

2017

# Virtuous Leadership for Increased Business Growth

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Destry Dokes

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Virtuous Leadership for Increased Business Growth

by

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MBA, LeTourneau University, 2007

BS, Southern University, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2017

## Abstract

Businesses in the United States endured approximately \$300 billion in annual performance losses resulting from ineffective leadership behaviors. Small business leaders' ineffective leadership characteristics diminish performance and stifle economic growth. As primary drivers of economic wealth, small business leaders rely on effective leadership behaviors to sustain the performance of small organizations. The purpose of this case study was to explore virtuous leadership strategies that small business leaders and employees use to increase business growth. The conceptual framework for this study was the virtuous leadership theory (VLT). The sample size consisted of 3 leaders and 7 employees from a small business located in the greater Houston metropolitan area. Study participants had at least 1 year of experience working in a small business that practices virtuous leadership as outlined in the authorized representative's organizational letter of intent. The qualitative research method was used to collect semistructured interviews and the small business's mission and goal statement. Data analysis included collecting and coding data, identifying and congregating analogous themes, interpreting thematic inferences, and methodological triangulation for interpretation accuracy. Six themes emerged including continuous communication, employee knowledge and training, the use of virtuous tenets, transference of wisdom, modeling justice, and teambuilding. The findings from this study may contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the best practices for virtuous leadership that leaders may use to increase business growth. Small business leaders may use the results identified in this study to increase economic viability and employment through increased business growth.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this submission to God for providing an opportunity for me to make a difference in my life and the lives of others and my grandparents Henry and Lenora Dokes for providing me with rich Christian values. Many thanks to my mother Fannie Dokes for her relentless demonstrable efforts and dedication to helping me develop my character and educational fortitude. I also dedicate this to my siblings James Dokes, Cheryl Dokes, Wanda Jackson-Evans, Degloria Jackson-Myles, and every person who ever believed they could not obtain their dream – keep dreaming. Thanks to Dr. Linda (Dokes) Lane for serving as a model of educational excellence and Christian values. I especially dedicate this to my wife, Janet Dokes, and my children, Giana, and Keith Dokes for their unwavering understanding, support, and inspiration – I love you.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizations invest in leadership as a mechanism for guiding business goals, promoting employee affinity for virtuous activities, and increasing business performance (Hackett & Wang, 2012; Maloş, 2011; Northouse, 2012; Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Stakeholders emphasize the lack of virtuous behaviors in business settings as an on-going concern (Doh & Quigley, 2014). Research on the application of the virtuous leadership model to business practices has shown it to be a viable managerial and performance tool (Palanski, Cullen, Gentry, & Nichols, 2014; Stouten et al., 2012; Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, & Prussia, 2013). Studying the virtuous business characteristics of leaders, marked by their principled behaviors, may contribute to understandings of best practices for managing employee behaviors and increasing organizational performance (Asslander, 2013; Bright, Winn, & Kanov, 2014; Ein-Gar, 2013; Madison & Kellermanns, 2013). Virtuous leadership skills may assist small business leaders in guiding business resources (Hackett & Wang, 2012).

### **Background of the Problem**

Approximately 95% of small business, which are entities with fewer than 500 employees, closed in the first quarter of 2014 (SBA, 2014). Aboyassin and Abood (2013) suggested that ineffective decision-making amongst leadership is a concern for corporate leaders' and impedes employees' ability to meet business objectives. In addition, business stakeholders and employees assign limited credibility to organizational activities when leaders engage in behaviors that neglect established business goals and visions (Almansour & Neal, 2015). Business integrity and trustworthiness serves as a framework

for leaders' abilities to engender behaviors needed for business profitability (Congleton, 2014; Yoon Jik, & Poister, 2014). Moreover, leaders' engagement in leadership behaviors influences employees, stakeholders, and investors (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014; Simha & Cullen, 2012; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2013; Woodland, C., & Parsons, 2013).

Business leaders use virtuousness as a tool to foster employee engagement and performance (Friedman, Friedman, & Kass-Shraibman, 2014), and leaders' behaviors and responses influence an employee's capacity to focus on organizational performance targets (Almatrooshi, Singh, & Farouk, 2016; Gupta & Nedelea, 2015). Leaders who apply principles, virtues, morals, and prudence in decision-making model the attributes of effective leadership (Stouten et al., 2012). Business standards of conduct alone may not increase business performance (Becker, 2013). To attain virtuous benefits, leaders and employees must identify strategies for modeling moral behaviors as a transformative mantle of leadership (Caldwell, McConkie, & Licona, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

Ineffective leadership behaviors are key factors in the diminished performance of small businesses (Aidis, Estrin, & Mickiewicz, 2012). Companies in the United States have experienced productivity losses of approximately \$300 billion annually because of ineffective leadership behaviors (Johnson, 2014). The general business problem was that unprincipled small business leadership behaviors adversely influence employee perceptions of workplace standards and affinity towards performance. The specific

problem was small business leaders lack strategies needed to promote virtuous behaviors for increased business growth.

### **Purpose Statement**

I used a qualitative method and a single case study design to explore strategies that leaders in small businesses use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors for increased business growth. I conducted semistructured interviews with small business leaders and employees located in the greater Houston metropolitan area (GHMA) who had at least one year of virtuous experience in a professional organizational setting. The study findings may contribute to social change by advancing virtuous leadership as a tool that leaders could use to increase business performance, which might develop employment opportunities and increase the delivery of products and services.

### **Nature of the Study**

I employed a qualitative method to collect participants' direct input regarding the study topic. Researchers use the qualitative research method as an inquiry tool for collecting firsthand accounts from study participants regarding naturally occurring phenomena (Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011). Since I conducted interviews to collect data from participants regarding their natural experiences, a qualitative method was suitable for this study.

Quantitative research methods are distinct from the descriptive nature of qualitative analysis and are focused on building theory through hypothesis and testing (Bansal, & Corley, 2012). The quantitative method was not applicable in this study given that I did not test a hypothesis. Darawsheh (2014) noted that researchers apply a mixed

method to blend qualitative data collected from participants' natural settings with quantitative hypothesis testing. Since a combination of participants' natural experiences and numerical testing was not needed to explore the phenomenon under study, a mixed methods approach was likewise not suitable for this study.

I used a case study design. In case studies, researchers use artifacts, audiovisual materials, and other physical data documents to explore a phenomenon (Yin, 2011; Yin, 2014). The phenomenological design allows researchers to gain an understanding of a phenomenon by identifying participants' lived experiences (Hays & Wood, 2011). Since my data collection included a combination of interviews and a physical document (i.e., the mission and goal statement), as opposed to exploring the lived experiences of participants, a phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study. Finally, ethnographic investigators conduct observations to address a cultural phenomenon (Wolcott, 1994). The latitude of my work did not include cultural observations; therefore, the ethnographic design was not suitable for this study. Finally, researchers apply the grounded theory for comparing and verifying data to assist in theory development (Rizzo & Fulford, 2012). I did not intend to develop a theory; hence, the grounded theory design was not appropriate for this study.

### **Research Question**

What strategies can small business leaders use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies are needed by leaders to ensure the promotion of virtuous behaviors for increased business growth?
2. What strategies can leaders use to promote a work environment to support the greater good?
3. What strategies can leaders use to encourage purpose and meaning in work activities?
4. How do organizational leaders emphasize courage as a virtuous leadership attribute within your entity?
5. How do organizational leaders strengthen virtuous leadership within your entity?
6. How does your small business integrate justice to increase virtuous behaviors?
7. How do leaders use wisdom to promote behaviors that increase growth within your entity?
8. What more would you like to add regarding this study?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this study, I used the virtuous leadership theory as the conceptual framework. In 2007, Havard introduced virtuous leadership (VL) as a model that emphasizes an individual's commitment to acquiring professional excellence as the impetus for establishing high standards for performance (Havard, 2007). Through VL, leaders focus on acquiring excellence as a core element for guiding workplace performance (Cameron, 2011). Additionally, Chen (2013) noted that leaders apply VL to inspire self-cultivation and employee emulation towards organizational goals. Virtuous leaders model high

moral standards as an attribute of effective leadership (Caldwell et al., 2014; Stumpf, King, Blendinger, & Davis, 2013). Leaders' use of VL may prove instrumental in inculcating employee affinity for similar workplace behaviors. Leaders that practice virtuous attributes assist employees in characterizing their assigned workplace roles (Hackett & Wang, 2012). Hence, leaders that participate in VL may inspire and stimulate employee commitment towards small business performance.

Small business leaders may see increased performance as an attribute of applying VL in business practices. Cameron (2011) proposed that business leaders use VL as a guidance approach for developing employee commitment to the bottom-line. Karakas and Sarigollu (2013) posited that business leaders possess the ability to model behaviors that engender an affinity for virtuous characteristics. Therefore, organizations may benefit from VL characteristics (Allio, 2013) and an affinity towards performance (De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Rego, Vitória, Magalhães, Ribeiro, & e Cunha, 2013). Leaders need to commit to developing principled standards within business settings by modeling virtuous behaviors and ensuring the pursuit of such behaviors achieves desirable organizational results (Cameron, 2011). A leader's use of virtuousness within business settings may prove vital to understanding the strategies needed by leaders to promote VL for increased business performance.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Principled leadership:* Principled leadership is a moral and integrity based practice that leaders use in their decision-making process (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014).

*Virtuous behaviors (Virtues):* Virtuous behaviors (virtues) are moral characteristics as accepted by society (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

*Virtuous leadership (VL):* Virtuous leadership (VL) is a morally laudable process used by individuals in leadership positions to foster behaviors devoted to embracing principled activities and sustainable organizational performance (Cameron, 2011).

*Virtuous leadership theory (VLT):* Virtuous leadership theory (VLT) is an effective style of leadership that leaders use to model virtuous behaviors to engender employee's commitment for increased business performance.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions constitute various aspects of a study that a researcher may tacitly accept (Ellis & Levy, 2009). I made three assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that all participants replied honestly to interview questions. The second assumption was that some leaders lack strategies needed to promote virtuous behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. Finally, I assumed that patterns and themes that emerged from input provided by leaders and employees participating in this study would assist in addressing the research topic.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are investigative biases or risk inherent to researchers' study selections (Guyatt et al., 2011). The first limitation was that I used a small sample size, which may not reflect a broader business population. Next, the research findings may not include the perceptions of larger organizations, given that I limited the study to small

business leaders and employees. Lastly, my application of a single case study to collect data may have limited the range of input participants provide in this study.

### **Delimitations**

In investigative studies, researchers note delimitations as potential input not selected for study consideration (Alina, Matis, & Oriol, 2012). Three delimitations were denoted in this study. First, I delimited my study to a single case with small business leaders and employees possessing at least one year of experience with virtuous leadership. Next, my use of interviews and a physical document as data sources excluded input that I could gain through other qualitative or quantitative designs. Finally, I analyzed my findings exclusively based on VL.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

This study addresses a gap in business practice regarding how small business leaders may promote virtuous behaviors amongst employees for increased performance. Business leaders may apply strategies as a means of understanding behaviors that inspire employees to engage in increased performance behaviors. Leaders subscribe to leadership behaviors as a tool for developing business climates and performance (Cameron, 2011). Moreover, Frisina and Frisina (2011) proposed that effective leadership behaviors induce workforce engagement contribute to approximately 30% of business performance. Exploring VL behaviors may address the gap in business practice regarding leaders' application of virtuousness as a workplace tool to increase performance.

## **Implications for Social Change**

Small business performance is crucial to domestic and global societies given small businesses represent 99% of employer firms and have generated more than 65% of all employment opportunities from 1992 to 2013 (SBA, 2016). In addition, an exploration of small business decision-making may assist small business executives in understanding the value of VL as a social responsibility (Cameron, 2011). Societies may also experience greater community engagement when small business managers participate in virtuous leadership behaviors (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). The welfare of society is contingent upon the behaviors of small business leaders to increase economic outcomes (Koenig & Thomas, 2015; Nwobu, Faboyede, & Onwuelingo, 2015). Conversely, social values and trends are often enablers for the development of small business contributions to society (Azimzadeh, Pitts, Ehsani, & Kordnaeij, 2013). The virtuous leadership practices of small business leaders may be critical social change instruments that result in economic growth and increased employment.

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

This review of the professional and academic literature includes an exploration of various sources I examined to address the research problem. I used the Walden University library to access EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Thoreau databases, which I used to retrieve peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed literature on leadership, small business leadership, fundamentals of leadership, VL, and comparative leadership theories. The findings from this study may provide data to address a gap in business practice regarding the value small business leaders contribute to performance when engaging in virtuous

activities. In this study I used peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and business textbooks, which I found by searching the databases for the following keywords and phrases: *business leaders and leadership, business principles and virtuous business behaviors, leadership behaviors, leadership in practice, leadership development and guidance, leadership performance, leadership theories, organizational leadership and performance, and small business*. I collected information from 257 sources for the literature review, of which 243 (94.55%) were peer-reviewed, and 220 (85.60 %) were published between 2013 and 2016. Additionally, I reviewed one seminal book (0.39%), one business textbook (0.39%), and two government publications (.78%).

My desire to better understand leadership behaviors was the impetus for reviewing literature on leaders and leadership, leadership in practice, and leadership perceptions and development. This literature review includes a discussion of extant research on principles, virtues, leadership, and of VL and business leaders' ability to model virtuous behaviors as a viable business performance tool. My exploration of leaders' affinity for virtuous decision-making may assist practitioners and scholars in characterizing the value leadership behaviors contribute to business performance.

## **Leadership**

Northouse (2012) suggested that, in business settings, at some defined point in life individuals perform the canons of a leader. Leaders' role in the leadership process may vary and evolve based on critical business needs. Bischak and Woiceshyn (2015) conveyed that leaders use the leadership process to advocate goals and objectives as the

key organizational decision-makers. The presence of leaders in small business settings may be needed for managing performance initiatives.

In small businesses, key decision makers performing in leadership roles may prove vital to organizational performance goals. Beaman (2013) suggested that small businesses appoint leaders as a means of managing performance challenges. The role and responsibility of leaders in business may engender divergence; however, organizations require goal orientation and performance. Lamm (2014) suggested that a small business leaders' role should include responsibility for developing and sustaining business goals. In business, the terms *leader* and *leadership* may carry variable connotations and responsibilities; therefore, an exploration of each term could contribute to business behaviors may prove beneficial to small businesses.

Organizationally, leaders may possess innate authority and act as a catalyst for stimulating business objectives. Johnson (2012) framed leaders as exchange agents attempting to manage the goals and objectives of an organization. For example, the characteristics of influential employees may represent the extent of an entity's need to recruit individuals proficient in motivating corporate performance. Moreover, corporate leaders are often put in place because of an organization's recruitment of authority figures capable of leading business objectives (Johnson, 2012). The recruitment of various leaders may imply a corporate commitment to ensuring agility for business performance at every level of the organization (Lewis, Andriopoulos, & Smith, 2014; Aidis et al., 2012).

Business leaders may operate throughout business pyramids to guide follower interactions towards company goals (Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Leaders often emerge as business patricians and inspire, intrigue, and engage followers to participate in an entity's vision (Maloş, 2011). In small businesses, leaders often serve in a variety of leadership roles to accomplish established objectives (Scales, 2014). Researchers deem small business leaders as vital economic participants capable of leading performance objectives (Petkovska, 2015). Allen, Ericksen, and Collins (2013) conveyed that conducting investigative inquiry of workers is paramount to understanding how employees contribute to economic performance. Small business leadership positioning may serve as a critical means for allowing leaders to nurture and foster performance. Small businesses may benefit from a definitive outline of leadership as a critical business process for cultivating and enhancing performance (Johnson, 2012).

The term leadership has been a topic of discussion for many years among practitioners and business enthusiasts (Ahmed, Reaburn, Samad, & Davis, 2015; Wen & Chen, 2016). However, Rosch and Kusel (2010) suggested that the definition of leadership remains ambiguous from generation to generation. The essence of leadership continues to evolve (Galuska, 2014) and generate copious dialogue throughout the world (Steffens et al., 2014). Brown and Trevino (2014) and Stonehouse (2013) have suggested that multiple levels of leaders exist in management (i.e., supervisory, middle management, executive-level leadership) and assist in defining leadership at various levels of an organization's workforce structure.

The interest and interactions performed by executive-level individuals, managers, and administrators may provide a human profile of leadership. Leaders typically reside at the top of the leadership chain (Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Moreover, individuals participating in decision-making processes could make the leap from traditional management roles to leadership (Jacobs, 2014). Finally, leaders participate in the leadership process as the key primary decision-makers to influence and stimulate employee involvement in accomplishing financial performance goals (Johnson, 2012; Northouse, 2012).

Corporations recruit talented leaders to serve in leadership positions to manage the business mission, resources, and increase performance (Boivie, Graffin, Oliver, & Withers, 2016; Maloş, 2011; Wolter, Tarnoff, & Leckman, 2015). A leader's ability to meet or exceed business performance goals may depend on her or his capacity to influence group participation and employee engagement (Johnson, 2012). Bai, Lin, and Li (2016) and Lee, Martin, Thomas, Guillaume, and Maio (2015) conceptualized leadership as a respectable process that leaders use to acknowledge the skills and capabilities of followers. Jacobs (2014) proposed that a leader's capacity to influence employees and other business participants may depend on her or his ability to identify with employee challenges and successes. Furthermore, Johnson (2012) suggested that the leadership process provides an opportunity for leaders and followers to work toward mutual business objectives.

Northouse (2012) proposed that leadership signifies the capacity of leaders to influence change for the greater good of the organization. While discussions on the

meaning of leadership vary, additional ambiguity may exist on the overall value leadership contributes to business profitability (Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Organizations look to engage specific leadership skill sets as means to develop a healthy bottom-line through the effective management of business resources and objectives (Northouse, 2012). Ultimately, leadership may exist to influence employee participation in performance objectives.

In this study, leadership represents the ability of leaders to stimulate employees to increase business performance. Functionally, leadership hinges on a leader's ability to influence others based on perceived personal and positional power as idealized business decision-makers (Northouse, 2012; Bacha & Walker, 2013). The operational benefit of leadership resides in the acquired individual skills sets (i.e., training and relevant experiences) required to help ensure organizations meet outlined financial and operational goals (Northouse, 2012; Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Practically, a leader's ability to influence and stimulate employee actions towards prospective performance may rely on the leader's commitment to modelling principled behaviors.

Leaders' participation in unprincipled decision-making behaviors may signify a need for organizational executives to further explore leadership characteristics. Yazici and Siniksaran (2012) stated that leadership interactions have caused a growing concern for stakeholders. Frisch and Huppenbauer (2014) conveyed that organizational stakeholders have legitimate concerns regarding leadership participation in unproductive managerial behaviors. A leader's ineffective decision-making diminishes organizational trust and the leader's ability to generate increased performance (Aidis et al., 2012). In

reference to ineffective leadership behaviors, Cascini, DelFavero, and Mililli (2012) noted that leaders' participation in a number of unprincipled financial decisions during the early 2000s remains a concern to the business community. However, limited knowledge exists on leaders' propensity to engage in unprincipled behaviors (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011b), therefore, businesses may benefit from exploring the tenets of business principles.

A breach may exist in a leader's capacity to adhere to principled traits during decision-making (Cascini, DelFavero, & Mililli, 2012; Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). Leadership behaviors that deviate from principles could cause organizations to suffer enormous financial debt (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, 2013). Therefore, codes of conduct and regulations exist to assist executives in behaving virtuously. Modelling virtuousness (i.e., principled, right, moral, honest, trusting, and transparent) goes beyond the law (Sison & Ferrero, 2015). Internal and external stakeholders expect corporate leaders to prescribe to established guidelines as a means of mitigating cynical business activities (Walters, Thompson, & Fitzgerald, 2013).

Ineffective decisions may cause doubt among stakeholders regarding leaders' ability to adhere to principled management interactions. Shareholders and stakeholders demonstrate an interest in leaders' virtuous dispositions (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014; Yazici & Siniksaran, 2012). Leadership vices exacerbate the challenges attributed to leaders unprincipled behaviors and cause an enormous amount of unwanted attention (Cascini et al., 2012; McManus, 2011). Furthermore, ineffective management behaviors have surfaced over the last four decades, arousing great concerns about corporations' and

managers' commitment to advocating principled guidelines (Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013). By exploring leaders' behaviors and influence, organizations may be better able to establish measures to increase business performance.

**Leadership Characteristics.** A multitude of unethical business acts transpired in the 2000s, raising concerns regarding organizational participation in normative business practices (Cascini et al., 2012). Frisch and Huppenbauer (2014) have claimed that a void in principled characteristics exist in business environments. Bolino and Klotz (2015), Liu, Wright, and Wu (2015), and Wong and Li (2015) suggested that a multitude of organizations and individuals in varying business industries have participated in financial parodies as deemed by public headlines. Stakeholders are increasingly expecting leaders to adhere to internal and external codes of conduct aligned with VL tenets.

Codes of conduct may signify management's pledge to virtuous performance. The Sarbanes Oxley Act serves as a governance tool for addressing public concerns about leadership performance, representation, and accountability (Cascini et al., 2012). Advocates of corporate financial regulations introduced the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 as a means of addressing unethical business decision-making (Banerjee, Humphery-Jenner, & Nanda, 2015; Bhagat & Bolton, 2013; Malhotra, Poteau, & Russel, 2015). King and Case (2014), Weber and Wasieleski (2013), and Winrow and Winrow (2015) noted that the presence of the Sarbanes-Oxley act (as amended in 2004), the new rules by NASDAQ, and the Foreign Corrupt Practice Act, among many others, provided measures for addressing an array of unethical business behaviors. Brown and Trevino (2014) suggested that the surplus of coverage given to a business leader's capacity to guide

resources exist due to the plethora of businesses and individuals participating in ineffective business acts.

Desai (2016) posited that concerns exist among corporate leaders regarding the effects of executive behaviors on financial results. Luu (2012) proposed that the unprincipled behaviors of an assembly of successful firms in a given industry might compell other corporations to engage in similar practices. Moreover, corporate maleficence contributes to apprehensive sentiments among current and potential stakeholders (Walters et al., 2013) and may offer an opportunity for business leaders to explore leadership characteristics for improved business outcomes (Johnson, 2012). In order to bridge internal workforce and external constituency trust, business leaders must commit to demonstrating virtuous characteristics (McManus, 2011).

