Thematic Narrative Research to Explore the Traits that Help Shape an Innovator, Entrepreneur, and Philanthropist

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This study outlines the use of a phenomenological interviewing process, as defined by Irving Seidman (Seidman, 2019), to explore the traits that contribute to shaping an individual as an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. The study involved interviewing Dr. Andy Hafer, Founder of Dynamic Communities Inc., DCE Productions Inc., Synapse, and other startup companies. The resulting data was analyzed thematically to gain insight into the observed vital traits. More specifically, the interview was focused on Dr. Hafer's early life experiences to the current day. The authors used inductive coding to examine the interview transcripts to thematically code the responses, including Initial Coding and Value Coding for the first cycle and Focused Coding for the second cycle. In this study, the coding produced 28 initial codes clustered into six categories and eventually four main themes, i.e., family, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship.

Reviewing the main themes from different perspectives, including attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1967; Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), generativity theory (Somerstein, 2010), self-leadership theory (Manz, 1986), and entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000), the study finds that combining family influences, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship can help shape individuals into innovators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists. This study contributes to scholarship by emphasizing the critical role of community leadership and entrepreneurship in developing successful entrepreneurs who can also positively impact their communities. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of action-oriented entrepreneurship and encourages entrepreneurs to recognize the value of being community leaders in achieving their goals. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study can help aspiring entrepreneurs to be more aware of the essential traits and skills needed for success in their endeavors.

> "The Most Powerful Force in the Universe is People Coming Together in Community"
> – Dr. Andy Hafer, CEO and Founder of Dynamic Communities.

Keywords: Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Philanthropy, Innovator, Learning, Servant leader, Faith, Family impact, Community leadership, Attachment theory, Generativity theory, Entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme, Self-leadership.

On February 10, 2023, at the Muma College of Business of the University of South Florida, the authors interviewed Dr. Andy Hafer, a serial entrepreneur, focusing on his early life experiences to the current day. This interview gathers insights into potential influences of his life history that shaped Dr. Hafer as an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. The authors used inductive coding to examine the interview transcripts to thematically code the responses, including Initial Coding and Value Coding for the first cycle and Focused Coding for the second cycle. In this research, the coding process resulted in 28 preliminary codes grouped into six categories. These categories are further distilled into four primary themes: family, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship. These themes can help find the ideal components that shape an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist.

In the following sections, the authors start with a brief narrative biography of Dr. Hafer, highlighting his significant accomplishments that are particularly relevant to the interview topic. Then, the authors provide a section on methods and analysis during which research design, method, data collection, and coding transcripts analysis are discussed. They applied the thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and followed the six phases of analysis when coding and analyzing the empirical data.

A summary table is created to document how these authors coded the data of interview transcripts, formed categories, and finally extracted the main themes. A preliminary mind map is designed to show their thinking process and to visualize the connections. Finally, a conceptual model is developed to show the relationships and their connections.

In the discussion section, the authors first present a content analysis of the four main identified themes, then sensemaking these themes to show their conformity with attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1967; Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), generativity theory (Somerstein, 2009), self-leadership theory (Manz, 1986), and the entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000). The study finds that family influences, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship can help shape individuals into future innovators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists. This study contributes to scholarship by emphasizing the important role of community leadership and entrepreneurship in developing successful entrepreneurs who can also positively impact their communities. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of action-oriented entrepreneurship and encourages entrepreneurs to recognize the value of being community leaders in achieving their goals. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study can help aspiring entrepreneurs to be more aware of the essential traits and skills needed for success in their endeavors. The authors also acknowledge their limitations in this interview research, present three important observations from their in-depth reflections after the interview, and highlight potential areas for future research.

Dr. Andy Hafer

Dr. Hafer was the CEO and founder of Dynamic Communities – an organization that supports the establishment and growth of communities. He exited that company in 2018 and founded DCE Productions, which focused on delivering high-quality events and experiences. He recently co-founded Synapse – a groundbreaking platform to connect people in Florida's early-stage ecosystem. Hafer's 30-year career in technology includes entrepreneurial start-ups, significant company roles, and not-for-profits. As past CEO of Tampa Bay Technology Forum, he saw first-hand the opportunities for ecosystem players to collaborate in a world-class style (Hafer, 2023; Linkedin, 2023; Synapse).

Dr. Hafer was born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. His family moved to Florida when he was five years old, and he lived in Ft. Walton Beach and Tampa during elementary and middle school years. His high school years were in Englewood, Florida. He was proud to be the valedictorian of his high school. Dr. Hafer's father was a Christian pastor, leading him to believe that his entire life was inherently intertwined with religion and faith. His deceased mother and father, who is still alive, influenced his early life and continued to influence him, helping to drive the entrepreneurial risk-taking characteristics he has today. Dr. Hafer is married to Eileen, and they have three children: two sons and a daughter. Dr. Hafer had a lovely story about how he met Eileen. He proudly spoke of her drives and good works.

Dr. Hafer has a purpose in life, primarily spurred on by his parents, his choice of spouse, and close family relationships. He made great efforts in nonprofit businesses, including Synapse, Village of Hope, and other charitable organizations. The strong sense of community and family motivates Dr. Hafer to actively support his wife in two influential nonprofit projects she conceived, IMatter and UMatter.

Dr. Hafer earned three degrees from USF, including a B.S. in Electrical Engineering, an M.B.A., and a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) (Foundation, 2023).

The Interview

The authors conducted a 45-minute interview with Dr. Hafer, focusing on his early life experiences to the current day, and asked Dr. Hafer to reconstruct his early experiences with family, friends, school, neighborhood, and work. During the interview, the authors delved into Dr. Hafer's early life experiences

and behaviors, examining how these factors influenced the development of his skills as an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. Through this analysis, the authors understood how his formative years contributed to his success.

Below are the questions raised by the authors during the interview; a complete transcript can be found in Appendix C.

Q1: We are going to jump right into your college years. So, you chose to study exclusively undergraduate, master's, and Doctorate at USF. Can you tell us about the decision and why?

Q2: May I ask what kind of engineering?

Q3: What's your master's outside of engineering? Tell us about that.

Q4: So, did you ever make any good friends in Albany?

Q5: So, tell us about the decision to enter the DBA program.

Q6: Is your educational bucket empty?

Q7: Let's see. How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life, and how do you feel about that choice? There are a lot of questions here. So, start wherever you want. What was your first job? What did you like or not like about it? And what job did you do most in your life? And what did you like most about it? Or least?

Q8: Do you consider that a plan, too?

Q9: Can we focus on what you have mentioned a couple of times about your shift from an inward focus on education and engineering to an outward focus on people, which is evident in what you do? And then entrepreneurship? Is there a significant moment in your life, your job, or your education where that happened? Like a eureka moment?

Q10: So, you developed a philosophy in your life. Tell us about that. And did it have something to do with what you were just describing?

Q11: Would you say you're comfortable in your skin?

Q12: What do you like to talk about your upbringing? People in your life along the way, and decisions related to your marriage, work, etc.

Q13: Is your father still alive? You did not talk about him in the past. Is he still a businessman?

Q14: Do you have involvement with him in all of that, too?

Q15: So, I had my first question later in your

life, you became an innovator, entrepreneur. You serve on the board of directors for Village of Hope. USF's UMatter program, USF Executive Advisory Council, and the Center for Entrepreneurship. Your LinkedIn says, "The most powerful force in the universe is people coming together in community." All are performed with a servant's heart. So, my question is, what childhood or early teenage years or family experiences shaped you to become a leader in serving communities?

Q16: Thank you. So, is there anything that gave you or influenced you to serve their communities and be a leader? Anything.

Q17: Thank you, Andy. Let us go to the next question. Many people are either innovators or entrepreneurs, and very few are successful in both. You are in that unique category. Innovative and entrepreneurship mindset has innate character relationships that are thinking from childhood, some incidents that changed life or our mindset during the course of our life. My question here is, what family or personal environment or moments in early life help you to be both an innovator and entrepreneur?

Q18: Okay. Let me go to the next question. So, you have donated to many different organizations, including yours, right? What early life experience molded you to become a philanthropist? How do you account for the personal satisfaction that brings with such actions of generosity?

Q19: So, do you feel personal satisfaction when you donate?

Q20: We have one more question before we summarize our part of the interview. Our last question is: We are very impressed with your saying, "A rising tide lifts all the boats." You also mentioned that the rising tide community would create collaboration, encouragement, and forgiveness. So please tell us what that means to you.

Research Method and Design

A phenomenological interview is a research method of creating meaning from lived experience (Seidman,

2019). The interviews focus on a specific aspect, in this case, entrepreneurship with community leadership, that the authors want to understand better. It focuses on the participant's early life, daily routines, habits, and finally, what these experiences mean to the participant. The interviews are then analyzed to understand the meaning within the context of the interviewee's experience. The three-interview series allows the interviewee to reconstruct their experience and reflect on its meaning.

In this study, the researchers were part of a 7-person group, splitting into 3-2-2-person teams assigned to each interview. The authors' 3-person team conducted Interview One, i.e., focusing on Dr. Hafer's early life up to the present day, asking Dr. Hafer to reconstruct his early experiences with family, friends, school, neighborhood, and work. All three interviews were done on the same day. Each lasted approximately 45 minutes, with a 15-minute recess in between interviews. The process was explained to Dr. Hafer before the first interview. The authors obtained his consent to record and transcribe the interview and checked if he had any questions before starting the interview. The authors also informed Dr. Hafer that if any questions arose during the interview, he could freely raise those questions. Furthermore, no further questions would be asked if he decided to end the interview for any reason. Although each team prepared their interviews separately, the larger 7-person group worked together via a Teams meeting before the interviews to discuss, coordinate, and ensure that there would be a logical flow to the questions.

