

A Path to Authentic Leadership: Interviews with Jeffrey E. Johnson

By

Paul Tripp, University of South Florida

Mr. Jeffrey Johnson is Executive Vice President of PNC Bank, N.A., one of the largest banks in the country. He has successfully managed and led organizations in the banking industry but also in consulting and auditing. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Harvard Business School and earned his doctorate in business from the University of South Florida. He has been, and remains, an accomplished athlete and competitor, having competed in multiple world championship ironmans and climbed six of the world's seven summits by continent—among other things.

As part of an interview seminar for D.B.A. students at the University of South Florida, on July 1, 2023, five students, including me, interviewed Mr. Johnson. The purpose of the interviews was to conduct narrative research and, in so doing, reveal Mr. Johnson's internal

personal world, and make meaning of his lived experiences. The purpose of the research was to (i) evaluate adding to the body of knowledge in leadership studies Mr. Johnson as an exemplar of authentic leadership; and (ii) reasonably infer his leadership style may be of particular value to employees he leads. The conceptual scheme applied to analyze Mr. Johnson's lived experiences was an authentic leadership development model known in applied literature. The scheme was used to explain the processes that lead to the development of an authentic leader.

The findings from the analysis supported

(i) adding Mr. Johnson's story to the body of knowledge as an exemplar of authentic leadership; and (ii) the reasonable inference that his particular leadership style may motivate his employees to thrive in the workplace and elicit creative tendencies there.

Using a phenomenological approach to narrative research, the essence of Mr. Jeffrey Johnson's lived experiences was explained, supporting a finding that his life stories, crucibles, and leadership style reflected those of an authentic leader.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, Crucibles, Jeffrey Johnson, Phenomenology, Narrative research, Sensemaking, True North.

On the morning of July 1, 2023, a group of five students from the Muma College of Business' D.B.A. program, including me, interviewed Mr. Jeffrey E. Johnson, Executive Vice President of PNC Bank, N.A. During the course of three ca. 45-minute interviews conducted in succession, we asked Mr. Johnson a total of 30 questions and prompts.

The purpose of the interviews was to conduct narrative research, exploring the life and beliefs of a business leader and making meaning from his lived experiences. The interviews were designed to comport with Seidman's three-interview method of combining life-history interviewing and "focused, in-depth interviewing informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology" (Seidman, 2019, p. 14).

Prior to the day of the interviews, Mr. Johnson had furnished a copy of his resume. It contained details about various leadership, management, and other roles in business and in academia over the past 46 years. At the end of the document, the interviewee included a list of other activities titled "Special Achievements." See a summary of this list in the final paragraph of the next section. The group had planned to ask Mr. Johnson questions about various resume topics, including these Special Achievements. However, while Mr. Johnson responded to the career and education-centered questions asked during the first interview, Mr. Johnson made clear at the outset of the interview that his business career accounted for "maybe 10, 15, 20% of [his] total life."

How can sensemaking from non-business experiences, whose importance accounts for 80% to 90% of an individual's life, meaningfully inform the business community? What insights can be drawn from a business leader who considers business at most 20% of his total life? Much can be learned. When parties step out of the stream of flowing action, all phenomena revealed through reflection have meaning (Seidman, 2019)—for Mr. Johnson assuredly, but also for others.

While the purpose of the interviews was to conduct narrative research and explore the essence of Mr. Johnson's lived experience, the purpose of the research itself is (i) to evaluate adding to the body of knowledge in leadership studies Mr. Johnson's story as an exemplar of authentic leadership; and (ii) to reasonably infer that Mr. Johnson's leadership style as evidenced by the essence of his lived experiences may be of value to his organization's employees, something they may be willing to exchange in kind with pro-organizational behavior. As will be discussed further below, the particular phenomena considered in this idiographic narrative research support the notion that Mr. Johnson's story is one of an authentic leader, as such concept has been understood to mean in application. And authentic leadership within an organization can be contagious, infecting others with pro-organizational tendencies.

Jeffrey E. Johnson

Mr. Johnson is Executive Vice President of PNC Bank. In this role, he currently leads a team of 150 individuals and is responsible for all workouts and real-estate owned transactions, as well as certain commercial and industrial loans offered by the bank. At PNC Bank, he successfully hired, trained, and led a 300-member asset management team. Before his current role, Mr. Johnson managed all commercial mortgage-back securities operations for PNC Bank.

Prior to joining PNC Bank, Mr. Johnson held various executive and leadership positions. While Mr. Johnson later led as many as 400 employees at one time during his career, he began leading people at age 16, when he managed up to 30 ushers at a local theater complex. After graduating from the University of Illinois in 1977, with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting with an emphasis in information systems and computers, he served as a Corporate Internal Auditor with John Deere. Upon graduating with an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School, Mr. Johnson assumed the position of Vice President and Assistant to the President of Mark Twain Banks in Kansas City, Missouri. After consulting for Fortune 500 clients involved in agribusiness at Agribusiness Associates, Inc., Mr. Johnson spent the next 7 years until 1992, at Metro North State Bank in Kansas City, Missouri, where he was given supervision responsibility for over 200 bank officers and employees and was directly responsible for a \$1.5 billion loan and real estate portfolio. And from 1993 until 1998, when Midland Loan Services, L.P. was sold to PNC Bank, Mr. Johnson was a Midland Executive Vice President and one of its owners.

Mr. Johnson grew up in Rock Island, Illinois, a small town that borders Iowa on the Mississippi River. When asked during the third interview if he was still the same man he was when he was young, Mr. Johnson responded, "I've always been optimistic. I've always been energetic, disciplined, passionate." Mr. Johnson is also someone who not only responds to challenges, he "looks for challenges and then figures out a way to do it," whether the challenge is academic or physical. In 2020, Mr. Johnson earned his doctorate in business administration from the University of South Florida Muma College of Business. He is a competitive triathlete, having competed in the Hawaiian Ironman World Championship three times. He has climbed with his son six of the seven highest summits by continent. He has competed in the Formula Dodge Race Series and the Master's Bike Racing National Championship. He has been a competitive body builder.

In the month before the sitting for the interviews detailed in this paper, he participated in 29,029 Everesting, an endurance event where participants climbed 29,029 feet (the height of Mt. Everest) in 36

hours. In describing the conditions of the event on the mountain, Mr. Johnson said, *“But it’s steep. It’s cold, it’s windy, and so most people stopped during the middle of the night you know and took a break . . . And what I did is I just would refuse to stop . . . I could have made it a much easier event. I didn’t do that, but I just went to the limit.”* He was the oldest athlete there; he placed 7th out of 259.

He looks for the best attributes in people and learns from them. He eschews self-aggrandizement *“because I think everybody’s life is special.”* His family is close knit. He considers family paramount to a life well lived. And he wants to be remembered as someone who enjoyed life but, more importantly, as *“somebody that treated everybody the same, the clerk at the subway, the chairman of the company.”*

The Interviews

The interviewers adopted a phenomenological approach, which included posing open-ended questions about topics, ranging from Mr. Johnson’s early career to present day and building upon his responses with further inquiry about various lived experiences. The questioning was inductive in nature: other than my remark at the beginning of the first interview about how the interviews were being conducted in a business course, I made clear that the group was interested in all aspects of the participant’s life history, not just his business experiences. The questions and prompts posed during the three interviews are set forth in Appendix A. In this paper, Mr. Johnson’s transcribed responses are italicized and placed in quotes. From Teams recordings, the interviews were electronically transcribed verbatim by Otter.ai, a web-based service that uses artificial intelligence to create real-time transcription and meeting notes. The transcripts were later edited to improve their fidelity to the video recordings.