Corporate leaders have enormous power, which may propel them to participate in unhealthy financial leadership endeavors. McManus (2011) noted that shareholders and concerned societal stakeholders alike are interested in the increased misuse of leadership. Leaders' misuse of inherent authority may signify a lack of concern with nurturing organizational goals. Reiley and Jacobs (2016) and McManus (2011) suggested that business stakeholders' concerns include leaders' mismanagement of authority and power that deviates from organizational visions for developing business climates focused on growth.

The opportunity to improve leadership behaviors has received on-going attention (Fehr, Yam, & Dang, 2015). Leadership virtuousness continues to infiltrate the business scene (Crossan, Mazutis, & Seijts, 2013). Not prescribing to the tenets of virtuous

executive decision making may result in increased expenditures and loss of personnel.

Cascini et al. (2012) conveyed that the enactment of penalties for corporate neglect based on guidelines from The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), as enforced by the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) ranged from \$5.2 million to \$23.5 million between 1998 and late 2011. Steinway (2014) noted a mean payment of \$57.9 million and a median payment of \$9 million for organizations involved in SEC disclosures for the period ranging from 2000-2013. Such business losses may be detrimental to strategic planning initiatives and could escalate as business cultures undergo tremendous challenges to meet increased performance plans.

The lengthy history of ineffective decision-making amongst organizational leaders may have created a halo of mistrust among business stakeholders. Leaders have skewed the amount of reliance assigned by stakeholders and distressed community allegiance to leaderships' ability to guide business goals (McManus, 2011). The mere appearances of distraught business behaviors generate varying cynical perceptions among interested business constituents (Jordan, Brown, Trevino, & Finkelstein, 2011).

Companies suffer when leadership behaviors do not align with stakeholder perceptions (Desai, 2016). The demonstration of normative behaviors engenders the presence of principled characteristics (Hansen, Alge, Brown, Jackson, & Dunford, 2013). Prescribing to a set of principles assists leaders in managing behavioral responses (Bello, 2012).

Leaders' demonstration of unprincipled behaviors may affect follower and stakeholder's trust in leadership adherence to virtuous traits. Brown and Trevino (2014) proposed that virtuous leaders subscribe to morals through modeling and patterning

leadership behaviors for the assurance of enriched organizational outcomes. In concert with Brown and Trevino, Van der Voet, Groeneveld, and Kuipers (2014) suggested that leaders should demonstrate virtues in daily conversations and interactions. Therefore, committed leaders should recognize the need for professional standards in decision-making efforts and practice the virtuous values conveyed to stakeholders and employees (Gonçalves, Martins, Pereira, Oliveira, & Ferreira, 2013). Executive actions serve as a stimulant propelling employees to participate in well-designed performance targets (Gupta & Nedelea, 2015). Consequently, management crystalizes credibility through virtuous modeling of behaviors that imbue honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness (Stouten et al., 2010).

The intense attention dedicated to business operations and decision-making that emerged in the early 2000's (Cascini et al., 2012) may potentially affect the level of allegiance pledged to various organizations. Confidence shatters when corporate leaders select business behaviors that devalue the demonstration of virtuousness in decision-making (Maitland, 2010). Conversely, research provided by the Ethics Resource Center (ERC) suggested employees reporting workplace misconduct fell by 45% as compared to the 49% in 2009. However, employee and stakeholder concerns about leadership behaviors are eminent, as leaders continue to engage in ineffective decision-making (McLaughlin, 2013).

In addressing moral awareness for future leaders, Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) suggested organizational leaders demonstrate a level of invincibility when neglecting to adhere to established codes of conduct. However, organizations may require leaders'

commitment to adhere to stringent guidelines for managing behaviors regardless of prior or subsequent performance outcomes. A number of organizations encountered operational losses due to leaderships' on-going participation in ineffective decision-making practices (Yukl et al., 2013). The SEC recorded more than \$1.9 billion in monetary relief and a 25% increase in financial crises between 2010 and 2011 from organizations and leaders' violation of security laws (U.S. Security and Exchange Commission, 2011).

Luu (2012) and Sarwar (2013) advocated that leadership behaviors resonate from a stimulation to meet the bottom-line and industry cultural demands. Brown and Trevino (2014) suggested a surge in managerial literature regarding weak or negative perspectives on leaders' ability to model virtuous leadership behaviors. In this study, leader's commitment to developing positive organizational behaviors and business performance represents the presence of virtuousness in leadership. However, atypical leadership receives enormous attention (Sheraz, Zaheer, Kashif-ur-Rehman, & Nadeem, 2012) and Johnson (2012) suggested that a refusal to explore uncharacteristic executive performances increases the potential for future disparities among leadership behaviors. Moreover, Gabriele (2011) presented that leaders possess the ability to model noble characteristics as a means of advancing healthy business outcomes.

The emergence of corporate and individual business actions may concern existing and developing stakeholders. The consistency of unproductive behaviors among corporations and individuals engender concerns among potential employees who are preparing to enter the work environment (Stedham & Beekun, 2013). In addressing the

attitudes of potential and existing employees, Yazici and Siniksaran (2012) proposed that as potential decision-makers, prospective managers and employees contribute to future business climates. Organizational leaders and employees do not work in vacuums and possess a level of experience with leadership decision-making within the workplace (Aritz & Walker, 2014; Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Conceptually, Yazici and Siniksaran's contributions conveyed that prospective business participants' sensitivities must be considered as imminent attributes in addressing leadership behaviors. Friedrich, Griffith, and Mumford, (2016) and Phillips, Ray, and Phillips (2016) suggested limited knowledge exist on the direct magnitude in which leadership behaviors and actions affect others.

The permutation of prudent managerial behaviors in corporate settings may distress the amount of confidence stakeholders attribute to leadership. Leadership commitment to virtuous tenets remains a challenge even in the presence of well-established governance guidelines (Caldwell, Hasan, & Smith, 2015). However, executive involvement in business disruptions may assist in providing the impetus for exploring the effects of virtuousness in leadership for nascent and established business workers. Gabriele (2011) suggested concerns of executive business fiascos are healthy and contribute to successive discoveries. Additionally, encounters of ineffective leadership may influence the perceptions individuals, societies and various cultures assign to managerial ability to prescribe virtuousness in vigorous managerial events (Gabriele, 2011). Leadership's infinite participation in imprudent business behaviors may provide an opportunity to explore how virtuousness affects leaders' ability to influence organizational employees towards increased business performance.

**Leadership Expectations.** Organizations may commit enormous resources to attract and recruit individuals capable of leading their on-going concerns (Johnson, 2012; Maloş, 2011; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012). Business leaders may provide companies with the skill sets to manage economic endeavors (Jacobs, 2014; Northouse, 2012). Additionally, stakeholders may expect management to advance an organization's mission and model behaviors that stimulate follower participation in sustainable performance. Businesses expect leaders' commitment and engagement in meeting established goals (Chen, 2014). Therefore, leadership must develop a strategy for effectively managing expectations and resources given the need for business sustainability (Burns, 2016; Burns, Vaught, & Bauman, 2015; Newman-Storen, 2014; Wang, Van Wart, & Lebrede, 2014).

Leaders by title possess a level of positional rank (Chen, 2014) and influential power (Northouse, 2012) that may serve as a tool used to guide corporate activities. Stakeholders and community participants defer to leaders for organizational direction and guidance (Desai, 2016). Systematically, leaders establish the organizational tone (Brown & Trevino, 2014), rather consciously or unconsciously (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Executive interactions and decisions may serve as the building blocks for establishing virtuous corporate characters.

Leaders in hierarchical positions assist in establishing the organizational culture and corporate tone, which ultimately transpires down to followers (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013; Bello, 2012). Therefore, establishing and maintaining a virtuous organizational environment is under the auspices of leadership (Lawton & Páez, 2015) and ensuring

employee adherence to amicable business standards relies heavily on executive articulation and demonstration of virtuous expectations (Bischak & Woiceshyn, 2015). Comprehensively, Eisenbeiß and Giessner (2012) and Woodland and Parsons (2013) conveyed that leadership stimulus includes vertical influences (top to bottom) and horizontal participation (peers across the organizational landscape). Ultimately, company board members recruit upper management to establish business strategies and exercise the innate authority to set or alter organizational agendas (Coulson-Thomas, 2013).

Stakeholders may not expect followers to assist in developing prospective strategic planning initiatives required to manage and navigate organizational decision-making challenges. Upper level managerial responsibilities include establishing decision-making policies and setting the tone for behaviors (Ross & Squires, 2015).

Organizational use of management and leadership may often represent interchangeable connotations (Atkinson & Mackenzie, 2015). However, in business, leaders focus on fostering change and engaging in the application of new approaches to addressing sustainable concerns (Miricescu, 2015).

When acting responsible, conscientious leaders understand the inherent duty to serve as a role model, and shape administrative and operational perspectives, all while establishing the organizational culture (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011a). Performance objectives and the development of a virtuous business environment may reside with leadership. Responsible leaders understand the value of nurturing virtuous workplace relationships (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013). Moreover, business leaders cannot shrink from providing moral and performance guidance (Bello, 2012). Therefore, leaders

have a duty to inspire and foster behaviors that evoke virtues and prudence in workforce situations (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

Leadership presence and power alone may not inhabit the integrative attributes to establish a virtuous business tone. Management's prominence may not persuade effective modeling of principles activities (Brown & Trevino, 2014). Effective leadership or leaders must make every effort to develop a virtuous environment through continuous demonstration of prudent business qualities (Stouten et al., 2012). The presence of moral leadership serves as an antecedent for engendering principled followers (Gotsis & Grimani, 2015; Zhu, He, Treviño, Chao, & Wang, 2015).

Furthermore, leaders possess the power to encourage follower participation in efforts required to meet organizational goals (Brumm & Drury, 2013). In addressing the impact of leadership on an organization's environment, Bello (2012) advocated that leader's responsibilities include developing cultural expectations as a leadership tenet to lead-by-example. Corporate leadership teams may have a responsibility to engage in activities that foster strategic planning objectives and conciliate social expectations and business performance conceptions. From a comprehensive perspective, guiding organizational actions requires responsible leadership that enables follower participation in performance forecasts (Bello, 2012; Stouten et al., 2012).

Leadership may neglect to model principled-based behaviors among business participants may influence an organization's capability to meet operational objectives (Kolodinsky, Madden, Zisk, & Henkel, 2010). Therefore, leaders remain on high alert when catering to business challenges, which could affect an organization's economic

contributions and associations (Kolodinsky et al., 2010). Moreover, entities may expect leaders to demonstrate behaviors that foster virtuousness as a means of influencing positive organizational behaviors. As decision-makers, leadership has the capacity to affect a network of stakeholders (Ross & Squires, 2015). Furthermore, Hasan and Othman proposed that leaders have to understand that virtuousness as viewed through leadership personalities, values, and experiences can influence others.

Leaders may model behaviors that influence businesses to thrive in the midst of rigorous economic performance expectations. Deciding how to apply business resources and manage employee has become a complex task whereby, executives' actions reflect a lack of assurance in what decisions provide compliance (Viinamäki, 2012). Present and prospective leaders may demonstrate periods of confusion when neglecting to recognize the value sensible decision-making contributes to an entity's portfolio (Craft, 2013). Nonetheless, the value leadership contributes to a business portfolio is unquestionable (Northouse, 2012). Stakeholders and community constituents desire credible leaders capable of demonstrating values and trust in business endeavors (Hansen et al., 2013).

**Leadership Development.** Organizations may benefit from developing leaders' affinity to model virtuous deeds. Davis and Leon (2014) advocated that organizations benefit when provisions exist to develop embryonic leaders' engagement in virtuous tutelage. The amount of success attributed to upper management, directly reflects leaderships' view of the value virtuousness contribute to business continuity (McKnight, 2013). The ability of experienced and emerging corporate and small business leaders to stimulate workforce participation may prove instrumental in achieving organizational

comprehensive plans. An organization's success may depend on leaderships' commitment to develop skill sets required to guide employees in a fashion that results in maximum tangible and non-tangible outputs (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Moreover, organizations seek effective leaders that possess the capacity to influence virtuous characteristics throughout corporate boundaries (Bacha & Walker, 2013). Leaders may garner employee commitment as a tool for developing increased levels of organizational performance.

Portrayals of developing relationships between leaders and followers permeate virtuous leadership literature (Choudhary et al., 2013). However, understanding the relational attributes between management and workers provide the basis for building employee allegiance given the reciprocity between leaders and followers (Sarwar, 2013). Committed leaders and employees serve as critical resources for developing a viable organization (Pereira, Ramos, & D'Innocenzo, 2014) and function as the principal point of reference for performance efforts (Northouse, 2012). A leader's characteristics and style may have the capacity to bridge employee affinity for virtuous behaviors and organizational performance.

Upper management's commitment to lead by example provides an opportunity for leaders to apply leadership power to foster personal endeavors (Schuh, Zhang, & Tian, 2013). Executive leaders possess the capacity to model behaviors that influence and transform the follower's desire to participate in moral business characteristics (Northouse, 2012). However, management's ability to accomplish and sustain organizational performance measures represents the essence of leadership (Inyang, 2013).

Orientating employees to participate in virtuous behaviors and performances may require leaderships' demonstration and guidance in moral initiatives (Mayer, Nurmohamed, Treviño, Shapiro, & Schminke, 2013). Consequently, leaders must continue to develop skill sets as required to manage follower behaviors in relationship to the organizational vision and mission (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Leadership styles assist in developing employee enthusiasm for specific behaviors as needed in workplace performance (Hackett & Wang, 2012).

**Trust in Leadership.** Leader's commitment to demonstrate virtuous characteristics may enable followers to trust in leaderships' capacity to manage performance. Developing trust is paramount characteristic and required in building leadership patronage among stakeholders and followers (Lawton & Páez, 2015; McDowell, Harris, & Gibson, 2013; Stouten et al., 2012; Tan, Braithwaite, & Reinhart, 2014). Therefore, leadership must attempt to develop trust as an essential component of principled conduct (Peterson et al., 2012). In addressing trust in leadership, Bulatova (2015), Drescher, Korsgaard, Welpe, Picot, and Wigand (2014), Mooijman, van Dijk, Ellemers, and van Dijk (2015), and Savolainen (2014) purported that the business genre characterizes leadership as a trustworthy process closely observed and monitored by followers. The amount of trust followers affix to organizations may directly relate to leaders' behaviors. Mishra and Mishra (2013) suggested that leadership actions assist in developing followers' levels of trust in leaders opposed to the company as a whole.

Top executives' ability to build organizational trust as required to increase performance aims (Aidis et al., 2012) may directly represent business leaders' level of

experience and ability to manage performance expectations. Leaders experience various levels of social and financial responsibility within prevailing organizations (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013). In providing contributions on leadership behaviors, Yukl et al. (2013) conveyed that leaders may ascribe to unprincipled measures as a means for meeting organizational objectives if only in the short-term. However, management could dismiss any desire to participate in ineffective business cultures given the potential for adverse outcomes and economic consequences on long-term performance. Virtuous practitioners model principled behaviors as prerequisites for maintaining long-term business benefits (Demirtas, 2015; Rawwas, Arjoon, & Sidani, 2013). The level of long-term trust assigned to entities might reflect a follower's observation of leadership behaviors and experience.

### **Small Business Leadership**

The term small business venture may ignite an assortment of conjectures and connotations (Glabiszewski, 2016). Azimzadeh et al. (2013) suggested divergence exists among business literature to delineate small to medium sized enterprises. However, Cunningham, Sinclair, and Schulte (2014) advocated that the workforce sizes of small businesses or enterprises vary from less five to less than 1,000 employees. Anastasia (2015) proposed that a small businesses' employee size could consist of an average of five employees. However, the Small Business Administration categorized small businesses as independently operated entities doing business for profit with at least one employee (SBA, 2014).

Small business owners on-going concern to provide products and services is realized through the development of SMB and SME ventures (Choe, Loo, & Lau, 2013;

Azimzadeh et al., 2013). Engaging in small business may ultimately signify a need for professional achievement, self-satisfaction, self-esteem characteristics and innovation (Aranzadi, 2013; Choe et al., 2013). However, Álvarez-Herranz, Valencia-De-Lara, and Martínez-Ruiz (2011) purported that emerging business endeavors often evolve from professionally experienced and spirited individuals. Additionally, some innovative business endeavors could be a result of developmental exercise (Álvarez-Herranz, Valencia-De-Lara, & Martínez-Ruiz, 2011) such as skilled craftsmen, small shopkeepers, and restaurants (Fox, 2013; Sularto, 2016). The worth small businesses contribute to economic activities saturate business literature based on the economic influence and value of SMB's (Badulescu, & Badulescu, 2012; Azimzadeh et al., 2013). Small businesses may serve as a vital link in the assurance of economic sustainability.

Small business leaders possess the influence to engender employee patronage to participate as a team in organizational objectives (Muchiri & McMurray, 2015). As with large organizations, small business leader's previous experiences may influence organizational participants' willingness to commit to established rules and regulations (Cross, 2015). Therefore, small business enterprises rely on the principal leader's capacity and ability to guide internal governance as needed to develop behavioral affinity and solvency as elements of good business (Mihai, 2015). In business, leadership serves as a crucial asset to the success of guiding resources required to accomplish short and long-term business projections (Nixon, Harrington, & Parker, 2012). Researchers denote that leaders' behaviors serve as enablers, assisting in fostering approximately 30% of organizational business performance (Frisina & Frisina, 2011).

Leadership roles in small business may also serve as a vital resource for meeting the bottom-line. Azimzadeh et al. (2013) suggested small business entities assist in producing societal wealth and, therefore, may prove as instrumental to economic growth as large organizations. Small business leaders' engagement in the distribution of products and services has provided much needed resources for economic growth and prosperity (Koens, & Thomas, 2015; Nwobu et al., 2015). Therefore, small business leaders' ability to influence the behaviors of workplace participants may prove vital to increasing business performance.

### **Fundamentals of Leadership**

Leaders motivate and inspire followers through various forms of leadership styles (Coates & Howe, 2015). Developing team camaraderie towards organizational goals is the fundamental purpose of leadership (Miricescu, 2015). Retallick (2015) suggested that leaders must model inspiration and the need for a shared purpose for employees to commit to organizational objectives.

**Leadership Roles in Organizational Guidance.** The innate position of executives may provide a platform to shape or alter worker's attraction toward honorable leadership. Boivie et al. (2016) and Wolter, Tarnoff, and Leckman (2015) suggested that high-ranking organizational members strategically occupy established roles to assist in nurturing company values, performance, and organizational good. Silva (2014) posited that leaders occupy the highest levels of leadership positions used to manage and influence organizational participants' behaviors. Therefore, leaders apply supervision tactics to enable employees to apply moral reasoning in decision-making opportunities

(Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, & Njoroge, 2014). Leadership possesses an array of persuasive talents and influence on organizational participants.

A leader's behaviors, roles, and influence may signify the leadership topographies needed to develop and support increased performance. Organizations recruit leaders to assist in guiding business performance objectives as a tenet of the leadership process (Bello, 2012; Johnson, 2012). However, leaders guide workforce interactions as a means of establishing the functional business tone throughout the corporate landscape (Aidis et al., 2012) due to the capacity of leaders to influence employee behaviors (Almatrooshi, Singh, & Farouk, 2016; Gupta & Nedelea, 2015). Business stakeholders expect leaders to adhere to principled behaviors as virtuous leadership canons for ascertaining performance goals (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Walters et al., 2013). The attributions leadership provides to guiding increased performance outcomes may depend on the leaders' style and ability to generate workplace optimism through VL modeling.

**Leadership and Decision-Making.** Companies recruit business leaders as knowledgeable overseers to engender employee engagement as needed to advance business performance (Aidis et al., 2012; Johnson, 2012; Nasomboon, 2014). Public and private small and large organizations and non-profit leaders retain skills capable of guiding performance (Silva, 2014). Entities may rely on leaders to influence workplace participant's behaviors and business engagement levels due to their tacit knowledge and level of experience (Johnson, 2012; Maloş, 2011). However, employees have a considerable amount of workplace experience and possess knowledge regarding executive decision-making demonstrations (Gift, Gift, & Zheng, 2013). Therefore,

emerging and experienced followers may possess the aptitude to determine levels of organizational engagement based on leadership effectiveness (Aidis et al., 2012).

Organizations may experience positive performance outcomes due to leadership's ability to model behaviors that foster workplace commitment.

Traditionally, stakeholders may have perceived ineffective decision-making as neglect on the behalf of leadership to demonstrate virtuousness in daily business practices. Ineffective decision-making may symbolize an endogenous response by respected leaders to engage in business practices that neglect the value of standard regulations and governance (Aidis et al., 2012). Organizational decision-making based on personal gain and the absence of demonstrable principles may diminish stakeholder reliance on a leader's ability to effectively manage (Luu, 2012). However, executives share the capability to manage entity interactions in a moral fashion by ensuring decision-making exists in daily routines as needed to circumvent improprieties (Stouten et al., 2010).

A leader's decision to participate in ineffective judgment may only represent the attitudes and intents of the perpetrator (Mayer, Nurmohamed, Treviño, Shapiro, & Schminke, 2013). In addition, leadership involvement in ineffective behaviors may signify an array of business infractions (Miao, Newman, Yu, & Xu, 2012). Leadership divergence from standard business practices may impede performance opportunities for any business venture. Leader's contributions to ineffective management in small business settings could cause a perpetual influence of divergent behaviors, which may tarnish an entity's reputation (Graham, Ziegert, & Capitano, 2013). Nevertheless, leaders hold the

capacity to influence workforce participants' behaviors (Yidong, & Xinxin, 2013; Northouse, 2012). Furthermore, leaders exhibit the capacity to engender employee commitment to participate in the facilitation of a healthy bottom-line (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015).