The authors applied a semi-structured interview format in preparing their interview protocol. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a list of questions and methodically works through them (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The open-ended questions align with the phenomenological approach of searching for meaning through the interviewee's lived experiences (Seidman, 2019). The authors used information publicly available online to research the interviewee's life, family, and current activities. The authors also created an interview guide, including "What," "When," "Where," and "How" questions they wished to ask. The questions were related to his childhood and adulthood up to the current time. They also developed possible follow-up questions. In addition, the authors worked out a sequential "flow" for asking those questions during the interview. However, the nature of open-ended questions creates a scenario where follow-up questions will likely not go according to the script. Therefore, preparing and focusing on asking and exploring questions was essential, especially during Interview One.

The interviews were recorded using Otter.ai and reviewed and cleaned before the 10-page document was uploaded to Quirkos for analysis and coding.

Data Collection

The interview transcript represents the qualitative data we collected for this research.

Before the interview, the authors extensively explored Dr. Hafer's life through internet searches and reviewed his video presentations. The semi-structured open-ended interview guide helped maintain his focus from his early life experiences through the current time. It guided the interview and probing questions to drill deeper into the content or context of answers, which might provide richer information.

To capture his essence, the interview was video and audio recorded using Otter.ai and the Quirkos application, thus allowing the authors to view transcribed, time-stamped data. The interview was scheduled for 45 minutes in duration. During the interview, one author acted as the primary interviewer while the other two acted as secondary interviewers for timekeeping and taking notes. The interviewee was asked to consent to the recording and transcription of the interview.

The authors relied on Otter.ai to professionally transcribe the interview. To ensure data validity, one author of Interview One took the interview data and manually compared it to the recordings to ensure empirical evidence was captured verbatim. It was then slowly grammatically cleansed by listening to Dr. Hafer's words and voice inflections and watching his body language to prevent losing the essence of each statement. Then, two authors uploaded the edited transcripts into Quirkos and coded the results independently before consolidating and synchronizing their Quirkos coding results.

Analysis

According to Blair (2015), the data was analyzed using inductive coding. Inductive coding is an appropriate phenomenological interview method since we let the data "talk to us" instead of searching for pre-conceived themes. The authors utilized inductive coding to extract themes from the data, codes, and categories to make sense of the participant's lived experiences.

The authors used Quirkos to code interview transcripts obtained through the recording from Otter.ai. The transcripts were scrutinized for errors by comparing the recordings of the interviews with the transcripts. Edits were made accordingly. Initial Coding and Values Coding approaches were used during the first coding cycle. Using the Initial Coding method, researchers remained open to all possible categories, themes, and concepts suggested by their interpretations of the transcripts. They broke down transcripts into discrete parts, closely examined them, and compared them for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2016). In the meantime, researchers also paid close attention to the values, at-

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 1. Phases of Thematic Analysis

titudes, and beliefs the participant disclosed during the conversation (Saldaña, 2016) and applied Value Coding. Since the first cycle codes did not provide adequate insights, the authors used the Focused Coding approach during the second cycle for a more profound understanding by searching for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the key categories (Saldaña, 2016). The authors also realized they needed to decide which initial codes contributed most to their analysis. More specifically, the authors examined the transcribed interviews through a thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006), adhering to their six-phase analytical process (Figure 1) above when evaluating the empirical data. Using the circularity process described in (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016), the authors moved back and forth between phases to fully extract meaning.

First, the authors familiarized themselves with the transcript. They used the cloud icon function in Quirkos and wrote initial memos and ideas as they reviewed the transcript. They also took written notes during the interview. After the interview, the authors identified initial key concepts from the notes. The transcript created from the recording app Otter.ai is downloaded. The transcript is checked for spelling errors and compared to the video-recorded interview for corrections to words incorrectly transcribed from the Otter.ai app.

Second, the authors did the initial systematic coding of the transcript. They uploaded the cleaned-up transcript to Quirkos software for self-coding. They conducted first-cycle coding (i.e., Initial Coding and Value Coding) and second-cycle coding (i.e., Focused Coding) to understand the data better. To ensure the validity of the coding results, two authors conducted independent coding. Later, they compared, consolidated, and synchronized their coding to form a final completed coding.

Third, after this initial coding, a Word Cloud (Appendix A) was generated in Quirkos, and a preliminary Mind Map was created (Appendix B) to vi-sualize the connections. Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006) describe this part as the third and fourth phases of thematic analysis. The authors used the Word Cloud and Mind Map to facilitate their search for potential themes, and they reviewed and discussed these possible themes in detail and achieved consensus on the most important themes. In this process, the Focus Coding approach helped to identify the key themes and made the characteristics of an entrepreneur and community leader clear. As such, a thematic framework and coding were developed. Figure 2 below illustrates the 28 codes generated from the initial coding, which were subsequently grouped into six categories. These categories were then mapped onto four overarching themes, i.e., family, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship, as described in the following sections. If a theme appeared as a duplicate, it was reviewed and categorized into an overarching theme. This part of the process is described in phase five of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Discussion

A conceptual model was developed to show the relationships and their connections (Figure 3). This conceptual model was refined several times to make sense of the data and themes. The result was, as described in (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the final opportunity for analysis. The conceptual model served as a vivid final analysis of the interview with Dr. Andy Hafer.

This conceptual model shows several key components to shaping a leader like Dr. Hafer. These key components can be summed up into four main themes: family, self-leadership, entrepreneurship, and community leadership. The research literature was consulted after the interview, the transcript was analyzed, and coding was completed to deepen sense-making about these main themes.

Dr. Hafer is a fascinating and focused man. He refers to himself as an entrepreneur and a risk-taker.

No.	Code	Category	Theme
1	Family	Family Dynamism	Family
2	Family dynamism		
3	Marriage		
4	Mother		
5	Father		
6	Professional influence	Workplace Influences	Self-Leadership
7	Work influence		
8	Servant leader		
9	Education	Educational Influences	
10	DBA experience		
11	Lifetime learning		
12	Educational influence		
13	Thrill of building and risk taking	Professional Influences	Entrepreneurship
14	Self-awareness		
15	People person		
16	Business acumen		
17	Entrepreneurship		
18	Life lessons		
19	Key outcomes	Social Inspirations	Community Leadership
20	Defining moments		
21	Belief and being useful		
22	Value of contribution		
23	Attitude of involvement		
24	Social inspirations		
25	Enjoy leading	Community Giving Back	
26	Giving back to society		
27	Community leadership		
28	Philanthropist		

Figure 2. The Thematic Framework and Coding

Others refer to him as a philanthropist and a self-determining individual. In this thematic review of his life as an entrepreneur and risk-taker, we, the interviewers and authors, have chosen four themes that make Dr. Hafer who he is today. Dr. Hafer has two main drivers: family and his desire to be helpful in the community as a leader. We also address two additional drivers, i.e., self-leadership, and entrepreneurship, which motivate his future endeavors.

Family

Dr. Hafer was born In Kutztown, Pennsylvania. His family moved to Florida, where he received his elementary and middle school education in Ft. Walton Beach and Tampa, respectively. His family then moved to Englewood, Florida, where he attended high school. His mother (now deceased) and father (who is still living) influenced not only his early life but continued to influence him, helping to drive the entrepreneurial risk-taker he is today and the man he expects to continue in the future. Attachment theory, originated by John Bowlby and elaborated by Mary Ainsworth, explores the emotional bonds between infants and caregivers and their lifelong impact. The theory underscores the importance of early relationships in shaping emotional development and proposes distinct attachment styles (secure,
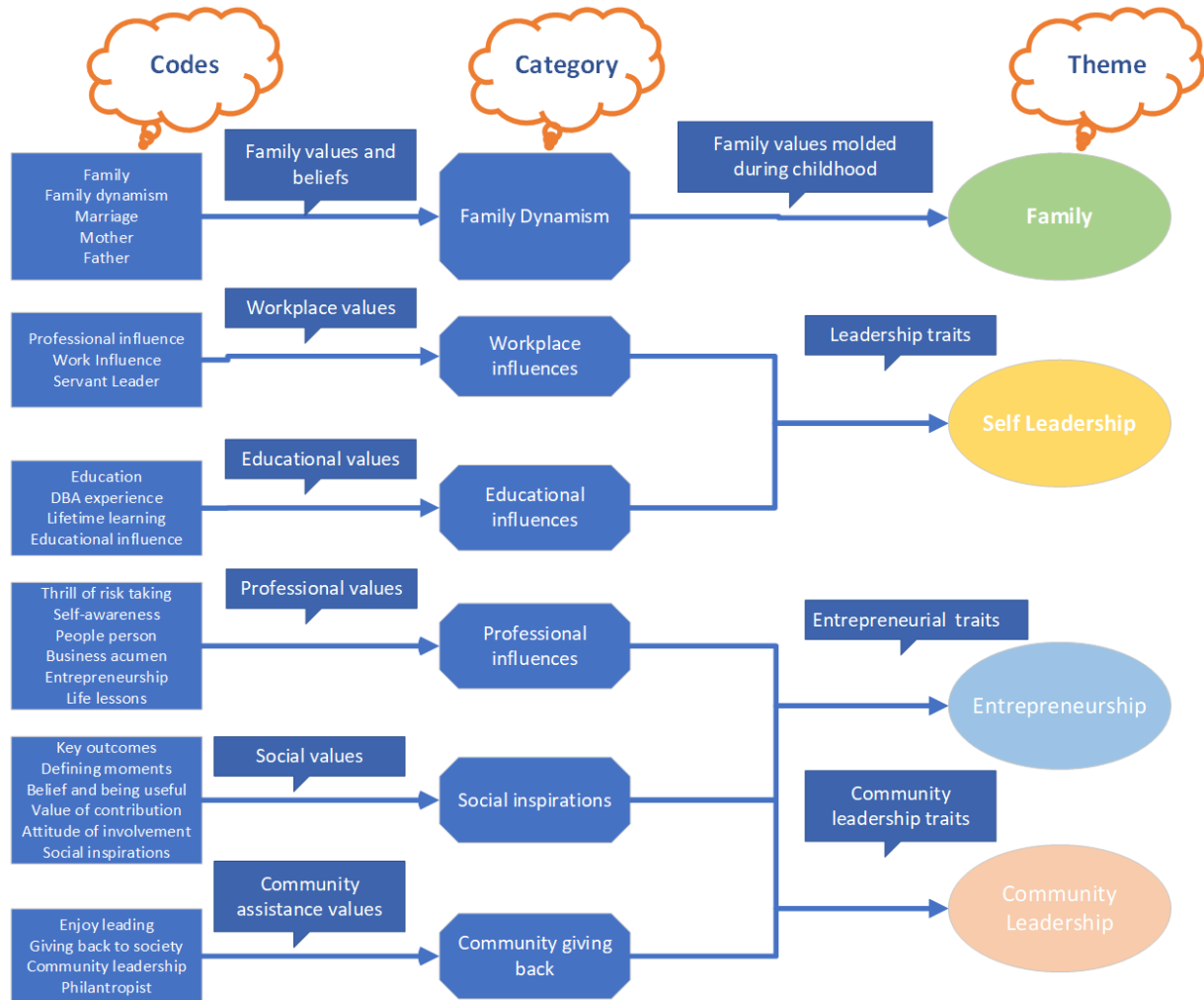
Figure 3: Conceptual Model

insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, disorganized) based on caregiver interactions. These styles inform internal working models and mental frameworks guiding future relational expectations and behaviors. Attachment patterns persist into adulthood, affecting romantic relationships, parenting, and social interactions. In specific, the quality of the attachment relationship that a child forms in early childhood has a lasting impact on their development and well-being and can influence their relationships and behaviors throughout their life (Ainsworth, 1967; Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Dr. Hafer's strong family values, molded during childhood, are the bedrock of his entrepreneurial journey. The secure attachments formed in his early years likely gave him the confidence and resilience to venture into the uncertain world of entrepreneurship. This foundation of trust and security, rooted in attachment theory, allowed him to take calculated risks, knowing that he had a supportive base to return to.

I have, you know, wonderful mentors in my life, starting with birth, my mom and dad; both of them were fundamentally instrumental in who I am today. My mother was a golden woman. She is not with us anymore, but she was fantastic. She had such a caring personality, [a] caring heart. My father … his professional… he was a pastor, a Christian pastor … And so, I spent my life being a pastor's kid … my whole life had … religion and faith infused in it by default, and I found that great. I participated in stuff.… I think of what a hard charger my dad was. (Source: Appendix A-The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview One with time-stamped 14:16).

One of Dr. Hafer's earliest memories of his father's 'hard charging' influence and Christian ethos is from a civil rights march they attended together in the 1960s.

I remember marching … probably [at] eight years old … [we were] marching with a whole diverse group of people on this parade route, including people of color … [and] young white kids like myself, and I remember walking through a city street and people yelling things. I am like, why are they yelling at us? You know, we're doing good… We are united, and we were carrying banners and signs, and there were people yelling at us, not approving of what we were doing. I was too young to really understand it, but in hindsight, I remember how much gravity that had to my upbringing because it was a trying time in the United States. And the fact that I felt it as a young kid but was naive enough not exactly to know what the issue was, and I think that had a lot to do with my at least my outlook on what is now [are] very popular terms diversity, equity, and inclusion and that was kind of an early exposure. (Source: Appendix A - The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview One with time-stamped 14:16).

Even though Dr. Hafer describes his experience with his father at the civil rights march as affecting his outlook on life, we find that his experience in the march is a significant driver of Dr. Andrew Hafer: family man, helpful citizen, risk taker, and entrepreneur he is and will continue to be. Following a "Christian ethos" and his desire not to be another "bleeding heart," Dr. Hafer wraps his drivers into his life, work, and community involvement.

Dr. Hafer is married to Eileen, and they have three children: two sons and a daughter. Dr. Hafer had a lovely story about how he met Eileen. He proudly spoke of her drives and good works. Dr. Hafer's stories about her made it clear that, while not identical, their relationship reflects that of his parents and the traits in them that he values: family and being helpful. This illustrates the values his parents evoked that led him to establish the giving, family man he values and that motivates him.

If you were to sit my brother and me down [to] reflect on both of our parents, my mom is the hero of the family. She would always keep us together. The family was super important to her … She was fabulous at keeping my family together, even extended family ... The importance of family, and not just the immediate family, but extended family and people you call family … is a huge thing for us … I think that is 100% driven by my mother. My wife, who obviously is a Hafer through marriage … [is] the matriarch of our family ... she is the one in charge of the family reunion that we have every year where 100 people gather in the hometown we have up in Pennsylvania … I think it is kind of funny that this person who is only in the family 37 years is the one calling all these cousins and everybody together that are much older than her. But I think it is that manifestation of the importance of family that drives that. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Three with time-stamped of 06:54).

Community Leadership

Dr. Hafer has a purpose in life, spurred by his parenting, his choice of spouse, and close family relationships. That purpose is to be useful and helpful. While usefulness often reflects self-validation, we consider it one of his solid drivers. The About section of Dr. Hafer's LinkedIn profile (Linkedin, 2023) is an unidentified quote: "The Most Powerful Force in the Universe is People Coming Together in Community." The coalition of a strong sense of belonging to a community and the desire to help others through his entrepreneurial gifts and philanthropic efforts are evidence of his usefulness as one of his drivers. When asked about the quote on his LinkedIn profile, Andy responded.

I like a good party. I like to be around people, and so I don't know if the concept of the community started then [it] probably germinated in believing that when people came together, it was good [and] it usually ended well. But I think this concept of how powerful community is was realized more into my career. I used to … rely on [what] I mentioned it was in corporate IT, and then I started my career. And I used to rely on peers and other people who were doing the same thing in their careers to solve problems … now it is… [my] primary way of creating opportunities to give back. (Source: Appendix A - The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview One with time-stamped 25:26).

This strong sense of community and family motivates Dr. Hafer to actively support his wife in two influential nonprofit projects she conceived, IMatter and UMatter. After talking about his nonprofit efforts, including Synapse, Andy spoke with pride about his involvement in his wife, Eileen's, nonprofits, IMatters, and UMatters, and with great about his father's nonprofit, the Village of Hope Haiti.

IMatter

The other one is … helping my wife, who was trained as a special education teacher… and spent her career in public schools as a special ed teacher. Somewhere along the line, she made the decision to leave the classroom. She said one day, I can no longer impact young people's lives. There is just so

much paperwork … and politics … It is not the best use of my time, so she retired from public school and started creating programs - nonprofits. The first one was called IMatter. It was linked to a faith-based initiative … dedicated to students with intellectual and physical disabilities ... [It] created this inclusive scenario where our kids [who] were young at the time too, and they would always come to the [IMatter] activities and events … it was really cool to watch them being exposed to people who, in some cases, were nonverbal. You know, physical deformities, disabilities, people in wheelchairs way different than what they were used to … and watch them become super comfortable in that environment … So, I watched how great that was, and what [the] phenomenon had on our young kids … So, I loved what she was doing. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

UMatter

Her coup de grace was that she dreamed up this opportunity for that population of students with disabilities that would not have an opportunity at a college experience … [She created] a program, an on-campus program, … a residential program for students with intellectual disabilities. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

We shopped around the country and looked at models. We went to Clemson. Clemson has a really cool program … called Clemson Life, and it is… celebrated, and we are like, okay, we want our university to have that. And so, we worked with the current College of Education here [at the University of South Florida]. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

Her philosophy was [developed] as a special ed teacher when she was in school … in the 80s ... She majored in this, but she was never really expected to be exposed to students whom she would actually be teaching with any of the disabilities … her thesis [in the program] was on what if we create a program where students that were recently taught by special ed teachers in high schools and such, we are here for them to interact ... they'd be so much more effective once they graduated, [becoming] teachers in the real world. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _ Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

She felt strongly about putting that in

the [USF] College of Education. And we worked on it for about a year or two … then we met some really [neat] researchers over on the [USF] St. Pete campus who were doing [what we were] dreaming of … all of a sudden the magic happened, and it got approved. We found a grant that funded it for the first year. We put some money in to make sure that it could sustain itself and expand [it] to the other [USF] campuses … she calls that UMatter ... And it is in its second year now, and … [has] 14 students … living in a dorm over at the St. Pete campus … it is magical [that] you are watching a change of opportunity for people that would not have been able to go to college. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

Village of Hope Haiti

Dr. Hafer is involved with his father's Christian fund-raising organization, Village of Hope Haiti, which supports educational, medical, and faith programs and ministries in the Ganthier community of Haiti. In a separate interview, Dr. Hafer said, "I like lifting the parts that I can lift." (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Three with time-stamped of 15:16). His quote gives depth to the disappointment he expressed about the current state of Haitian politics and the violence there. Dr. Hafer didn't give the impression that his disappointment had anything to do with the damage to his father's legacy but that he felt loss over the suffering the Ganthier community was experiencing.