Authentic Leadership

The Authentic Leadership Development Model: A Conceptual Framework for Qualitative Studies

In their 2008 study, Walumbwa et al. developed and validated a theory-based measure of authentic leadership, proposing four dimensions for the construct: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. Their measure continues as cited authority for empirical researchers of leadership studies to this day. However, authentic leadership as a useful construct for empirical research and practice has been called into question (Gardner et al., 2021). Researchers have asked, given the observational challenges facing measures based on intrapersonal attributes among other things, whether the construct’s measure may lack the validity necessary to support the generaliz-

ability of studies with findings predicated on such a measure.

In the same paper, Gardner et al. (2021) acknowledged the dominance of the positivist tradition in leadership studies. But they had “not seen any intellectually convincing reason why this is so” (p. 7). The authors went on to voice concern about academics’ continued downplaying of alternative approaches to research in leadership, calling such conduct “a severe handicap to the field of leadership studies” (p. 7). In direct response to the challenges authentic leadership faces in quantitative research, Bradley-Cole (2021) detailed the design and application of a qualitative, inductive research study grounded in phenomenology to investigate the concept of authentic leadership.

In a way similar to Bradley-Cole’s choice to explore authentic leadership beyond the confines of positivist strictures (and apparent theoretical confusion), I chose to adopt the attributes of authentic leadership as espoused and applied by thought leaders in leadership studies. Bill George, a current executive fellow and former professor of management practice at Harvard Business School has published works for the past 20 years on authentic leadership. And he is the co-author of “True North: Leading Authentically in Today’s Workplace.” (Leavy, 2023; see also Gardner et al., 2021, p. 15 (While “uncritical acceptance of the retrospective accounts of successful executives on the secrets to their success is not good science[,] . . . the contributions of practitioner reflections, such as those provided in True North, to our understanding of leadership extend beyond the stories themselves.”); Walumbwa et al., 2008 (citing George among others when describing authentic leadership as a concept studied in applied literature)).

In his interview with Mr. George, Leavy (2023) described George’s authentic leadership development model (hereafter, the “Leadership Model”) as “the basic ingredients of authentic leadership” (p. 3). The Leadership Model consists of three primary processes: self-discovery, self-development, and leading people (Clayton & George, 2022):

1. Self-discovery is the process of self-examination, processing one’s life stories and the most difficult episodes of one’s life, its crucibles.
2. Self-development is the process of becoming self-aware and living one’s values, i.e. using one’s True North (as defined in the Discussion section below) as a compass and guide.
3. Leading people is the process of caring about others, aligning them to a common mission and values, challenging them to reach goals, and helping them with mentoring and feedback.

Successfully reflecting one or more of these three processes in the phenomena gleaned from Mr. Johnson’s life would support the notion that he is an authentic leader, as the concept has been understood

to mean in application, thereby adding Mr. Johnson's story to the body of knowledge in leadership studies. As seen further below in the Discussion section, the phenomena identified from this research may embody all three processes of the Leadership Model.

An Antecedent to Employee Pro-Organizational Behavior

Contributing Mr. Johnson's story to the body of knowledge to broaden the understanding of authentic leadership is a laudable goal in its own right. However, leaders are not meant to be merely studied. They lead. And authentic leaders not only lead, empirical research has proposed that they also infuse their organizations with positivity and promote creativity, both of which have been tied ultimately to positive organizational outcomes.

Sehrish, Shahid, & Muchiri (2019) suggested that the positivity inherent in authentic leadership is linked to employees' thriving in the workplace. Imam et al.'s (2020) study supported the idea that high-quality relationships, a feature of authentic leadership, increases employee creativity in the workplace.

Both studies relied on social exchange theory, among other things, to explain the proposed causal relationship between authentic leadership as an antecedent and thriving and creativity as dependent variables. In social exchange theory, the parties initiate and continue the social interaction provided by the exchange of benefits, intrinsic and extrinsic, independent of normative obligations (Zafirovski, 2005). Importantly, social exchange theory predicts that such exchanges engender feelings of personal commitment, gratitude, and trust (Blau, 1968).

Successfully reflecting on the above processes that comprise the Leadership Model in the phenomena gleaned from Mr. Johnson's life would support the notion that he is an authentic leader. As an authentic leader, Mr. Johnson would be leading others, but he also he might be encouraging them to thrive. In so doing, he might be engendering among employees creativity and evoking feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust.

The Research Design

Narrative Research Through a Phenomenological Lens

This qualitative, idiographic research leverages people's natural tendency to tell stories. And reducing such stories to writing, a narrative, serves as a means of revealing their internal personal world that lies otherwise hidden (Hall, 2011). By focusing this narrative on all the lived experiences of Mr. Johnson (not only those directly related to business, the 20%), his points of view regarding such experiences, and then his making sense of such experiences by

stepping out of the stream of flowing action, I have embraced the phenomenological approach to narrative research (Seidman, 2019; Weick, 2012).

Research Methods

Acquiring the Data

As discussed above, the groups conducted interviews following Seidman's (2019) three-interview method designed to inductively make meaning from Mr. Johnson's stories. The interviews were conducted via Teams where the five group members and the interviewee were located in different places. The interviews took place in the online presence of Matthew Mullarkey, Ph.D., a professor at the University of South Florida, and the other students of the D.B.A. class. Other than those of the interviewers and interviewee, all Teams videos and microphones were turned off during the interviews.

The first interview, which I conducted, was designed to cover Mr. Johnson's life history up until present day. I had prepared a three-page set of questions or cues to frame the interview, largely in line with the chronology of Mr. Johnson's resume, which he had shared prior to the day of the interview.

The second interview, which was conducted by two other members of the group, was designed to delve into the participant's detail of his current lived experience. However, a portion of the second interview was allotted to questions and responses about certain historical events included in Mr. Johnson's resume, including the Special Achievements, that I was unable to broach given time constraints. The third interview was given by the remaining two members of the group and was intended to elicit Mr. Johnson's reflections about the content covered in the prior two interviews.

Once the interviews were transcribed, each group (I am the sole member of my group) independently undertook their respective qualitative data analyses, i.e. the organization and sensemaking stages of the research. Using Quirkos, cloud-based qualitative analysis software, I uploaded the three transcripts and read them.

I also used the software to generate a word cloud, a visual representation of words whose sizes are directly proportional to the frequency such words occur. In addition to common words Quirkos had automatically removed, I eliminated the following words from the word cloud, words I considered to be immaterial to meaning or otherwise lacking a referent to be meaningful: it's, so, jeff, johnson, just, know, i'm, my, me, because, don't. The resultant word cloud is presented in Appendix B.

Coding the Data

In reviewing Saldaña's (2021) listing and commentary on various first-cycle coding methods available for use, I next chose to organize the data using two

elemental coding methods. They were concept coding and in vivo coding.

Concept coding involves the assignment of meso or macro-levels of meaning to data, has been suggested to be an appropriate method for all types of data, and may serve approaches like phenomenology (Saldaña, 2021). Due to the inductive nature of the interviews and breadth of the topics covered, including both business and significantly non-business topics (including the Special Achievements), I selected concept coding as my primary method of coding the artifacts. Through the process of open coding and combining common concepts, I reached a point of perceived saturation, ultimately creating 21 concept codes from the three artifacts. A graphic display of the codes organized by themes (see Theming the Data section below) is set forth in Appendix C.

In vivo coding utilizes the actual language found in the data record (Saldaña, 2021). I utilized in vivo codes because, as Saldaña (2021) put it, “sometimes the participant says it best” (p. 142). As listed in Appendix D, from my open coding exercise, I identified 35 in vivo codes from the three artifacts. Notably, as more particularly described in the Theming the Data section below, the in vivo codes came to serve a purpose akin to analytic memo writing as the process of theming the data began.

