her husband got a job there. She explained:

“Even if I did, the pay would have been so much less than what I was... I could do so many things not in the university. So at the time, I still really enjoyed what I was doing, and I started working with the a Center for Women in IT. So I decided to take a role with them half time for a couple of years, set up an initiative So it was something I was personally interested in. So I stayed. I really enjoyed it. But it was time. I felt like it was kind of time for my sabbatical time to be over and time to go back to a regular job.

It was six years ago when she joined her current company, a for-profit organization. She stated:

It is a global company based in USA. ... I mean, it's the premier IT advisory services in the country. I mean, it's been in business, gosh, I don't know how many years. I mean, if you're an IT person. So probably right now I think we're up to about 2,000 research analysts who do research on everything in IT.

I asked why she is working in a big company again and she said:

So part of the reason I joined, I knew I might've joined a small independent consulting kind of company. But I liked the idea of this role and the fact that the (profit organization) research and the name. I didn't want to go into something where I was going hunting for clients. I wasn't interested in that. So the clients, they bring this... I mean, I've got salespeople that bring the clients. So I deal with delivering, right? So I'm not in sales. I mean, obviously everybody's in sales to some level. But my job is to work with my clients and keep them happy.

Regarding her work she reported that:

So basically, an hour a month for each client, I'm face to face with them or on video working on... What are you working on? We're developing a strategy where I've got to stand up a new vendor management program, having these issues with my employees. How do I get my team working better together? Whatever, any number of problem they could be dealing with. I work with them to help them think it through, give them tools for (profit organization), like frameworks or resources or templates on how to do some research on whatever the problem is they're trying to solve. Then the next month, I go back, and we talk about, how do they do, how do they implement that, what worked, what didn't, what's next? That type of

relationship. So that's what I work with them on. I do present. I mean, the part I love is the spending the time with the clients. I also do workshops for them. So I develop a curriculum for our workshop. I also present at our big conferences. So I'll do presentations of workshops on different content at our conferences. That's what I do.

Concerning her career changes she considered important that she decided to leave the company where she was a CIO and go to a non-profit organization. She reported:

I think the move from being a CIO to not being one, right, was a big change because it was... I mean, and for most people in my field, right, you start off as a programmer, and the highest position in IT is CIO in your company, right? That is the highest position. So I got there, and I decided not to do it anymore. ...going to the (non-profit organization) and working for a nonprofit was a huge change. I enjoyed what I was doing, but I got to a point where I felt like I can do more. Somebody with a lot less experience than I have could do this job, right? So it was time for me to get back.

She recognized that when she came back to a for-profit organization that was hard for her to go back into a line management role, and that there are multiple jobs being offered to be a manager, but she had no interest to be a manager again. However, in this position which she is working as an executive she enjoys what she is doing. She likes when clients are promoted as CIOs and she supports them to achieve this goal. She acknowledged:

I mean, there's multiple jobs where there's opportunities to move up and be a manager of people who do what I do, and I intentionally do not do that. I have no interest in doing that. I don't want to be... I like doing what I do. I like the job. I like the interaction with the clients. I don't want to manage people anymore. I don't want. That's not what I want to spend my time doing it." . So for me, I'm happy to do... I mean, I look at this as being what I do until I retire kind of a job, right?

Career – Leadership

As a leader, her first experience was in a for-profit organization when she began to manage some contracts. After that she had a team and she went through some issues and conflicts to cope with. She figured out with other leaders how to deal with the different issues.

...But it was really there where I moved into having a team of people that I was working with. I wasn't just doling them out tasks, right? I was very much having to coach them, be thoughtful about how do I help them in their careers and learning, for the first time, that conflict of being a manager in a big company where you

might not agree with all of the decisions, but you need to act as you do, and you have to figure out how to reconcile that if it's a big disagreement, right?

When she began working as a leader she acknowledged that she did not know what is the difference between management and leadership. The company in which she was working at that time sent her to do a training. It was in the 80's. She did not remember doing a training in leadership in the early 90's. At that time she decided to do an MBA. She felt that she needed to understand more about leading people since about IT she already knew.

I don't think when you're being managed by someone, you don't necessarily think about the leadership part of it. But this company would send you to management supervisory training and management training. I mean, one of the reasons I decided to do that was content-specific. But I've looked around at the other people at the company, and I said, "I know how to do IT, right? I've always been in an IT department. ...which is very much about management. I realized I needed some understanding. I didn't really know about all the other departments in the company. I didn't come from a family that had a business background, right? I mean, I came from a working-class family. So I didn't know things about... All I knew about marketing was what our marketing department did. All I knew about accounting and finance was how we did it. I didn't know it could be good, it could be bad. How'd I know? So I decided to go back and get my MBA because I felt like I needed to learn... If I really wanted it to be a leader, not just managing the people in my department, I needed to understand more about the rest of the organization and how business worked in a way that I didn't.

After her MBA she looked for a company in which she could have an impact. She mentioned how much she learned:

I think when you're managing, the job matters because you want to make sure, I know how to do the job these people are doing so I can manage them in doing it and then learning that you can be a leader in all sorts of different ways. So I think that was a big learning for me.

Currently, she thinks about leadership as a career for her clients. She has been talking about leadership with her clients. They are all in leadership positions. She helps them and she tries to help her partners at the company. She is a senior employee in her job at the company because usually her partners are consultants and they did not have experience in big companies like her.

... But how they lead is very different and how they think about their role as a leader is very different. Part of my job is to help them become better leaders, right? So I'm coaching them on that. So I mean, I think it's... For me, it's part of what I do every day but then also for myself in my role thinking about... Even within my

partners, right? I've been there six years, but personally also because of my experience and the size of company I led. A lot of my colleagues either were not in very big companies or maybe they were in consulting, but they don't have as many years experience. So learning that even though I'm not anybody's boss, I'm still in a leadership role, and I still have this opportunity to lead across my team, right? So that's a little bit of how it changes over time. But it's not as much hierarchical, right? It's not necessarily related to the hierarchy. Yeah.

I asked how she perceives herself as a leader and she mentioned that she leads by example. She thinks it is necessary to influence the team and not just to say what they need to do. She admitted:

So it's very much lead by example kind of thing. I've never been one to... I absolutely worked for leaders who they thought their ability to lead was based on the table and telling people what to do, and that's not my way out for it, right? I think partly because I've often been in roles where you needed to lead through influence. It wasn't around the hierarchy and having positional authority to lead. It's you lead by setting an example and drawing people to you. That's all we had to do that in my roles.“ So that's why in my current job, nobody reports to me, right? Anything I can do to influence what we do is through influence and relationships and collaboration.

Career – The meaning of work

What drives her in terms of career she reported that it is that she loves to work with her clients, her energy boosts by helping them and seeing them become successful.

I get my energy from seeing them be successful, seeing their companies do well, seeing them get recognized, seeing them be able to coach their people and help them. I get a lot of energy from that. That's what motivates me.

The meaning of work for her is having a cause “to get up for work in the morning”. She reported that she does not work for the money and in the phase that she is in now, she considered that she works because she enjoys it:

I don't need to work for money. But I can stop working right now, and I'll be fine. I could do whatever I can do to finance some of the things I want to do. So I literally go to work because I like what I do, right? So for me, it's that I really genuinely enjoy to work with my clients.

The company has had some issues with leadership however, she keeps her job because she feels well and she likes to support her clients. She shared:

But I have a pretty good ...with my clients. I'm kind of like, "Don't interfere with what I do with my client." That's where I am. So for me, I can't imagine myself getting up and... Yeah. I like to read. I like to meet. There are things I do in my spare time. But I mean, I don't know what I would do if I wasn't working all day, right? “ But I know the work I do helps my clients be better at their jobs. It helps their companies do better, and it helps their employees. They're better leaders because they will then help them do that, and I get a lot of satisfaction about that. So that's where it is.

She mentioned that she does not want to change her job or career. Just if the leadership changes what she is doing or goes towards a different direction she may leave her current job. However, she wants to keep the job she is doing. She shared:

I mean, if I change, it'll be because I might change my company because of the leadership changes they're doing and some of the things they're doing. But I would not change significantly what I do. So the biggest change I see coming into some point, I may decide to leave this company. If I decided not to do, I probably won't. I don't know. It's hard to imagine going back into a full-time consulting kind of role. I would continue that kind of advisory piece, right? So doing that. But for me, that's about it. I mean, I don't see myself going off and doing something completely different. I like the IT work.

I asked about her perception related to different meanings between her first jobs and recent jobs. She reported that she went to college to get some skills to get a job because she did not have a good background from her family. First, the jobs meant a financial source for her. However, she liked her jobs though. She described:

I enjoyed my work. I made my first few jobs. I really enjoyed them. I liked the people I worked with. I mean, all of that. But I mean, I've always been the primary breadwinner in my family, right? I'm the one who make the money that puts the food on the table, even now with kids gone and everything.

When her children were born, she stayed at home to take care of them. She assessed that it was something stupid because she could get more money than her husband. She explained:

But I mean, growing up, my husband worked... I mean, while he got his PhD, he... When we had kids, we recognize that we wanted someone to be primarily at home or at least part-time at home taking care of the house, and it was stupid for that to be me because one, I wasn't all that interested in that part of it, but also, I could make a lot more money than him, right?

Also, she mentioned that when she was at the highest level at work and she was flying to other countries someone was at home to take care of the kids. She reflected that she wanted something else and she did not know if she liked it at the beginning. Now, she likes what she does and she earns good money for that. She reported:

Financially, it would have been a bad decision for me to stay home or work part-time, right? I was able to take my career to the highest level partially because just partly, but I mean, I couldn't have done it if I hadn't had... I mean, either we'd not had kids, or I couldn't have done it because somebody had to be home when I was flying to India three times a year. Somebody had to take care of the kids. So I think for me, early in my career, I wanted something... I don't know that I liked this thing. I would say I was lucky, right? I mean, I really liked what I do. It also happened to pay really well.

She mentioned that first, she got a job because she needed the money to support her at college, made loans, because her parents did not have money to pay for the college. sometime later, when she was financially stable she got jobs that she liked. She said:

But I wasn't in a position financially coming out of college that I could have taken a job that didn't pay very much just because I liked it. I needed to be able to support myself. I mean, I paid my way through college. I mean, my parents couldn't pay for me to go to college. I paid for me to go to college, right? I paid that money myself and paid off my loans, so I got out, right? So I didn't have the... For me, it was about more financial. Then once I got further in my career, and I was more financially stable, then I could pick jobs because I liked them. But I was lucky I was in a field where it didn't matter which job I take. It was going to pay me off, right?

She considered herself lucky and she knew that in her field people make a lot of money. Money became secondary when it could, because her first thought was what the job is “going to do to the family“. She described:

I mean, I know. I wasn't an English major, right? People wanted me to... They were willing to pay me a lot of money to do what I did, and I mean, that was really good, right? So I recognized it only became secondary because it could, right? I do always have that responsibility. When I made a decision about a job, whether it was what I wanted to do, there was at least part of thinking about, "Okay, what's this going to do to the family." Right?

Career - Performance

She described her performance is at its peak. She has objective measures from the company and her boss considers her on the top and she reported that the feedback from the clients matters and she feels confident that she performs very well. Mainly when her clients renew the service. She added:

I mean, I know by objective measures that if you were to ask my boss, I know he would say I'm one of the top performers in my job, right. But I also know based on the relationships I have with my clients, right, which is, for me, what matters. We measure it based on did they renew their service, which they almost all do. For me, even if they don't renew their service, I know there was a valid reason for it, and I know that there's... I'm in a place where I'm absolutely confident that there's nothing additional I could have done.

She assessed that she has the skills and knowledge to work in this job. Also, she mentioned that she has the ambition and aptitude too. She explained:

I'm good at this job. I mean, people tell me all the time that you're a good fit for me. It's like I found a place where I have these skills, and so I have this combination of I have the knowledge and skills to do the job, but I also have the ambition to. We always talk about things in terms of the aptitude and the ambition or the willingness. It's what I like to do. I enjoy work with my... So for me, the idea that I'm not a leader and a boss, where I've got some big, high role that people have deference when I come. When you come into the room, there's a CIO and people look at you, and it's like, "Oh, you're a CIO, and you get this special treatment." I don't care about that part. I'm quite comfortable kind of leading from behind and doing that. So I think because of that, it's a job I'm well suited to.

As for the factor that may affect her performance positively she mentioned it is when her clients approve of her work. She said:

I mean, I think feedback from clients affects in a very positive way, and internal things in the company get in the way. For me, I mean, there's a number of us right now that are very frustrated with the new leadership.I always say that the work I do with my clients doesn't change. It's fabulous. But the time I spend not doing that or I have to deal with people who've never done this job telling me how to do it and telling me to do things that I know ... my clients don't want and don't value, I refuse.

She recognized that maybe her metrics can be affected negatively because she will not do something that her clients do not want or they do not value. She reported if it happens, she is

available to leave the company. She does not want to force the clients to take directions that they do not want because of his/her bosses.

So I'm willing to let my metrics suffer because I will not do something that my clients don't value, and I'm totally comfortable telling my office, "That's why I didn't do it." Because they don't want that, and I won't do it, I'm not going to force them to do something because some boss thinks it's a great idea, and they don't. They're the one paying for the service. They're the customer, and I'm going to meet their needs. But I mean, for me, that's partly, I'm confident enough to do that because I'm prompt enough to say to them, and it's okay, I've got a line I'm not going to cross. As the boss, you're going to have a line. You need me to go... I said, "If there's a place where you need me to go here and I'm not going to go there, you can tell me to go home. I'm okay with that.