Guga (2013) suggested that businesses must commit the appropriate capital and human resources required to accomplish a stated mission. Large and small enterprises alike structure business ventures as a means of addressing societal demands and financial opportunity as key economic outcomes (Hazudin, Kader, Tarmuji, Ishak, & Ali, 2015). A business executive's primary task is the management of a profitable and sustainable business (Carter & Greer, 2013; Rule & Tskhay, 2014; Waldman & Bowen, 2016).

Leadership serves as a means for articulating and operationalizing organizational mission and successive planning agendas (Graffin, Boivie, & Carpenter, 2013; Metcalf & Benn, 2013). The panacea for business success does not entirely rest on the mere existence of leadership and instead requires a commitment to business virtuousness (Cameron, 2011). Additionally, Blackburn, Hart, and Wainwright (2013) and Wiley and Lake (2014) proposed that business performance rest on leaderships' ability to engender an employee's pledge for sustainable profitability tools. Leaders' carelessness in modeling virtuous behaviors may cause an influx of small business ventures to emerge. Small businesses have emanated due to employees need for principled characteristics and commitment for high-performance self-leadership (Hazudin, et al., 2015). In a review of business leadership, Marques-Quinteiro and Cural (2012) discussed that leaders occupy

supervisory roles and must demonstrate virtuous habits to assist in guiding employee passion towards performance.

**Business Leaders' Influence.** Leaders demonstrate behaviors that stimulate employee's commitment to specific business practices based on moral provenances (Bai & Morris, 2014; Choudhary et al., 2013). An amalgamation of leadership traits provides particulates for transforming employees to subscribe to virtuous behaviors and high levels of performance (Choudhary et al., 2013; Wen & Chen, 2016). Organizations may also benefit from leadership that focuses efforts on guiding employee behaviors through service-based initiatives (Choudhary et al., 2013). Behavioral stimuli may transfer down from leaders to followers because of leadership positions and style.

Bacha and Walker (2013), Johnson (2012), Bonner, Greenbaum, and Mayer (2016), and Northouse (2012) suggested that followers routinely idealize leaders and, therefore, pursue actions that mirror executive behaviors. Therefore, increased organizational performance could reflect leaderships' ability to build a business climate fervent in modeling principled behaviors and governance (Sheraz et al., 2012). Organizations expect business leaders to model virtuous behaviors amid a formidable mix of managerial challenges, provisional performance outlooks, and sustainability initiatives (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

De Klerk (2015) postulated that small business leadership embraces creativity as a means of fostering increased performance. However, creativity alone does not represent the entire efforts of an organization's ability to increase financial resources (Bratnicka & Bratnicki, 2013). Performance outcomes in small business may be directly related to a

leader's style of leadership (Vargas, 2015) and leadership characteristics (Soo-Young, Won-Woo, & Hyoun Sook, 2013). A leaders' style of leadership is critical to workplace performance (Nasomboon, 2014; Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013). Upper-level workers that participate in the workforce as leaders, engender the capacity to galvanize employees' engagement towards increased performance (Mahdinezhad, Bin Suandi, Bin Silong, & Binti Omar, 2013).

### **Virtuous Leadership**

The community at large may refer to the traditional connotation of virtuous leadership as a commitment to highlighting actions of based morals and principles. Jordan et al. (2011) emphasized virtuous leadership as leaders' commitment to engage in standards as reflected in decision-making based on morals and values. Leader's selection of morals as a basis for participating in decisions based on values varies (Levitt-Rosenthal, 2013). Cultural variations among established standards reflect the presence of personal inferences (Stedham & Beekun, 2013). Johnson (2012) recognized that leaders express morals, standards and virtues in decision-making as interchangeable terms. Furthermore, executives' assignment of morals as the catalyst for decision-making may engender leaders' commitment to virtuous business behaviors (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

The term leadership may represent an array of individuals functioning in executive roles. Northouse (2012) advocated that many individuals have performed the canons of a leader at some stage in life. Moreover, Yang, Tsai, & Liao (2014) suggested that leaders participate in leadership as a means of advocating organizational goals and

objectives. Entities expect organizational leaders to engage in principled behaviors that reflect virtuous attributions as the impetus for stimulating employee commitment towards increased business performance (Asslander, 2013; Bright et al., 2014; De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, & McKenna, 2014). Organizational boards recruit leaders as proponents of business tone establishment, decision-making, purpose and meaning (Coulson-Thomas, 2013; Huang, Krasikova, & Liu, 2016; Ross & Squires, 2015) for the greater good (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). Furthermore, leaders model wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, and temperance as the foundational virtuous attributes (Bai & Morris, 2014; Şen, Kabak, & Yangınlar, 2013; Stacey & Stacey, 2014; Zacher et al., 2014).

**Virtuous Leadership Theory.** Customarily, leaders' application of virtuous leadership theory may signify a commitment to apply principles as the means for managing organizational activities. Leadership has the propensity to develop and guide standard organizational behaviors (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Virtuous leaders rely on fundamental characteristics identified in varying forms of leadership (i.e., servant, principled) to develop and maintain a climate of virtuous tenets (Hackett & Wang, 2012). Virtuous members apply principles and values (Viinamäki, 2012) to ensure the preservation of entity standards throughout the business environment (Bright et al., 2014). A leader's use of virtuousness in business may advance employee affinity to apply attributes of the VLT as a means of enhancing performance.

Leaders' distinction of VL may have evolved beyond their monolithic view based on principles in leadership to include virtuousness as a means of enhancing the corporate

bottom-line. Virtuous managers routinely invest numerous resources to transform business affections to assure the firms actions continuously align with cultural guidelines and expectations (Hackett & Wang, 2012). Cameron (2011) postulated that executives apply VL to focus on generating sustainability through guiding follower operational energy and passion towards the bottom-line. Leaders apply VL to exhibit a level of business aptitude for developing employee affection and elevate organizational performance (De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Zacher et al., 2014). Viinamäki (2012) proposed that virtuous leaders respect the need to build viable principled practitioners all while balancing the need to develop stakeholder affluence.

Effective leaders understand the benefit of ensuring a balanced scorecard (BSC) exists among competing business processes, relationships, and financial goals (Machado, 2013). Moreover, leaders that practice virtuous principles in contemporary markets learn to balance profitability measures with human need for guidance as tools for nurturing a balance workforce (Allio, 2013). Additionally, Bischak and Woiceshyn (2015) postulated that leaders might actually accomplish organizational goals through modeling virtuous characteristics. Comprehensively, entities building a VL platform constructed on principles, governance, and workforce engagement will experience a high level of goodwill (Reiley & Jacobs, 2016) and performance (Nasomboon, 2014). Organizations that advocate VL may experience long-term solvency (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

Leaders assist in ensuring a balance between organizational strategies, resources, communication, and overall business performance (Garg, 2013). Organizations benefit from a leader's commitment to advocate the link between the corporate vision and

mission to expected outcomes (Zou, Tian, & Liu, 2015). The wide-ranging benefit leaders contribute to small business stakeholder's trust in leadership is spatial (McDowell, Harris, & Gibson, 2013). Minimal research exists on the effect that leadership traits contribute towards follower affinity for organizational performance (Jordan, et al., 2011). Additionally, Withers and Ebrahimpour (2013) conveyed that limited research exists on SME's behaviors and attitudes towards business consciences.

Leaders apply VL to nurture a commitment of personal excellence and to instigate employees' pledge towards performance as an element of the enthralling leadership process (Havard, 2007; Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2013). The VLT has emerged as an effective style of leadership that leaders apply to engender virtuousness among employees for increased business performance (Cameron, 2011). Hackett and Wang (2012) advocated that leaders use VL to champion employees' commitment towards organizational performance. Additionally, leaders occupy the capacity to instill virtuous characteristics as a mean of guiding increased performance (Marques-Quinteiro & Curren, 2012).

The presence of virtuousness is not a communal connotation in leadership, however, the term and practice has emerged from a singular concentration of moral qualities to include business performance (Cameron, 2011). Hackett and Wang (2012) posit virtuousness in leadership as developing concept. Stakeholders and followers seek business environments that model prudence in decision-making (Allio, 2013). Additionally, Palanski, Cullen, Gentry, and Nichols (2014) suggested a leader's courage to model virtuous behaviors might affect an organizations image and performance. The

attributes of virtuousness in leadership may emerge as a model that leaders can use to increase performance.

The collective attributes of VL include a comprehensive and balanced approach to managing employee election to participate in high-performance environments (Machado, 2013). Virtuous leaders may experience increased employee engagement and performance (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Exploring a leader's affinity for virtuousness may assist in defining the strategies needed by leaders to promote virtuous behaviors in small businesses for increased growth.

**Leaders Inspiration of Purpose.** Organizational recruiters may engage the expertise of leaders for various functional purposes and meaning. Business executives' recruitment of new leaders might signify a need for workforce development, guidance, decision-making, and behavioral influence, to foster increased performance. Huang, Krasikova, and Liu (2016) postulated that leaders exist as a means to communicate and imbue a sense of purpose and meaning in employees towards performance. Leaders inspire communal support among employees to accommodate workforce customers (Booker, 2013). Kennedy, Carroll, and Francoeur (2013) advanced purpose in leadership as an opportunity for leaders to develop workforce participants' characteristics and dedication towards improved performance.

Choudhary et al. (2013) proposed that organizations defer to leaders to develop workforce stimulation towards business performance. Leaders can strategically occupy roles to provide purpose for the good of organizational members (Wolter et al., 2015). Organizational executives recruit leaders that possess decision-making skills needed to

engender employee engagement to align with organization vision and meaning (Aidis et al., 2012; Johnson, 2012; Nasomboon, 2014). Therefore, executives have the ability to inspire purpose and meanings to followers' behaviors given employees idealize the role of leadership (Bacha & Walker, 2013; Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016; Johnson, 2012).

**Leadership for the Greater Good.** Executives' recruitment of business leaders may relate to upper managements' need of employing individuals capable of inspiring employees' engagement in a broad range of business and societal objectives. Business organizations focus on securing leaders that have the propensity to propel virtuous attributions among workforce participants and the society at large (Peterson et al., 2012). Owens, and Hekman (2016) and Waddell, and Pio (2015) advocated that leaders have a sphere of influence to affect employees' ability to attain a wide-range of good and performance for an organization. Additionally, leaders possess the capacity to influence organizational efforts towards engaging the greater good for environmental and socially charged efforts (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014).

Executives seek leaders with the aptitude to stimulate workforce commitment towards the greater good of the organization. Leaders use the leadership process to exhibit a commitment to the espousing behaviors that support the greater good for the interest of all stakeholders (Wilson & McCalman, 2016). Lenka and Tiwari (2016) and Santamaria (2013) suggested that for leaders the *greater good* is espoused through a shared personal commitment to empathize and inspire employees' pledge towards business objectives and goals. Moreover, leadership is an engagement process that

executives exhibit to champion the greater good of workforce citizens (Priest, Bauer, & Fine, 2015).

**Leadership Principles.** Defining codes of conduct or principle attributes can depend on the leader's experiences, the impact of the decision on seen and unforeseen stakeholders, and even the business environment from which decisions evolve (Quick & Goolsby, 2013; Thaler & Helmig, 2016). Established standards by one leader may not be befitting to others as sensitivities may vary among organizational leaders (Kuntz, Elenkov, & Nabirukhina, 2013). Varying individual attitudes about business appropriateness may prove beneficial in addressing business principles (Men, 2012). Exploring the behaviors of leaders and employees could provide insight on business activities (Fellman, 2013).

Principled business leadership attributes may include morals, values, and virtues. Exploring the fabric of principled business behaviors from a priori lenses might signify a pledge to morals and values for virtuous leadership attributes (Hansen et al., 2013). In a review of small businesses, Cant, Wiid, and Kallier, (2013) conveyed that morals provide the guidance needed during decision-making when addressing issues associated with good or bad conduct. Decision-making based on right and wrong signify the existence of values (Miao et al., 2012). Business participants and organizations often discuss standard rules of conduct as normative business practices (Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013) as attributes of morally inspired decisions resonating from effective leadership (Jondle, Ardichvili, & Mitchell, 2014). Furthermore, Jordan et al. (2011) highlighted principled behaviors as virtuous replies that focus on selecting right decisions as standard

responses among business participants. Leadership may refer to the use of principle standards as a guidance tool for developing long-range business characteristics (Carter, 2013).

The rudiments of principles and virtues provide a basis for evaluating corporations and an individual's conduct and character (Miao et al., 2012). Businesses may apply virtues as a tool for measuring an organizations' behavioral affinity (i.e., fairness, inducement, physical environmental endangerment, personal gain, and favoritism), involving internal and external business interactions (Luu, 2012). The synergies between the traditional concepts of values, morals, principles, and standards in virtuous business behaviors may reside with stakeholders; however, leaders may apply these terms to signify interchangeable attributes within leadership discussions (Johnson, 2012). Moreover, Kolodinsky, Madden, Zisk, and Henkel (2010) advocated that a lengthy history of dialogue on leadership involvement in morally charged decision-making exists and may affect the principles assigned to virtuous business behaviors (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

Individuals may assign various attributes to VL traits based on cultural influences and inferences such as religion and national origin respectively. Levitt-Rosenthal (2013) suggested that values symbolize a reflection of time and culture and may differ throughout the world based on societal influences. Cultures vary, and such differences reflect personal evaluations including the acceptance of established standards (Stedham & Beekun, 2013). However, Peterson, Galvin, and Lange (2012) suggested a subtle difference exists among virtuous traits as perceived by emerging business decision-

makers. Gabriele (2011) proposed that principled conventions resemble virtuously charged behaviors that respect the need for regulatory compliance and natural laws as reasonable operational standards. Although principled leadership may resemble cultural attributes, the need for virtuousness in business leadership remains a topic of discussion (Stouten et al., 2012).

Nascent data exists on advancing principled leadership, although, scholars have been interested in the ideas of virtuous driven leadership behaviors for many years (Brown & Trevino, 2014). Currently, organizations invest numerous resources comprehend the concepts of noble leadership (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011a). However, while a minimal number of empirical studies exist regarding principled leadership (Yukl et al., 2013); research on reputable leadership behavior has materialized beyond the embryonic stage (Brown & Trevino, 2014; Jordan et al., 2011).

Organizational stakeholders' concerns regarding virtuous leadership behaviors may have escalated; hence, providing additional opportunities for investigating the uncultivated terrain associated with virtuous characteristics (Stouten et al., 2012). Eisenbeiß and Giessner (2012) emphasized that limited information exists in literature on principled leadership characteristics. Furthermore, limited knowledge exists as to why leaders select unprincipled behaviors as opposed to conforming to standard business measures (Kalshoven et al., 2011b). Bajraktari, Ahmeti, Alidemaj, and Nimani (2016) and Flite and Harman (2013) correlated views on virtues and guidelines as a focus of principled characteristics and principled actions correspondingly. Corroborating extant contributions on virtuous behaviors may include various parallelisms between principles,

morals, virtues, and value-based manners (Bello, 2012; Hansen et al., 2013; Kalshoven et al., 2011b). Organizations may experience increased performance when leaders model principled behaviors in business practice.

**Leadership Virtues.** The notion of selecting good over bad and adhering to right over wrong in decision-making speaks to the core and heart of business standards (Heyler, Armenakis, Walker, & Collier, 2016). Virtuous manners serve as the nucleus of leadership (Johnson, 2012). Minimal disagreements exist on the value of *good* business behaviors (Maitland, 2010). Moreover, a business leaders' demonstration of values may signify the presence of professional morality (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2013), which may serve as the underpinnings of virtuous behaviors (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013).

Organizational stakeholders expect leaders and subordinates to prescribe to virtuous behaviors that embrace good decision-making to meet corporate goals (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010). Executive decisions to model a well-defined value system may prove profitable to an organization's mission (Walters et al., 2012). Current business environments may experience increased performance with leaders that act in a manner that bridge principles as virtuous behaviors. However, providing a uniform view of good business standards may deviate from the myriad of connotations provided in modern literature and business settings (Hansen et al., 2013; Johnson, 2012). Organizational participants should understand the rich values embedded in customary processes and engage in behaviors that mitigate challenging perceptions of principled business characteristics (Gabriele, 2011).

Chughtai, Byrne, and Flood (2015) suggested subordinates view virtuous driven leaders as credible role models that exhibit principled characteristics. Bello (2012) characterized principled-based leadership as exemplifying behaviors of honesty, fairness, and concern for others. Hansen et al. suggested purpose driven decision makers expose a level of moral behaviors through a genuine concern for subordinates. Therefore, principled leadership behaviors serve as a mechanism for managing the social exchange among business relationships (Zou, Tian, & Liu, 2015). Mayer, Kuenzi, and Greenbaum (2010) fashioned morally inspired leaders as temporal role models seeking opportunities to engage followers. Moreover, Oates and Dalmau (2013) elaborated on focused leadership as an art used to motivate an organization's goals through facilitating, influencing and guiding others to participate in a moral fashion.

Positive focused leaders demonstrate and encourage virtuous actions to ensure employees follow pursuit (Mayer et al., 2010). Leaders prescribe to rigorous moral decision-making when addressing the long-term effects managerial decisions impose on internal and external stakeholders (Oates & Dalmau, 2013). Moreover, modeling standard leadership characteristics may exceed a single demonstration of virtuousness to include a continuous commitment to principled-based behaviors. Furthermore, principled leadership reflects a continuous presence of honesty, justice, and altruism (Yukl et al., 2013).

Virtuous minded leaders may model principled behaviors that engender trust and honesty as the underpinnings of a good role model (Hansen et al., 2013). Leaders should resist the notion to abandon codes of conduct in daily interactions (Greenbaum, Mawritz,

& Piccolo, 2015; Jordan et al., 2011). Principled leaders habitually conform to normative connotations as business guidance tools (Letwin, et al., 2016; Mannix, Wilkes, & Daly, 2015). Additionally, morally engaged individuals seek to provoke value-based behaviors as a symbol of a role model (Mayer et al., 2010). In this study, leadership behaviors that represent virtuous principles may prove beneficial to a business leader's ability to ascertain performance measurements.

Leaders that respond in a virtuous manner may prescribe various leadership attributes to promote virtuous behaviors amongst leaders and employees. Wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, and temperance are virtues that leaders apply in leadership that engender employees' desirability to participate in business goals (Bai & Morris, 2014; Şen et al., 2013; Stacey & Stacey, 2014; Zacher et al., 2014). Virtuous leaders in organizations exhibit an ability to demonstrate attributes that engender various distinctive characteristics (Zamahani, Ahmadi, Sarlak, & Shekari, 2013).

**Wisdom.** Wisdom is an essential element of leadership (Liu & Baker, 2016; Nayak, 2016; Yang, 2014). Dougherty (2013) advocated that leaders possess an experiential array of wisdom to ensure leadership effectiveness modeling. Schiller (2013) suggested that leaders possess the wisdom to guide and affect followers. Moreover, leaders exhibit wisdom as a tool to address organizational needs to inspire employee efforts towards performance (Bai & Morris, 2014; Dey, 2012; Greaves, Zacher, McKenna, & Rooney, 2014; Zacher et al., 2014).

Entity leaders may experience increased performance when exposed to leadership that embraces the virtue of wisdom. Greaves et al. (2014) postulated that through the

virtue of wisdom, leaders harbor the aptitude, insight, and interpersonal competence to esteem others ability concerning positive performance. Leaders strategically stimulate employee's passion for increased performance through the demonstration of wisdom garnered from existential knowledge (Dey, 2012). Bai and Morris (2014) suggested that effective leaders apply wisdom as a virtuous tenet for establishing an organizational workforce vision towards performance. Moreover, the existence of wisdom in a leader's repertoire intrinsically extends their capacity to develop workforce relationships and increase performance (Zacher et al., 2014).

**Courage.** The fundamental virtuous process of leading others may require a level of courage to foster business performance. Leaders model courage as a virtuous precept for ascertaining performance excellence (Crossan et al., 2013). Courageous leaders demonstrate a level of resilience as required for acquiring performance results (Schneider, 2014). Şen, Kabak, and Yangınlar (2013) proposed that courageous leaders possess the intellect, spirit, bravery, and creativity to motivate employee to perform at a maximum level as a means of moving the organization forward. Moreover, courageous leaders exemplify principled behaviors as a fundamental attribute of leading organizational performance (Stacey & Stacey, 2014).

Leaders may possess a level of courage when modeling virtues as a business performance attribute. A leaders' ability to demonstrate virtuous behaviors in the quest for performance requires courage (Palanski et al., 2014). Furthermore, Schneider (2014) postulated that leaders should advance the use of courage in decision-making amongst organizational participants.

**Humanity.** Engendering workforce support to venerate performance intentions may parallel the virtuous attributes of organizational leadership. Humanity involves a leader's use of virtuous excellence to recognize and attend to the strengths, uniqueness, and potential of the labor force as antecedents to developing an effective business culture (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Levine and Boaks (2014) suggested that leaders occupy virtues that embrace a Eudaimonia as an indwelling affection to contend to the concerns of others as an approach for developing employee commitment toward business goals. Moreover, humanity encompass principled leaders' propensity to model a deep virtuous code of conduct by applying respect, dignity, and transparency when interacting with employees (Eisenbeiß & Giessner, 2012).

**Justice.** The presence of justice in leadership may contribute to a leader's sphere of virtuous attributions used to increase a business performance. Bai and Morris (2014) advocated that leaders' demonstration of principled endeavors depend on the presence of the justice as a virtuous canon. Leaders that exhibit justice as a fundamental leadership practice heighten an employee's enthusiasm to engage in increased performance (Levine & Boaks, 2014). Corporate leaders' demonstration of justice increases an employee's desire to participate in business performance goals (Xueli, Lin, & Mian, 2014).

**Temperance.** Leaders must demonstrate an appreciation for developing a balanced lifestyle, which may prove essential in leadership. Bell and David (2015) and Neubert (2015) discussed temperance as a leader's ability to develop and maintain a balance lifestyle as an element of effective leadership. Temperance is a virtue that leaders must adhere to establish the type of leader that employees admire (Levine & Boaks,

2014). Virtuous leaders exemplify temperance as a precept of effective leadership (Hackett & Wang, 2012).