Theming the Data

Theming constitutes an extended phase that considers what data are about and what they mean (Saldaña, 2021). I began to theme the data categorically, first by reviewing the existing concept codes and merging and renaming codes and then creating subcodes as logic dictated. I performed this part of the analysis by editing and manually adjusting the graphical representations of the concept codes in Quirkos. Ultimately, I arrived at 21 distinctive concept codes and then considered how they might be categorized into one or more themes.

I next gave attention to the in vivo codes I had created. Serving a similar purpose as analytic memoing, I considered the in vivo codes that corresponded with the concept codes to appreciate the rich detail the concept codes had come to represent. (Saldaña, 2021, p. 142) (“In Vivo Coding is one strategy for getting at the organic poetry inherent in a participant.”) At this stage of the research, I had separately identified as a subject of interest the concept of authentic leadership, as framed by the Leadership Model, discussed above. Following a more deductive approach, I then conceptualized the following three themes that encompassed the 21 concept codes enriched by their corresponding in vivo codes.

They are the following and are graphically displayed at the center of the groupings in Appendix C:

1. Building Mind, Body, Spirit
2. Scripting Life

3. Living and Working Interdependently

Discussion

Storytelling and sensemaking, when combined with organization, “provide tremendous scope for further developing our knowledge and understanding of action that lies at the heart of organization (and management) studies.” (Weick, 2012, p. 142). The interviews conducted on July 1, 2023, afforded Mr. Johnson the opportunity to tell his story and to make sense of it through reflection. The subsequent creation of artifacts through transcription, in turn, afforded me the opportunity to organize Mr. Johnson’s storytelling and sensemaking. This exercise in phenomenology and narrative research provides the needed scope to next discuss the extent to which the processes of self-discovery, self-development, and leading people, processes composing the Leadership Model, are evident in the themed data. In other words, the following discussion addresses the question of how well the essence of Mr. Johnson’s story reflects a path to authentic leadership.

The Self-Discovery Process of the Leadership Model

Clayton and George (2022) identified self-discovery as the beginning of one’s path to authentic leadership. The process involves an individual’s experiencing and coming to an introspective understanding of one’s own life stories and crucibles. Life stories provide the context in which an individual may become an authentic leader, but the crucibles and the pain and suffering they entail shape the individual and forge the leader. To give greater meaning to the concept, Clayton and George (2022) linked the concept of crucibles to psychologist Abraham Maslow’s finding that “tragedy and trauma were the most important human experiences leading to self-actualization” (p. 37). The authors gave examples of crucibles leaders have endured—all traumatic and transformative, all tragedies.

Mr. Johnson’s interviews were filled with narrations of life stories and events that appear to have also led him to discover who he was. His life history to present day provided needed context, but his stories themed within Building Mind, Body, Spirit, in particular, also included tragedies, both traumatic and transformative. Appendix E includes the following and other phenomena identified within this theme that relate to the self-discovery process.

“We were playing touch football and he just leveled me, and it snapped my neck back and actually, I got it fixed. Took 20 years to ever get it fixed . . . [Harvard Business School] asked me to come back the next year. I never, never, ever, ever even considered it.

You know I said I had to stick it out. I couldn't see being a failure. You know, to me failing is, I failed a lot, but it would be a tough one to swallow to have to take a year and come back."

"It's hard to lose you know, you lose . . . All my net worth is tied up to the bank . . . when I left the bank . . . I lost everything, my net worth was I own the house that I built here."

"I went in front of a secret grand jury. I was interviewed, you know. I still remember I'd run out of money to pay the attorney because he was \$400 an hour, so I went up to the Attorney General and FBI agents, the whole room was filled with people. It was me, I still remember I was . . . with the guy who was prosecuting everything. He was there, FBI agents, other lawyers, you know, but I was the only one who didn't have an attorney because I wasn't going to pay because I spent seven hours getting interviewed. I said, guys, the appraisal was wrong. You know, and you can't do that. You know, they had cameras in our offices, they had bugged our offices. They were following me in the car. It was really interesting."

However, despite Clayton and George's (2022) link to Maslow's finding, crucibles may not be limited to tragedies. And the authors offered broader understandings of the concept in other parts of their book, e.g., "our most significant challenges" (p. 11), "our most painful experiences" (p. 11), and "a transformative experience" (p. 41). For Mr. Johnson, his Special Achievements (as described above) may have also served as his crucibles, testing his character and transforming his life. And as further described below, his Special Achievements may not have only engaged the self-discovery process as described in the Leadership Model, but they may have also catalyzed and provided support for the second process towards authentic leadership, self-development.

The Self-Development Process of the Leadership Model

Self-awareness and living one's values are key components of the second process of the Leadership Model. Clayton and George (2022) described self-awareness as the act of exploring the first process of self-discovery, reflecting on such life stories and crucibles and deriving meaning. And living one's values is living your "True North," which is "the moral compass that guides your actions, derived from your most deeply

held beliefs, your values, and the principles you lead by." (p. 2).

For Mr. Johnson, however, life's stories and crucibles appear to have not only led to self-discovery, but they also constitute in significant measure the means by which he has developed and continues to develop himself. As described in greater detail above, Mr. Johnson's Special Achievements included, among other things, competing in world championship triathlons, climbing 6 of the 7 highest summits by continent, and participating as recent as June 2023, in 29,029 Everesting, an endurance event where participants climbed 29,029 feet in 36 hours. As with the phenomena used to support self-discovery, the following phenomena are themed within Building Mind, Body, Spirit. However, unlike the phenomena quoted above, the following describe crucibles Mr. Johnson endured voluntarily: transformative but not tragic.

"We climbed Vinson Massif, the highest point in Antarctica. I don't know it's just tough."

"My favorite place in the whole world is the Grand Canyon. I've probably done that over 30 times, maybe 40 times, up and down in a day or rim to rim . . . there's so many experiences."

"It was a disastrous trip. Somebody stole all our climbing gear. So, we did it . . . I had a golf jacket, so I'm on top one of the biggest mountains in the world . . . I was wearing size 10 double plastic boots, with crampons on and I take a size 12. So, I didn't put any socks in there or anything. I just got to get my foot in them because everything was stolen but the final the evening there we stayed up all night and Moscow during the summers, not now, but back then, was just a magical place."

"[The 29,029 Everesting Event is] where you walk up [the mountain] 15 times. It's 2,000 feet of elevation. Average grade is 25%. You have 36 hours to do it 15 times. And this I promised my wife this would be my last event, so I trained harder than for any my whole Hawaiian Ironmans or any of my bike racing or anything . . . I didn't want to get injured. I wanted to have fun, but I wanted to go to my limit. I wanted to almost break. Even if I broke a little, it's fine. And it was such an unbelievable event . . . I was the oldest

person in the event at 68 . . . But it's steep. It's cold, it's windy, and so most people stopped during the middle of the night you know and took a break for two, four or six hours. And what I did is I just would refuse to stop. I wanted to go and like I said to my limit. I could have made it a much easier event. I didn't do that, but I just went to the limit."

In addition to sharing with the interviewers his lived experiences, reflecting self-awareness, Mr. Johnson's values were made known. The Scripting Life theme, whose phenomena related to the process of self-development, takes its name from Mr. Johnson's reference to his son's use of the term "scripting your life." Mr. Johnson said the phrase meant, "*you can't control exactly what happens to you, but you can actually control what your response is to it.*" And this statement may embody Mr. Johnson's True North as defined above. In other words, for Mr. Johnson True North, the moral compass that guides actions, may mean the act of building character. His actions include volunteering to endure crucibles. And as the following self-reflections themed in Scripting Life suggest, Mr. Johnson's beliefs, values, and principles appear inextricably interwoven with the virtue of building character.

