Leadership Styles and Perceived Organizational Competencies at a Nonprofit Organization

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Abstract
Amidst increased demands for accountability and scrutiny over operational performance, nonprofit executive leaders are being asked to deliver more effective measures to address complex social issues largely ignored by government and business entities. Research indicates the nonprofit sector has the greatest opportunity in shaping the quality of life in America, yet the literature on the leadership and competencies needed to propel these organizations forward is limited. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the leadership styles of executive, management, and staff personnel, and the alignment to perceived organizational competencies concerning the areas of capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. Using an anonymous 36-question survey, research participants assessed their own leadership style along with the leadership style of their direct supervisor through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) 5X-Short Form by responding to nine statements, each corresponding to a specific component of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership. Through a series of statistical procedures, (descriptive statistics, t-tests, Chi-square test of independence, and a MANOVA) this study found statistical alignment of specific transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership components to capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning as self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports. This study also found statistical alignment in terms of leadership styles and mediating variables of gender, educational background, and position membership.

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Leadership Styles and Perceived Organizational Competencies at a Nonprofit Organization

By

John L. Perry

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Josephine Moffett

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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

August 2019
Dedication

To my mother, Adelia Trainor, without your love, happiness, and constant resolve none of this is possible. I’ll never forget the sacrifices you made to ensure I’d have an opportunity to be someone you could be proud of. Lila, your strength as you endured life’s most difficult road, propelled me to graduate from this program.

The Trainor family and especially Sean, Natalie, and Vincent, who welcomed complete strangers into your life and created a warm home. To Tiffany, Sandy, Doug, Juddy, Tessa, and Zookie, thank you for your endless support and patience while I carry out my dreams. I love you all.

Dave, I can’t express how happy I am to have you in my life after all these years. Thank you for your consistent friendship and support. To Jake and Carrie, whose occasional visits resulted in incredible bonds, endless laughter, and friendship. Annelise, your potential is unparalleled and I’m excited to stand by and watch as your dreams come true.

To Pam, whose mentorship has positioned me for unimaginable heights. Learning from you has been one of the most rewarding experiences. Thank you for the opportunity and endless leadership sessions in navigating work’s many complexities. My best wishes to you, Vinny, Eric, and Emily. To Anika, whose emotional intelligence, optimism for life, and care for others is unlike anything I’ve ever witnessed. Thank you for teaching me the way.
To Dr. Moffett and Dr. Louis, your support as Chair and Committee member through the dissertation journey exceeded all expectations. This process deserves a strong committee and your commitment to excellence was unrivaled. Thank you!

To Jerrell, Dottie, Tanicqua, and Rae, who became family over the years. I wish you all the success in your future endeavors. To cohort 9, thank you for an incredible journey and best of luck to you all!
Biographical Sketch

John L. Perry is an experienced operations and finance professional with significant exposure to corporate and nonprofit organizations. John joined the St. John Fisher College, Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership in 2016 and completed a quantitative, exploratory study focusing on leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies at a nonprofit organization. He pursued his research under the direction of Dr. Josephine Moffett and Dr. Gilbert Louis and received his degree in 2019.
Abstract

Amidst increased demands for accountability and scrutiny over operational performance, nonprofit executive leaders are being asked to deliver more effective measures to address complex social issues largely ignored by government and business entities. Research indicates the nonprofit sector has the greatest opportunity in shaping the quality of life in America, yet the literature on the leadership and competencies needed to propel these organizations forward is limited. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the leadership styles of executive, management, and staff personnel, and the alignment to perceived organizational competencies concerning the areas of capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. Using an anonymous 36-question survey, research participants assessed their own leadership style along with the leadership style of their direct supervisor through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) 5X-Short Form by responding to nine statements, each corresponding to a specific component of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership. Through a series of statistical procedures, (descriptive statistics, t-tests, Chi-square test of independence, and a MANOVA) this study found statistical alignment of specific transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership components to capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning as self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports. This study also found statistical alignment in terms of leadership styles and mediating variables of gender, educational background, and position membership.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Over a 10-year period from 2005 to 2015, the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) increased 10.4% to 1.56 million organizations. The same 1.56 million organizations contributed $985.4 billion to the U.S. economy, accounting for 5.4% of gross domestic product (McKeever, 2019). In 2016, nonprofit organizations provided 12.3 million jobs or 10.2% of the private sector employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Recognizing the impact decades prior, Drucker (1995) suggested nonprofit organizations were America’s true success story and industry growth was largely unmatched. The emergence of nonprofit organizations across the third sector has provided basic social goods, particularly in the fields of education and health care, but now, nonprofit organizations are being asked to find creative ways to deliver on social missions, all the while minimizing their dependence on various constituencies (Dees, 1998); thus, creating greater emphasis on leadership styles and organizational competencies as critical elements worthy of nonprofit research. Examples of these nonprofits and the work they do are many. For instance, due to the research and innovations in treatment at St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital, the overall childhood cancer survival rate has grown from 20% to more than 80% in just 50 years. Also, the survival rate of children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia has increased from 4% in 1962 to 94% today. Yet, with all the advancements in treatment and research, one in five children diagnosed with cancer will not survive. On a global scale the figures are worse as most childhood cancer patients
lack the access to adequate health care services (St. Jude Children’s Hospital, 2019). Other nonprofit organizations like Volunteers of America have helped more than 1.3 million individuals annually and more than 57,000 disadvantaged and disconnected children and youth by providing social, emotional, and academic support (Volunteers of America, 2019). Additionally, the American Red Cross has provided 40% of the nation’s blood and blood components where a single donation of blood can save up to three lives (American Red Cross, 2019). These and other societal challenges such as homelessness, pollution, drug abuse, and domestic violence, have been largely ignored by government policy and the market, resulting in an increased demand for new solutions to public issues and for more efficient and effective ways to deliver socially important goods (Dees, 1998). Scholars continue to debate whether these issues are best addressed by the third sector as they typically carry specific moral or characterological components (Schenck, 2003). As Frumkin (2002) proposed, nonprofit organizations are best prepared to respond to such issues because they specialize in service delivery, creating opportunities for social entrepreneurship, provide forums for civil and political engagement, and embody the values and the faith of individuals involved in them (Schenck, 2003).

More than 3 decades later, scholars continue to struggle with defining the third sector (also referred to as the social sector) and whether nonprofit organizations (also referred to as not-for-profit organizations or nongovernmental organizations) can truly distinguish themselves from government or business entities (Schenck, 2003). The inconsistencies in definition are largely due to the drastically different missions nonprofit organizations serve. Some of these charitable nonprofits specialize in providing services to children, the elderly, or provide opportunities for the homeless and hungry. In 2018,
the majority (35.5%) of nonprofit organizations were recognized as human service providers (National Council of Nonprofits, 2019). Regardless of the mission, these organizations tend to provide individuals with an opportunity to contribute to the common good and have paved the way for new programs, innovations, and even provided a vehicle for private citizens to pursue their own passions (Dees, 1998). The desire for meaning in which an individual can discover renewed passion and commitment creates a distinct advantage for the third sector that is rarely found in government and for-profit institutions (Collins & Collins, 2006).

The challenge for nonprofit organizations is the expectation to achieve a social mission with the often-limited resources available to nonprofit executive leaders and management personnel; though rarely are appropriate actions taken to maximize resources to successfully fulfill the mission (Clark, 2012). In fact, most charitable organizations have softened the need for strategic goals, suggesting that nonprofits do not require the business mentality typically found in government and for-profit settings (Clark, 2012). The unfamiliarity with business or management terminology by nonprofit executive leaders is oftentimes attributed to the lack of a conventional bottom line (Drucker, 1995). Yet, empirical research would suggest the lack of a conventional bottom line serves as the primary reason why nonprofit organizations need executive leaders who can manage complex relationships and constituents, and strategically increase operational capacity to deliver on a broader mission (Thach & Thompson, 2007).

Due to the growth and increased popularity across the sector, nonprofit organizations have become synonymous with the expectations around quality of life in America, citizenship, and most closely resemble the values often associated with
American society and tradition (Drucker, 1995). While these charitable nonprofits have strong social reform and human care goals, most of these organizations face three major problems which limit their ability to efficiently and effectively execute their mission: (a) overcrowding, (b) competence, and (c) executive turnover.

**Overcrowding.** When discussing nonprofit complexities, the emergence of the nonprofit sector as a significant and growing segment of the economy that is pivotal in making societal contributions, must be considered (Privett & Erhun, 2011). With increasingly more organizations, nonprofits are competing amid limited resources, which has an everlasting impact on their organizational life cycle and opportunity for growth (Clark, 2012). The sobering truth for many nonprofit organizations is that traditionally dependable revenue streams, such as grants and government contracts, were less available due to overcrowding in the industry (Clark, 2012). In fact, federal and state grants as a share of gross domestic product are at historic lows. Specifically, discretionary and mandatory grants (other than Children’s Health Insurance Programs (CHIP) and Medicaid) which support a variety of programs including child nutrition, public safety, and education to name a few, have fallen to the lowest level since 1989 as a percent of the economy (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2018). With the decline in government funding, nonprofit organizations have traditionally relied on individual and annual giving which has accounted for nearly 80% of all charitable donations (Charity Navigator, 2018).

Over the last century, the U.S. nonprofit sector has grown in social, political, and economic importance. In the last 25 years alone, the nonprofit sector as a percentage of total U.S. employment, increased paid employment from 5.8% to 7.1%. Yet, the growth
across the sector is not distributed evenly and questions about disparate levels of social
capital remain (Saxton & Benson, 2005). Charitable giving remains unproportionate
across the sector as religious organizations accounted for 31% of all donations in 2017,
while education and human services charities rounded out the top three at 14% and 12%
respectively (Charity Navigator, 2018). Having faced significant transition and
heightened institutional complexity, both government and business rely on the U.S.
nonprofit sector to act as the primary supplier of social services, increasing the need for
management expertise (Bromley, Hwang, & Powell, 2012).

**Competence.** According to Charity Navigator (2018), charitable donations have
increased in current dollars every year since 1976 except for 1987, 2008, and 2009. Yet
only 12% of nonprofit organizations, per the Clark (2012) survey, operated above
breakeven. More importantly, Clark (2012) highlighted the growing concern as 31% of
nonprofit organizations have failed to secure the necessary liquidity or operating cash to
cover 1 to 3 months of expenses. Drucker (1995) has suggested that even though
nonprofits struggle to secure adequate resources, it is oftentimes a lack of competence
that drives organizational failure. Competence is the process of executing a task at a high
level and may lead to new standards of performance. A lack of organizational
competencies across nonprofit executives, board members, and management could lead
to organizational ineffectiveness. With societal pressures demanding that nonprofit
executive leaders start emphasizing performance outcomes, efficiency, and evaluation
much more so than in the past, an examination of organizational competencies in a
nonprofit setting is desperately needed (Drucker, 1995).
Nonprofits have evolved, specifically in their use for quantitative metrics to assess effectiveness and to react to demands for accountability (Suarez, 2009). The challenge with addressing competence in nonprofit organizations is that few resources have been made available to nonprofit executives to aid them in their leadership and management, oftentimes ignoring the distinct characteristics or central needs critical to nonprofit organizations (Drucker, 1995). Froelich, McKee, and Rathge (2011) acknowledge the tendency to rely on for-profit theories and evidence which are inadequate in understanding nonprofits, given the vast differences between the sectors and their end goals. Additionally, some nonprofits lack the skills or knowledge to implement such managerial tools. Others, while successfully incorporating new tools as organizational routines, are either unable or find it difficult to align newly introduced materials with extant identities and priorities (Bromley et al., 2012).

