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# The Correlation of Leader Traits and Learning Organizational Culture

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Mark Reginald Porter

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Walden University
2016

Abstract


The Correlation of Leader Traits and Learning Organizational Culture

by

Mark Reginald Porter


MS, Walden University, 2011

BEd, University of Lethbridge, 1989



Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration



Walden University

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Abstract

Many researchers in numerous studies have focused on leadership style and

organizational cultures, but there is an absence of research regarding leader personality

traits and productive work cultures in Alberta's oil and gas industry. The purpose of this

correlational study was to assess the relationship between leader traits and preestablished

learning organization culture benchmarks within Alberta's oil and gas industry. Learning

organization culture is an extension of Senge's learning organization theory. Simple

random sampling was used to attain a population comprised of 52 employees in Alberta's

oil and gas industry who were accountable to an organizational supervisor. Data were

collected via the NEO-FFI-3 and the Learning Organization Survey; summarization was

accomplished by means of an online third party survey administration service. Regression

analyses revealed that each of the 5-factor traits was correlated to learning organization

culture. When the model was changed to multiple regression using all traits together, only

2 traits remained significant. Openness to experience positively correlated with learning

organization culture, whereas neuroticism was negatively correlated with learning

organization culture. The implication for social change is that human resource personnel

in Alberta's oil and gas industry can institute information provided in this research to

identify and develop leaders who promote innovation in a learning organization culture.

Innovation in Alberta's oil and gas industry assists to overcome environmental

sustainability, augment technology inefficiencies, and decrease workplace personnel

issues.

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Dedication

I could not have completed the DBA journey without the values for higher education and determination instilled in me by my parents. My father, Reginald John Gordon Porter, despite your limited education you engrained in me the value of setting elevated goals for self improvement and the intense desire to achieve rather than abandon goals in times of adversity. My mother, Carol Porter, you were the smartest, strongest, and most compassionate and understanding person I have had the honor knowing. Completion of my DBA fulfills the promise I made to you during your battle with cancer that I would accomplish higher education. Finally, my brother Hal Allan Porter, thank you for the life lessons you taught me as big brother. Each of them have deceased, but accomplishing the completion of my DBA is a family effort in their honor.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the support of Dr. Robert Hockin, my doctoral study chair, and your ability to critique my work to attain the highest level of scholarly achievement while providing a compassionate ear. I appreciate my relatives and friends for accepting the time commitment to complete the DBA journey, and the sacrifices they made to assist me in successfully achieving the title of Dr. Mark Porter. Finally, I am grateful for the individuals who participated in my study. This study's successful completion is a collective effort of amazing people who portray the qualities essential for accomplishing positive social change.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Perception of a leader plays a role in whether subordinates become followers or simply act as employees. Dierendonck and Dijkstra (2012) stated that a significant correlation exists between the behavior demonstrated by followers and their perception of the relationship with their leader. The significance of perception of followers was also supported by Kean and Haycock-Stuart (2011) who argued that subordinates analyze the actions and behaviors of leaders before deciding whether to become followers. Followers have differing needs. Leader effectiveness correlates with the followers' perception of the leader's ability to fulfill these prescribed needs (Hansbrough, 2012). In addition to fulfilling the needs of subordinates, the behaviors demonstrated by leaders significantly correlates with leadership effectiveness (Graf, Schuh, Quaquebeke, & Dick, 2012). Martin, Liao, and Campbell (2013) declared that the perceptions and attitudes of followers must be incorporated to evaluate a leader's effectiveness.

Followers are essential components of organizational success. Whitlock (2013) established that followers affect an organization's performance level, behavioral expectations, teamwork, and innovation for continuous quality improvement. Followers who deem their leader as effective demonstrate increased organizational commitment, work performance, proactive work behaviors, work habits, and productivity (Martin et al., 2013; Mosley & Patrick, 2011; Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun, & Frey, 2012). The increased levels of job performance and behavior stem from trust and psychological safety via a perception of the followers for supporting a leader's style (Mosely & Patrick,

2011). Followers' perceptions and behaviors determine the degree of productivity and profitability of an organization.

Followers collaborate with leaders to establish an organization's culture. An organization's culture is the set of fundamental values and beliefs that differentiates the company from other organizations (Brady & Haley, 2013). Mohanty and Rath (2012) stated that preserving effective organizational cultures or applying positive cultural change contributes to improving an organization's competitiveness, and augments organizations suffering from a production and profitability demise. The onset of a globalizing marketplace has changed the dynamics of business, which in turn necessitates altering organizational culture (Canaan Messarra & El-Kassar, 2013). Supportive and agile organizational cultures responding to the needs of the internal and external environment are conducive for the implementation and entrenchment of change for sustained competitive advantage (Cristian-Liviu, 2013). Followers influence the organizational culture and long-term sustainability of the organization.

This study fills a gap concerning leader traits and organizational culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry. Leader traits were the independent variables, and the degree of learning organizational culture based on a scale of 0-100 was the dependent variable. The study quantitatively correlated leader traits and the degree of learning organization culture in comparison with preestablished benchmarks. Noteworthy for the study was that correlation does not imply causation (Brumm & Drury, 2013).

The significance of this study relates directly to human resource concerns in business. Knowledge gained from this study allows human resource personnel to incorporate trait assessments into the process of hiring leaders. Leader traits affect leadership style. Leadership style affects organizational commitment of followers. Organizational commitment of followers affects the sustainable success of the organization. This study garnered data related to the significance of leader traits in sustaining organizational success as a learning organization.

## Background of the Problem

Effective leadership is critical for organizational success (Holt & Marques, 2012). Throughout history, controversy beset leadership because of the inability to attain consensus regarding a definition, theory, interpretation, and understanding of leadership (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Despite the lack of academic solidarity pertaining to leadership, scholars agree that organizational performance is the underlying principle of leadership (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012; Ljungholm, 2014). Optimal performance requires positive organizational health, motivated employees, and effective leadership that provide a vision valued by organizational followership (Chou 2014; Qing, Rong, & Guoliang, 2013). Riaz, Riaz, and Batool (2012) asserted a leader's traits influence his or her style and their effectiveness as a leader. Despite Riaz et al.'s assertion, there has been contentious scholarly acceptance of the significance of leader traits in determining leadership effectiveness.

The evolution of business practices has stimulated a resurgence of study about personality and leadership. Initial studies regarding personality and leadership concentrated on trait theories. The great man theory that leaders were born and not made was foundational in early trait theory (Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011). Trait theory, focuses on the uniqueness of individuals because of personality traits and life experiences (Alkahtani, Abu-Jarad, Sulaiman, & Nikhin, 2011), despite the criticism of being simplistic, is receiving more academic acceptance while undergoing further research and development (Judge et al., 2002). Rothstein and Goffin (2006) delineated that further research is necessary to authenticate the validity of personality as a predictor of workplace performance.

Despite the lack of academic unanimity regarding the significance of traits in the professional workplace, research regarding traits and leadership continues in an attempt to alleviate controversy and augment professional practices. O'Neill and Allan (2011) stated that a leader's traits could be a source of negative influence on organizational culture or a positive power for innovation and sustainability within an organization. Research completed in this study may assist to create an academically accepted ideology regarding the significance of the traits of leaders, their leadership style, and their organizational culture for sustained success.

Sustained organizational success requires a culture that promotes risk taking for overcoming organizational barriers (Larri & Khanzadeh, 2012). Characteristics associated with a learning organization culture are conducive for sustained organizational

success (Larri & Khanzadeh, 2012). Learning organizations consist of an environment that supports trust where individuals are empowered in decision making and vested members create and share knowledge in open discussion forums (Sahaya, 2012).

Positive and effective learning organizations promote increased levels of organizational commitment (Maden, 2012). Islam et al. (2012) stated that enhanced organizational commitment leads to solidarity in attaining corporate objectives. Committed employees are prone to accepting organizational change aligned with corporate objectives, generating innovative solutions for organizational barriers to change, and sharing organizational knowledge (Farahani, Taghadosi, & Behboudi, 2011). Organizations that adapt, innovate, and share organizational knowledge endorse sustained competitive advantage (Forozandeh, Soleimani, Nazari, & Nasri, 2011). Stimulating and sustaining the culture conducive for a learning organization fall under the auspices of an organization's leaders (Sahaya, 2012).

Leaders who embed the qualities of a learning organization into their corporate culture promote an environment that encourages a sustained competitive advantage (Shieh, 2012). Team learning, a shared vision, and systems thinking are critical components within a learning organization (Forozandeh et al., 2011). Each of these characteristics requires subordinates to possess enhanced levels of organizational commitment and trust in leadership effectiveness. Ahmadi, Ahmadi, and Zohrabi (2012) claimed that transformational leaders demonstrate the traits, skills, and characteristics that correlate with affective, continuance, and normative organizational commitment.

Transformational leaders charismatically inspire subordinates to accomplish elevated levels of performance (James & Lahti, 2011). Charismatic abilities including interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with subordinates stimulate followers to amplified levels of organizational commitment (James & Lahti, 2011). Leader traits and leadership style have a history of correlating with organizational performance (Sahaya, 2012).

Researchers point to the significance of leadership style on organizational performance (Chou 2014; Holt & Marques, 2012; James & Lahti, 2011; Ljungholm, 2014; Sahaya, 2012). Sahaya delineated that the traits of the leader correlates with his or her leadership style. The problem arises that a leader's traits positively or negatively influences organizational culture, innovation, and organizational performance (O'Neill & Allan, 2011). This study includes a correlation in response to the prescribed problem by allowing me to assess the significance between leader traits and the degree of learning organizational culture. When determining leadership style for sustained competitive advantage, traits were not the only factor considered. The dynamic nature of the globalized economy, including internal and external contextual factors, influences the degree of adaptability and agility necessary to maintain competitive advantage (Parumasur, 2012). Maden (2012) proclaimed that learning organization cultures augment innovation, improve productivity, and enhance competitive advantage of the organization.

Leader traits, as classified by the five-factor model (FFM), and its correlation with learning organization culture is a significant business problem and a gap in current business research, requiring further inquiry. Specifically, no research had been performed regarding this correlation in Alberta's oil and gas industry. Potential solutions include the identification of characteristics and individualized traits in leaders, via the significance of the correlation, that affect their effectiveness for instilling and sustaining a learning organization. Understanding this relationship was essential for establishing leadership styles that improve performance and augment positive social change in Alberta's oil and gas industry.

## Problem Statement

Employees in learning organization cultures depict trusting relationships and collegial cohesiveness to develop innovative solutions to organizational barriers, which in turn optimizes the company's productivity, profitability, sustainability, and competitive advantage (Shehzad & Khan, 2013). A company's organizational culture, a by-product of organizational leader behavior and personality (Huang, Hsu, & Chiau, 2011), is the distinguishing quality to determine a company's degree of innovation, and sustained competitive advantage (Khuong & Nhu, 2015). Kaiser and Hogan (2011) established that traits account for 26% variance in leader behavior. The general business problem is that inadequate leadership correlates to inferior efficiency, productivity, profitability, sustainability, and competitive advantage (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). The specific business problem is that leaders lacking characteristics essential to create a positive

learning organization culture, stifle sustained competitive advantage, and affect increased fiscal returns (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational design was to assess the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization culture. The study extends on the trait theory that compares traits and organizational health. Trait data was attained in accordance with the FFM via the NEO-Five Factor Inventory-3 (NEO-FFI-3) (Costa & McCrae, 2010) and learning organization culture data was compiled via the Learning Organization Survey (LOS) (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008).

This study assesses the significance of the suggested relationship via two academically ratified surveys incorporating Likert-type scales followed by data analysis using Pearson's correlation. The independent variable was leader traits and the dependent variable was the degree of learning organization culture based on a preestablished scale of 0-100. Participants were determined through simple random sampling from Alberta's oil and gas industry. The confidence level for the study was 0.95. Fundamental for this research is identifying traits in leaders that support learning organization culture. Huang et al. (2011) stated that organizational culture is a reflection of leadership style. Khuong and Nhu (2015) avowed that organizational culture determines a company's competitive advantage. Data attained in this study was interpreted and summarized to assist Alberta oil and gas companies' significance in the world oil and gas industry, and advance human

resources related to leadership employment and development. Augmenting leadership practices in Alberta's oil and gas industry will enhance social change at a global level.

## Nature of the Study

This nonexperimental quantitative study implemented a correlational survey identifying the significance of the relationship between leader traits as categorized in the FFM and an organization's health as a learning organization. Participants' responses to the LOS (see Appendix A) as well as the NEO-FFI-3 (see Appendix A) were assessed using multiple regression analysis. Quantitative survey design provides a numeric description of the generalized attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of respondents that researchers can use to delineate fact from quantitative value (Slevitch, 2011). The prescribed surveys have been proven academically and scientifically valid and reliable.

Experimental designs were not applicable for this research. Accessing enough participants for the study and creating a controlled environment of two groups was not feasible for the participants or me. Many of the employees in Alberta's oil and gas industry work in the field; therefore, a controlled experimental setting might provide unrealistic and invalid results.

Nonexperimental and cross-sectional research was appropriate because no treatment or intervention was applied during the study that provided a synopsis of the population at the prescribed time. Quantitative research produces a structured approach to studies and avoids the influence of bias by the author (Allwood, 2012; Masue, Swai, & Anasel, 2013). The rigors of quantitative research promote reproducible results with less

ambiguity (Allwood, 2012; Masue et al., 2013; Simonson, 2005). Essential to this study was establishing the significance of the relationship between the stated variables of leader traits and leadership effectiveness to institute a learning organization. Tanyaovalaksna and Li (2013) identified that learning organizations are conducive for improving an organization's business performance and sustaining competitive advantage. Establishing a correlation among leader traits and learning organization culture influences human resource personnel's ability to identify leaders who can augment business performance. A quantitative study contributes a numerical interpretation of the specified relationship rather than attempting to establish an explanation of the data (Masue et al., 2013).

Numerical data from a large sample in quantitative research was generalizable beyond the constraints of the study (Allwood, 2012; Masue et al., 2013; Simonson, 2005). Generalizability, interpreted by academics and professional practitioners from numerical statistics and established patterns, operationalizes concepts in business settings, revises current business practices, and predicts future outcomes from processes (Masue et al., 2013). The simplicity of quantitative study results and the ability to portray the data in graphs, tables, and charts for professional practitioners aligned with the purpose of this study. Applicability of the research to augment professional business scenarios is the focus of Walden's Doctorate of Business Administration degree program.

Instilling the NEO-FFI-3 and the LOS, which have proven reliability and validity, standardizes the research completed, generalizability of results, and replication of outcomes; these are the strength of quantitative research (Simonson, 2005). Focusing on

prescribed research questions and testing theories is fundamental for effective quantitative research (Simonson, 2005). The central research question and theoretical frameworks provided for this study are in the ensuing sections.

## Research Question

What is the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization culture?

## Hypotheses

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant relationship between leader traits as categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_a 1$: There is a statistically significant relationship between leader traits as categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_0 2$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the individualized categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

$H_a 2$: There is a statistically significant relationship between the individualized categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

## Theoretical Framework

Learning organization theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study. A written description of the learning organization theory follows in the discussion as well as how the theory associates with the central research problem. Specifically, the purpose for the study focuses on the relationship between leader traits, as categorized by the FFM,

and learning organization culture, as well as the relationship between each of the

individualized FFM categories and the degree of learning organization culture.

**Learning Organization Theory**

A basis of understanding for this research stems from the learning organization

theory established by Senge (1990), which stipulates that organizations enhance their

efficiency by vested members' unyielding desire to learn and create extraordinary results

(Senge, 2006). Senge did not construct the five disciplines of the learning organization

theory, but interlinked them to develop the framework of the learning organization

theory. Senge delineated a discipline as a concept requiring extensive study and

mastering for effective infusion into practice.

Senge (2006) defined a learning organization as a cumulative effort of all five

disciplines interacting with a free-flow of ideas, which stimulates creative thinking.

Fundamental to learning organizations are working teams that collaborate through

experimentation for individual and organizational growth (Senge, 2006). Table 1 includes

the five disciplines of learning organizations and summarizes the characteristics

associated with organizational culture.

Table 1

*Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations*

| Discipline | Focus | Characteristics |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Systems Thinking | Integration of disciplines | Conceptual framework (interrelationship of disciplines) Knowledge and practices developed Response to feedback Adaptive learning Generative learning |
| Personal Mastery | Personal growth and learning | Improved proficiency Innovation Correlate personal and organizational learning Intrinsic motivation |
| Mental Modes | Understanding personal assumptions | Accept differing perspectives Interactive learning Self-reflection Inquiry Decision making on shared understanding Trusting relationships |
| Building Shared Vision | Common identity and destiny | Organizational commitment Accountability Innovation Risk taking Coherent efforts |
| Team Learning | Dialogue | Improved organizational results Increased personal growth Suspended assumptions Co-ordinated effort Active participation Creative thinking |

*Note*. Adapted from "The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization" P. Senge, 2006, New York, NY: Doubleday.

Learning organizations evolved from the necessity for change with the onset of the global economy. Organizational systems, including technical and followership dimensions, have become increasingly complex with globalization of the marketplace (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012). Greyvenstein and Cilliers noted that the onset of a globalized marketplace required traditional leadership ideologies and practices to evolve and adapt to ensure sustainable success. Evolution and adaption via innovative solutions necessitated leadership to encourage organizational learning (García-Morales, Matías-Reche, & Verdú-Jover, 2011).

Organizational learning is an evolving process in which individual knowledge contributes to the ongoing creation of new knowledge within an organization (García -Morales et al., 2011; Shoid, Kassim, & Salleh, 2012). Argyris and Schön (1996) characterized organizational learning as organizations and individuals recognizing their shortcomings and incorporating corrective actions. Shared organizational and individual knowledge embeds in the culture of the organization to ensure sustained competitive advantage (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Shared and embedded knowledge allows organizations to adapt more effectively to change through innovative solutions (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Organizational learning is characteristic of learning organizations.

Learning organization culture compiles diverse entities to establish sustained competitive advantage. Maden (2012) proclaimed that leadership style and skill significantly influences the capacity of an organization to respond with innovative solutions characteristic of a learning organization. This assertion has been further

reinforced in other research establishing that supportive leadership and trust in the

leadership is indispensable for creating a sense of psychological safety and confidence to

take risks and freely communicate among vested members in learning organizations

(Gazzola, Jha-Takur, Kidd, Peel, & Fischer, 2011; Kelloway, Turner, Barling, &

Loughlin, 2012). Leaders' acceptance of the significance of new practices and cultural

adjustments for agile response to market demands for sustained competiveness was

foundational for a learning organization (Lindberg & Meredith, 2012; Shoid et al., 2012).

Leaders need to be at the forefront of establishing a learning culture. Academic studies

have established that effective leaders in learning organizations detail an organizational

vision that stimulates followers to commit to the process because of perceived shared

value (Gazzola et al., 2011; Kelloway et al., 2012). Affective commitment to

organizational goals by followers, followers' job satisfaction, and organizational

performance were influenced by leadership style (Ghorbanian, Bahadori, & Nejati, 2012;

Khakssar Ghahroodi, bin Tan Sri Mohd Ghazali, & Seyed Ghorban, 2013). Greyvenstein

and Cilliers (2012) proclaimed that effective leaders recognize the needs of their

followers and their success as leaders depends on the actions of their followers

    Shoid et al. (2012) supported the significance of committed followers by asserting

that followers committed to learning and sharing knowledge provide the greatest

opportunity for an organizations' successful adaptation to external market demands and

sustained competitiveness. Followers are not passively involved in successful

organizations. Khakssar Ghahroodi et al. (2013) argued that followers' perceptions

determine the success of a leader, and follower perceptions are critical to expanding

organizational knowledge and corporate success. Additional research furthered this

argument by establishing that followers' perception of leadership style determined

followers' perception of psychological safety, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and

organizational cultural norms for behavior (Ghorbanian et al., 2012; Kelloway et al.,

2012; Khakssar Ghahroodi et al., 2013). The opinion regarding leadership style varies

with the values and degree of interaction of the observer. Ghorbanian et al. found that

perceived leadership style by followers often conflicts with leaders' personal perception

of their own leadership style. Leadership style influences the degree of commitment by

followers and organizational performance. Successfully adapting to the globalized market

requires leaders and leadership styles to evolve. Responding to the external market with

internal change necessitates communication in a positive work environment rather than

traditional leadership methods of persuasion, manipulation, and dictating (Garcia-

Morales et al., 2011).

Researchers identified correlations among leader traits, leadership style, and

followers' performance (Ghorbanian et al., 2012; Kelloway et al., 2012; Khakssar

Ghahroodi et al., 2013). In addition, academics have identified the significance of

committed followers to the success of learning organizations. To augment the prescribed

theoretical frameworks presented in this section, professional practitioners and academics

will interpret the results of this study regarding the influence of leader traits on leadership

style to determine the degree of learning organizational culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry.