"I like to do accomplishments because they build character. I'm big into building character, and accomplishments do that. Business accomplishments can do that."

"I've always been optimistic. I've always been energetic, disciplined, passionate, all those things stick I think they start to the edges go off a bit more, the sharpness of those edges rub off a bit more."

"I've always used- you have to learn how to live with the cross you bear. Everybody's given a cross to bear. And what I found is more skills, God given like intelligence, the bigger that cross is to bear."

"I don't think you can self-actualize. So, I think you can take steps towards achieving it, but you never achieve it, like an infinite ladder. That the higher you go, the better you look down and see things. And so you're climbing this ladder up and you're looking down and you're beginning to realize you're not at the floor. We're all in the trees. We live life in the trees."

See Appendix F for a listing of similarly-themed phenomena related to the self-de-

velopment process.

The Leading People Process of the Leadership Model

The final process along the path to authentic leadership involves leading people, and the previous two processes serve to prepare a leader to lead people authentically. In distinguishing authentic leadership from more traditional top-down managerial approaches, Clayton and George (2022) proposed a framework to demonstrate this final process, COACH, i.e. Caring, Organizing, Aligning, Challenging, and Helping. The authors considered authentic leadership to include giving greater focus to the we, not the I.

Phenomena themed as Working and Living Inter-dependently fit within one or more of the COACH dimensions. They include the following:

"So I always call everybody because I don't like to embarrass people. So I always call and review every deal when it comes to committee the day before. Because I'd never embarrass people. If you're gonna yell at somebody, you do it one on one."

"I go walk around the halls, I start talking to the new interns that we just hired. You know I bring my dog to work so we go out and visit people, you know, and then and in your building a rapport, you're building a culture . . . They understand and that culture is what holds the glue . . ."

"So, I'm going to tell you a success story, but it took five years. You know, he had, he was very insecure. He was very insecure and so he was always bragging and taking all of the say, hey, he did everything. That really turned off bosses at PNC. I understood it . . . So the key was that was it was like when you confront . . . And that confrontation, which probably lasted over several months didn't just happen one day. He began to think about that. And he really came around. It took a long time. But he came around and now again, he's well liked in the organization."

"The way I run my department is really has three major principles. One is respect, respect each other . . . Number two is you act like it's your money . . . And then the third is transparency. That means being honest and straightforward with everybody in the organization, in-

cluding our department within our department, outside of department, so nobody thinks we mislead so we always tell the truth even if it reflects badly on us and sometimes it does, we screw up, everyone screws up.”

See Appendix G for a listing of similarly-themed phenomena related to the process of leading people.

Findings

Having identified phenomena that fit within the three Leadership Model processes, this section details findings from the research. And it answers the question of how well the essence of Mr. Johnson's story reflects a path to authentic leadership, reiterating the implications of such a finding to the organization and employees being led.

The phenomena gleaned from the three interviews appear to strongly suggest that through his lived experiences, Mr. Johnson has successfully engaged in all three Leadership Model processes. As detailed in the Discussion section above and as Mr. Johnson recounted, his life stories and, in particular, his crucibles were both formative and transformative. His ongoing commitment to building character in himself and in others and his resultant managerial style are indicia of an authentic leader as such concept has been conceived in applied literature.

As noted above, the purpose of this research is (i) to evaluate adding to the body of knowledge in leadership studies Mr. Johnson as an exemplar of authentic leadership; and (ii) to reasonably infer that Mr. Johnson's leadership style, as evidenced by the essence of his lived experiences, may be of value to his organization's employees, something they may be willing to exchange in kind with pro-organizational behavior. The findings of this research support adding Mr. Johnson's story to the pantheon of authentic leaders whose stories have been recorded and studied.

However, this qualitative research did not evaluate the explanatory power of social exchange theory or the question of whether authentic leaders promote pro-organizational behavior like thriving and creativity as quantitative researchers discussed above have suggested. Nonetheless, reasonable inferences may be drawn, and Mr. Johnson's own statement during the second interview about the low attrition rate of employees he led may provide, albeit inferentially, some empirical support for the proposition that authentic leadership promotes pro-organizational behavior. In his second interview, Mr. Johnson stated,

“They understand and that culture is what holds the glue, like my organization, in the last four years, two people have left for other jobs. I've

had 12 or 14 people retire, but only two people out of a couple hundred left for other jobs. And that's because we had a culture that is very, very strong.”

While not directly germane to the research purposes identified in this study, I made one additional finding worth noting and developing below. In participating in the interview process and conducting the research, I found that many of Mr. Johnson's perceptions of his lived experiences (the focus of the third interview in Seidman's (2013) concert series of interviews) seemed to have already been conceived. In other words, when reflecting on his life during the interviews, Mr. Johnson appeared to have already actively engaged in his own version of phenomenology, an auto-phenomenology. One of the first questions asked during the final interview was “can you bring everything together and let us know who you are?” Mr. Johnson responded, “*very philosophical question, which I spend a lot of time on now.*” And by his answers during that interview, it appeared he had already spent time thinking about his lived experiences: who he was and what he had done.

For example, Seidman (2019) suggests that interviewers encourage participants “to step out of the stream of everyday occurrences, pause, and reflect on what their experiences meant to them” (p. 23). Shortly after responding to the first question above, Mr. Johnson said,

“Most of my past challenges have been physical or academic, but the next stage of my life is self-actualization . . . So what I've been working on for the last few years. I've always been interested in philosophy. So I've read a lot over the past couple of decades. But it's very much figuring out who you are, and what makes you tick, and you're never going to figure that out. . . wherever you go, you're never ever going to, but it's a fun thing to explore.”

Long before the interview on July 1, 2023, perhaps for the past 20 years, Mr. Johnson had already been reflecting on his lived experience; he had been thinking about who he was and what made him tick. But this is not the only example.

Seidman (2019) describes meaning-making as a process that requires participants to “look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them, not necessarily in a straight line, to their present situation” (p. 24). During the final interview, Mr. Johnson revealed that his present challenge was “*to have a perfect day, which I'm not even close to.*” In describing what a “perfect day” meant, “*never get[ting] upset or mad about something.*” Mr. Johnson recounted a key

lesson: “Don’t fight reality. What that means is, it is what it is. Now, almost all of the good things in my life came out of bad situations.” Striving to achieve the “perfect day” and that key lesson appeared to trace their roots at least as far back as the following event Mr. Johnson next narrated. “We landed in Moscow to climb [Mount] Elbrus, which is the highest point in Europe.” He recalled that upon arrival, all the climbing gear had been stolen, and in response to the disastrous setback, his Russian guide told him an “old Russian proverb: trips that start off poorly end well.” Mr. Johnson added, “I’ve used that so many times . . . like the last 20 years. When something starts to go bad, . . . there’s a silver lining.” Mr. Johnson continued to describe various ups and downs he had experienced over the years, reinforcing the key lesson not to fight reality, supporting his belief that good things can come from bad situations, and providing a philosophical, if not metaphysical, basis for his present-day challenge—to have the “perfect day.”