Dr. Hafer's behaviors and experiences fit well with the generativity theory. Generativity theory, a key concept in Erik Erikson's psychosocial development framework, explores the drive to nurture and contribute to the next generation during middle adulthood. Generativity is associated with increased psychological well-being and life satisfaction, providing a sense of fulfillment and purpose. According to Erik Erikson (Somerstein, 2010), people are driven to create, contribute, and positively impact the world around them. The theory suggests that people experience a sense of fulfillment and purpose when they can make meaningful contributions to society, culture, or future generations. Erikson describes how individuals progress through a series of stages as they grow and mature over their lifespan. Generativity, the seventh stage in Erikson's model, refers to the drive to leave a lasting impact on the world through acts of creation and contribution. In our view, generativity theory goes beyond the mere desire to leave a legacy. It encompasses the drive to actively contribute to and nurture the next generation.

Dr. Hafer's community leadership initiatives, viz., to give back to society, mentor the next generation of leaders, and create lasting impacts in his community, are not just acts of philanthropy. They are manifestations of his deep-seated desire for generativity. His commitment to "lifting all boats" and fostering collaboration, encouragement, and forgiveness within the community resonates profoundly with the core tenets of the generativity theory. It is about shaping the future, not just for oneself but for the broader community.

Self-leadership

Dr. Hafer is a self-motivated man. The authors call this motivation self-leadership. Beyond his external motivations of family, community, and his natural gift and love of entrepreneurship, Dr. Hafer is self-motivated. He drives himself and tempers that drive with practical considerations and his interest in a particular subject(s), endeavor(s), and challenge(s). A non-practical consideration of Dr. Hafer's self-leadership seems to be pleasure in those subjects and endeavors he chooses and the challenges he takes.

> I grew up in a town about an hour and a half south [of] here called Englewood, Florida … and so back then, choices weren't as many choices for a university as there are today. So, I applied to all the usual places. … I was valedictorian of my high school. … I wanted to see how far I could go. … I applied to Yale. That was my big reach. … It was so expensive to go there [Yale] that I said … let me just stay in Florida [and] get in-state tuition. (Source: Appendix A - The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview One with time-stamped 02:11).

> I don't have a day job, so [I am] technically unemployed. … [I] have … two … for profit [start-up] companies that I am still working on. … What's keeping me most busy right now is [my] interest in helping the [USF] Center for Entrepreneurship. … I got involved in that advisory board … one thing led to another, and I am teaching a college class, an undergrad class in entrepreneurship. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped 00:14).

> I didn't go to [the] Bruce Springsteen concert last week because … I was having an anxiety attack because I had not graded the students' projects for … two weeks, and [I] never found a few hours [to grade the papers] that I thought was going to take me almost 10 hours. It really taught me a good lesson on what kind of assignments to give them [the students]. … [Right now] I am not good at it. I just keep going and know-

ing that there [are] going to be good things [ahead] and light at the end of the tunnel. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped of 26:07).

Dr. Hafer spoke about a challenge for UMatter, which may one day demonstrate the pleasure of self-leadership he finds in a challenge. The students from UMatter are currently not eligible to 'walk' when they graduate with their certificates. Dr. Hafer leads by making the necessary connections to provide added value to the UMatter student graduates. After describing a chance conversation with the president of USF, who let Dr. Hafer know she had heard about the "UMatter issue." Dr. Hafer said, "Sweet! … we will see if [that] gets [it]. If you see people from the UMatter program going across this floor in the fall [or] the spring, then you will know." The exciting news is that UMatter students received approval to participate in the graduation ceremonies. The inaugural cohort successfully completed their course and was celebrated at the USF Commencement on 7 May 2023!

Retirement poses a problem for Dr. Hafer. After describing an unsatisfactory attempt at retirement, he said,

> I'm doing [retirement] now but in smaller doses. I think I do want a day or two that I can sit and rock with my coffee and not have a lot to do. I do take those days on occasion still. But … my life seems to work in those little crescendos. It's the roller coaster. … When you are there [on the roller coaster, you hear the] click-click, click, click-click [while] you are climbing up and … when you get to the top … and you can do that freefall, and it's exhilarating. I am the click click click part right now, knowing that there is something that will get easier to get lighter for me now [that] I hit a milestone … [when] I can [give] it off to somebody [else]. … [I need to] do a better job [of that]. I say that all the time, and I am gonna knock on wood when I say that, but I am taking pieces at a time and not making them all crescendo at the same time like they are now. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Three with time-stamped 02:30).

This evidence obtained during the interview(s) made the authors confident that self-leadership theory could explain Dr. Hafer's motivation, behaviors, and experiences. Self-leadership theory, rooted in the principles of self-influence and self-management, explores the strategies individuals use to guide their behavior and achieve desired outcomes. A central tenet of self-leadership is personal responsibility, with individuals taking ownership of their actions and results. It is widely believed that self-leadership theory provides a relatively new approach to un-

derstanding leadership that emphasizes the role of self-influence in shaping one's behavior and achieving personal and professional goals. The theory focuses explicitly on self-leadership and proposes that individuals can develop their self-leadership skills using specific strategies, such as self-goal setting, self-reinforcement, and self-talk (Manz, 1986). Additionally, self-leadership encourages continuous learning and personal growth, enabling individuals to adapt and thrive personally and professionally. Dr. Hafer's entrepreneurial journey, marked by setting personal goals, self-reinforcing achievements, and continuous learning and personal growth (i.e., he successfully earned his DBA degree), is a testament to the principles of self-leadership in action. His ability to navigate challenges, innovate, and adapt stems from this intrinsic drive to lead oneself toward success.

Entrepreneurship

Early in Dr. Hafer's childhood, he experienced the thrill of creation by trying to solve a problem. The failure of the solution did not deter him and revealed his enjoyment of risk-taking. During one of the interviews, he described risk-taking as climbing a roller coaster and the anticipation that builds when hearing the "click click click" as the carriages move to the top. It is a sound and a sensation that illustrates Andy's love of entrepreneurship.

> I remember being in Boy Scouts …We were going to go on the Appalachian Trail … you got to wear a pack with all your stuff for like three weeks, and it was so heavy back then because they didn't have these lightweight materials. So, I said … why don't we just use plastic instead of these big heavy canvas tents to reduce the weight … We put grommets in the corners. We brought rope … and it was really light in our pack. But the first night that plastic just ripped apart and the grommets ripped out … so we are laying under this plastic [which] was probably a death threat … I just remember doing dumb stuff like that. … I think it is mostly.. not having any fear of trying something ... And if it worked, it was great, but sometimes … you lay under plastic because the grommets ripped through. (Source: Appendix A - The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview One with time-stamped 29:21).

It may seem that risk-taking is one of Dr. Hafer's drivers, but there needs to be more evidence of that. He is apparent throughout his interviews that he must be useful and helpful, which is a more powerful motivation. Taking a risk does not necessarily bring success. Dr. Hafer does not say in the interviews that he is always successful, but he does indicate throughout, that his entrepreneurial endeavors must be purposeful.

After receiving a degree from the University of South Florida in electrical engineering, he chose a corporate path. That path was unsatisfactory and drove Andy toward his first entrepreneurial undertaking. That early undertaking forged an empathy toward other entrepreneurs, leading him to where he is today.

> When I had the guts to quit … my day job, I was the CIO of a mid-sized manufacturer … When I started this, [Dynamic Communities] was a side hustle nights and weekends … Eventually, it [Dynamic Communities] got so time-consuming and rewarding and opportunistic, [and] … I ended up quitting my day job and took the plunge into being an entrepreneur … [I thought] this is fabulous. You can even control your own destiny … you can still make money. You don't have to starve. But then 2008 came, and I started starving. And so, then I learned sort of the biggest valuable lesson was that there are no guarantees, and … there is no net, safety net to fall into if you fall. And so, I think they are my biggest empathy for aspiring entrepreneurs was probably forged. … There is risk associated with it … it is easy for me to say … just quit your job and go build … because I don't have problems putting money or food on my table right now, whereas someone earlier in the process might … so that was a valuable lesson for me. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Three with time-stamped 17:29).

The desire to create businesses has and still motivates Dr. Hafer. Regret and retirement play a small role in his interview descriptions. However, his drive to create is described as an affliction he cannot help. Dr. Hafer's entrepreneurial drive led him beyond retirement. After recently receiving a Doctorate in Business Administration from the University of South Florida Muma College of Business, he has joined the USF Center for Entrepreneurship Project. He is teaching as an adjunct professor and rewriting the curriculum.

> When I got the curriculum … I realized it was boring. It … had nothing to do with reality. It was all textbook stuff … I know this is not what I am supposed to be preaching here, but entrepreneurship is less academic, more a school of hard knocks and experience, and yes, there are some fundamentals that they teach. But … it's hard to teach entrepreneurship. I describe it more as a disease that you are born with. You … look at something and … see an opportunity, and you just can't sit still until you go fill that hole…(Source: The edited notes of otter.ai

_Interview Two with time-stamped 18:46).