**Definition of Terms**

An understanding of Alberta's oil and gas industry is not necessary; however, definition of terminology used for this research study grounded in education and performance facilitates concise understanding.

*Competitive advantage*: Competitive advantage is the product of superior resources, unique capabilities, and positive relationships that differentiate a business from its direct competitors (Minyu, 2012). Customers' perceive value in the differentiation as advantageous, which augments sustained superiority over the initiator's competitors. Advantageous services provided by organizations with sustained competitive advantage are difficult to duplicate (Minyu, 2012).

*Conscientiousness*: Effective self-regulators displaying desirable traits: diligence, persistence, dependability, structured planning ability, determination, sense of duty, prudent judgement, and morality are conscientious individuals (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013; Derue et al., 2011; George, Helson, & John, 2011; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Törnroos at al., 2013).

*Followership:* The ability of an individual to follow directives and support a leader to maximize organizational performance (Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Engaged and affectively committed subordinates that perform beyond their professional baseline expectations to accomplish organizational success and sustainability constitute a

followership (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011).

*Leadership*: Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who effect real changes and outcomes that reflect a shared purpose (Daft, 2011). Effective leaders are visionaries who create a followership that commits to organizational goals at a higher level compared to the individual goals of the subordinates (Holt & Marques, 2012; Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). Effective leaders fulfill the needs of their followership (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012).

*Learning organizations*: Learning organizations have positive organizational health endorsing a community of trust in which employees are innovative in accomplishing corporate goals to sustain competitive advantage (Aksoy, Apak, Eren, & Korkmaz, 2014*)*. Continuous learning, promoting dialog and inquiry, and encouraging teamwork and collaborative learning are characteristic of learning organizations (Aksoy et al., 2014). Established systems encourage retaining and sharing knowledge, empowering vested members to attain a shared vision, responding to internal and external stimuli, and instilling strategic leadership to support learning (Shehzad & Khan, 2013).

*Organizational culture:* Organizational culture is the business practices and leadership style for achieving organizational goals (Mahalinga Shiva, & Suar, 2012).

*Personality:* Personality is a combination of life experiences and genetic factors creating embedded patterns for life behaviors making each individual unique (Alkahtani et al., 2011).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This section covers the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. Details assumed to be factual without actual verification are assumptions (Walden University, 2014). Limitations entail the prospective shortcomings of the study (Walden University, 2014). Delimitations include the parameters specifying the boundaries of the study (Walden University, 2014).

### Assumptions

I assumed that participants involved in the study were aware and have experiences allowing them to respond accurately to the survey questions. I assumed that respondents acted in an ethical manner and responded truthfully and without personal agenda to manipulate results. Sampling could be biased because of random sampling method. Different perspectives that might influence results could be attained from nonrespondents. Historically academic valid and reliable measurement tools were instilled for this study so an assumption is that their validity and reliability were prudent for the study. Multivariate statistics are employed and assumptions built into the statistics include the data that are normally distributed, a linear relationship exists among the variables, and the variables were measured without error.

### Limitations

This study incorporated a quantitative, nonexperimental research method. Participants were from diverse oil and gas companies with varying job positions. . Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), Chief Operating Officers

(COOs), presidents, vice presidents, or members of the Board of Directors were not permitted to participate in the study because of their roles as senior executives or as corporate decision makers. Although participants were from diverse oil and gas companies with varying job positions, it is necessary to realize that results might not be generalizable to other industries. Economic conditions, accessibility of diverse participants, the short time frame for completion of the study, and respondent bias might influence the generalizability of results within and outside of Alberta's oil and gas industry.

The assessment tools for this study are standardized and have an academic history of reliability and validity. No alterations have been instilled to the format or questions of the original academically valid and reliable version of the survey for the purpose of this study. The standardization of the surveys and the incorporating of a quantitative study might influence the variance in the dependent variables.

**Delimitations**

Research was limited to Alberta's oil and gas industry. Participants in the study must be under the direct supervision of organizational management or leadership. Culture outside the characteristics associated with learning organizations were not part of the study.

**Significance of the Study**

**Contribution to Business Practice**

The constructs of learning organizational culture, leadership style, and leader traits were worthy for further study to address the gaps in research related to Alberta's oil and gas industry, which in turn can lead to increased productivity and profitability throughout global business practices. Historically, leader traits, leadership style, and organizational culture correlated with organizational performance and sustained competitive advantage professionally and academically. While researching this topic, I was unable to find research focused on the influence of these three constructs on Alberta's oil and gas industry. This study focused on this gap to provide data useful to academics and professional practitioners so they may enhance performance and productivity for Alberta's oil and gas industry, in turn leading to sustained competitive advantage in the globalized economy.

The energy sector was responsible for 27.6% of Alberta's gross domestic product in 2011 (Government of Alberta, n.d.). Using technologies available at the time of this study; Alberta has access to 170.2 billion barrels of oil, which ranks the province as the world's third largest oil reserve (Government of Alberta, n.d.; Tosto & Nuttall, 2012). The Government of Alberta estimates that Alberta's oil sands consists of 1.84 trillion barrels of oil, which is approximately seven times the amount of oil in the world's largest oil reserve in Saudi Arabia. Only 9% of Alberta's oil sands reserve is accessible with current technology (Government of Alberta, n.d.127). In addition to accessibility

difficulties, Alberta's oil and gas industry is the province's largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a primary consumer of freshwater (Government of Alberta, n.d.). Data derived from this study can be interpreted by stakeholders as well as academics to reduce the gap in research regarding leader traits, leadership styles, and learning organization culture related to Alberta's oil and gas sector with a broader application in diverse industries and markets. Reducing this gap promotes positive social change via innovative solutions for enhancing recovery efficiency, improving cost-effectiveness, sustaining competitive advantage, reducing greenhouse gases, decreasing freshwater consumption, and minimizing the environmental footprint (Tosto & Nuttall, 2012).

Leadership effectiveness is subject to the perception of the follower. Huang et al. (2011) established that effective leadership positively correlates with organizational performance and success. Failing to achieve organizational success equals incompetent leadership (Huang et al., 2011). Skills, knowledge, and behaviors can be trained, and situations can be modified; however, traits are relatively stable (Di Schiena, Letens, Van Aken, & Farris, 2013). Defining the leader traits necessary for effective leadership and identifying potential leaders who possess the prescribed traits needs to be a principle criterion to determine leadership candidates (Di Schiena et al., 2013). Academia's interpretation of this study's results may establish society's implicit theory of the traits necessary for effective leadership. Effective leaders promote positive organizational health and increased organizational performance (Schaumberg & Flynn, 2012).

Executing the suggested practices may improve productivity and profitability as well as effect positive social change. Subordinates of ethical leaders generally demonstrate behavior that augments positive organizational and societal growth (Schaumberg & Flynn, 2012; Tanyaovalaksna & Li, 2013). Discovering the significance of leader traits with leadership style and organizational culture was fundamental to this research.

**Implications for Social Change**

The research and practical implications of this study portray the significance of the relationships of leader traits, leadership effectiveness, and learning organization culture within the domain of the random sample. This study contributes to social change by investigating whether leader traits affected leadership effectiveness in establishing a sustained learning organizational culture. Sustained learning organizational cultures are favorable for innovative solutions (Balay, 2012).

Alberta's oil and gas industry has been subject to environmental scrutiny by environmentalists, foreign governments, and other diverse world populations. Overcoming the perceptions of these groups requires innovation to enhance the business and production practices incorporated in the oil and gas industry. Opportunity exists for Alberta's oil and gas organizations to evolve current business and production practices via a learning organization culture. Learning organizations emphasize knowledge sharing and continuous learning, which endorses innovation to overcome barriers to sustainability and competitive advantage (Shieh, 2012). Ultimately, leadership support of continuous

learning is critical for establishing trust within a learning organizational culture (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012).

The traits of leaders influence their leadership style (Holt & Marques, 2012). To capture the traits of a leader, the FFM is a model that classifies traits into five broad categories: conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and emotional stability (neuroticism). Focusing on these dimensions of personality provides human resource personnel and organizational leaders with data regarding the significance of leader traits to determine leadership effectiveness for establishing learning organization culture. Creating a learning organizational culture supports innovation within Alberta's oil and gas industry, which is desirable for social change.

**A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Three constructs (latent and observable variables) underlie the research performed in this study. These constructs include leader traits as classified by the FFM taxonomy, leadership effectiveness, and the degree of learning organizational culture. The relationship regarding each of the constructs is presented in the two hypotheses presented earlier in the study. In hypothesis one, I present that a statistically significant positive correlation exists among the traits of a leader and the degree of learning organizational culture. The traits of the leader influence the organization's learning organization culture. In hypothesis two, I delineate that a statistically significant correlation exists among each of the five trait categories of the FFM taxonomy and the organization's degree of learning organizational culture. Although each of the hypothesized correlations reflect an

independent relationship to explain the variation of learning organization culture, each of the proposed relationships interacts simultaneously to support the multivariate explanation of variation in learning organization culture.

This literature review provides an intensive discussion and explanation of the proposed correlational constructs incorporated within the hypotheses. The underlying business problem and subjects supporting each of the constructs presented in the hypotheses are scrutinized in the literature review. Important topics include organizational culture, leadership style, followership, and personality. Each of the five categories of the FFM taxonomy for trait assessment is presented to expand on comprehensive characteristics of the leader. Foundational and recurring themes within the primary topics include organizational trust, organizational commitment, ethics, psychological safety, organizational knowledge, employee empowerment, performance, and competitive advantage.

**Literature Review Organization and Strategy**

The initial inquiry used scholarly research databases to search for the key words *leadership effectiveness*, *leadership personality*, and *organizational culture*. Evolving from the initial word search were the terms *learning organization*, *five-factor model*, *organizational trust*, *affective commitment*, *innovation*, *organizational citizenship behavior*, *innovation*, *competitive advantage*, and *sustainability*. The databases used for the study included ProQuest, PsychINFO, Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM, and Google Scholar. Additionally, further research included identifying and searching

recurring authors cited in the assessed articles. Paraphrasing of articles deemed relevant occurred in an extensive array of annotated bibliographies. The literature review did not identify studies in Alberta's oil and gas industry related to the research question. This study adds knowledge concerning the degree to which leader traits predict learning organizational culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry.

**Evidence of the Problem from the Literature Review**

Brown (2011) detailed that throughout the history of social sciences, academics have studied leadership and the traits differentiating leaders from followers. Early trait theorists delineated that leaders were superior beings with prescribed traits and characteristics to control and manipulate followers to attain desired objectives (Brown, 2011). Studying traits of leaders formally evolved, in the early 1900s, into the great man theory (Brown, 2011), which has become the foundation for modern studies regarding the relationship of a leader's traits and leadership effectiveness.

As academics and professional practitioners studied the relationship between the great man theory and practical business scenarios, new theories evolved. Trait theory extended the great man theory by concentrating on personality characteristics of leaders (Brown, 2011). During the last century, scholars debated the significance of personality and personality theories for determining leadership effectiveness. The evolution of a globalizing economy has stimulated a resurgence regarding the significance of the trait theory and the influence of leader traits in sustaining organizational success.

A globalizing marketplace has instilled new parameters for sustained organizational success and leadership effectiveness. Traits determine the behaviors and style portrayed by leaders that influence their effectiveness (Barrick et al., 2013). Human resource personnel, who understand traits, are dire for selecting leadership candidates who provide opportunity for attaining organizational goals and stimulating sustained competitive advantage (Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, & Gardner, 2011; Mansur, Ahmed, Ishaq, Ahmad, & Ali, 2011).

Trait theory (Terman, as cited in Judge et al., 2002), despite the criticism as simplistic, has been receiving academic acceptance while undergoing further research and development (Judge et al., 2002). Contemporary leadership zeitgeist supports the ideology that the best manner for studying leadership has been and may always be through the study of traits (Cowley, as cited in Judge et al., 2002). Since the 1990s, traits research has been resurrected because organizational psychologists delineated the significance of traits to identify personnel who will be effective leaders (Xu, Yu, & Shi, 2011). Organizational psychology's revival stimulated new interest in the study of leadership and created new areas for debate regarding effective leadership in an evolving market.

Scholarly debate regarding leadership stimulates evolutionary practices for business and augments leadership effectiveness. The concept of leadership continues to be a scrutinized and controversial topic (Derue et al., 2011). Despite the lack of academic solidarity pertaining to leadership, scholarly consensus is that the underlying ideology for

leadership is performance (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Optimal performance requires leadership to kindle positive organizational health, motivate employees, and be visionary (Erdem & Uçar, 2013). Leaders play a role in the sustainability of an organization.

**Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture is the product of the leadership's vision for future practices and expectations within the organization. Detailed in the leader's vision for organizational culture is an established social system of expectations differentiating the organization from others (Gogheri, Nawaser, Vesal, Jahanshahi, & Kazi, 2013). Effective leaders align the workplace culture to a common organizational vision (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). Aligned cultures share the corporate vision at all levels of the organization, with vested members committed to organizational goals rather than personal gain (Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Cheung, Wong, & Lam, 2012; Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). As vested members become committed to organizational goals at the expense of personal gain, all vested members benefit. Afzali, Motahari, and Hatami-Shirkouhi (2014) established in their research that cultures committed to organizational goals correlated with improved responsiveness, which in turn positively corresponded with increased fiscal returns. Positive cultures, created via effective leadership, in which collaboration, teamwork, and a healthy life balance is the norm gained competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining qualified employees (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). Recruiting and retaining desirable employee's aids in the sustenance of

a positive culture with established norms of expectations. The correlation between desirable employees and a positive culture promotes sustained competitive advantage.

Establishing cultural norms within an aligned workplace permits clear communication of behaviors and expectations among the vested members while displaying trust and accountability. Members in aligned cultures share their knowledge through direct trusting personal interaction (Shehzad & Khan, 2013). Altaf (2011) proclaimed that knowledge and the people of an organization were an organization's greatest assets in attaining organizational goals and sustained competitive advantage. Effective leaders recognize the value of organizational knowledge and create an environment that promotes characteristics of sustainable competitive advantage. Collaboration and teamwork, within a flexible working structure that allowed employees' autonomy in decision making and challenged them for innovative solutions, created a culture with increased levels of organizational commitment (Altaf, 2011; Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). Distributing power throughout an organization via decision making and autonomy endorsed accountability among all vested members through a shared sense of identity and suppressed individualism (Altaf, 2011; Cheung et al., 2012). Accountability and a culture of collaboration augment business systems stability, but they allow freedom to create innovative solutions that promote competitive advantage (Cheung et al., 2012). Innovation allows organizations to develop methods to overcome novel barriers to sustained success. Trusting relationships, established cultural norms, and accountability involve all vested members in sustaining a positive workplace culture. Positive workplace

cultures created through the leader's style stimulate innovation, accountability, knowledge sharing, and sustained competitive advantage.

Leaders' styles reflect their vision and ambitions for an organization. Rahmati, Darouian, and Ahmadinia (2012) identified three specific organizational cultures that reflect the style of leadership and business strategy of an organization (a) alienated cultures, (b) antagonistic cultures, and (c) democratic cultures. Leadership styles that alienate subordinates and promote antagonistic cultures deter productive work environments (Rahmati et al., 2012). Alienated cultures are common in autocratic structures with rigid rules and formalized business practices (Rahmati et al., 2012). Subordinates that sense alienation simply comply with leaders' expectations rather than engage in decision making (Rahmati et al., 2012). Complying with leadership maintains a status quo within business practices rather than promoting innovative solutions. Argyris & Schön (1996) referred to maintaining status quo rather than evolving business practices through innovative solutions as single-loop learning. Single-loop learning cultures continue to perform traditional routines of business practices and inhibit followers from actively creating innovative solutions (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Alienating subordinates deters a positive organizational culture. Alienated cultures create isolation and inhibit communication. Failure to communicate prevents a workplace culture that is committed to organizational goals, stifles knowledge sharing, and prevents evolution of business practices. Leadership styles that promote cultures without aligned goals create undesirable internal competition and antagonistic relationships within the organization.

Antagonistic cultures have barriers that prevent collaboration and knowledge sharing. Rahmati et al. (2012) proclaimed that members of an organization with an antagonistic culture justify their behaviors as necessary for accomplishing individual or departmental goals rather than committing to organizational objectives. In an antagonistic culture, the vested members focus on departmental objectives and fear interaction with other organizational groups. Antagonistic cultures are counterproductive to attaining the desired qualities of employee engagement and collaboration for innovation (Rahmati et al., 2012).

In contrast, democratic cultures are characterized by collaboration, open knowledge sharing, and productive working and social relationships among all vested members. Members of a democratic culture share an elevated affective commitment to the corporate vision (Rahmati et al., 2012). Democratic cultures support collaboration, knowledge sharing, and accountability to create an environment conducive for innovative solutions necessary for competing effectively in the global marketplace (Rahmati et al., 2012). Instilling and embedding a democratic culture requires leaders to create the foundation of a positive culture through communicating effectively, promoting innovation, and empowering all vested members (Rahmati et al., 2012).

Leaders who instill democratic cultures promote an environment with committed followers and endorse long-term organizational success (Rahmati et al., 2012). In the initial stages of developing a committed followership, leaders are responsible for conveying the organizational vision and norms, clarifying their personal values and

beliefs, and responding to the feedback of subordinates (Cheung et al., 2012). Democratic

leaders involve followers in the process of establishing the norms for the workplace and

respond to the needs of their followers (Rahmati et al., 2012). The willingness of

subordinates to align with the prescribed values of the organization and their leader, and

commit to the desired organizational culture, varies with the followership's perception of

fairness by the leader. The characteristics and style of a leader influence the perceptions

of subordinates (Hansbrough, 2012). Perceptions of the leader and the degree of

commitment by followers are a response to the leader fulfilling the followership's desired

qualities in a leader.

Leaders who provide the qualities perceived as necessary by the followership

stimulate increased levels of performance. Schaumberg and Flynn (2012) proposed that

followers perceive their leaders as possessing superior leadership ability and

effectiveness when the leaders are aware of their actions and behaviors. Awareness of

actions and behaviors, as well as leader traits, influences organization culture by affecting

the quality of people that will join the organization, employee loyalty, member behavior

and communication patterns, and the decisions that employees make (Chou, 2014).

Leadership style and traits determine the perceptions of vested members and the culture

of an organization (Riaz et al., 2012). Organizational culture is the distinctive

characteristic of an organization to determine its sustained success (Cheung et al., 2012).

Organizational culture is representative of a leader's style.

The characteristics and actions portrayed by leaders establish cultural norms for an organization. Giberson et al. (2009) identified four organizational cultures and the leader traits that correlate with the culture. Clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture, and hierarchical culture are the four typical cultures within corporate settings (Giberson et al., 2009).

Clan culture orients to collaboration with a flexible structure that engages all vested members and develops human capital. Leaders in a clan culture demonstrate agreeableness and emotional stability (Giberson et al., 2009). Adhocracy cultures focus on meeting external demands of the marketplace via creativity and innovation. Creativity and innovation through risk-taking in adhocracy cultures promotes adaptability and transformational change of an organization. Adhocracy's focus on external competition generally aligns with leadership that is low on agreeableness and emotional stability (Giberson et al., 2009). Market cultures also focus on the demands of the external marketplace with an aggressive traditional business strategy to gain market share. Leaders in market cultures are goal oriented and use a reward system to motivate employees to excel.

Leaders incorporating traditional leadership practices with a goal-oriented focus tend to portray poor emotional stability and limited levels of agreeableness. Low agreeableness and poor emotional stability in leaders creates anxiety and stress within the organization by focusing on external competition (Giberson et al., 2009). Control-oriented hierarchical cultures instill predictable business strategy that focuses on

minimizing errors and improving consistency (Giberson et al., 2009). Leaders in hierarchical cultures skeptically accept and incorporate new ideologies (Giberson et al., 2009). Giberson et al. stated that extraversion did not demonstrate a significant correlation with any of the prescribed cultures; however, Giberson et al. also proposed that extraversion might correlate with leadership personal interactions rather than business operations. Leadership style and traits affect the culture of an organization as well as the willingness of followers to commit to leadership's vision.

The combination of a leader's style and the organizational norms for performance expectations influence the organization's culture. Altaf (2011) argued that organizational culture determines the ability of an organization to develop innovative solutions in response to the external demands of an evolving global marketplace. In response to the changing demands of the external marketplace, leaders of successful cultures communicate and interact effectively in an attempt to embed adaptive and intelligent business practices (Altaf, 2011). The review of literature establishes that leadership is critical for determining an organization's culture. Organizational culture is the determining factor for an organization's ability to develop and sustain competitive advantage. The literature indicated that a significant correlation exists among leadership style, organizational culture, and an organization's productivity and profitability.