**Executive turnover.** In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 2.8 million people reached age 65. Further analysis suggests that each year after, for the next 10 years, the number of individuals who will reach age 65 is expected to increase, surpassing 4 million individuals by 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, 2008). The mass exodus of baby boomers likely presents more challenges for the nonprofit sector. Difficulties in executive succession planning persists due to a shortage of experienced executive directors in the job market, lower wages, lack of organizational infrastructure, and increasingly more executive level tasks and responsibilities (Froelich et al., 2011). Additionally, the executive turnover dilemma is presenting new challenges to organizations and more importantly, nonprofit boards. Suarez (2009) recognized that strategies are needed to properly manage these organizations, given how complex and
volatile the environments are, yet who leads these nonprofits and how leaders develop their skills remains unclear. The evolution of change and transition presents new challenges to current nonprofit executives and to future leaders as well. Suarez (2009) suggests that the implications of such change specific to the nonprofit sector have received little attention. This, coupled with new management demands, may alter the composition of its leaders. For instance, market changes could lead to institutional shifts, forever altering the culture and leadership in the workforce across the nonprofit sector and the volunteer force (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

The executive level, of whom are most responsible for the impact on organizational performance, holds a higher order of competency when developing strategy and influencing others to follow it. Given the role of executives as strategic leaders, organizations tend to emulate the cognitive values associated with those executives (Phipps & Burbach, 2010). The vulnerability to external activities across the social sector makes nonprofits highly dependent on their top executives to secure resources to revitalize the mission (Heimovics, Herman, & Coughlin, 1993); thus, increasing the need to understand nonprofit executive leadership styles.

**Problem Statement**

Nonprofit organizations provide the greatest opportunity to educate the youth, connect religiously, ensure our communities are safe, and provide support for the poor and those battling hunger (Collins & Collins, 2006). Yet, these services are challenged by an underinvestment in leadership development across the nonprofit sector which has resulted in a significant gap in the increased demands for leaders and those who have the ability to respond effectively (Callanan, Gardner, Mendonca, & Scot, 2014). More so, a
growing shortage of nonprofit managers has forced professionals into roles with an insufficient understanding and skill to execute successfully (Hopkins, Meyer, Shera, & Peters, 2014). These charitable organizations face increased demands to prove their impact on complex social problems by responding to issues of performance measurement, accountability, and effectiveness (Mensing, 2017; Renz, 2016; Sowa, Selden & Sandfort, 2004). In an era of unprecedented challenges, a lack of leadership development, leadership oversight, and minimal to no succession planning in key leadership roles, the nonprofit sector is, without a doubt, in a state of unrest (Sargeant & Day, 2018).

Some demands are exogenous to nonprofit organizations, ascending from carefully positioned requests for accountability and performance by regulators and donors. Others, driven by endogenous behaviors, highlight the unwillingness of nonprofit executive leaders to embrace the complexities and demands of policy (Ebrahim, 2010). Driven by a barrage of exogenous and endogenous demands, nonprofit organizations are forced to manage multiple, and sometimes irreconcilable, performance and accountability expectations with limited resources (Ebrahim, 2010).

Even though the nonprofit sector continues to grow in size and importance, the infrastructure across the sector is lacking the expertise in recruiting, retaining, and developing skilled, dedicated, and diverse employees and leadership in order to be successful long-term (Stroup, 2007). The leadership needed to guide nonprofit organizations through such times has evolved and more modern definitions emphasize team structures, individual empowerment, and participative management (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2011). This perspective essentially sees leadership as a driver of others’
performance and suggests that leadership is present at all levels of an organization – not just among the executive level team (O’Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz, & Self, 2010). Drucker (1995) suggested nonprofit institutions have a responsibility to tomorrow’s citizens and that society is driven by a community of leaders. By engaging this community, nonprofit institutions can elevate an organization’s vision, its competency levels, and overall organizational performance.

This study examined the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, passive/avoidant) of all personnel at a Northeast based human services organization (the Bryant Organization) and the core competencies concerning capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. Additionally, this study contributes to the growing emphasis of research, ensuring the next generation of nonprofit leadership is equipped with the necessary management and leadership skills to succeed across the nonprofit sector (Stroup, 2007).

**Theoretical Rationale**

In 1989, 17.9% of nonprofit organizations reported expenses in excess of $1 million. This statistic has gone largely unchanged over the last 2 decades as 17.7% reported expenses in excess of $1 million in 2012 (Beaton & Hwang, 2017). Scholars continue to debate whether crowding across the sector has impacted the ability of nonprofit organizations to secure resources. Regardless, resource limitations have become a fundamental assumption in the literature when defining nonprofits (Beaton & Hwang, 2017). In fact, many nonprofit leaders have indicated a high degree of change in their external environment (Sargeant & Day, 2018). As Collins and Collins (2006) suggest, the ultimate question for nonprofit executive leaders is merely, “how effectively
do we deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our resources?” (p. 7).

Resource dependence theory (RDT) is the need for resources, including financial and physical resources, as well as information obtained from the environment, making organizations potentially dependent on the external sources of these resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). RDT has evolved from the works of social exchange or social relations theory in 1962 by Richard Emerson where it was suggested organizations shared a mutual dependence that would support them in achieving their goals or objectives (Singh, Power, & Chuong, 2011). Seminal work by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) would further solidify RDT as one of the most important frameworks in organizational theory and strategic management (Hillman, Withers, & Collins, 2009). Nearly 3 decades after its publication, The External Control of Organizations, is widely cited by scholars for its unifying theory of power at the organizational level of analysis (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005).

RDT would continue to evolve in recent years as more specific definitions were offered suggesting that organizations engage in a series of arrangements based on interorganizational interdependencies or interorganizational relationships (IORs) such as board interlocks, alliances, joint ventures, and mergers and acquisitions (Drees & Heugens, 2013). IORs develop through enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations within its environment (Oliver, 1990). RDT is considered valuable guidance to managers who want to understand the considerations and consequences of interorganizational partnering.
(Malatesta & Smith, 2014). As Malatesta and Smith (2014) suggested, managers should be concerned with RDT as their primary focus is to reduce resource uncertainty.

RDT is consistently present in empirical work, however little is known about its measured impact and utility in an organizational setting. Specifically, RDT fails to identify how organizations intend to lead through resource limitations, or who is capable of succeeding (Malatesta & Smith, 2014). In the same publication where RDT was depicted as a great influencer of organizational theory and strategic management, it was suggested that RDT lacks the rigorous testing and exploration it deserves (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Closer examination of the literature suggests that RDT is more of an appealing metaphor rather than a foundation for testable empirical research (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005).

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argued that RDT is a platform to further examine the connection between external interdependencies and internal organizational behavior which are mediated by power. Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) challenged the notion of power and interdependence as mutually exclusive ideas, suggesting that they are instead two distinct theoretical dimensions of RDT. In fact, they believed power imbalance and mutual dependence to be separate from one another because of the opposite effects they might have on an organization’s ability to minimize dependencies. To support this claim, results from a study, which examined mergers and acquisitions among U.S. public companies between the periods of 1985-2000, indicated that mutual dependence is a key driver of merger and acquisition activity, whereas power imbalance oftentimes acted as a barrier to formation (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005).
Resource dependence theory has not experienced significant development or refinement since 1978, and although RDT is considered a valid theoretical framework with a strong future in management research, scholars should continue to build on its already successful foundation (Hillman et al., 2009). For instance, scholars can use this theory to explain specific management tools on a more operational level (Singh et al., 2011). In a specific business case, de los Mozos, Duarte, and Ruiz (2016) demonstrated how nonprofits can leverage RDT to further understand organizational autonomy through revenue diversification. As a result, the examination concluded that with RDT, nonprofits can create less financial distress through the development of a heterogeneous revenue portfolio (de los Mozos et al., 2016). To ensure its relevance, Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) urged organizational scholars to develop a more in-depth, theoretical and empirical model to ensure its position in organizational research.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, passive/avoidant) of executive, management, and staff using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) at a Northeast based human services organization (the Bryant Organization) and the alignment to organizational competencies regarding capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning.

**Research Questions**

This study addressed a single overarching question: To what extent is there alignment between self-perception and one’s perception of their supervisor’s leadership
style and the delivery of organizational competencies: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning?

In order to sufficiently address the overarching question, a series of sub-research questions emerged to support the proposed study:

1. What is the leadership style of the executive team as self-assessed?
2. What is the leadership style of the executive team as assessed by their direct reports?
3.a Is there alignment in leadership style across all levels of the organization (executive, management, and staff)?
3.b Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) age, (2) educational background, (3) gender, (4) position membership?
3.c Is there alignment in how executive, management, and staff perceive the assessment of organizational competencies: (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?
3.d Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?

Significance of Study

Nonprofit organizations have become an invaluable and obvious resource with broad sociopolitical implications and insights into organizational life (Salamon, 2012). Yet, the skills in leadership and strategy needed to propel these organizations forward have been recognized as critical gaps across the voluntary sector (Clark, 2007). With little question, nonprofits remain the best suited to address the broad social issues and respond effectively to human needs given the impact they have on the lives of many, yet
a deeper understanding and measurement across the sector and its organizations is needed (Hudson, 2009; Salamon, 2012).

With a multitude of internal factors such as understaffing, gaps in leadership, membership atrophy, coupled with an over dependency on volunteers and other extra-organizational members, the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations could be in jeopardy (Gilstrap & Morris, 2015; Riggio, Bass, & Orr, 2004; Stid & Bradach, 2009; Tierney, 2006). Changes across the third sector and an understanding of its implications demands an examination of nonprofit executive leadership as the quality of third sector leadership will dictate the life chances and experiences of all citizens (Howieson & Hodges, 2014; Macmillan & McLaren, 2012). Such impact can be measured through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which partners with nonprofit and faith-based organizations to serve nearly 41 million people with assistance to buy food, or the Global Fund Partnership, which has saved 27 million lives by partnering with politicians, scientists, and drug makers to secure safe and effective health investments to reduce the number of deaths caused by aids, malaria, and tuberculosis (Global Fund Overview, 2019; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018). These activities have a significant opportunity in identifying true leadership by providing the greatest freedom of followership, a concept typically missing from the business sector (Collins & Collins, 2006). Aside from examining the future of nonprofit executive leadership, research on the careers of nonprofit executives will appropriately increase the attention to the evolution of the sector and the new challenges that leaders are tasked with (Suarez, 2009).
This study informs future strategies at the Bryant Organization by identifying opportunities in leadership and organizational competencies. Additionally, this study will increase the attention to nonprofit literature and specifically the gaps in leadership styles as explored across executive, management, and staff levels. More so, this study contributes to the broad range of literature on RDT and the MLQ as valid frameworks to be leveraged in nonprofit settings.

**Definition of Terms**

*Capacity for Change* – An organizational competency concerned with how nonprofit organizations respond to ever-changing environmental conditions. Research suggests that nonprofit leaders should be concerned with innovation in order to develop new approaches to solving complex social challenges (Sahni, Lanzerotti, Bliss, & Pike, 2017). This organizational competency seeks to convey the importance of innovation and technology within nonprofit organizations. Drucker (1995) suggested that nonprofit organizations should be concerned with innovation to ensure long-term sustainability and mitigate risks.

*Communication* – An organizational competency concerned with the ability of nonprofit organizations to effectively message its mission, vision, and values to its many constituents including donors and volunteers. BoardSource (2016) suggests chief executive officers should be concerned with three major components of nonprofit communication: (a) effectively promoting the organization, (b) mission advocacy, and (c) stewarding relationships with key constituents. For purposes of this study, communication emphasizes the ability to effectively convey an organization’s mission, vision, values to internal employees along with external constituents.
Executive – For purposes of this study, executive members (also referred to as the c-suite or executive leadership team) include the chief development officer (CDO), chief financial officer (CFO), chief marketing officer (CMO), the chief operating officer (COO), and a regional director (RD) (Appendix B). These positions represent the highest level of the organization. The chief executive officer (CEO), while generally recognized as the leader of the organization and his or her executive team, is excluded from participating in this study.