And so that's been more of my approach. I rewrote the curriculum … I am rewriting it about three weeks ahead of where the students are. So, every time I finish a unit, I gotta write the next unit to keep ahead of them. But I think it's working out so far. But anyway, that gave me exposure to the academic program we have here at USF, [which is] ranked really high … but I don't think it's as good as it can be in … affecting success and entrepreneurship … there is a good group of people and more joining the team to take what I consider extracurricular activities to the next level. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped 18:46).

I am meeting later this afternoon to figure out what to call myself, but I am volunteering to head the [Project renaming committee] … there should be a new emerging of new programs for students and alumni and the community … but instead of being focused on the community out there … focused on … USF being the gravitational pull. (Source: The edited notes of otter.ai _Interview Two with time-stamped 18:46).

Following the interview held in February 2023, the Dean established a selection of roles dedicated to the external and community facets of USF's role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Moreover, Dr. Hafer has been appointed as the interim Executive Director, spearheading initial efforts and securing the necessary funding while the hunt for a permanent appointment continues.

USF is the current beneficiary of Dr. Hafer's drives and motivations. Retirement is not much of a thought as he hears the "click click click" while working on his latest project.

In our view, Dr. Hafer's success story perfectly fits the entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme.

The entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme encompasses attitudes and behaviors crucial to successful entrepreneurship, characterized by a willingness to take calculated risks and a focus on innovation and creativity. Rita Gunther McGrath and Ian C. MacMillan (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000) suggest that there are certain personality traits and cognitive skills that are associated with successful entrepreneurship, such as opportunity recognition, creativity, risk-taking, action-oriented and a willingness to learn from failure. Entrepreneurs excel in recognizing untapped opportunities and addressing market gaps, displaying resilience and persistence in overcoming challenges. A strong sense of resourcefulness and problem-solving ability allows entrepreneurs to adapt and navigate obstacles efficiently.

With a foundation of self-reliance and autonomy, entrepreneurs take responsibility for their actions and prioritize control over their ventures. Dr. Hafer's love for risk-taking, ability to identify untapped opportunities, and resilience in facing challenges reflect this mindset. His journey is not just about building businesses but continuously adapting, innovating, and learning. This mindset, combined with the foundational influences of attachment, generativity, and self-leadership, has shaped Dr. Hafer into the multifaceted individual he is today.

The authors chose four main themes for this treatment of Dr. Hafer. He refers to himself as an entrepreneur and risk-taker, the outward-facing Dr. Hafer. He is a family man following a Christian ethos of giving back and being useful and helpful to others and the community. These drivers are inward and outward-facing. His past family influence shaped his drive to entrepreneurship activities. His ongoing family influences nurtured it further – Dr. Hafer's drive to be useful and helpful to others and the community, practice self-leadership, and be an entrepreneur and risk-taker continue to move him forward.

We look forward to seeing what Dr. Hafer does next.

Contributions

This interview research highlights to what extent Dr. Hafer's upbringing, early life experiences, and personal values and beliefs contributed to his success as an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. The three-person research team utilized in-depth phenomenological qualitative research interview techniques (Seidman, 2019) to create questions that intentionally guided him to reflect on these specific segments of his early life story and recreate it through storytelling.

Using the resulting empirical evidence from his perspective, the authors applied qualitative research and thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify four primary themes that explain his professional successes. Some data-driven findings were presented using Dr. Hafer's own words to unfold the events in his life that richly influenced and informed his leadership style, thus transforming him into a successful CEO of a large non-profit organization. In reflection of the interview, the authors also applied the sensemaking process (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Weick, 2012; Wikipedia, 13 February 2023) by giving meaning to Dr. Andy's motivation, behaviors and experiences guided by related theoretical frameworks, including attachment theory, generativity theory, self-leadership theory, and entrepreneurial mindset conceptual scheme.

An individual's journey toward becoming an innovator, entrepreneur, or philanthropist is seldom linear. Instead, it is a confluence of various influences and experiences that mold them. Dr. Andy Hafer's

life is a testament to this intricate interplay of factors. In this study, four central themes emerge as pivotal in shaping such trailblazers: family influences, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship.

- Family Influences: Rooted in attachment theory, family plays a foundational role in shaping an individual's worldview. Secure attachments formed during formative years provide a bedrock of trust and security. For Dr. Hafer, his family values, imbibed during childhood, equipped him with the resilience and confidence to venture into the entrepreneurial world. The familial bonds often instill the first lessons of trust, risk-taking, and perseverance.
- Community Leadership: Drawing from the generativity theory, community leadership is not just about leading but nurturing and contributing to the community's betterment. Dr. Hafer's commitment to community initiatives, such as mentorship programs, reflects his deep-seated desire for generativity. It is about shaping the future, ensuring the next generation has tools and knowledge, and leaving a lasting impact.
- Self-Leadership: Self-leadership is central to an individual's drive and motivation. It encompasses strategies employed to guide one's behavior toward desired outcomes. Dr. Hafer's journey, marked by setting personal goals and self-reinforcing achievements, is a testament to self-leadership principles in action. This intrinsic drive propels individuals to navigate challenges with determination.
- Entrepreneurship: The entrepreneurial mindset, characterized by traits like opportunity, recognition, and resilience, culminates the previous themes. Dr. Hafer's ability to identify untapped opportunities and his love for risk-taking are underpinned by this mindset. Entrepreneurship is not just about building businesses; it is about the spirit that drives innovation and adaptation.

In summary, while these four themes play a pivotal role in shaping individuals like Dr. Hafer, it is essential to recognize the diversity of experiences. Not all who embrace these themes will tread the same path. However, they provide a useful framework for understanding the journey of innovators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists.

One cannot merely look at these theories in isolation in understanding Dr. Hafer. The confluence of these frameworks, working in tandem, provides a holistic understanding of his journey. By intertwining these theories, we can appreciate the intricate interplay of early life influences, personal motivations, and entrepreneurial drive that have culminated in Dr. Hafer's successes as an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. From our perspective, it is essential

to acknowledge that this combination might not always lead to the outcomes of becoming innovators, entrepreneurs, or philanthropists for everyone. Individual experiences, societal influences, economic conditions, and personal choices are crucial. Other unexplored factors, such as educational experiences, mentorship, or personal challenges, might influence this journey. It is imperative to recognize the diversity of experiences and not generalize based on one individual's journey.

This study contributes to scholarship by emphasizing the important role of community leadership and entrepreneurship in developing successful entrepreneurs who can also positively impact their communities. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of action-oriented entrepreneurship and encourages entrepreneurs to recognize the value of being community leaders in achieving their goals. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study can help aspiring entrepreneurs to be more aware of the essential traits and skills needed for success in their endeavors.

Limitations and Future Research

The authors recognized they were limited in the specific conclusions drawn from Dr. Hafer's early and current life experiences and generalizing information derived from only one person. In addition, in reflecting on the entire process of conducting Interview One, the authors also identified the following limitations.

First, the authors realized that they sometimes failed to follow the interview guide that they had prepared for the interview; thus, they missed a few "What," "How," "Where," and "When" questions and thereby missed several excellent opportunities to drill down to get more evidence from the participant. Sometimes, they unconsciously shifted their focus by jumping to "Why" equivalent questions, which are not supposed to be asked during Interview One because "why" questions may not help identify more facts and evidence at this interview stage.

Second, during the interview, the authors were eager to identify the linkages between the data, the categories, and the central themes from the conversation. Before the interview, these authors did extensive online research, which might have led them to form particular views on Dr. Hafer – presenting a confirmation bias (Yagoda, 2018) and researcher interaction biases (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008). Interview One team members were influenced by these research results and unconsciously brought some viewpoints and biases into the interview. Therefore, they were not aware that they had shifted their focus by asking several why-type questions to "verify" those viewpoints. The authors should focus on exploring and obtaining more evidence, not verifying their biases during Interview One.

Third, during the interview, the authors inappropriately used several expressions that violated one of the ground rules of interviewing (Seidman, 2019): the rule that the interviewer should keep a neutral attitude. For instance, they used the words/expressions "impressive," "you are in that unique category," and you have shown "a servant's heart," etc. They asked leading questions, tried to verify their thinking during the conversation, and failed to explore deeper or dig out more evidence from the participant.

Fourth, the study provides a detailed account of Dr. Hafer's life and the factors influencing his roles. However, it is based on a single interview subject, which might not offer a comprehensive understanding of the broader population of innovators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists. In addition, with one interview subject, we cannot make any definitive statements about the themes that we have identified.

These limitations call for future research. First, future research holds promising avenues in expanding our understanding of traits that help shape an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. While the central themes identified—family influences, community leadership, self-leadership, and entrepreneurship—have influenced Dr. Hafer's journey, testing these linkages with other successful leaders is imperative. This would validate the conceptual model presented in Figure 3 and ascertain the consistency of these themes among innovators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists. We can further refine and validate our findings by interviewing more subjects using our guide. Viewing this exploratory research as a foundational step is essential, paving the way for more comprehensive studies in the future. Next, as lessons learned, a more focused exploratory interview could be accomplished by asking more "What," "How," "Where," and "When" questions to identify sufficient evidence and behaviors from the participant.