“The intellectual life of man consists almost wholly in his substitution of a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes. (James, 1988: 1008-1009, italics in original)” (Weick, 2012, p. 43). For Mr. Johnson, by the time he sat for the interviews on July 1, 2023, he had already conceived of certain principles and understandings that gave order, meaning, and perhaps purpose, to his life experiences.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

Validity

In conducting interviews using a phenomenological approach, focus is given to the participant’s understanding of lived experiences (Seidman, 2019). Given this focus, confidence in the validity of the research may be reasonably inferred from the authenticity of what the participant has to say during the interview. Having conducted the first interview and watched and listened to the second and third interviews, Mr. Johnson’s responses to questions appeared authentic. And I was not alone in this view. As noted above, the interviews took place in the online presence of the class’ professor, Dr. Mullarkey,

and fellow classmates. At the conclusion of the interviews, Dr. Mullarkey asked the class if they believed Mr. Johnson’s responses were authentic. All who responded to the professor’s question agreed that Mr. Johnson’s responses were in fact authentic. My view and the views of others in the class about the interviewee’s authenticity support the claim that the research based upon the artifacts created from these interviews is valid.

Reliability

The reliability of the methods used to conduct this narrative research is supported in two ways. First, to support inter-rater reliability, the 21 concept codes and three themes I derived while analyzing the data were compared with codes and themes independently developed within the group who conducted the second interview. Within that group, eight predominant codes or themes were identified. And as noted in Table 1, five of the eight correspond well with the themes identified in this research. The remaining three may be better characterized as reflecting one or more of this paper’s themes.

Second, as described in the Research Methods section above, I generated a word cloud, which is presented in Appendix B. The sizes of the words displayed in the word cloud are directly proportional to the frequency such words occur in the interviews’ transcripts. In the Introduction section above, Mr. Johnson stated at the beginning of the three-interview series that his business career accounted for “maybe 10, 15, 20% of [his] total life.” In reviewing the word cloud, I see that “bank,” “business,” and “work” are relatively small in size, and “career” was apparently not even uttered with enough frequency to be included within the cloud. On the other hand, although “things” may not much larger than “business,” “people” is larger than the career-related words and stands out as one of the largest words in the cloud. The frequency of Mr. Johnson’s use of words as represented by the cloud appears consistent with his opening view about how much (or little) his business career accounted for his total life experience. This consistency further supports the reliability of the data gathered in the research.

Themes from this research	Codes or themes from 2 nd group/2 nd interview
(1) Building Mind, Body, Spirit	(1) Sacrifice and trade-offs, (2) Learning from experience
(2) Scripting Life	(3) Career and leadership, (4) Professional achievements
(3) Living and Working Interdependently	(5) Relationships and family
A Mix of Two or Three Themes	(6) Appreciation, (7) Day at work, (8) Trip and personal achievements

Ethics

“[E]thics are not just a means, but rather constitute a universal end goal of qualitative quality itself, despite paradigm” (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). As described above, the purpose of the research detailed in this paper is to evaluate adding to the body of knowledge in leadership studies Mr. Johnson as an exemplar of authentic leadership and to suggest by inference that his leadership style may be of value to his organization’s employees. However, at no time should research purposes be deemed more important than the interests of those who played roles in supporting this research. And in this research, those interests belong primarily to Mr. Johnson.

At the conclusion of the third interview, Mr. Johnson confided, “*I really didn’t want to do this . . . I don’t like to aggrandize my life because I think everybody’s life is special.*” Mr. Johnson’s admitted reluctance to participate in the interview underscored his character, i.e. the results of his being guided by his True North. But his statement also brought into sharp relief the importance of the ethical treatment of interview participants: to safeguard their interests. For Mr. Johnson, an Executive Vice President of one of the largest banks in the country and a reluctant interviewee, those interests necessarily center around his privacy.

Mr. Johnson’s privacy interests were taken into consideration. Prior to each interview, Mr. Johnson was made aware of its recording, and prior to the first interview, I asked him if he had any questions before beginning. With respect to this paper, prior to any publication outside the classroom setting, I afforded Mr. Johnson the opportunity to review it, including its appendices. I did not seek to publish this paper or any parts of it, including Mr. Johnson’s interview transcripts contained in the appendices, without his prior written consent, which he was free to withhold in his sole discretion.

It is also important to give due attribution to others who made this research as presented possible. Besides Mr. Johnson who was the very source of the data, Mr. Massoda Ma-Nlep, a fellow D.B.A. student, kindly shared his coding and theming data so that I may support the above-described inter-rater reliability of my analysis. Mr. Matt Versdahl and he conducted the second interview, and Ms. Jacqueline Benavides and Mr. Kyle Kelly conducted the third. The transcripts from all three interviews served as artifacts for this idiographic narrative research, enabling me to generate the findings in the Discussion section above and contributions to knowledge in the section below.

Contributions to Knowledge

This research contributes to knowledge in the field of leadership studies by including within such studies Mr. Johnson’s story as an exemplar of authentic lead-

ership. However, the contribution of Mr. Johnson’s lived experiences to knowledge does not end there. His view about his business career within the greater context of his life may provide novel insight into the effectiveness of phenomenology as an approach in narrative research, perhaps suggesting phenomenology is particularly suitable for qualitative research of authentic leadership.

Specifically, Mr. Johnson informed me during the first interview that his business career accounted for “*maybe 10, 15, 20% of [his] total life.*” Despite this relatively low percentage of life ascribed to business, the thick descriptions and concrete detail from *all* his lived experiences, including, in particular, the Special Achievements, permitted me to nonetheless organize the storytelling and sensemaking and derive research findings that directly apply to business. This is generally consistent with inductive research and comports specifically with Seidman’s (2019) and Weick’s (2012) ruminations on phenomenology. (cf. Shannon et al., 2020) (“Particularly interesting was the fact that personal trigger events and crucibles help shape authentic leader characteristics, *which carry over to their roles as organizational leaders.*”) (emphasis added). That is, mostly analyzing phenomena involving 80% of Mr. Johnson’s life still permitted me to draw meaningful conclusions and inferences about the other 20%.

As discussed above, the positivist tradition has dominated leadership studies, and some in the field considered the downplaying of alternate approaches to be a “severe handicap in the field of leadership studies” (Gardner et al., 2021, p. 7). This research contributes to knowledge and perhaps broadens the landscape of leadership studies by taking another approach—adopting a conceptual scheme conceived in applied literature, the Leadership Model, and employing it through narrative research to evaluate phenomenologically the leadership characteristics of an individual.

Future Research

Mr. Johnson’s Special Achievements introduced questions about the nature of crucibles. Unlike many, if not most, stories about the development of leaders and the tragic and traumatic experiences that befell them, many of Mr. Johnson’s were crucibles of his own choosing. Future research could delve more closely into the concept of crucibles, questioning whether volunteering to endure them may have a different impact on leadership development.

Future researchers may also consider the last finding made above about the prospect of Mr. Johnson’s having engaged in auto-phenomenology. It may be of interest to better understand how or whether a study adopting a phenomenological approach may be influenced by, or need to account for, such conduct by a participant.

And future research involving the Leadership Model or a similar model or theory may focus attention on the effects or existence of overlapping processes. For Mr. Johnson, the process of self-discovery and the process of becoming self-aware (as part of self-development) appeared to overlap significantly. This raises questions of whether such processes may not necessarily be sequential but rather concurrent and whether the processes could instead reflect different dimensions of some larger construct or concept.

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Review

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

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Authors



Paul Tripp is currently a doctoral candidate at the Muma College of Business, University of South Florida, and holds a Master of Laws in Health Law from Loyola University Chicago, Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida, and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Central Florida. For the last eleven years, he has served as General Counsel of Lincare Holdings Inc., a national provider of respiratory therapy and durable medical equipment to patients in the home setting. Prior to that, he served for ten years as Lincare's mergers and acquisitions counsel. The author can be contacted at ptripp1@usf.edu.