Although she knows that many clients will not keep the contract if she leaves the company, she admitted:

I got a lot of clients who won't be doing this anymore when they're not working with me, right? So it's that dynamic between... I get that the company wants it to be more prescriptive and scalable, right? What I do is not very scalable. I only have capacity for so much. I totally understand that, but I kind of push back and say, "Look, I came into the job with these understanding of, this is the work." You guys have the right to change the work, but I also have the right not to do it. If you tell me, "No, you have to," then I'll leave it at some point. Not a threat. It's just reality. ...More than half of my clients have been my clients for five years or more...

She mentioned that the task in which she has to give her best is the meetings that she has once per month with clients:

I think it's the one on one where I have a one-hour meeting with my clients every month. I am very comfortable in that setting, right? I mean, you think about that. I never know what they're going to want to talk about, right? I mean, I have some idea, right? It's not like they're going to... They're now off doing some different job, right? But I think where I'm my best is this interaction with clients because I think it's one of the things I do well, is I'm really good at making connections between things. So I do my preparation, but my best work is when I'm one on one, and they ask me a question. I mean, they'll ask at our calls every week. They'll ask me a question about something, and I'm like, "Well, I don't know. Here's my thinking of it." Then I'll go and get more details and get the research. I'm not the expert on everything. But I understand enough about what they do and them and the work and the research that I can answer the question and guide them in the moment and then follow up with more detailed research that backs it up. That's the part of my job I like the best, and I think it's the part that I get a lot of kudos from that from my clients.

She does not have staff but she interacts with people who support her in some way but they do not report to her. She stated:

I mean, I have a team in one sense. I don't have any staff. For each client, there are three people who support the client. So I mean, they're my peers. But I'm obviously much more senior than they are, right? I'm the expert in the content. So I have a salesperson that I work with, who in most cases. Then I have someone who works in the office who they're like... I mean, it's more than the clerical person, right? They're responsible for setting up all the meetings with the analysts. I can send them material and say, "Would you pull research?" They get them registered for events. So they do some of the more administrative functions. But they can sometimes be on the calls and help too. So they're my support team, but I'm the face with the client

I asked her what they would say about her performance. She reported that they recognized that she is friendly, she helps them with their work, she tries to include them in what is going on with their clients and they depend on client contract renewing and then she does not "dump crap work on them". She said:

Yeah. It depends on which ones you talk to. But most of them, I will say, most of them recognize that their livelihood, right, is partially dependent on, is the person they're working with friendly and doesn't just dump crap work on them, which some of my colleagues do? I don't do that. Their livelihood depends on these clients renewing, right? They get measured on the client's renewing. So for working with me, I'm a pretty good person to work with them. I'm pretty friendly. I'll pitch in if they're out. I can cover things for them. I don't just dump work on them without including them in what's going on with the clients. So I have one person right now who's brand spanking new and is struggling in every way and with me as well. But except for her, I would say if you asked my colleagues, they would want me to work with them, me and my salespeople that I work with.

About what is the assessment of her boss she acknowledged that he considers her a leader and a top performer. She described:

I mean, he considers me one of the leaders. I'm one of the top performers in our metrics. I do good work with my clients, right? I can be a pain in the neck to him because I push him on things that I'm not happy with. But other than that, he has to look across his group and say, "Who's delivering results?" He doesn't have to worry about me".

Career - Work Orientation

I asked P06 about each answer to Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr.C (Appendix A). “ Why did you answer (not at all like me, or a little, or somewhat, or very much like me) for Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C?”

Mr. A – Job Orientation – She answered – Not at all like me

For Mr. A – job orientation, she answered not at all like me because she mentioned that she is financially secure and she would repeat the same line of work. She acknowledged:

Yeah. I mean, I guess if he were financially secure, he would no longer continue his line of work. That's not true at all, right? I guess I look at that and say, "I am financially secure, but I keep doing it." I mean, I would absolutely go into the same line of work again, and I would... Yeah. So yeah. To me, this one's not even close, the A one, for almost every reason, right?

Mr. B - Career Orientation – She answered – A little

As for career orientation, Mr. B, she answered a little because she does not expect to be in another job in five years. She got a promotion last year as a Vice President and she does not feel in competition with her colleagues. She said:

A little. Yeah. In the sense that, I mean, I think for me, I guess partly, I probably don't expect to be in my job five years from now, right? But not because I get promoted to a higher job, right? So for me, it's only a little because I was trying to find something... I mean, I will say, I mean, I got promoted to vice president last year, right? We have levels in this job. That was important because it was a recognition of my work, right? I don't know, it's in competition with my coworkers isn't very true. But it mattered to me in the sense that I felt like the work I was doing with my clients and relative to my peers, so in that sense, competition, that I felt like I was a leader in our team. I was one of the most senior people, and that should be recognized, right? So I guess that's why I said a little, but kind of more last year than this year. Now, there's not really anywhere for me to go.

Mr. C – Calling Orientation – She answered – Somewhat

For the calling orientation, Mr. C answered somewhat. She feels that her work is very important in her life, one of the first things. Sometimes she brought work home, but she works at home now and it is hard for her this kind of definition. She explained:

Somewhat. I think my work is important part of my life. I am happy that I'm in this line of work. One of the first things that I tell, it's probably true. I mean, I tend to describe who I am around by what I do, right? I mean, I've always done this kind of thing. I will say I used to take homework with homework. I mean, it's a little hard. I work from home, right? When I closed my computer, I'm pretty much done, and I don't, other than a couple years ago when I was really overloaded, and I'll probably do a little work this weekend, but that's because I'm leaving for two weeks' vacation, and I had to do a month worth of work. I still have a month's worth of clients to see, even if I'm only working for two weeks, right?

However, she does not agree with some features of calling orientation represented by Mr. C. For example, the majority of her friends are not from her workplace. She added:

Organizations related to my work, sure. The boards I'm on are related to my work. But I do think what I do matters. I do encourage people. Not looking forward to retirement. I wouldn't say that so much just because I feel like I'm doing something where I can craft a job. Even if I wasn't doing this job at this company, I'd still be doing something similar. So I think that's where it mostly describes me, except that I don't... I work in (city). Most of my colleagues aren't here. So most of my friends are not from where I work. I would say my friends that I do think socially with are not in my field. I have a group of close women friends who are. But other than that, not so much. So yeah.

I asked her if during her career she perceived that she was as Mr. A, B, or C. She recognized that probably is not like Mr. A because she felt that everything was important to her. She reported that there was something that she did not like at work, she changed jobs. She said:

Yeah. I don't know that I've ever been the A. I don't think I've ever felt like I was just doing this, I mean, even where it was important to me that. Maybe in a specific job, but I don't even know. I think I've always had the situation where I was in a job I didn't like. I left it and went to a different job. Maybe doing in the same line of work, right, in the same field. ...I don't know that I've ever though felt very much like work seems like a waste of time, knows he must do it sufficiently well to move on.

With respect to Mr. B (career orientation), she explained that she was never focused on the next job, she felt as if she needed to be able to do the job and just then get a job, a new position is a reward for her. The most important thing is to do a good job. She said:

I've never been someone who was so focused on the next job. I mean, I advise people all the time, right? I mean, I talked to my son-in-law about this all the time because he's probably a Mr. B. He focuses on the next job. But he's 29, right? So it's not too surprising. He's at that stage. But I mean, I think for me, maybe sometimes it was that. But I've always felt like you needed to be able to... The reason you got promoted was because you did a good job in the job you were in. I was never one who maybe very much focused on the next job. I always kind of viewed what I... The next job was more of a reward for doing this job well.”\

As I was curious to why she changed her job, I asked if it was an opportunity she had or she was thinking of changing. She admitted that she changed because she wanted a new thing. She said:

I think it was because I changed what I wanted, right? I recognize that what I wanted wasn't... I wanted something different, right? So I mean, when I left (profit organization), I mean, there were a lot of factors in play, right? I mean, lots of factors. But one of them certainly was that I had been working with the coach because when you became a vice president, you've got an executive coach. So I'd been working with her, and I had felt like my life had gotten kind of out of balance and not kind of a lot out of balance, right?

She explained why she does not want to be a CIO anymore bringing in some reflections:

So I was working with her on, what really matters to me and what gets me excited in my job? It felt like I figured out that the things I had to do day to day in my job were... I didn't like the job of being CIO all that much. I liked all the things I got to do because of it, the fact that my role gave me the opportunity to be on the dean's council and work with students at (non-profit organization) and do the nonprofit work. But the day to day of the job had really gotten to a place where I wasn't enjoying it anymore. But for me, what's different is that B would said, "Okay. I just need to suck it up until I got to the next position." I said, "Okay. No. I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm going to do something else." Right?

I deepened this question and she reported that when she was uncomfortable with her job it affected her performance. She said “yes” because she disagreed with the ideas that the company was adopting. She added:

Oh, sure. Absolutely. Absolutely. Because I mean, there were two components to it. There were things that I intentionally chose not to do because I didn't think they were the thing... I didn't think they were right. So there were decisions the company was pushing to where they wanted to centralize as an example, a bunch of things. I felt fundamentally that was not the right thing to do. So if you think about for our performance, obviously, I would look back and say, "Well, if my performance were better." Performance is the right word, but, "Maybe someone who was more skilled could have convinced them to go in the direction that I thought they should go, right? For whatever reason, they still wanted to go in this other direction. I said, "Yeah. I'm not going to go there." But I'm sure it did because I felt like I was worn down, and I consciously chose to focus on the pieces of the job I really enjoyed and that I felt like I could make a difference in. But yeah. I mean, there was a lot of politics, right? I decided I didn't like that. I didn't enjoy it. I didn't enjoy the fighting, and I kind of said, "Yeah. I'm just not going to do that anymore." Right? I don't have to. All right?"

She recognized that the aptitudes of Mr. C are more present in his career. I asked her if she wanted to change her career and she explained that she does not know because she likes her job and wants to be in the company:

I don't know. I mean, sometimes I've said, "Boy, it would have been nice." Not so much. I mean, there are probably some times that I let it get too out of balance, where I was just not present at home enough, and so I'm looking back on that, and I mean, I think almost everybody's bad time is like that, right, where I just let it get too out of whack. The job became too much or too important. But on balance, not so much. I mean, even the situation that comes and leaving there and changing things has been, it was absolutely the right thing to do. There are certainly parts of me that thinks that I should buy just this and that different, right? Maybe that whole thing would have turned out differently, and I could have continued to do that role. But frankly, I look at where that company is right now, and I think, "Oh, I would not want to be there." It's not what I want to be doing. So I think the opposite that whole situation caused me to end up in a way better place.

I asked if she had difficulties to find another job when she wanted. She reported that it was quick because she had the skills that people required:

No. I've almost never done a... I see people all the time. I work with people all the time, CIOs who've left their job or been asked to leave their job and are in transition for six or nine months. Never. I mean, I've almost always... I mean, I've really not been on the job market very much. I generally send team to find something. This job, my transition, I think every transition I've had, I mean, it's just been really quick either early in my career because I had skills that everybody wanted, right? So it almost didn't matter about me personally. They had skills they wanted.

She gave as an example how she found her current job:

Now, most of my jobs I found and the job I have today, I took this job in 2013. I found an email when the guy who had the job before me retired, and I found an email from 2007, where he'd been trying to get me to come and work for this company, and I just said, "No, no, no, not a good timing." I mean, I met with him for breakfast to talk about something else that I was interested in pursuing, and he said, "what you're describing is what we do. Please send me or give me a resume. I mean, literally on a Wednesday, I had breakfast with him. On Wednesday night, I updated my resume because I hadn't updated it in years, sent it to him that night. On Friday morning, I had my first phone call with the manager or hiring of the job and I had my interview with HR on Monday, and three weeks later I had a new job.

Usually, she did not need to look for a job. She just used her relationship as an influence during her career. She said:

I didn't interview. I didn't look at any other companies. That's been more how my jobs have happened. It's been through relationships, through people I know. I mean, I'm very thankful for that because I work with some people who are very talented, and they're in this job search, and I have this thing, "Oh, I would just shoot myself if I had to do that." I can't even imagine having to go through this constant interviewing for jobs, interviewing for jobs. ...But I think it's because I don't interview for jobs that aren't a good fit, right? I think I only do it when I'm... It's a very thoughtful process. But I've rarely been out of work looking for work. I mean, almost never. I don't even know. I guess when I was looking for a job when I was graduating from college, but other than that, really not much.

Participant 6 Structural Description

Participant 06 was aligned with calling orientation, ...“the work is one of the first thing“. She mentioned that currently, she does not work for the money, although she considered that at the beginning she did that because she needed to support herself and her family. However, in general, she liked her jobs and when she changed she wanted something else or she did not like the job anymore. The meaning of work to her is “to get up for work in the morning. She likes to work with her clients, she has more energy when she works with them. In the performance questionnaire she answered for most of the questions exceptionally well.

4.4 Epoche session – After Interview

After, each interview I wrote my impressions, my feelings, my self-assessment of my performance, and the main points about the answers. Below follow some points after I concluded all the interviews.

At the end of each interview, I was so excited. I met wonderful people. They were motivated with their work, they seemed to like sharing their experiences, and they were super friendly.

I gave them new “names“ before I began to record the interviews. It was a good warm-up. I used Angelina Crawford, Jeremy Redford, Jackson Bond, and so on. It was a little bit funny.

What was interesting was that when I finished the interview and I stopped recording, we talked more about many issues or did more reflections about work. They shared other feelings, or they asked me about my studies, and my life as an international student. For me it was good, I felt that we had some kind of bond, strong enough to have a successful interview.

My concern about the language decreased after each interview. I saw that sometimes I asked again if I did not understand just some specific things about the US culture, or when I wanted further information. For this methodology it is necessary to repeat questions within a different context or to deepen the answer. I felt that they answered my questions and when it was necessary, I asked again, and they had new answers, new reflections and I had more information. When people are talking they are redefining experiences, they find new meanings in their stories. I realized that I needed to ask the questions in different ways to reach my results.