Management – An organizational level below the executive leadership team. Employees at this level must have one or more full-time direct reports and not occupy an executive or c-suite title. This may include some of the following positions within the organization: senior directors, directors, senior managers, managers, associates and controllers (Appendix B).

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) – A comprehensive framework and instrument for assessing leadership styles. The MLQ is widely cited by scholars for its success in conceptualizing behavioral domains in leadership that range from transformational leadership, based upon attributed and behavioral charisma to transactional leadership, based upon rewards and punishments and passive/avoidant leadership or non-leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1993; Tejeda, Scandura, & Pillai, 2001).

Non-executive Members – For purposes of this study, non-executive members shall be any full-time employee not considered to be of the executive or c-suite level. This includes two levels of the organization: (a) management and (b) staff. Non-executive members do not include board members, volunteers, interns, donors, temporary employees, and any constituent receiving the benefits of the service.
Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) – Generally small organizations (82.5% reported revenue under $1 million) that benefit from public and private donations that are meant to serve a community or the public’s interest. These organizations employ over 12 million people and typically require the assistance of volunteers. Contrary to many understandings, nonprofit organizations should plan to generate positive revenue to ensure sustainability, yet these profits can’t be distributed to private individuals with the exception of those organizations compensating for those providing service (What is the third sector? Definition and meaning, n.d.). Also referred to as not-for-profits (NFPs) or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Position Membership – Refers to three organizational levels of the Bryant Organization: (a) executive, (b) management, and (c) staff.

Staff – An organizational level below executive and management. Employees at this level do not have any supervision responsibilities and therefore have no direct reports. This may include some, but not all the following positions within the organization: senior managers, managers, controllers, associates, and coordinators. Although some of these positions occupy a managerial title, they have no supervisory responsibilities and are considered staff in this study (Appendix B).

Strategic Planning – An organizational competency concerned with the ability of nonprofit organizations to effectively define an organization’s strategy and direction. More so, the strategic planning process typically serves as an opportunity to communicate organizational priorities, align organizational functions and operations with financial forecasts, while clearly outlining metrics and timelines. Strategic plans tend to
share a common vision amongst board and staff around the organization’s role, values, and priorities (BoardSource, 2019).

Succession Planning – An organizational competency concerned with the ability of nonprofit organizations to proactively plan for employee transition or vacancies. Most often, succession planning is examined at the executive level given their roles as drivers of strategy, however for purposes of this study, succession planning is recognized as an organizational activity that is paramount across all levels.

Third sector – The third sector is synonymous with nonprofit, not-for-profit, charitable, or 501(c)(3) organizations. This sector fills a void between business and government where private energy can be deployed for public good (What is the third sector? Definition and meaning, n.d.). The third sector is also referred to as the nonprofit, voluntary, or civil society sector (Morris, 2000).

Chapter Summary

A remarkable upsurge in volunteer activity spanning developed countries from North America to developing societies of Africa and Latin America, has created a phenomenon of social care and upkeep. The creation of private, nonprofit, or nongovernmental foundations has stimulated human service efforts, accelerated economic development, encouraged environmental responsibility, among countless of other objectives (Salamon, 1994). Given the dense and diverse nature in mission, nonprofit organizations face immense pressure to prove their effectiveness (Liket & Maas, 2015). With a heavy reliance on a variety of incomes, resources, and partnerships with external organizations, nonprofit executive leaders and managers must strategize accordingly to ensure financial sustainability (de los Mozos et al., 2016). Yet, limited
revenue streams and a series of operational complexities and difficulties in managing relationships with their environment has created significant challenges for nonprofit organizations (Helmig, Jegers, & Lapsley, 2004). More so, leadership gaps have created major debates about the future of leadership across the sector and even raised questions about whether the third sector can operate as a single, coherent space (Alcock, 2010; Hodges & Howieson, 2019; Howieson & Hodges, 2014). This study not only contributes to the emerging research on nonprofit executive leadership but enriches the conversation by drawing on the alignment of executive leadership styles, member demographics, and the application of specific competencies within the Bryant Organization.

Chapter 1 introduced the background information, including the problem statement and a theoretical framework (resource dependence theory) to guide the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the extensive literature on the three leadership styles associated with the MLQ (transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant) and key nonprofit organizational competencies (capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning). Chapter 3, the methodology, includes the study’s design, population, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the results of the quantitative study and relationship analysis. In Chapter 5, findings and recommendations are summarized.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

Nonprofit leadership has been examined for decades and for significant reason. As shared by Heimovics et al. (1993), executives, and specifically nonprofit CEOs serve as the most critical influencers to nonprofit effectiveness (Froelich et al., 2011). Leadership and management face intensified pressure to perform effectively and respond to demands from various sources such as funders, philanthropists, and board members to name a few, but lack uniformity in doing so (Bromley et al., 2012; Marx & Davis, 2012).

To further understand how nonprofit leaders may respond to demands of accountability and heightened pressures, various leadership assessment tools can be applied. The leadership assessment tool leveraged in this study was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). This literature review examines three specific leadership components of the MLQ which consist of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership. Over the last 20 years, a substantial amount of research has accumulated on transformational and transactional leadership theory, but passive/avoidant leadership (also referred to as non-leadership or passive leadership) occupies a critical dimension of which is typically absent in any other form of leadership including transformational or transactional (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Leadership Styles

Transformational leadership (TF). In its purest form, TF leadership is a process that changes and transforms people (Northouse, 2007). Founded by Burns
(1978), leadership was theorized as either transformational or transactional (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Later iterations, driven by Bass (1985) differed substantially from Burns’s original assessment. Bass (1985) proposed that the best leaders are both transformational and transactional whereas Burns (1978) believed these two leadership styles were juxtaposed to one another (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Bass (1985) suggested that TF leadership is the result of followers buying into the leader’s vision beyond their own self-interest. Further examination by Bass and Avolio (1993) proposed TF leadership consists of five subdimensions: idealized influence (attributes) (IIA), idealized influence (behavioral) (IIB), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC). Idealized influence involves exhibiting confidence and admirable components that arouse strong emotions and loyalty from followers. Specifically, IIA seeks to understand how leaders are perceived by followers as admired and respected role models. IIB analyzes the observed behaviors of a leader who is trusted to demonstrate high ethical and moral standards (Bass, 1995). Sometimes in the literature, charisma is used as a substitute for II (IIA and IIB are sometimes grouped as idealized influence or II) given that it measures the degree to which leaders behave admirably to create followership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). For this reason, TF leadership is oftentimes referred to in the literature as charismatic leadership. House (1977) became the first to use charismatic leadership in contemporary organizational research (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The third dimension, IM, involves articulating organizational goals, communicating high expectations, and convincing followers of the importance of those goals. IS, the fourth dimension, is responsible for developing innovative ways of thinking and breaking away from existing routines and norms. Lastly, IC includes
attending to the individual needs of followers, acting as their coach, and listening to their concerns (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

TF leadership is arguably the most researched leadership topic over the last few decades and has garnered much attention largely due to its relevance and importance to organizational productivity and job performance. Bernard Bass has become synonymous with understandings of TF leadership for his many contributions on the topic and refinement of the original work by Burns in 1978 (Ng, 2017). Given its popularity, there are many empirical studies on TF leadership across various industries and organizations. The section to follow explores several practical and empirical studies on TF leadership.

An exploratory descriptive study, conducted by the University of Tennessee College of Nursing Empathy Research Group, aimed at identifying the first step in developing an empathy enhancement program for emerging nursing leaders (Gunther, Evans, Mefford, & Coe, 2007). Various leadership styles were examined to understand the relationship to empathy levels of junior and senior student nurses.

Three key research questions emerged to support the study:

1. Is there a predominant leadership style among student nurses enrolled in a traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program?
2. Is there a difference in the predominant leadership style between junior level and senior level students?
3. How are leadership style and empathy levels related in student nurses?

This correlational study explored the leadership styles and personality qualities of 178 total students enrolled in the BSN program, comprised of 92 junior and 86 senior level students. The instrument used in this evaluation was the Bass and Avolio,
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) which was first leveraged to understand leadership styles in comparison to empathy scores of juniors and seniors. A second analysis later examined the MLQ scores against the Hogan Empathy Scale (HES) and the Emotional Empathy Tendency Scale (EETS). The MLQ, comprised of 45 descriptive statements, advised students to score each item as it relates to each individual on a 0 to 4 scale (Gunther et al., 2007).

The first set of findings from this correlational study, proved that juniors and seniors in this specific nursing program were similar in their leadership styles. Yielding combined mean scores of 2.98 for the juniors and 3.05 for the seniors, this suggested statistical significance. The second set of findings yielded similar results when comparing the scores of the HES and EETS to that of the MLQ. Specifically, weak positive correlations existed at the junior level between HES scores and MLQ items measuring transformational components of IM, IS, and IC. Additionally, at the senior level, both Pearson correlation coefficients yielded weak positive correlations with TF leadership of II and IC (Gunther et al., 2007). While the comparison of MLQ scores to HES and EETS proved significant, this study was limited by its sample size and the lack of a longitudinal design. Expanding on this design to follow junior students all the way through their senior year would increase the validity of the findings. This study was useful though, as it clearly outlined a research design that could be easily replicated using the MLQ. More so, the statistical procedures used demonstrated the effectiveness of the MLQ in measuring leadership styles against other models and frameworks demonstrated by this study. This study supported the practice that the MLQ is a predominant instrument to use when analyzing leadership styles in nursing programs.
Valero, Jung, and Andrew (2015) provided a more recent study on TF leadership in a nonprofit setting. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between TF leadership and organizational resiliency. The research design would examine 112 individuals representing public and nonprofit organizations that worked in emergency management departments in the Southeastern Economic Region (SER) of South Korea through a structured survey. Several statistical analyses were used in the study. First, a regression analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between multiple independent variables and organizational resiliency. Second, a condensed version of the MLQ, which would only leverage the components associated with TF leadership was used, which supported the initial purpose for the study. The condensed MLQ reduced the number of statements from 45 to four; only focusing on the four dimensions of TF leadership, including: II, IM, IS, and IC. Each statement was scaled 0 to 4 and the results were leveraged in creating an index or a percentage. A higher index score indicated characteristics mostly associated with that of a TF leadership style.

The findings from this study showed statistical significance in the relationship between TF leadership and organizational resiliency ($p < 0.01$). This significance indicated that respondents who perceived their leaders to be transformational in style also perceived their organization to be resilient (Valero et al., 2015). This greater supports the theoretical arguments about the need to examine leadership styles in emergency management situations. This study contributed to a gap in the literature pertaining to the relationship between transformational leaders and organizational resiliency in an emergency management setting. More so, while this study was quantitative in nature, the assessment of the transformational leaders from the SER was very much subjective.
Specifically, this study does not survey leaders or ask leaders to conduct self-assessments on their leadership abilities. Another constraint was one of generalizability as few studies exist on leadership in Korean emergency management organizations. The purpose of providing this study, while significantly different from the first, was to showcase the various uses of TF leadership and the MLQ. These studies continue to validate the reliability, replicability, and overall utility of the MLQ.

In the first two case studies, the versatility of the MLQ to further understand TF leadership was well demonstrated. In fact, the MLQ has played a vital role in dictating TF leadership in relation to empathy levels and organizational resiliency in nonprofit settings. A similar approach, taken by Geer, Maher, and Cole (2008), examined TF leadership and commitment of standards for nonprofit accountability.

The researchers have generated the following hypotheses:

H₁: The greater the level of commitment to operating standards as reported by organizational leaders, the greater the level of accountability within nonprofit organizations they lead.