### **Comparative Leadership Theories**

Leaders may apply various leadership theories and styles to guide employee interactions (Cameron, 2011; Hackett & Wang, 2012; Kunnanatt, 2016; Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016). Miles, Jenster, and Gill (2014) purported that leaders should refrain from marginalizing the value of effective leadership. Leaders' application of divergent leadership models may vary, although, each theory might contribute to guiding workplace activities. Berger (2014) and Evans et al. (2015) suggested that researchers must attempt to understand the value leadership theories contribute to the practice of business.

Organizations that understand leadership theories might possess the aptitude to stimulate employee patronage (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Landis, Hill, and Harvey (2014) proposed that researchers explore various leadership theories to understand a leader's responsibility to guide and engage employees. Leaders may subscribe to various leadership theories or styles as organizational management tools (Tyssen et al., 2013). Varying leadership theories exist among leaders based on their organizational environment and behaviors (Fein, Tziner, Vasiliu, & Felea, 2015). Therefore, leaders may apply leadership theories as a reflection of their responsibilities and organizational behaviors.

Burris, Ayman, Che, and Min (2013) postulated that researchers engage theoretical models to address various business leadership propositions. Landis et al.

(2014) and Dinh et al. (2014) proposed that researchers have applied leadership theories throughout history to signify leadership behavioral attributes as used in organizational settings. Therefore, leaders may seek to adhere to specific leadership theories in managing organizational initiatives. Leadership theories such as the behavioral, participative, transformational, and virtuous theories all provide a basis for exploring leadership attributes within organizational settings (Cameron, 2011; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Virtuous leaders engender employee engagement in business performance based on moral qualities (Cameron, 2011; De Araújo & Lopes, 2015). Moreover, business leaders may prescribe contrasting theoretical leadership ascriptions in an effort to advance organizational performance.

**Behavioral Theory.** In relation to the behavioral leadership theory, leaders' behavioral attributes (i.e., trust, respect, and task) could vary in an effort to build trust among participants as an antecedent for bridging workforce engagement. Yang et al. (2014) postulated that leaders' that exhibit behavioral attributes engender mutual trust and respect among employees. Additionally, leaders that embrace the behavioral leadership theory promote rational, task, and change oriented behaviors as the catalyst for their leadership style (Ghasabeh, Reaiche, & Soosay, 2015; Maloş, 2012). Leaders that subscribe to the behavioral theory exhibit behaviors that could induce employees' trust and participation as an element of their leadership style.

**Participative Theory.** Executive leaders that model the participative theory of leadership may solicit employee opinions as a source of their decision-making in the workplace. Leaders that demonstrate participative theory attributes primarily focus on

ensuring employees are including in decision-making processes (Maloş, 2012). Through the participative form of leadership, leaders ensure the inclusion of employee comments in their of workplace decisions concerning organizational goals (Lam, Xu, & Chan, 2015). Further, Arnold and Loughlin (2013) specified that participative leaders emphasize the inclusion of employee contributions as an element of their decision-making. Therefore, participative driven leaders may focus on soliciting employee opinions as the emphasis of their style of leadership.

**Transformational Theory.** Ghasabeh, Reaiche, and Soosay (2015) contributed the birth of the transformational leadership theory (TLT) to James MacGregor Burn's 1978 writings on leadership. The introduction of transformational leadership as viewed by Burns (1978) focused on morality and motivation (Phipps, Prieto, & Verma, 2012). Transformational forms of leadership go beyond the quid-pro quo of rewards as stimuli for participant engagement towards performance targets (McKnight, 2013; Mencl, Wefald, & van Ittersum, 2016; Tang, Kwan, Zhang, & Zhu, 2016; Zhu et al., 2013). Organizational leaders use transformational leadership theory as a tool of advocating charisma and sensitivity to stimulate follower participation in workforce behaviors and desirability to engage in organizational expectations (McKnight, 2013; Muenich & Williams, 2013; Sheraz et al., 2012). Lanaj, Johnson, and Lee, (2016) and Nikolic and Robinson (2013) and You-De, You-Yu, Kuan-Yang, and Hui-Chun (2013) suggested that business practitioners and enthuses apply the transformational leadership theory as a resource for influencing employee behaviors and performance potential. Moreover, Emmanuel and Ugochukwu (2013) suggested that the transformational theory of

leadership represents the premier theoretical approach to exploring follower behaviors and organizational performance. Organizational leaders applying transformational leadership to manage business on-going concerns may experience high levels of follower participation and performance.

Leaders may apply contrasting leadership theories as plausible management tools (Politis, 2013; Tyssen et al., 2013). However, Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Gumusluoglu (2013) and Van Wart (2015) referred to transformational leadership theory as possessing a considerable level of leadership efficacy due to the ability of the leader to engender employees to internalize organizational objectives. Organizational leaders adhering to transformative forms of leadership stimulate employee's personal absorption of workplace values and expectations as their own (Towndrow & Vallance, 2013; Van Wart, 2015; Yang, 2016). Transformational leadership is analogous to virtuous leadership given that leaders focus on stimulating employee pledge to organizational objectives and performance (Cameron, 2011; Hackett & Wang, 2012; Katou, 2015; Ryu, 2015; Zhu et al., 2013).

### **Summary**

Business enthusiasts and organizations connotation of leadership signifies varying degrees of business responsibility (Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Although typically ambiguous, leadership is a process that leaders adhere to promote an organizations business goals and objectives (Yang, Tsai, & Liao, 2014). Through the leadership path, leaders garner employee patronage as required to accommodate performance initiatives (Beaman, 2013; Tu & Lu, 2016; Van Knippenberg & van Kleef, 2016). In small business, a leaders' role

includes a commitment to sustaining an entity's performance (Lamm, 2014). Leaders often apply varying leadership theories to assist in meeting organizational demands (Cameron, 2011; Desai, 2016; Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016). Transformational, behavioral, participative, and virtuous leadership theories are among various leadership models leaders use to guide employee interactions towards business performance goals (Cameron, 2012; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Cameron (2011) offered VL as a plausible pathway for engendering employee patronage towards virtuous behaviors for business performance. Leaders apply various styles of leadership to prompt employee benefaction (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014; Tyssen et al., 2013). However, leaders may use VL as a guide for understanding leadership attribution for developing employee behaviors and motivating business performance.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 1 of this study, I propose the foundation for the study applicable to the problem and purpose statements, nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, definitions, significance of the study, and a review of the literature. In Section 2, I provide the purpose statement and concentrate on the role of the investigator, participants, research methods and designs, population and sampling, ethical research, the data collection instrument, data collection and organization techniques, data analysis, and the reliability and validity of my study. In Section 3, I presented the study findings.

## Section 2: The Project

The objective of this study was to assist small businesses in reviewing leadership behaviors as potential antecedents for promoting a virtuous business climate to increase business performance. This section includes the purpose statement, a discussion of my role as researcher, identification of study participants, and a discussion of the research method and design. Additionally, I discuss population and sampling, ethical research considerations, data collection, data analysis techniques, and reliability and validity considerations.

### **Purpose Statement**

In this study, I used a qualitative method and a single case study design to explore strategies that leaders in small businesses use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors for increased business growth. I conducted semistructured interviews with small business leaders and employees located in the greater Houston metropolitan area who have at least one year of virtuous experience in a professional organizational setting. The study findings may contribute to social change by advancing virtuous leadership as a tool that leaders could apply to increase business performance, which may lead to employment opportunities and increase the delivery of products and services.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the investigator, my data collection included the use of semistructured interviews and open-ended questions. The role of the researcher extends to an active participation in data collection to engage a deeper understanding of the topic question (Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2012). In qualitative research studies, investigators serve as

the main data collection instrument (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). I served as the sole source for data collection and analysis, and I worked to ensure integrity and confidentiality.

I bring more than 20 years of experience working in administration and business performance roles for large and small businesses. A researcher's knowledge of the study topic should serve to augment a thick description of the phenomenon under review (Knight et al., 2013). As a college operations officer (COO), director of operations, administrator, and business manager, I have participated in many organizational roles including but not limited to budgeting, planning, financial projections, and the interviewing, training, and evaluation of employees. I had no personal or professional relationships with the study participants.

The protection of study participants' involvement and input in research remain a crucial task for researchers (Amon, Baral, Beyrer, & Kass, 2012). Researchers apply ethic principles throughout the study process while interacting with study participants (Pollock, 2012). Ponterotto (2013) and Oliver (2012) noted that researchers must subscribe to an ethical protocol when performing research as a means of safeguarding participants' inclusion and input. Stichler (2014) suggested that well-planned investigative studies ensure the protection of the human subjects included in research. I adhered to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines as means of protecting respondents' involvement and input in this study.

Protecting and preserving the rights of human subjects is essential for strengthening research (Juritzen, Grimen, & Heggen, 2011). By completing The National

Institute of Health Human Subject Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training course (Appendix F), I came to a better understanding of the needed protections for, and rights of, participants in this research study. I reviewed the Belmont Report (1979) ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects to ensure that I understood and complied with them. Mikesell, Bromley, and Khodyakov (2013) proposed that researchers should refer to the Belmont Report as a mechanism to protect the rights of research participants. Therefore, my intent was to follow these guidelines to ensure proper protection and handling of human subjects in this research study.

As the primary instrument, my intent was to collect and transcribe participants' interview input, and to refrain from any personal sensitivity biases in an effort to ensure valid study results. Ponterotto (2013) recommended that researchers refrain from data deception and ensure study content remain credible and dependable. Ponterotto further suggested that qualitative researchers use interviews as a conventional instrument for collecting participant's raw data. I collected study participants' responses in semistructured interviews.

Researchers must demonstrate beneficence by demonstrating respect for each participant involvement. I demonstrated respect for each participant's input throughout the research study process in an effort to ensure beneficence. Investigators must ensure that respondents receive adequate protection when participating in research studies (Marrone, 2015). Miller, Hayeems, Li, and Bytautas (2012) advocated that researchers should demonstrate respect for all persons participating in a study and ensure beneficence through informing participants about the broad nature of the study. Pike (2012)

postulated that research respondents should understand the fundamental aspects when participating in a study and the obligation of care provided by the investigator.

Researchers use interview protocols to ensure the collection of viable and reliable data (Yin, 2014). I used an interview protocol (Appendix D) as (a) a logical interview format for providing directions, (b) an instrument for collecting participants' data, and (c) a basis for recognizing emerging themes. Gross, Wallace, Blue-Banning, Summers, and Turnbull (2012) proposed that investigators use interview protocols to ensure precision during the collection. Furthermore, researchers use the interview protocol as a technique to elicit respondents' input to specific questions (De Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013). Moore, Harris, and Bradlyn (2012) advocated using an interview protocol as a structured means to collect participants' data related to the study topic. Moreover, researchers apply an interview protocol as a means of noting developing themes to assure data saturation (Shen-Miller, Forrest, & Burt, 2012).

### **Participants**

I emailed a request for a research partner to forward a study invitation letter (Appendix B) to small business executives located in the GHMA with the intent to identify existing leaders and employees with at least one year of VL experience. Mullins (2013) and Miller and Schertzer (2014) conveyed that participant eligibility and selection should reflect the research topic. In regards to inspiring virtuous relationship and performance, leaders and employees serve as collaborative workplace participants (Van Gils, Van Quaquebeke, van Knippenberg, van Dijke & De Cremer, 2015). Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman, and Kidwell (2011) postulated that leaders and employees possess

the aptitude to develop company personnel towards increased performance. Within the framework of small business, Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard (2012) stated that leaders and employees work in tandem to propel organizational objectives. Subordinates and leaders share a level of co-dependency as workplace contributors (Van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2013). Employees and leaders work as a human community focused on enhancing performance (Hrncir & Metts, 2012). Moreover, leaders and employees possess the experiences to provide discernment on the promotion of virtuous behaviors and performance (Walumbwa et al., 2011).

I used the State of Texas Comptroller public database to collect information on small businesses located in GHMA. Freeman (2014) acknowledged that public data is accessible at the local, county, or state level. In the context of research repositories, Borgman (2011) advocated the access of public archives to develop or advance research. Moreover, Krohwinkel (2014) discussed accessing of public records as a means to identify specific documents for research inclusion.

I received an organizational intent to participate letter (Appendix E) via email, prior to IRB approval, from an authorized representative stating that the organization was willing to participate in this study. Next, I emailed a request for a research partner to forward a study invitation letter (Appendix B) to an authorized representative at the study site. I received an email from the authorized representative agreeing to forward an introduction letter (Appendix A) to company leaders and employees regarding the potential to participate in this study. By distributing the study invitation letter, the authorized representative informed potential participants that they could contact me

directly to confirm their intent to participate in this study, at which point I would email them an informed consent form (Appendix C).

Chester and Khunti (2012) advocated acquiring organizational approval prior to requesting participants' input. Researchers need to seek formal organizational approval to engage workforce participants (Casimir, Lee, & Loon, 2012). Koskiniemi and Perttula (2013) stated that researchers should secure permission from an entity's administrators prior to conducting employee interviews. Similarly, Plankey-Videla (2012) observed that researchers should obtain assent from organizational gatekeepers to access employees. I received the organizational intent letter prior to obtaining approval to access an assigned space within the entity in which to audio record participants' input to interview questions.

My intent was to define VL in the introductory letter (Appendix A) to ensure participants understood the meaning of the terms. Additionally, I expressed my past involvement in small business at the onset of each interview, which served as my strategy to facilitate rapport and in-depth data collection. Lyons et al. (2013) proposed that researchers communicate with participants to build a relationship as a means of collecting study data during the interview process. The building of relationships is an essential tool that researchers use to enable the collection of data from study participants (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014). Doody and Noonan (2013) conveyed that researchers build rapport during the interview process as a data collection advantage that may ensure an in-depth communication of experiences. Hence, a discussion of my previous interactions in small business occurred to build a relationship with participants to enable study topic dialogue.

## Research Method and Design

Using a qualitative single case study design, I explored strategies for small business leaders to promote virtuous climates for increased business growth. Researchers use a qualitative method as a means of describing, in participants' own words, the experience of participants regarding a specific phenomenon (Kiage, 2013; Krizman, 2011). Yin (2011) suggested that qualitative researchers should collect participants' individual experiences to understand a research topic. Additionally, Krizman (2011) proposed that researchers apply qualitative research as a plausible method for collecting and interpreting participants' raw data as related to the phenomenon.

In case studies, the investigator seeks to gain an in-depth collection of data to explore a specific phenomenon (Connelly, 2014). Klonoski (2013) framed case studies as a data collection process that researchers use to explore input from a particular group as needed to address the study topic. Wahyuni (2012) advocated the ability of researchers to collect and compare multiple data sources in a multi-case study or in a single case study. Additionally, Birkinshaw, Brannen, and Tung (2011) asserted that the case study design is a process that researchers apply to collect data on naturally occurring phenomena. Mariotto, Zanni, and Moraes (2014) emphasized that researchers use case study designs to investigate instinctively occurring phenomena within business settings.

### Method

I selected the qualitative method for this study. The qualitative approach offers researchers an opportunity to focus on a specific phenomenon (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Moreover, qualitative research serves as a mechanism for divulging elements of personal

experiences associated with observable facts (Szyjka, 2012). Kiage (2013) postulated that researchers apply qualitative methods to provide descriptive explanations of study content.

Qualitative researchers use interpretation to assist in exploring a phenomenon (Krizman, 2011). Additionally, Denzin (2012) propositioned qualitative inquiry as an interpretive research method to explore participants' perspectives regarding a specific research topic. Moreover, Kiage (2013) suggested that researchers apply the descriptive attributes of qualitative research as a means to express research participants' input. A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study since I explored the study topic through the collection of participants' contextual input and observations.

Quantitative researchers employ the value between numerical forms to confirm study results (Lunde, Heggen, & Strand, 2013). According to Zachariadis, Scott, and Barrett (2013), researchers prescribe the quantitative research method as a quantification tool for substantiating research findings. Birkinshaw et al. (2011) advocated the quantitative research methodology as a form of providing measurements to test a hypothesis. Additionally, Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) advanced quantitative research as a methodology in which researchers apply statistical and inferential measures to corroborate results. No hypothesis testing or application of statistical measurements to substantiate data occurred; hence, a quantitative method was not appropriate for this study.

Mixed methods researchers apply elements from qualitative and quantitative methods to describe and substantiate participants' data input (Peterson et al., 2013).

Additionally, Zachariadis et al. (2013) discussed the application of a mixed method approach to explore a phenomenon using qualitative research for descriptive inferences and quantitative research for variable analysis. A mixed method approach is a comprehensive analysis of explanatory and statistical inferences as viewed in quantitative work, and the rich inquiry as seen in qualitative work (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). I did not blend naturally contextualized insight in qualitative inquiry with statistical inferences as in quantitative research; hence, the mixed method was inapt for this study.

### **Research Design**

According to Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013), researchers apply qualitative research designs to explore specific phenomenon. Qualitative research designs include phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The phenomenological design is used in investigative inquiry to explore study participants' lived experiences (Weiner, Amick, Lund, Lee, & Hoff, 2011). Additionally, Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2013) referred to phenomenology as a design applied by researchers to collect human existential experiences. Moreover, Bevan (2014) added that through a phenomenological design, a researcher describes participants' experiences in the way the familiarities occurred. Since I explored the lived experiences, the phenomenological design was not applicable.

I did not apply the narrative design in this study. Accumulating study participants' contextual influences regarding a specific topic falls within the scope of the narrative design (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). McMullen and Braithwaite (2013) posited that researchers exert the narrative design as an inquiry for collecting data through

participants' storytelling. Moreover, investigators apply the narrative design to focus on storytelling and journaling as a meaningful data collection format (Hays & Wood, 2011). My collection of sources included interviews and a physical document (i.e., mission and goal statement) as raw data; therefore, asking participants to share stories as demonstrated in the narrative design was not appropriate for this study.

Crede and Borrego (2013) conferred that researchers use observations and interviews in an ethnography design. Wolcott (1994) advocated that researchers apply an ethnographic design in fieldwork to gain data through observation. Investigators engage in observation as the core field activity in an ethnography research design (Hegner, 2013). However, the ethnography design was not appropriate for this study since the core collection activity did not focus on observing research participant interactions to explore the study topic.

The grounded theory design allows the investigator to generate a theory grounded on the collection of raw data (Hoflund, 2013). In the grounded theory approach, investigators continuously analyze and review data constructed on interactions as grounded in the views of study participants (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). Moreover, Higginbottom and Lauridsen (2014) conveyed that researchers apply the grounded theory design as a means of developing a theory based on systematically analyzing participants' data input. A grounded theory design was not viable for this study since I did not develop a theory.

Wiles, Crow, and Pain (2011) proposed that researchers apply the qualitative case study design to focus on addressing a specific event. Petty, Thomson, & Stew (2012)

referred to case studies as a means of collecting participants input through interviews, observation and tangible documents. Nolen and Talbert (2011) suggested that in case study design, researchers seek multiple case observations in exploring specific phenomena. Birkinshaw et al. (2011) discussed the case study design as a tool applied by researchers to assist in collecting first hand data on naturally occurring phenomena. Multi-case studies engender artifacts, audiovisual and physical data documents to address investigative inquiry (Yin, 2011). Moreover, Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift (2014) proposed that case studies are the most flexible of the five designs in qualitative research. The selection of varying cases, sites, and data sources are innate flexibility attributes that researchers may find useful in verifying assertions in a case study design (Nolen & Talbert, 2011; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Therefore, my design included a case study based on the availability of multiple data sources (i.e., business documents and interviews) to explore the study topic.

### **Population and Sampling**

In this study, I identified and selected study participants based on purposeful sampling. Armstrong et al. (2013) conveyed that through purposeful sampling researchers gain access to a wide range of experiences, which may lead to information-rich cases (Palinkas et al., 2013). Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016) discussed purposeful sampling as a credibility tool used to select participants based on study intent. Additionally, Sonenshein (2014) referred to purposeful sampling as a means of collecting data from a specific group of participants. Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam (2013) proposed

that researchers apply purposeful sampling as a tool for delineating particular subjects needed for investigative inquiry.

Yin (2014) advocated strategically using existing knowledge of organizations or individuals to identify a potential pool of participants or selecting cases. Njie and Asimiran (2014) postulated that researchers should focus on collecting data from a sample size based on depth and richness of data needed to address the study topic. Rao (2012) advanced that selecting a sample size is essential to the study topic and given that, the appropriate sample selection may increase study ethicality and cost-effectiveness (Guo, Logan, Glueck, & Muller, 2013). Azzi, Battini, Faccio, Persona, and Sgarbossa (2014) noted the use of 10 participants in a case study as an adequate sample size in exploring data from SMEs. Moreover, the use of at least 10 participants serves as a sufficient sample in case study research (Hanson, Balmer, & Giardino, 2011). I used three leaders and seven employees from one small business as the sample size for this study.

A direct relation exists between the sample size and data saturation (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) proposed that collecting data from a sample of participants until data saturation exists. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) suggested that data saturation exist given researchers' achieve the breadth and depth of data. Data saturation involves researchers' efforts of collecting data until no new themes emerge (Hanson et al., 2011; Roy, 2012). Additionally, Dworkin (2012) posited that investigators review additional participant input until no new relevant data emerges. Moreover, Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) suggested that the lack of new themes or

emerging data signifies the presence of data saturation. My efforts included the continuous interviewing of leaders and employees until no new themes emerged to assure data saturation.

In this study, the participation criterion included leaders and employees currently working for small businesses that embrace virtuousness among business activities. Leaders exemplify individuals with the inherent and expressed authority to manage and guide business objectives (Aidis et al., 2012; Jacobs, 2014; Northouse, 2012; Johnson, 2012). Moreover, employees represent individuals within the workforce that receive guidance from leadership (Coombs, 2014). In discussing small business employment, Gialuisi (2011) conveyed that the success of small business depends on the collective contributions of leaders and employees. The utilization of small business leaders and employees may contribute to understanding the strategies needed by small business leaders to promote virtuous climates for increased business growth.

Aminul Islam, Aktaruzzaman Khan, Obaidullah, and Syed Alam (2011) discussed leadership and employee interactions as the catalyst for developing a performance driven small business. Small businesses occupy a significant role in promoting economic performance throughout the United States (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2016; Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015). I collected data from small business leaders and employees located in GHMA. Participating leaders and employees from small businesses provided input on the strategies needed by leaders and employees to promote increased business performance based on their roles and experiences.