**Learning Organizations**

Learning organizations have come to the forefront in the study of organizational culture. Learning organizations thrive in the changing landscape of the globalized

marketplace by being innovative and experiential companies committed to sustainable competitive advantage (Shieh, 2012). Organizational learning is a collective process that influences current business practices, as well as future strategies, learning, and operations of organizational members (Balay, 2012). Agility and adaptability are characteristic of learning organizations. Communicative sharing of individual and group learning experiences related to augmenting corporate performance and objectives characterizes learning organizations (Noruzy, Dalfard, Azhdari, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Rezazadeh, 2013). Oliver (2012) stated that underlying the principles of knowledge sharing in learning organizations was continual quality practices enhancement. The development of a learning organization culture is a response to the external demands of the market to provide a culture of adaptability and innovation.

The globalization of markets necessitates that businesses perform in new and innovative manners if they desire to remain relevant and competitive. Traditional business solutions consisted of single-loop learning in which an organization corrects errors or inefficiencies; however, single-loop learning organizations do not alter the underlying values guiding their decision making and business practices (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Single-loop learning is inefficient in meeting the demands of the globalizing economy. Double-loop learning, which is the core of learning organizations, focuses on adapting underlying business values and modifying practices to embed innovative solutions to barriers for sustained competitive advantage (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Double-loop learning is a process of learning to adapt (Caldwell, 2012). Learning

organizations use knowledge management and creation in a dynamic process of analyzing, evaluating, and implementing corrective actions to adapt internally to the changing external environment (Caldwell, 2012; Maden, 2012; Shieh 2012). The demands created by the globalizing economy for sustained competitive advantage compel businesses to incorporate novel business practices. Organizations with learning cultures have adapted in response to the demands of the evolving economy.

Productivity and sustained profitability are the desired results of a prolific business. Learning organizations promote positive organizational results (Sahin, 2013; Shehzad & Khan, 2013). Maden (2012) stated that attaining positive organizational results requires a process of collective thinking for innovative solutions, and the ability to adapt to the demands of the external marketplace along with the internal corporate environment. Current organizational knowledge managed effectively and ongoing learning to expand an organization's current knowledge and strategy correlated with successfully fulfilling future organizational needs (Alipour, Idris, & Karimi, 2011). In learning organizations, vested members of the organization strive to improve performance by increasing organizational memory and expressing personal ideas and opinions (Alipour et al., 2011). Learning organization culture embeds within the organization, but the long-term success is rooted in innovation evolving from the knowledge of the individuals within the organization.

Evolution of an organization correlates with innovatively overcoming the barriers to sustained success. Generating innovation requires open communication in learning

environments in which a perception of psychological safety exists (Maden, 2012; Yuanyuan, Chaoyou, & Yuqiang, 2014). Psychological safety encourages vested members to appreciate individual differences and condones thoughtful reflection of new ideas (Maden, 2012). In support of the significance of psychological safety, Kerman, Freundlich, Lee, and Brenner (2012) proclaimed that the ability to safely reflect and innovate created an environment accepting of change, embedding the change into the organizational culture. Innovation, adaptability, and positive organizational cultures are characteristic of learning cultures. Organizational learning and adaptive change to overcome organizational barriers stimulate competitive advantage (Maden, 2012). Competitive advantage is desirable for sustaining the profitability of an organization. Learning organizations provide a psychologically safe environment conducive for sustained competitive advantage.

In addition to fostering innovation and openness to change, psychological safety provides a comfort level for vested members to implement new ideas and share knowledge. Learning organizations involve an environment that encourages organization wide learning practices (Islam et al., 2012). Kinghorn, Black, and Oliver (2011) identified that the organizational culture of learning organizations must have established norms for behavior and performance embedded with all vested members accountable to each other and the organization. Oliver (2012) established that trust in the corporate vision, values, and leadership generated accountability among the culture's vested members. Mutual trust and healthy relationships among vested members are critical for

knowledge sharing in learning organizations (Islam et al., 2012). Psychological safety

extends into trusting the culture in learning organizations.

Positive relations among the vested members are essential for successful learning

organizations. Interpersonal trust affects corporate culture, the level of collaboration, and

organizational behavior norms (Maden, 2012). Mutual trust among vested members and

enhanced teamwork for increased productivity is commonplace in learning organizations

(Forozandeh et al., 2011). Cohesive teams of vested members with aligned values

emphasize organizational goals ahead of personal agendas, and individuals become

engaged organizational members demonstrating enhanced levels of organizational

citizenship behaviors (Islam et al., 2012). Successfully sustaining and embedding change

for performance improvement requires engagement of all vested members within an

organization (Kerman et al., 2012). Vested organizational members with elevated levels

of trust in their prescribed organization increase opportunity for sustained learning

organization's business success.

Leaders and followers are both integral to successful learning organizations. A

learning organization's business success requires effective leaders who demonstrate

leadership styles that encourage the processes foundational of learning cultures

(Caldwell, 2012; Maden, 2012; Sahaya, 2012). Power must be decentralized (Maden,

2012), and employees must perceive they have autonomy for decision making (Quiñones,

Van den Broeck, & De Witte, 2013). Perceived psychological empowerment augments

subordinates' organizational commitment or psychological bond to organizational values

and objectives (Quiñones et al., 2013). Empowered employees with elevated levels of organizational commitment have demonstrated a significant correlation with increased return on assets (Sahaya, 2012). Subordinates with affective commitment to the organization and a sense of empowerment become followers. Followers perceive that their leaders listen, learn, and respond to their needs. In return, followers respond to their leaders as mentors and role models, which further enhances their degree of organizational commitment (Maden, 2012). Leaders establish the culture that is conducive for ongoing learning and knowledge sharing in learning organizations. Followers who are empowered in a learning environment commit to organizational goals and strive for excellence. Learning cultures are a combination of effective leaders and committed followers, which may result in organizational efficiency and increased productivity.

Followers with enhanced organizational commitment have an increased level of psychological attachment and a sense of ownership toward the organization. Employees with raised levels of organizational commitment demonstrate increased work habits and voluntarily undertake new challenges (Forozandeh et al., 2011). In learning organizations, committed employees view challenges as learning opportunities that can further the evolution of themselves and the organization (Alipour et al., 2011). Alipour et al. argued that as employees evolve with a sense of purpose, they become increasingly committed and supportive of organizational objectives. Forozandeh et al. concluded from their research that increased organizational commitment among subordinates facilitated

change and institutionalized the learning organization culture. Learning organizations have committed cultures that stimulate growth in individuals and the organization.

The benefits of affectively committed employees influence productivity in both observable and underlying facets. Loyalty, decreased employee turnover, increased knowledge sharing, augmented commitment to the corporate vision, accountability, and elevated employee efforts are characteristic of affectively committed employees in learning organizations (Forozandeh et al., 2011; Kinghorn et al., 2011). Committed employees in learning organizations desire to create innovative processes, products, and ideas, which in turn enhances performance and sustains competitive advantage (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012). Learning organizations are productive because the culture stimulates growth in individuals that aligns with organizational goals.

Creating and sustaining learning organization cultures requires a skill set that evolves with the stage of the cultural development. Kerman et al. (2012) stated that enhancing performance and sustaining competitive advantage through learning organizations as an ideology can be simple; however, implementing the ideology is difficult. Bureaucratic barriers, fear of change, complacency, traditional roles and structures, lack of leadership and organizational support, mistrust, and organizational defense mechanisms hinder knowledge sharing and the successful instillation of a learning organizational culture (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Kinghorn et al., 2011). Creating and sustaining a learning organization culture requires commitment. Parumasur (2012) delineated that the desired change with organizational learning is not an instantaneous

transition in culture. Followers have a tendency to be comfortable with the status quo and fear for their personal safety in corporate change (Chou, 2014). Leaders must create the sense of security in a learning organization to reap the benefits of the learning organization culture.

Creating the desired culture to understand and accept change to a learning organization tends to be difficult. Expedient results desired by vested members may not arise as quickly as desired. Afzali et al. (2014) found that learning organizations demonstrated continuous improvement in job performance; however, organizations with organizational learning embedded as part of the culture demonstrated consistently better performance than organizations new to organizational learning. Establishing learning organizational culture requires a democratic culture and systems that allow open communication of valued knowledge for problem sharing (Alipour et al., 2011). Establishing the environment to instill the change to a learning organization requires trusting followership secure with the desired change.

As a reflex reaction to change, followers can portray behaviors that appear as negative citizenship behaviors. At an organization-wide level, followers can respond with defense mechanisms embedded in their culture, making them resistant to change (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Defense mechanisms deter learning organizational cultures and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Argyris and Schön defined defense mechanisms as actions, policies, or practices that prevented vested members from taking risks and learning from mistakes. Throughout the research for this study, a common theme is that

trust has been core for followers to alleviate their anxiety and create committed

followership. Mixed messages and ambiguity by leadership prevents trust in leadership

and the change necessary for learning organization and corporate success (Argyris &

Schön, 1996; Kerman et al., 2012). Before change and commitment to a learning

organization can occur, leaders must establish a foundation conducive for change.

The responsibility for establishing the rudimentary criteria necessary for

organizational change lies with leadership. Kerman et al. (2012) stated that transitioning

to a learning organization culture requires clearly delineated goals and processes of the

change communicated to followers so that they could assess the value of the desired state.

Results of the transition must be measurable, and an organization must be prepared to

change the implementation plan as needed (Kerman et al., 2012). Failure to instill

organizational processes and a culture conducive to change through a preestablished plan

generally resulted in unsuccessful change, financial losses, and deprived organizational

knowledge through personnel loss (Kerman et al., 2012). Learning organizations are a

systematic process that requires effective planning and establishing a culture of change.

In addition to planning and establishing change readiness, leaders must develop

positive relationships with the organization's vested members. Competitive advantage

and achieving optimal potential in performance in the globalizing economy requires

organizations to adapt innovatively while transferring new knowledge and practices

(Alipour et al., 2011; Oliver, 2012). Driving the necessity for change can be either

internal or external forces individually or a combination of the two (Kerman et al., 2012).

Learning organizations facilitate integrative processes for sharing knowledge in the form of cognitive resources and skills essential for solving theoretical and practical barriers (Alipour et al., 2011; Shehzad & Khan, 2013). Facilitating the processes of transition to a learning organization is a leader's responsibility. Kerman et al. proposed that accomplishing a successful learning organization required leadership to successfully manage change initiatives and provide an environment in which a learning organization can flourish. Learning organizations embed a culture of continuous learning, and followers continually self-reinforce the culture through accountability (Forozandeh et al., 2011; Kerman et al., 2012). Accountability within a learning organization, created by empowering vested members in establishing organizational goals and decision making, resulted in positive change emphasizing continuous improvement (Oliver, 2012). The role of leadership in establishing a culture conducive for a learning culture cannot be undermined; however, learning organizations are a combination of people and practices.

The roles of leaders and followers do not diminish when initiating and entrenching a learning organizational culture. Learning organizations are innovative, adaptable, agile, and supportive of positive organizational change (Oliver, 2012). Alipour et al. (2011) claimed that leadership is responsible for creating a system and structure favorable by being flexible, supportive of continuous learning, developing trusting relationships, and providing technology necessary for implementing the desired change. Followers who perceive leaders as fair, ethical, and supportive demonstrate trust in the leaders (Kinghorn et al., 2011). Organizations with a clearly established vision, autonomy

for followership, interaction with the external and internal cultures, diversified resources, and open communication throughout departments had the foundational components of a learning culture (Alipour et al., 2011). Vested members reap the benefits of a successfully sustained learning organization.

Creating a learning organization begins as a hierarchal process that originates with committed leadership. Leaders initiate a culture conducive to change via a democratic style that encourages followers to accept and embed desired business practices. Learning organizations are symbiotic relationships of people and processes (Aksoy et al., 2014). Collectively all vested members of a learning organization acquire, store, and disseminate information in a manner of improving organizational performance and supporting sustained competitive advantage (Shehzad & Khan, 2013). Ultimately, learning organizations strive to learn and apply knowledge and skills for corporate gain rather than focus on individualized objectives (Prati & Zani, 2013). Learning organizations consist of individuals, but they are a united team committed to organizational performance.

**Leadership Style**

Understanding leadership and leadership style is important for understanding the traits and skills necessary for establishing a successful learning organization. Leadership research historically lacks integration, and developing a universally accepted definition among professional practitioners and scholars has been difficult (Derue et al., 2011). Despite the lack of unity in accepting a universal definition of leadership, general

acceptance of leadership by academia is that leadership acts as a motivational tool used to influence others toward an organizational goal (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Holt and Marques (2012) identified that leadership is a collaborative process requiring an interaction between leaders and others that become followers. Establishing a leadership style and incorporating leadership skills that align subordinates with the goals of a learning organization are essential for sustained organizational success.

Leadership requires committed followership and extends beyond the conventional leadership ideology of simply demanding subordinates to perform job actions. Traditionally, management has been interchangeable with leadership, while contrasting perspectives regarding the similarities, differences, and interrelationships have been debated (Holt & Marques, 2012). Holt and Marques defined management as mundane and uninspiring, whereas leadership is vision oriented and provides influence and direction. Leadership is an important factor for corporate success; however, to be effective, as either a manager or leader, certain skills are required to perform the other task as well (Holt & Marques, 2012). Leadership and management are not separate entities, although leadership is a more entailing composition of acts and behaviors than management.

Traditional management ideologies have not progressed and adapted with the onset of the globalized economy. Globalization of the marketplace has created increased complexity in organizational structure and business practices (Ananthram & Nankervis, 2013). Complex organization's success is more dependent on the skills and style of

leaders than in the past (Ho, 2012). In addition, Ho argued that the determining factor for organizational success and survival in the future marketplace is the actions of the organizations leaders. Successful organizations in the current marketplace are the product of leaders that display adaptability and creativity.

Academics contest the degree of significance for traits and behavior in establishing a leadership style. Derue et al. (2011) maintained that the behaviors demonstrated by leaders correlated stronger with perceived leadership effectiveness than leader personality traits. Holt and Marques (2012) established a significant correlation between leadership style and personality traits. Additionally, Kaiser and Hogan (2010) established that personality of the leader and the integrity of the leader had a significant positive correlation. Resick et al. (2011) explained that the significance of each of the individual ethical leadership characteristics varied in diverse cultures. Despite the contrasting opinions regarding behavior and personality in a leader's style, academics concede that they are significant to determine a leader's style.

Followership is the act of committing to a leader and his or her style of leadership. Derue et al. (2011) proclaimed that the level of commitment by followers depends on the traits and behaviors demonstrated by the leader and the followers' perception of the leader's effectiveness. Passive leadership behaviors negatively correlated with perceived leadership effectiveness, whereas followers perceive proactive leaders as effective (Derue et al., 2011). Proactive leadership establishes authenticity and integrity at the outset, whereas passive leaders respond with actions to alleviate followers' concerns. Leadership

behaviors desired by followers include authenticity and ethical actions (Derue et al., 2011). Authentic leaders share knowledge, involve vested members in decision making, allow transparency, and represent ethical behaviors to enhance psychological safety and trust (Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2011). Ethical leaders portray respect for others, use power to act in the best interest of the organization, and align their personal behaviors with the values of the organization (Resick et al., 2011). In addition to authenticity and ethics in perceived leadership effectiveness, Gaiter (2013) included the characteristic of integrity. Integrity incorporates leaders demonstrating honesty, trustworthiness, and ethical behaviors (Khuong & Nhu, 2015). Followers who perceived integrity in their leaders considered them as character leaders, and integral leaders gained the trust of followers and cohesiveness in teams easier than leaders without integrity (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010; Weichun, Sosik, Riggio, & Baiyin, 2012). As established previously in the literature cited for this study, trust is foundational for productive learning organization cultures.

Trust in leadership is foundational for perceived effective leadership (Sadeghi, Yadollah, Baygi, & Ghayoomi, 2013). In addition to the association of trust, authenticity, ethical action, and integrity with perceived effective leadership, Derue at al. (2011) outlined extraversion and conscientiousness as the significant personality traits associated with perceived leader effectiveness. Combining conscientiousness with the traits classified as agreeableness positively correlated with improved follower performance (Derue et al., 2011). Historically, the traits related to task competence and interpersonal

acumen positively associated with leader effectiveness (Derue et al., 2011). Traits and leadership style act in combination to determine followerships' perceived effectiveness of a leader.

The perception followership has of their leader influences the organizational culture and long-term success. Resick et al. (2011) delineated that perceived effective leaders had positive implications for the organization and its vested members. Leaders that established a vision that was shared among vested members instituted a culture of expected norms for values and behaviors relating to current and future decisions (Huang et al., 2011). Individuals committed to the corporate vision demonstrated improved performance levels (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012; Hogg, Van Knippenberg, & Rastivet, 2012). Commitment to the organizational vision depended on trust in leadership (Sadeghi et al., 2013). Establishing trust required two-way communication between leaders and followers (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Positive relations via clear communication of expectations and norms within an organizational vision are essential for followers to perceive their leaders as effective.

Organizations that communicate and share ideas reap rewards at all organizational levels. Weichun et al. (2012) argued that the message delivered was not as influential as the style of delivery instilled by the leader in attaining committed followership. Sharing knowledge through communication allowed leaders to catalyze change, manage behaviors, and provide direction for universal corporate goals (Shieh, 2012). As an organization, all vested members gain from leaders that communicate well.

Followers shared knowledge openly when they trusted their leadership via a culture of perceived psychological safety and leader support (Tanyaovalaksna & Li, 2013). Sharing knowledge under the auspices of psychological safety positively influenced individual and group behavior as well as organizational performance (Walumbwa, Luthans, et al., 2011). Communication within an organization allows sharing of information that promotes innovation as well as generating an understanding of the needs of vested members.

Successful leaders have the ability to adapt to the external and internal demands of their organization. Afzali et al. (2014) identified that recognizing individual followers' needs and personality allowed leaders to adapt their style to fulfill their followers' needs. The ability to understand and empathetically fulfill followers' needs is a developable leadership skill that augments organizational performance and enhances organizational commitment (Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012; Holt & Marques, 2012). Kaiser and Overfield (2010) stated that successful leaders demonstrate concern for the collective good of the organization and its vested members while focusing on developing organizational teams that outperform their competitors. As leaders recognize and fulfill the needs of the followers, they develop as leaders and enhance organizational performance.

The leadership style implemented by a leader influences the culture and performance of an organization. Characteristics for perceived effective leadership correlated strongly with transformational leadership style (Derue et al., 2011). Transformational leaders identified an enticing vision for the future and elicited high

performance expectations (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Odetunde, 2013).

Communication of the desired vision and performance expectations must be clear and

compassionate to instill a desire for self-fulfillment within employees (Erdem & Uçar,

2013). Followers of transformational leaders recognized the value in their jobs, were

stimulated intellectually, and emphasized corporate objectives over individual goals (Den

Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013; Sadeghi et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders communicate a desired future state of the organization and

motivate followers to perform at a level beyond their personal expectations.

Transformational leadership is a combination of personal leadership style and innate

qualities.

Two categories of the FFM and leadership style combine predominantly to

determine a leader's degree of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders

demonstrate qualities associated with the FFM categories of openness to experience and

agreeableness (Amir, Naz, Hafeez, Ashfaq, & Dogar, 2014). Followers of

transformational leadership style demonstrate engagement in decision making and

autonomy for self-determination of innovative ideas to improve organizational

performance (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Transformational leaders, portraying

openness to experience and agreeableness, combined with a committed followership

augments individual and organizational outcomes. Scholars have detailed that

transformational leadership creates an environment of elevated group performance (Amir

et al., 2014), employee proactivity, sustainable organizational change, development of a

culture of accountability, and improved performance (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Huang et al., 2011). As the global marketplace evolves, transformational leaders instill qualities that provide a culture conducive for innovation to overcome barriers to competitive advantage.

Historically, transformational leaders provided an environment for sustained success; however, economic events altered business practices for sustainability. Globalization of the marketplace created more complexity by means of technology, communication methods, and virtual environments adding new organizational barriers that required evolving leadership solutions (Holt & Marques, 2012). Followers of transformational leaders in the modern globalized marketplace demand more than the traditional characteristics correlated with transformational leadership (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Di Schiena et al. (2013) asserted that exceptional leaders require attributes identifying them as possessing character in addition to technical expertise in business strategies and organizational skills. As unforeseen organizational barriers to sustained competitive advantage come to the forefront, leaders must adapt and respond with pioneering solutions. Solutions to organizational barriers are not solely the responsibility of the leader, but leaders are responsible for creating the culture conducive for adaptability and agility in response to the external market. Changing demands of the external market make traditional leadership ideologies and methodologies undesirable and unsuccessful.