H₂: The greater the level of TF leadership exhibited by staff leaders of nonprofit organizations, the greater the level of accountability within nonprofit organizations they lead.

The research design for this study examined a small rural county in southwestern Pennsylvania with a population of approximately 37,000. The population was funneled to include only executive nonprofit leaders which yielded a list of 325 individuals. A survey was issued to these individuals containing 48 questions, including a 20-item scale measuring TF leadership. Following the data collection, qualitative interviews were
conducted for validation purposes. The response rate from this survey was 26% or 85 of the targeted 325 individuals. In revisiting the hypotheses, this study found statistical significance to support H₁ and H₂. While both commitment and TF leadership were supported in the findings, TF leadership was positively and significantly more impactful to nonprofit accountability (Geer et al., 2008). As found in the last research study, limitations in generalizability and sample size exists with this study as well. Additionally, the literature clearly outlines the potential for bias in this study given that chief executives were surveyed using a self-rater form. Whatever the confines, this study continues to support the notion that TF leadership and the practical use of the MLQ was a viable and replicable approach to measuring leadership practices within a specific population.

In review of these studies, it is evident that TF leadership has many uses and practical applications. More so, the MLQ has proven valuable when examining the components of TF leadership including II, IM, IS, and IC. From these studies, researchers can develop confidence in TF leadership and the MLQ in understanding how executive leaders might influence organizational effectiveness. The leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant, as leveraged through the MLQ, are important to thoroughly analyze given the need to understand leadership styles across several organizational levels. These studies contributed to the literature on the MLQ as a versatile and structurally viable instrument.

**Transactional leadership (TA).** While TF leadership focuses on individual needs and abilities, intellectual development, and a common mission, TA leadership focuses on monitoring performance and achievement-related rewards (Hamstra, Van
Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). Bass (1985) suggested that TA leadership builds the foundation for relationships between leaders and followers by clarifying responsibilities, setting expectations, and providing recognition and rewards for achieving expected performance. The construct of TA leadership is emphasized through two factors: (a) contingent rewards (CR) and (b) management by exception (active) (MBE-A). Leaders apply CR when set expectations with followers are positively reinforced when satisfied (Bass, 1985). This tends to create the notion that rewards are contingent on achievements which could lead to discomfort among followers due to the desire to create individual rather than collective goals (Hamstra et al., 2014). MBE-A occurs when leaders enforce consequences to ensure their followers maintain the status quo (Hater & Bass, 1988).

In this first study on TA leadership, Hamstra et al. (2014) presented two hypotheses:

H1: TF leadership would be positively related to followers’ endorsement of mastery goals.

H2: TA leadership would be positively related to followers’ endorsement of performance goals.

The population for this quantitative research design includes 449 followers of 120 leaders from diverse organizations in the Netherlands. It should also be noted that 59% of the participants were female. Participants were approached at their place of employment and asked to complete a brief voluntary survey about job characteristics that would remain completely anonymous. While the MLQ can be used to measure TA leadership, Hamstra et al. (2014) deferred to a multilevel analysis. This multilevel
analysis examined TF leadership and TA leadership styles as predictors of mastery and performance goals. The findings, as it relates specifically to TA leadership, found no statistical significance in demographic control variables and the impact on performance goals. However, groups were created to distinguish between relationships at different levels (between-group and within-group) which helped in controlling for differences between followers of the same leader and individual treatment by leaders. When TF leadership and TA leadership styles were measured as predictors of mastery and performance goals between these groups, a significant positive relation between TA leadership and followers’ performance goals between groups \( (p = .003) \) was found. These findings suggest that TA leadership styles have no impact on mastery goals, yet as assessed by other followers of the same leader, TA leadership was positively related to the individual’s endorsement of a performance goal.

This study was significant as it clearly outlined the vast differences between TF leadership and TA leadership styles and more importantly, the impact they have on followers of an organization. As a leader, it’s critical to understand how one leadership style might influence day-to-day activities. For example, a transactional leader that focuses on a reward system may instill a culture where individuals are constantly trying to outperform each other (Hamstra et al., 2014). In some cases, this was a tactical decision made by organizations to motivate employees, however, if mismanaged it could be costly. Similarly, an organization that fails to recognize individual achievement and approaches learning and development as a cohesive unit may be causing some level of discomfort in the organization as well.
In another study on TA leadership, Liu, Liu, and Zeng (2011) examined the relationship between TA leadership and team innovativeness. This study was intentionally chosen for the purposes of highlighting the moderating and mediating variables of emotional labor and team efficacy, respectfully.

This quantitative study suggested two hypotheses:

H₁: Emotional labor required by the job moderates the relationship between TA leadership and team innovation such that when emotional labor is high, the relationship is negative but when emotional labor is low, the relationship is positive.

H₂: Team efficacy mediates the interactive effect of TA leadership and emotional labor on team innovativeness.

The population for this study included 90 teams across eight different research sites. Teams ranged in size, greater than three and preferably between five and 15. The composition of these teams included 28 product line teams, 22 management teams in two servant organizations, 11 research workgroups in a university, 10 service workgroups in a regional government, eight marketing teams, five airline profit management teams, four management teams in an insurance company, and two management teams in a bank setting. Surveys were distributed to these 90 teams resulting in 462 responses and a response rate of 69%. Teams with less than three members were removed from the process resulting in a sample of 85 teams with 450 team members. To measure TA leadership in this study, the MLQ was used along with a one-way ANOVA to test the significance of individual scores on the variable. The findings, as they pertained to H₁, suggested that TA leadership and emotional labor interacted to negatively influence
workgroup innovativeness ($p < 0.05$). In terms of H2, the findings suggested that the interactive effects of TA leadership and emotional labor on workgroup performance was partially mediated by team efficacy, therefore making H2 partially supported. In analyzing this study, it is important to note that TA leadership is an effective style in team innovation. Specifically, transactional leaders can make intentional efforts to enhance followers’ innovation through the contingent rewards and management by exception. For clarity, it should be noted that all key variables were operationalized and reported by the same source, making it difficult to determine causality of which has been examined. Also, this study runs the risk of common method variance (CMV) which can be resolved through a longitudinal design. Common method variance, according to Podsakoff et al. (2003) is the result of having a common rater, a common measurement context, a common item context, or from the characteristics of the items themselves.

**Passive/avoidant leadership (PA).** The passive/avoidant leadership style is comprised of two leadership components: (a) management by exception (passive) (MBE-P), and (b) laissez-faire (LF). MBE-P, unlike MBE-A results in passive leaders who only act when expectations are not met (Bass, 1995). Similarly, LF leadership is not only a lack of presence, and therefore a type of zero leadership, but it implies not meeting the legitimate expectations of key stakeholders including subordinates or superiors (Skogstad et al., 2007). Therefore, the notion that LF leadership may be a precursor of interpersonal conflicts among coworkers seems reasonable, making it incredibly important to have managers who can handle interpersonal conflicts (Bass, 1990). As Bass and Avolio (1997) further analyzed, LF leaders tend to take a hands-off approach. More importantly, these leaders avoid setting expectations which can delay the decision-making process and
efforts to solve problems. As a result, followers may lack the motivation due to the absence of intrinsic or extrinsic reinforcement. More so, these leaders lack the willingness to motivate followers.

In previous sections of this literature review, more positive and constructive leadership types were examined in TF leadership and TA leadership. These leadership styles are most often associated with creating positive relationships and constructive leadership behaviors because of their impact on job performance, motivation, and organizational effectiveness (Skogstad et al., 2007). In contrast, empirical research on destructive leadership styles is somewhat limited.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Skogstad et al. (2007) attempted to analyze the assumption that destructive leadership behaviors are correlated to workplace stressors, bullying, and distress.

In designing the study, the following hypotheses emerged:

H1: Experiencing LF leadership by one’s immediate superior is associated with high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity

H2: Experiencing LF leadership by one’s immediate superior is associated with high conflict levels with coworkers

H3: Role stressors and conflicts with coworkers mediate the relationship between superiors’ LF leadership and subordinates’ experienced exposure to bullying at work

H4: Superiors’ LF leadership is directly associated with subordinates’ exposure to bullying at work
H5: Role stressors, conflicts with coworkers, and bullying mediate the relationship between superiors’ LF leadership and psychological distress among subordinates.

The population for this study was initially 4,500 Norwegian employees. These employees were mailed an MLQ in which 57% responded ($n = 2,547$). The result, due to funneling of employed full or part time employees resulted in 90% of the total sample ($n = 2,273$). The findings for the hypotheses indicated statistical significance suggesting that LF leadership is associated with high levels of role ambiguity, role conflict, and conflict with coworkers. Additionally, these types of workplace stressors trigger bullying of the individual, with increased distress as a reaction to such negative acts. This study suggest the presence of LF leadership can negatively impact the experience of their direct reports, especially when leaders choose to ignore expectations either through a lack of presence, sheer involvement, providing feedback, or recognition. More importantly, this study also highlighted the careful distinction that workplace stressors were mostly explained by the presence of LF leadership rather than the lack of constructive leadership.

This study has been particularly useful in developing an understanding of the impact of LF leadership on employee performance. Specifically, the statistical significance eludes to the point that laissez-faire is very much a disruptive behavior and not simply a zero-type or passive behavior. Scholars can continue to build on negative leadership behaviors by further examining the magnitude to which LF leadership impacts interpersonal role stress.

**Organizational Competencies**

An increased demand for more effective nonprofit leaders has required a sophisticated set of skills or competencies. Given the broad spectrum of nonprofit
complexities, debate over the required skills or competencies for nonprofit executives remains. Mission aside, all nonprofits require certain competencies to manage day-to-day operations ranging from personnel to finances. Additionally, nonprofit executive leaders should possess the skills to cast a vision while ensuring the regulatory functions of the organization remain intact (Zum Dahl, 2010). According to BoardSource (2016), nonprofit chief executives should be concerned with six core competencies: (a) planning, (b) fundraising, (c) administration, (d) board relations, (e) communications and public relations, and (f) financial management. This study explored more specific realms within the broader concepts outlined by BoardSource. More so, this study contributes to the literature on organizational competencies in four key areas including: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning.

**Capacity for change.** Given the globalization of nonprofit competition coupled with advancements in technology, leaders of nonprofit organizations are required to manage and create change. Drucker (1995) suggested that nonprofit organizations require innovation as much as government and business entities. Referred to as constant renewal, nonprofits should organize appropriately for systematic innovation to properly manage crises (Drucker, 1995). In a survey of 145 nonprofit leaders, more than 80% identified innovation as an urgent imperative, yet only 40% are currently set up to innovate (Sahni et al., 2017). These statistics are concerning for the nonprofit sector given the volatility of their environments and to complicate matters, Bryson (2018) suggested that technology has accelerated in recent decades creating dramatic change in workplace practices, social interactions, information sharing, health care, among many other organizational functions. As a result, technology is redefining work and careers
across government, business, and nonprofit organizations. Similarly, Connors (2001) recognized the desire for change as organizational self-renewal. The literature on change specific to the nonprofit sector is growing considering the ever-increasing challenges facing nonprofits and their leadership. In fact, Germak (2014) recognizes the inevitable nature of change and suggest that nonprofits need to focus their efforts on capacity building in order to ensure survival across the sector.

Several resources are available to aid nonprofit organizations in their bequest to manage change effectively. For instance, Germak (2014) proposed an understanding of the lifecycle of an organization along with the use of logic models to further clarify strategy. The organizational lifecycle includes the following stages of growth: start-up, infrastructure development, maturity, stagnation, and decline or dissolution. A particularly useful resource when assessing development levels of organizations is the maturity and impact expansion framework (MIE). This framework, only applicable at a certain stage of maturity, is best used to understand organizational resources in need of development. The ability to develop resources effectively, financial or human for example, could create long-term sustainability of this lifecycle phase for nonprofit organizations.