I conducted interviews on-site, in a private location, at the participant's organization. Investigative interviewers should select a site familiar to the interviewee in which to conduct the interview (Chenail, 2011). Marshall and Rossman (2014) espoused that research interviewers should consider the potential interview site in an effort to enhance the collection of study data. Turner (2010) posited that researchers should ensure the interview site is appropriate, whereby, study participants feel comfortable in sharing study topic input.

### **Ethical Research**

I communicated the study intent, procedures, risks and benefits, withdrawal protocol, and privacy and confidentiality measures on the informed consent (IC) form (Appendix C). Whitley and Kite (2013) recommended that investigators employ informed consent as an ethical research tool. Additionally, investigators use the IC to advise respondents of the study intent, right to engage in the research, and the freedom to withdraw from participation (Whitley & Kite, 2013). Researchers must ensure that respondents have signed a consent form to participate in a study (Agnew & Jorgensen, 2012).

Participants could have selected to withdraw from the study prior to data analysis by notifying me via email. Bromwich and Rid (2014) stated that research participants have the right to voluntarily engage in research studies. No participant received an incentive for participation.

The preservation of anonymity, as required in ethical research guidelines, may prove instrumental for respondents' willingness to participate in research studies

(Beskow et al., 2012). Pollock (2012) proposed that researchers exercise ethics to guide the research process and study results. In addressing the presence of ethics in qualitative research, Ponterotto (2013) inferred that a good qualitative inquiry assures the study includes an anchored research paradigm and facilitated by appropriate protocol. My Walden University's approval number for this study is 07-07-16-0376227 and it expires on July 6, 2017. Therefore, I conformed to the guidelines established through the Walden University IRB process as required for participants' approval and safeguarding of data sets. The rights of participants should remain a priority in investigative studies (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013; Oliver, 2012). Moreover, Beskow et al. (2012) advocated that researchers must adhere to the legal obligation of ensuring privacy and the safeguarding of participants' data.

All participants received an exclusive identifier to safeguard the privacy of individual respondents and identification. Sari and Altiparmak (2012) suggested applying alphanumeric identification to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. Therefore, I assigned the letter L to represent leaders, the letter E to represent employees, and sequential numbers to represent each leader and employee participating in the single case study. Hence, a combination of letters and successive numbers accompanied each leader (i.e., L1, L2), and employee (i.e., E1, E2), that participated in the research study as a means of ensuring their information and identity remain confidential. Investigators apply identity coding in research studies to ensure non-traceability and safeguarding participants' anonymity and input (Kelly et al., 2013).

Small business leaders and employees' participation and data will remain confidential (Appendix C). Beskow et al. (2012) advocated that researchers have a responsibility to maintain participants' anonymity. Research participants have a right to assume the preservation of data collected during individual inquiry (Adinoff, Conley, Taylor, & Chezem, 2013). Moreover, Wahyuni (2012) encouraged using a locked cabinet to safeguard and preserve data. I stored all data in a locked fireproof safe for a period of 5 years to protect confidentiality of the participants.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Data collection is a crucial element in case study work (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). In this study, I served as the primary instrument for collecting all data. Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) depicted researchers as the human instrument when addressing and collecting raw data. As the key instrument, researchers must serve as the personal interview facilitator in accumulating respondents' personal perspectives on the study phenomenon (Chenail, 2011). Additionally, Postholm and Skrøvset (2013) suggested that as human instruments, an investigators' role is to guide and frame the research.

I conducted semistructured interviews as part of the data collection process. Hays and Wood (2011) suggested that semistructured interviews are an adequate data collection instrument. Semistructured interviews are utilized by researchers to allow participants an opportunity to share data based on specific set of questions as a means of collecting personal experiences (Struyve, Meredith, & Gielen, 2014). The one-on-one nature of the semistructured interview process applied in qualitative research permits the

researcher to collect in depth data based on participants' ability to provide continuous responses to questions (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014).

Investigators employ pre-established questions in semistructured interviews to reduce interviewer bias (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Asif and Rodrigues (2015) relayed that the semistructured interview format is a widely used qualitative instrument for acquiring participants' input. In case studies, Redshaw and Frampton (2014) viewed semistructured interviews as a guide to address questioning based on the study topic. Additionally, Barratt, Choi, and Li (2011) suggested that investigators might apply semistructured interview as a suitable means of collecting raw data in a case study design. Applying semistructured interviews based on specific interview questions (Appendix D) may assist in acquiring respondents' perceptions on my study topic.

In addition to conducting interviews, I collected a physical document (i.e., mission or vision statement) for data triangulation. Case study work involves the collection of a comprehensive array of interviews and tangible documents (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). In a case study, investigative inquiry can include interviewing, and collecting participants' physical documents from an array of sources for comparison purposes (Smebye, Kirkevold, & Engedal, 2012; Yin, 2011). Moreover, Dabić and Stojanov (2014) advocated that within qualitative case studies, researchers conduct interviews and access various documents (i.e., physical sources) as vital sources of input.

I applied a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix D) as a guide to conduct face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviewing is a primary instrument for collecting research data (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Through a face-to-face interview,

researchers have a distinct opportunity to apply their senses to collect respondents input (Xu & Storr, 2012). Comprehensively, investigators conducting face face-to-face interviews with participants may enable rich responses and data collection (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013; Xu & Storr, 2012).

My interviews did occur in a designated private space within the participants' entity in which the respondent is comfortable in providing input to questions. Interviewers should select a site conversant to the participants (Chenail, 2011). Interviewers seek interview sites in which the participants feel relaxed and comfortable in contributing information as desired (Turner, 2010). Marshall and Rossman (2014) suggested that researchers select interview sites as a means of enhancing participants' potential to respond to each question. The location researchers select to conduct interviews is important to the interviewees' willingness to respond to proposed questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The presence of research reliability and validity are instrumental elements in determining the integrity of data results (Krizman, 2011). In this single case study, I conducted interviews to collect responses, and organizational documents to assist me in validating the credibility of sources to address the research topic. Reliability and validity is regarded as necessary in the provision of rigorous science (Gage & Scott, 2014). The collection of data based on the research topic should increase plausibility in the amount of reliability and validity contributed to the study content (Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013).

Every participant in the study received a summary of their personal interview transcript to confirm and substantiate data authenticity and accuracy as a means of member checking. Torrance (2012) referred to member checking as a process in which the investigator verifies the accuracy and validity of their findings with each participating member. Marshall and Rossman (2014) characterized member checking as a practice that researchers exert to confirm interviewer findings with actual study participants for authenticity and accuracy. Member checking is collaboration between the interviewer and study participant to corroborate transcriptions and other documented context for verification and accuracy (Harvey, 2014). Caldwell (2013) stressed the application of interviewing, data evaluation, and member checking as a technique used to enhance the reliability and validity of research findings. I emailed a summary of my interpretation of the individual interview responses to each study respondent for authentication and to confirm verification as a means of member checking to ensure data reliability and validity.

### **Data Collection Technique**

This study includes my exercise of interviews as the data collection technique to accumulate respondents' input. Xu and Storr (2012) conveyed that researchers applying interviewing as a data collection technique have an advantage of personally using all their senses during the interview to collect participants' input. Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2012) purported researchers use the interview technique to ensure the comprehensive collection of participants input. Additionally, Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) proposed that researchers conducting interviews possess a higher level of flexibility in the inquiry

process. The interviewer has control during the interview process (Stanton & Walker, 2013). The benefit of enabling participant responses to questions in a one-on-one setting could prove substantial to addressing a research study topic (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013; Seidman, 2012; Stanton & Walker, 2013; Xu & Storr, 2012).

My efforts included asking open-ended questions to collect data and gain insight from small business leaders and employees. The open-ended question format is a tool researchers utilize to allow respondents to share constitutive detailing of experiences related to the phenomenon under review (Seidman, 2012). Additionally, researchers apply open-ended questioning to stimulate participants' willingness to divulge detailed responses about the study topic (AbuSabha, 2013). Moreover, Doody and Noonan (2013) suggested researchers prescribe open-ended questioning as an investigative data collection technique to enable participants to respond without reluctance of expression. Through open-ended questioning, leaders and employees may feel free to provide in-depth study topic responses.

I used a voice recorder to audio record all individual interviews. Researchers often include audio recording as a technique to collect respondents' interview input (Al-Yateem, 2012). Stone-MacDonald and Stone (2013) postulated that investigators use audio recordings as a repository system for collecting and deciphering participants' contributions to the study topic. Moreover, Berazneva (2014) suggested that researchers use audio recording as a quality tool to collect and check for gaps in participants' input. I used a Phillips® digital voice recorder (DVT2500) to record interviews subsequent to

participants' approval (Appendix C). Obtaining participants' permission to record the interview prior to questioning is paramount in ensuring communicative trust (Rowley, 2012). The digital recorder may prove a vital for collecting interviewee responses during the inquiry process (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Additionally, Moorkens (2013) referenced the use of a voice recorder to record participants' input during face-to-face interviews. My receipt of participants' permission to record interviews ensured an appropriate and accurate collection of audible input.

In the context of data clarity, I used a journal as an additional source to log participants' responses and fully document any expressive or non-verbal cues during my investigative interviews. Journaling notes during an interview might assist in collecting data (Lunde et al., 2013; Wahyuni, 2012). Investigators include case logs as an additional tool for collecting participants input (Arca et al., 2014; Lamb, 2013). Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) noted that researchers use detailed notes to identify respondents' data contributions to a study topic. In addition, personal field notes complement interview recordings to ensure a level of accuracy and consistency (Petty et al., 2012). Journaling respondents' input to study questions might enhance interview accuracy (Urban, Burgermaster, Archibald, & Byrne, 2014). In case study research, investigators combine multiple data collection techniques (Alex, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). In an attempt to ensure input accuracy, I used a journal as an additional source to collect and denote participants' input during the interviews.

Investigators use the input collected from participants to provide a rich understanding of the study topic (Kragelund, 2013; Rollans, Meade, Schmied, & Kemp,

2013; Sinkowitz-Cochran, 2013). Gaižauskaitė (2012) postulated that researchers might not experience a high level of respondents' interaction using interviewing. Walker (2013) suggested the need for participants to meet in person with the researcher as a potential disadvantage of the interview study instrument. Additionally, Baillie (2013) suggested that investigators risk collecting marginal input when applying interviewing as the data collection instrument.

Investigators applying interviews as a collection tool experience the flexibility of selecting an open-ended face-to-face inquiry (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013; Rowley, 2012; Rowley, 2014). Interviewers ask open-ended questions to enable participants' willingness to provide responses (AbuSabha, 2013). Doody and Noonan (2013) also advocated that researchers primarily subscribe to one-on-one questioning as a means of collecting participant's in-depth contextual input on the study topic. Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011) stated that researchers should use at least four or more open-ended questions during an interview to ascertain rich data. Rowley (2012) advocated that investigators use of 6 to 12 flexible interview questions represent an appropriate inquiry number for collecting study participants' input.

Yin (2013) advocated the use of a small number of cases to explore in-depth data regarding a specific study topic. In case studies, investigators may focus on collecting data that is directly associated with the study topic. Researcher's primary emphasis is to ascertain rich data as a fundamental criterion for deciding the number of cases (Ganguly, 2013). Moreover, Mookherji and LaFond (2013) referenced the use of a single case as a sufficient source in exploring data regarding a specific study topic. In this single case

study, I triangulated interviews and a physical source to explore strategies that are needed by leaders to promote VL in small businesses for increased growth.

Each interview took approximately 45 minutes. Gold, Petrilli, Hayes, and Murphy (2014), and Tew et al. argued that 45 minutes is a sufficient length of time to conduct an interview for collecting study topic input. Wahyuni (2012) conveyed that interviews should not last more than 90 minutes. Yu (2012) referenced the use of at least 25 minutes as a means of collecting respondents' study input.

Participants received an email summary of my interpretation of individual interview responses for member checking. Harvey (2014) proposed member checking as a tool researchers use to corroborate the accuracy and validity of transcription context with study participants. Through the application of member checking, interviewers have an opportunity to confirm the authenticity and accuracy of transcribed data with interviewees (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Additionally, Caldwell (2013) conveyed that researchers apply member checking to validate the accuracy of communication of study participants' input. Torrance (2012) characterized member checking as a process that investigators use to collaborate with interviewees to confirm and ensure data authenticity and representation respectively.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

Investigators may apply various techniques to organize research data (Alex, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). I transcribed interviews into Microsoft® Word and then transfer data to NVivo® 11 qualitative software for organization and analysis.

Researchers use software to enhance the accuracy of data assimilation, evaluation,

coding, and indexing (Einwohner, 2011; Gibson, Webb, & Lehn, 2014; Patterson et al., 2014; Peakall & Smouse, 2012; Wilkerson, Iantaffi, Grey, Bockting, & Simon Rosser, 2014). Gibson, Webb, and Lehn (2014) suggested that scholars apply software to organize and track respondents' data. Moreover, Einwohner (2011) advocated the use of NVivo<sup>®</sup> software to code participants' input in organizing data.

Investigators use reflective journals as note taking tools to enhance study topic understanding (Al-Rawahi & Al-Balushi, 2015). Scholars use reflective journals to document participants' comprehensive experiences and to escalate input comprehension (Lakshmi, 2014). Furthermore, researchers that use reflective journals can experience a heightened level of intellectual knowledge (Al-karasneh, 2014). I used a reflective journal for capturing and reviewing notes to amplify my understanding of the study topic based on participants input.

I organized data based on identifiable themes. Researchers organize participants input based on categorical themes (Bernauer, 2015). Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013) proposed that organizing and arranging data is a result of investigators' assigning categories based on recognized themes. Moreover, Rowley (2012) suggested that researchers should link the emergence of key themes with the study problem.

In this single case study design, I assigned the letter "L" to represent small business leaders and the letter "E" to represents small business employees. Leech and Onwuegbuzie's (2011) recommended that researcher apply data ascriptions or codes to assign meaning to text. I assigned alphabetical letters and numbers for leaders (i.e., L1, L2), and employees (i.e., E1, E2) to demarcate a subject's participation and to assure

confidentiality in this case study. Research respondents often receive a unique identifier in investigative studies to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Urban, Burgermaster, Archibald, & Byrne 2014). Additionally, Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) used identifiers to represent member participation and privacy. Therefore, I listed unique identifier codes for each small business, leader, and employee to safeguard and protect study participants' anonymity.

I will ensure the safeguarding of participants' data; therefore, raw data used in the study will remain in a fireproof safe for 5 years for preservation and confidentiality. Beskow et al. (2012) advocated that researchers have a responsibility to vigorously protect participants' raw data as a means of maintaining identity and input privacy and confidentiality. Adinoff, Conley, Taylor, and Chezem (2013) and Hiriscau, Stingelin-Giles, Stadler, Schmeck, and Reiter-Theil (2014) postulated that investigators hold a position to ensure confidentiality among their collected research data sets. Moreover, study participants input remains confidential and secure when researchers provide a secure stored measure (Laurila et al., 2012). All participants' data will remain stored in a locked safe for a period of 5 years to preserve confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

The research data analysis process includes an in-depth review of interviews and observational data in an attempt to understand the study purpose (Yin, 2011). Gläser and Laudel (2013) proposed that researchers accomplish qualitative data analysis through reviewing participants' input to research questions. Moreover, Petty et al. (2012) advised

that data analysis occur concurrently with data collection to deepen understanding in a qualitative case study with interview questions.

I conducted data triangulation as a multi-step process of analyzing data to ensure an accurate betrayal of study participants' input and intent and to enrich my understanding. Denzin (2012) posited triangulation as a multi-method process that researchers use to analyze various data sources to gain a more in-depth understanding about a study topic. I analyzed interview transcripts, and a physical document from the small business participant as a means of triangulating data for accuracy. Woodside and Baxter (2013) discussed researchers' application of data triangulation in qualitative studies as an opportunity to congregate interviews and other interpretive documents to understand the phenomenon in question. Triangulation is used at the investigator level as a vehicle for converging multiple sources such as interviews and notes to substantiate a specific phenomenon (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Moreover, Yin (2009) suggested investigators apply data triangulation to corroborate a phenomenon using multiple data sources such as interviews and physical records. My utilization of triangulation to compare multiple sources of data assisted me in understanding the promotion of virtuous leadership as an increased business growth practice.

I applied methodological triangulation to compare various data to gain comprehensive insight about the study topic. Methodological triangulation is used when an investigator attempts to converge multiple pieces of data (i.e., interviews and interpretive documents) to attain an understanding of the study topic (Frels &

Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Zivkovic (2012) stated that researchers apply methodological triangulation as means of reproducing results based on a mixture of data. The use of multiple methods to understand a phenomenon represents the essence of data triangulation (Denzin, 2012). I applied methodological triangulation using participants' interviews and a physical data document to understand the study phenomenon.

### **Coding and Themes**

Coding is a process of assigning indexes to numbers, key phrases or words for analysis (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) suggested that researchers' code data for analysis. Coding is an instrumental tool applied to assist in classifying parallel attributes as described by study respondents (Cresswell, Morrison, Sheikh, & Kalra, 2012). I transcribed and coded interview responses to better understand and analyze participants' input. Techniques applied to coding may vary, however, the emphasis remain on ascribing text that reflect respondents' raw data (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Therefore, I applied coding based on grouping, such as communication, training, virtuous tenets, wisdom, justice, and teambuilding. Cresswell et al. (2012) advocated the importance of using actual raw data in the coding process for cataloging purposes.

I used software to code transcribed data. Raw data was transferred to NVivo® 11 for analyzing, indexing, and coding to recognize emerging themes. Gibson et al. (2014) advocated computer software for data coding. Ward, Furber, Tierney, and Swallow (2013) proposed that researchers explore NVivo® 10 as a flexible software application for deciphering contextual content. Moreover, Einwohner (2011) suggested that investigators

access qualitative research software such as NVivo<sup>®</sup> 10 to code respondents' testimonies and thematic connotations.

Study topic thematic patterns may arise through the process of sorting and coding of participants' input (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Additionally, Bernauer (2015) suggested that researchers apply coding to assist in organizing and structuring raw data into categorical themes. Leech and Onwuegbuzie's (2011) recommended researchers use software to assist in deciphering codes and understanding developing themes. Data analysis software may enable coding and theme recognition of raw data (Paulus, Lester, & Britt, 2013; Talanquer, 2014). I utilized NVivo<sup>®</sup> 11, which is the latest version of Nvivo<sup>®</sup> analysis software to sort and code data in an effort to demarcate any thematic patterns.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I utilized VL as the conceptual framework for this study. Cameron (2011) proposed VL as a process advocated by organizational leaders to ensure employees adopt and model behaviors committed to principled activities and increased performance. Virtuous leaders model characteristics that effectively influence workplace involvement (Pearce & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Antonakis and House (2014) and Birasnav (2014) proposed that researchers apply leadership models for exploring interactions among participants as required to increase performance. Moreover, leaders, which subscribe to VL, foster behaviors that engender workplace patronage towards high performance (Cameron, 2011).

Effective leaders may possess the capacity to envision the benefits of modeling behaviors that engender workplace engagement towards sustainable outcomes. Bacha and Walker (2013) discussed effective leadership as the ability of leaders to influence, inspire and stimulate followers to model behaviors associated with enhancing organizational performance. Effective leaders understand the value behaviors contribute to building a high performance organization (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Moreover, Bello (2012) linked effective leaders with the modeling of principled behaviors as a means of transforming workplace participation towards increased business performance.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Research reliability and validity is crucial for ensuring the integrity of study results (Krizman, 2011). Investigative results should enhance knowledge by ensuring findings are pragmatic and measurable for enhancing research reliability and validity (Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013). Establishing data usefulness for an audience requires that investigators ensure research validity (Cardoso & Ramos, 2012). Furthermore, practitioners and potential audiences rely on the validity of research results (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

#### **Reliability**

Houghton et al. (2013) advocated that researchers ensure study reliability to emphasize the importance of providing consistent data. Reliability is an important attribute of research data (Krizman, 2011) given the need for consistency across research techniques and instruments (Lakshmi & Mohideen, 2013). Investigators remise

normative emotive biases to ensure the reliability and authenticity of study content (Ponterotto, 2013).

Research dependability is the level of stability and reliability researchers attribute to data results (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Researchers ensure content dependability exists if other scholars can replicate the study over time (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Lishner (2015) postulated that investigators seek to confirm consistency and simulation among research results as a means of ensuring dependability of the findings. As the dependability measure within this study, I forwarded a summation of participants input for member checking, which should be completed in approximately 20 minutes to ensure I have accurately portrayed interview responses. Member checking involves transferring the investigators' synopsis of collected responses to participants for authentication (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Investigators forward summation of interview responses to participants in an effort to ensure corroboration of input (Truglio-Londrigan, 2013). Furthermore, Li, Westbrook, Callen, Georgiou, and Braithwaite (2013) divulged member checking as a process of following-up with respondents to clarify that the summation of responses to questions are accurately captured.

### **Validity**

Research validity is the trustworthiness readers perceive regarding the accuracy of respondents' input and the interviewers' capacity to convey participants' experiences (Seidman, 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Investigators adhere to research validity as a means of ensuring the results are concrete and presented with assurance (Krizman, 2011). Cope (2014) suggested that researchers refer to validity as the amount of trust assigned to

research findings based on conveyance of participants' existential experience.

Analogously, research validity exists at the level of trust users attribute to participants' contributions to study phenomenon (Cope, 2014; Seidman, 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To address study validity, I incorporated methodological triangulation by conducting interviews with small business leaders and employees and reviewing a physical data document.

**Credibility.** In qualitative work, scholars rigorously seek to establish credibility of study topic results (Hanson et al., 2011). Moriarty (2014) designated credibility as the meaningful contributions assigned to the data collected to convey research findings. Research credibility is based on the researcher's assurance that the datum encompasses participants' comprehensive contributions to the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

My efforts to substantiate participants' input through member checking enhanced research credibility. Member checking is a process that researchers use to assure the credibility of data (Torrence, 2012). Marshall and Rossman (2014) characterized member checking as a path researchers use to address the trustworthiness of participant's interview interpretation. Cope (2014) postulated that member checking is the most rigorous form of ensuring data credibility. To ensure credibility, I asked participants to confirm and substantiate the accuracy of my summary of their individual responses as a means of member checking.