The demands of the global market necessitate change from the traditional skills and traits preferred in leaders of hierarchal corporate structures. In the confines of traditional corporate structures, leaders were often complex individuals driven by personal agendas (Oh, 2012). Personal agendas that failed to align with organizational values and behaviors were a destructive leadership behavior (Oh, 2012). Destructive leadership is a compilation of negative behaviors. Negative behaviors deter the qualities of a culture conducive for a positive organizational culture. Kaiser and Hogan (2010) identified abusing staff, theft, manipulating rules, and demonstrating unethical behaviors to others as negative leadership actions. Leaders with the objective of fulfilling personal goals at the expense of organizational goals negatively influence organizational productivity and profitability. Personal gain at the expense of organizational objectives does not align with transformational leadership.

Traditional strategies of leadership focused on time-proven methods for completing organizational tasks rather than emphasizing the organizations' people as their primary asset for organizational success. De Vries et al. (2010) posited that task-oriented leaders demonstrated a tendency to be more verbally aggressive in their interactions with subordinates. Narcissistic leaders portrayed the appropriate qualities of charisma; however, excessively narcissistic leaders were egocentric, alienated followers, and failed to demonstrate integrity and ethical behaviors (De Vries et al., 2010). Kaiser and Hogan (2010) predicated that, in response to ineffective leaders, their followers cultivate self-defence mechanisms to preserve their personal security at the expense of

committing to the organizational objectives. Leaders who fail to create a committed followership influence current and future corporate success. Schaumberg and Flynn (2012) detailed that perceived ineffective leadership hinders an organization's ability to attract desirable personnel and expand organizational knowledge. Successful leaders stimulate followers to achieve enhanced levels of performance. Failing to align followers with organizational goals creates a negative work culture and inhibits long-term organizational achievement. Traditional leadership practices need to adapt to the demands of the external and internal cultures of their marketplace to promote sustained organizational success.

Adapting to the demands of the changing landscape of business requires adjustment in performing tasks, creating followership, and general business practices. Khuong and Nhu (2015) claimed that business success requires leaders to apply innovative methods in coordinating a collective organizational effort by stimulating followers to commit to organizational goals. Kaiser and Overfield (2010) proclaimed that assessing the effectiveness or potential effectiveness of a leader should emphasize group performance and followership cohesiveness. Group performance refers to the collaborative efforts among formalized units toward achieving a corporate goal (Hogg et al., 2012). Successful leaders align vested members to achieve organizational goals and accomplish self-actualization as individuals.

As globalization has altered the face of business, skills and behaviors for effective leadership have changed. Kaiser and Overfield (2010) stated that psychological,

intellectual, and social capital is the most effective scheme for determining potential leadership style and effectiveness. Psychological capital includes engrained characteristics such as personality and mental abilities (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Intellectual capital is the knowledge and skills attained via education and experience (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Social capital is interpersonal abilities interrelated with personal and professional networks (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010).

Leadership is a combination of traits, knowledge, and interpersonal skills. Huang et al. (2011) stated that combining the prescribed capital abilities to provide vision and create inspired belief in organizational change among followers is critical for perceived effective leadership. Followers perceived their leaders as effective when leaders demonstrated communication skills, engaged in ethical behaviors, created trusting relationships, and instilled innovative solutions (Khuong & Nhu, 2015; Ruggieri & Abbate 2013). Perceived leadership effectiveness correlated with organizational performance, corporate success, and sustainable competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2011). The role of leadership in business should not be underestimated. Leaders provide the foundation for the organization's culture and establish the parameters that decide the level of organizational commitment of their followers. Leadership and organizational success in sustaining competitive advantage depends on the actions of the organization's followers.

**Followership**

   Throughout this literature review, the significance of leadership's influence on the roles and performance of vested members in an organization has been established. Bacha and Walker (2012) contended that organization sustainability and employee welfare directly correlate with the values and ethics demonstrated by leaders. Corporate visions delineate the values of leadership and the organization (James & Lahti, 2011). The vision details a desired state of the organization in the future and articulates values that employees are unable to express themselves (Hayibor, Agle, Sears, Sonnenfeld, & Ward, 2011; James & Lahti, 2011). Corporate values prescribed in the organization's vision that aligned with employee values motivated subordinates to strive for attaining organizational goals (James & Lahti, 2011). Employees who are committed to achieving organizational goals as established by the vision of corporate leaders become followers.

   Followers differ from subordinates or employees because of their level of engagement. Engaged followers' demonstrated initiative, assumed ownership, and placed organizational goals ahead of personal gain (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012). Walumbwa, Cropanzano, and Goldman (2011) maintained that committed followers go beyond the baseline expectation of their job and become employees devoted to organizational success and sustainability. Followership is dependent on the actions, values, and beliefs of organizational leaders. Attaining followership requires leaders to demonstrate values and behaviors that align with the organization's values to ensure sustainable success

(James & Lahti, 2011; Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Successful organizations depend on leaders to stimulate and maintain a committed followership.

Creating followership requires leaders to portray the defined skills, qualities, and characteristics desired by their subordinates. Mosley and Patrick (2011) established that followers in successful organizations had positive interaction and relationships with their superiors. In the past, business leaders supported the ideology that subordinates will follow any leader (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012). Historically, perceptions of subordinates acting as a follower had negative connotations, which can make coercing employees to align with leadership in the modern workforce difficult (Parumasur, 2012). Gaining the confidence of subordinates to transition them to followers requires leaders to display effective leadership skills and behaviors.

A critical skill for leadership is the ability to develop positive relationships with vested members of their organization. Mosley and Patrick (2011) proclaimed that fundamental to developing committed followership was open and honest communication. Leaders that effectively communicated with followers created higher quality relationships (Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). High quality relationships consist of open communication, trust, and knowledge sharing (Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Communicating with followers elevates the knowledge of leaders regarding their followers. Communicative leaders that developed trusting relationships with followers became familiar with their needs (Hayibor et al., 2011; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Weichun et al. (2012) furthered research by proclaiming that followers'

perception of their leader's ability to understand their needs influenced the followers'

level of organizational commitment and engagement. Communication to develop trusting

relationships is necessary to create an engaged and committed followership.

Creating engaged and committed followers benefits an organization as noted by

Godkin and Allcorn (2011), who established that the employee level of commitment and

performance in the workplace are critical determinants of organizational success. In

addition to influencing performance, researchers have delineated that increased affective

commitment and engaged followers' buffer negative behaviors that can have a

detrimental effect on organizational success (Khuong & Nhu, 2015). As well as deterring

negative behaviors, committed followers have improved levels of performance

(Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Improved performance, accountability

among vested members, and positive relationships are qualities associated with learning

organization culture detailed previously in this literature review. Committed followers,

developed through their relationship with leadership, embed a sense of identity and

expectations within an organizational culture (Mosely & Patrick, 2011). Followership is a

by-product of leadership actions. Committed followers believe in their leadership and

extend personal boundaries to augment organizational performance and profitability

The degree of commitment demonstrated by an organization's followership is a

product of the behaviors and skills of leaders. Committed followers perceive competency

and consistent style in their organizational leadership (Mosely & Patrick, 2011).

Researchers have substantiated that transformational and charismatic leadership styles

correlate with cultures conducive for committed followership (Bacha & Walker, 2012; Hayibor et al., 2011; James & Lahti, 2011; Mosely & Patrick, 2011). Communication, including listening to the needs of followers and defining the purpose and applicability of the corporate vision, is fundamental to transformational and charismatic leadership (James & Lahti, 2011). Charismatic and transformational leaders inspire followers to enhanced levels of performance, actively engage subordinates, empower employees, and promote critical thinking (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011; Hayibor et al., 2011). Followers of transformational and charismatic leaders are affectively stimulated to attain organizational objectives and exhibit increased levels of affinity for their leaders (Hayibor et al., 2011). The actions and style of transformational leaders augments the followers trust in the leaders and heightens the follower's affective commitment. Committed followers believe they are empowered to take risks for innovation and apply critical thinking to overcome barriers to organizational success (Bacha & Walker, 2012; Brumm & Drury, 2013; Godkin & Allcorn, 2011). Motivation and innovation of committed followers boosts organizational performance and increases agility in response to the barriers for competitive advantage.

The ability of an organization to overcome the barriers that prevent competitive advantage encourages sustained success. Mosley and Patrick (2011) declared that organizational success in a globalized marketplace entails agility and innovation characteristic of transformational leadership. Innovation and agility require a culture of autonomy based on communication and interpersonal trust; therefore, traditional

hierarchical business structures were ineffective for establishing and maintaining competitive advantage (Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Hierarchical structures stifle autonomy and information flows from the top down with limited interpersonal communication. Walumbwa, Cropanzano, and Goldman (2011) stated that followers accept change associated with innovative responses to external demands easier when they trusted leaders to supply the resources and tools necessary for organizational success. The degree of positive interaction via open communication in a leader's style influences the organizational culture's response to desired change. Resistance to organizational change has been associated with leadership characteristics that contrast with the ethical actions, value alignment, and trusting relationships representative of charismatic and transformational leadership (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011). Transformational leaders promoted self-actualization for followers via mentorship and empowerment (Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Followers of transformational leaders demonstrate independence, innovation, and willingness to challenge the actions of their leaders. Chou (2014) expanded on this ideology by proclaiming that followers of transformational leaders that serve as critical thinkers, rather than simply complying with leaders, are essential for sustained organizational success. Integrity and communication are indispensable qualities for transformational leadership and developing a culture of committed followership (Bacha & Walker, 2012). Transformational leadership provides enhanced opportunity for establishing sustained organizational success.

Transformational leaders support their followers and create a working culture that is productive and profitable. Ho (2012) outlined those transformational leaders who actively engage followers inspire affective commitment and job satisfaction in their followership. Intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction correlated with the level of active engagement displayed by followers (Prati & Zani, 2013). In addition to active engagement, Chou (2014) noted that critical thinking is a desirable characteristic associated with followership. Critical thinkers challenge unsubstantiated leadership decisions and desired change in a positive and constructive manner; however, these thinkers also possess organizational knowledge supporting innovation and sustained competitive advantage (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011). Critical thinkers and engaged subordinates become committed followers providing essential elements of organizational success.

Subordinates' perception of their organizational leader's ability to fulfill their needs corresponds with their response to leadership decisions. Subordinates with positive interactions with leaders believe they are supported in the workplace and become committed followers portraying desirable work behaviors, superior commitment to their leader and the organization, and enhanced job performance (Mosley & Patrick, 2011; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Hansbrough (2012) established that negative employee behavior correlated with the perceived level of fairness displayed by their leaders. Subordinates of transformational leaders perceive fulfillment of their needs

and commit to organizational success. Organizations evolve, adapt, and innovate via committed followers.

Vested members of an organization gain from effective leaders and committed followers. Ruggieri and Abbate (2013) found that despite the general consensus regarding the significance of leadership on organizational culture conducive for committed followership, other research depicted that colleagues in formal productive teams created committed followership (Erdem & Uçar, 2013). Individuals with a sense of belonging to a group demonstrated elevated work effort characterized by tolerance, consideration, and willingness to volunteer (Ruggieri & Abbate 2013). The role of leadership in the performance of followers is undeniable; however, accountability and psychological safety in organized follower groups can also be beneficial. Synchronicity and accountability exists in productive groups with the criteria for their success similar to characteristics of a large-scale organizational culture.

Synchronicity of a group is a combination of styles and personality. Personality of subordinates has demonstrated a correlation to the type of followership they will portray (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011). Followers that demonstrated conscientiousness, as categorized in the FFM, historically demonstrated engaged followership and independent critical thinking (Törnroos et al., 2013). Conscientious followers demonstrated desirable organizational citizenship behaviors (Aiqin, Xiuqin, Yongfu, Yonggang, & Xiaoyang, 2012). Törnroos et al. furthered personality correlations by establishing that extraversion correlated with increased work satisfaction and decreased risk of burnout. Personality

factors influence the style demonstrated by followers and leaders as well as their interactions.

Accountability and synchronicity within follower groups is significant; however, responsibility for establishing the workplace culture falls on leaders. Followers' perceiving that their leadership acted in the best interest of the organization and rewarded vested members for organizational success aligned with the organizational vision (James & Lahti, 2011; Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Committed followers thrive in an organizational culture that encourages innovation to achieve the organizational vision with limited restrictions because of ideology, structure, or business strategy (Mosley & Patrick, 2011). Fundamental to followership was leadership that supports an environment of trusting relationships (Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Leadership style is significant to determine organizational culture, followership, productivity, and competitive advantage. The traits of a leader play a role in defining their style as a leader. Additionally, the personality of a subordinate influences his or her style as a follower.

**Personality**

Personality influences a variety of facets of daily life. Fazeli (2012) identified that throughout academic history social science researchers have intensively studied personality and applied the results to a variety of academic genres. Identified through the historic study of personality regarding leadership is the assumption that defined traits make success as a leader more likely. Early study of personality and leadership focused on the great man theory that leaders were born and not made (Hoffman et al., 2011).

However, academic support for the great man theory dwindled prompting academics to assess leadership from multiple perspectives (Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013; Kaiser & Hogan, 2011). The change in viewpoint regarding traits and leadership does not diminish the significance of traits within the study of leadership. Törnroos et al. (2013) identified that personality influences the relationship between leaders and followers, subordinate fit with leadership style, leadership effectiveness, and the style of a leader. Research supports that human resource personnel who understand traits are critical in establishing desired organizational citizenship and achieving organizational goals (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2011). Despite the absence of unanimous support for the significance of traits on leadership, academics and professional practitioners assessed in this review acknowledge traits influence leader effectiveness.

Understanding personality is essential for developing a judgment regarding traits and leadership effectiveness. Barrick et al. (2013) defined personality as a combination of actions and motivational controls that remain relatively stable throughout a person's lifetime. As an individual matures, his or her personality evolves because life experiences combine with genetics developing an individual's personality (Alkahtani et al., 2011). Personality is unique to an individual because of the combination of heritable traits and distinct life experiences (Alkahtani et al., 2011). Personality is relatively stable throughout a person's lifetime, but academics continuously debate whether personality becomes more constant in adulthood (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Specht et al., 2011). Specht

et al. delineated that personality changes throughout a lifetime because of ongoing life events and maturity, but they also argued that the adaptability and change patterns of personality depend on age and experience. Lifetime experiences and genetics create unique responses and behaviors in each individual. Recognizing and understanding traits allows organizations the opportunity to provide each individual with a scenario conducive to individual success and, reciprocally, corporate success.

Academia established that personality is significant within the working environment. Barrick et al. (2013) argued that traits drive workplace behaviors and influence leadership style. As part of leadership style, the traits of a leader influence his or her thoughts, feelings, and interpersonal skills (Alkahtani et al., 2011). Leaders aware of their traits can conscientiously alter their leadership styles and influence their leadership effectiveness (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011; Riaz et al., 2012). Additionally, traits can be present in a leader and remain inactive, without leadership's awareness of the traits, until stimulated by a unique external situation (Blickle et al., 2012). Understanding traits allows organizations the opportunity to adapt their practices to attain and sustain competitive advantage.

Barriers to competitive advantage change as the marketplace changes. Blickle et al. (2012) identified that the external and internal cultures of business evolved as the marketplace globalized and information technologies developed. Surviving as an effective leader requires adaptability to the expansion of internal and external business contexts (Parumasur, 2012). Evolving as a leader is an ongoing process involving vested

members. Antonakis, Fenley, and Liechti (2011) delineated that adaptability and awareness of traits was a learning process requiring leaders to undergo extensive education and professional development via coaching, mentoring, and consultation. Overcoming barriers and establishing sustained competitive advantage requires organizational commitment to self-actualization of leaders.

Leaders committed to personal growth and adaptability while aligning with organizational values provide an environment conducive to sustained success for an organization and their effectiveness as leaders. This significance was supported via Mansur et al. (2011) claiming that expansion into a globalized marketplace required recognizing traits of leaders as a method for establishing competitive advantage in business relations, organizational knowledge, and communication. Leader traits aligning with an organization's cultural norms and values endorsed an environment for attaining organizational goals (Mansur et al., 2011). This literature review supports that traits are significant in all aspects of business. The ability to assess the traits of leaders to determine their leadership effectiveness provides the opportunity for an organization to sustain competitive advantage.

**Five-factor model (FFM).** The FFM fills a longstanding void in the study of traits. Categorizing and classifying traits for practical implications have a turbulent history and a lack of harmony among scholars and professional practitioners (Fazeli, 2012). As a tool for predicting leadership effectiveness, the FFM has become a widely used trait assessment instrument (Dietrich, Lasley, Mondak, Remmel, & Turner, 2012;

Fazeli, 2012). The FFM offers a theoretical framework that systematically supports trait

comparisons in research (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Personality is not measured by the

FFM, rather the FFM acts as a classification system for traits (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011).

The FFM assesses demographics, task proficiency, and interpersonal skills via questions

regarding behaviors, attitudes, and reactions (Derue et al., 2011; Fazeli, 2012).

Additionally, the FFM framework incorporates five generalized trait categories:

conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and emotional

stability (neuroticism) (Amir et al., 2014). Significant correlations of the big five traits

established in the FFM and calculating organizational behavior and work attitudes have

reliably been established in academic research (Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, &

Crawford, 2013). Improvements regarding the applicability of traits to professional

scenarios occurred via the FFM.

The FFM is not without controversy and differing levels of acceptance in

academia and professional contexts. Divergent opinions regarding the effectiveness of the

FFM exist because it assumes that traits are universal (Bowler, Bowler, & Cope, 2012).

Fein and Klein (2011) claimed the generalizability of FFM classifications might not offer

enough detail to establish unqualified conclusions from research. Despite the debate

regarding the universal applicability of the FFM, the FFM is used for evaluating leader

traits resulting in reliable outcomes.

*Conscientiousness.* Conscientiousness is the FFM category that has demonstrated

the most significant influence on job performance, organizational citizenship behavior,

career success, ethical leadership behavior, and emotional intelligence (Andi, 2012;

Blickle et al., 2012; Chiaburu et al., 2011; Derue et al., 2011; Fazeli, 2012; Xu et al.,

2011). Conscientious individuals are commonly persistent, dependable, structured

planners, goal oriented, dutiful, and moral (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Barrick et al., 2013;

Derue et al., 2011; George et al., 2011; Kalshoven et al., 2011). Leaders portraying

conscientious traits demonstrated ethical behaviors and served as role models for desired

organizational behaviors (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Conscientious leaders effectively

portray self-regulating behavior as well as clearly establish roles and expectations of

subordinates, which in turn augmented group performance (Derue et al., 2011; Fein &

Klein, 2011; Kalshoven et al., 2011). Specht et al. (2011) claimed that conscientiousness

is relatively stable throughout a lifetime, especially after age 50; however,

conscientiousness is at its highest levels between age 30 and 70. Characteristics

associated with conscientiousness align with desirable traits in leaders and followers.

*Extraversion.* Extraversion is an assessment of assertiveness, social interests,

status seeking, and energy (George et al., 2011). While personality is relatively stable

throughout a lifetime, Specht et al. (2011) noted aging individuals seek less attention, and

become less extraverted. Individuals with high levels of extraversion are social,

ambitious, domineering, talkative, energetic, self-confident, assertive, and often seek

power positions (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Barrick et al., 2013; Fazeli, 2012). Alkahtani et

al. stated that in an environment in which leadership wishes to instill change, extraversion

is a desirable quality because extraverts communicate openly and seek direct interaction

with others. Their ability to communicate allows them to be aware of subordinates' needs and portray emotional intelligence (Andi, 2012). High levels of extraversion correlate with effective leadership and leadership emergence; however, extraverts are not inclined toward charismatic or transformational leadership (Cheng, Tracy, Kingstone, Foulsham, & Henrich, 2013; Derue et al., 2011). Extraversion can be an integral component of leadership effectiveness in certain contexts.

*Agreeableness.* Agreeableness traits include caring, empathy, trusting, modest, and compliant (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Barrick et al., 2013; Fazeli, 2012; Kalshoven et al., 2011). Agreeable leaders focus on making friends and maintaining positive relationships (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Fein & Klein, 2011). Leaders with high levels of agreeableness demonstrate emotional intelligence and adapt to the needs and personalities of their followership (Andi, 2012). Established cultural norms of fairness, power sharing, and psychological safety for subordinates commonly occur when leaders portray agreeableness (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Agreeableness has demonstrated a significant correlation with ethical leadership; however, leaders that focus on satisfying followers can be inconsistent with decisions and perceived as unethical (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Agreeableness is a desirable trait in leadership, but as the domineering trait, it can be ineffective in diverse leadership scenarios (Amir et al., 2014).