Witmer and Mellinger (2016) furthered the conversation on innovation in the nonprofit sector by analyzing the ability of these organizations to adapt in an ever-changing environment. This concept, coined as organizational resiliency, analyzes two nonprofit behavioral healthcare organizations in the northeastern part of the US where six characteristics of change emerged. The characteristics, necessary in responding to change include: (a) mission commitment, (b) ability to improvise with the resources
available, (c) creating mutual trust with the community through reciprocal relationship building, (d) leveraging servant and TF leadership styles, (e) hope and optimism, and (f) fiscal transparency. Using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 17 individuals, participants were asked to define resiliency, provide an assessment of their organization’s level of resilience, and give an example of how their organization responded to change.

Analysis of the data collected, determined these organizations were highly productive in responding to change using some combination of the six characteristics identified. More importantly, these characteristics align to common themes present in resilient organizations and the literature, but also demonstrate how organizations act in responding to change (Witmer & Mellinger, 2016). This study provided a detailed understanding of the characteristics needed in nonprofit organizations to react accordingly to the demands of change. Yet, the sample size associated with the study created challenges when trying to generalize the data. Additionally, snowball sampling was used to identify members for interviewing, potentially creating a level of bias, particularly when members were asked to share information about their organization.

With mounting demand for evidence of organizational effectiveness, nonprofit organizations are increasing the use of information technology to drive capacity for accountability (Jaskyte, 2012). The rapid nature of technology change presents a series of challenges for nonprofit organizations, as deficiencies exist in the adoption and adaptation of technological innovations to maximize virtual resources (Waters, 2014). Using a research method for systematically and objectively describing and quantifying phenomena referred to as content analysis, Jaskyte (2012) examined the applications of
124 nonprofit organizations seeking 2009-2010 Technology Innovation Awards through TechBridge (Krippendorff, 1980). Such awards are extended for efforts in using technology to advance nonprofit missions, engage communities, expand strategic goals, and improve client services. Of the nonprofits that applied, the majority (66) were human service organizations. These organizations recorded the highest number of information technology (IT) innovations across administrative and service functions. Such results suggest that nonprofit organizations, and specifically those with human services missions, are concerned about driving internal operational efficiencies. Some of the more specific innovations sought improvements in donor or volunteer databases, various office tools, and systems for streamlining communication across a range of constituents. Through content analysis the impact of IT innovations across key operational areas is well understood and of increasing importance to nonprofits. IT can be leveraged to improve services, drive operational efficiencies, attract donors, and to more effectively manage the organization’s resources (Pinho & Macedo, 2006).

While Jaskyte’s (2012) study contributes to the literature on IT in the nonprofit sector, it should be noted that the results of this study are not generalizable as those organizations that applied were specifically Georgia based nonprofits. To further the study, a broader scope of nonprofit organizations should be included. More so, an assessment of the effectiveness of the innovations implemented in lieu of the award would be beneficial. Also, the current design of the study disregarded the potential downsides of IT implementation such as the lack of return on investment. As Jaskyte (2012) recommended, a longitudinal study that measures the outcomes of such implementation of IT innovations would be most beneficial for nonprofit organizations.
Communication. The literature on nonprofit communication is vast and covers a wide range of topics including, but not limited to fundraising, crisis communication, message structure, media, and online stewardship. More so, in order for organizations to be recognized as excellent, those responsible for communications must supply leadership with strategic communication advice, contribute to a dominant coalition, and account for diversity in all aspects of public relations (Fisher Liu, 2012). As Waters (2014) further elaborated, nonprofit communication can help resolve some of the most complex and significant challenges facing nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. In fact, the role of communication experts not only encompasses facilitating communication, but providing communication expertise and problem solving (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Bowen (2008) also added that communication experts are accountable for creating an ethical culture and providing direction during the decision-making process. As Souder (2016) proposed, the research on nonprofit communications covers a broad range of disciplines with varying terminology such as marketing or strategic communication, emphasizing the importance of diligent searches to ensure its comprehensiveness.

To demonstrate the immensity of nonprofit communication in the literature, Fisher Liu (2012) provided an in-depth review of six characteristics that affect the activities of communicators in an organization: (a) politics, (b) laws and regulations, (c) media scrutiny, (d) collaboration, (e) communication value, and (f) professional development. Through purposeful sampling, 35 nonprofit communicators were identified which included personnel with titles ranging from executive directors, public relations directors, marketing directors, and development directors. The nonprofit organizations
represented, as a result of those agreeing to be interviewed, spanned the US and included a variety of missions and staffing sizes. The interviews, conducted by two trained qualitative researchers, asked three general questions regarding the participants’ background, their primary responsibilities as the communications expert in their organization, and factors that hinder or accelerate communication efforts, either internally or externally in their organization. Through data collection and analysis, the interviews yielded a variety of responses and experiences associated with the six characteristics outlined, but more importantly, also identified three additional factors that impact communication practices. These factors included brand recognition, employee engagement, and evaluation. Fisher Liu (2012) provided an extensive review of the many external complexities impacting nonprofit communicators. However, the results from the study are not generalizable and would benefit deeply from a quantitative assessment. For example, descriptive detail such as the fundraising revenue of the organization or staffing size may be important characteristics to reflect on in correlation to the factors outlined, as nonprofit organizations and their executive leaders are impacted differently by a host of environmental factors.

A critical driver of nonprofit communication involves clearly defining the organization’s mission statement, vision, and values (Germak, 2014). With mission statements, nonprofit organizations have a significant opportunity in establishing appropriate structures of communication across several avenues including the Internet, administration, and development, yet some are often mistaken for lofty or self-congratulatory texts (Fox-McIntyre, 2001).
In a 2010 exploratory study, Kirk and Nolan furthered the research on the linkage between mission statements and organizational performance. Specifically, they referenced the presumption in nonprofit literature that a well-designed mission statement leads to higher degrees of organizational performance; citing increases in staff and volunteer motivation, improved decision making, and organizational legitimacy to stakeholders. The study, which sampled 138 women’s rights organizations, identified three measures of financial performance in cross-tabulation with mission focused components. Financial performance metrics, as dependent variables, consisted of overhead ratios’ (OHR), year-over-year change in overhead (COHR), and year-over-year change in contributions (CIC). Mission focused components, representing the independent or control variables, were coded by two independent researchers and ultimately allocated to three dimensions: (a) the number of target audiences, (b) geographic scope, and (c) the number of programmatic areas. In total, nine hypotheses were tested through three separate multiple regressions. While the relationships between OHR and COHR and the mission focused components yielded little evidence to support an impact on organizational performance, the relationship between CIC and mission focused components suggested that narrowly defining a target client could turn off potential donors. These results would indirectly confirm the possibility that mission statements are useful mechanisms by which nonprofit organizations communicate with external stakeholders.

Kirk and Nolan (2010) presented a fascinating case for evaluating mission statements and the potential impact on organizational performance. Scholars should continue to build on this study by broadening the scope of nonprofit organizations instead
of merely limiting it to women’s rights organizations. Also, the study lacked the perspective from internal stakeholders including staff and board members, regarding the utility of the mission statement. Lastly, as Kirk and Nolan (2010) pointed out, this study would benefit from an alternative approach to identifying the key performance measures of nonprofit organizations rather than using secondary financial indicators. Yet, the tools or models for identifying such have been largely absent in the literature and questions of measuring organizational effectiveness across the sector continue to baffle scholars (Herman & Renz, 1998; Liket & Maas, 2015).

While mission statements are an important form of communication, Feinglass (2005) highlighted the importance of developing public relations strategies for purposes of relationship maintenance and cultivation. With often limited resources available, nonprofits should rely on public relations strategies as they typically yield a lower investment than more traditional advertising tactics and could draw a broader range of constituents. Pressgrove (2017) suggested that communication practitioners should be concerned with public relations strategies as they can improve operational efficiencies and stakeholder relationships.

As demonstrated in O’Neil’s (2009) quantitative study on the measured impact of communication tactics in building trust, commitment, and satisfaction with donors, various communication strategies can have a profound impact on donor support and the long-term attitude of donors. Specifically, this study, which examined the questionnaire responses of 275 donors of a large nonprofit organization called Tarrant Area Food Bank (TAFB), measured three relationship items: (a) the degree to which donors feel as if TAFB treats them fairly, is capable of keeping promises to donors, and that TAFB is able
to achieve its mission and goals (trust); (b) the degree to which donors felt their relationship with TAFB was worth maintaining from an emotional perspective (commitment); and (c) the satisfaction levels of the donors when they donate and work with TAFB (satisfaction). Through three regression models the correlation between the organization’s communications and donor perceptions showed positive coefficients, suggesting that communication can lead to higher levels of trust, commitment, and satisfaction (O’Neil, 2009).

O’Neil’s (2009) study is an insightful piece that demonstrated the importance of communication in donor stewardship. Yet, the study only examined the perceptions of relationships and communications of a single organization. As O’Neil (2009) further suggested, a qualitative investigation of donor needs and the relationship to greater trust, commitment, and satisfaction is necessary. Future studies could broaden the scope of communication tactics to include social media or speeches and the long-term impact.

As Lewis (2005) pointed out, several key aspects of nonprofit organizations and the sector are fundamentally communicative, and scholars should seek to understand the complexities of human interaction. In the nonprofit sector, communication serves a broad range of constituents and functions. Communication can impact the social capital of an organization, its mission, governance, and volunteer and donor relationships; only emphasizing the need for further research and theory building that understands and appreciates the complexities of human interaction.

As Drucker (1995) outlined, in order to be effective, leaders must make the appropriate time with staff to ensure clarity and understanding. Too often in nonprofit settings, leaders assume their actions are obvious. Furthermore, Lewis (2005) stressed
the importance of placing communication at the foundation of research to ensure specific communicative explanations are developed to understand various nonprofit phenomena. Additionally, these explanations should complement, challenge, and expand upon existing theoretical frameworks (Koschmann, 2012). Such efforts help public relations practitioners better understand the value they provide in both the short and long-term future of nonprofit organizations (O’Neil, 2009).

**Strategic planning.** Bryson (2018) defined strategic planning as the thoughtful and disciplined approach that produces fundamental decisions. The actions associated with carrying out this process will dictate the organization’s primary functions: what it is, what it does, and its significance. Additionally, the strategic planning process may be particularly rewarding for nonprofit organizations because it can elevate expectations and performance (Clark, 2012). More so, strategic planning enables volunteers and staff to take advantage of ever-changing environmental conditions which eliminate threats and creates opportunities for organizations (Freeland, 2002). Freeland (2002) further elaborated on the potential benefits by suggesting that strategic planning activities create a proactive environment, provides clear goals and direction, focuses the organization on the long-term welfare, facilitates both volunteer and staff analysis and decision-making, and provides volunteers and staff with a clear understanding of what is required for success. Bromley et al. (2012) offered an alternative definition, noting that a strategic plan acts as a road map for achieving organizational goals which encourages effective management practices given the time sensitivity and availability of resources.