Hanson et al. (2011) suggested that researchers ensure the credibility of input collected in a study topic by applying data triangulation. The review of multiple methods to comprehend a study topic embodies the principle of methodological data triangulation

(Denzin, 2012). I included each participant's interview responses and a physical document as a means of methodological triangulation to assure study content credibility. Ensuring credible research entails the triangulation of multiple data sources (Hanson et al., 2011). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2012) and Ziykovic (2012) noted methodological triangulation as a robust credibility process due to the convergence of multiple data sources to address the study phenomenon.

**Transferability.** Marshall and Rossman (2014) suggested that investigators' ability to reproduce study results in other settings represents the transferability of research findings. Hanson et al. (2011) noted that transferability occurs by determining the possibility of transmitting data into a new setting with different participants. Furthermore, transferability refers to the potential that data results can be expressed through a different range of participants or situations while preserving the meaning of the study topic findings (Burchett, Dobrow, Lavis, & Mayhew, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013). Transferability of research findings is a vital concept for investigators who wish to replicate study results (Burchett, Umoquit, & Dobrow, 2011). Subsequent to the completion of my study, I address transferability by proposing various topics for future studies.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is a researcher's capacity to attest that the data represents verifiable input (Cope, 2014). The ability of investigators to verify study results may prove vital to the level of confirmability attributed to the research content. Marshall and Rossman (2014) advocated that confirmability is a process of affirming that researchers maintain objectivity in the presentation of research results. Houghton et al.

(2013) suggested that researchers must ensure a level of confirmability to expose research rigor. Investigators must be clear from biases to achieve confirmability (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2015). Moreover, investigators review and parallel participant's interview input as a means of validating data accuracy (Elo et al., 2014).

My application of member checking to achieve data accuracy served as a crucial tool in confirming data. Houghton et al. (2013) advocated that researchers request that participants review interview summation as a means of validating data accuracy through member checking. Researchers apply member checking to confirm that readers can trust study findings (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Member checking is a process researchers use to confirm the accuracy of participants input (Torrance, 2012). To accomplish data confirmability, I forwarded the interview data summation to individual research participants for corroboration and verification as a means of member checking.

### **Data Saturation**

I collected participants' input until I achieve data saturation. Fusch and Ness, (2015) suggested that researchers collect input until no new themes transpire to ensure data saturation. Data saturation involves a researcher's capacity to collect data until participants are not able to provide any original input (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Researchers achieve data saturation based on achievement of sufficient input to reproduce study results without the emergence of any new themes (Dworkin, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013). Hence, data saturation occurred at the point of redundancy among participant's input based on my analysis of the three leaders and seven employees' responses to the eight proposed research questions (Appendix D).

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2 of this study I addressed the study purpose, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling method, research ethics, data collection techniques, organization, and analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I provided a presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, my research reflections, and study conclusion. The study findings may assist in addressing the gap in business practices regarding the use of virtuous leadership for increased business performance.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that leaders use to promote virtuous behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. I interviewed three leaders and seven employees of a small business located in the GHMA, and collected its mission and goal statement (physical document) for data triangulation. The six themes that emerged as attributes for cultivating a virtuous work environment from my triangulation of data were the need for continuous communication, employee training, virtuous tenets (i.e., honesty, integrity, and principles), wisdom, justice, and teambuilding. First, all 10 study participants suggested that leadership communication is a vital attribute for developing a virtuous work environment. Second, eight participants advocated a need for business leadership support for workforce training. Third, seven study participants supplied input on virtuous leadership tenets. Fourth, eight participants indicated that the transference of wisdom is a critical tool for developing employee commitment towards workplace performance. Fifth, seven participants identified justice as an essential characteristic for leaders to model in an effort to guide virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Finally, two leaders and three employees noted teamwork and teambuilding as a key strategy for promoting virtuous behaviors in small business settings.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The central research question for this study was: What strategies can small business leaders use to promote virtuous behaviors in small businesses for increased

growth? I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions (Appendix D), and my study site's mission and goal statement document (Appendix G) as data for this study. I analyzed data using NVivo 11. The six themes that emerged from my analysis was (a) continuous communication in the workplace as an overarching strategy to promote VL for increased business growth; (b) employee knowledge and training for virtuous behaviors and business performance; (c) leadership application of honesty, integrity, and principles as virtuous tenets; (d) leaders' transference of wisdom to induce employee commitment and trust; (e) leadership commitment to modeling justice within the workplace as a means of strengthen an employee's cupidity to engage in increased performance; and (f) teambuilding in the workplace as a tool for deepening employee's patronage toward virtuous behaviors. In Tables 1 through 6, I show the number and frequency of participants' (designated E1, L1, etc.) responses to interview questions.

### **Theme 1: Continuous Communication in the Workplace**

Huang et al. (2016) proposed that leaders exist to assist employees in understanding a business purpose and meaning as related to performance. Garg (2013) postulated that leadership communication is paramount in propelling an employee's commitment towards business performance. Moreover, organizations seek effective leaders to promote virtuous behaviors across company boundaries (Bacha & Walker, 2013). All 10 (100%) participants stated that communication is a tool needed to advance a virtuous climate for increase business growth. Table 1, shows the frequency of participants responses, across questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, regarding communication. Table 1 shows that there were 39 references to communication in the workplace.

Four (57%) employees noted that leaders should offer verbal communication through meetings as a means of developing better outcomes. Two (29%) employees reported that leaders should conduct meetings on a consistent basis to communicate the purpose of the organization in an attempt to promote virtuous behaviors. Two (29%) employees stressed the importance of leaders using verbal communication skills as the means of talking to employees.

Four (57%) employees responded that leaders must hold regular meetings, maintain an open door policy, and develop a continuous flow of communication to facilitate workers' understanding of the organization's purpose for the greater good. Business boards recruit leaders as advocates of the entity's purpose and meaning for the greater good (Coulson-Thomas, 2013; Huang, Krasikova, & Liu, 2016; Ross & Squires, 2015). Griffin and Hu (2013) and Lievens and Vlerick (2014) postulated that leaders have a fundamental role to ensure employees participate in developing a functional work environment for all patrons. Moreover, Frisch and Huppenbauer (2014) suggested that leaders have the ability to influence workforce participants to engage in business activities for the greater good of the organization. Participant E1 expressed that leaders use meetings as a tool to convey information among workforce participants and respond to the needs of clients. Participant E5 noted that current leaders ensure employees understand they can meet with leadership in order to address workforce concerns. E5 reported that existing leaders have an open door policy, and that employees therefore feel welcome to approach leadership and engage in open dialogue. Participant E6 postulated that leaders should use a range of communications to ensure clarity. E6 stated, "to make

sure that everyone is on the same page and if they don't understand something make sure they engage communication, communication, a lot of communication." In the tone of developing strategies for the greater good, participant E7 stated, "at all cost if they don't know, you need to find a way to reach them and help them understand that everybody is equal."

Participants E3 and L2 relayed that communication is a strategy to divulge purpose and meaning in work activities. An employee's understanding of an organizations' purpose and meaning is based on the precept of leadership (Huang et al., 2016). Coulson-Thomas (2013) and Ross and Squires (2015) suggested that companies select leaders as a strategic resource for disseminating a business's purpose and meaning. Moreover, leaders possess the capacity to inspire an entity's purpose and meaning towards business performance (Bacha & Walker, 2013; Johnson, 2012). Participant E3 stated, "I think taking the time out to explain a lot of things or to say okay, I want you to do this but here's why I want you to do this, this is why this is needed and so it gives me a purpose." Similarly, L2 stated, "show appreciation, be open to ideas from everyone and no one is above or beneath you, and just be open to having a listening ear."

Three (43%) employees framed communication as a process for instilling courage as a virtuous leadership attribute. Palanski et al. (2014) suggested that leaders demonstrate courage when modeling an affinity to apply virtuous behaviors. Moreover, Schneider (2014) pronounced that leaders advance communication about courage amongst workplace participants for decision-making. Participant E3 reported that existing leaders set aside time to communicate the benefits of modeling courage during all

workplace activities. Participant E6 stated, “you talk with the employees and let them know what your standard is, and then encourage them on doing a good job.”

Furthermore, participant E7 proposed that current company leaders model virtuous behaviors by sharing personal encounters from past experiences as a means of communicating acts of courage in business activities. Participant E7 stated, “I feel like people need to share their story with people to show where they were and where they are now to express how to get to where they want to be.”

Participants E3, E6, and L3 discussed using communication as a tool for strengthening virtuous leadership within business confines. Wang and Hackett (2016) postulated that leaders should necessitate fortifying virtuous behaviors within the workplace to achieve desirable performance outcomes. Leaders have the aptitude to strengthen employees’ commitment to virtuous behaviors (Silva, 2014). Moreover, societies may benefit when small business leaders model virtuous behaviors (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). In reference to current workplace leaders, E3 stated, “they have other things going on, but they can come by our office and tell me that I’m doing a good job.” Furthermore, participant E6 stated, “Communicate with them and just encourage and let them know you are doing a good job today.”

From the leadership perspective, L3 stressed the need for all employees to engage in open communication. Participant L3 further noted that the leaders’ pursuit of communication among workplace participants may inspire individuals to express their feelings or provide insight about the business. The leader comments paralleled those of

the employees' that communication is paramount for strengthening the practice of virtuous leadership.

Three (43%) employees and two (67%) leaders noted that leadership communication is a method for promoting wisdom for increase business growth. Wisdom is a critical component of leadership (Liu & Baker, 2016; Nayak, 2016; Yang, 2014). Schiller (2013) reported that leaders need an inordinate level of wisdom to guide followers. Moreover, leaders communicate wisdom as a tool to motivate employee efforts towards performance (Bai & Morris, 2014; Dey, 2012; Greaves et al., 2014; Zacher et al., 2014). Employee E1 stated, "Everyone is smart, intelligent, and always giving positive feedback." Participants E2 and E3 reported that current leaders seek to share their personal insight to assist in addressing workplace problems. Participants L2 and L3 stressed that they use their experience as a means to communicate wisdom to employees to address performance concerns.

Participants E4 and E6 advanced additional communication input towards the study. Employee E4 stated, "something we do need, is like going out and advocating more." Additionally, E6 stated workplace participants should, "be more active and communicate to others." Employees and leaders as a whole advocated communication among all employees to develop teamwork as a means of promoting virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses to increase growth.

Table 1

*Continuous Workplace Communication (Frequency)*

Participant	Interview questions	Total number of references
E1	1,2,5,7	6
E2	1,2	3
E3	3,4,7	5
E4	1,8	4
E5	2	3
E6	1,2,4,5,8	5
E7	2,4,7	7
L1	7	1
L2	3	1
L3	5,7	4

**Physical document analysis.** I reviewed and analyzed the mission and goals statement of my study site (Appendix G) for content regarding continuous workplace communication. The phrases “we emphasize” and “this system emphasizes teaching” are used in two (67%) out of three (100%) sentences of the second paragraph of the mission and goals statement. All 10 participants referenced the need for continuous workplace communication as a strategy for highlighting the purpose of the organizations towards virtuous behaviors. All 7 (100%) employees advocated the perpetuation of communication to inspire workplace participant’s good works by direct conversations or during meetings. The 3 (100%) leaders noted that providing continuous communication assists in providing insight to workplace participants regarding their performance.

### **Theme 2: Employee Knowledge and Training for Virtuous Behaviors**

Organizations invest enormous resources to secure leaders with the propensity to guide employee capacity for virtuous activities related to business performance (Hackett

& Wang, 2012; Maloş, 2011; Northouse, 2012; Wang & Hackett, 2016; Wolter et al., 2015). Northouse (2012) and Belschak, Den Hartog, and Kalshoven (2015) noted that leaders possess the knowledge to provide training to encourage participants' engagement in the organization's operational goals. Moreover, business leaders have the skills to guide workplace participants' commitment towards performance (Silva, 2014). Eight (80%) participants noted employee training as a significant contributor to developing virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Table 2 shows that participants E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, L1, and L2 noted employee training in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 as a significant contributor to developing virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Additionally, as shown in Table 2, participants provided 35 references regarding the promotion of knowledge and training in work environment.

**Knowledge.** Participant E2 focused on knowledge as a means of promoting a work environment for the benefit and good of all stakeholders. E2 further noted that employees should apply experiential knowledge from workplace interactions to promote an engaged organizational culture. Additionally, from a service perspective, E2 proposed that all company employees should ensure that positive individual behaviors are exhibited on a repetitious basis to promote an environment that supports the greater good of the organization.

Participants E4 and E7 promoted skills obtainment and teaching as strategies to encourage purpose and meaning in work activities. Participant E4 espoused that leadership should ensure that employees possess advanced job related competencies as a strategy to champion purpose and meaning among workplace members. Participant E7

stated, “As a leader you have to be involved, you have to know exactly what you’re trying to teach.” Additionally, participant E7 stressed that leaders should know the appropriate message to teach employees to advance purpose and meaning in work activities.

**Training.** Participants E3 and E5 responded to employee training as a strategy to ensure the promotion of virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Participant E3 stated, “...workshops, conferences, and things of that nature, I think leaders can put in place” when discussing virtuous behavior advancement. This employee also suggested that leaders advance employee general knowledge through webinars as potential strategy for promoting virtuous behaviors. Additionally, in addressing the promotion of virtuous behaviors, participant E5 stated, “workforce activities like leadership training for employees” would be an asset to promote VL behaviors. In addressing the promotion of virtuous behaviors for increased business growth, E3 and E5 reiterated that workforce activities such as leadership training through workshops, seminars, and webinars as strategies for promoting virtuous behaviors for increase business growth.

Participant L1 advocated training as a method of providing employees courage as a virtuous leadership attribute. L1 promoted the use of seminars as a teambuilding exercise to promote courage. Additionally, L1 emphasized teambuilding workshops as an opportunity to assist employee development of courage in areas where some form of weakness may exist.

Participants E4, L1, and L2 championed identifying an array of internal and external participants as proponents of providing knowledge to strengthen the use of

virtuous leadership behaviors in the workplace. Participant E4 stated, “I think training, I think training and I can’t stress enough training because that’s how you learn by training classes.” Additionally, E4 offered that leaders must ensure on-going training, conferences, and print materials are available to strengthen virtuous behaviors.

Participant L1 stated, “...providing them education on the same process.” L1 also suggested that employees should have an opportunity to hear from various internal and external individuals other than current executives to strengthen virtuous leadership behaviors. Additionally, participant L2 noted that the use of people outside the current work environment is instrumental in reinforcing the use of virtuous leadership behaviors.

Participant E7 suggested training as a process for integrating justice to increase employee participation in virtuous behaviors. E7 stressed, “We have to train and retrain on a daily basis.” Additionally, E7 emphasized that leaders should ensure that employees participate in training to accommodate work related expectations.

Participant E6 advocated training as a means of sharing leadership wisdom for increased business growth. E6 proposed that leaders should ensure that individual employees have access to training to necessitate the transference of leadership wisdom as a tool to promote increase business. Furthermore, E6 suggested that leaders should actually participate in training employees to ensure consistency and the transmission of wisdom required in the current business setting to oblige growth.

Three (43%) employees provided additional input regarding training. Participant E4 stressed that small business leadership should ensure that employees receive more training classes to exhibit virtuous behaviors. Participant E5 stated, “...we need more

help understanding how to run a small business.” Additionally, participant E7 noted leaders should provide more training as a means of developing virtuous participants.

Table 2

*Employee Knowledge and Training for Virtuous Behaviors (Frequency)*

Participant	Interview Questions	Total number of References
E2	2	2
E3	1	7
E4	3,5,6,8	10
E5	1,8	3
E6	7	1
E7	3,6,8	6
L1	4,5	4
L2	5	2

**Physical document analysis.** My analysis of the physical document (Appendix G) revealed that the small business under study emphasized teaching and training of each individual for advocating complete workplace participation. Additionally, in the mission and goals physical document the small business highlighted ‘knowledge’ as an element of assisting the employees to provide superior services (Appendix G). Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fifolt (2015) advocated that entities use a mission or goal statement to signify the shared purpose of the organization. Through training, employees have the ability to exhibit leadership characteristics (Şen, Kabak, & Yangınlar, 2013). Organizational leaders retain the skills to provide employee teaching given training is instrumental to business performance (Padachi & Lukea Bhiwajee, 2016). Six (86%) employees stressed the presence of training through workshops, seminars, and webinars in 7 (70%) questions to advocate consistency among workplace participants towards the

promotion of virtuous behaviors for increased business growth. Two (67%) leaders responded to 3 (38%) questions that employees should receive the same level of educational to strengthen virtuous leadership behaviors.

### **Theme 3: Virtuous Tenets**

Wang and Hackett (2016) noted honesty, integrity, and principles as elements of virtuous tenets. Leaders crystalize credibility through modeling honesty and trust as a virtuous behavior (Peterson et al., 2012; Stouten et al., 2010). Virtuously charged leadership includes a commitment towards integrity (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). Furthermore, all workplace participants should understand the value of professional integrity on organizational performance (Gupta & Nedelea, 2015). Demirtas (2015) suggested that leaders model principles as a prerequisite to virtuous leadership. Wang and Hackett (2016) suggested virtuous leaders ‘do well by doing good’. Moreover, Caldwell, Hasan, and Smith (2015) stated, “doing the right thing” in defining virtuous leadership characteristics.

Seven (70%) of the 10 study participants provided input on honesty, integrity, and principles as listed in Table 3. In theme three, data saturation occurred given the 7 (70%) participants recurring comments on virtuous tenets (i.e., honesty, integrity, principles) in 7 (88%) of the eight interview questions as a strategy to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. Participants E1, E4, E5, E6, E7, L1, and L3 provided input on honesty, integrity, and principles in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 as listed in Table 3. Additionally, participants provided 27 comments on virtuous tenets as shown in Table 3.

Participants E1, E7, L1, and L3 provided input on honesty, trust, integrity, and principles as a virtuous tenet for increasing business growth. Participant E1 conveyed that honesty and trust are required to promote virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Participant E7 said, “you can’t say one thing and do another.” From a leadership point of view, participant L1 stressed that leaders must demonstrate integrity as a core leadership value. Furthermore, participant L3 stated, “Employ people into the business so that you can continue to have the integrity and the knowledge and the honesty that you want in your business.”

Participants E1, E6, and L3 responded that honesty, integrity and business principles are primary strategies for promoting an environment for the greater good. Participant E1 stated, “Being honest with one another, with leaders and with the staff” demonstrates characteristics required to cultivate a business culture towards the greater good. Additionally, participant E6 urged that the organization must adhere to the right set up rules to support the greater good. From a leadership perspective, participant L3 declared, “The purpose of your business is to use integrity to grow.”

Regarding honesty, E1 responded, “staying positive with staff and staff being honest with leaders.” Participants E5 and E6 provided the terms beliefs and standards as input to address courage as a virtuous leadership attribute. In emphasizing courage as provided by existing leaders, participant E5 stated, “you know they’ve always told us to be firm in what we believe.” Participant E6 purported that leaders should “let them know what the standards are.”

Participant L3 provided input that honesty truly is the best policy for strengthening virtuous leadership within an organizational setting. Participants E1 and E4 advanced the integration of justice to increase virtuous behaviors. Participant E1 urged that to integrate justice and wisdom in virtuous behaviors require employees “doing the right thing.” While, participant E4 stated, “I guess that the number one thing is trusting.”

Table 3

*Virtuous Tenets (Frequency Table)*

Participant	Interview questions	Total number of references
E1	1,2,3,6	6
E2		
E3		
E4	6	5
E5	4	2
E6	2,4,7	3
E7	1	2
L1	1	3
L2		
L3	1,2,5	6

**Physical document analysis.** The small business leaders contextualized ‘integrity and good works’ based on my analysis of the physical document (Appendix G). In the mission and goals statement (physical document) the small business leaders stated, “Knowledge is power-the power to create and implement innovative programming and the power to serve with integrity, through good works.” King, Case, and Premo (2014) suggested that the mission statement is critical and should provide insight for stakeholders regarding character expectations among organizational participants. A business mission and goal statement includes the purpose, characteristics, standards,

principle tenets and beliefs of the organization (King, Case, & Premo, 2013).

Additionally, Babnik, Breznik, Dermol, and Trunk Širca (2014) suggested that organizational leaders use the mission statement as a tool to address internal business beliefs and behaviors.

During the interviews, 5 (71%) employees urged honest, trust, standards, and doing the right thing as strategies to promote virtuous tenets for increased business growth. Two (67%) leaders advocated integrity in the workplace to inspire virtuous behaviors towards increased business growth. One (33%) leader stated, “The purpose of your business is to use integrity to grow.”

#### **Theme 4: Transference of Wisdom**

Liu and Baker (2016) proposed wisdom as virtuous leadership characteristic. Nayak (2016) and Yang (2014) noted wisdom as a vital component of leadership. Furthermore, Bai and Morris (2014) suggested that effective leaders apply wisdom as a virtuous tenet for developing an entity’s workforce vision towards performance. Leaders transfer wisdom to the employee through existential knowledge in an effort to increase performance (Dey, 2012). Eight (80%) of 10 study participants expressed in questions 1, 4, and 7 the benefit of sharing or transferring wisdom and knowledge among employees as a strategy to promote virtuous behaviors for increase business growth. Zundel (2012) noted that leaders’ consistent engagement with employees might contribute to the sharing wisdom. In Table 4, participants E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E7, L2, and L3 provided input on wisdom in questions 1, 4, and 7 as an important attribute towards motivating employee

engagement in the workplace. Additionally, as shown in Table 4, participants provided 21 references regarding the transference of wisdom in the work environment.