Appendix A: 30 Questions or Prompts Posed During the 3 Interviews

Q1. Please talk about your business careers.

Q2. Is that what they disliked?

Q3. But you were the top 5% of the class. So, I mean that's impressive?

Q4. What experiences in these unions gave you color in terms of your career progression?

Q5. What do you think would have happened?

Q6. You're talking about your professional career. And I appreciate all this information. Obviously, there are other what you call your special achievements, which are many, and you were just starting to talk about those and I'm kind of curious at a high level. How do you connect those because when I first looked at your resume, I saw that somebody who is a CPA auditor, but then has climbed six of the seven summits how do those connect? In other words, how do you reconcile sort of your personality or your worldview? Your experiences, you mentioned all these connections and having I think a larger a greater perspective than others. But how do you marry those two different worlds?

Q7. I'm curious. It just kind of culminating with what you're talking about and character building and how would you define the end of the day, a life well lived I think we're talking about your successful career, but more broadly, kind of stepping out of the professional realm. How would you define that? Somebody whose lives at the end of the day?

Q8. And you had some really awesome stories there in the first part of the interview and I really picked up on the fact that your family is really important to you. You've obviously done a lot of traveling with them. And I would love to hear some experiences that you would mind sharing about those and maybe the most memorable trip that you've had.

Q9. You, you talked a lot about the people that you've kind of surrounded yourself with over the years and I'm curious how it how has that made a difference for you? You know, getting to where you are today. As far as you know, how do you how do you leverage that in your you know, getting to the to the place where you are and do you have any examples of how that is contributed to your success, whether you know, whether your role in PNC or, you know, some of the amazing things that you've done with athletics?

Q10. And I have to say that your career has been very impressive and very inspiring as well. Congratulations. So, you have been in leadership position for a very long time now. Tell me how your leadership or your decision that you've made may have destroyed someone's careers. Some of your decisions in your leadership position.

Q11. Can you please share an example of who you are to deal with the highly qualified employees who didn't fit into your company's culture? So, tell us how you did. You did handle the situation.

Q12. Jeff, I think the question I had is, you know, can you just go through a day in the life of what it's like to be Jeff Johnson? And right now, your current role and some of the things that you do?

Q13. So, Jeff, we were all impacted by COVID. You remember 2020, 2021, 2022 pandemic and something a COVID has changed something in our life, professionally and sometimes with our family. Can you tell us or share with us how you approach what type of leadership you had during COVID?

Q14. Which actually means you don't support remote working with those it means that you do not support remote working?

Q15. So, you've taken us through a lot of your life already, you have done a lot of reflection in the first two interviews. I'd like to know a little bit more. You're the sum of all your parts, which is what I mentioned in class right now. But who are you? If you were to describe yourself who is Jeff Johnson, can you bring everything together and let us know who you are?

Q16. Have you figured out what your cross?

Q17. So how are you dealing with that fear?

Q18. Has getting older made you think about the eternal I guess for lack of a better way to put it?

Q19. Though, what do you think about it?

Q20. So, you obviously have a close relationship with your sons is there. What haven't you imparted to them that you still want to impart?

Q21. Are you still the same man you were when you were a young man or have you how have you changed?

Q22. So, looking back if you had to identify one experience or situation, biggest regrets that you would change what? What would that be?

Q23. Do you think you've made up for that?

Q24. And have you just haven't discussed it with them? I mean, what kind of feedback are they giving you about it?

Q25. So, what do you what are you most proud about?

Q26. So, did they make you who you are?

Q27. Jeff, how would you like to be remembered?

Q28. Now and you're in you keep saying you want to be self-actualized What do you feel you're still missing?

Q29. Can we solve world problems in two minutes?

Q30. Your outlook on life has been really fascinating. Your experience and everything and for sharing everything with this. You've been very candid with us. Thank you.

Appendix C: The 21 Concept Codes and 3 Themes

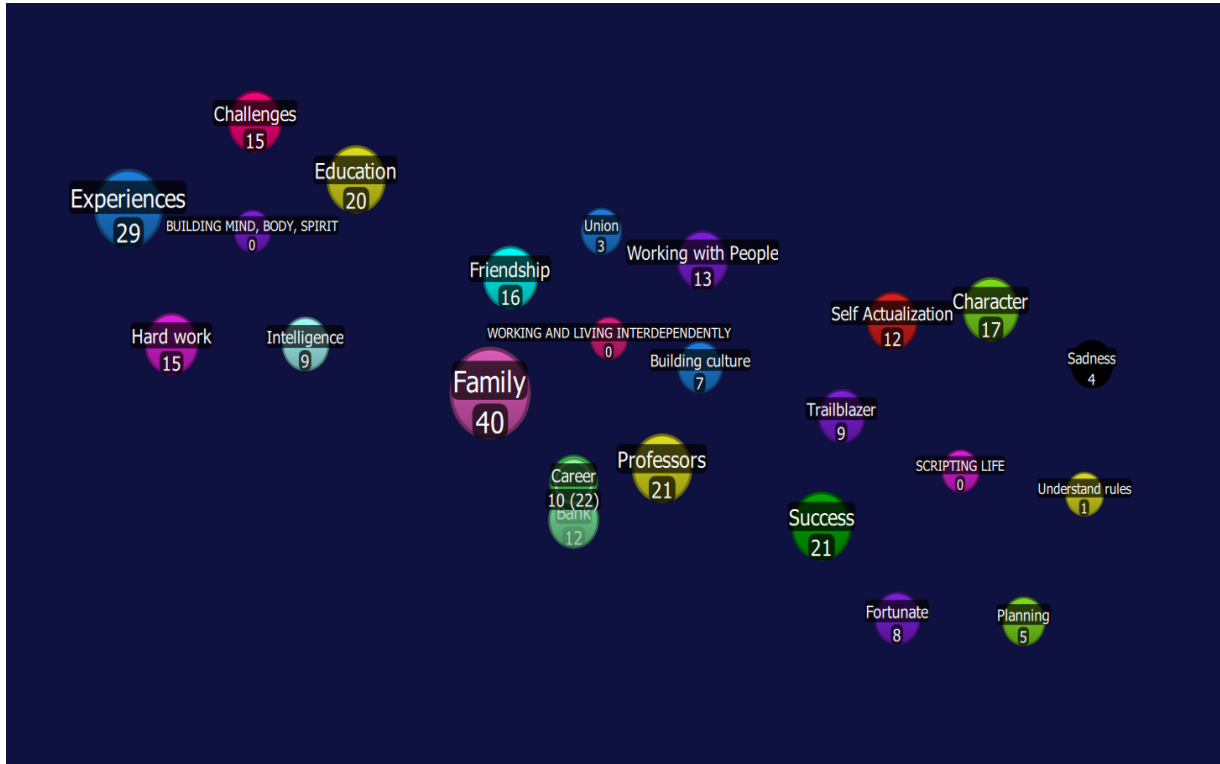


Figure C1. Concept Codes and Themes

Appendix D: The 35 In Vivo Codes

- "I've had some really interesting experiences"*
- "I've been lucky enough to be able to do a whole lot of things"*
- "I've had so many adventures"*
- "Luckily most of them with my kids"*
- "I just liked being around smart people"*
- "They liked me"*
- "Impossible . . . but it's a great experience"*
- "We did a lot of interesting things here"*
- "I'm very good at figuring out what the rules are"*
- "You have to be coachable"*
- "There's no better job than being a lending office. Get to decide how people make money"*
- "I was hooked up with the best salesperson I've ever seen in my life"*
- "Banking sounded really, really interesting"*
- "I would have been a good professor"*
- "Union perspective gives you is the overwhelming distrust workers have for their bosses"*
- "I figured out how to create a plan. You have to be coachable"*
- "I can pick up things very, very quickly"*
- "Stress builds character"*
- "I would just refuse to stop"*
- "I've been managing people since I was 16 years old"*
- "You're building rapport. You're building culture"*
- "How do you build a culture over a Zoom call"*
- "I'm lucky enough to talk to most of my workforce"*
- "My days are just basically talking to people. It's pretty easy"*
- "It's really an easy job"*
- "It's a Buddhist concept that you need to accept reality"*
- "I'm somebody that responds to challenges"*
- "It is what it is"*
- "Scripting your life"*
- "I've always been optimistic"*
- "Scripting is you can't control exactly what happens to you, but you can actually control what your response is to it"*
- "I don't see it as extraordinary"*
- "I've been lucky enough"*
- "Just slowing slipping down an icepack"*
- "I have no fear of death"*