*Openness to experience.* The five-factor classification of openness to experience includes insightfulness, imagination, adaptability, curiosity, eagerness to learn, and intellectualism (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Barrick et al., 2013). Openness to experience

positively correlates with change-oriented behaviorism within an organization's culture (Chiaburu et al., 2011). In addition to an environment conducive for change, openness to experience positively correlates with leaders who demonstrated emotional intelligence (Andi, 2012).

   *Emotional stability.* Emotional stability and neuroticism are interchangeable as the fifth trait category in the FFM for this study. Neuroticism includes negative emotions such as anxiety, recurring anger, negative self-image, moodiness, poor emotional adjustment, and oversensitivity to criticism (Alkahtani et al., 2011; Fazeli, 2012). The qualities of demonstrating calmness and self-confidence and the ability to control emotional responses qualify as emotional stability (Barrick et al., 2013). Specht et al. (2011) established that during an individual's lifetime, emotional stability remains relatively stable, with a slight increase in personal control as the individual ages. Neurotics require perceived fairness in the workplace to align with corporate values and cooperate in achieving organizational goals (Amir et al., 2014; Törnroos et al., 2013). Neurotics are ineffective and unethical leaders (Xiaoyong, Fen, & Jiannong, 2011; Xu et al., 2011). Leaders with a high level of emotional stability overcome personality differences with others and prosper in goal-oriented environments (Khuong & Nhu, 2015). Emotionally stable leaders with a positive self-concept extend their confidence by empowering subordinates and express a positive organizational vision that endorses committed followership (Khuong & Nhu, 2015).

Beyond the categories of the FFM, traits and leadership skills influence leadership effectiveness. Chiaburu et al. (2011) established emotional intelligence and citizenship as critical components for creating positive relationships between leaders and followers. Positive relationships stimulate a mutual understanding of role expectations, increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Songbo, Xiaoshuang, & Wei, 2013; Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Individuals who share similar traits, levels of emotional intelligence, goals, and perspectives created cohesive groups and augmented organizational performance (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012). Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence devoted attention to holistic development of vested members, whereas task completion was the primary objective for leaders with low levels of emotional intelligence (Khuong & Nhu, 2015; Oh, 2012). Although emotional intelligence is not a category of the FFM, emotional intelligence is a skill entailing a combination of FFM traits.

Traits play a noteworthy role in the success of a leader. Hoffman et al. (2011) claimed that traits and learned leadership skills account for similar correlations regarding perceived leadership effectiveness by followers. Leadership traits characterizing interpersonal abilities and knowledge for successful task completion significantly correlates with leadership effectiveness (Derue et al., 2010). Laglera, Collado, and Montes de Oca (2013) expanded on traits and leadership effectiveness by establishing that contextual factors influence the degree of applicability for each of the desired traits

for leadership effectiveness. Recognizing the desired traits for success in a leadership role provides an organization with an environment conducive for sustained success.

Matching a leader with the desired traits to the leadership context promotes sustained competitive advantage. Kaiser and Hogan (2011) delineated that personality accounts for 26% variance in leadership behavior. Schaumberg and Flynn (2012) stipulated that personality influences leadership emergence and perceived leadership effectiveness; therefore, understanding leadership traits augments organizational performance (Derue et al., 2011). Sustaining competitive advantage and augmenting organizational performance required companies to define the essential leadership functions desired and select the leader based on the traits that fulfill the prescribed needs (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011; Xu et al., 2011). Contrasting the concept that personality influences perceived leadership effectiveness, Kaiser and Hogan proclaimed that extreme levels of desirable personality traits in a leader can negatively affect organizational performance. The significance of traits for effective leadership indicate that leaders are born not made (Hoffman et al., 2011). Personality affects leadership style, and is a determining factor in an organization's ability to sustain competitive advantage.

## Transition and Summary

Section 1 introduced the study, purpose, framework, and a comprehensive literature review of the topic. A review of the literature confirmed organizational culture is the predominant characteristic in establishing long-term profitability, productivity, and sustainability in business (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). Organizations with aligned

workplace cultures create a followership committed to achieving organizational goals and sustained competitive advantage (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). Effective leaders create aligned cultures (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). Effective leaders instill collaboration, teamwork, and a healthy life balance while their organizations gain competitive advantage to recruit and retain qualified employees (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013).

Voids exist in research regarding the understanding of the relationship between leader traits, leadership style, and leadership effectiveness for learning organizations. Critical to this study was determining the leader traits characterized by the FFM in establishing and maintaining a learning organization for sustained business and organizational success. The association of leader traits and organizational culture was the major emphasis of the study. The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship of leader traits as categorized by the FFM on the development and preservation of a learning organizational culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry. In Section 2, I focus on the actual research project performed to attain the data that was analyzed and interpreted for outlining conclusions regarding the research question.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2 I focus on the nature of the research project and the results attained in response to the research question. The research question is: What is the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization culture? Section 2 includes the processes for the sampling method, defining the population and sample, data collection techniques, research instruments, reliability, and validity in response to the research question. Additionally, I review the research purpose, role of the researcher, access to participants, and ethical safeguards implemented for the study.

## Purpose Statement

The objective of this quantitative correlational design was to determine the significance of the relationship between the traits categories, delineated in the FFM, in a leader and their effectiveness in establishing a learning organizational culture, which may increase organizational efficiency and profitability. Trait theory acts as the original foundation for this research. This study expands on research by implementing the FFM to assess leader traits and the resultant organizational culture measures via the LOS.

Academia accepts the FFM as an effective tool for assessing traits and predicting leader effectiveness, organizational behavior, and organizational norms (Berry, Kim, Wang, Thompson, & Mobley, 2013; Fazeli, 2012; Wille, De Fruyt, & De Clercq 2013). The FFM categorizes traits into five broad categories of conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness. Demographics, task proficiency,

and interpersonal skills are assessed via the FFM questions regarding behaviors, attitudes, and reactions (Derue et al., 2011; Fazeli, 2012).

Traits are distinctive for individuals because of the uniqueness in their personal experiences and genetic constitution (Alkahtani et al., 2011). The behaviors, actions, and motivational controls that constitute an individual's personality traits remain relatively stable throughout a person's lifetime; however, life experiences and maturity alter an individual's personality (Barrick et al., 2013). In the confines of an organization, traits influence the relationship between leaders and followers, subordinate fit with leadership style, leadership effectiveness, and the style of a leader (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011; Songbo et al., 2013).

Organizational cultures replicate the leadership style implemented within an organization (Rahmati et al., 2012). Holt and Marques (2012) established a positive correlation between leadership style and traits. Learning cultures reflect the style of the leader. Learning organizations are workplaces in which leaders instill a culture that endorses trust and employees create innovative solutions to promote competitive advantage (Balay, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the LOS was the quantitative measurement instrument incorporated to evaluate the learning organizational culture for each of the respondent's workplaces.

The purpose of this study was to determine the significance of leader traits in establishing and sustaining a learning organizational culture, which may increase organizational efficiency and profitability. Data regarding the significance of the

proposed relationship will be interpreted by academics, and implemented by professional practitioners to enhance Alberta's position as a world leader in the oil and gas industry. At the core of the study was determination of the leader traits that stimulate learning organization cultures.

## Role of the Researcher

To perform this quantitative study, I gathered and analyzed data via close-ended, Likert-type surveys and applied multiple regression analysis to establish a correlation between leader traits and the varying degrees of learning organization culture. Data retrieved for the study was retrieved through online surveys. In this quantitative study, I statistically translate the data regarding the leader traits and leader effectiveness to establish and sustain a learning organization culture, from a numerical representation. Analysis of previous research performed for this study supported the ideology that leader traits correlate with the dependent variable of learning organization culture.

The FFM categorizes leader traits into five domains. Each of the five domains, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness, act as correlated independent variables (predictor variables) with the dependent variable of learning organization culture. The degree of covariance among the correlated independent variables was used to analyze the relationships proposed in the study hypotheses. Results of the statistical analysis delineate the significance of the correlation among the independent and dependent variables.

My role as a researcher aligns with standardized academic protocols established by Walden University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 06-23-15-0184965. Aligning with established IRB protocols ensure that the method, analysis, and conclusions are valid and reliable. Validity and reliability assure that measurement tools and data analysis conform to the established intent for the study of analyzing and interpreting the degree of correlation between learning traits and learning organization culture. Instilling IRB protocols and incorporating valid and reliable assessment tools assist in eliminating the bias of the researcher, which can affect the measurement, interpretation, and characterization of the variables and their relationship. In an attempt to avoid bias, I incorporated systematic controls established by the IRB and Walden University for statistical analysis techniques designed for achieving the reliable and valid correlation of the variables.

I had no prior relationship with the study participants; however, I have experience in Alberta's oil and gas industry, and leadership roles and an academic background in organizational psychology. Although these experiences could influence the interpretation of the study results, quantitative research, Walden University, and IRB practices help to mitigate these effects by establishing paradigms of expectations and procedures for complying with scientific research protocol.

## Participants

This research study analyzed participants employed in Alberta's oil and gas industry. Research participants were employees subject to directions for business

operations and under the supervision of an individual employed at a superior level in the

organizational power hierarchy. Although predetermining the functions and roles of all

employees in the oil and gas industry is impossible, this study applied specified

limitations regarding participant eligibility to standardize the respondent group. Members

of Alberta's oil and gas industry functioning as CEOs, CFOs, COOs, presidents, vice

presidents, or members of the Board of Directors were not permitted to participate in the

study because of their roles as senior executives or as corporate decision makers. Aubert

and Bourdeau (2012) declared centralized corporations followed an established set of

rules determined by decisions made at the upper levels of the corporate hierarchy.

In 2012, Alberta's oil and gas sector consisted of an estimated 108,000 employees

(Government of Alberta, n.d.). The government webpage did not provide the number of

employees meeting the criteria for the study participation so sample size was determined

on an approximate total population of 108,000. Minimum sample size for multiple

regression analysis was determined via the mathematical equation of $50+8(m)$ where m is

the number of predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). The five classifications of

traits documented in the FFM were the predictor variables for this study; therefore,

minimum sample size is 90.

To arrange for potential respondents, I visited diverse corporate offices of oil and

gas companies and made contact with the personnel responsible for responding to

academic study participation requests. I shared a synopsis of the purpose for the study

and the ethical parameters for conducting the study. If the company agreed to participate

in the study, we agreed to exchange emails regarding the ongoing status of the study. Each company assigned an authorized person to act as a liaison for emailing the online survey link to potential respondents aligning with the ethical expectations of the study.

Potential participants received an invitation to participate via a letter under my signature along with my credentials and the purpose for the study. Because the sampling was potentially from the entire province of Alberta, I did not expect direct face-to-face contact with respondents; however, I was willing to arrange direct interaction if requested. The letter of invitation included instructions to access and complete the online survey, the purpose of the study, and the ethical responsibility of the researcher regarding confidentiality.

In the letter of invitation, I informed potential respondents that the purpose of the study was to augment business strategies regarding employee and organizational development. Also, in the invitation to participate letter I informed the potential respondents that the survey was voluntary and allowed them to opt out at any time without reprisal from management. The prescribed letter clarified that participants receive no special benefits from partaking in the study.

I outlined the details regarding the anonymity of participant responses, nondisclosure of individual results to management, and the securing of the results within my possession for 5 years in the letter of introduction. A summary of the results attained from the study is available to Alberta's oil and gas industry leaders and accessible by participants. Consent was implied regarding the acceptance of the parameters for the

study established in the letter of invitation via completion of the online survey. In the consent to participate form, I detailed the confidentiality parameters incorporated into the study.

Vance, Talley, Azuero, Pearce, and Christian (2013) contended that quantitative research instills statistics to generalize about an aspect of a population for the development or testing of a theory. Probability sampling is the best method for generalizing results (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). Specifically, various researchers have proven that simple random sampling (SRS) has the characteristics associated with systematic academic quantitative research (Acharya et al., 2013; Aggarwal, 2011). Simple random sampling provides an equal opportunity for all potential participants to access the study (Acharya et al., 2013).

Rouquette and Falissard (2011) established that incorporating the largest sample size possible supports valid and reliable data. The significance of sample size detailed by Rouquette and Falissard aligns with Delice (2010), asserting that correct sampling is necessary for effective data analysis and interpretation. In correlational quantitative research, a large sample size results in less ambiguity, minimized measurement error, and decreased statistical variation (Gerring, 2011). Based on the approximated population of 108,000 employees in Alberta's oil and gas industry, a confidence level of 0.95, and a confidence interval of 0.05, the minimum sample size for this study must be 90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). A response rate of approximately 30-40% is common in similar studies; therefore, the sample frame of respondents was 300 to ensure the required

respondents of 90. The expected response rate necessitates that the sample size be increased from the statistically garnered sample size (McCrum-Gardner, 2010). In an attempt to alleviate insufficient sample respondents, the sample size was increased to 100 to warrant achieving the minimum sample size of 90.

## Research Method and Design

Learning organizations continue to evolve and promote competitive advantage in a globalizing economy. Leaders in learning organizations remove structural barriers to ongoing learning, empower all vested members, and evaluate and adapt based on feedback from external and internal forces (Som et al., 2011). An organization's ability to adapt more effectively than its competitors provides learning organizations with the only competitive advantage quality considered sustainable in the long term (Som et al., 2011). Leaders are critical components of developing and sustaining a learning organization culture. The method and design for this study must provide reliable and valid responses to the central research question regarding the relationship between leader traits and leadership effectiveness in developing and sustaining learning organization culture.

### Method

Research method is a systematic approach of formulating a hypothesis, collecting and analyzing data, and developing conclusions to the research problem (Aggarwal, 2011). Badiger and Sharanappa Kurne (2013) defined business research as a systematic inquiry to establish facts and detail conclusions to augment business practices. Purty

(2011) stated that the selection of a research method depends on the research question as well as internal and external conditions such as validity and ethics.

Nonexperimental studies occur in natural settings; they are not limited by the application of treatments or preventions, and the results are applicable to practical scenarios (Purty, 2011). Badiger and Sharanappa Kurne (2013) argued that producing knowledge that is applicable in practical situations is critical in research. In addition, experimental studies are infeasible because of constraints such as participant enrollment, costs, ethical issues, and difficulty in applying the results to practical scenarios (Purty, 2011). Augmenting business practice is the basis for this study. For these reasons, incorporating a nonexperimental method was appropriate for this study.

The central research question for this study compelled a correlational numerical relationship between leader traits and learning organization culture. Slevitch (2011) supported the implementation of a quantitative correlational method for this study by claiming that a benefit of quantitative survey design is that it provides a numeric description of the generalized attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of respondents that researchers can use to delineate fact from quantitative value. Masue et al. (2013) established that quantitative studies contribute a numerical interpretation of a specified relationship rather than attempt to establish an explanation of the data. Each method of research is subject to bias, but quintessential is ensuring that bias is not deterministic in the conclusions (Hodkinson & Macleod, 2010). The rigors of quantitative research promote reproducible results with less ambiguity and limited deterministic bias

(Allwood, 2012; Masue et al., 2013; Simonson, 2005). Gerring (2011) explained that the choice of a research method must provide the best process for collecting data, and the interpretation of the data relates to the central research question. Correlational studies oblige the implementation of quantitative research.

This quantitative study incorporated a cross-sectional inquiry to analyze the correlation of the prescribed variables of the population at a single point in time (Purty, 2011). A primary advantage of cross-sectional study is that the results accumulated from a sample of the general population are generalizable and replicable (Purty, 2011). Replicable results confirm the internal and external validity of results (Duvendack & Palmer-Jones 2013; Gerring, 2011). Ambiguous results, not supported by empirical analysis, are not replicable and not the result of standardized systematic research (Gerring, 2011). Duvendack and Palmer-Jones proclaimed that replicable results augment understanding and promote better business practices.

A nonexperimental, cross-section quantitative research method was the preeminent style for providing valid and reliable data pertaining to the central research question of this study. The generalizability and practical applicability of quantitative research aligns with Walden University's guidelines for dissertation studies. In addition to Walden's expectations, quantitative research provides opportunity for augmenting current business practices and positive social change.

**Research Design**

The research approach incorporated was a postpositivist worldview using quantitative methods. Quantitative research, focused on the central research question, assesses the correlation of leader traits and learning organizational culture. I implemented close-ended, Likert-type scale surveys to provide results applicable to the resolution of the research question using a Pearson's correlation.

Hodkinson and Macleod (2010) explained that a primary advantage of survey research is the ability to provide empirical descriptions related to a population and thus influence positive social change. The data attained via systematic survey research and corresponding to the study's central research question allow academia and professional practitioners to accept the results as judicious conclusions (Badiger & Sharanappa Kurne, 2013). Systematic and valid quantitative research that delineates and justifies the statistical procedures incorporated aligns with scientifically acceptable protocol (Armstrong, Davies, Dunne, & Gilmartin, 2011). Surveys augment the credibility of scientific research by using standardized questions that enhance consistency and precision assessment across all participants (Hodkinson & Macleod 2010). Hodkinson and Macleod further their perspective regarding surveys and scientific credibility by stating that expanding on previous research theory requires the operationalization and quantification of survey data to gain profound understanding.

Data interpretation from the prescribed survey results consisted of multivariate statistical analysis of the leader's traits and each of the individual categories of the FFM

with the learning organization culture. Multiple regression analysis establishes the psychometric reliability and validity of the measurement tools incorporated to assess the correlation between leader traits and learning organization culture. Quantitative studies incorporating multivariate statistical analysis appeared predominant throughout reviews of literature related to leader traits and leadership effectiveness for learning organization culture.

Nonexperimental and quantitative research provided the data desired for the central research question. Nonexperimental design incorporates no control over randomization, treatments, or interventions. Qualitative method strategies do not numerically assess the desired correlation of leadership effectiveness and leader traits. Ethnography, grounded theory, and case studies involve prolonged time periods and multiple stages of data collection. Longitudinal studies permit the observation of changes over an extended period. This study was a cross-section research design assessing the hypothesized correlation during a specified point in time. Quantitative research methods provide numeric descriptions of a population by studying a sample of the population while allowing a degree of generalization, within the random sample, to test the hypothesized correlation.

**Population and Sampling**

According to Acharya et al. (2013), generating valid interpretations from research requires systematic and detailed sampling following established scientific protocols. Aggarwal (2011) furthered this inference by establishing that the method of sampling and

the appropriate sample size is an essential component of quality research studies. The representativeness of the chosen sample is critical for ensuring the validity of results and conclusions garnered by an author (Gerring, 2011). Validity of research establishes that the study measures the desired scope and represents data related to the central purpose of the study (Badiger & Sharanappa Kurne, 2013). Random sampling provides the greatest degree of representativeness (Acharya et al., 2013; Aggarwal, 2011).

Vance et al. (2013) proclaimed that quantitative research's objective is to generalize resultant relationships of variables in a correlational study from a sample to a population. Probability sampling, in which each individual in the population has an equal opportunity for participating in the sample, provides optimum generalizability and representativeness in academic research (Acharya et al., 2011). This study incorporated SRS because the population and sample size were numerous, and little detail was known regarding the participants. Simple random sampling augments external and internal validity, and it simplifies data for a quantitative correlational study (Acharya et al., 2011). Delice (2010) extended this proposition by maintaining that SRS limits the degree of bias incorporated in the results of the study. Simple random sampling promotes worthy research by limiting bias while increasing the level of validity and reliability (Gerring, 2011).

Selecting the proper sample size correlates with the purpose of the study, population, data analysis method, sample size in similar research, and parameters established within the research (Delice, 2010). Samples need to be representative of the

population and aligned with the data analysis techniques; each member of the sample must be independent yet comparable in the guidelines for sample inclusion and large enough to establish a correlation between the variables (Gerring, 2011).

Eligible participants for this study must have been employed in a sector of Alberta's oil and gas industry and been accountable to an organizational supervisor. Members of Alberta's oil and gas industry functioning as CEOs, CFOs, COOs, presidents, vice presidents, or members of the Board of Directors were ineligible. In 2012, Alberta's oil and gas sector consisted of an estimated 108,000 employees (Government of Alberta, n.d.). Because the demographics regarding the role for each employee were not provided, this study considered the total population of 108,000 for generalizability purposes.

The mathematical formula 50+8(m), where m is the number of predictor variables, governs the desired minimum sample size for multiple regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). Results from the prescribed formula while incorporating a value of m=5, where 5 is the number of categories of traits in the FFM, equalled a minimum sample size of 90. The expected return rate for the study was 30-40%. A sample frame of 300 potential respondents was invited to participate to ensure the sample size consisted of 100 respondents alleviating issues of incongruence with study paradigms.