Along each interview I tried to improve my performance, reviewing the questions, making notes on what was important, what kind questions I needed to include, or questions that I should improve. I needed to keep my focus on the research questions and on my role as a researcher. For example, fully explore the relationship between work orientation and performance. Another important thing was to explore the significance of work for the participants.

Through the questions about their performance they showed to have a good perception of themselves, even of the jobs that they worked for the money. Some of them were critical of themselves in terms of performance, bringing in details about their performance.

I realized that all the participants like to learn and face new challenges. It was a common assumption. It was possible to see it in an overview of the meanings of work. All of them considered themselves successful. My curiosity when I read the interviews is what kind of categories/essence I will find.

They mentioned a number of meanings, beliefs, assumptions, decisions between family and career, decisions between two options, and what would happen if they chose the second option, for example. They keep thinking. I believe they liked to be interviewed. I think the relationship with James helped them to be opened, but I felt that they liked to share their experiences and I believe that they had an opportunity to reflect, to build more significance for their career.

At the end of each interview I asked them feedbacks about the survey and interviews. As a result, I felt happy because they told me that they felt comfortable to answer the survey/questions. They acknowledged that the interview provided them good reflections about their careers. The feedback was positive. P03 was my first interviewee and he summarized it and he was the only one that mentioned feeling a little uncomfortable: He said *“I thought the questions were... yeah. I mean, I think that it's caused me to evaluate, it'll be interesting to see when you talk to other people. You think about stuff that you don't normally articulate. And it's kind of like you do it by instinct. And so, you've given me some stuff to think about. Reflecting on my own decisions and motivations. And there's part of that that's slightly uncomfortable of course. But I knew that going in to this. But yeah, but I'm glad I did it. It's good every so often to reflect and to be honest with yourself about who you are. And what you're not, and yeah.*

4.5 Epoche session – After transcription

After the interviews I read the transcriptions again and again and I obtained some ideas from the data. Pointing out that first I listened and read the transcriptions. After that I just read the whole interviews of each participant, and next I did the textural and structural description. When I finished reading the transcription I wrote:

Many questions I got to deepen and the participants answered with more details.

I have some ideas about my data. I described some points that seem important when I finished my transcriptions:

- . Learning and challenges are really important to each participant and it is linked to changing jobs or positions

- . Most of them are financially secure, they work because they like it. Many times during the interviews, they assured that they are proud and like the path they have chosen.

- . They worked for the money at the beginning of their careers but they tried to give significance to their jobs. They saw that they were learning, helping people, doing things very well, and getting to know the way to begin a new and succesful career.

- . The participants seem to disagree with some statements about the calling orientation. They mentioned that they try to keep the balance between the relationship with their professional and private life. Maybe because they are in a new age and stage of their careers, they are more confident to set limits for friends, family, entertainment, and work.

- . Maybe if we changed the paradigms of the three dimensions of orientation they would be more closely related to what people think about their choices,

. It seems that most of them are identified with the calling orientation and they have a high performance. Even if they are in a job or career that is in alignment with work orientation they see themselves as high performers.

So, after the transcriptions, I am excited to see the results and analyze the data. I feel that I will have a lot of work because I have consistent and great data.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the data from the various sources collected and investigated in this study. After to analyze the work orientation and performance' survey, the interview was a source to complement it. Through the interview, the background, experiences in leadership, performance, the meaning of work, and the work orientation were examined.

In the next chapter the data in this chapter examines the themes that emerged. It will promote discussions and points related to this research.

CHAPTER 5. THEMES AND ESSENSES

The preview chapter reviewed the data sources, presenting the results of the survey, in both textural and structural descriptions of each participant. This chapter reports the essence of various data sources describing the themes that emerged.

Upon a review of the data I realized several emergent themes, as shown in Table 3. The next sections provide an explanation for each theme.

Table 3. Themes

Role Models	Family members; teachers as role models influenced their career development
Background, Work Experience, and Career Decision	Failures and successes, the significance of first jobs, reasons for changing jobs
Leadership	Leadership meanings in different stages of career, self-perception as a leader
Feelings and the Work Meanings	Reasons to work, different meanings during the career, essential meanings, career change
Performance Perception	Self-perception, perception from the boss and the team, best performance, influential factors
Reflection on Work Orientation	Job: the meaning of money, money versus enjoyment/commitment at work. Career: role, position, time, decisions, expectations. Calling: what are the features of calling which are identified, work as a part of life.

5.1 Role Models

The literature review on the significance of work often presents that the social context, the culture, the value system in a community influence the choices and decisions about work (Baumeister, 1991; Prager, 1996; Rosso et al., 2010). Role models from families, such as parents and other relatives influence people to decide on their careers. My sample showed that families and teachers had a huge influence on this process.

The participants reported some careers that they thought about following when they were children. They mentioned some specific jobs: babysitter, fireman, astronaut, psychologist,

biologist, and veterinarian. P06 wanted to be a babysitter because she had one who had long hair. P02 reported that in her family there were strong women. Her grandmother was a music teacher and she worked out. Then, she showed interest in “what people did into that career projection “. P04 wanted to be a fireman. Next, he thought of being an astronaut because at that time there was a lot of exploration on the Moon. When he worked with a veterinarian he thought about specializing in this field. P03 did not remember anything about career choice when he was child. He just liked to study science and math, and he read a lot. P05 wanted to be biologist.

I observed that some early “dreams“ were left behind and other choices arose along their careers. These choices also suffered influences from the environment. The participants also created meaning themselves but this meaning was also influenced by social contexts through their careers. Parents, other relatives, friends, and also people from the workplace such as bosses and colleagues had an influence on this process. The local culture impacted the participants’ choices and decisions (Baumeister, 1991; Prager, 1996).

The participants followed some paths based on values, beliefs, and assumptions that they built during their careers. Thus, initial ideas were transformed and defined their careers direction. P02 had some examples in her family that encouraged her to follow her career. P04 turned to the technology field because at that time technology-related jobs were booming in the labor market, this field was “promising“. P01, P03, and P06 mentioned that they did not want to follow their families’ choices. Their parents and relatives worked just to make money. Furthermore, P06 did not expect to get a degree.

Teachers and parents had an impact on their careers. For all of them, except P04 and P05, the decision to go to university was motivated by high school teachers. It is interesting to note that mathematics teachers were the greatest encouragers. P03 is from Europe and he was encouraged by a math teacher to come to the United States. P06 reported with great emotion about her math teacher. She was motivated by him to go to university. Also, P01 was guided by a math teacher. P05 did not mention his family or teacher but he mentioned that he had opportunities that he embraced. P04 reported that his father was a person who impacted him on how to do things and how to treat people.

The narratives also supported the second source of the meaning of work (others) developed by Rosso et al. (2010). These authors explained that interaction with groups, families, and communities influences how people see their work and how they make choices. P06 reported that at that time many girls were just fated to get married so as not to study. Her family expected her two brothers go to university. She said:

So there was kind of this expectation that they would go to college and do things, but that they could have paid for me to go to college because I was a girl. I was going to get married and have kids, and what was the point of me going to college?

In addition, the participants have some mentors from their workplace who have great influence on their careers. Actually, the participants reported that they still keep in touch with them to exchange ideas, discuss new challenges and other issues that they are facing.

5.2 Background, Work Experience, and Career Decisions

The data seems to corroborate the findings in the literature which show that the nature of work has changed over time. The development of technology, economic and political pressures, and globalization create new directions to careers. Then, each generation lives new experiences at work and creates new meaning, impacting on life satisfaction (Brown et al., 2001; Guevara & Ord, 1996).

Most research participants studied Math, Technology, and Computer Science at College, except P02 and P05 who went into the Humanities field. Although all participants were in different fields of study, they ended up in the technology field. P01 choose technology because he could not afford an engineering program, P02 wanted to be a psychologist, but during the course, after some work experiences, she opted for high education field. P05 began in social sciences but quit because the school was not in his expectation. Then, he started working as a teacher in the technology field. P04 thought about being a veterinarian. However, he went into the technology field because it was a better position at the labor market with an excellent income. Also, he liked it and realized that he had good skills in this area. He said:

Everything clicked about it. I loved the technology side, learning about business, learning about management and leadership, and it just felt like a good place.

Participants changed positions within the organizations where they worked. However, the jobs were still related to technology field. For example, P06 was a CIO in a technology organization and now she is a coach supporting leaders who are working with technology. P01 had many positions in the engineering/technology when he worked in the industry. Currently, he works with engineering and technology in a non-profit organization. P05 is a CEO of a company which is a mix between technology and education.

All participants from the United States mentioned going through some work experience during high school and college. The purpose was to make money. I realized that these kinds of jobs are part of the American working culture. “To make money for personal things.” However, it seems there is a value behind the to “make money” idea, they also aimed to develop skills. P01 reported that besides his job as a “devil printer” he learned a lot of skills such as: how to have a “good attitude, be punctual, and get things done”. The participants reported that they were learning a lot with these jobs, taking new responsibilities, and doing their best. During the interview, they always described their jobs as an excellent experience, preparing them to the work in their current fields. The participants from Europe, P03 and P05, did not mention working during high school, just while in College.

When questioned on career changes, several participants reported changing their career or job position because they were looking for challenges, learning, and diversity. They revealed that they wanted to do something else, they desired new significance for their work. Other factors which affected their decisions to change were new opportunities, disagreements with the organization members or something that happened in their families such as parents’ death, a partner changed the job and having to move to another city, etc. Also, repetitive work was a factor that influenced job changes. P06 mentioned that she left the organization as a CIO due to disagreements with the new direction. From her perspective, she could not stand the new rules. The same situation was happening to P02. Up to the day of the interview, she was thinking about changing jobs because she was going through “uncertainties” concerning the new directions.

Table 4 demonstrates brief statements of the participants during the interviews:

Table 4. Participants Statements about career change

Participants	Statements
P01	That was a big important thing about changing jobs... total impact on your life and your family's life ... but never turning down an opportunity within an organization. Always be open to that
P03	And then I've changed roles. I've written software, I've been a sales person, I've been a manager. I've been a teacher, I've been an entrepreneur, all of that. So, yeah change is my career is about change. The opportunity was growth. When I noticed at various places that I was stagnating, or that I wasn't going to be able to do more of what I wanted to do. , but I had reached a plateau there.
P04	I think it just means a variety of experiences. Well and I really think each one has allowed me, and maybe each one has made me, allowed me to do it more, impact the lives of other people I think. Not only of those working around me, but what you might say as our customers and things like that. Each one has allowed me to interface with and learn more from but also help more people I think. Might be kind of a consistent.
P05	And I think that the third step in my career is I became a leader instead of a manager. So for me that's a different definition of the role that's quite significantly different. So I think that, yeah. I think that is the development that I see from specialist to a manager to a leader. And I am so lucky that the moment that I started thinking about, "Oh, maybe I should consider do something else." Something came on my path. And I was able to do something else really quickly. So it's not like a deliberate action that I worked on, training for it or doing things. But it was more like when I was ready for it. I was lucky enough to find an opportunity really quickly to grab it. But it's not like a planned career path.
P06	I think the move from being a CIO to not being one, right, was a big change because it was... I mean, and for most people in my field, right, you start off as a programmer, and the highest position in IT is CIO in your company, right? That is the highest position. So I got there, and I decided not to do it anymore. ...going to the (non-profit organization) and working for a nonprofit was a huge change. I enjoyed what I was doing, but I got to a point where I felt like I can do more. There were things that I intentionally chose not to do because I didn't think they were the thing... I didn't think they were right. So there were decisions the company was pushing to where they wanted to centralize as an example, a bunch of things. I felt fundamentally that was not the right thing to do.

There are findings in the literature on the meaning of work that personal growth was the main source of personal meaning for old and young people (Allan et al., 2015; Prager, 1996). Also,

studies about meaningful work are related to well-being. It is plausible to see that for all participants meaningfulness and well-being were important. Furthermore, autonomy, competence, relatedness, and beneficence are predictors of meaning (Martela & Riekk, 2018). The participants showed how these factors were important when they changed jobs.

Two of the participants (P03, P04,) tried to open their own businesses but they did not succeed. They reported that it was a great experience and it was a possibility to learn and build new things. They assessed these “failures” as important processes in their careers. One participant had an own business and it was successful, but he decided to sell it. P03 actually is focused on another business, he wants to achieve “entrepreneurial success.”

During the interview, they talked about their current job with enthusiasm, pleasure, joy, and happiness. They expressed that they love their work and they want to bring something good to the world. They want “challenges, learning, and also to cause an impact on others, to help people, to interact with people, and to contribute with organizations”. They mentioned that they do not want to change jobs and they are not looking for a specific job. Just, P02 admitted that she could not finding meaning in her current job. She loves the job but the organizational structure has been changing a lot. For her there is “no sense and a path to follow”. Create and perceive meanings are part of life and influence on contentment, health, welfare, and good feelings (Lysova et al., 2019). As well as work meaning is one of moderators during a career, each one experience different levels of work and life meaning (Allan et al., 2015).

When I asked P03 what career he is pursuing, he answered:

Several. One of the features of my career is the breath. The number of different things and different industries I've worked in many different roles.

Although all the participants had different reasons to change jobs there were two features in common that they based their decisions on: to learn and to be challenged.

5.3 Leadership

I explored some topics about leadership with the participants. I aimed to search for the leadership meanings which they have created all through their careers. They began in a leadership position earlier, during college or during the first years in their career. They had different reflections about leadership, although they are complementary. Each one developed different approach as a leader and they created their own personal style. The participants in general worked on the interactions between processes and teamwork focusing on results (Bass, 2008).