Appendix E: Building Mind, Body, and Spirit

First Interview

“The first year [at Harvard Business School] I had some real difficulties at the start. I injured my neck in a touch football game with I don’t know if you guys know Jeff Immelt, former head of GE. He was a Dartmouth Guard, he was a Guard at Dartmouth. We were playing touch football and he just leveled me and it snapped my neck back and actually, I got it fixed. Took 20 years to ever get it fixed. But it was a loose bone went into my spine. And so, they asked me actually the first year at Harvard, they asked me, given the medical problems I was having. I was having to go into traction for two hours a day to take the pressure off my neck. They asked me to come back the next year. I never, never, ever, ever even considered it. You know I said I had to stick it out. I couldn’t see being a failure. You know, to me failing is, I failed a lot, but it would be a tough one to swallow to have to take a year and come back. I was in traction two hours a day. Grandon had a place up in New Hampshire, which I think his brothers still has.”

“It’s hard to lose you know, you lose... All my net worth is tied up to the bank. I still found my statement back then I had, when I left the bank my net worth because I lost everything, my net worth was I own the house that I built here.”

“[J]ust think of this... The heat that’s been going through. You’re in an un-air conditioned manufacturing facility and doing that or I was, you know, I was laying concrete. I mean that’s hard you get, you’re tearing up your hands, your feet, your everything, and it’s so difficult, very, very difficult.”

“[T]hey could have prosecuted with me. I went in front of a secret grand jury. I was interviewed, you know. I still remember I’d run out of money to pay the attorney because he was \$400 an hour, so I went up to the Attorney General and FBI agents, the whole room was filled with people. It was me, I still remember I was at the ... with the guy who was prosecuting everything. He was there, FBI agents, other lawyers, you know, but I was the only one who didn’t have an attorney because I wasn’t going to pay because I spent seven hours getting interviewed. I said, guys, the appraisal was wrong. You know, and you can’t do that. You know, they had cameras in our offices, they had bugged our offices. They were following me in the car. It was really interesting.”

Second Interview

“[W]here you walk up [the mountain] 15 times. It’s 2,000 feet of elevation. Average grade is 25%. You have 36 hours to do it 15 times. And this I promised my wife this would be my last event, so I trained harder than for any my whole Hawaiian Ironmans or any of my bike racing or anything. I trained my ass off. And I wanted to, you know, my request to God was very, very simple. I didn’t want to get injured. I wanted to have fun, but I wanted to go to my limit. I wanted to almost break. Even if I broke a little, it’s fine. And it was such an unbelievable event. My son there’s 259 competitors, and my son got second. So, he got done at 11 o’clock at night he was with the super ultra marathoners and stuff like that he’s a super duper athlete. And then I was the oldest person in the event at 68. And I decided there was a lot more people better than me that I finished ahead of, but you had to have tremendous determination to hike through the night because you put a headlamp on, and if you guys hiked at night the headlamp on a steep mountain. It’s eerie. They have reflectors, so your lamp looks ahead when you lift up your headlamp and see it’s like lights up the mountain. But it’s steep. It’s cold, it’s windy and so most people stopped during the middle of the night you know and took a break for two, four or six hours. And what I did is I just would refuse to stop. I wanted to go and like I said to my limit. I could have made it a much easier event. I didn’t do that, but I just went to the limit, so my son ended at 11. I still had over three laps to go. You say well just three laps. 15 laps, just three laps little over three laps to go that’s nothing. Three laps take a little over an hour and a half each. That’s four and a half hours. I’ve done a half Ironman, which is 56 mile bike and 1.2 mile swim, and a half marathon in four and a half hours. So, when I started thinking I only got four and a half hours to go shoot, it’s like instinct in, you know it’s midnight. So, my son went and showered, went back in every lap you know the next couple laps he was at the bottom and then the last lap we got to do together. Nobody was on the mountain. It’s 3:30 in the morning. Nobody’s on the mountain we had hiked. We had done six of the seven summits [of the world] together, so we were as close as you can be.”

“We climbed Vinson Massif, the highest point in Antarctica. I don’t know it’s just tough, we’ve done... My favorite place in the whole world is the Grand Canyon. I’ve probably done that over 30 times, maybe 40 times, up and down in a day or rim to rim to rim, you can go to the north rim so I don’t know, there’s so many experiences.”

“You know, we got done climbing. It was a disastrous trip. Somebody stole all our climbing gear. So, we did it, you know. My son you’ll see him in Adia wind pants and a golf jacket. I had a golf jacket, so I’m on top one of the biggest mountains in the world. You know, I was wearing size 10 double plastic boots, with crampons on and I

take a size 12. So, I didn't put any socks in there or anything, I just got to get my foot in them because everything was stolen but the final the evening there we stayed up all night and Moscow during the summers, not now, but back then, was just a magical place."

Third Interview

"I'm somebody that responds to challenges or actually looks for challenges and then figures out a way to do it."

Appendix F: Scripting Life

First Interview

“I think it comes down to how do you, what you want out of life? And I’m not saying my approach is the right approach. I like to do accomplishments because they build character. I’m big into building character, and accomplishments do that. Business accomplishments can do that, you know, being on a mountain for 30 days, and it’s 40 below zero and you’re tired and eating candy bars you know. I very much like exploring where you can go mentally because most of life is a mental game. It’s you can say it’s physical, but it’s not. Why do people get out of shape? Okay, well, it’s an interesting observation for me, why do people it’s mental, it’s not physical, its mental. Some things are physical. I’m not saying there’s not physical issues, but it’s very much a mental game. Life is, to me, is defined by building character. And I got that from watching people we volunteered numerous moments. We had a therapy dog and what I learned is people that went up through a lot in their life like the one or two vets that were dying off, this was a decade ago. Their experiences made their character make death just not a joke, but it’s very interesting. They didn’t fear it.”

Second Interview

“There’s a great book. It’s out of print now, but it’s written by a Harvard professor called Trade Offs. You have different things in your life, work, exercise, religion, relationships, family. All those sorts of things. It’s a great book because you can’t maximize. It’s really cool to be able to say, hey, I can be a great family man and I can be a great businessman. I think very few people have the capability of maximizing both of those. Okay. And so, when you put in a lot of other things, it becomes very difficult to maximize. I was addicted to that book. And I read it before I went to Harvard Business School, and said, Hey, you just got to push if you really want to be successful, and you’re an ordinary person, and I consider myself no super intellect or anything like that. You have to push, you know, when you have the opportunity. So, I put my marriage, we didn’t have any kids at the time, but I put my marriage aside, my wife stayed and worked for all of Harvard business school. So, I saw her at the summertime. And then, you know, usually Grandon could cover for me, you know, somewhat, you know, because we had some group projects and so I would just forget the group projects Grandon would be me, and cover for me and I could go home and see Sue. And so but that’s a sacrifice you have to make. And so when you consider family, and then when the kids were young, I mean, you know, you spend a lot of time talking, you know, so we do a lot of, I don’t want to call it therapy, but you know, two hour rap session, you know, deep talk not superficial crap. But, you know, and, you know, it was one of the things that kids didn’t like about when they were young, because until they were, you know, five or eight, you know, maybe six and nine somewhere in there, they’re three years apart. I mean, I couldn’t spend time with them. I didn’t, I chose not to spend time, I put it into work.”