Participant E7 advocated that leaders share experiences as a means to promote workplace knowledge towards increase business growth. E7 stated, “I feel like as a leader first of all you have to have good structure a good background with your past and your future.” Participant L3 related wisdom to religious values as a tool for emphasizing courage as a virtuous leadership attribute within their entity. L3 espoused that current small business leaders emphasize courage as an element of a virtuous workplace culture. Additionally, L3 stressed that a virtuous business culture inspires the “good light” needed to motivate courage and bravery among employees.

Six (86%) employees and 2 (67%) leaders advocated intelligence, God, insight, and spiritual values as tools to strengthen virtuous behaviors within their entity. Participant E1 stressed that everyone within the current small business setting possesses intelligence and has the ability transfer wisdom to promote behaviors that increase business growth. Participant E2 insisted wisdom is from God and that leaders must adhere in order to use wisdom to promote increase growth. Furthermore, participant E3 urged that leaders within the existing business environment retain the capacity to necessitate the transference of wisdom to employees as a means of promoting increase performance. Participant E4 proposed that existing leaders support the transference of their knowledge through teaching employees to promote increase business growth. However, participant E5 suggested that leaders must have a background in small business as a means of developing employees’ attraction towards increased entity performance.

Additionally, E5 advocated that the leaders within their current small business possess germane industry experience to assist employees in building increased performance.

Participant E7 promoted that the current leaders within their small business have long-term business and virtuous behavioral experiences to necessitate the promotion of behaviors that increase performance.

Participants L2 and L3 conveyed the importance of wisdom and innovative thinking about engaging in business performance. Participant L2 espoused that leaders share existing empirical wisdom to necessitate the promotion behaviors that increase growth. In promoting increase business growth, L3 declared, “wisdom is the key.”

Table 4

*Transference of Wisdom (Frequency)*

Participant	Interview questions	Total number of references
E1	7	3
E2	7	4
E3	7	2
E4	7	2
E5	7	3
E6		
E7	1,7	3
L1		
L2	7	2
L3	4,7	2

**Physical document analysis.** In my analysis of the physical document (Appendix G), the small business leaders emphasized applying workplace experience to accommodate service requirements. In the mission and goals statement (physical document), small business leaders noted their commitment and dedication to ongoing training as a means to providing superior services. Williams, Morrell, and Mullane (2014) suggested that employee performance could be affected by leader's commitment to adhere to the business mission statement. Williams et al. (2014) also conveyed that leaders share existential experience related to the company mission. Bai and Morris (2014) advocated that leaders transfer wisdom as a means of safeguarding the organization's mission.

Six (86%) employees urged that leaders should use their experience and wisdom within the workplace to promote increased business growth. Moreover, 2 (67%) leaders espoused the sharing of wisdom among workplace participants to increase business

performance. One (33%) leader offered wisdom as a principal and essential leadership instrument for engendering employees' commitment towards virtuous behaviors to necessitate the growth of a business.

### **Theme 5: Modeling Justice within the Workplace**

Levine and Boaks (2014) advanced that leaders model justice as a fundamental leadership practice to deepen employees' enthusiasm to engage in increase business performance. Xueli et al. (2014) suggested that business leaders use justice as a stimulant to motivate employee commitment towards increased entity performance. Moreover, principled leaders subscribe to justice (Yukl et al., 2013). Seven (70%) of 10 study participants responded that equality, fairness and caring about the rights of others symbolize the justice that is instrumental in developing a virtuous business culture. In theme five, data saturation was reached given the perpetuity among 7 (70%) participants about workforce modeling of justice as a strategy to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. In Table 5, participants E1, E2, E3, E5, E7, L1, and L2 responded in questions 1, 6, and 7 that equality, fairness and caring about the rights of others symbolize the justice that is instrumental in developing a virtuous business culture. Additionally, the 7 participants provided 18 responses on justice as shown in Table 5.

In respect to identifying strategies to promote virtuous behaviors for increased business growth, participant E7 declared, "You have to have the heart of treating everyone equal. You have to be giving and you cannot turn your back on some people that you might think have more or need less. You have to be equal you have to be fair..."

Furthermore, E7 expressed that business leadership must adhere to nurturing an environment where employees are treated equally which is essential for promoting virtuous behaviors for increased performance.

Five (71%) employees and 2 (67%) leaders espoused the tenets of justice for developing a culture of employees committed to promoting virtuous behaviors for increased business growth. Three (43%) employees contributed that those current leaders within the small business advocate justice through being the 'voice' for clients as modeled by the leader. Participant E1 stated, "if they continue to be fair they shouldn't have any problems with staff." Participant E5 acknowledged, "if we go to them knowing that we are right justice will be served." Participant L1 stressed that their small business serves as a "beacon of light" modeling justice through interacting and supporting the community. In respect to justice among their internal leadership, participant L2 made a quote that, "They are all for the right never for the wrong and they will push and push until they find out who was right and who was wrong."

In addressing the integration of wisdom to increase virtuous behaviors, participant E1 declared, "if they continue to be fair we shouldn't have any problems with staff, with honesty, and just being open with your staff." Furthermore, E1 suggested that leaders and employees are fair and work collaboratively to provide corrective feedback.

Table 5

*Modeling Justice Within the Workplace (Frequency)*

Participant	Interview Questions	Total number of References
E1	6,7	3
E2	6	1
E3	6	2
E4		
E5	6	3
E6		
E7	1,6	5
L1	6	2
L2	6	2
L3		

**Physical document analysis.** I reviewed the physical document (Appendix G) regarding content on justice. In my analysis of the document, this small business accentuates ensuring that employees work with customers based on their preferences. In the mission and goals statement (physical document), the small business emphasized working with ‘individual preferences and choices’ in the provision of services. Xueli et al. (2014) expressed that employees are concerned about organizational justice or fairness in the workplace. King, Case, and Premo (2013) proposed that a well-written mission is a comprehensive statement embodying various employee and stakeholders’ expectations. Levine and Boaks (2014) suggested that organizational leaders support objectivity in the workplace as a means of ensuring the existence of justice. Five (86%) employees noted that if leaders in the small business will experience increased business performance if they continue to model fairness within the organization. Two (67%) leaders suggested

that the small business leadership team is for doing what is right and often serves, as a beacon of light for employees.

### **Theme 6: Teambuilding in the Workplace**

Miricescu (2015) connoted that developing and nurturing team camaraderie is a fundamental purpose of leadership. Leaders have a responsibility to champion a shared purpose among employees towards organizational objectives (Retallick, 2015).

Moreover, Muchiri and McMurray (2015) advocated that small business leaders possess the influence to engender employee teambuilding in performance objectives. Five (50%) participants commented on developing teams and teambuilding interactions as the process to progress a workplace committed to virtuous behaviors for increase business performance. In Table 6, participants E3, E5, E6, L1, and L2 commented on developing teams and teambuilding interactions as the process to develop a workplace committed to virtuous behaviors for increase business performance. Additionally, the 5 participants provided 18 comments on teambuilding as shown in Table 6.

Participant E5 stated, “If you know there’s some teambuilding strategies that the leader can help promote, I think that would be a best thing for a company in order to grow the business.” Participant E3 declared, “I just think we should have more things put in place for motivation to motivate our employees whether it’s us all getting together having a picnic getting to know on another.” Additionally, E3 advocated that the small business conduct more interactive events to motivate employees and give leaders an opportunity to personalize workforce interactions as a strategy to support work

environment for the greater good. Participant L2 commented, “promote teamwork” to build an environment for the greater good.

Participant E6 declared, “Make sure everyone works as a team.” Participant L1 specified, “Leaders build their teams up by constant teambuilding philosophies, teambuilding games, teambuilding seminars and workshops.” Participant E5 stated, “just teamwork and teambuilding” as potential pathways to strengthen virtuous leadership within the small business. Participant E6 suggested teamwork is a primary means for developing teambuilding among workplace participants.

Table 6

*Teambuilding in the Workplace (Frequency)*

Participant	Interview questions	Total number of references
E1		
E2		
E3	2	8
E4		
E5	1,5	3
E6	3,8	4
E7		
L1	4	2
L2	2	1
L3		

**Physical document analysis.** I reviewed the physical document (Appendix G) regarding content on teambuilding in the workplace. In my analysis of the document, this small business emphasizes the promotion of a comprehensive system to accomplish the company’s mission and goals. In the mission and goals statement (physical document),

the small business stated, “The philosophy is realized through the provision of a comprehensive system of integrated community...”

Muchiri and McMurray (2015) suggested that leaders have an innate ability to inspire teamwork among employees. One fundamental aspect of leaders is to develop an atmosphere of teambuilding (Muchiri & McMurray, 2015). Moreover, Retallick (2015) emphasized that leaders have a purpose to ensure employee share in participating in the organization’s purpose. Three (43%) employees noted that company activities would help fuel teambuilding within their workforce. Two (67%) leaders advocated using teambuilding games, seminars, and workshops to promote camaraderie among employees.

### **Findings Related to the Virtuous Leadership Theory**

Contemporary contributions of VLT exceed traditional connotations based on morals as the inspiration for conducting business activities (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Virtuousness in leadership practices is emerging (Wang & Hackett, 2016) to include a focus on long-term solvency (Nikolic & Robinson, 2013). Leaders use attributes of VLT to motivate employees’ commitment towards personal excellence and performance as tools of the leadership process (Havard, 2007; Zhu et al., 2013). Hackett and Wang (2012) noted honesty, integrity, training, principles as elements of virtuous leadership tenets. Moreover, proponents of VLT advocate that leaders model virtuous attributes to stimulate employee engagement towards increased business performance (Cameron, 2011; De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Hackett & Wang, 2012; Xu, Caldwell, Glasper, & Guevara, 2015; Zacher et al., 2014).

Virtuous participants aspire to ensure communication exists among workforce stakeholders (Cameron, 2011). Palanski et al. (2014) suggested that leaders that subscribe to VLT engage in sharing virtuous leadership across the organizations' landscape. In line with VLT, Xu et al. (2015) suggested that leaders seek to transform organizational participants and outcomes through articulating the need for principles and virtuous behaviors among workforce participants. Leaders apply a balanced approach to developing strategies and using resources and communication to help guide business performance (Garge, 2013). Ten participants (100%) advocated workplace communication in 7 (88%) of 8 questions as the primary strategy for promoting virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. Virtuous leaders articulate the corporate vision and mission to expected outcomes as a tenet of VLT (Zou, Tian, & Liu, 2015). As an element of VLT, Garge (2013) suggested that leadership communication is essential to garner employee commitment towards business performance. Moreover, leaders modeling VLT have the ability to garner employee goodwill, performance, and solvency (Nasomboon, 2014; Reiley & Jacobs, 2016; Zou, Tian, & Liu, 2015).

Virtuous leaders model high moral standards as a VLT attribute towards effective leadership (Caldwell et al., 2014; Stumpf et al., 2013). Under the auspices of VLT, leaders exhibit the aptitude to guide employee engagement in workplace business activities (Hackett & Wang, 2012; Maloş, 2011; Northouse, 2012; Wang & Hackett, 2016). Northouse (2012) and Wolter et al. (2015) advocated that leaders preserve the aptitude to train organizational participants' commitment towards meeting operational

goals. Eight (80%) of 10 participants contributed input on the value of knowledge and training in all questions (100%). Leaders and employees emphasized training and retraining through seminars, workshops, and conferences as an opportunity to cultivate employee knowledge (Appendix F) and understanding as a means to promote virtuous leadership for increase business growth.

Entity leaders subscribe to attributes of VLT as a model to guide employees' use of high moral standards in business participation (Caldwell et al., 2014; Stumpf et al., 2013). Employees also espoused working with leaders to gain knowledge and provide training as tools for strengthening courage and promoting purpose as elements of VLT. Leaders modeling virtuous behaviors may induce employee commitment towards VLT characteristics within the workplace. Bacha and Walker (2013) and Lepine, Yiwen, Crawford, and Rich (2016) postulated that employees characteristically idealize leaders and, therefore, pursue habits that reflect leadership behaviors. Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, and Gandz (2013) and Wang and Hackett (2016) proposed that leaders use VLT to guide employee understanding and passion for meeting performance objectives.

Caldwell et al. (2015) suggested that virtuous leaders focus on inspiring principles and values to guide workplace activities. Seven (70%) of 10 participants conferred honesty, integrity, and principles in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 as guiding tenets for promoting the theoretical attributes of VLT as applied to business activities. Seven (70%) participants provided 27 comments reflecting individual contributions towards virtuous tenets of honesty, trust, integrity, and principles. Virtuous charged leaders commit to demonstrating integrity (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). Participant E7 stated, "you can't

say one thing and do another” to advocate that leaders should not promote attributes of VLT and neglect to adhere to established virtuous tenets. Cameron (2011) suggested that responsible leaders ‘walk the talk’ (p. 26). Caldwell et al. (2015) advocated, ‘doing the right thing’ as leaderships’ demonstration of virtuousness (p. 1185). Leaders’ adherence to selecting right over wrong parallel VLT standards regarding virtuousness as signified in modeling principled characteristics (Heyler et al., 2016; Wang & Hackett, 2016). Sousa-Lima, Michel, and Caetano (2013) and Xiong, Lin, Li, and Wang (2016) discussed how organizational leaders model honest and engendered trust among employees as a means of crystalizing workplace credibility. Moreover, leaders’ adherence to principled behaviors is analogous to leadership exhibition of virtuous characteristics (Rawwas et al., 2013; Wang, Cheney, & Roper, 2016).

Relative to VLT, Wang and Hackett (2016) conveyed that leaders, which model virtuous behaviors, are expected to apply wisdom as an intentional element of good leadership. Wisdom is a vital element in VLT that leaders use to inspire employee engagement (Gotsis & Grimani, 2015; Liu & Baker, 2016; Nayak, 2016; Yang, 2014). Effective leaders use wisdom as a VL precept (Bai & Morris, 2014). Moreover, Rawwas, Arjoon, and Sidani (2013) suggested that leaders who model VLT seek to share acquired knowledge in an effort to enhance virtuous characteristics.

Leaders and employees contributed an array of input during interviews regarding workplace knowledge as a means of developing a virtuous and zealous environment. As related to VLT, 8 (80%) of 10 participants stressed that employees embrace the promotion of virtuous behaviors as an outcome of leaders transferring wisdom. Effective

leaders seek to transfer wisdom amongst employees for heightening the level of employee commitment to virtuous tenets for increase business performance (Bai & Morris, 2014; Dey, 2012). Moreover, Greaves et al. (2014) postulated that through the virtue of wisdom, leaders harbor the experiential competence to inspire others ability towards positive performance. In reference to virtuous tenets, participants E3 and E5 conveyed that leaders possess experiential knowledge to facilitate the transference of wisdom to employees for small business performance, as aligned with VLT. Leaders participate in the transference of wisdom as an opportunity to enhance employees' knowledge and pledge toward business performance (Dey, 2012). Dougherty (2013) suggested that leaders' business experience contributes to the virtuous nature of an organization. Moreover, business leaders' commitment to share wisdom reflects their commitment to virtuousness as designated in VLT (Gotsis & Grimani, 2015; Rawwas et al., 2013).

Virtuous leadership requires a continuous pledge to justice amongst workplace participants (Yukl et al., 2013). Seven (70%) of 10 participants provided 21 interview responses referencing justice to ensure that fairness prevails among employee activities associated with increased business performance. Xueli et al. (2014) proposed that business leaders ensure justice exists to necessitate employee desirability towards increased business performance. Participant L1 stressed that leader's adoration of justice serves as a 'beacon of light' to employees and externalities. Levine and Boaks (2014) advocated that justice is rudimentary to the practice of leadership as required to foster employee participation in increase business performance. Leaders model justice as a

primary attribute of VLT (Bai & Morris, 2014; Şen, Kabak, & Yangınlar, 2013; Stacey & Stacey, 2014; Zacher et al., 2014). From a VLT perspective, Rawwas et al. (2013) conveyed justice as a universal principle. Moreover, leaders ensure justice in the workplace as a VLT attribute to necessitate employee commitment towards enhanced business performance (Levine & Boaks, 2014; Şen, Kabak, & Yangınlar, 2013; Stacey & Stacey, 2014).

Endrissat, and von Arx (2013) suggested that responsible leaders seek to mobilize teams as an effective attribute of leadership. Developing team camaraderie is a fundamental attribute of leadership (Miricescu, 2015). Cameron (2011) postulated that leaders which prescribe to VLT focus on developing social relationship among followers as an attribute towards enhancing performance. Moreover, Wang and Hackett (2016) suggested that leader engage followers' commitment towards performance by developing comradeship through everyday interactions.

Five (50%) of 10 participants provided 18 responses advocating teambuilding or social engagements as activities for building business performance. In questions 3, 4, 5, and 8, participants E5, E6, and L1 stressed teambuilding as an internal schematic that leaders use to develop employee engagement towards business objectives. Participant E3 suggested that leaders invest in social activities such as company picnics as an opportunity to build team solidarity to necessitate business performance. Jain, Jain, and Jain (2015) postulated that teams interact socially as means to develop workplace camaraderie. Small business leaders engender the fortitude to develop a team concept towards corporate objectives (Muchiri & McMurray, 2015). From a theoretical

viewpoint, leaders engage in VLT characteristics such as communication, knowledge and training, virtuous tenets, wisdom, modeling justice, and teambuilding to necessitate employees' commitment to increase business growth.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Identifying the best practices that small business leaders need to address increased business growth may prove instrumental for enhanced organizational performance. Business leaders may be able to cultivate virtuous workplace behaviors as needed to necessitate increase business performance based on the research findings within this study. Small business leaders experience diminished performance due to ineffective leadership behaviors (Aidis, Estrin, & Mickiewicz, 2012). Johnson (2014) proposed that businesses in the United States have experienced annual productivity losses of approximately \$300 billion due to ineffective leadership behaviors. Effective leaders understand the benefits achieved by applying a balanced approach to manage competing business processes, relationships, and financial goals (Machado, 2013) towards improved customer satisfaction (Johnson, 2014). Moreover, Allio (2013) suggested that leaders in the contemporary marketplace practice virtuous principles in an effort to develop a symmetrical workforce through the alignment of profitability measures with human needs.

A leaders' capacity to ascertain strategies to promote virtuous leadership behaviors may assist small business employees with practices needed for increased business growth. Study findings may assist organizational leaders to (a) develop enhanced communication; (b) provide knowledge and training; (c) model virtuous tenets;

(d) transfer wisdom; (e) ensure justice; and (f) promote teambuilding as a means of engendering employee commitment for increased business growth. Frisch and Huppenbauer (2014) suggested that business leadership recruit leaders as a means of guiding employee contributions towards the greater good of the organization. Leaders are expected to articulate to employees the business purpose and meaning as related to performance (Huang et al., 2016). Garg (2013) advocated that communication among leaders and employees is germane to guide workplace efforts towards increased business growth. Moreover, organizations pursue leaders capable of conveying virtuous behaviors across company boundaries (Bacha & Walker, 2013). All 10 (100%) participants confirmed that leaders must ensure communication exists as a strategy to necessitate increased business performance. Moreover, leaders' use of communication as provided in the study findings may prove paramount in guiding employees' commitment to participate in efforts for increased business growth.

Entity leaders assign resources to identify and procure leaders that model the propensity to guide employees' aptitude to engage in business performance based on virtuous precepts (Hackett & Wang, 2012; Maloş, 2011; Northouse, 2012; Wang & Hackett, 2016). Bischak and Woiceshyn (2015) advocated that leaders might actually achieve business objectives through modeling virtuous characteristics. Eight (80%) of 10 participants stressed workplace training as a critical attribute for guiding employee commitment towards business performance. Participants stressed training through seminars and workshops to promote virtuous workplace behaviors. Additionally, participants promoted that leaders provide training as a means of establishing the

business purpose and meaning among employees. Based on the study findings, small business entities adhering to training as an element for guiding employee commitment to virtuous behaviors might experience an increase in business performance.

Small business leadership engagement in virtuous tenets (i.e., honesty, integrity, and principles) may result in increased growth based on 7 (70%) of 10 study participants. Virtuous followers prescribe to values based on principled behaviors (Caldwell et al., 2015). Bright et al. (2014) postulated that virtuous in leadership is about “doing the right thing” throughout the workplace to preserve the entity’s standards (p. 1185). Furthermore, study participants promoted that leaders should not say one thing and do another. Cameron (2011) advocated that leaders’ behaviors must reflect defined characteristics as a means of modeling virtuous tenets. The analysis of leaders and employee data paralleled Cameron’s contribution in that business employees must *do the right thing*. Business leaders’ commitment to model principled characteristics signifies a propensity to adhere to virtuous leadership behaviors (Demirtas, 2015). Small business leaders that practice virtuous tenets may enhance employee engagement and entity growth.

Leaders share wisdom as a basic means of advancing employee knowledge (Bai & Morris, 2014). In the practice of business, employees may deepen an affinity for business performance due to leaders’ commitment to share wisdom or knowledge. Leaders share wisdom as a basic means of advancing employee knowledge (Bai & Morris, 2014). Based on employee’s input within this study, leaders possess industry related knowledge and must convey such wisdom to employees to advance business

growth. Comparable to employees, leaders conveyed that leadership should impart wisdom to employees as a primary attribute for engendering employee commitment towards increase business performance.

Leaders' enactment of justice in workplace settings may be critical to garnering employees' commitment towards enhancing performance activities. Xueli et al. (2014) postulated that business leaders apply justice to garner and energize employee commitment towards increased entity performance. Leaders that embrace justice have an opportunity to engender employee patronage towards virtuous behaviors for increased business performance based on an amalgamation of study participants input. Seven (70%) of 10 study participants stressed the importance of cultivating an environment of virtuous advocates of leadership commitment to ensure that equality, fairness and caring existed in the practice of business. Seven (70%) of 10 participants stressed that a leader's application of justice during workplace interactions inspire employees' commitment to demonstrate virtuous behaviors to promote enhanced performance.

Small business performance increases as leaders' energize teambuilding amongst employees based on an analysis of data contributed by 5 (50%) of 10 study participants. The five study participants advocated teambuilding as a strategy to engage employee sensitivity towards virtuous behaviors for increased business performance. Participants E3 and E5 suggested that business leaders conduct company outings such as picnics to deepen employee role towards teambuilding for promoting business performance initiatives. Participant L1 conveyed that leadership use workplace gatherings as a

teambuilding opportunity to reinforce employee courage to model virtuous behaviors during business practices and foster a virtuous environment for the greater good.