When I asked them what they thought about leadership at the beginning of their career, they described that to be a leader it was a big challenge. They considered that being promoted to a leader position was the recognition of their good performance. It was a reward for developing a good job. P04 had a training in leadership and then he was appointed to a leadership position. However, he did not expect that being a leader was so hard. P02 said that to be a leader does not mean a good salary or a title, instead it is a way “to being inclusive, to lead with the team in the best way, and recognizing them“. For her, it was important to focus on people who were marginalized or with difficulties. Also, she shared that at the beginning, she thought that leaders should know everything, should never make mistakes, and everyone should follow the leader’s direction. At the beginning P01 learned with each work experience applying what worked out and avoiding what did not work in his approach. Each experience was an example for the next. For him it was necessary to evaluate their own actions and decisions. P03 wanted to be different from other leaders that he knew during his career, “that’s what I will do differently“. Also, he did not plan to be a leader. It suddenly happened when his director left the company. For him, a leader should lead with technical skills and nurture the careers. Actually he thinks that a leader should “shine through others“. P05 and P06 mentioned that at the beginning they were managers and later they became leaders. Also, they considered that leaders influence people. P06 reported that sometimes it was necessary to manage ideas and disagreements. These narratives supported the idea that each leader with personal features, behaviors, assumptions, points of view led her/his team to achieve results and to bring meanings to the organization setting. (Bass, 2008; Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013; Rosso et al., 2010)

The literature on leadership is congruent with some ideas that the participants shared. They stated that it is decisive “to achieve results, to define goals, have a purpose, values, to be empathetic, fulfill the potential, and to be clear with the team on their role as a leader“ (Lysova et al., 2019). P05 reported that to believe yourself and to keep motivated makes the difference. All participants described that to be a leader is hard, it is critical because each situation involves people, behaviors, ideas, purposes, agreements, disagreements, different points of view, crisis, and conflicts (Bass, 2008; Lysova et al., 2019; Vecchio, 2007).

In the beginning, they did not realize the differences between management and leadership. To perceive this difference, a maturity process was required on the role. Then, after some experiences they considered it was relevant to know this difference (Vecchio, 2007). P06 had some training in management but after that, she felt that she needed to learn more, then she went back to school and attended an MBA program. It is important to remember that she was a manager and a leader (CIO) along her career. P04 considered himself a leader and a manager as well because of the nature of his work. P05 and P06 might have provided the best description of the difference between being a manager and a leader:

P05:

So automatically I'm much more in a role that I have to convince and steer people instead of managing them. And I think that is the key difference between my previous role where I was selling a solution, building that out. Managing a company, making sure that everything works. And right now it's much more than making sure that we are... Well followings. And I think that we have great potential. Makes sure that we fulfill the potential is a really different kind of job.

P06:

I don't think when you're being managed by someone, you don't necessarily think about the leadership part of it. But this company would send you to management supervisory training and management training. I mean, one of the reasons I decided to do that was content-specific. But I've looked around at the other people at the company, and I said, "I know how to do IT, right? I've always been in an IT department. ...which is very much about management. I realized I needed some understanding. I didn't really know about all the other departments in the company. I didn't come from a family that had a business background, right? I mean, I came from a working-class family. So I didn't know things about... All I knew about

marketing was what our marketing department did. All I knew about accounting and finance was how we did it. I didn't know it could be good, it could be bad. How'd I know? So I decided to go back and get my MBA because I felt like I needed to learn... If I really wanted it to be a leader, not just managing the people in my department, I needed to understand more about the rest of the organization and how business worked in a way that I didn't

Another source of the meaning of work comes from interactions with others and how “others” influence choices and visions about work (Rosso et al., 2010). When all the participants began their careers as leaders, they acknowledged other leaders as models. Most of them considered observation as a way to learn how to be a leader. During their careers, they observed how other leaders performed towards their teams and how they coped with conflicts in various situations. They learned with “good and bad” leaders. They appraised behaviors, decisions, actions, and results. The narratives demonstrated that little by little they created their own style. They used strategies from everyday experience to build a profile that they believed was right.

As for relationship between leaders and teams, they stated that a leader needs to allow her/his employees to participate in different contexts, not to be authoritarian, but to be a mentor to them, help, protect them from risks, work together, and encourage them to follow the same direction. Also, to manage diversity, be confident, be ready, cope with crisis, and to say “I don’t know” when it is necessary. P04 emphasizes that it is important to work with people who share the same values to build a great team and organization.

Below it is what they reported about themselves as a leader:

Table 5. Self-perception as a leader

P01	I think you would never believe that I don't care. He cares. He cares about me. He cares about what we're trying to do. He's dependable, honest, is transparent, maybe too transparent sometimes. Takes time every morning to see what I'm doing. Knows about my family. Knows if I'm dealing with special issues, and tries to support.
P02	I'm probably seen as too nice, but I'm a pretty nice, kind, I'm a very human type of person to begin with. I would say as a leader that's the forefront. I don't, I think my leadership style is my example. I don't like pounding on people, I don't like berating them, I don't like destroying them this is their job. My first attitude is everybody comes into work planning on doing the best they can do and sometimes that doesn't work out. Then as a leader you got to watch that and make sure is it the environment doing that. You've got to figure those things out and maybe help them, but I think I'm a kind person
P03	I have no problem taking great satisfaction from seeing somebody else do well if I've helped them. it's a little bit like it's part of the professor's job. It's part of the athletic coach's job. The coach doesn't run the race, or play or score the goal. But it helps the players who actually do.
P04	I think as a leader most folks would say that I'm very fair, I'm very consistent, I'm very empathetic, but also that I set high standards for myself and that because of that ... I do for my people too or our people. It's not something I have to impose on them. I think they see it in how I operate and they want to be part of that team to help deliver that same kind of work methodology
P05	And I think that being really natural, really upfront, honest and transparent. That is, I think those are really important features. I want to have people with certain spirits and certain energies, certain... And because you can learn to be how to sell and stuff like that. But the way that you think and the way you're motivated that is for me really crucial.
P06	So it's very much lead by example kind of thing. I've never been one to... I absolutely worked for leaders who they thought their ability to lead was based on the table and telling people what to do, and that's not my way out for it, right? I think partly because I've often been in roles where you needed to lead through influence. It wasn't around the hierarchy and having positional authority to lead. It's you lead by setting an example and drawing people to you. That's all we had to do that in my roles

The narratives showed many concepts of leadership that they have built through their careers. It is possible to say that these concepts originated from theory and practice. Leadership is related to a leader's behavior, effects and the relationship among leader, process, and team (Bass, 2008).

5.4 Feelings and Meanings of Work

The literature on the meaning of work includes several studies that show relationship between the meaning of work and life satisfaction (Brown et al., 2001). Also, the meaning of life and the meaning of work are related to human well-being and suffering changing over the lifespan. The participants reported that they have changed their perceptions during their careers concerning leadership, first and current job, money, performance, among other aspects. It was a maturity process insofar they improved in their careers impacting also on the meaning of their lives and well-being. These perceptions were related to challenges that they faced or new opportunities that they had. They lived significant experiences that changed their minds and consequently, the meaning of work. Also, they demonstrated that they integrated work in their personal life, bringing a sense of life meaning (Allan et al., 2015).

I asked the participants what changed in terms of meanings along their careers. They mentioned that at the beginning work was money-related. P01 and P02 compared themselves to their friends regarding money and the things they bought. Later on, money was just something needed to support their families and go on with their lives. Now they earn decent money and like their jobs. P02 reported that work means “to go home and feel well, to make deal with problems, respect people, maintain the dignity.” For P03 and P05 work is a way to create something new, be inventive, and contribute to the world. The participants reported that all through their whole careers they were searching for new meanings, for something else from work. They saw themselves as protagonists of any changes. It does not depend on age or gender (Allan, et al., 2015; Baum & Steward Jr, 1990; Prager, 1996).

Furthermore, literature showed that many factors may affect the meaning of work. The sense of efficacy, autonomy, the sense of making, positive contribution, purpose, and the sense of belongingness are very significant for people to find sense in their work. Also, to be connected with the organization influences this meaning. Furthermore, meaningful work is relevant to workers' well-being, job satisfaction, and contentment. (Bandura, 1991; Martela & Steger, 2018; Rosso et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2012; Willemse & Deacon, 2015). These studies were also supported by all the participants. When they were or not connected with their work. P02 and P06 were valuable examples of that. They went through some tough time at work because they were

not integrated or connected with the organization's directions (see Chapter 4). However, they were open minded to changing their jobs looking for significance in their work.

What reasons were given by the participants to be working? They answered that it was "to have good feelings, self-worth, to be able to achieve objectives, feel healthy". They had a desire to learn and to be engaged with something. They described that they enjoy and feel great pleasure at work. They shared that they like "to be around people, to accomplish goals, feed the ego". They wanted to be successful at work. For P03 his work is the "reason of his life."

In terms of the meaning of work, the participants showed that they perceive the job as "a way to impact, to help, to create new things, it is a fulfilling mission, feel valued". The participants' statements of the meaning of work are below:

Table 6. Statements on the meaning of work

P01	I think the meaning of work is very broad to me. What I need to do, to maintain our household, you could classify it as work. Being here, and developing, and maintaining programs that provide educational benefit to our customers, and students. Being a good employee in interaction with other people that are here, and work here. Build friendships. Work is, when you're younger, and the model I saw from my dad, is a necessary evil, and something he hated. "I hate to work. I don't want to work. My boss doesn't understand me."
P02	Meaning of work. I hate to use the word impact because it seems like it's overly used, but I think I've stayed in higher ed because bottom line I feel like what I have done has somehow changed somebody's life for the better. People not everybody goes to college, so if they get to come here they're wanting to better themselves and you want to be a part of that experience. I love being a part of that experience and I want to make sure I'm a memorable positive part of it.
P03	So, I would really like to have an entrepreneurial success. It's one thing to say you've done multiple startups. But a startup with a good exit, which is maybe only one out of twenty. That's hard to do. So, I haven't had that yet. I would like to achieve that. Not so much I mean money would be a by product of that. But money doesn't motivate me.

Table 6 continued

P04	To me, it's something that completes you, that makes you feel valued. I certainly feel valued and think that I'm working on something of importance. It's kind of an inside ... I know we're not meant to necessarily feel good or feel happy, but it makes me feel good to know that I'm helping in this mission. That to me is the value that I'm contributing in some way to the mission of this organization
P05	I can have a huge effect there. I can really work on my dream. So yeah. For me, I think that is the most important.
P06	I don't need to work for money. But I can stop working right now, and I'll be fine. I could do whatever I can do to finance some of the things I want to do. So I literally go to work because I like what I do, right? So for me, it's that I really genuinely enjoy to work with my clients.

These answers are also related to some mechanisms of the meaning of work described by Rosso et.al (2010). Authenticity, when there is consistency between values, beliefs, and attitudes. Self-efficacy, when an individual has experiences of competence resulting from successful challenges. When an individual has a perception that he or she is learning, growing, and facing the adversities and challenges. Self-esteem is related to the assessment that individuals make about his or her self-worth. Furthermore, self-esteem is linked with achievements that an individual reach. The purpose referred to the directions and intentions that people give for their life. Belongingness, when individuals perceive and feel that they belong to a workgroup and organization, the work has more significance for them.

When I interviewed the participants, they did not want to change their career or job. Just P02 who was going through a hard time was thinking of changing her job. They reported that there is this possibility but something needs to happen, such as disagreements with new managements or another good job opportunity. They described that they like to be challenged and enjoy new opportunities, transforming the world. They reported:

Table 7. Participants' statements on current career

P01	At this phase of life, any significant change, I do not right now have in my mind, an eye on something other than this opportunity to have a more people leadership influence in this transition within (the non-profit organization). Doors are opening, and it's ... I'm not out knocking on doors or looking at job postings, or whatever, but I did realize that I felt like I was getting a little stable. My work in (Association) keeps me vibrant. Some of our programs are so cumbersome, the approval processes, the length of time, getting people to cooperate. The exciting part is that this could be different.
P02	I think I'd go back to that medical field just for something different. Maybe I don't know if it's been at (non-profit organization) for a long time and I'm just getting or if it's this reorganization is, this is hard, this is making it hard to motivate myself because this is July 1 right here and right now I'm about here. All of us in this box are watching us, ourselves come down the track. This is probably motivating me the most to look for a different environment and I've never been a part of something like this, but I have to believe that everybody who was a part of this decision making thought they were doing the right thing. The way this is being implemented is very, and remember I'm a kind person and the way I treat people it's not happening that way. I would say yes, most definitely I'm looking for a different
P03	I could see under some circumstances going back into corporate R and D with what I've learned from the entrepreneurial world. Because that's something I think was missing at Disney and at Mitsubishi Electric. I could see doing another startup. So, I have no desire to go into venture investment unless it's with my own money. If I make enough with the startup, but managing other people's money, no, going back into teaching, no. So, I think probably startups and maybe a big company if it was the right opportunity. Writing I'd like to do is maybe some writing. I started a novel, it's not very good.
P04	I can see finishing my career in this position. I think if I changed, it would be the same kind of job, maybe a bigger (nonprofit organization). That would be an option but that would just be because maybe then I could have even more impact than I'm having now.
P05	Which doesn't mean that it will not change. But it's really something that's not a goal. So for example, it's very likely that this company will be bought by an American company. So there are already companies interested in us and so far we are holding off. But it will probably happen between now and let's say three years. And for me that is where I worked. What kind of role is there for me? Is there a role for me? I make a decision is there something for me to pursue or do I need to start thinking about other things? Right now I'm just focused on the success of the company. And the next goal is basically to make sure that it is as sold or gets an investment. That brings us to the next level.