“Yeah, it’s it proved to me that I could get along with my wife 24/7. You laugh. It’s got me to get a dog. Which’s been life changing for me, too. And it’s, it’s it is guys will laugh, but an animal can teach you a lot and a very intelligent dog. So it’s taught me a lot about love and caring in things that I kind of ignored. And so it’s one step in my self-actualization. It’s an important step in moving forward.”

Third Interview

“Most of my past challenges have been physical or academic, but the next stage of my life is self-actualization. So what I’ve been working on for the last few years. I’ve always been interested in philosophy. So I’ve read a lot over the past couple of decades. But it’s very much figuring out who you are, and what makes you tick, and you’re never going to figure that out. Even Buddhism or meditation. Wherever you go, you’re never ever going to, but it’s a fun thing to explore.”

“I’ve always been optimistic. I’ve always been energetic, disciplined, passionate, all those things stick I think they start to the edges go off a bit more, the sharpness of those edges rub off a bit more.”

“I’ve always used- you have to learn how to live with the cross you bear. Everybody’s given a cross to bear. And what I found is more skills, God given like intelligence, the bigger that cross is to bear. Just it’s a huge it’s I mentioned I’m sure I can prove the correlation statistically, but it’s been my theory and in Stutz, it’s called your shadow. You have to figure out what your shadow is that cross to bear and then deal with and how successful you deal with you’re never going to get eliminated.”

“My challenge now is to have a perfect day, which I’m not even close to. . . a perfect day is defined as I never get upset or mad about something.”

“The key lesson I’ve learned in life- Don’t fight reality. What that means is, it is what it is. Now, almost all of the good things in my life came out of bad situations . . . when we landed in Moscow to climb Elbrus, which is

the highest point in Europe, but it's in Russia. Our stuff was stolen . . . And then my guide, Mikhail (he was a Russian world class climber that we helped him immigrate to the U.S.), I remember my son was there, he goes there's an old Russian proverb: trips that start off poorly end well. I've used that so many times so like the last 20 years. When something starts to go bad, it still sounds so fishy, but there's a silver lining."

"It's about being humble. But then it's about treating everybody equally. . . I want to be remembered as somebody that treated everybody the same, the clerk at the subway, the chairman of the company."

"I don't think you can self-actualize. So, I think you can take steps towards achieving it, but you never achieve it, like an infinite ladder. That the higher you go, the better you look down and see things. And so you're climbing this ladder up and you're looking down and you're beginning to realize you're not at the floor. We're all in the trees. We live life in the trees. I'm cutting this tree down. I'm cutting this tree down, I'm cutting this tree down. We really don't get very high up to say what's the forest. Why am I alive? What is the reason I'm alive? What do I want to be? If I can just ask how do I want to live my life? I think that is just so important to climb up higher and higher. You see what's really important."

Appendix G: Working and Living Interdependently

Second Interview

“My approach to people is to find the attributes that you admire, and learn or adapt.”

“I built a department I remember when I was at Midland and the people the other owners would always say you fill a position. You tried to fit the person to the position. I fit the position to the person so I would create the position, I would find a good person and say okay, what can you do? Okay, how can we modify? We want to get all our jobs done, but how can we modify the job? Why have somebody try to fit a round person, a round peg into a square or whatever that is? And so it was it's, it's I've always had a little bit of a different approach to that and I always try to find what I can learn from somebody.”

“If you saw how I run the committee, I run a loan committee, a workout committee, most of day, and that's what I do. What's the 900 pound gorilla? So I always call everybody because I don't like to embarrass people. So I always call and review every deal when it comes to committee the day before. Because I'd never embarrass people. If you're gonna yell at somebody you do it one on one. Never, never would it be good, you know, 70 to 100 people on this call. And so my whole approach to it is never have any surprises, but I give the quick summary.”

“Okay, and so we don't have to do, I do no appointments. So no, you can't call me and say, okay, I want to talk at 9:15, let's do a conference call. No, just call me, I don't know what I'm going to be doing at 9:15 so it's, it's very informal. So I talk to hundreds of people every week. It's fun, it's interesting and I get to and I keep everything light hearted, I'm not a serious person because nothing, anything we do is really not that serious. So it's may sound like it's serious, but it's not.”

“There's 600 People in the office here. I go walk around the halls, I start talking to the new interns that we just hired. You know I bring my dog to work so we go out and visit people, you know, and then and in your building a rapport, you're building a culture. We're not talking to work most of the time, but we're talking a culture. They understand and that culture is what holds the glue, like my organization, in the last four years, two people have left for other jobs. I've had 12 or 14 people retire, but only two people out of a couple hundred left for other jobs. And that's because we had a culture that is very, very strong.”

“So, I'm going to tell you a success story, but it took five years. You know, he had, he was very insecure. He was very insecure and so he was always bragging and taking all of the say, hey, he did everything. That really turned off bosses at PNC. I understood it. You know, he only had a high school education yet he was making a million dollars a year and he was insecure. So the key was that was it was like when you confront, I don't know if you've ever confronted alcohol, alcoholics. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, you have everybody sits around and confronts him and that's kind of what we did with this guy. That you're gonna get fired. I can't control that you're going to lose you job. You make a lot of money, family depends on you, you got a lot of, two big houses, you know, you got a shitload of things that you're gonna lose. And that confrontation, which probably lasted over several months didn't just happen one day. He began to thin

9k about that. And he really came around. It took a long time. But he came around and now again, he's well liked in the organization.”

Third Interview

“The way I run my department really has three major principles. One is respect, respect each other and you respect the customer because we deal in hostile situations when you're trying to foreclose, trying to collect money, but still you keep that respect. Number two is you act like it's your money. That's very tough in a corporation because ah, it's only \$100,000. People have ended their career saying that OK, it's only \$100,000. It's only \$1,000,000, a billion-dollar corporation. It's not that big a deal. And then the third is transparency. That means being honest and straightforward with everybody in the organization, including our department within our department, outside of department, so nobody thinks we mislead so we always tell the truth even if it reflects badly on us and sometimes it does, we screw up, everyone screws up. Amazed how at the top of the house, the top three executives, who I kind of report to all three of them or another. They really appreciate it, they just say, hey, we goofed up, we should have done this, we didn't, it happens. That's work instead of trying to hide it. You know, you get through it, do a lot more good things than bad things so screw ups don't happen but a couple times a year.”

“I really didn't want to do this . . . It's the person I was talking to on the plane a couple hours, said wow you just had an unbelievable life. I don't consider that. I don't like to aggrandize my life because I think everybody's life is special. Because I've done events that people think are unique or special, that they're just different okay. I think everybody has those you know. I don't see it as extraordinary. I don't look at my life as being extraordinary. I

look at it and I've done, I've been lucky enough, like my son said, to script a pretty good life. I oftentimes feel like I'm making people feel like wow, I haven't done much in my life. I haven't, I think everybody's like I said, equal, doesn't make a difference so it's, I think that's more important."