According to a recent study by Sargeant and Day (2018), 90% of nonprofit leaders have engaged in strategic planning efforts. While it is positive that so many
nonprofit leaders have welcomed the strategic planning process, questions around the quality of the process should be examined as staff is routinely excluded from the activity and only 47.4% of nonprofit leaders were assessed against their plan, as part of their annual review. In fact, commentators have suggested the quality of nonprofit strategic planning is hindering their efforts to progress their missions and ensure long term sustainability (Sargeant & Day, 2018). Given its organizational influence, scholars continue to examine successful strategic planning processes. Thus, the literature is rich with common elements of effective strategic planning processes specific to nonprofit organizations (McHatton, Bradshaw, Gallagher, & Reeves, 2011). Arguably, the most important element of the strategic planning process is the development of a clear vision and mission statement (McHatton et al., 2011). This element is crucial as mission performance is comparable to financial performance in the for-profit sector (Moore, 2000). Successful strategic planning also requires great leadership and should encourage collaboration (McHatton et al., 2011). Importantly, 55.8% of nonprofit leaders indicated staff at all levels of the organization were engaged in the strategic planning process, but only 24.6% were rewarding staff for their efforts suggesting an immense opportunity for nonprofit leaders (Sargeant & Day, 2018). However, a collaborative strategic planning process can be challenging for nonprofit organizations as there is typically a vast number of internal and external stakeholders involved. Some of which may include, but are not limited to organizational members, leaders, financial contributors, partners, targeted beneficiaries, competitors, and general community members (Freeland, 2002).

To demonstrate its significance, Crittenden, Crittenden, Melissa, and Robertson (2004) conducted a study of 303 nonprofit organizations and the potential impact of
strategic planning efforts on measures of nonprofit organizational performance.

Specifically, the questionnaire administered gathered information in three critical areas: (a) general organizational characteristics, (b) elements of strategic planning, and (c) measures of resource contributions. Data analysis explored the relationships between strategic planning elements and resource contribution measures. For clarity, it should also be noted that Crittenden et al. (2004) did not consider strategic planning to be the result of a single process, but rather a series of factors. In fact, 10 strategic planning factors were measured using a canonical analysis to identify and examine the extent to which these factors are related to performance measures in the nonprofit realm. These factors include: (a) scope of planning, (b) planning formality, (c) administrative informality, (d) level of participation, (e) external interdependence, (f) implementation responsiveness, (g) stat planning routines, (h) constraint identification, (i) subjective planning, and (j) resource misallocation. The findings suggested that significant relationships exist between specific strategic planning factors and various performance measures. For instance, for an organization to increase its program offerings or volunteer efforts, it is necessary to respond to external demands in the planning process (implementation responsiveness). Additionally, the results from this study also highlight some elements of the strategic planning process that managers value such as forecasting (scope of planning) and evaluation (planning formality). This analysis is significant as it suggests that strategic planning can serve as a vehicle for reducing uncertainty for managers as they contribute to the control and direction of the organization through planning elements.
Crittenden et al. (2004) further suggested that the study would benefit from understanding where each nonprofit organization was in the strategic planning process. For example, some nonprofit organizations may have benefitted from the strategic planning process while others are merely awaiting the rewards of it. Other factors that should be considered in future studies is the size of the nonprofit organization and specifically the resource contributions. This study did not stratify organizations based on size and results could be coherently biased toward nonprofit organizations particularly in terms of percentage increases.

**Succession planning.** Nonprofit boards and CEOs, according to a 2015 report by The Bridgespan Group, cited succession planning as the top organizational concern. Succession planning causes such trepidation for nonprofit leaders, its response is doubled when compared to that of the next organizational concern (Landles-Cobb, Kramer, & Smith Milway, 2015). More so, it’s been estimated that the nonprofit sector will need approximately 80,000 new senior level leaders annually (Bridgespan Group, 2012). Detrimental to addressing the issue is the fact that nonprofit organizations have traditionally failed to embrace succession planning and more importantly, to implement tools or practices that can mitigate the disruption caused by executive turnover (Tebbe, Hughes, & Adams, 2017). As reported by Sargeant and Day (2018), only 22.3% of nonprofit leaders have indicated that a formal succession plan exists for their role or other senior leadership roles. This literature review on succession planning contributes to the already extensive research on executive turnover, and more importantly, elaborates on the core features of nonprofit executive transitions which scholars suggest have been insufficiently investigated to date (Tebbe et al., 2017).
As previously outlined, the number of aging baby boomers to reach age 65 is expected to surpass four million individuals by year 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, 2008). Notable studies in the last several years highlight growing concern as 67% of nonprofit executives were preparing to exit within 5 years and only 30% of executive level positions in the last 2 years were filled through internal promotion, nearly half the pace of the for-profit sector (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011; Landles-Cobb et al., 2015). This may be driven by the fact that many nonprofit leaders feel undervalued or deprived of personal career investment. As a result, many of these leaders have sought opportunities elsewhere (Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio, & Eagly, 2017). Organizations across the public, private and nonprofit sectors are scrambling to address the issues of executive turnover projected in the years to come (Stewart, 2016). Without question, executive transition is the most important turnover organizations will encounter. Managing the inevitability of this transition is necessary for organizational survival (Grusky, 1960).

To further the conversation on nonprofit executive succession planning, Stewart and Kuenzi (2018) provided a systematic approach for examining the career paths of existing nonprofit executives. This study was a timely justification given the increasingly complex environments, driven by governmental regulations, funding oversight, and missions that complicate service delivery. More so, this study contributes to the trend of professionalization happening across the nonprofit landscape and provides in-depth research to aid scholars as questions of retirement and attrition impact leadership pipelines.
In their study, Stewart and Kuenzi (2018) selected executives from 150 nonprofit organizations operating in the top 20 metropolitan markets across the US. Data on the executives of these organizations were gathered in two ways: (a) a survey and (b) Internet-based research and information gathering. Using both forms, information on 86 executives in total was captured. The findings from this study provided an array of valuable information on the career paths of nonprofit executive leaders, including general descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis on career transitions. From a quantitative perspective, this study challenged the general thinking that the nonprofit sector is well represented in terms of diversity, as 61% (majority) of the responses indicated they were of White or Caucasian ethnicity and 52% (majority) of nonprofit executive leaders were male. Additionally, 59% (majority) held credentials marked by post-graduate work, indicating that higher education could be a factor in identifying future leadership. Coupled with the elevation or quick promotion to management and executive positions, it is suggested that leadership is potentially identifiable at earlier stages of an individual’s career.

Yet, Stewart and Kuenzi (2018) realized that significant variation existed in the responses to why executives made such career transitions. Some noted that their executive transition was intentional while others referred to more of a “journey” (p. 374). However, prevalent in the responses was the notion that regardless of the transition, executives found fulfilling a mission or purpose to be the most gratifying in their efforts. Stewart and Kuenzi (2018) outlined key analysis in understanding the career paths of nonprofit executive leaders. However, several points are important for scholars to consider in future research. First, the study only examined those individuals who
succeeded in reaching an executive level position, whereas analysis on those who aspired, but failed to reach the executive level may be of equal importance. Additionally, while significant to the proposed study, Stewart and Kuenzi (2018) only limited their study to those in health or human service nonprofit organizations in the top 20 metropolitan areas. To elevate the research in this area, future scholars should look at succession planning across a variety of different mission areas. Lastly, this study is at risk of non-response bias given that 150 executives were included in the sample, but information on the career paths of these individuals could only be obtained for 86 of them. Regardless of planned or unplanned exits, nonprofit organizations should anticipate the transition and make the necessary arrangements to prevent discomfort or negative performance (Sargeant & Day, 2018).

Chapter Summary

Over the last 3 decades, significant growth in the nonprofit sector has propelled this industry forward, bringing with it a series of new challenges and opportunities (Ahmed, 2005). America’s largest employer now has significantly more responsibilities (Drucker, 1995). Concerns from internal and external stakeholders has nonprofits responding to demands for accountability across the sector. A variety of questions persist on overhead and administrative expenses from watchdog agencies, reservations from donors about the utility of their funds, and government agencies looking for assurance that nonprofits are effectively acting as a good community citizen (Waters, 2014). The difficulties in executing across this competitive landscape is simply that nonprofits lack the guidance needed in leadership and management to effectively support the functions critical to their operations (Drucker, 1995). In contributing to the literature and
knowledge on nonprofit leadership, this review broadens the conversation by examining transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership styles in parallel to key nonprofit competencies including capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership styles of executive, management, and staff personnel, and the alignment to core competencies regarding capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning within the Bryant Organization. This chapter outlines the detailed research design for this examination of nonprofit leadership styles using a survey approach.

The nonprofit sector was once viewed as marginal to American society as large businesses and government institutions dominated the landscape (Drucker, 1995). However, businesses and government institutions were limited in their purpose, particularly when addressing complex social issues. The socioeconomic gap was later addressed by an increase in global volunteer activism. Today, the growth and popularity of the nonprofit sector is without question, as more than 25% of the American population volunteered in 2014, leading to more than 8.7 billion hours of unpaid work, worth an approximate $179.2 billion dollars (McKeever, 2017). Yet, the growth across the nonprofit sector has created immense pressure for nonprofits and their executive leaders to operate more like a business, as governments have divulged responsibility of public services to nonprofit organizations by providing tax relief and privatization options (Kim & Kim, 2015).

The attentiveness to the social sector from government, donors, volunteers, and watch-dog organizations, among others, has accentuated the examination of nonprofit
leadership. In fact, researchers have suggested the greatest challenge of the nonprofit century lies in providing the leadership, competence, and managerial skills, to deliver the necessary quality and performance to 21st century society (Riggio & Orr, 2004). This prompts the essential question to be examined in this study: to what extent is there alignment between self-perception and one’s perception of their supervisor’s leadership style and the delivery of organizational competencies: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning?

The following sub-research questions emerged to support the overarching question:

1. What is the leadership style of the executive team as self-assessed?
2. What is the leadership style of the executive team as assessed by their direct reports?
3.a Is there alignment in leadership style across all levels of the organization (executive, management, and staff)?
3.b Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) age, (2) educational background, (3) gender, (4) position membership?
3.c Is there alignment in how executive, management, and staff perceive the assessment of organizational competencies: (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?
3.d Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?
**Independent variables.** For purposes of this study, leadership style serves as the independent variable examined. This includes three leadership styles: (a) transformational, (b) transactional, and (c) passive/avoidant.

**Dependent variables.** Creswell (2014) describes the dependent variable as the response or the criterion variable presumed to be influenced by the independent variables. In this study, organizational competencies served as the dependent variable. This includes the four organizational competencies: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning.

**Mediating variables.** As Creswell (2014) stated, mediating variables tend to intervene or influence the independent variable on the dependent variable and is common in quantitative studies where demographic information is present. In this study, the five demographic variables of (a) age, (b) educational background, (c) gender, and (d) position membership served as mediating variables.

**Research Context**

The Bryant Organization is a Northeast based nonprofit organization that provides life-altering experiences to children diagnosed with a critical illness. Founded more than 25 years ago, the Bryant Organization has impacted the lives of more than 10,000 children and families. These experiences, fantasized by the children themselves are then brought to real-life and could include a wide host of ideas from world travel with family or friends, wanting a service animal, or even an opportunity to fundraise for other children with similar illnesses. It is through such experiences that children and their families can discover renewed happiness, optimism, and resiliency in a time seemingly filled with few possibilities. The Bryant Organization operates with annual fundraising
revenue over $10 million and is supported by 52 total full-time paid employees across three regional offices. Powering the mission and vision are more than 1,400 volunteers who work directly with the children, families, and staff.

**Research Participants**

The target population for this study included 52 full-time employees at the Bryant Organization. To ensure anonymity, the total number of full-time employees eligible to participate in the survey was reduced to 48. The four full-time employees excluded from the study included the CEO, the researcher, and the researcher’s two direct reports. Removing the researcher’s direct reports addressed any concerns of coercion in the study. Additionally, board members, volunteers, interns, or temporary employees were prohibited from participating in the study. This convenience sample covers three levels of the organization: (a) executive, (b) management, and (c) staff.