Table 7 continued

P06	I mean, if I change, it'll be because I might change my company because of the leadership changes they're doing and some of the things they're doing. But I would not change significantly what I do. So the biggest change I see coming into some point, I may decide to leave this company. If I decided not to do, I probably won't. I don't know. It's hard to imagine going back into a full-time consulting kind of role. I would continue that kind of advisory piece, right? So doing that. But for me, that's about it. I mean, I don't see myself going off and doing something completely different. I like the IT work.
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5.5 Perception of Performance

The participants, in general, assessed themselves as high performers at work. They showed confidence in their performance. They appraised that they developed enough skills and competencies to achieve great results. P01 rated as “outstanding“, P0 2 as “the best I can do“. P04 mentioned that “tries to be better“, P06 says she is “on the top“. It is interesting to note that P02, P04, and P05 were very open with the questions related to performance. They reflected on their performance and demonstrated that they still need to improve some skills.

I asked them the perceptions of their performances displayed by their teams and bosses. The bosses considered them high-performance professionals, “exceeding the expectation, outstanding, happy, on the top“. P05 reported that he had some disagreements about the work process with his boss, but it does not interfere in their relationship or his assessment.

The participants believed that the team thinks highly of them. The statements were:

Table 8. Participants statements on performance from the teams' perceptions

P01	If they are, my belief is that they are happy to work with me, that I'm open to new challenges, or changes, or things that we need to do. I'm reasonably responsive as long as I'm here, and not distracted with other projects. I know my boss openly compliments my performance. Like I say, he augmented my performance evaluation in a very positive way
P02	I would say they would probably put me in middle of the road, because they've seen me make some mistakes and they've also seen some things with the culture that's affected me. I would say they wouldn't give me a super great review, they wouldn't give me a bad one. I think they'd say, "Yeah, she's doing okay."
P03	Yes, some of them are repeaters. So, they obviously liked what they saw. Or they've stayed with us for quite some time. I think they would look at me and (name of his partner) and say that we're creative, determined, pleasant to work with, respectful of them and helpful to them. I think they probably also think that we're a little delusional at them. But everybody startup is delusional until it's successful. And then everybody says, "Oh, I knew all along." Probably a little they might think of us as a little disorganized. But yeah, I think most they I have not over the course of my career had too many people quit on me. And certainly not quit unfriendly, kind of exceptional other opportunities. In which case I've usually helped them.
P04	I think ...they're glad that I came in and that I'm in most areas exceeding what their expectations were of me when I came in. I could do a better job of, and I think one would be kind of listening, sitting and listening to all the viewpoints of something and taking all of those viewpoints in very deeply before I make decisions. "They probably would say sometimes I'm a little bit quick at making decisions and they'd like me to ... I think the results show that in the end my decisions are pretty good, but maybe I don't bring some of the other department heads along with me. ...I'm not taking the time sometimes to bring those other folks along. That can get a little bit into some communication, taking the time to listen to those folks and understand and also have them listen to me and why I think the decision needs to go a certain way.
P05	I think everybody will give me direct feedback on what I do or what I don't. ... But I think that I think they're really positive on how approachable I am and how I involve people decision. I'm not sure if everybody's as happy with me all the time. Because I make lot decisions for (name) the sales manager. He's a really critical guy. So we have a good working relationship. But also sometimes we really have fights. Because he really believes he wants to move the company another direction and I'm not allowing him. So I think it depends a bit on who you're talking to. But in general I think people will be positive about me.

Table 8 continued

P06	Yeah. It depends on which ones you talk to. But most of them, I will say, most of them recognize that their livelihood, right, is partially dependent on, is the person they're working with friendly and doesn't just dump crap work on them, which some of my colleagues do? I don't do that. Their livelihood depends on these clients renewing, right? They get measured on the client's renewing. So for working with me, I'm a pretty good person to work with them. I'm pretty friendly. I'll pitch in if they're out. I can cover things for them. I don't just dump work on them without including them in what's going on with the clients. So I have one person right now who's brand spanking new and is struggling in every way and with me as well. But except for her, I would say if you asked my colleagues, they would want me to work with them, me and my salespeople that I work with.
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What they are doing when they are performing at their best? The answers were related to “interacting with people, bringing positive things, giving a solution for important decisions, managing projects, organizing, building teams, working with diversity, proposing directions, creating a good atmosphere at work, being approachable, and making a good job with partners and clients“.

What factors may affect their performance? P02 answered it was the culture in the office. The literature review showed that the design of jobs, tasks, and organizational culture affects the meaning of work and influence performance, behavior, and decisions (Lysova et al., 2019; Rosso et al., 2010). She mentioned that she was experiencing a reorganization with which she did not agree and it had affected her performance. P01 referred that negative factors are related to a lot of emails to check when there are many other things to do, or people who are oppressed or treated disrespectfully. P06 and P02 were affected in terms of performance when they disagreed with the direction the organization was taking on. P03 reported feeling under stress with respect to some challenges and relationships:

The kind of thing where that I have difficulty with is personalities.” When people elevating the problem to a personal level , personal stress, that detracts from his performance. “ When it gets personal and subjective, I tend to shy away from those situations because I find those personally stressful.”

P05 shared a curious answer:

For example if it would forced to a company with really different ideas that don't match mine, I would definitely... My performance would go down significantly so much that I would upfront decide, "I will not go downwards. I will just leave right then."

As for the positive factors that affect their performance, the participants reported making a difference, having opportunities to learn, interacting with people, having great leadership, a good mission, a vision, relationships, and the approval of their clients. All statements demonstrated that it is essential for them that their work makes sense and bring significance to their lives.

The literature explored how performance is related to other attributes such as personal traits, self-efficacy, self-esteem, work environment, job satisfaction (Fossen & Vredenburg, 2011; Judge, 2009). During the interviews, the participants stated that they needed to feel they are efficient. They want to be integrated with the work environment, feel confident to lead through adversity and generate positive results. These factors may influence their performance. (Fossen & Vredenburg, 2011; Judge, 2009).

Other studies showed that job satisfaction has correlation with job performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). Another research demonstrated that work meaningfulness is "related to greater job performance and that meaningfulness mediates the relation between task significance and job performance" (Allan et al., 2016, p.172). All participants changed their job when the task or work lost the meaningfulness and also, they felt that their performance would be affected. When the participants were in conflict with their organization, probably the consistency among values, beliefs, and attitudes were affected. Also, the self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and performance. (Bandura, 1991; Rosso et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2016). P06 reported that her performance will be affected in her current job if she does not accept some directions from the organization. She stated:

So I'm willing to let my metrics suffer because I will not do something that my clients don't value, and I'm totally comfortable telling my office, "That's why I didn't do it." Because they don't want that, and I won't do it, I'm not going to force them to do something because some boss thinks it's a great idea, and they don't. They're the one paying for the service. They're the customer, and I'm going to meet their needs. But I mean, for me, that's partly, I'm confident enough to do that because I'm prompt enough to say to them, and it's okay, I've got a line I'm not going to cross. As the boss, you're going to have a line. You need me to go... I said,

"If there's a place where you need me to go here and I'm not going to go there, you can tell me to go home. I'm okay with that.

P04 had a great contribution about performance:

I think when you're doing something you enjoy, it brings you joy, and that leads towards a mission you are passionate about, to me, it's natural. You're going to like doing it and your performance is going to be better than the other two scenarios.

5.6 Reflections on Work Orientation

The last theme that emerged was what dimension of work orientation the participants were aligned with. These results were from the work orientation survey and interviews. For each work orientation, I described the comments from the participants and analyzed them based on the literature.

5.6.1 Job Orientation

Let us remember Mr. A' statement – job orientation:

He works primarily to earn enough money to make a living. If he was financially secure, he would no longer continue in his current line of work, but would really rather do something else instead. Mr. A's job is basically a necessity, a lot like breathing or sleeping. He often wishes time would pass more quickly at work. He greatly anticipates weekends and vacations. If Mr. A lived his life over again, he probably would not go into the same line of work. He would not encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. A is very eager to retire.

Bellah et al. (1985) defined that job orientation “supports a self-defined by economic success, security and all that money can buy” (p.66). The participants were not aligned with job orientation. P01 and P05 reported that they do not need the money. P02 is working partially for the money. She is looking for another job because she is feeling under pressured by big changes in her department. The other participants did not express clearly, but through their answers it seems that money is not their priority.

They answered “not at all like me“ except P04 that answered “somewhat“ to job orientation (Mr. A). I realized that they did not consider the money as the most important thing but something that is necessary. Maybe at the beginning of their careers they were focused on money and enjoyed

other aspects of life. Participants demonstrated that they take pleasure in their work activities and the job is not the only source of income.

P01 and P03 mentioned that their families worked for money and they did not follow the same path. Studies showed that the lowest levels of job satisfaction were reported by people who were living a job orientation and highest among people who were living a calling. (Lan et al., 2013).

P01 reported that he began to work for the money ("devil printer"). However, he was learning. Later, when he began in the industry, he enjoyed the job and he was also earning money. Currently, he definitely does not work for the money. He said:

I'm financially independent. I don't have to be here. I could walk out of here today, lifestyle wouldn't change. That's not likely, but first you have to be able to image, "If I don't have money," like it says, "You are working primarily to earn enough money to support your life outside of this job. It's just where the source of revenue would come for, and would really do something else instead. Right now, I don't know what else I would want to do, rather than what I'm doing.

It is plausible to think that his father was an important example for him. He mentioned him more than once during the interview explaining what kind of meaning of work he learned with his father and he did not want to go through the same experience.

My dad ended up being an example of what I did not want to do, as I observed him and his behavior. He was a very talented and capable guy, but no leadership, no stretching himself, taking risks of getting a better job. He ended up working for his brother, my uncle, pretty much all of his life, right? Work was just something to earn money, to stop and have a beer after work with his buddies. I got some good traits from him, but it was not for leadership.

P02 shared different feelings and reflections related to job, career and calling orientation. She reported that she is living too many uncertainties regarding her job position. She demonstrated that she shares a few features of each work orientation. For job orientation, she answered "not at all like me". Also, she mentioned that she got an advice from a professor that told her: "go to work because you want". She reported that she does not think of retiring like Mr. A. She reported that if she won the lottery she would work part-time because of the medical benefits and in her spare time she would do some volunteer work. On the other hand, she answered true for the following job

orientation statements: “I view my job as just a necessity of life, much like breathing or sleeping” and to “I am very conscious of what day of the work week it is and I greatly anticipate weekends.” Additionally, she answered false to “If I was financially secure, I would continue with my current line of work even if was no longer paid.” These statements are linked to people that perceive their work as connected to job orientation. She reported:

Honestly, I think I have just learned by watching what other people do in my most recent experiences in the last two years it doesn't matter how much money I make to be successful. If I go home and I feel like I've had a good day, I dealt with this problem well, I think this went well that means more than what my paycheck is going to be.

I'm active in the community and these are volunteer jobs and I can do more there, but still get my medical benefits and still have the directed problem-solving.

When we talked about Mr. A (job orientation) she shared that “right now“ she is feeling like Mr. A. It seems that she does not work for the money or expect to retire, but her current job is so difficult that she is there until the issues are solved or she finds a new opportunity. It seems that she is going through a transition between a bad situation and a better one, which she wishes to be compatible with her values.

P03 selected “not at all like me“. He reported that he never worked for the money in his life. He mentioned that he did not want to become like his parents and relatives who did that.

P04 answered “somewhat“ to job orientation. He chose true to the statement “my primary reason to work is financial “and false to “If I was financially secure, I would continue with my current line of work even if it was no longer paid”. He explained that money does not bring fulfillment, it is at the “bottom of the hierarchy “. However, he considered money as a necessity to support his family and help others. He said that work is a “mission“. It is reasonable to think that he works for the money and also for fulfillment.

P05 mentioned that money is not his main goal. He answered “not at all like me“ to job orientation. He reported that he never worked for the money. In his career, he sometimes had a low income job but he felt that it was a significant one. He said that other organizations had been offering five times the money that he was earning but he did not accept it.

P06 also answered “not at all like me“ and she shared that she is financially independent and she would follow the same line of work.

This led me to believe that money may take on different meanings during a career. The participants gave distinct meanings to money depending on their goals, opportunities, experiences, and needs. Also, it is clear that they were looking for challenges, learning from each opportunity, and were not only interested in the money.

5.6.2 Career Orientation

Below are Mr. B’ statement – career orientation:

Mr. B basically enjoys his work, but does not expect to be in his current job five years from now. Instead, he plans to move on to a better, higher level job. He has several goals for his future pertaining to the positions he would eventually like to hold. Sometimes his work seems a waste of time, but he knows that he must do sufficiently well in his current position in order to move on. Mr. B can’t wait to get a promotion. For him, a promotion means recognition of his good work, and is a sign of his success in competition with his coworkers.

For career orientation, Lan et al. (2013) verified the impact of job satisfaction and personal values on work orientation (job, career, and calling). They found that 41.9% of the participants viewed their work as a career. Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) measured the work orientation and its correlation with life satisfaction and physical health. They found career orientation respondents were the youngest. It may imply that younger employees want to work harder to advance in their career, they want to be promoted to another position.

In general, the participants were also not aligned with career orientation. Age may be an explanation considering some studies mentioned above. All of them are over 50 years old. The participants expressed some features of career orientation like to be promoted as a recognition of work. For all of them the essence of work was the challenge, to make a difference in the work environment.

Most of them did not want to be promoted or to be in another organization in five years like Mr. B. One of the features of career orientation developed by Bellah et al. (1985) is “ ... a

sense of expanding power and competency that renders work itself a source of self-esteem“ (p.66). This assumption is possible to identify in the participants’ answers. Considering self-esteem as a mechanism of the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010), the participants shared experiences, results, and accomplishments that they achieved and brought a sense of value and self-worth to their work. Through the interviews it is possible to perceive that they were motivated, had a very high self-esteem, and felt capable to contribute with the organizations (Rosso et al., 2010).