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Review

This article was accepted under the *constructive peer review* option. For futher details, see the descriptions at:

http://mumabusinessreview.org/peer-review-options/

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Mary West is a freelance writer specializing in technical documentation. She served for ten years as an enlisted soldier and an officer in the U. S. Army. Additionally she represented Georgia House District 78 and Senate District 5 in the Georgia General Assembly.
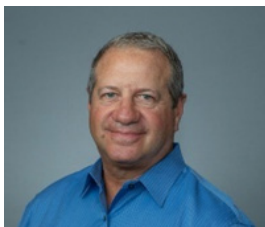
Andy Hafer is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Muma College of Business Nault Center for Entrepreneurship, where he is also an adjunct professor. He has spent his career in technology, starting in corporate IT, but has been a serial entrepreneur since the early 2000s. With several successful exits behind him, he is passing along his start-up business experience to students. In addition to serving USF, Andy founded and currently serves as Executive Chairman on the Board of Directors of DCE Productions, a full-service virtual and in-place event services company. DCE brings high-quality event production, videography, and other digital features to corporate, social, and philanthropic events. Andy is Co-founder of Synapse, a nonprofit organization that guides Florida's innovation communities to help accelerate success and drive economic growth. He helped establish the Inclusion Lives Here program - the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Andy has founded several other organizations as well as has prior stops in his career at companies, including Pride Enterprises, Tribridge, Yara, Accenture, Proctor & Gamble, and IBM.

Appendix A: A Word Cloud Generated by Quirkos

Figure A1. Word Cloud
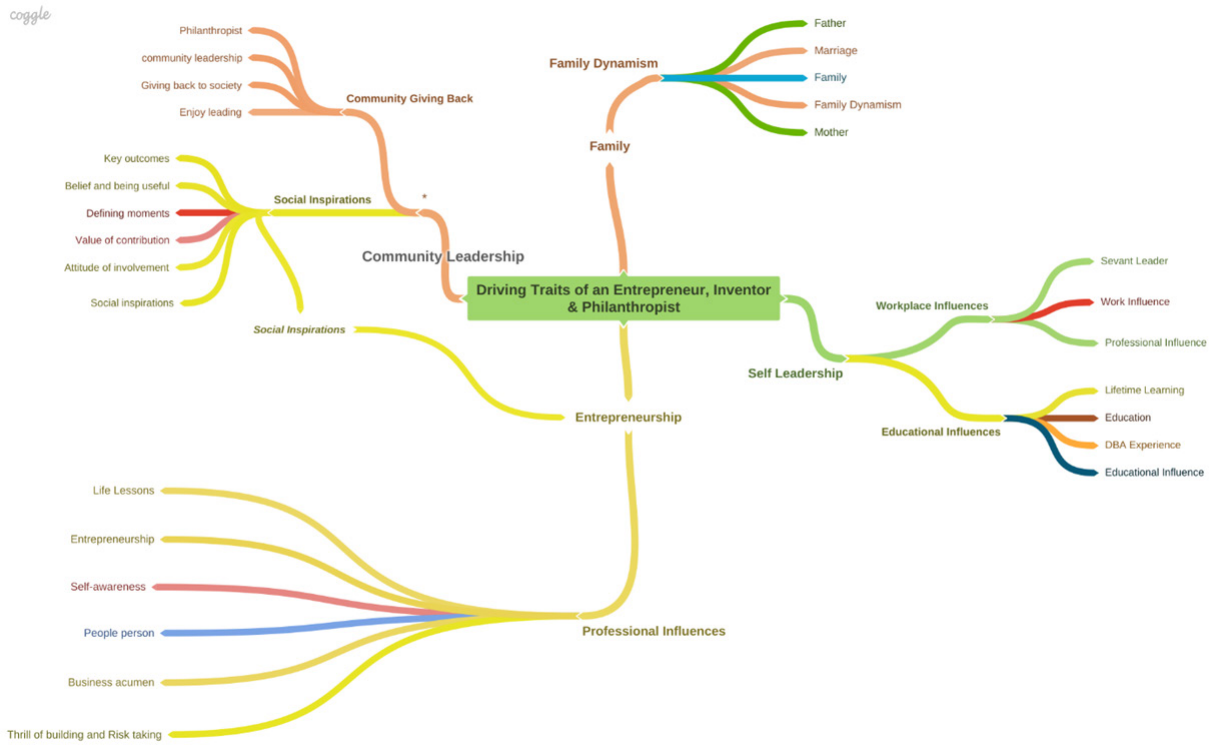
Appendix B: A Preliminary Mind Map

Figure B1. Mind Map

Appendix C: The Interview One Transcript

Interview One with Dr. Andy Hafer by Wen Wei, Mary West, and Krishnakumar Nair (The edited notes of otter.ai)

Fri, Feb 10, 2023, 8:43AM • 36:35

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, USF, life, question, engineering, community, years, remember, entrepreneur, philosophy, business, giving, big, led, interview, board, program, good, undergrad.

SPEAKERS

Andy Hafer

00:05 - The 1st Interviewer

Good morning, Dr. Hafer. My name is Wen Wei; I am from Beijing, China, and I came to the States for this DBA program. First of all, we would like to say thank you for being willing to participate in today's conversations. Our group has three members: Krishna, Mary, and myself. I really look forward to listening to you and seeing how you become an innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. This part of the interview will last for 45 minutes, during which we will invite you to talk about your upbringing, people in your life along the way, and the decisions related to going to college, marriage, work, etc. Let me put it this way: Please just think about your life as chapters in a book. So please describe for us how those chapters in your early life from your childhood up to the current time, explaining for us how one chapter flowed into the other and eventually led you to become the CEO and founder of the Dynamic Communities.

So, before we start the interview, do you have any questions for us?

01:13 – Dr. Hafer

No. Hope I can fill up 45 minutes of interesting content for you. But will you guys be asking me questions specifically, and then I respond to them, or do you want me just to start?

01:27 – The 1st Interviewer

(We will ask you questions). If any questions arise during the interview, please ask. Also, if for any reason you decide to end the interview, no further questions will be asked. So now I am going to turn this interview over to Mary. Mary, please.

01:44 – The 2nd Interviewer

Good morning. Good morning. So, you, okay, we are gonna jump right into your college years. So you chose to study exclusively undergrad, Master, and Doctorate at USF. Can you tell us about the decision and why?

02:11 – Dr. Hafer

Well, I grew up in a town about an hour and a half south here called Englewood, Florida, went to high school there, and so back then, choices weren't as many choices for a university as there are today. So, I applied to all the usual places and went and an unusual place. I was valedictorian of my high school, so I wanted to see how far I could go. Should I choose to go so, I applied to Yale. That was my big reach. And I got in, but it was so expensive to go there that I said, Okay, well, let me just stay in Florida and get in-state tuition. So, I just went up the road to USF because my major was in engineering, and some of the other places, I got into a prominent engineering program at the University. So that was it; it wasn't much of rocket science other than it is close. I get to go home on a couple of weekends a year, and it had a good program that I was looking for.

03:16 – The 2nd Interviewer

May I ask what kind of engineering?

Electrical. – Dr. Hafer

Okay

03:19

Carry on. – The 2nd Interviewer

(Dr. Hafer words below:)

Yeah, I mean, that's it. There was a lot of financial aid that was offered to me here. So that helped me make the decision. Yeah, nothing, nothing more than that at a time. I had a friend who had gone here before that's always influential to a high school student. I'd come up for a weekend to stay with him to kind of see it, and

then, of course, I did the traditional visits before, but there, it just seemed like the right answer. I dare say it might have been an easy answer, but I am glad I did in hindsight.

03:52 – The 2nd Interviewer

What's your master's outside of engineering?

Yeah. – Dr. Hafer

Tell us about that – The 2nd Interviewer.

03:57 – Dr. Hafer

So, after I took a little longer to graduate, I was in a six-year program. Engineering is 136 hours, which is about five years. Anyway, because you are supposed to take some an internship, and they are a co-op, as they call it over there. So, five years is typical. I spent a little bit more time doing work, studying things, as well as extracurricular things. And so I was in the six-year program. And my kids are on the six-year program now, so I can't yell at him yet. But that is a reality, maybe hereditary. So, when I graduated with my engineering degree, I got a job at Procter and Gamble in an assembly line setting. It was a high engineering, high math. I had a lot of calculations sitting in the back room, sitting behind what was kind of a new tool back then was a computer, and I just absolutely hated it. I did not like it. I decided I didn't like engineering. I think it had something to do with where they placed me. I was in Albany, Georgia, which was a very tiny backward town. And so maybe that had an influence on me as much as the profession of engineering. But I right away decided to go back to school to get my MBA. It's a nice, valiant way to bail out of an industry that you think you made a mistake in entering. And I came back here. I just applied to a few other schools, but you know, I knew USF was easy. And I went to MBA school here right after essentially right after graduation.

05:35 – The 2nd Interviewer

So, did you ever make any good friends in Albany?

05:39 – Dr. Hafer

I did. I did. None that I really stay connected to. But I did for the first few years after leaving there.

05:46 – The 2nd Interviewer

So, tell us about the decision to come into the DBA program.

05:51-Dr. Hafer

Well, that came many, many years later. There was always a bucket list item for me. Certainly, I exited a company in 2018, which gave me the ability that does not figure out where my next paycheck was going to come from. And so that was when I was able to start plotting a course to figure out what my next chapters were going to be in my life. And so, this DBA thing was always an option. I always had a desire. And so, again, I had applied. I only applied here and had many friends go through it, and they talked highly about it. The reason I liked this one more than any is because of the practitioner's focus on it. It's really built, as you guys know, to accommodate people who are in business and, even though it has a research component. It's not focused on building you into a researcher. It's more focused on what you can do with it. On the way out, in fact, remind me to talk to you about this. This Amplify Conference we have coming up this summer because that's to me a manifestation of this philosophy that I've learned through the DBA program, but yeah, so what was I saying? The decision to go to VBA school was probably more bucket list thing. My desire after retiring was to just really focus on ways of giving back. I had some success as an entrepreneur. So, I really enjoy that thrill of the build, the thrill of the start. And so, I wanted to go through that with the younger entrepreneurs and give back, and I know that having a DR in front of your name always gives you a little bit more of an open door to get involved in things like mentoring and speaking to classes and things like that. So that was the decision.