Attaining the sample of 100 respondents was a collaborative effort with a designated representative from each participating company. The designated

representative was assigned by the corporate decision maker approving participation in the study. After sharing the purpose and ethical responsibilities for the study in a face to face meeting with the company representative, the participating company's representative became a liaison for implementing the study. The liaison was informed of the study progress and their expected role during the process. At the time of implementing the survey, the liaison sent an email entailing the survey link to potential respondents. The letter of introduction and invitation to participate were detailed in the survey link. Respondents completing the survey were considered to have implied their consent. In representing their company, the liaison was expected to comply with the established IRB research and ethical protocols.

## Ethical Research

Ethical research supports the objective of the study and promotes values such as accountability and responsibility among vested members (Badiger & Sharanappa Kurne, 2013). This study's ethical principles aligned with the ethical principles of psychology, social research, and the related code of conduct (American Psychological Association, 2010). Each potential respondent in the study received a description of the purpose of the study verified by the designated proctor of the study. The description of the study purpose delineated my identification and the method for sample selection. Gerring (2011) noted that the validity and reliability of results attained in research relied on the transparency of the research method in addition to statistical analysis. Armstrong et al.

(2011) furthered this notion by stating that the researcher is responsible for justifying each stage of the analysis process in quantitative studies.

Respondents received no rewards or punitive actions for participating or refusing to participate. The guidelines of the study allowed potential candidates to withdraw from the study via non participation, failing to answer questions, or not submitting completed surveys. Participants, survey submissions, and individual results remained anonymous. My contact information was available to the population sample for clarification and response to inquiries.

All data, which I own, are protection encrypted for confidentiality and will be kept safe for 5 years on completion of the research. After 5 years, hard copy data will be shredded and disposed, and encrypted data will be deleted via a computer overwrite program. Respondents accessing the electronic survey consented to participating in the study. Failures to complete, submit, or participate in the study resulted in non-participation.

## Data Collection

Data collection consists of the instruments incorporated to access data, techniques for collecting data, data organization procedures, and data analysis method. In an attempt to garner data regarding the research question, data collection for this study consisted of two surveys. Throughout this section, I detail the reliability and validity of the infused assessment tools.

**Instruments**

Both of the surveys incorporated into the research has an academic history of presenting reliable and valid results in academic research. Publishers or authors provided permission for incorporating the surveys in this study. This section details general information related to surveys as well as detailed information for each of the surveys used.

**General information**

The LOS and NEO-FFI-3 implemented for this study incorporate Likert-type scales to generate numeric data regarding leader traits and the degree of learning organization culture. No modification of either survey was necessary for this study because past results interpreted by researchers implementing these studies demonstrated the ability to align and surpass the rigor established for scientific research. The history of the two studies in academic research ensures reliability and validity of results. Descriptive statistics, tables, and other analyses from the study are available in Section 3 of this paper.

SurveyMonkey® (SurveyMonkey®, n.d.) acted as the online agent presenting the two surveys to participants. Potential respondents received a letter of invitation providing the survey link via email from a corporate representative acting as a liaison for implementing the study. The letter of invitation included the purpose for the study, instructions for accessing the study, ethical and privacy details, specifics regarding participation and opting out, and contact information if participants had questions.

**Learning Organization Survey (LOS).**

The LOS (see Appendix A) is a self-assessment tool designed by Garvin et al. (2008) to assess the learning organization culture of an organization or parts of an organization. Core to the LOS is the applicability of comparison among an organization's departments, between organizations, and against academically established benchmarks (Garvin et al., 2008). In sections one and two, participants respond by rating the degree, based on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from highly inaccurate to highly accurate, that each statement describes the learning organization culture in their workplace. In section three, respondents rate the degree that leadership reinforces learning based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from never to always. Additionally, participants assess the frequency the organization's leaders portray learning organization culture behaviors (Garvin et al., 2008). Totals for each of the LOS surveys completed by the respondents was tallied by me and categorized in accordance with the survey mandate.

Scoring for the survey entailed synthesizing participants' responses with a 0-100 scale to simplify direct comparisons (Garvin et al., 2008). Comparisons consisted of analyzing results attained via the synthesized score to the preestablished benchmark scores on an individual basis or an average of a department or organizations' scores (Garvin et al., 2008). The LOS quantifies benchmark data into quartiles based on median scores (Garvin et al., 2008). Upon completion of the online survey, data was tallied and categorized by me for statistical analysis purposes.

Garvin et al. (2008) gathered the data for establishing the benchmarks over two different surveys of two different focus groups in 2006. The first group consisted of 100 senior executives from diverse industries enrolled in a management program at a prominent U.S. Ivy League university (Garvin et al., 2008). The second focus group measured via survey within the same year consisted of 125 executives (Garvin et al., 2008). Acceptance of the learning organization concept stems from research on the topic and its applicability to diverse industries (Singer, Moore, Meterko, & Williams, 2012). The research performed by Garvin et al. (2008) established benchmarks for comparative analysis of a learning organization culture. The availability of the benchmarks within the LOS established through scientific research appeals to industry and academia (Singer et al., 2012).

Singer et al. (2012) established a shortened version of the original LOS to reduce the completion time for their study. In preparation for their modification of the original LOS, Singer et al. (2012) proclaimed the original LOS was accepted as valid and reliable despite assessments of the psychometric properties was limited and unpublished. Furthering the validity and reliability of the LOS required Singer et al. (2012) to perform field-testing and statistical analysis. Singer et al. (2012) established that the shortened version of the LOS aligned with the paradigms of academic acceptance for statistical validity and the 0.70 reliability factor of the original LOS.

Edmondson, Garvin, and Gino (2013) established the reliability and validity of the LOS via two stages of field-testing followed by additional modifications and field-

tests until they attained scientific degrees of acceptance. The resultant complete version of the LOS reliability derived through Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.795─0.947 (Edmondson et al., 2013). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was implemented to determine the validity. All items assessed were greater than the desired result of 0.40, while the goodness of fit was 0.93 (Edmondson et al., 2013). Additional statistical analysis was interpreted by the authors as demonstrating significant correlational coefficients with a confidence level of 0.01 equating to adequate discriminate validity and a high degree of convergent validity (Edmondson et al., 2013).

Section 1 of the LOS focuses on the supportive learning environment within the organization. A supportive learning environment includes the respondent's perspectives regarding psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas, and time for reflection in the organization. Each of these assessed characteristics for supportive learning environment qualities is further broken down into subcomponents.

Section 2 of the LOS gauges the respondents' perception of characteristics of concrete learning processes and practices incorporated within their organization. Concrete learning processes and practices include experimentation, information collection, analysis, education and training, and information transfer. The LOS evaluates each of the prescribed factions for concrete learning processes and practices by assessing characteristics associated with the factions.

The final section of the LOS has the respondents appraise their perception of the degree that their leadership reinforces learning. Leadership that reinforces learning

assesses qualities aligned with characteristics common for learning organization cultures. This section of the LOS applies to the respondent's perception of their direct supervisors and the organization's leadership team.

**NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI-3)**

The NEO-FFI-3 (see Appendix A) was developed by Costa and McCrae (2010) as a revision of NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). The NEO-FFI-3 is a 60− item shortened version of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). The purpose of the NEO-FFI-3 is to assess adult personality based on the FFM. The NEO-FFI-3 is a dual-purpose personality measurement tool applicable for self-assessment or interpreting the observational perspectives' of others. Appraisal for each of the big five personality domains−categorized as neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness to experience (O), agreeableness (A), and conscientiousness (C)− occurs via 12 specialized items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Rossellini & Brown, 2011).

Historically, the reliability for the domains and facets of the NEO FFI has been excellent. Reliability of the domains ranges from 0.86 to 0.95, whereas the reliability of the facets ranges from 0.56 to 0.90. The NEO-FFI demonstrated short-term test reliability and the previous versions of the NEO-PI confirmed long-term test reliability. Various studies and comparisons with historically proven research establish the validity of the NEO-FFI (Maples, Guan, Carter, & Miller, 2014). Additionally, the study incorporates a validity check to weigh honesty and accuracy in the responses supplied by participants.

However, the newer facets for assessing conscientiousness and agreeableness do not have the historically supported validity of the other facets of the survey.

**Hypotheses**

Data collection focuses around the central research question and understanding the hypotheses. Response to the central research question established in Section 1 required the development of two hypotheses. Leader traits as categorized in the FFM, in combination and individually, were the independent variables, and the learning organization culture was the dependent variable. Each of the five trait classifications of the FFM associated with the leader was correlated with the learning organization culture (see Hypothesis 2). Composite results of leader traits were correlated with composite learning organization culture (see Hypothesis 1). Each of the prescribed hypotheses is provided below.

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant relationship between leader traits as categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_a$1: There is a statistically significant relationship between leader traits as categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_0$2: There is no statistically significant relationship between the individualized categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

$H_a$2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the individualized categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

**Data Collection Technique**

A corporate liaison acted as the study designate sent an email to all potential respondents providing details regarding the purpose of the study, researcher contact information, participant anonymity, and ethical parameters. A link to the survey webpage for the company was provided. The survey was administered online through a third party, SurveyMonkey®. Appendix A includes copies of the surveys implemented for the study.

I paid for administration costs for the implementation and analysis of the surveys. Participants were allotted a time span of 8 weeks to complete and submit their responses. Weekly communication between the corporate liaison and me was ongoing throughout the duration of the allotted eight-week time span. A reminder email was sent to the participants via the corporate representative six weeks into the allotted time. In the event the required 100 participants were not achieved during the 8 weeks, the study time was extended to 12 weeks, and the geographical area of potential respondents expanded into Alberta's larger metropolitan areas.

**Data Organization Techniques**

Data collection and summarization was accomplished via an online third party survey administration service, namely SurveyMonkey®. Notes and logs were recorded in a journal upon initial contact of potential respondents. Correspondence and face-to-face meetings with vested members of the study were detailed as log entries. New ideas or issues arising were recorded in print format in the journal and transferred to an electronic source as a backup. Survey data was encrypted and will be maintained in storage for 5

years, aligning with IRB safety guidelines as well as acting as a source of data in the

event questions regarding the study arise. Incidental data and all data first established in

the paper-pen format was shred to guarantee confidentiality and ethical research

protocols were maintained. Individual data collected and aggregated via SurveyMonkey®

remain anonymous.

## Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis addresses the proposed hypotheses. Software implemented was

IBM SPSS 23 for all statistical analysis. I determined inferential statistical analysis based

on an alpha level of 0.05. The data analysis was displayed in tables and charts as well as

supplemental explanatory information. Readers can judge the rigor and draw their own

conclusions from the statistics and provided $p$-value. I provide the results of hypotheses

testing in the form of rejection or failure to reject the null hypothesis and the occurrence

of statistical errors. Professional statisticians provided confirmation of data analysis and

statistical accuracy. Appendix A consists of the survey questions.

Initially, preliminary and descriptive analysis was performed. This included

descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages) for the demographic and background

characteristics of the respondents including age, gender, and tenure with the organization.

Descriptive statistics present data to assist the reader's understanding about the sample

incorporated for the study and stimulate the reader to think further while generating

personal inferences regarding the study.

The LOS consists of 55 survey questions. In sections one and two, participants respond by rating the degree, based on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from highly inaccurate to highly accurate, that each statement describes the learning organization culture in their workplace. In section three, respondents rate the degree that leadership reinforces learning based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from never to always. The expected completion time for the survey is 10−15 minutes. On completion of the survey, the LOS scaled scores of the composite building blocks, as well as their prescribed subcomponents for a learning organization culture was assessed by me for statistical analysis regarding the significance of correlation with leader traits. For comparison purposes, the LOS provides the benchmark scores established by Garvin et al. (2008). Benchmark scores allow the respondent the ability to parallel his or her workplace learning organization culture components with the benchmarks established via field-testing. The LOS presents the benchmark scores in quartiles with the median score also delineated for each composite building block and subcomponent.

For analysis purposes, this study focused on the composite score for each building block. The aggregate learning culture of the organization was determined by averaging the three composite scores from each respondent. Descriptive statistics such as standard deviation and variance is provided for the prescribed scores incorporated to determine the means for the composite scores. I determined the benchmarks for the learning organization culture by averaging the composite scores for each quartile benchmark provided within the LOS. The benchmark median is the average of the composite

medians provided within the LOS. Respondent's mean scores for the three composite scores are the numerical representation of the aggregate score for the organization's level of learning organization culture.

The Neo-FFI-3 is a 60-item trait assessment tool that incorporates a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to assess the five domains of traits categorized in the FFM. Estimated time for completion is 10−15 minutes. This study implemented the adult version (aged 17+ years) observer rating (Form R) assessment tool to assess the traits of the respondent's leaders (see Appendix A). Each respondent's survey score is presented as domain levels and a strength-based score of very high, high, average, low, or very low for each prescribed domain. Facet and domain scores are reported as *t*-scores for comparison with preestablished norms of measurement for traits.

Leader traits were based on the degree of significance for each of the five factors. Individual classification of traits were coded according to the standardized coding method incorporated for the FFM (O=Openness to Experience; C=Conscientiousness; E=Extraversion; A= Agreeableness; N=Neuroticism). Additionally, each of the five classifications of traits as established by the FFM were averaged. The mean average is the numerical representation for each trait category. Descriptive statistics including standard deviation and variance were calculated and presented for the individual classifications and leader traits.

Researchers implement and interpret Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables (Benard, Jagero, Kevin, & Ronald, 2013). Pearson's correlation was the statistical analysis technique incorporated for this study in response to the central research question and hypotheses. The variables correlated for this study include the traits of leaders and the learning organization culture with each trait category correlated with the mean value for the learning organization culture.

Multiple linear regression was instilled for this study. Researchers incorporate multiple linear regression in a quantitative study to assess the effect of various explanatory variables on the response variable (Bonellie, 2012). I used multiple linear regression to assess the relationship among each of the five trait categories and the three composite building blocks for a learning organization.

**Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity ensure that research meets a criterion of expected quality in social science research (Uronu Lameck, 2013). Reliability is the degree of consistency that a psychometric assessment tool results in consistent data from the same respondents regardless of the time of implementation (Said, Badru, & Shahid, 2011). Validity is the measure of consistency in a psychometric measurement tool to measure the desired intentions of the study (Said et al., 2011). The results attained by social science researchers that align with scientific and academia parameters for reliability and validity

are generalizable to a population and realistic tests of existing theory (Uronu Lameck, 2013).

This study combined two surveys previously implemented into one instrument, with no modifications to the original survey instruments, to collect data regarding traits in leaders and learning organization culture. Both psychometric assessment tools, the NEO-FFI-3 and LOS, incorporated for this study have academic and scientific support regarding their rigor for reliability and validity as detailed previously in Section 2.

**Reliability**

Cronbach's alpha (coefficient alpha) provides an estimate of a psychometric research tool's internal consistency (Connelly, 2011). Internal consistency is the degree to which all the survey items measure the same characteristics (Connelly, 2011). Cronbach's alpha focuses on the correlation of the items in a psychometric assessment tool (Connelly, 2011). The greater the degree of correlation among the test items equals the greater the internal consistency reliability (Kline, 2010). If the Cronbach's alpha is a perfect correlation among the test items, measurement error can be the unreliable error of the responding cohorts (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Both of the surveys implemented for this study have historical academic support confirming their internal reliability.

In addition to Cronbach's alpha, test/retest is a useful tool for determining the reliability of a psychometric assessment tool (Trochim, 2006). Test/retest is accomplished by giving the test item to the same respondent under the same conditions and determining

the sameness of the scores (Trochim, 2006). Test/retest was not a viable reliability test for this study because the survey was completed at only one point-in-time.

**Validity**

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical analysis technique for determining the degree of model fit to the data (Kline, 2010). Enacting CFA enables the researcher to evaluate the relationship between the observed variables and the latent constructs (Kline, 2010). Confirmatory factor analysis occurs after the collection of data is complete (Said et al., 2011). Researchers performing CFA statistical assessments after the implementation of the LOS and NEO FFI-3 delineate that both surveys align with the rigors of scientific research.

Trochim (2006) identifies four significant areas of validity in the research process; (a) conclusion validity, (b) internal validity, (c) construct validity, and (d) external validity. Conclusion validity relates to the relationship between variables; internal validity relates to the claim of causality; construct validity relates to the concern of measuring the intent of what was desired to be measured; and external validity relates to the ability to generalize the results to other groups (Trochim, 2006). Each validity area must be evaluated in social science research. Validity is essential for academic research. If a study lacks validity, the psychometric measurement tool does not measure desired concept, which makes the study immaterial (Trochim, 2006).

In preparation for implementing an academically acceptable study, I needed to anticipate potential threats to the validity of the study and develop safeguards to alleviate

the potential validity threats. Following the paradigms of academic research and incorporating historically reliable assessment tools deters a threat to conclusion validity. Internal validity was not a concern for this study as the study focused on correlation and not causation. Internal validity is only a factor in research dedicated to causation (Trochim, 2006). In an attempt to reduce construct validity, I aligned procedures with the rigor of academic study paradigms by using historically proven surveys and providing detailed participation procedures. To avoid threats to the external validity and promote generalizability of the results, I incorporated random sampling from diverse demographics within Alberta's oil and gas industry.

Prior researchers, identified via the literature review, indicated that the reliability and validity of the two surveys implemented for this study varied, but the data supported that the reliability and validity is at a value acceptable for social science research. In addition to the prior academic support of the validity and reliability of the instruments, on completion of the data collection, I measured and reported the reliability and validity of the two instruments in Section 3.

## Transition and Summary

The objective of section 2 is to define the details of the chosen research method and design for the study. Section 2 includes the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, sampling methods, accessing the population, and ethical safeguards for the respondents. I also detailed data collection techniques; instruments and organization; and reliability and validity. Once completed, the analysis is expected to define a clear

correlation to support either the hypotheses or null hypotheses of a relationship existing between leader personality traits and learning organization culture.

In Section 3, the results and conclusions are presented with the support of diverse statistical analysis techniques. The applicability of the results to practical business scenarios and the implications for positive social change is clarified. Recommendations for future study are offered. Details regarding my experiences during the research process; including possible bias, preconceived ideas and values, potential effects of me on the participants or situations, and changes in my bias and thinking are provided throughout section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

**Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to measure the relationship between a leader's traits, as defined by the five-factor model, and the degree of learning organization culture present under his or her leadership in the specific context of Alberta's oil and gas industry. The study extends the trait theory that compares traits and organizational health. Trait data were attained in accordance with the FFM via the NEO-Five Factor Inventory-3 (NEO-FFI-3) (Costa & McCrae, 2010), and learning organization culture data was compiled via the Learning Organization Survey (LOS) (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008). This study assessed the significance of the suggested relationship via two academically-ratified surveys incorporating Likert-type scales, followed by data analysis using Pearson's correlation. The independent variables were the leader traits and the dependent variable was the degree of learning organization culture, based on a preestablished scale of 0-100. Participants were determined through simple random sampling from Alberta's oil and gas industry.

This section presents the results of the data analysis methods following the collection and organization of the data. Simple Linear Regression and Multiple Regression models were used to examine the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization culture. Prior to discussing the results of the statistical

tests, descriptive statistics of the demographic variables of the participants were

presented, followed by a report of the study variables.

**Presentation of the Findings**

The following hypotheses were used to guide the statistical analyses, to examine

the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within

Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization

culture. The overall question was: is there a correlation between the five-factor model

traits and the existence of learning organization culture?

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant relationship between leader traits as

categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_a 1$: There is a statistically significant relationship between leader traits as

categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture.

$H_0 2$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the individualized

categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

$H_a 2$: There is a statistically significant relationship between the individualized

categories of the five-factor model of traits in leaders and learning organizational culture.

To tests these hypotheses, I used Simple Linear Regression and Multiple

Regression models to assess the relationship and predictability between leader traits and

learning organizational culture. I used Simple Linear Regressions for the first hypothesis,

where each of the leader traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness,

Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) was used as an independent variable, and

the degree of learning organizational culture based on a scale of 0-100, was the dependent variable. Multiple Regression models were run for the second hypothesis, where all of the leader traits were used as independent variables, and learning organizational culture (LOC), along with 3 LOC sub scores, were used as dependent variables. Each regression model was followed by tests of normality and linearity assumptions, as well as multicollinearity assessments for multiple regression models. All parameter estimates from the regression models were bootstrapped using 999 samples. Before giving the results of the analyses, descriptives of the demographics and study variables were given.