For career orientation two participants answered “a little“, one answered “somewhat“ and three “not at all like me“. P01 changed his answer from “a little“ to “somewhat“ during the interview . He acknowledged that he is over 60 years old and he does not expect any promotions, although he will be glad if it happens. He felt competitive in some way like Mr. B (to be in a high level job in five years). Although he is concerned with his health condition in five years’ time, he shared that he is “open minded“ to new opportunities and promotions because he wants to be mentally active.

P02 answered “somewhat“ to career orientation. She reported that she is competitive, she would like a promotion because for her it would be a recognition of her good work.

P03 answered “not at all like me“ to career orientation. He considered just one thing like Mr. B., “to be in a different job in five years“. It was reasonable for him to change the job but not because he was not happy, but because he wants a better one to experience a new perspective. He revealed that he loves to learn new things and to be challenged. He talked about what career he is pursuing:

...several. One of the features of my career is the breath. The number of different things, different industries I've worked in different roles.

P04 also answered, “not at all like me.“ He shared that he never thought about being in another workplace in five years like Mr. B. For him, it is too a short time to change positions. He perceived his job as a mission. P04 reported:

He says I expect to only be here five years, that's just nothing I've ever done in any of my jobs. I've never gone in with a short term thinking. ...but in my mind I'm

always coming in for the mission and to help accomplish goals. I've never viewed my work that way, that it's a ladder and I've got to climb up the ladder.

P05 was a CEO and he was not interested in moving on a high-level job like Mr. B (career orientation). He mentioned that he never felt like Mr. B and if there was something to learn he stayed in the job. He considered that he had great opportunities but it was not as deliberate as Mr. B stated: "I need to be in another position in five years". He pointed:

And I am so lucky that the moment that I started thinking about, "Oh, maybe I should consider do something else." Something came on my path. And I was able to do something else really quickly. So it's not like a deliberate action that I worked on, training for it or doing things. But it was more like when I was ready for it. I was lucky enough to find an opportunity really quickly to grab it. But it's not like a planned career path.

P06 answered "a little" to career orientation. She was not expecting to be in another job in five years because to be promoted was a reward for her. She was promoted last year and she did not feel in competition with others at the organization like Mr. B. She loves to work with her clients. She said:

A little. Yeah. In the sense that, I mean, I think for me, I guess partly, I probably don't expect to be in my job five years from now, right? But not because I get promoted to a higher job, right? So for me, it's only a little because I was trying to find something... I mean, I will say, I mean, I got promoted to vice president last year, right? We have levels in this job. That was important because it was a recognition of my work, right? I don't know, it's in competition with my coworkers isn't very true. But it mattered to me in the sense that I felt like the work I was doing with my clients and relative to my peers, so in that sense, competition, that I felt like I was a leader in our team. I was one of the most senior people, and that should be recognized, right? So I guess that's why I said a little, but kind of more last year than this year. Now, there's not really anywhere for me to go.

5.6.3 Calling Orientation

Let us remember Mr. C's statement – calling orientation:

Mr. C's work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs relating to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he

thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working, and he is not particularly looking forward to retirement.

All the participants reported that they felt like Mr. C, regarding the calling orientation. Four participants answered “somewhat“ and two “very much“. Then, these participants were aligned with calling orientation.

Consistently, studies have shown that one perceives the career as a calling to be associated with positive aspects of career development and well-being. Essentially, people live a calling demonstrate higher levels of career maturity, career commitment, work meaning, job satisfaction, life meaning, and life satisfaction (Allan & Duffy, 2014; Dik et al., 2009; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy et al., 2017). Among many definitions, calling use to be understood as a job that brings personal meaning, purpose and also to help others (Dik & Duffy, 2009, Martela & Pessi, 2018). The narratives are congruent with these studies. Although all the participants disagreed with some of the points from calling orientation.

P01 talked about his work with great pleasure and he wants to make a difference. He loves to interact with and support others. During the interview he talked about his promotions, achievements, and how he has been learning. Also, he mentioned his family as a priority in his life. He answered false to the statement: “my work is one of the most important things in my life“. He considered his family the most important thing. His body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, his admiration for his wife, the pictures of his whole family in the office, his emotion revealed how important his family is to him . It was remarkable. Although his work is intertwined his private life his family is a “priority“. He said that “vital“, like Mr. C stated, is “too much strong a word“ to attribute to work. Also, he said that he does not work at home like Mr. C just when it is urgent. in addition, he shared that he does not want to retire and he wants to make this world a better place. He said:

Let's talk about that. "Work is one of the most important things in his life." It's definitely up there. My wife is ... My family is my number one priority as you see here (pictures)...

I will take my laptop when we go there, or wherever we're going. I keep it in perspective. If there's something urgent, I always know that there are people here

that can handle it. "He feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place." That, I can agree on. Upset if he were forced to stop working." I'm not particularly looking forward to retirement. That's not me.

P02 was overwhelmed with emotion throughout the interview. I sometimes saw some tears in her eyes, mainly when she was talking about the department reorganization. She shared that she had opportunities in these 35 years, and now there are new directions and the work environment has changed a lot. She answered "somewhat" to calling orientation. It seems that it has been hard for her to manage the changes. Also, she answered false to the statements of calling: "I find my work rewarding, I tend to take my work with me on vacations, I feel in control of my work life, I enjoy talking about my work with others, If I was financially secure, I would continue with my current line of work even if I was no longer paid, When I am not at work, I do not think much about my work". She answered true for "I am very conscious of what day of the work week it is, and I greatly anticipate the weekends". This led me to believe that P02 perceives her work as a calling, however until the day of the interview she was not living a calling orientation. She expressed that "right now" she was working for the money.

This narrative of P02 demonstrates that the work environment has a huge influence on how people see work (Guevara & Ord, 1996; Rosso et al., 2010). P02 was having different feelings and challenges. She was struggling with how to manage so many disagreements in the work context. I am intrigued because this participant revealed that it is possible to have feelings from different work orientations and still be aligned with some statements from each work orientation. It seems that she was "fighting" to do better and to change the situation. However, it is essential to consider that in this case her assumptions and beliefs about work remained to fall in the category of calling orientation. It means she is not living a calling but she perceives her work as a calling (Allan et al., 2015; Duffy et al., 2013). On the other hand, I did not find in the literature a situation like P02's, a person who feels aligned with parts of each work orientation. She shared how she sees herself related to work, organization, and her commitment:

I do identify with, I do relate to a big part of my identity is working at (non-profit organization). Nine times out of 10 when I introduce myself that's what I say, "I work at (name of non-profit organization), I do this. I see how big of an impact the reputation (name of non-profit organization) has and I'm very proud to say I'm a part of it. I've been here for 35 years and I've seen the progression, but I feel as

though my complaining compared to theirs is more, but I want to be here to fix it. I want to be part of fixing it.

P03 answered “very much” to calling orientation. He did not agree with Mr. C with regard to “encourage friends and children to enter his line of work”. He said that he would encourage somebody “to figure out whether they are Mr. A, Mr. B or Mr C. and do it appropriately”. He added:

“ There is a lot of people who would not enjoy my life. But I wouldn't necessarily recommend for other people depending on their personality.”

What is interesting is that he reported that he never felt like Mr. A or Mr. B along his career. Also, when he changed jobs he felt that he had reached a plateau. He mentioned that he loves new ideas, new directions, challenges, and to be learning.

P04 recognized his work as a mission and believes that the values from the organization should be shared. For him, the environment should promote good relationships, help others, bring joy, and be rewarding. He answered “very much” to calling orientation and he shared that most of the time he felt like Mr. C:

I'm pleased with this because of the mission. Like I said, I believe in the mission. I share the values of the organization. I think likewise the organization shares mine, so it's a good relationship for both of us. It's a vital part of who I am, yes. I've seen that in all of my position and I was proud ...

He disagreed with the idea of bringing work home and he had an interesting explanation for that:

Take my “work home with me”, now I'll be honest there, I don't do that as much. I try to get it done. I take it home in my mind. It's in my mind but I'm not the type anymore that goes home and opens up my computer or that starts opens my briefcase. The other thing I talked about balance in life, my kids need me when I'm home. They don't need my briefcase. On vacation I would also say rarely. I mean to me that's part of that balance. When I go on vacation, I try to turn work off because that allows me to come back to work fully charged up to do it.

He also added that he aspired to make the world a better place and he did not want to retire:

I think because of the mission and my help against that mission we're making the world a better place. I can imagine retirement if it's like a vacation, but if it just

means sitting home doing nothing, no I can't imagine it. I would be involved some place. That this is the overall vision that I like the mission of the work, I like what I can put towards it. It's a major part of my life but I've got other parts too. That's why I try not to let work go into those other parts too much.

He brought reflections on the relationship between money and work enjoyment:

I think pretty much it's always been like mister C ever since. I can't remember any of my jobs where I just said oh I'm just doing this for the money. No. No. To me, it has to be rewarding. It's at least eight hours a day, if not more, in the job and you want that to be a joyful time, a rewarding time internally as well as how you're helping other people. I can't imagine it any other way. ... I've always felt like whatever I do, and I talked this with my son and daughter all the time, whatever I take on regardless of the reason, I want to do a good job at it.

Regarding calling and performance he said:

I think again those other two didn't affect it in a negative way, but I think when you're doing something you enjoy, it brings you joy, and that leads towards a mission you are passionate about, to me, it's natural. You're going to like doing it and your performance is going to be better than the other two scenarios.

In terms of relationship with work he reported that the job should be a positive experience:

It's never been a negative person at all. I think to pick a job where it's one of the most important things of your life, it's going to be positive. There's some people that might answer that and they do take it home with them and they allow it to consume all the other hours of the day. I love it so much, it causes me to ignore my family. Then it's a mistake. Then I don't ... But for me it's not the case because I don't allow it to creep into those other areas of my life too much. That's just always allowed me to keep the performance and motivation up.

For him, besides the money, there is also a reputation to keep when you have a job and want to follow a career. He said:

If the reason I took it on which was to make money, I'm going to do a good job. Yeah because that to me is kind of like my reputation.

When he changed jobs he wanted to try something else and it was necessary for different reasons as he came back to the US to take care of his mother, disagreements within the organization, among other reasons. Money is not priority to him but it is important. Bringing work home is not part of his daily life, and the job mission and values are relevant to him.

P05 answered “somewhat” to calling orientation. He considered his work very important. However, he mentioned that he understands that it is necessary to keep a balance between work and private life:

I need that balance in my life. So on one hand, I recognize, yes, work is really important for me and I do it with all my heart. But the other hand I really need to be able to get away with my family and my wife and just joy being outdoor, biking, walking, working the garden.

And this is what he added about the relationship between work and family. He said:

I have been lucky enough to switch between jobs. Very different jobs. Because the roles I had were very different in their nature. So I learned a lot of that. And it also enabled me to build up a good life for my family which is also important. So, I have three sons. They're now on their own. They all studied and they all have jobs and girlfriends and houses and so I think that is a... I'm still there with the same wife I had 40 years ago. So I consider myself being really lucky. Both in work and private life.

P06 answered “somewhat” to calling orientation and she reported that she loves her work, and she considers it “one of the first things”. She reported that she never felt like Mr. A – job orientation. She acknowledged that jobs were important:

Somewhat. I think my work is important part of my life. I am happy that I'm in this line of work. One of the first things that I tell, it's probably true. I mean, I tend to describe who I am around by what I do, right?

When she changed jobs she was not feeling connected with the organization and she felt that if it was sufficiently she left the company. She explained:

I think I've always had the situation where I was in a job I didn't like. I left it and went to a different job. Maybe doing in the same line of work, right, in the same field. ...I don't know that I've ever though felt very much like work seems like a waste of time, knows he must do it sufficiently well to move on. ? I recognize that what I wanted wasn't... I wanted something different, right? So I mean, when I left.

Regarding performance and calling orientation, she stated that in some jobs she did not follow all the guidance from the company, or she was in disagreement, then her performance was affected. However, she believed that she was right and then she decided to change jobs. She always used her good relationship with companies and professionals to get a new job and she usually

possessed the skills that people were looking for. She said that she is focused on making a difference and that she likes what she has been doing.

As for friends, all participants reported that their friends are from other places. They are not like Mr. C whose friends are from his workplace. During their careers they have built some relationships at work, but most of their friends are from other contexts.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has described the various themes that emerged from the data analysis. They included background, work experience, career decisions, leadership, feelings and the meaning of work, perceptions of performance, and work orientation. The next chapter will summarize the study and its results, providing implications to executive coaches, organizations, professionals, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY, OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has investigated the lived experiences of leaders, exploring the kinds of perceptions and meanings on work they created during their careers. Through the surveys and interviews, each question was addressed to reveal the phenomenon and to make emerge new knowledge to executive coaches, counselors, and organizations. This chapter provides a summary of the study, its significance, the research questions, the methodology, and its implications. Furthermore, conclusions were reached on the perspectives of the meaning of work, work orientation, performance, and recommendations for future studies.

6.1 Research Question

The question for this study was: How do work orientation and leader perception of performance interact?

6.2 Significance of this Study

How leaders perceive their work regarding the three work orientation dimensions (job, career, or calling) has implications for leaders, organizations, and executive coaches. Based on a literature review, I found little attention had been focused on understanding work orientation and leaders' perception of performance. Most of the studies took almost exclusively quantitative approaches.