07:41-The 2nd Interviewer

Is your educational bucket empty?

07:45 – Dr. Hafer

I think it is on the receiving side. Yeah, my brain is full. But now I want to empty it out a little bit at a time.

07:53 – The 2nd Interviewer

Yeah. Okay. All right.

Let's see. How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life, and how do you feel about that choice?

There are a lot of questions here. So, start wherever you want. What was your first job? What did you like or not like about it? And what job did you do most in your life? And what did you like most about it? Or least? There is a lot of questions.

Yes.

08:28 – Dr. Hafer

So let me see where to start on that one. I almost feel like I have, although I am a big preacher of having a plan. I have spent my life and my career seeing opportunities and going to grab them. So, I am more like a pinball machine strategy of life, bouncing off of something led to something else, and that's kind of how my career is.

09:03 – The 2nd Interviewer

Do you consider that a plan, too?

09:05 – Dr. Hafer

You know, I think it's a mindset where if you see something and, you rule out that it is just a flashy object and it is there to distract you. Then, be open enough to analyze it and take advantage of it if you want to. I think I have done that decently well. And I believe that is a trait of an entrepreneur that helps you be successful. It's at least in my mind; it is. So how did I decide to? I didn't decide to be an entrepreneur; that was purely sideways and accidental. As I mentioned, I had thought I was going to be an engineer. And again, even that was how I had a great upbringing. As I mentioned, I did well in high school and was good at math. So, everyone is like, Oh, you are good at math and science; you should be an engineer, and I kind of said, okay, and I went down that path. I like taking on challenges. I know that engineering here at USF at that time was one of the harder majors. So, I enjoyed sort of carrying that badge, you know. But as I mentioned in the former discussion, I realized that I really didn't want to be in that occupation. I liked the degree I had gotten. It was a challenge. It taught me problem-solving skills, and it was good that way, but I wanted to do more with people. And so, going back for the MBA gave me three more initials to put behind my name, but it also opened up some other doors, and I still like technology. So, I took a little bit of a left turn from electrical engineering into computer science and information technology.

10:41 – The 2nd Interviewer

Can we focus on what you have mentioned a couple of times about your shift from an inward focus on education and engineering to an outward focus on people, which is obvious in what you do? And then entrepreneurship? Is there a significant moment in your life, your job, or your education where that happened? Like a eureka moment?

11:06 – Dr. Hafer

I have always been a people person. I was always in student organizations here, did different things as an undergrad, and did it in high school and even middle school. So, I have always been a people person. It wasn't so much of a eureka realization that the profession I chose didn't do that. And I don't know if I ever put two and two together, but that being a heads-down engineer was going to rob me of those things that allowed me to do that every day. So that was probably the if there was a eureka moment, is just sort of osmosis of understanding that said. I have been in this office; I haven't seen anyone in three weeks. So, I saw people; I did social things. I wasn't a recluse. But the fact was that I started to dread going to work every day because I knew I was going to be sitting there plowing through. I mean, I had this will ratify. Why do I think it happens so quickly? Because it was only a few months. I was assigned to Procter and Gamble's paper products division. My product was "loves diapers." To think back in the 80s, you know moms are changing their babies with Pampers "loves," and then a few other brands, and I was the "loves" guy. And my project, which was going to last a couple of years, was to figure out how to reduce waste from the assembly line. You know, think of all these fabrics and things that run through an assembly line. And then of the waste, which was the ones that were combustible and safe for the environment that we could use in the waste fuel boiler. Great. Spending two years of my life figuring that out that just seemed like a target too low for what I wanted to do in life, and so quickly realized that that was not where I wanted to be. So that was kind of the switch. It wasn't the other way around. It was that boy that sucks kind of thing.

13:06 – The 2nd Interviewer

So, you developed a philosophy in your life. Tell us about that. And did it have something to do with what you were just describing?

13:16 – Dr. Hafer

Yeah, and to call it a philosophy, I think, is generous as well. I think it was a lack of fear. Welcoming a risk.

I liked scars of mistakes. Strangely enough, I mean, failing is awesome. You learn so much when you fail, probably more so than when you succeed. So, I just got rid of this fear of trying things, and I don't know if that was a philosophy, certainly wasn't a planning philosophy. It's just something that kind of evolved for me.

13:56 – The 2nd Interviewer

Would you say you're comfortable in your skin?

13:59 – Dr. Hafer

I think so. I mean, like I think everybody else, there are things that I wish I were better at or wish I was taller and had more hair and that kind of stuff, but I am okay with it.

14:13 – The 1st Interviewer

What do you like to talk about your upbringing? People in your life along the way, and decisions related to your marriage and work, etc.

14:16

I'd love to. I have, you know, wonderful mentors in my life, starting with birth, my mom and dad; both of them were fundamentally instrumental in who I am today. The mother. My mother was a golden woman. She is not with us anymore, but she was fantastic. She had such a caring personality and a caring heart. My father, his profession, he was a pastor, a Christian pastor. And so, I spent my life being a pastor's kid, which there are lots of stories about PKS, but so my whole life had, you know, religion and faith infused in it by default. And I found that great. I participated in stuff. In fact, I think of what a hard charger my dad was. You don't know that when you are eight or ten years old, but I remember that would have been in the 60s, and the civil rights movement was flying high. And I remember marching this March. That's probably eight years old. And you know, marching with a whole diverse group of people on this parade route, including people of color people, you know, young white kids like myself, and I remember walking through a city street and people yelling things. I am like, why are they yelling at us? You know, we're doing good. We are, you know, we are united, and we were carrying banners and signs, and there were people yelling at us not approving of what we were doing, and I was too young to really understand it, but in hindsight, I remember how, how much gravitation that had to my upbringing because it was a trying time in the United States. And the fact that I felt it as a young kid, but he was naive enough not to know exactly what the issue was. And I think that had a lot to do with, at least, my outlook on what is now a very popular term diversity, equity, and inclusion, and that was kind of an early exposure that when my dad was a, he was more business obviously is his profession was faith, but he was much more businesslike, which is unusual in that profession. Usually, they are charismatic preachers from the pulpit. He was the opposite. He is pretty good in the pulpit, but he loved building social programs. And I think that's where I got a lot of that, but he was very business-oriented. Whereas my mom was the one who was probably more suited personality-wise for that kind of thing. So, the combination of the two, I think, really was good for me. And then my brother, my younger brother, I got one younger sibling, and he is an inspiration for me, too. He is; he and I are about as opposite as you can get. He has no plan in life and love, and you know, he has his idea of success, and his measurement of success is on a completely different scale. He is satisfied with reading a book and sitting in the sun, and that's the most delightful day you can have, and I want to do that. I just could never make myself sit still long enough to do that. So, he is an inspiration as well. So yeah, upbringing was important. You said to talk about marriage. This is an interesting story. So, I met USF as an undergrad. And I told you, I started getting involved in student organizations, and I used to like to go to USF basketball games. And so, I was sitting there at a game, and I was watching the cheerleaders in the endzone, as most undergrad males do it. That's probably not appropriate to say, but I was doing that. And I noticed that they looked like they were having so much fun, and they had male cheerleaders in there. They dated in the high school that I was at; it was all females, but here, it just looked like they were having so much fun. And so, in the dorm, I saw a flyer that said USF cheerleading tryouts. And I am like, Oh, what a great way to meet girls. And so I went to this tryout, and it turned out I was not bad at that activity as well and became a USF cheerleader herein; I guess it was 1984. And I remember walking through the door, and this lovely young lady welcomed me; you know, they really needed guys because it was a female-heavy sport. And so any guy that walked through the door, as long as you could walk and chew gum, you probably were gonna make the team anyway, but she was just so nice to me, and she taught me all the stuff I needed to know and led to me making it, and it ended up that I ended up dating her, and I think 30 whatever we are 38 years later, she is still my wife. So that's that story.

19:38 – The 2nd Interviewer

Is your father still alive?

Yes, yes. – Dr. Hafer

You didn't talk about him in the past. Is he still a businessman? -The 2nd Interviewer

19:47 – Dr. Hafer

Yeah, he is. He is still kicking. He is actually pretty healthy, slowing down as most 83-year-olds should be. He is. He, actually, my brother, and I talked about a lot because he is still striving to lay his legacy, which is really interesting. You figure by 83 and extend so much that you think he would slow down, but he doesn't. He is always looking for the next thing. He is still chairing committees and starting programs just like he did all through his career.

20:20 – The 2nd Interviewer

Do you have involvement with him in all of that, too?