**Executive level.** The executive level consists of the chief development officer (CDO), chief financial officer (CFO), chief marketing officer (CMO), chief operating officer (COO), and the regional director (RD), totaling five full-time employees. At the Bryant Organization, the executive team oversees the organization’s strategy in collaboration with the board of directors. These positions serve as the primary decision makers within their respected departments. The CDO, responsible for all aspects of fundraising, excels at stewarding corporations and individuals to give monetarily or through in-kind donations. In-kind is the donation of goods or services in which case donors receive a tax benefit for the value of the donation. The CFO is the point person for ensuring the organization’s financials are accurately and ethically accounted for. This role also oversees all aspects of the organization’s information technology division.
The CMO is responsible for content management and relaying a consistent message to ensure the mission, vision, and values clearly resonate with constituents. This position is also responsible for driving a digital media strategy to build brand awareness and increase followership. The COO oversees all program related activities, compliance, human resources, and operational activities. This function accounts for two-thirds of the personnel at the Bryant Organization. The RD oversees operations at two of the three smaller regional offices. This individual is primarily responsible for meeting fundraising revenue goals, but manages additional tasks related to program, operations, and finance.

**Management level.** The management population includes 17 supervisors. Within the Bryant Organization, this includes senior directors, directors, and managers. These functions exist throughout the organization and work closely with the executive level team on strategy, execution of deliverables, and performance management. This mid-level management team is responsible for the supervision of staff members who support in the execution of tasks as assigned by the executive and management level teams. Such functions may include officers of annual campaigning, process improvement, human resources, logistics, relationship management, information technology, marketing and communications.

**Staff level.** Employees identified as staff do not occupy an executive title and do not have any supervision responsibilities. Given sometimes the unusual structures of nonprofits, employees may have managerial titles, but do not supervise personnel. In such situations these employees will be classified as staff. Employees at this level total 26 full-time employees and may include manager, coordinator or associate titles. At the Bryant Organization, these positions manage key responsibilities including database
management, volunteer onboarding, determining medical eligibility, data entry, general accounting or finance functions. These individuals are responsible for the execution of day-to-day operations and generally carry significant caseloads, projects, or routine tasks. The organization’s ability to meet its goals and objectives as outlined in the strategic plan is contingent on the production of every person at this level.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

To sufficiently execute the following survey, several instruments were used to collect and analyze data. First, an electronic survey was developed which totaled 36 questions separated into four sections. This 36-question survey took research participants between 10-20 minutes to complete as all answers were provided in a multiple-choice format with only one selection per question or statement. The main instrument for this survey was the MLQ 5X-Short Form.

**Multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ).** The MLQ is a well-established instrument and has been applied to over a thousand research programs, dissertations, and thesis papers (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Its purpose, to evaluate three different levels of leadership: transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant has made the MLQ one of the more commonly applied tools when assessing leadership theories (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Kanste, Miettunen & Kyngäs, 2007). More so, recent versions of the MLQ, most notably the MLQ 5X, has received great support for its nine-factor leadership model and its applicability to the studied areas of TF and TA leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). In fact, some have considered this particular leadership model to be, “the most popular instrument for measuring transformational leadership” (Antonakis & House, 2002, p. 18). This study used the abbreviated version of the MLQ 5X known as the MLQ 5X-Short
Form. This simplified version of the nine-factor leadership model totals nine statements pertinent to the behavioral characteristics associated with TF, TA, and PA leadership styles. Through Mind Garden’s website, several versions and resources specific to the MLQ and the MLQ 5X are commercially available to students and business professionals (Bass & Avolio, n.d.).

The MLQ 5X continues to receive significant interest particularly in the fields of psychometric and theoretical examination. While the MLQ 5X is rightfully positioned as one of the most popular measures of TF and TA leadership, scholars continue to assess whether opportunity lies at the item level of analysis between the MLQ 5X and the constructs for which it attempts to measure (Schriesheim, Wu, & Scandura, 2009). In order to appropriately assess the MLQs influence in understanding leadership phenomena, empirical studies examining the reliability and validity of this instrument must be considered.

Analyzing the validity of the MLQ stabilizes its position as a reliable tool for measuring leadership styles. Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) presented a detailed examination of full-range leadership theory (FRLT) using the nine-factor leadership model which addresses many concerns of validity. As Avolio and Bass (1991) introduced, FRLT emphasizes three typologies of leadership behavior which is represented by the nine distinct subdimensions found in the MLQ. In using a sample of more than 3,000 raters, Antonakis et al. (2003) evaluated the psychometric properties of the MLQ and found convincing support for the validity of the MLQ 5X. In their study, specific conditions of academic and high-bureaucratic settings were analyzed in regard to the hierarchical levels where leaders were considered midlevel. The sample included
nurse educators, executive educators, and academic administrators. The results suggested the MLQ 5X nine-factor leadership model was an adequate fit. Specifically, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio achieved desirable results ($\chi^2/df = 2.90$), along with the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.968), and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.051). As Huck (2011) alluded, a model that is properly fit must have satisfied the following criteria: RMSEA $< 0.08$, $\chi^2/df < 3.5$, CFI $> 0.09$.

Antonakis et al. (2003) highlighted that predictive validity of the theory has received little criticism as dozens of studies along with four meta-analyses have accurately predicted relationships using both subjective and objective performance measures. To the contrary, construct validity has received a fair amount of attention regarding the MLQ. Construct validity is concerned with the personality or psychological construct possessed by those who have received the instrument (Huck, 2011). In assessing the construct validity of the theory, several empirical studies exhibited high internal consistency when using the MLQ 5X. Specifically, Bass and Avolio (1995) examined the factor structure of the MLQ 5X using a chi-square test and found the goodness-of-fit indices of the nine-factor leadership model ($\chi^2 = 2,394$) to be of the best fit when compared to one-factor ($\chi^2 = 5,260$), two-factor ($\chi^2 = 5,260$), and three-factor ($\chi^2 = 3,529$) models.

Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1995) presented a similar study using the MLQ 5X on a sample of 1,394 participants to understand the consistency of scale across the nine-factors of leadership. To support their results, a sophisticated statistical procedure was applied known as a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As Huck (2011) explained, a factor analysis is commonly used to develop, refine, or assess questionnaires whereas a CFA
leverages previous research to communicate the desired number of factors and how variables are related. Many other studies including one conducted by Bass and Avolio (1997) on a sample of 1,490 participants, have confirmed the validity of the MLQ 5X as a valid and reliable instrument of which can adequately measure the nine subdimensions of FRLT. Similarly, Hinkin, and Schriesheim (2008) examined the empirical properties of TA and LF leadership factors on the MLQ to highlight various uses of the questionnaire to generate more reliable and valid results (Northouse, 2007).

The MLQ continues to receive attention for its reliability and validity as the benchmark measure of TF leadership. Its applicability is well documented as the MLQ has been used in more than 200 research studies across industry and service settings within the last 40 years. Driven by reliability scores and CFA, the MLQ is the recommended instrument to use when assessing the behavioral characteristics of TF, TA, and LF leadership (Bormann & Abrahamson, 2014). While the study by Antonakis et al. (2003) supported the claim of the MLQ 5X as a reliable leadership survey tool, it is also suggested that no leadership tool will ever account for all possible dimensions of leadership, making this a foundation for continued research.

**Demographic information.** The first section of the survey asked general information about the survey participants through a series of nominal scales. Nominal scales contain variables of two or more categories where the sequence or order of responses is irrelevant (Types of Variable, 2018). The research participants were asked to select the answer that best described their current situation. For example, survey participants were asked to identify their positional level in the context of the survey. The possibilities for this section include executive, management, or staff (Appendix A).
**Organizational competency assessment.** In this section the research participants were asked to assess the organization’s ability to deliver on four competencies: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning. Each competency consisted of three statements for a total of 12 statements. A Likert-like scale was used to score the responses of each statement. Specifically, each statement was scored on five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). For instance, when discussing communication as an organizational competency, it may be worth understanding an employee’s ability in reciting the organization’s mission, vision, and values or simply how well the organization communicates this information to its internal and external stakeholders (Appendix A).

**MLQ 5X-short form (self).** This section of the survey contained the MLQ 5X-Short Form, which was necessary in determining executive and non-executive members leadership styles. As Northouse (2007) suggested, the MLQ is available in both self and rater forms. The self-form measures self-perception of leadership behaviors while the rater form measures the leadership behavior of others. The MLQ 5X-Short Form offers a total of nine statements to effectively measure subdimensions of TF leadership, TA leadership, and PA leadership styles.

In this section the survey participants were asked to complete the MLQ Form 5X-Short as they perceive their own leadership style using a five-point scale (0 = *Not at all* and 4 = *Frequently, if not always*). For instance, a survey participant was asked to score to the extent that they go beyond self-interest for the good of the group or that they consider moral and ethical consequences of decisions (Appendix A).
**MLQ 5X-short form (rater).** In this section survey participants were asked to rate the same nine sub-dimensions as they perceive the leadership style of their direct supervisor. Examples of this include staff members conducting the MLQ Form 5X-Short of their management level supervisors. Likewise, anyone at the management level conducted the MLQ Form 5X-Short for the executive leader to whom they report. At the executive level, the CFO for example, conducted the MLQ as they perceive the leadership style of the CEO. Ultimately, the same nine statements found in the self-assessment of this study were used, although the language was adjusted slightly to account for rating the leadership style of their direct supervisor. An example of a statement from this section may include: your supervisor helps others to develop their strengths or your supervisor keeps track of all mistakes (Appendix A).

**Procedures for Data Collection**

The electronic survey, tested by a panel of executive leaders, was designed using Qualtrics and distributed electronically from the researcher’s St. John Fisher College e-mail address on the first available business day of the week. The selection of the panel of executive leaders was purposeful to ensure a broad range of experience, professions, and perspectives. These executive leaders include nonprofit executives, directors of higher education, and human resources professionals. The feedback from this group was strongly considered in the development of the Qualtrics survey. Qualtrics is an online survey software designed to manage the complexities associated with academic research; recommended for researchers for its advanced survey functionality and analytics (Online Survey Software, 2019).
In using Qualtrics, the researcher was able to ensure anonymity of those who elected to complete the survey with its *anonymize response* feature. This feature prevented the sharing of any personal information with the researcher such as IP address or e-mail tracking. The e-mail distribution list included 48 full-time employees, spanning three regional offices of the Bryant Organization. The initial e-mail communication to the research participants provided context about the researcher’s involvement in the executive leadership program at St. John Fisher College, briefly introduced the dissertation topic, recognized the approval from the Institutional Review Board at St. John Fisher College and the organization’s CEO, and lastly reiterated the rights of the research participants as completely voluntary subjects where all responses were anonymous. Additionally, one e-mail reminder was sent a full week after the initial e-mail distribution. The survey results along with all subsequent statistical analysis is stored for 3 years on a password protected personal computer in a password protected file. All survey results were manually inputted into IBM’s Statistical Package for Social Sciences tool (SPSS). SPSS is traditionally used in social sciences but has developed as a leading analytical solutions provider through its predictive insights, allowing customers to make better decisions and to maximize business value (SPSS Analytics Partner, 2018).

**Procedures for Data Analysis**

At the close of the data collection process, a series of statistical procedures were executed to further understand the results of the examination. First, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to better understand the sample and specific categorical variables. Such analysis focused on measures of central tendency which included analyzing the median, standard deviations, and means of mediating variables, but was
also performed on the independent and dependent variables. In analyzing the descriptive statistics of independent and dependent variables, the researcher was able to sufficiently address research sub-questions 1 and 2. To provide more clarity around the descriptive statistics, tables were used to understand the frequency of responses pertaining to the scores of organizational competencies. Similarly, bar graphs were also used to capture the mean scores of independent and dependent variables.