Since the nature of this study is related to work orientation and performance I chose to use a phenomenological approach in the investigation phase. I applied two surveys: one on work orientation and the other on performance. Afterwards, I invited some participants to an in-depth interview. I believed that by means of this approach I could have a better understanding of the meaning of work to leaders, how they perceived their work and how they perceived their performance related to work orientation. I hope that this study will support executive coaches and organizations to develop and evaluate new interventions, developing career plans and increasing performance.

6.3 Methodology of this Study

I used the tools of qualitative research methodology in the form of interviews and surveys. The phenomenology perspective assisted in examining the participants' experience. Phenomenology investigates the realities lived by the individuals. This method explains the meaning of human phenomena and understands the lived structures of meanings (Manen, 1990).

6.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was based upon Giorgi's procedural recommendations (1997). The data collected was analyzed in three different steps to answer the research question. In the first step, the work orientation each participant was aligned with. Second, the participants' self-perception of performance related to their work orientation. Finally, the interviews were transcribed, coded, analyzed and triangulated with the data from the survey. Then, the themes emerged across the data sources.

6.5 Invariant Themes

The data analysis presented the results of the surveys and interviews. The analysis included the textural and structural descriptions for each participant. From the data sources some major themes emerged. They are role models, backgrounds, work experiences and career decisions, leadership, feelings and the meanings of work, perception of performance, and reflections on work orientation.

6.6 Outcomes and Essence

Through their lived experience, the participants "connected things", shared concepts about leadership, money, relationship, performance, meanings of work, and career development. They became conscious of a unique perspective on work. They interpreted their experiences, created perceptions and meanings about their work and their lives.

The participants were aligned with the calling orientation. They described their work as integral to their lives, involving their families in decisions, helping people, keeping volunteer jobs, and trying to make a difference. Several studies presented in chapter 2 showed that people who

are identified with the calling orientation at work have more significance in their individuals' life as a whole.

The participants shared some dreams concerning their careers. I assumed that they would talk about dreams as something huge in their lives – like the “American Dream”. However, I realized that “this dream” was increasingly built on opportunities, interests, acquired knowledge, and advice from other people. The dream was not the end of the road - an end in itself, actually it was just a way of thinking, just a beginning to a career.

The participants were influenced by their families and teachers when they were choosing their career paths to follow. I realized that the first groups with which they had contact, like families and schools had a huge influence on their careers choices. Their decisions were supported by a set of beliefs and a complex values system. They had some role models, not only examples of whom to follow but of whom not to follow, either. Also, the culture, the labor market, the opportunities, their motivation for working, and skills influenced them.

During the interview, they had opportunities to report their experiences at work. They expressed great emotion when they were describing them, they talked from the bottom of their hearts, and they used words such as pleasure, joy, happiness, impact on others, contribution to organizations, helping people, and making a difference. They demonstrated that they are proud of their choices and of how they built their careers. There is no evidence that work is seen in a negative way even when they were resolving conflicts or adversities. I would say that they perceived their work as something positive in their lives and it supported them in “who they are”.

Regarding leadership, all the participants focused on the importance of having a good team. That means, to offer them development opportunities, to respect and support all of them. In addition, they expressed that a good leader needs to be prepared to cope with conflicts, frustrations, and keep the group well motivated. It seems that if they are with a calling orientation relationship are part of their goals. It is reasonable to think that they try to integrate people, processes, and results. Their performance perception drawn from the team is that they play their roles very well as leaders. Even though P02 is going through a hard time, she considered herself as a leader with

a reasonable performance. She reported that she is doing the best she can despite the adversities that she has been facing.

The participants inferred that work meaning and life meaning need to be integrated. They shared that work has a huge significance and it also brings meaning to their private lives. P01, P04, P05, and P06 mentioned that they made job choices that would benefit their careers and also their families. P05 reported that the employment is important to support his family and it provides him with “outdoor activities”. P01, P02, and P04 reported that their volunteer jobs are considered a major activity in their lives. P01 has a job in an association, in which she feels very excited. I would say that all of them perceived their work as having a huge significance, they shared examples of great number of opportunities that they had at work which gave their lives a meaning.

During the interview, all the participants shared their meanings of work and how they perceived their work. When they changed their jobs, they demonstrated that they wanted to keep their motivation and well-being. They wanted to improve their skills and to be challenged. They intended to grow by developing new skills. It led me to think that they desired to find personal meaning. This is the case of P06, who while as a CIO, was in disagreement with the organization’s direction and left her job. P04, and P05 did not identify ways to continue in their jobs for political reasons. Maybe one or all the factors discussed in Chapter 2 such as their autonomy, sense of efficacy, sense of making a positive contribution, sense of caring for relationships were affected. Factors that change the view and meaningfulness of work. All the participants were searching for growth and purpose along their careers. The purpose is a highlight to the participants, and it is related to their objectives and achievements. They showed that work needs to bring a sense to life.

As acknowledged in Chapter 5, one of the mechanisms of the meaning of work is the values. It is worth to mention that P02 revealed that she was in disagreements with the values of the organization. When I interviewed her, she said that her values, beliefs, and motivations were affected by the new organization structure and consequently affected how she perceived the significance of work. Similar statements were made by P01, P02, P04, P05, and P06. They kept their motivation and performance when they shared the values of the organization. The sources and mechanisms of the meaning of work described in chapter 2 were expressed in different ways

by the participants and it could be understood that their work experience was directed to others or self.

Based on this research I would argue that self-esteem as a mechanism of work was shown by all the participants. They demonstrated self-confidence on their work choices and they assessed how much their work was worth, their achievements, and they reported a sense of value of the work. They were aligned with the calling orientation. Therefore, it seems that the sense of value, sense of efficacy, and a meaning at work influenced them in how they perceive their performance. They considered themselves high performers.

The participants demonstrated that they were engaged in self-exploration looking for preferences, interests, values, models to follow and to build a sense for their careers. The participants reported that learning, new challenges, contributing with organizations, among others were present in their decisions. They revealed a sense of self-exploration as discussed by Hirshi (2011) providing career confidence and engagement. In the beginning, they were motivated by external demands such as money itself. Afterwards they demonstrated that their choices were directed to purposes, meanings, and goals achievements. Most of the participants commented that they wanted to support others and bring new ideas to the world. However, I argue that they shared thoughts directed to the fulfillment of their personal interests. Some of them did not express clearly that their work was linked to a pro-social orientation, although others demonstrated that work was both oriented to personal interests and to making a difference in society.

The essence of job orientation is focused on money, retirement, and people who perceive their work just as a financial source. Through the surveys and interviews, it is reasonable to think that money is part of the working life and it takes different meanings, weights, and importance throughout a career. The participants showed that they worked for the money. However, at the same time they were learning and looking for meanings at work. It is possible to choose a career based on money like P01 and P04 reported and after enjoying the work, feel confident, and have feelings of fulfillment. This way I would say that a person may be aligned with job and calling orientations at the same time, it means, living both dimensions. It seems that money is not a priority, but some of it should be considered.

In addition, most of the participants considered a significant purpose as essential to accepting a job. It was more significant than to move upward in their careers as a career orientation suggested. Although P01 talked about many promotions that he obtained during his career and P02 reported that a promotion is the recognition of a job well done, they did not feel aligned with career orientation. For instance, the participants explained that they did not think about being in another position in five years. Their focus was not only on achieving better positions, but also on having a job in which they may get fulfillment and are able to cause an impact on others.

These participants are from a generation that witnessed the introduction and the huge development of technology. They turned to this field with great perspectives of career growth. They reported that they had a lot of opportunities creating a strong background and I would say that they developed self-confidence regarding their performance. In addition, as they faced new challenges, they built new meanings and understandings about work. Their self-confidence supported them in their achievements. Each experience helped them to improve their next, also improving their performance. The relationship between these factors led me to think in a circle of meanings: I assume that from this cycle of meanings performance is also influenced by meanings.

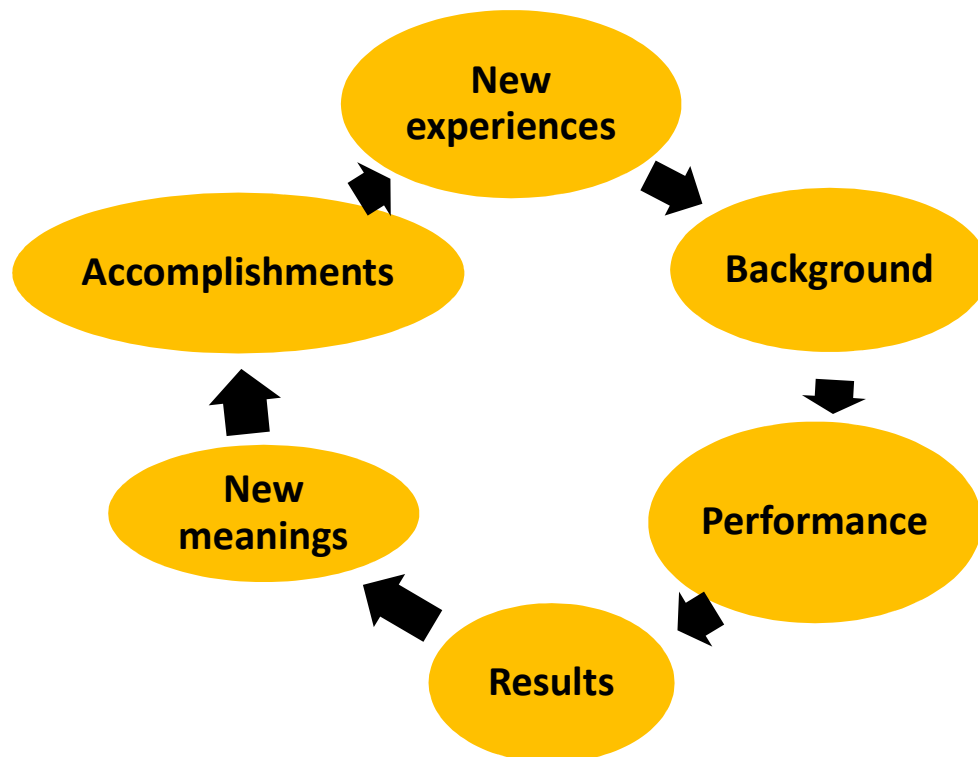


Figure 1. Cycle of Meanings

This cycle represents the evolution of the creation of new meanings which defines how people perceive their work. These participants were changing their meanings during their careers and they were aligned with a calling orientation. That also showed that it is possible to change the perception of work through goals achievement, working context, the adversities faced, stages of life, and work environment, leading to new meanings and becoming aligned to different dimensions of work orientation.

The participants' meanings changed during their careers. Although, through the surveys and interviews they were aligned to a calling orientation, in which work is integrated with life and work is seen as a mission to contribute with society, they felt aligned with parts of each work orientation in different phases of their careers. P01 perceived his work as calling oriented but he shared that in the industry he was promoted many times and he desired it. It led me to believe that prestige and status were important for him as with a career orientation ...“ 35 years of steady progression”. P02 I reported exhaustively in chapter 5, that she had some features from job, career, and calling orientation, P04 somewhat aligned with a job orientation in terms of earning money and also with calling due to viewing the job as a “mission“, and P03 and P05 are calling oriented. Although they considered their work an important part of their lives, they also enjoyed life in other places, they had other activities outside the job.

My issue is the necessity to create a new dimension to embrace the experience that people are living in our decade. The statement of each dimension of work orientation could be reviewed to fit in a new work context. A dimension that includes part of each one or something between career and calling, and/or job and calling orientation. Participants searched for meanings at work to feel a sense of accomplishment, also to grow and have money.

6.7 Implications for Executive Coaching, Counselors, and Organizations

After this study it is possible to present some ideas that may support executive coaches, counselors, and organizations.

Executive coaches and counselors can explore the meaning of work by applying the survey to their professionals. These surveys may help to clarify issues related to meanings that people

draw from work. These meanings may affect performance, the ability to resolve conflicts, how to perceive new projects, among other issues. Furthermore, it makes it easier to understand the work expectations that professionals have and how they perceive their quality of life and time at the workplace. These meanings make a real difference when people are planning their careers or making decisions.

Organizations may use this perspective of work orientation to define the enterprise's vision and mission. What kind of organization they want to become may change the journey and the purpose of an organization. What is the perspective they adopt? Is profit the sole objective of the business? Is growth its target? Is it devoted to the well-being of the community? What kind of work orientation is an organization aligned with?

In addition, each job has a specific description, requires certain competencies, sets the tasks to be accomplished and the goals to be achieved. The work orientation survey may be applied on the hiring process to align the expectations/meaning between candidates and organizations and minimize conflicts. The way people perceive their work can make a difference when an organization is hiring. Also, it can help significantly employees who will be promoted or in charge of new projects concerning the results if their new job is aligned with their view of work. Also, this perspective may be useful to develop training, discuss meanings at work, avoid many issues related to job satisfaction, commitment, engagement, motivation, among others.

6.8 Recommendations for Future Research

During this research, many issues came to light. I tried to keep my focus and answer my research question. However, many points could have been done differently or better. The following are acknowledgments of these.

Review of each work orientation: There is the need to analyze if the features of each work orientation are related to work environment, professions, and career development in the current days. It seems that some statements are not congruent with the concepts of work orientation, labor market, and current careers. Then, It is necessary to analyze the job, career, and calling statements and the 18 statements of each one, because it is relevant to bring understandings of the meanings

at work. While I present these thoughts, I acknowledge a caution, but I believe it may merely be studied deeply in future research.

Create new dimensions of work orientation: The three dimensions seem not to be enough to encompass the meaning of work and express as people perceive their work. The participants showed that it is possible to experience one or two dimensions at the same time.