Table 2 shows a summary of gender, age, and tenure among the 52 study participants. A majority of the participants were *male* (80.8%, $n = 42$), with 19.2% ($n = 10$) *female*. For age groups, 32.7% ($n = 17$) were aged *18 – 25 years old*, 23.1% ($n = 12$) aged *26 – 35*, 17.3% ($n = 9$) aged *36 – 45*, and 26.9% ($n = 14$) were *over 45 years of age*. Regarding tenure with the organization, 55.8% ($n = 29$) have 0 – 5 years, 30.8% ($n = 16$) with 6 – 15 years, 5.8% ($n = 3$) with 16 – 25, and 7.7% ($n = 4$) with 25 or more years.

Table 2

*Summary of Demographics (n = 52)*

|  | *N* | *Percent* |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Female | 10 | 19.2 |
| Male | 42 | 80.8 |
| | | |
| **Age** | | |
| 18 – 25 years old | 17 | 32.7 |
| 26 – 35 years old | 12 | 23.1 |
| 36 – 45 years old | 9 | 17.3 |
| 45+ years old | 14 | 26.9 |
| | | |
| **Tenure** | | |
| 0 – 5 years | 29 | 55.8 |
| 6 – 15 years | 16 | 30.8 |
| 16 – 25 years | 3 | 5.8 |
| 25+ years | 4 | 7.7 |

Table 3 summarizes the dependent and independent variables used for analysis.

Overall LOC ranged from 39 – 93, with an average of 67.6 ($SD = 11.8$). All three of the

LOC sub scores were similar to the overall LOC, with average Learning Culture and

Learning Environment being 70.1 ($SD = 13.2$), average Leadership was 65.1 ($SD = 14.8$),

and average Learning Processes was 67.7 ($SD = 10.7$). For the independent variables,

Openness to Experience ranged from 14 – 35, with an average of 25.0 ($SD = 4.2$).

Conscientiousness ranged from 16 – 48, with an average of 33.8 ($SD = 7.0$). Extraversion

ranged from 18 – 41, with an average of 31.7 ($SD = 4.9$). Agreeableness ranged from 14

– 43, with an average of 27.4 ($SD = 6.7$). Neuroticism ranged from 4 – 30, with an

average of 18.5 (*SD* = 5.5). Overall, there was less variability among the independent

variables than the dependent variables.

Table 3

*Summary of Study Variables*

|  | n | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent Variables** | | | | | |
| Overall LOC | 52 | 67.6 | 11.8 | 39 | 93 |
| LOC Sub1 – Learning Culture & Learning Environment | 52 | 70.1 | 13.2 | 30 | 97 |
| LOC Sub1 – Leadership | 52 | 65.1 | 14.8 | 33 | 95 |
| LOC Sub1 – Learning Processes | 52 | 67.7 | 10.7 | 47 | 94 |
| | | | | | |
| **Independent Variables** | | | | | |
| Openness to Experience | 52 | 25.0 | 4.2 | 14 | 35 |
| Conscientiousness | 52 | 33.8 | 7.0 | 16 | 48 |
| Extraversion | 52 | 31.7 | 4.9 | 18 | 41 |
| Agreeableness | 52 | 27.4 | 6.7 | 14 | 43 |
| Neuroticism | 52 | 18.5 | 5.5 | 4 | 30 |

Cronbach's Alpha was observed to assess the reliability of the scores that make

up the dependent and independent variables used for analysis. Overall LOC used items 61

through 115, where items 62, 65, 67, 68, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 85, 87, and 105 were

reverse scored ($\alpha$ = 0.95). For the LOC sub scores, Learning Culture and Learning

Environment used items 61 – 78 ($\alpha$ = 0.82), Leadership used items 98 – 105 ($\alpha$ = 0.88),

and Learning Processes used items 79 – 97, and 106 – 115 ($\alpha$ = 0.92). All sub scores used

the mentioned reverse scoring as well. All dependent variables were found to be highly

reliable with alpha values ranging from 0.82 to 0.95. For the independent variables,

Openness to Experience used items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38, 43, 48, 53, 58, reversing

items 18, 23, 28, 33, 48 ($\alpha = 0.66$). Conscientiousness used items 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, reversing items 15, 30, 45, 55 ($\alpha = 0.83$). Extraversion used items 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, 42, 47, 52, 57, reversing items 12, 27, 42, 57 ($\alpha = 0.77$). Agreeableness used items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39, 44, 49, 54, 59, reversing items 9, 14, 19, 24, 39, 44, 54, 59 ($\alpha = 0.88$). And Neuroticism used items 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 56, reversing items 1, 16, 31, 46 ($\alpha = 0.76$). All independent variables were found to be moderately to highly reliable with alpha values ranging from 0.66 to 0.88.

For hypothesis one, Table 4 shows the results of the simple linear regressions, with each of the leader traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) used as independent variables, and the degree of learning organizational culture based on a scale of 0-100, as the dependent variable. Results showed that all of the leader traits were significantly associated with learning organizational culture. Individually, the five leader traits explained 20 – 34% of the variability in LOC scores ($R^2$ values ranged from 0.20 for Conscientiousness to 0.34 for Neuroticism). Estimates for Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness were positive ($\beta = 1.43$, 0.74, 1.18, and 0.78, respectively, all $p < 0.001$), where the estimate for Neuroticism was negative ($\beta = -1.25$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that null hypothesis one can be rejected for all leader traits, leading to the conclusion that there is a statistically significant relationship between leader traits as categorized by the five-factor model and learning organizational culture. Additionally, for

each model, when observing a plot of the residuals by the fitted valued, a histogram of the residuals, as well as a normal probability plot of the residuals, all models satisfied the assumptions of normality and linearity. All bootstrap estimates were similar to the nonbootstrapped estimates.

Table 4

*Summary of SLR Analyses for LOC*

| Variable | B | SE(B) | β | t | $R^2$ | Bootstrap | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness to Experience | 1.43* | 0.33 | 0.52 | 4.27 | 0.27 | 1.43 | 0.88 – 1.97 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.74* | 0.21 | 0.44 | 3.48 | 0.20 | 0.74 | 0.42 – 1.06 |
| Extraversion | 1.18* | 0.29 | 0.50 | 4.03 | 0.25 | 1.18 | 0.71 – 1.66 |
| Agreeableness | 0.78* | 0.22 | 0.45 | 3.54 | 0.20 | 0.78 | 0.31 – 1.25 |
| Neuroticism | 1.25* | 0.24 | 0.59 | 5.12 | 0.34 | -1.25 | -1.76 – -0.74 |

*Notes*: SE: standard error, SLR: Simple Linear Regression, LOC: Learning Organizational Culture, Bootstrap: *B* Bootstrap Estimate 999x, CI: Confidence Interval on Bootstrap Estimate.
*$p < 0.001$.

For hypothesis two, Tables 5a – 5d show the results of the multiple regression models, with all of the leader traits (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) used as independent variables, and learning organizational culture (LOC), along with three LOC sub scores, as dependent variables. Results for the models with LOC as the dependent variable (Table 4a) showed that the predictors explained 49% of the variability in LOC ($R^2 = 0.49$, $F(5,46)=8.72$, $p < 0.0001$). It was found that Openness to Experience significantly predicted LOC scores ($β$

= 0.94, *p* = 0.009), as did Neuroticism *(β = -0.86, p = 0.018)*. All bootstrap estimates

were similar to the nonbootstrapped estimates.

Table 5a

*Summary of MLR Analysis for LOC*

| Variable | *B* | *SE(B)* | *β* | *t* | Sig. (*p*) | *Bootstrap* | *95% CI* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness to Experience | 0.94 | 0.34 | 0.34 | 2.73 | 0.009 | 0.94 | 0.22 – 1.66 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.04 | 0.24 | 0.03 | 0.19 | 0.854 | 0.04 | -0.43 – 0.52 |
| Extraversion | 0.17 | 0.34 | 0.07 | 0.51 | 0.616 | 0.17 | -0.45 – -0.40 |
| Agreeableness | 0.11 | 0.23 | 0.06 | 0.49 | 0.626 | 0.11 | -0.40 – 0.62 |
| Neuroticism | -0.86 | 0.35 | -0.40 | -2.46 | 0.018 | -0.86 | -1.64 – -0.07 |
| Constant | 50.09 | 18.03 | | 2.78 | 0.008 | 50.90 | |

*Notes*: SE: standard error, MLR: Multiple Linear Regression, LOC: Learning
Organizational Culture, Bootstrap: *B* Bootstrap Estimate 999x, CI: Confidence Interval
on Bootstrap Estimate.
$R^2 = 0.49$

Results for the models with Learning Culture and Learning Environment as the

dependent variable (Table 5b) showed that the predictors explained 47% of the variability

in LOC ($R^2 = 0.47$, $F(5,46)=8.02$, $p < 0.0001$). It was found that Neuroticism significantly

predicted Learning Culture and Learning Environment scores ($β = -1.04$, $p = 0.012$). All

bootstrap estimates were similar to the nonbootstrapped estimates.

Table 5b

*Summary of MLR Analysis for Learning Culture and Learning Environment*

| Variable | *B* | *SE(B)* | *β* | *t* | Sig. (*p*) | *Bootstrap* | *95% CI* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness to Experience | 0.75 | 0.39 | 0.24 | 1.90 | 0.063 | 0.75 | -0.15 – 1.64 |
| Conscientiousness | -0.08 | 0.27 | -0.04 | -0.28 | 0.785 | -0.08 | -0.68 – 0.53 |
| Extraversion | 0.26 | 0.38 | 0.10 | 0.69 | 0.493 | 0.26 | -0.48 – 1.01 |
| Agreeableness | 0.26 | 0.26 | 0.13 | 0.99 | 0.328 | 0.26 | -0.32 – 0.83 |
| Neuroticism | -1.04 | 0.40 | -0.44 | -2.61 | 0.012 | -1.04 | -1.99 – -0.09 |
| Constant | 57.69 | 20.60 | | 2.80 | 0.007 | 57.69 | 14.53 – 100.84 |

*Notes*: SE: standard error, MLR: Multiple Linear Regression, LOC: Learning Organizational Culture, Bootstrap: *B* Bootstrap Estimate 999x, CI: Confidence Interval on Bootstrap Estimate.
$R^2 = 0.47$

Results for the models with Leadership as the dependent variable (Table 5c)

showed that the predictors explained 47% of the variability in LOC ($R^2 = 0.47$,

$F(5,46)=8.04$, $p < 0.0001$). It was found that Openness to Experience significantly

predicted Leadership scores ($β = 1.49$, $p = 0.001$), as did Neuroticism *($β = -1.07$, $p =$*

*0.021)*. All bootstrap estimates were similar to the nonbootstrapped estimates.

Table 5c

*Summary of MLR Analysis for Leadership*

| Variable | B | SE(B) | β | t | Sig. (p) | Bootstrap | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness to Experience | 1.49 | 0.44 | 0.43 | 3.38 | 0.001 | 1.49 | 0.54 – 2.43 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.04 | 0.31 | 0.02 | 0.13 | 0.897 | 0.04 | -0.55 – 0.63 |
| Extraversion | -0.32 | 0.43 | -0.01 | -0.07 | 0.941 | -0.03 | -0.88 – 0.82 |
| Agreeableness | 0.07 | 0.29 | 0.03 | 0.22 | 0.824 | 0.07 | -0.69 – 0.82 |
| Neuroticism | -1.07 | 0.45 | -0.40 | -2.39 | 0.021 | -1.07 | -2.02 – -0.11 |
| Constant | 45.56 | 23.10 | | 1.97 | 0.055 | 45.56 | -4.91 – 96.03 |

*Notes*: SE: standard error, MLR: Multiple Linear Regression, LOC: Learning Organizational Culture, Bootstrap: *B* Bootstrap Estimate 999x, CI: Confidence Interval on Bootstrap Estimate.

$R^2 = 0.47$

Results for the models with Learning Processes as the dependent variable (Table 5d) showed that the predictors explained 30% of the variability in LOC ($R^2 = 0.30$, $F(5,46)=3.88$, $p < 0.005$). All bootstrap estimates were similar to the nonbootstrapped estimates.

Table 5d

*Summary of MLR Analysis for Learning Processes*

| Variable | *B* | *SE(B)* | *β* | *t* | Sig. (*p*) | *Bootstrap* | *95% CI* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness to | | | | | 0.120 | 0.58 | -0.10 – 1.25 |
| Experience | 0.58 | 0.37 | 0.23 | 1.58 | | | |
| Conscientiousness | 0.17 | 0.25 | 0.11 | 0.67 | 0.506 | 0.17 | -0.30 – 0.64 |
| Extraversion | 0.28 | 0.36 | 0.13 | 0.78 | 0.440 | 0.28 | -0.39 – 0.94 |
| Agreeableness | 0.01 | 0.24 | 0.10 | 0.05 | 0.960 | 0.01 | -0.47 – 0.49 |
| Neuroticism | -0.46 | 0.37 | -0.24 | -1.24 | 0.220 | -0.46 | -1.18 – 0.26 |
| | | | | | 0.018 | 46.89 | 15.51 – |
| Constant | 46.89 | 19.16 | | 2.45 | | | 78.26 |

*Notes*: SE: standard error, MLR: Multiple Linear Regression, LOC: Learning Organizational Culture, Bootstrap: *B* Bootstrap Estimate 999x, CI: Confidence Interval on Bootstrap Estimate.

$R^2 = 0.30$

## Summary

The purpose of this quantitative correlational design was to assess the relationship between leader traits and the degree to which organizations within Alberta's oil and gas industry measure against the standards for learning organization culture. According to the results of each research question individually, each of the leader traits is significantly related to learning organization culture. However, when combined in a multiple regression models, only Openness to Experience and Neuroticism still stand out as significant predictors.

## Relationship to Existing Literature

The existing literature suggests that traits are an important part of leadership—an aspect whose study allows for a better understanding of leadership as a whole (Cowley, as cited in Judge et al., 2002). Organizational culture is itself a product of leadership, as carrying out a leader's vision is what shapes an organization's development and so its

culture. Rahmati, Darouian, and Ahmadinia (2012) identified three distinct types of

professional culture defined by different types of leadership, while Giberson et al. (2009)

identified four such types of culture and correlated them with different leader traits.

While the more positive cultures in both these cases share a certain similarity to learning

organization culture, neither quite considers whether a leader's traits are correlated to the

degree of learning organization culture that exists under his or her leadership. Alipour et

al. (2011) suggested, however, that a learning organization culture must be built upon the

foundation of an existing democratic culture.

This study supports that notion—it shows a significant positive correlation

between the trait of openness to experience and the existence of learning organization

culture. In particular, Cheung et al. (2012) suggested that responding to feedback given

by subordinates is an important aspect of a democratic culture, and certainly being open

to feedback is an aspect of being open to experience. However, it proves more difficult to

compare to the work of Giberson et al. (2009), whose culture types are not as easily

connected to that of a learning organization, and where none of the four types were found

to be strongly correlated with openness to experience. Their study did, however, find that

openness to experience was negatively correlated with the hierarchical culture—a culture

that is very much rigid and opposite that of a learning organization. Therefore, in this

regard, my results support the literature again, if perhaps more indirectly.

On the other hand, I found there to be a significant negative correlation between

the trait of neuroticism and the existence of a learning organizational culture. This is

somewhat surprising from the standpoint of the Giberson et al. study, in which emotional

stability (the inverse of neuroticism) was found to be negatively correlated with

adhocracy, the most innovative of the four cultures considered. However, it is not

innovation alone that creates a learning organization. Indeed, adhocracy contrasts with a

learning organization in its focus on external competition rather than internal growth.

Internal growth is more characteristic of the clan culture, an organizational culture

defined by collaboration, flexible structure, and engaging all vested members to develop

human capital, which Giberson et al. found to be positively correlated with emotional

stability (and so negatively correlated to neuroticism).

As a result, I find that this study generally supports and perhaps expands upon the

literature with regard to how five-factor personality traits in leaders serve to influence the

development of organizational culture. The possible expansion introduced comes in the

form of the multiple regression used—that is to say, considering the combined effect of

all five personality traits, and seeing the potential redundancy of using multiple traits. It is

harder to say if the influence of the other traits would similarly become redundant when

considering other organizational cultures.

Considering the general theory of learning organizations, it is unsurprising that

openness to new experiences is positively correlated with the existence of learning

organization culture. Shieh (2012) found that learning organizations tend to be innovative

and experiential companies, and a leader who is not open to new experiences will have

significantly more difficulty dealing with innovation, much less promoting it in his or her

subordinates. Double-loop learning, which forms the basis of a learning organization, is not simply dealing with a new problem that arises, but instead learning how to adapt to new conditions in general (Caldwell, 2012). This is, again, something that a leader who is not open to experience will have trouble doing, much less instilling in others.

The negative correlation between neuroticism and the existence of learning organization culture also supports the literature. Neuroticism will naturally create, or at least exist in, a more rigid environment, as discussed above, where leader neuroticism was correlated with the existence of a hieratical culture. By contrast, not only must a learning organization be more fluid and adaptable, but an environment of psychological safety must exist as well (Maden, 2012; Yuanyuan, Chaoyou, & Yuqiang, 2014). Neuroticism can naturally be seen as opposed to such an environment, as a neurotic leader is more likely to lash out at subordinates. Furthermore, Kinghorn, Black, and Oliver (2011) suggest that a learning organization must have professional and behavioral norms established—and neuroticism is a natural enemy of such norms, as a neurotic person is by definition less emotionally stable and so more likely to behave in a chaotic fashion. In addition, learning organizations require a decentralization of power (Maden, 2012), which contrasts with the hierarchical culture that Giberson et al. correlated to neurotic leadership. Therefore, by and large, it supports the existing literature to have found a negative correlation between neurotic leadership and the existence of learning organization culture.

The issue of leadership style, as discussed in the literature, is related to traits. The style of leadership serves as something of an intermediate step between traits and organizational culture, in that traits influence a leader's style (Holt & Marques, 2012), and a leader's style in turn influences the organizational culture that their leadership gives rise to. However, in this study, that intermediate level is not considered; instead, I studied the relationship of the traits to culture more directly. Indeed, Törnroos et al. (2013) suggested that a leader's personality, not just the style that results from it, has an influence on the relationship between leaders and followers, and the five-factor model traits are an aspect of personality.

Prior research has established that the five-factor traits have an influence on, or at least can serve as predictors of, workplace behavior and attitudes (Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013). Chiaburu et al. (2011) found that openness to new experience is positively correlated to change-oriented behaviors, which concurs with the findings of this study to the extent that a learning organization is, as previously discussed, defined by the ability to learn to adapt (and so change). Lindberg & Meredith (2012) and Shoid et al. (2012) noted the importance of leaders' willingness to accept new practices as a foundational element of learning organizations.

Therefore, the results of this study are generally in alignment with the existing research, but they also go beyond it. Not only is there no research that considers the specific subject of this study, Alberta's gas and oil industry, but there is no consideration elsewhere of how the five-factor model's traits are related to the existence (or lack

thereof) of learning organization culture. Although, as discussed above, existing results are tangential to this in considering the relationship of these traits to other kinds of organizational culture, this study not only considers a previously unexamined relationship, it also uses a multiple regression model to consider whether the correlations found for individual traits remain significant when all traits are considered together. The conclusion here is somewhat surprising, and suggests some multicollinearity between the big five traits in leaders of a particular field.

Ultimately, this study fits well into the theoretical framework of learning organization theory; it studies, after all, the very existence of learning organization culture in a specific situation. Indeed, much research in the field of learning organizations focuses on what allows for their existence or promotes it. Perhaps I cannot claim something so strong, when correlation does not mean causation, and the study's scope is admittedly limited to Alberta's oil and gas industry, but still this study could prove a foundation for further advances in this regard. Its results could suggest a direction in which the study of learning organizations might expand, both by considering the big five as predictors of learning organization culture and by considering not only the individual influence of each trait, but their combined influence through multiple regression. At the very least, this study adds a solid data point to the study of learning organizational culture in the form of data on its existence or nonexistence in Alberta's oil and gas industry, as well as specific leader traits correlated with it in this context.

**Application to Professional Practice**

Having found a correlation between two particular leadership traits and the existence of learning organization culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry, the question then becomes what can be gained from this knowledge? I must stress again that correlation does not equate to causation, and further experimental studies would be needed to definitively say that the existence of these traits *causes* the existence of the desired learning organization culture. What I can say more solidly, however, is that the existence of this correlation suggests a relationship between these traits, and that in turn suggests a certain synergy or conflict. Whether or not (as logic might lead one to assume) a leader being open to new experiences causes the organization he or she leads to exhibit a higher degree of learning organization culture, such a culture is more likely to co-exist with such a leader. Similarly, learning organization culture is less likely to exist under the purview of a neurotic leader.