Study participants provided various data on the use of VL for increased business growth. Garge (2013) postulated that leaders subscribe to an array of leadership approaches to assist in guiding business performance. Moreover, 3 (30%) leaders and 7 (70%) employees suggested that communication, employee knowledge and training, transference of wisdom, virtuous tenets, modeling justice, and teambuilding are essential VL attributes for promoting increased business performance.

First, leadership communication was advocated by all (100%) study participants as a means of promoting VL behaviors for increased growth. Secondly, 8 (80%) of 10 study participants introduced employee knowledge and training as a strategy to address employee demonstration of VL in the promotion of business growth. Thirdly, 7 (70%) of 10 study participants stressed the application of virtuous tenets in daily professional practices as a strategy to accomplish increased growth. Next, the transference of wisdom emerged from 8 (80%) of 10 study participants as a strategy for promoting VL behaviors for increased growth in small businesses. Furthermore, 7 (70%) of 10 study participants offered that leaders modeling of justice is a critical strategy for developing virtuous employees for increased business growth. Finally, 5 (50%) of 10 study participants added that leaders ensure the development of teambuilding as a strategy towards promoting a virtuous work environment focused on increased growth.

Business leaders have given additional attention to the VLT as an operative method of leadership for promoting virtuousness among employees for increased

business performance (Cameron, 2011). Hackett and Wang (2012) posited that leaders inspire VL as a catalyst for engendering employees' engagement towards organizational performance. Additionally, business leaders inhabit the capacity to promulgate virtuous characteristics as a leadership tool for guiding increased performance (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). Karakas and Sarigollu (2013) postulated that entity leaders possess the influence to inspire and motivate virtuous characteristics in the workplace. Allio (2013) suggested that organizations receive a direct benefit from leaders modeling virtuous leadership characteristics. Moreover, organizational leaders experience increase performance when leadership inspire VL behaviors among workplace participants (De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Rego, et al., 2013).

### **Implications for Social Change**

Society expects business leaders to manage business performance objectives to help contribute to social change (Krainz, 2015). Society benefits from the sizeable economic impact of small businesses (SBA, 2016). Society's wellbeing is contingent upon the behaviors of small business leaders to increase economic outcomes (Koenig & Thomas, 2015; Nwobu et al., 2015). Neagu (2016) suggested that small business leaders' behaviors contribute to society's economic sustainability. Moreover, society benefits when business leaders engage in virtuous leadership characteristics (Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014).

Machado (2013) urged that leaders apply a balanced leadership approach among competing business processes, relationships, and financial goals as required to increase business performance. Krainz (2015) suggested that society expects business leaders to

balance financial performance and necessitate employee wellbeing in parallel with improving social concerns. Moreover, organizations must balance business objectives but remain aware of social needs as deemed important by society (Chang-Lin, Ching-Lien, Rong-Hwa, & Kai-Ping, 2016). Allio (2013) conveyed that leaders who practice VL in corporate climates promote workforce balance by balancing profitability objectives and guiding employee needs. Conversely, ineffective leadership behaviors can diminish the reliance business employees, stakeholders, and society assign to organizational leaders' ability to cultivate increased growth (Cascini, DeFavero, & Mililli, 2012; Hansen et al., 2013; Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Moreover, small business executives' decision-making may assist small business leaders to understand the value of virtuous leadership contributes to social responsibility (Wang & Hackett, 2016).

The prosperity of society is dependent on small business leaders' behaviors in correlation to increasing economic outcomes (Neagu, 2016). Small business performance is critical to local and foreign societies given small entities represent 99% of employer firms generating more than 63% of employment opportunities since 1992 to 2013 (SBA, 2016). Frisch and Huppenbauer (2014) proposed that societies might also experience greater community engagement when small business leaders model virtuous leadership behaviors. Data from this study may affect societal change by enhancing employment opportunities based on leader's application of continuous communication in the workplace, employee knowledge and training, use of virtuous tenets, transference of wisdom, modeling justice, and teambuilding in the workplace. The role of virtuous leadership behaviors in small business may become a critical tool that leaders apply to

guide business objectives as contributing attributes to social change through increasing employment opportunities through growth. Moreover, leader's commitment towards virtuous leadership might inspire increased performance and employment opportunities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Leaders that model VL characteristics may reduce ineffective behaviors and increase employee contributions towards performance (Cascini, DeFavero, & Mililli, 2012; Hansen et al., 2013; Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Allio (2013) advocated that leaders, which engage in VL behaviors, seek to balance employees' needs and business commitment to increase performance. Moreover, virtuous leaders commit to principled standards to ensure the pursuit of such behaviors enhance organizational performance (Cameron, 2011). The results of this study might assist organizational leaders to model and promote VL behaviors as workplace characteristics needed for increase business performance. Based on the research findings, I recommend the following actions:

- Business leaders must ensure employees consistently receive verbal and non-verbal communication to promote virtuous leadership.
- Leaders should work collaboratively with employees to develop a repertoire of seminars, workshops, conferences, and webinars as training opportunities to ensure workplace skills adequately exists to effectively manage responsibilities towards increase business growth.
- Business leaders should model and advocate virtuous tenets (i.e., honest, trust, integrity, and principles) on a consistent basis to ensure employee

understand the need and outcome of workplace standards on company growth.

- Leaders should invest in ensuring the consistent sharing of wisdom as the impetus for transferring experiential knowledge and developing courageous workplace participants.
- Leaders must commit to modeling and facilitate justice (i.e., equality and fairness) amongst all workplace participants to cultivate a culture of devoted employees dedicated to business growth.
- Organizational leaders should seek every opportunity to interact with employees as a means of teambuilding to facilitate increased engagement and growth potential.

Business leaders' neglect to model VL behaviors may diminish public confidence and minimize organizational leaderships' capacity to contribute to societal economic prosperity. Ineffective workplace behaviors marginalize the confidence employees, stakeholders, and the community attribute towards an organizations' ability to increase growth (Cascini, DeFavero, & Mililli, 2012; Hansen et al., 2013; Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Business leaders must balance organizational processes, relationships, and financial goals to necessitate growth (Machado, 2013) to engage in new approaches to address sustainable performance concerns (Miricescu, 2015). Allio (2013) suggested that leaders could model VL behaviors as a strategy to balance employees' need for guidance and business desire for increased profitability.

I will seek opportunities to distribute my research findings through business journals, academic journals, periodicals, local and national conferences, workshops, and other training opportunities. Sandelowski and Leeman (2012) suggested that little guidance exists on the presentation of research findings. Ouwe-Missi-Oukem-Boyer, Munung, and Vidal (2014) advocated that researchers have a responsibility to share their work through publications, journals, and conference presentations. Aydın (2012) postulated the need to assimilate academic work in periodicals as a means of attributing to the efficacy of research. My research findings might prove valuable for small business leaders that implement the recommendations as strategies to foster engaged employees for increased growth. Moreover, leaders might benefit from applying VLT as a tool for increased business growth.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The research findings as contextualized within my study may contribute to strategies that business leaders apply to promote virtuous leadership behaviors for increase business growth. Wang and Hackett (2016) proposed that business leaders engage virtuous leadership as a strategy for developing employee affinity towards the business bottom-line. Organizational leaders that practice and advocate the demonstration of virtuous attributes assist employees in characterizing assigned workplace roles for increased business performance (Hackett & Wang, 2012). Virtuous participants model business principles and values (Caldwell et al., 2015; Wang & Hackett, 2016). Moreover, Bright et al. (2014) postulated that virtuous business participants model principles to

ensure the preservation of entity standards throughout the organizational workplace (Bright et al., 2014).

Bacha and Walker (2013), Bonner, Greenbaum, and Mayer (2016), Johnson (2012), and Northouse (2012) suggested that employees characteristically idealize leaders and, therefore, pursue actions that resemble leadership behaviors. Wang and Hackett (2016) suggested that business leaders apply VL to generate employee commitment and passion towards the bottom-line. Organizational leaders apply VL to exhibit business acumen for developing and motivating employees' affection for organizational performance (De Araújo & Lopes, 2015; Zacher et al., 2014). Caldwell et al. (2015) conveyed that virtuous leaders possess a sensitivity towards developing viable principled practitioners while simultaneously balancing performance.

Limitations existed within this research study. First, I used a small sample size, which may not be scaled to the broader business population. Next, I only included leaders and employees from a small business, which may exclude workforce participation within large organizations. Prospective scholars could expand the sample and business size to include a large pool of participants from an array of organizations. Lastly, my application of a single case study to collect data may limit the range of input participants provided in the study. Future researchers could potentially use an ethnographic design to conduct research to observe leaders and employee interactions as a means of expanding the research findings. Wolcott (1994) suggested that researchers apply the ethnographic design to conduct observations to address a cultural phenomenon. Imminent business reviewers of my study findings may develop strategies for small business leaders to

commit to VL behaviors that affect employee's engagement towards virtuous characteristics for increased growth. Moreover, future researchers could expand the results of this study through additional investigation on leaders' capacity to (a) ensure a continuous commitment to leadership communication, (b) provide employee training opportunities, (c) exhibit virtuous tenets, (d) transfer wisdom, (e) model justice across the organizational environment, and (f) cultivate a culture of teamwork and teambuilding.

Businesses that are interested in increasing performance may benefit from VL behaviors as demonstrated within this study. I identified through the findings of this study that business executives may increase business performance given leaders understand the benefits of communication, knowledge and training, virtuous tenets, transference of wisdom, modeling justice, and teambuilding in the workplace. Additionally, organizational leaders may experience heightened levels of employee engagement in modeling VL for increased business performance. Future researchers could examine if and to what extent a relationship exists between variables of virtuous leadership, communication, knowledge and training, virtuous tenets, transference of wisdom, modeling justice and teambuilding.

### **Reflections**

In this research study, I used a single case study design to explore strategies that leaders can apply to promote virtuous leadership for increase business growth. Reflecting on my research study, I have learned that business leaders may apply VL characteristics to increase business growth. Additionally, I understand how a leader's use of communication, knowledge and training, virtuous tenets, transference of wisdom,

modeling justice, and teambuilding contributes towards engendering employees' commitment towards increased business performance. All 10 (100%) participants stressed leadership communication as the overarching leader attribute to promote business strategies for increase growth.

I utilized a qualitative single case study to explore strategies that leaders use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. I now understand how to apply a qualitative method and a case study design to explore a business phenomenon. Through this research study, my understanding, knowledge, and indebtedness for the value leaders and employees assign to the position of leadership in the workplace have increased. Moreover, conducting my doctoral research study has expanded my knowledge and appreciation of the commitment required to complete scholarly work and my understanding of the theoretical lens to address the research problem.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that leaders use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth. In Section 1, I reviewed the literature on business leaders and leadership, business principles and virtuous business behaviors, fundamentals of leadership behaviors and practices, leadership development and guidance, leadership performance virtuous leadership, comparative leadership theories. In Section 2, I reviewed and drafted content on the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection and analysis, and reliability and validity of

the research. In Section 3, I focused on providing comments regarding the application for professional practice and the implications for change. I interviewed three leaders and seven employees from a small business located in the greater Houston metropolitan area. I collected participants input and a physical document as data for my study. Six themes emerged from during my data analysis: (a) continuous communication in the workplace, (b) employee training towards virtuous behaviors, (c) use of virtuous tenets, (d) transference of wisdom, (e) modeling justice within the workplace, and (f) teambuilding in the workplace. Business leaders must communicate with employees the value of ascertaining virtuous tenets to engender employee participation towards business growth.

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## Appendix A: Introduction Letter

Hello,

My name is Destry Dokes and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University working on completing my Doctor of Business Administration degree with a concentration in leadership. I am conducting a doctoral research study on what strategies small businesses need to promote virtuous leadership behaviors for increased business growth. For this study, virtuous leadership behavior is defined as leadership's commitment to embrace principled business activities that encourage purpose, justice, courage, and knowledge for the greater good of achieving sustainable organizational performance (Bai & Morris, 2014; Cameron, 2011; Şen, Kabak, & Yangınlar, 2013; Stacey & Stacey, 2014; Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, & McKenna, 2014).

Existing small business leaders and employees with at least one year of virtuous experience in a professional organizational setting are invited to participate in this study. I believe that your participation and knowledge of virtuous leadership behaviors in small business settings will be crucial to the research being conducted. Please contact me directly at 281-770-3115 or via email at [destry.dokes@waldenu.edu](mailto:destry.dokes@waldenu.edu) if you interested in participating in this study. As a volunteer for this study, you will participate in on-site interview that will be conducted in a designate space for privacy. The interview will be audio recorded lasting approximately 45 minutes to allow you time to respond to the questions. I will define virtuous leadership at the onset of the interview.

As a participant, you will receive a 1-2 page summary to transcription for member checking, and a summary of the findings, which will allow you to learn what best practices are being used to leverage virtuous leadership behaviors and business performance. Your confidentiality will be protected. I will email you a consent form after you contact me even if you only have a few minutes to participate in an interview. I will ask that you return the consent form by email or fax. The consent form contains additional information about the study. Afterwards, I will contact you to set up a mutually agreed to time and date for the interview. Again, please contact me at 281-770-3115 or via email at [destry.dokes@waldenu.edu](mailto:destry.dokes@waldenu.edu) if you interested in participating in this study or have questions. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Thank you,  
Destry Dokes

## Appendix B: Request for a Research Partner to forward a Study Invitation Letter

Community Research Partner Name  
Contact Information

Date

Dear Authorized Representative,

I am thankful that your organization intends on participating in my research study entitled, 'Virtuous Leadership for Increased Business Growth,' based on your signed 'Organizational Intent to Participate Letter'. I wish to interview leaders and employees with at least one year of experience with virtuous leadership in a small business setting and based on your signed letter, employees within your organization have an average of 7-10 years of experience working in a virtuous environment. Therefore, I am requesting that as the authorized representative that you forward an email on my behalf to leaders and employees with at least one year of experience within your virtuous environment to determine their interest in volunteering in this study. Each individual employee interested in the study must email me directly at [destry.dokes@waldenu.edu](mailto:destry.dokes@waldenu.edu) or contact me by phone at 281.770.3115. I will forward a consent form to each employee that contacts me directly and volunteers to participate in the study.

I will use a designated space as mentioned in your 'Organizational Intent to Participate Letter,' in which to interview participating employees. Each individual that volunteers will participate in one on-site interview lasting approximately 45 minutes for data collection purposes. Leaders and employees that participate in the interviews will receive a summary of the interview transcription for member checking, and a summary of the research findings. I will also request an physical document (i.e., goals, mission or vision statement or other document) from you as the authorized representative as an additional data source. Keep in mind that your organization has the right to withdraw from the study at any time if your circumstances change.

Thank you for your cooperation to participate in this study and for forwarding an invitation letter to leaders and employees within your organization.

Sincerely,  
Destry Dokes  
Email: [Destry.dokes@waldenu.edu](mailto:Destry.dokes@waldenu.edu)  
Phone: 281.770.3115

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

## CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of how would small business leadership behaviors contribute to employee engagement in enhancing business performance. The researcher is inviting small business leaders and employees whom have experienced the effects of leadership behavior on business performance. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Destry Dokes, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies to promote virtuous leadership for increased business growth.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Be interviewed face-to-face not expected to exceed 45 minutes.
- Be interviewed at a time and day that will be mutually agreed.
- Allow the researcher to audio record all interviews.
- Review the researcher’s written summation of the interview which each participant will receive via email to verify accuracy. Participants should be able to read the 1-2 page summation within 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

- What motivated you to participate in a small business?
- How do you define business virtues?
- How would you describe ineffective workforce behaviors?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your organizations will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time by forwarding me an email.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risks in terms of minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as stress. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. As a result of this study, leaders and employees may potentially benefit from understanding the effect of how virtuous leadership attributes such as the

greater good, courage, justice, and wisdom promote workplace solutions on organizational performance. The researcher will not falsify data or disclose private information to the public.

**Payment:**

No payments will be given to participants.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. The interview will be audio-recorded. Data will be kept secure by a locked safe, only accessible by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions that you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368 ext. 3121210). Walden University's approval number for this study is 07-07-16-0376227 and it expires on July 6, 2017.

***By replying to the e-mail with the words "I Consent", you are agreeing to participate in the study.***

Please keep this consent form for your records.

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview: Virtuous Leadership for Increased Business Growth	
What you will do	What you will say—script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the interview and set the stage</li> <li>• Give the applicant the opportunity to introduce themselves</li> </ul>	<p>My name is Destry Dokes, and I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this research study project”.</p> <p>Virtuous leadership (VL) is a morally laudable process used by individuals in leadership positions to foster behaviors devoted to embracing principled activities and sustainable organizational performance.</p> <p>I am researching VL, for increased business growth in small businesses like your organization. My central research question that will drive this study is: What strategies can small business leaders use to promote virtuous leadership behaviors in small businesses for increased growth? I will ask you eight questions.</p> <p>I have been a student of Walden University for approximately 3.5 years. I have worked with the Houston Community College (HCC) for approximately 3 years. Prior to working with HCC, I invested more than 18 years working in various roles with in the Healthcare industry.</p> <p>Just to reiterate, you have consented to become part of this research project by agreeing to be interviewed.</p> <p>Remember, your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time prior to data analysis stage.</p> <p>Do you have any questions about the informed consent form that I previously sent to you or the informed consent process?</p> <p>I will audio record this interview along with taking notes. Your participation along with this interview is a private matter, and I will keep these proceedings confidential.</p> <p>Do you have any questions or concerns about the confidentiality of your participation?</p> <p>Do you have any questions or concerns about anything that I have discussed with you thus far?</p>

	<p>For the purpose of this study VL is defined as a morally laudable process used by individuals in leadership positions to foster behaviors devoted to embracing principled activities that encourage purpose, justice, courage, and knowledge for the greater good of achieving sustainable organizational performance.</p> <p>Let's begin with the questions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for non-verbal queues</li> <li>• Paraphrase as needed</li> <li>• Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What strategies are needed by leaders to ensure the promotion of virtuous behaviors for increased business growth?</li> <li>2. What strategies can leaders use to promote a work environment to support the greater good?</li> <li>3. What strategies can leaders use to encourage purpose and meaning in work activities?</li> <li>4. How do organizational leaders emphasize courage as a virtuous leadership attribute within your entity?</li> <li>5. How do organizational leaders strengthen virtuous leadership within your entity?</li> <li>6. How does your small business integrate justice to increase virtuous behaviors?</li> <li>7. How do leaders use wisdom to promote behaviors that increase growth within your entity?</li> <li>8. What more would you like to add regarding this study?</li> </ol>
<p>Wrap up interview thanking participant</p>	<p>This concludes our interview session.</p>
<p>Schedule follow-up member checking interview</p>	<p>I will transcribe this interview and provide a summary of your responses to each of the questions to you via email within three business days from today so that you can make certain that I have captured the essence of your responses to the questions.</p> <p>If there are inconsistencies in my transcription and the intended meaning of your responses, we will have a follow-up interview so that you can provide clarification.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and I hope that you have a great rest of the day.</p>

## Appendix E: Organizational Intent to Participate



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Date: March 19, 2016

To: Destry Dokes, MBA, DBA (ABD)

From:

RE: Organizational Intent to Participate

Thank you for contacting [redacted] quality care community service organization. This letter serves as confirmation that we would like to participate in your study entitled, "Virtuous Leadership for Increased Business Growth". We are a provider of home and community based-services (HCS) for clients in the greater Houston metropolitan area. We understand virtuous principles within as the capacity for employees to help ensure a virtuous functioning environment built on trust, and participation in respectful behaviors with all patrons and co-workers. We also believe that such behaviors help us to continue promoting a culture of engaged employees as needed to maintain organizational performance. Our employees have an average of 7 to 10 years servicing clients in a virtuous inspired environment.

Onsite office space is available for you to conduct your interviews with our employees. If you require assistance or need additional authorization letters, please contact [redacted] or [redacted] for approval.

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## Appendix F: Protecting Human Research Participants Certificate



Appendix G: Company Mission and Goal Statement

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER - THE POWER TO CREATE AND IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AND THE POWER TO SERVE WITH INTEGRITY, THROUGH GOOD WORKS, THOSE INDIVIDUALS IN OUR COMMUNITY WITH MENTAL RETARDATION.

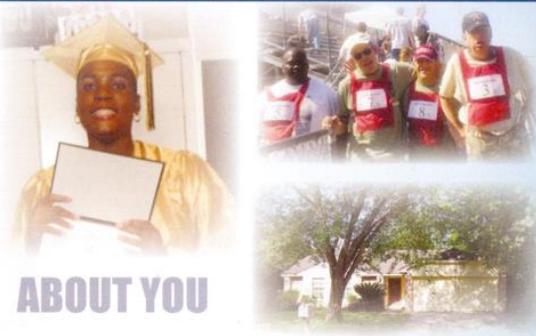
## OUR MISSION OUR GOAL YOUR CHOICE YOUR PROGRAM



Quality Care Community Services understands that choosing an HCS provider is a difficult and possibly confusing task. All HCS providers are licensed to provide the same waiver services. We stand committed to demonstrating the qualities of knowledge, experience, and dedication that allow us to provide superior service delivery.

We emphasize the creation and implementation of programs that enhance the individual's strengths and promotes the individual's preferences and choices. This philosophy is realized through the provision of a comprehensive system of integrated community and waiver services to meet the needs of each individual enrolled in the Quality Care Community Services HCS Program. This system emphasizes teaching and training each individual to realize their maximum potential and promote their full participation in the community in which they live.

## ABOUT YOU



As an individual enrolled in the Quality Care Community Services HCS Program, you will be afforded the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of your service needs. Your preference for housing will be supported. Your choice for work and recreation will be encouraged. Your relationships with others of your choice will be promoted. Your learning experience will be diverse and stimulating. You will be encouraged to identify goals and objectives that are considerate of your capabilities rather than your disabilities. Your caregivers will treat you with respect and dignity. You will participate in the fullness of life through the experience of quality integrated community living.