The participants see their work as a calling orientation, but they mentioned money, spending time with their families, working as a priority, to fill a mission, and work for the well-being of the society. They reported that they tried to keep the balance between their working and private lives. This might be due to the fact that they are in a new age and stage in their careers, they are more confident to set limits to friends, family, entertainment, and work. Then, I believe it is necessary to create new dimensions to encompass how people are living the work that affects their meanings.

Work orientation related to self-efficacy, self-esteem, and purpose. The participants demonstrated a high-level sense of these factors and maybe it led them to perceive as scoring higher in their performance. In future researches, it is reasonable to measure self-efficacy, self-esteem, and *Values, beliefs, and work orientation* purpose related to work orientation and as mediators of performance. For future researches it is relevant to analyze what kind of values and beliefs related to work orientation people create and base their decisions on. The idea is to search for a system of values and beliefs that may influence decisions related to the meaning of work, including work orientation. P02 is an example of that, as explained in chapter 5. For her it is important to be engaged in work and at that time, she did not feel the sense of values in terms of consistency and agreement with the organization. She did not realize congruence in this system changing her view of work.

The meaning of work and crisis. Due to the time limitations to this study, I was unable to explore deeply how they perceive their work when they are going through conflicts, indecisions, adversities, or when they were fired. What are their issues related to work orientation? If an individual is with a calling orientation how he or she perceives work when they are living a crisis in the career?

At the end of the interview, I asked for feedback. I invited them to speak freely about the surveys, interviews, and anything that they considered important for this study. Below, follows the feedback from the participants about this research:

P01

I think it's amazing that you've allowed me to talk as freely. You're very receptive. Your body language is that you're attentive. You give me a ... I feel comfortable talking about these, all of my personal feelings about my life experience here. In some ways I always enjoy ... I mean, all of us enjoy talking about ourselves. I mean, there are good and bad things that happen to us in life, but recalling the good things and how you got here, I think is a positive experience. I'm glad I committed the time to do it.

P02

I was excited when you reached out to me, because I'm, literature and writings and work in this field excites me, and now I'm remembering when you said did I consider a career change, I thought of quitting my job applying to be a grad student at Stanford and to work for this study under this guy that's written these books.

P03

I thought the questions were... yeah. I mean, I think that it's caused me to evaluate, it'll be interesting to see when you talk to other people. You think about stuff that you don't normally articulate. And it's kind of like you do it by instinct. And so, you've given me some stuff to think about. Reflecting on my own decisions and motivations. And there's part of that that's slightly uncomfortable of course. But I knew that going in to this. But yeah, but I'm glad I did it. It's good every so often to reflect and to be honest with yourself about who you are. And what you're not, and yeah.

P04

Well I always like interviews more because they're not as structured or as confining. I mean like there we see that it sounded like I probably picked a wrong answer. In an interview, you might challenge me. Both of them, i thought the interview and the surveys were very well thought out in terms of how the questions were asked. I'm not sure ... I remember when I first did the survey, it surprised me because I thought I was just registering and it popped up. I thought okay I guess I'll go ahead and do the survey now. I don't think it gave me a chance to do it later. That was just a little bit of a surprise, but no I thought it was good. Do you have a hypothesis yet for your research? Have you put together that? That wasn't clear to me in the questions, but I knew that you probably had a process behind it. I liked that you brought the answers to my survey, so you could challenge me as we talked to see where there were maybe some inconsistencies. I think that was good. I'm trying to

think back to the survey, whether there was anything ... No, I think you've done a good job by asking follow ups to draw out some kind of information and history.

P05

I think most of the feedback... I don't remember the survey that well. So I filled it and so probably I don't know a lot about that anymore. So yeah. I liked the interview. Yeah. And I do collaborate with research more often. Because I think is really important to people who have the ability to learn. So we're talking about I got to know a guy in Egypt and he was working on his MBA looking for CEOs in the western front interview. And I was the only one that wanted to help him. So I became his coach in there. And then I really liked that. And so I still am in touch with him. So I really like to do like that. I think it's really important to help people out that are in another phase of their career. And of course and for me it's also really interesting. I do hope that if you were finished your research I will get the results of that.

P06

Yeah. I thought it worked really well. I think you kind of took it from one question to the next, and you got me... I mean, you asked the right questions and got me to think about things and open up. So I felt very comfortable doing that. So yeah, no worries.

This feedback provided an example of the methodology that I applied, which was the phenomenology methodology. They shared what they lived as a unique experience, talking, thinking, assessing their experience, creating new meanings, perceiving the work from different perspectives. My role was to analyze these perspectives and to contribute to the community of researchers, professionals, leaders, executive coaches, counselors, and organizations.

While I am writing this conclusion, I am considering how this research touched my heart. I believe that affection and hard work make a difference. What affected me were the participants. They were open to my questions, there were involved and curious about the results, they shared meanings, feelings, and beliefs. They taught me, they “took me from a place and sent me to another, a place that was never thought of “. Sometimes I was puzzled but gradually everything became clear, and now a new significance has come up concerning the way to perceive and act in my work life. Therefore, regarding this aspect, this study seems to provide new reflections on the meaning of work and performance.

APPENDIX A. SURVEYS

Part 1 – Demographics data

1-What is your gender?

Female Male Other

2-What is your age?

20 - 24 years old

25 - 34 years old

35 – 40 years old

41 – 50 years old

51 – 60 years old

61 years old or older

3-What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

High School graduate

Completed some college

Trade/technical/vocational training

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Completed some postgraduate

Master's degree

Professional degree

Doctorate

4-What best describes the type of organization you work for?

For-profit

Non-profit

Government

Other

5-Which of the following most closely matches your job title?

Supervisor

Manager

Senior Manager

Director

Vice President

Senior Vice President

C-level executive (CIO, CTO, COO, CMO, Etc)

President or CEO

Owner

None of the above: (please specify)

6-How many years do you have a leadership position?

Less 5 years

6 – 10 years

11- 15 years

16 – 20 years

21 – 25 years

26 years or more

Part II - Work orientation (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997)

Paragraphs Describing Job, Career, and Calling

Job

“Mr. A works primary to earn enough money to support his life outside of his job. If he was financially secure, he would no longer continue with his current line of work, but would really rather do something else instead. Mr. A’s job is basically a necessity of life, a lot like breathing or sleeping. He often wishes the time would pass more quickly at work. He greatly anticipates weekends and vacations. If Mr. A lived his life over again, he probably would not go into the same line of work. He would not encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. A is very eager to retire.”

Career

“Mr. B basically enjoys his work, but does not expect to be in his current job five years from now. Instead, he plans to move on to a better, higher level job. He has several goals for his future pertaining to the positions he would eventually like to hold. Sometimes his work seems a waste of time, but he knows that he must do sufficiently well in his current position in order to move on. Mr. B can’t wait to get a promotion. For him, a promotion means recognition of his good work, and is a sign of his success in competition with his coworkers”.

Calling

“Mr. C’s work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs relating to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working, and he is not particularly looking forward to retirement”.

Questions to answer true or false about job, career, and calling:

“I find my work rewarding

I am eager retire

My work makes the world a better place

I am very conscious of what day of the work week it is and I greatly anticipate weekends.

I tend to take my work with me on vacations

I expect to be in a higher level job in 5 years

I would choose my current work life again if I had the opportunity

I feel in control of my work life

I enjoy talking about my work to others

I view my job primarily as a stepping-stone to other jobs

My primary reason for working is financial—to support my family and lifestyle

I expect to be doing the same work in 5 years

If I was financially secure, I would continue with my current line of work even if was no longer paid.

When I am not at work, I do not think much about my work

I view my job as just a necessity of life, much like breathing or sleeping.

I never take work home with me

My work is one of the most important things in my life.

I would not encourage young people to pursue my kind of work”

Part III Performance (Abramis, 1994)

Technical Performance

“In the last (seven days week you worked), how well were you . . .

1. handling the responsibilities and daily demands of your work?
2. making the right decisions?
3. performing without mistakes?
4. getting things done on time? “

Scale (1) Very poorly, (2) Not very well, (3) All right, (4) Very well, (5) Exceptionally well

Social Performance

“In the last (seven days week you worked), how well were you . . .

1. getting along with others at work?
2. avoiding arguing with others?
3. handling disagreements by compromising and meeting other people half-way? “

Scale (1) Very poorly, (2) Not very well, (3) AU right, (4) Very well, (5) Exceptionally well

APPENDIX B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. Introduction to the participant

This study aims to investigate how people make meaning of their work. This interview is intended to last 50 or 60 minutes. The name of the participants will be kept strictly confidential.

Thanks for your participation.

2. Work Experience Questions

Career - At the beginning

1. First, tell me a little bit about yourself and career. When you were a kid, what did you want to be? Until when?
2. What was your dream career when you were a teenager?
3. What person or persons were important for you in terms of career? What did they talk to you about? How did they impact your decision?
4. Currently, what career are you pursuing?

Career – Work experience

Now, tell me about your jobs.

1. How many years have you been working?
2. When did you begin to work?
3. What was your first job? Describe it. Describe what did you do, if you liked it or not, how many years, why did you change?
4. Second job,
5. Third job
6. Fourth, and so on.
7. What is your current job? How many years are you working in this job?
8. What do you like in your job? What do you not like in your job?
9. During these years that you are working, what career changes that you consider important? Why?

Career - Leadership

1. When did you begin your career as a leader?
2. What did you think about leadership when you started in this role?
3. Currently, what do you think about leadership?
4. What would say about you as a leader?
5. What are your main characteristics as a leader?

3. The meaning of work

1. What drives or motivates you in your current career?
2. What is the meaning of work to you?
3. Currently, would you like to change your career? Why?
4. Do you think to pursue another career? If so, what career? Why?

4. Performance

1. Currently, what is your assessment of your performance at work?
2. Usually, what factors do you believe affect your performance?
3. What job/task do you consider that you have the best performance? What are you doing when you are in your best performance?
4. What do you think that your team and/or boss would talk about your performance?

5. Questions about work orientation's survey

1. Why did you choose (I speak what his or her choice was) for Mr. A?
2. Why did you choose (I speak what his or her choice was) for Mr. B?
3. Why did you choose (I speak what his or her choice was) for Mr. C?
4. In your career did you feel like Mr. A, B and/or C? When? Why?
5. In your career when did you show the best performance and when worst. What kind of job? In that time did you feel as Mr. A. B or C?
6. Could you tell me what happened when did you change from Mr. ... to Mr.? What changed? Did you have another opportunity? Why did you change?
7. What changed in your thinking?
8. Did you change your performance when you changed from Mr. ... to Mr....?
9. How do you feel as Mr. ...?

10. Would you like to change something in your career? What? Why?
11. Could you say something more about that?

6. Ending Question

We are finishing the interview. Would you like to add something else? Do you have any question?

Thank you for your help. I appreciate your time and attention!

APPENDIX C. CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Work Orientation and its Relationship to Performance of Leaders

James L. Mohler

Computer Graphics Technology

Purdue University

Key Information

Please take time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions to the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form, be sure you understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate how leaders perceive and understand their work. Also, what is the relationship between the perception and significance of the work and performance of the leader. The participant will spend 25 minutes to answer surveys. Some participants will be invited to the interview and it will take between 50 minutes and 60 minutes.

This research should benefit leaders, organizations, and executive coaches. First, when leaders understand how the significance of work affect their professional life they can assess their career and define new goals, proposals, and plans. Second, organizations can change strategies towards promoting, retaining, and developing their leaders. Finally, executive coaches and career counselors can make interventions, and help leaders to build a solid career with plans and effective actions.

Additional explanations may be more detailed in the sections below.

What is the purpose of this study?

Our participants are leaders/managers and we would like to enroll 30 people in this study.

This research project will take place over a 6 month period.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will answer 3 surveys. First is about demographics data (age, education, time in leadership). Second, a survey about how the participants perceive their work. Third, how the participants perceive their performance at work.

If you accepted to participate follow the activities, you will be invited to participate.

- 1- You received an email from Mrs. Coutinho, a graduate student, with more details on research. Then, you will be invited to answer the surveys. For these surveys, we will use Qualtrics. It is an online tool to host surveys.
- 2- Some of the participants will receive an email to participate in an interview.

How long will I be in the study?

- 1- You will spend to answer the surveys for 25 minutes. If you are invited to an interview it is intended to last 50 or 60 minutes.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

You may feel discomfort when you are answering questions about performance or your perception of their work. However, it is important to mention that this research project is not an assessment of career, perceptions, or meanings. There are no correct answers or score. What the participant answer will be great. To interview, the participants invited will choose the time and place where is convenient for them, keeping confidentiality. Also, we will offer a room at Purdue if they prefer.

Breach of confidentiality is always a risk with data, but we will take precautions to minimize this risk in the confidentiality section.

Are there any potential benefits?

You may enjoy answering the surveys or being interviewed. You may reflect on the meaning of your work, your beliefs, choices, plans, and perceptions that you did not think before.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

The interview will be recorded. The participants will not be identified. Only the researchers will have access to the original interview data (audio records). Written information will be de-identified by using fictional names. Audio records will be destroyed latest by December 31st, 2019. The audio data will not be used for any further studies. The de-identified, transcribed data will be kept indefinitely. The written documents will have no identification marks.

The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. Records (e.g., Consent Forms) will be kept for at least 3 years after study completion.”

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

If you agree to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Just, send an email that you don't want to participate.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact

James L. Mohler – Ph.D. – Computer Graphics Technology – Young Hall 170
jlmohler@purdue.edu – 765.496.6071

Cristina Voigt Coutinho = Technology Leadership & Innovation – cvoigtco@purdue.edu 765 775 3833

To report anonymously via Purdue’s Hotline see www.purdue.edu/hotline

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

Do you consent to participate in this study?

Yes, I consent to participate in the study.

No, I do not consent to participate in the study.

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