As of 2011, 27.6% of Alberta's gross domestic product came from the energy sector (Government of Alberta, n.d.). This marks the oil and gas industry as a significant factor in Alberta's economy, and so there are clear benefits to anything which could enhance its productivity or provide it with a competitive advantage. Historically, both leader traits and organizational culture have been shown to have an effect upon both sustained competitive advantage and organizational performance. Therefore, a study that considers the relationship between these particular factors has obvious applications to professional practice. These applications are primarily in Alberta's oil and gas industry,

because that is where the data was collected. While it is certainly possible that the conclusions of this study can be extended to other, broader areas, it would be dangerous to assume they could be generalized without further research. However, because this study itself was undertaken within the industry, its data and conclusions are assured to be relevant to Alberta's oil and gas industry specifically.

Whether or not it is causal, I have established the synergy between a leader who is open to experience in Alberta's oil and gas industry and the existence of learning organization culture. If learning organization culture is desirable—and it is, in a globalizing world where traditional methods of sustaining a competitive advantage through single-loop learning often fall short (Argyris & Schön, 1996)—then these results can be used to create a better fit between leaders and organizations to promote the successful development and sustainment of learning organization culture. Furthermore, Kaiser & Hogan (2011) and Riaz et al. (2012) suggested that leaders who are aware of their traits can consciously alter their leadership styles. If the kinds of leadership styles resulting from neurotic leaders prove to be a poor fit for organizations hoping to foster a learning organization culture, as this study's results suggest, then such leaders should be aware of this and actively attempt to lead in a different way. Moreover, even a non-neurotic leader might find that a style of leadership based on being open to experience—whether or not he or she is naturally inclined toward this—has better synergy with a learning organization culture than one that is not.

Although it is beyond the scope of the study's results to suggest causation, one might justify claiming it here simply through reasoning. After all, as was discussed at length in the previous section, learning organizations are built primarily upon double-loop learning, the process of learning to adapt, and it is only natural to claim a leadership style that is more open to change would yield an organization more willing to adapt. Even if the results of this study are not grounds enough, alone, to make that claim, they would support the notion. In the long term, however, it may prove to the advantage of Alberta's oil and gas industry to consider filtering leadership applicants with an eye to these two particular traits and their synergy or anti-synergy with learning organization culture. An established leader may change his or her style to synergize better, but not needing to make such a change, because a desired style arises naturally from the leader's traits, is more advantageous still.

In support of this notion, research by Chiaburu et al. (2011) and Xu et al. (2011) suggested that human resource personnel who understand traits are important to achieving organizational goals and reaching the desired organizational citizenship. Therefore, it is of clear interest to human resource personnel in Alberta's oil and gas industry to be aware of the correlation of these traits to learning organization culture in their field. Indeed, Kaiser and Hogan (2011) found personality to account for 26% of the variance in leadership behavior, while Di Schiena et al. (2013) noted that defining the leadership traits necessary for effective leadership and identifying those traits in candidates should be of the utmost importance in filling leadership positions. And, if for

some reason there was any doubt, Huang et al. (2011) verified that effective leadership is positively correlated with organizational success.

In addition to suggesting that human resources personnel in Alberta's oil and gas industry should consider traits in their evaluation of candidates, though, these results suggest that they might be able to narrow their search. While all the traits in the five-factor model are individually significant, the multiple regression analysis trims this down to two relevant traits, one of them positively correlated and the other negatively correlated. Regardless of the reason for the multicollinearity of the other traits, the fact that only two emerge as significant in the multiple regression model suggests a way of refining the search for suitable candidates. It also allows for more in-depth evaluation of a potential candidate if only two traits need to be measured, rather than considering the candidate's scores on all five of the traits in the five-factor model.

Finally, the results of this study could prove of interest to the leaders—CEOS, CFOs, and other executives in Alberta's oil and gas industry—themselves. Above, I suggested that a leader might take on a different leadership style to better synergize with the development of a learning organization culture. This is not, however, the only way that the results of this study could be useful to the leadership of Alberta's oil and gas industry. They could also serve as a means for leaders to get their bearings—to better understand not only the traits that synergize well with learning organizations, but the overall current state of the industry in their area with respect to both the existence of learning organization culture and the distribution of leader traits.

Indeed, Alipour et al. (2011) argued that employees in a learning organization view challenges as learning opportunities that can further their evolution. Therefore, to the organization within Alberta's oil and gas industry that does not have a learning organization culture but desires to have one, these results could prove a useful tool for growth. Parumasur (2012) suggested that the creation of this culture is not an instantaneous thing in any given organization. Thus, tools to not only advance the process, but measure it, could prove valuable to an organization in the midst of such a transition.

Ultimately, the application of this study to professional practice rests upon the demonstrated importance and value of learning organization culture. Sahin (2013) and Shehzad & Khan (2013) find, quite simply, that learning organizations promote positive organizational results. Therefore, it behooves any company to move toward a learning organization culture when possible. To assist in that goal, based on this study and its results, I suggest ways in which Alberta's oil and gas industry could both select leaders whose traits correlate well with the existence of learning organization culture and offer existing leaders a way to alter their leadership style and ensure that it synergizes well with the desired learning organization culture.

**Implications for Social Change**

The applications to professional practice are not the only implications of this study, although they are perhaps its most direct consequences. The applications discussed above result from the straightforward, factual nature of the results—that a significant

correlation exists in the data, suggesting a relationship between the leader traits and organizational culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry. These results have direct applications to the industry in which the study was undertaken, as was considered at length. Here, there is no question of their relevance because the data was drawn from the industry itself.

Alberta's oil and gas industry faces many challenges, not the least of which has been coming under scrutiny for environmental reasons. Considering its decidedly significant contribution to Alberta's economy, the energy sector must be able to address its critics and advance itself as Alberta moves forward into a more and more globalized economy. To overcome this challenge, the industry must be innovative and, as Balay (2012) found, sustained learning organization culture promotes innovation. Indeed, the sort of innovation that learning organization culture supports is ideal for overcoming barriers to both sustainability and competitive advantage (Shieh, 2012). Sustainability, or rather a lack of sustainability, is traditionally a core aspect of environmental concerns, and so it is of clear concern to Alberta's oil and gas industry to achieve sustainability. On the other hand, the reasons to desire competitive advantage are clear by its very definition. Thus, it is clear that fostering a learning organization culture in Alberta's oil and gas industry is a desirable social change, and this study provides information relevant to that goal through the correlation of leadership traits to the existence of learning organization culture. These results, as discussed, may allow Alberta's oil and gas industry

to move toward choosing leaders possessed of traits who will support or foster learning

organization culture.

In addition, these results have application to more academic matters. They raise

several interesting lines of questioning. Is the multicollinearity observed in this study

simply an artifact of the sample, or does it suggest a larger trend of multicollinearity

between the big-five traits? And if it does, in what subset of people beyond the leaders of

Alberta's oil and gas industry does it exist? Or, on the other hand, how generalizable are

these results? Do they extend beyond the specific situation in which they were observed?

If they do not, then there is the question of why they exist in Alberta's oil and gas

industry. Not only do these questions provide venues for further academic and

professional studies, but their answers would—for the same reasons I have suggested this

study would—prove valuable for professional practice, especially in Alberta's oil and gas

industry but possibly in a larger set of world organizations.

### Recommendations for Action

Having now established that these results could and should prove relevant to not

only Alberta's oil and gas industry, but to the academic and professional study of

learning organizations, the question becomes one of how. How might I ensure that these

results reach those to whom they are relevant? In the academic sense, publication and

presentation might prove enough, as those researchers with an interest in learning

organization theory will generally keep themselves abreast of developments in it. To this

end, it is only necessary to exercise good publication practice to ensure that the results are

published and readily available, as well as properly tagged. The question of how to ensure that these results reach the organizations to which they are relevant, though, is a harder question, especially because some of these are organizations in which learning organization has not quite taken root. Indeed, Kerman et al. (2012) suggested that, while sustaining and enhancing learning organization culture can be simple, it is difficult to create in the first place. Argyris & Schön (1996) and Kinghorn et al. (2011) found that that some of the barriers to the establishment of learning organization culture include fear of change, complacency, traditional roles and structures, and organizational defense mechanisms.

Among these obstacles, fear of change and complacency stand out as particularly detrimental to the dissemination of these results to the relevant organizations. Simply put, those who are complacent and afraid of change will naturally be disinclined to examine materials that suggest ways by which they might better themselves. While simply providing a copy of this study and its results to the relevant parties might do some good, it seems unlikely, by itself, to break these barriers, at least in the current form. Academic research, after all, can often prove intimidating to those not versed in its study, and for such persons, it is much more the results of the study that are important.

Therefore, rather that providing the full study to the organizations that comprise Alberta's oil and gas industry, it would seem more prudent to create a more concise version of the results. This could include a brief summary of learning organizations and their benefits, emphasizing their importance in a globalizing world and the problems they

help solve and the fact that learning organization culture is linked to both sustained

competitive advantage and increased productivity. With this hook to catch the reader's

interest, the document would then offer a concise explanation of what constitutes each of

the five-factor personality traits and perhaps a list of resources by which one might

measure their personality using the five-factor model.

After this brief introduction would be the results, likely with appropriately

instructive and professional graphics. Of course, this would omit the more technical

details of the study, suggesting a reference back to the full paper for those interested, and

focus on the results themselves. In particular, it would emphasize the significant

correlations found between the leader traits of openness to experience and neuroticism

and the existence of learning organization culture. For the present, until further research

can prove or disprove a causality, it would be prudent to include the caveat that

correlation does not equate to causation, as this misconception is particularly pronounced

in the general public. This concise summary of the results would then conclude with a

brief explanation of how, as discussed above, these results can be applied to professional

practice.

Ultimately, the creation of such an approachable version of the literature would be

a small effort for a potentially large payout. While I cannot be certain that the results

would be more well-received in a more approachable form such as has been described,

the inclusion of references to the full study—made readily available, as suggested

previously to ensure academic awareness—means that it effectively can do no worse than

presenting the full study. Practically speaking, though, it is easy to see why creating an accessible version of the study's results for professional consideration would likely be received better, especially by those who were complacent or afraid of change.

## Recommendations for Further Research

More than once, I have alluded to areas that the results of this study suggest could benefit from further research. These are, in order of importance, exploring whether the correlation found herein is indicative of an underlying causality, exploring whether the correlation found in the study extends to a wider scope beyond just Alberta's oil and gas industry, and further examining the apparent multicollinearity of the big-five traits seen in the results of this study. Each of these questions is individually interesting and worthy of study, and each would have applications to further study.

First and most important, it is important to explore—via the sort of experimental study which is able—the existence of a possible underlying causal relationship, if only because of the danger inherent in uncertainty. Even though one of the first (and most repeated) lessons a student of regression learns is that correlation does not mean causation, it is painfully easy to find ourselves confusing the two. It comes naturally to see the fact that one condition can predict another as evidence that the former caused the latter, especially because it is often true in the world. We see clouds and know it means rain is coming; clouds cause rain. And so when there is uncertainty, we naturally lean toward causation. Here, that is a dangerous assumption, and one which this study, being non-experimental, could not hope to prove or disprove. Assumption of causation could

cause an organization to put too much stock in these results—to over-emphasize the importance of these traits in achieving a learning organization culture by expecting them to create one, rather than merely synergize well with this.

Ideally, we would like a study to show that causation does exist, at least in the context of Alberta's oil and gas industry. However, even if a study were to disprove causation, it would be better than uncertainty, better than a gap in our knowledge that we naturally tend to fill with potentially incorrect assumptions. And, if we were fortunate enough to find that causation did exist, it would add another reason to expand upon the study to a larger sample.

But even without causation, the extension of the study to a larger scope is still a worthy endeavor, and there are myriad of directions in which this could be done. For example, it could be expanded to explore the oil and gas industries in other regions besides Alberta—elsewhere in Canada, or on a generally more globalized scale. In addition to expanding upon the particular subject of this study, it would give a basis for a more generalized comparison of both leader traits and learning organization culture across the same industry in different geographic regions. This would give something of a way for a given organization in the global gas and oil industry to measure its relative progress in fostering a learning organization culture, as well as perhaps emphasize the importance of that culture.

On the other hand, another possible venue for expanding the scope of the research is geographically. Rather than studying the same organizations in different context, a

study could be made of different organizations in Alberta—either another specific industry or a broader range of industries. Such studies, of course, would have the same benefits for their respective industries as this study has for Alberta's oil and gas industry. In addition, however, they would allow for the exploration of whether the correlation discovered in this study is unique to the oil and gas industry, or whether the correlation is perhaps related to local culture. The answer to that question would, in turn, provide insight into how best to expand the scope even further.

Finally, a related question is the multicollinearity of the traits. In this study, only two of the five-factor model traits were significant in the multiple regression model, even though they were all significant when individually regressed against the level of learning organization culture. This is a somewhat surprising phenomenon, as it suggests a relationship between these traits, and it is the nature of this relationship that is of interest. Although the sampling for this study was done randomly, it is not impossible that the relationship is an artifact of the particular dataset used—further study could prove or disprove that.

If this relationship persists, though, then it is only natural to examine the extent of it. Is it a relationship particular to Alberta's oil and gas industry? If so, what factors in this specific environment have led to it? And if it proves instead not to be so limited in its scope, how far does it reach? What is the nature of this relationship, and how does it affect the five-factor model in general? This line of research is most tenuous, but perhaps

also the one with the largest potential for interesting and valuable consequences, if the

multicollinearity proves to be something more than a fluke.

All in all, there is a significant amount of further research yet to be done to

expand upon the subjects this study considers and to bear out the full consequences of its

results. These studies would be more focused, and perhaps more experimental—a luxury

afforded by entering into them with the background that this study provides.

Experimental design and broader scope can ultimately hope to address the limitations that

existed in this study and provider a more complete picture of the truth, a truth which

might not, however, have been glimpsed at all without this study to first illuminate it.

This particular study's scope was limited to Alberta's oil and gas industry by simple

virtue of having been done there, and so I can only say with any certainty that these

conclusions apply there. Further research, though, could serve not only to expand the

previously-discussed applications of these results to a broader range of industries, but

also to deepen the understanding of these results and broaden their application even

within the specific context of Alberta's oil and gas industry.

### Reflections

With all else said and done, I will take a moment to reflect upon the study and its

nature. Due to its purely quantitative nature and basis in established practices for

surveying, the study leaves little room for personal bias to color the results.

Interpretations, of course, are never so flawless, but this study has taken care to avoid

unsupported assertions or unproved assumptions. Most claims are supported by the

academic and professional literature, while the rest are based on common knowledge and common sense. As always with regression, the greatest danger is to claim more than I have actually found—to imply causation, instead of mere correlation.

The limited scope of the study is perhaps both its greatest strength and greatest weakness. While studying only Alberta's oil and gas industry allows me to ensure that the results have application to professional practice in a specific area, it also raises the question of whether the results can be generalized, or whether they represent only the specific set of data from which they were obtained. However, further research may serve to fill the gap and answer the question of whether the results can be generalized.

**Conclusion**

In closing, I examined the relationship between a leader's traits and the degree of learning organization culture that existed under his or her leadership in the context of Alberta's oil and gas industry. The specific traits considered were openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism, which together make up the five-factor personality model, while learning organization culture was measured as an index. Regression was done with the traits and independent variables and several aspects of learning organization culture as the dependent variables. The existing literature suggests that there should be a correlation between these leader traits—traits that influence and define leadership styles—and the existence of learning organization culture. Indeed, the general study of learning organizations includes a significant body of work on what conditions promote or conflict with their existence, and

how this knowledge might be used. Learning organization culture is, in general, something that must be specifically cultivated, and therefore knowing what leader traits synergize well with it is valuable. Learning organization culture has tangible benefits that make it desirable.

After performing the regression, each of the five-factor traits was significantly correlated to learning organization culture individually. However, when the model was changed to multiple regression using all the traits together, only two remained significant. One of these—openness to experience—was positively correlated with learning organization culture, while the other—neuroticism—was negatively correlated with learning organization culture. These results are interesting academically and professionally applicable to Alberta's and gas industry. They give a basis for research into whether these traits can *cause* learning organization culture (or inhibit it), as well as offering a tangible benefit in the form of traits to seek out or avoid when filling leadership positions in Alberta's oil and gas industry. This concludes the study.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

**Learning Organization Survey Questions**

Likert-type 7 scale responses

- highly inaccurate

- moderately inaccurate

- slightly inaccurate

- neither accurate nor inaccurate

- slightly accurate

- moderately accurate

- highly accurate

**Please respond to each item in terms of how descriptive it is of your work unit.**

- In this unit, it is easy to speak up about what is on your mind.

- If you make a mistake in this unit, it is often held against you.

- People in this unit are usually comfortable talking about problems and

  disagreements.

- People in this unit are eager to share information about what does and doesn't

  work.

- Keeping your cards close to your vest is the best way to get ahead in this unit.

- Differences in opinion are welcome in this unit.

- Unless an opinion is consistent with what most people in this unit believe, it won't

  be valued.

- This unit tends to handle differences of opinion privately or off-line, rather than addressing them directly with the group.

- In this unit, people are open to alternative ways of getting work done.

- In this unit, people value new ideas.

- Unless an idea has been around for a long time, no one in this unit wants to hear it.

- In this unit, people are interested in better ways of doing things.

- In this unit, people often resist untried approaches.

- People in this unit are overly stressed.

- Despite the workload, people in this unit find time to review how the work is going.

- In this unit, schedule pressure gets in the way of doing a good job.

- In this unit, people are too busy to invest time in improvement.

- There is simply no time for reflection in this unit.

- This unit experiments frequently with new ways of working.

- This unit experiments frequently with new product or service offerings.

- This unit has a formal process for conducting and evaluating experiments or new ideas.

- This unit frequently employs prototypes or simulations when trying out new ideas.

- This unit engages in productive conflict and debate during discussions.

- This unit seeks out dissenting views during discussions.

- This unit never revisits well-established perspectives during discussions.

- This unit frequently identifies and discusses underlying assumptions that might affect key decisions.

- This unit never pays attention to different views during discussions.

- Newly hired employees in this unit receive adequate training.

- Experienced employees in this unit receive periodic training and training updates.

- Experienced employees in this unit receive training when switching to a new position.

- Experienced employees in this unit receive training when new initiatives are launched.

- In this unit, training is valued.

- In this unit, time is made available for education and training activities.

- This unit regularly shares information with networks of experts within the organization.

- This unit regularly shares information with networks of experts outside the organization.

- This unit quickly and accurately communicates new knowledge to key decision makers.

- This unit regularly conducts post-audits and after-action interviews.

**This unit systematically collects information on:**

- competitors

- customers

- economic and social trends

- technological trends

**This unit frequently compares its performance with that of:**

- competitors

- best-in-class organizations

**This unit has forums for meeting with and learning from:**

- experts from other departments, teams, or divisions

- experts from outside the organization

- customers and clients

- suppliers

Likert-type 5 scale responses

- never

- infrequently

- sometimes

- often

- always

**Please respond to each item in terms of how descriptive it is of your work unit.**

- My managers invite input from others in discussions.

- My managers acknowledge their own limitations with respect to knowledge, information, or expertise.

- My managers ask probing questions.

- My managers listen attentively.

- My managers encourage multiple points of view.

- My managers provide time, resources, and venues for identifying problems and organizational challenges.

- My managers provide time, resources, and venues for reflecting and improving on past performance.

- My managers criticize views different from their own.

**NEO-FFI-3 Form R-Adult Male (Observer Rating)**

Likert-type 5 scale responses

- strongly disagree

- disagree

- neutral

- agree

- strongly agree

**Please respond to each item (Licensing agreement allows for 3 sample questions)**

- He believes letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse or

  mislead them.

- He tries to perform all the tasks assigned to him conscientiously.

- If necessary, he is willing to manipulate people to get what he wants.

Appendix B: Permissions

**Learning Organization Survey**

Subject : **RE: Permissions to Instill Learning Organization Survey - Approved at no charge for use in dissertation - HBP material must be cited (#8095-394133648-5183)**

Date :    Mon, Dec 02, 2013 12:40 PM CST

From :   Permissions <IS5820_12897@is.instantservice.com>

To :     Mark Porter <mark.porter@waldenu.edu>

```
Dear Mark Porter,

Thank you for your inquiry and we appreciate your
checking with us. As long as the HBP material is
only being used to fulfill the class assignment in
the pursuit of your degree, permission would be
granted at no charge as long as the material is
fully cited.

If the thesis is later published or distributed as
training material; however, then there would be a
royalty charge for use of the HBP material that
would be based on how much material is used and
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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement in duplicate on the date first herein above written.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:                    ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

BY: _____Mark Reginald Porter_____     BY: _____

MARK R. PORTER                          R. BOB SMITH III, PH.D.

Title: _____Student_____           Title:  CHAIRMAN AND CEO

DATE:_____May 5, 2015_____         DATE: 5·6·2015

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## SCHEDULE A

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