20:25 – Dr. Hafer

He had. Yes. Not super directly, but indirectly. He had started a mission in Haiti in the 90s, early 90s. I was still a pretty young college kid, and I was not. I guess I was out of college by then. He started in the 80s. So, I saw it developing, but the first time I went down there was when I was out of college. But it was a mission to serve the well. He and a couple of other pastors felt like for, and for their parishes, they needed to not just be lukewarm; they wanted some exotic missions so people could get their hands dirty. Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, is one one-hour flight from here or where we lived before, and you could get there, you could see the surf, do good things, and fly home. The more popular mission like that was Africa or otherwise to Africa. They try to do mission work. And it's a full day flight, you know, jet lag, a full day flight back, so it's a much bigger undertaking. In Haiti, they, you know, you could get there, and you could do good works, and it's just as needy of a country as anywhere else. And so, he established that in it was the early 90s. By the time it really got kicked in, it was a school to try to break the cycle of poverty through education. And eventually, it also was those kids who were always so undernourished that he started a health center, kind of they call it a hospital down there, and it really does act like a hospital because there are not many resources. But it was really built for nourishment for pregnant women to be healthy when they are giving birth and that kind of thing. So, that still exists today. And after he gave up leading that, there were a few other chairpersons along the way, and then I got involved in that as on the board. And it was just getting ready to turn the corner. So, I think the middle part of, let's say, was 2015 or 2016; maybe I can't remember the dates exactly. I believed that we could turn that into just a move from just a bunch of churches who were putting money in an offering plate kind of a charity to a real by onesie three, and so I served as an Interim Executive Director, just figuring that out, got programs going and really figured out what a job description would look like for a real Executive Director. And then we hired that. And so, since then, I've been, I'm not sure, but I am active in getting that going or not. Getting it going now, it's, you know, it's about a million dollars a year for charity, which is, you know, decent size does a lot of good. You know, Haiti right now is a whole different thing. So, I won't even go there because we are not talking about that, but that is where I am directly involved with him today. And then he likes to bring me in because I've really spent a lot of time understanding nonprofit boards and business operations. And so, what I've seen is a little bit of interest for me in the same vein of giving back, helping what I consider sort of a board of bleeding hearts, people who want to do good, think about themselves just like you would in business. Because at the end of the day, being a nonprofit doesn't mean you don't make any profit; you have to sustain and exist and act like a business. So, I've done that for several of his other boards, almost like a consultant. So that's how we interact today.

24:22 – The 1st Interviewer

Excuse me; I know Krishna has several questions to ask. Please let me check with him: Krishna, do you want to ask those questions by yourself, or do you want me to ask on your behalf?

24:38 – The 3rd Interviewer

I can ask. Can you hear me? Yes. Good morning.

Good morning.

So, my first question is, later in your life, you became an innovator and entrepreneur. You served on the board of directors for Village of Hope. USF's UMatter program, USF Enterprise Advisory Council, and the Center for Entrepreneurship. Your LinkedIn says, "The most powerful force in the universe is people coming together in community." All are performed with a servant's heart. So, my question is, what childhood or early teenage years or family experiences shaped you to become a leader in serving communities?

25:26 – Dr. Hafer

You guys have done your homework. That's not even sure where I've listed that, but that is my quote that I hope someday gets quoted by others, but you know, I've always been. They used to joke about me being the social director, and I'm looking at your name tag, Krishna. I'm not sure if you are. Yes, I'll just keep moving.

But, you know, I've always been, they joked about me being a social director. I will always be the one that, and I think it's just because I like a good party. I like to be around people, so I don't know if the concept of the community started then probably germinated in believing that when people came together, it was good, and it usually ended well. But I think this concept of how powerful community is, was realized more in my career. I used to really rely on I mentioned I was in corporate IT and then started my career. And I used to rely on peers and other people who were doing the same thing in their careers to solve problems. And eventually, again, I mentioned it kind of happened sideways; was became my profession through the last few startups that I've had, and now it's that, to me, the primary way of creating opportunities to give back, but we'll talk about that I guess, in next chapters of this interview.

27:07 – The 3rd Interviewer

Thank you. So, is there anything that gave you or influenced you to serve their communities and be a leader?

27:26 – The 3rd Interviewer

Anything

27:30 – Dr. Hafer

I enjoy leading. You know, I consider myself a servant leader. So, you know, I like to demonstrate. You know, I won't do it. I won't ask somebody to do something I wouldn't do first. So, I like digging into it that way. That's worked well for me, and people see their passion and tend to, you know, get you to know, get on board. Yeah, I mean, some people say I'm a control freak. I don't think I'm a control freak, but I do hate when I see the potential that isn't doing as well as it could be because it's not being led well, so I have this anxiousness over that maybe, but I don't know if it's so much during the upbringing, other than some of the seeds that I talked about. It really became super evident in my well into my career when I established dynamic communities. Okay.

28:34 – The 3rd Interviewer

Thank you, Andy. Let's go to the next question. Many people are either innovators or entrepreneurs, and very few are successful in both. You are in that unique category. Innovative and entrepreneurship mindset has innate character relationships that are thinking from childhood, some incidents that changed life or our mindset during the course of our life. My question here is, what family or personal environment or moments in early life help you to be both an innovator and entrepreneur?

29:21 – Dr. Hafer

Oh man, I can't put my finger on it other than this little boil that I described already. My interest in the thrill of creation, I mean. I remember being in Boy Scouts, and you know, how old are you when in the Boy Scouts? 10 or 12 years old? And I remember just; we were going to go on the Appalachian Trail; that was our big summer trip. I don't know if you know about that in Shanghai, but it's a very famous hiking trail that goes up the side of the United States. And, and I remember, you know, being a very young kid, we had a Scoutmaster, and we're talking about how we're going to do this. And I remember, you know, you got to wear a pack with all your stuff for like three weeks. And it was so heavy back then because they didn't have these lightweight materials. So, I said, let's, why don't we just use plastic instead of these big heavy canvas tents to reduce the weight, and so we made this plastic out of the Visqueen that was popular back then. We put grommets in the corners, we brought rope, and it was really light in our pack. But the first night that plastic just ripped apart and the grommets ripped out, and so we're laying under this plastic was probably a death threat, but we saw it was not good, but I just remember doing dumb stuff like that. So again, I go back to I don't think it was. I think it is mostly a fear of not having any fear of trying something. And if it worked, it was great, but sometimes you get you lay under plastic because the grommets ripped through. You know, and then I think the other part Krishna is my dad was always starting programs and stuff again, mostly in the context of social ministry, things within his church and in the community, but I probably witnessed that, and I thought that was kind of cool. So that's probably where that stems from, I think about it.

31:31 – The 3rd Interviewer

Okay. Let me go to the next question. So, you have donated to many different organizations, including yours, right? What early life experience molded you to become a philanthropist? How do you account for the personal satisfaction that brings with such actions of generosity?

31:54 – Dr. Hafer

I missed what the word used; Krishna inspired me to be a what?

31:59 – The 3rd Interviewer

Philanthropist?

32:01 – Dr. Hafer

Yeah, well, that's not my word. That is actually what I learned from Les Muma. But it does describe what I think I'm trying to do. I came into more money than I thought I should. When I sold one of my companies, I was really blessed that way, and so I have always been a giver of time and talent, and now have an opportunity to add treasure to that. And so yeah, there's nothing magic about it other than I just feel really strongly about giving of yourself and whatever you can.

32:42 – The 3rd Interviewer

So, do you feel some kind of personal satisfaction when you donate?

32:49 – Dr. Hafer

Yeah, you know, I would say donations aren't to my personal satisfaction as much as seeing the outcomes of what you're enabling. I actually don't like just writing checks. And in the examples that I've done something, I usually get myself involved in it and then use dollars as fuel to get to the destination. I'm guessing somewhere along the line, someone is going to ask me about UMatter. That was the biggest donation we've made to USF so far. Should I talk about it now, or does that come later from letters? Okay. That is, you know, I sit on the board, you know, Dr. Mullarkey sits on the same board with me, and he's come up with so many great ideas, and just enabling that program is to me that the thrill of the philanthropy so I'm not a proponent of only writing checks. Although talking to Mr. Kelly, I'm sure he wants to make sure people still want to go. Oh, he's in the other room. Sorry, that's right. That is behind me. But anyway, there are other people who are, obviously, making their lives collecting money and donations from people. But to me, you'll see me donating money to something that can have an impact on the outcome. This activity I'm working on right now with the Center for Entrepreneurship within Muma is an example of that. And I haven't given any money to that, but I certainly am giving a lot of time to that right now.

34:30 – The 1st Interviewer

We have one more question before we summarize our part of the interview. Our last question is: Our whole is very impressed about your saying that "A rising tide lifts all the boats." You also mentioned that the rising tide community would create collaboration, encouragement, and forgiveness. So please tell us what that means to you.

35:01 – Dr. Hafer

Well, the term itself just means that if success is happening for everybody, then it lifts everybody else up. I think that became most obvious to me in the synapse activity, which I guess we'll also talk about it at another time, but there was a specific effort to shine the light on good things that people were already doing. And once the light was shining shone on them, others would see that they're actually, you know, the tide was rising, and so more people got involved, and it's just a euphemism for saying, if, if good things happen, other people get on board and they can rise higher with their boat floating higher as well. And yeah, so not all I didn't make that will not be there. I wish I could take more credit for some of these sayings. I have no idea where you guys are finding these, they must be on the web somewhere that I said something somewhere, but this is impressive. The private investigators. Yeah, that's my answer there.

36:09 – The 2nd Interviewer

I'm Mary West, and I want to thank you on behalf of Wen Wei and Krishna. Thank you so much for giving us a glimpse into your early life, your education, and a whole bunch of your philosophies. I had no idea we were gonna get into that, but we tried to drill down into that. So, enjoy your break. Thank you.