To further analyze the multiple continuous and categorical variables (referred to as mediating variables in this study), a chi-square test of independence was administered to test the association between such variables. In this instance, the chi-square test ($\chi^2$) of independence acts as a correlational probe. As Huck (2011) elaborated, a correlational probe is not concerned with measuring the strength of a relationship, but whether or not the variables are related. To reiterate, this study had four categorical or mediating variables: (a) age, (b) educational background, (c) gender, and (d) position membership. The chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2$), for example, examined the relationship between specific categorical items such as gender and position membership and leadership components of TF, TA, and PA. The results were displayed in a contingency table for clarity.

To further analyze sub-research questions 3.a, 3.b, 3.c, and 3.d, a series of independent $t$-tests were administered to identify the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. As Huck (2011) noted, the $t$-test is a versatile statistical tool that is most common for its use in comparing means. This tool was vital in understanding the statistical means of leadership styles and organizational competencies.
Post the completion of the independent \( t \)-test, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was also conducted. The MANOVA is a statistical procedure that analyzes the means of the two or more dependent variables (Huck, 2011). While several types of MANOVAs exist, for purposes of this study, a one-way MANOVA was used. To provide a practical example, a three-group one-way MANOVA would explore group differences by position membership (executive, management, or staff) and the means of the multiple organizational competencies as dependent variables. Using a MANOVA post the independent \( t \)-test is beneficial as it may help reduce any Type I error. Type I errors occur when the null hypothesis is mistakenly rejected as the level of significance or alpha level \((a)\) is met although the null hypothesis is actually true. For this reasoning, the level of significance should be viewed as a probability for Type I error (Huck, 2011).

**Summary of the Methodology**

This chapter identified the specific research method and statistical procedures to fully examine leadership styles and the relationship to four organizational competencies as perceived by executive and non-executive members. This study, executed at a Northeast based nonprofit human services organization, sought to analyze the responses of 48 survey participants. The instruments used, the MLQ 5X-Short Form, as a self-assessment and to measure the leadership styles of executive and management supervisors, provides an opportunity for triangulation. Triangulation is beneficial as it adds to the validity of the study based on the themes captured from multiple sources of data or perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2014).

The surveys collected over the course of several weeks allowed for in-depth data analysis using multiple statistical procedures. Using descriptive statistics, a chi-square
test of independence, a series of independent $t$-test, and a one-way MANOVA, the researcher was able to sufficiently address the research questions as outlined. The results of this analysis will be reported in Chapter 4.

This study may contribute to the gap in nonprofit literature around executive leadership styles. More importantly, the methodology may provide insights into leadership styles across executive, management, and staff levels. Similarly, this study may generate understandings about the organization’s ability to effectively deliver on four key organizational competencies as a result of specific leadership styles.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies at a nonprofit organization. Specifically, using an anonymous survey approach, this quantitative study investigated transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership styles across executive, management, and staff levels as self-perceived and perceived by one’s direct reports and the alignment to capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. With increased demands for accountability and efficiency, understanding nonprofit executive leadership styles is paramount to the success of the social sector and more importantly the quality of life in America. This chapter reestablishes the research questions and provides a review of the quantitative methodology used to understand the alignment of leadership styles to perceived organizational competencies. Additionally, this chapter outlines the data analysis and findings through specific statistical procedures (descriptive statistics, a chi-square test of independence, a series of independent t-test, and a one-way MANOVA) to address the results related to the research questions.

Research Questions

This chapter presents the quantitative results and analysis specific to the alignment of leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies across executive, management, and staff levels. More so, this chapter addresses the essential question guiding this study: to what extent is there alignment between self-perception and one’s perception of their supervisor’s leadership style and the delivery of organizational
competencies: (a) capacity for change, (b) communication, (c) strategic planning, and (d) succession planning? Additionally, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the leadership style of the executive team as self-assessed?
2. What is the leadership style of the executive team as assessed by their direct reports?
3.a Is there alignment in leadership style across all levels of the organization (executive, management, and staff)?
3.b Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) age, (2) educational background, (3) gender, (4) position membership?
3.c Is there alignment in how executive, management, and staff perceive the assessment of organizational competencies: (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?
3.d Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning?

Data Analysis and Findings

Using an anonymous survey-based approach, research participants were asked to provide general descriptive information, self-assess their own leadership style and the leadership style of their direct supervisor, and to apply a rating to organizational competencies using a Likert-like scale.

Valid survey responses. The anonymous survey was distributed to 48 research participants in which 40 submissions were received. Of the 40 submissions, 38 were completed in their entirety; responding to every question. One survey participant, although agreed to the terms and conditions outlined in the informed consent form, failed
to complete any of the questions or statements. The submission was removed from the dataset bringing the total responses to 39. In another submission, one survey participant skipped statement seven – the organization welcomes new ideas and opportunities. To address missing data in this study, several approaches were considered including case deletion (CD), mean/mode imputation (MMI), and regression methods (RM). However, the method for dealing with missing data is dependent on why the data may be missing to begin with. Essentially, missing data is categorized in three ways: (a) missing completely at random (MCAR), (b) missing at random (MAR) or (c) not missing at random (NMAR). For purposes of this study, the missing piece of data was considered to be missing completely at random. The method used to replace the single piece of missing data was the all possible values imputation (APV). This approach involves replacing the missing data for a given attribute by all possible values of that attribute (Liu Peng, 2005). For clarity purposes, this method suggests that the missing piece of data could be replaced by all values 1 through 5 as provided in the Likert-like scale. Doing so creates minimal variation in overall scores across each of the possible scenarios.

**Data cleanup.** Forty total submissions of the survey were received. The data was exported from Qualtrics and saved in a CSV file using Microsoft Excel. A copy of the raw data was made, preserving the original dataset. Since one of those submissions provided no responses to any of the questions, that response was deleted from the dataset. From there, using an Excel feature referred to as *find and replace*, text answers were searched and replaced by simply their numerical value. For example, 4 = somewhat agree was replaced by 4. Given the format, this task was quite easy to perform.
**Descriptive statistics.** Table 4.1 provides the number of valid survey responses by organizational level. Specifically, the executive team provided five submissions equaling a 100% response rate. Management personnel totaled 17 submissions for a 100% response rate. Remaining survey participants provided 17 submissions for a 65.4% response rate bringing the overall response rate to 79.6%.

Table 4.1

*Valid Survey Responses by Organizational Level (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.2, descriptive statistics by organizational level (executive, management, and staff) is displayed in relation to mediating variables (age, educational background, gender). Specifically, 85% of the full-time employees at the organization self-identified as female. Gender disparities exist primarily at the management and staff levels where two individuals at each level self-identified other than female, accounting for 13% of management and staff personnel. In terms of education level, 59% of full-time employees held a bachelor’s degree followed by 28% with a master’s degree. The greatest range in education level is present at the management level with 8% having received some college. Additionally, the only post-graduate degree can be found at this level.
Table 4.2

*Gender, Age, and Education Demographics by Organizational Level (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th></th>
<th>Management</th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Declare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and under</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 and above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors (B.S., B.A.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (M.B.A., M.S., M.Ed.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduate (Ph.D., Ed.D.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Research question 1.** What is the leadership style of the executive team as self-assessed? Table 4.3 presents the mean, standard deviation, and median scores of the MLQ 5X-Short Form where executive leaders were asked to rate themselves on the components of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership styles. The results, as demonstrated by a comparison of means, shows that the executive team primarily sees themselves as transformational leaders.

The highest mean scores were associated with idealized influence (behaviors) (IIB) ($M = 3.80$) and idealized influence (attributes) (IIA) ($M = 3.60$). These components of transformational leadership (TFL) also yielded the highest median results of any of the nine MLQ 5X components. Management by exception (passive) (MBE-P) and laissez-faire (LF) leadership styles yielded the lowest mean scores ($M = .40$ and $M = .60$ respectively) of all MLQ 5X components.

**Research question 2.** What is the leadership style of the executive team as assessed by their direct reports? Table 4.4 displays the means, standard deviations, and medians of executive leadership styles as perceived by their direct reports (referred to as the rater assessment). In total, 23 employees across management and staff levels identified their direct supervisor as an executive and assessed their leadership style ($n = 23$). The results indicated high mean scores of idealized influence (behaviors) (IIB) and inspirational motivation (IM) ($M = 2.96$). Both the self and rater assessments, IIB yielded the highest mean scores. However, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1, when examining the mean scores of the self and rater assessment of the executive leadership team, mean scores from the rater form varied greatly with no mean score exceeding a
In fact, when assessed by their direct reports, components of transformational leadership such as IIA, IIB, and IC resulted in lower perceived scores.

Table 4.3

Mean, Standard Deviation and Median scores of Executive Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed (n = 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Style</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of IM, the rater assessment showed a higher mean score than when self-assessed. When examining components of passive/avoidant leadership styles, notable increases in mean scores of MBE-P and LF were present in the rater form. To further interpret the results of the self and rater mean scores, MLQ 5X normative data has been provided in Figure. 4.1. The normative data represents descriptive statistics from a 2004 United States sample (N = 27,285) (Mind Garden, n.d.). In analyzing the results of the
self and rater in comparison to the norm data, notable differences exist in IIA, IIB, CR, and LF leadership styles.

Table 4.4

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Median scores of Executive Leadership Styles as Assessed by Their Direct Reports (n = 23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (IIA)</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Behaviors (IIB)</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation (IM)</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation (IS)</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration (IC)</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward (CR)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.1. Mean Scores of Executive Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed (n = 5), Assessed by Their Direct Reports (n = 23), and MLQ 5X 2004 Normative Data (US) (N = 27,285)
**Research question 3a.** Is there alignment in leadership style across all levels of the organization (executive, management, and staff)? Table 4.5 represents the mean, standard deviation, and median scores of leadership styles across executive, management, and staff levels as self-assessed. The total category, which calculates the mean scores across all three levels, shows idealized influence (behaviors) (IIB) as the highest resulting leadership component ($M = 3.72$). More so, IIB also received the highest mean score by each individual organizational level of the nine MLQ 5X components (executive: $M = 3.80$, management: $M = 3.82$, staff: $M = 3.59$).

Table 4.5 also demonstrates by way of the total category, the alignment of transformational leadership across executive, management, and staff as all five components of transformational leadership (IIA, IIB, IM, IS, IC) received higher mean scores than any of the remaining leadership components (CR, MBE-A, MBE-P, LF). Figure 4.2 provides a more specific examination of leadership styles by organizational level using independent $t$-tests to determine if any alignment exists between two groups. Three independent $t$-tests compared the statistical significance across executive and management levels, executive and staff levels, and management and staff levels. Of the 27 possible results (Table 4.7 represents a 9x3 contingency table) statistical significance was found in five areas at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

More so, alignment of leadership styles between executive and staff yielded statistical significance in terms of idealized influence (behaviors) ($p < 0.05$). Statistical significance was also found between management and staff in terms of idealized influence (behaviors) ($p < 0.05$). Management by exception (active) yielded statistical significance between executive and staff ($p < 0.05$) and management and staff ($p < 0.05$).
Lastly, statistical significance was found between management and staff in terms of laissez-faire leadership \((p < 0.05)\). No statistical significance was found in terms of a leadership style between executive and management \((p > 0.05)\), accepting the null hypothesis that no significant alignment of a particular leadership style existed between the two groups.

It should also be recognized that statistical significance was found in only three of the nine leadership components \(\text{(idealized influence (behaviors), management by exception (active), and laissez-faire)}\). These three leadership components cover the three leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership. To further understand the potential alignment in leadership styles across executive, management, and staff levels of the organization, a chi-square test \(\chi^2\) was administered and results captured in Table 4.6. At a 95% confidence level, the \(\chi^2\) test suggests that there was no statistical significance in terms of alignment of leadership styles across all levels of the organization as the resulting p-value of each MLQ 5X leadership component was greater than the desired level of significance \((p > 0.05)\).
Table 4.5

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Median Scores of Leadership Styles Across Executive, Management, and Staff as Self-Assessed (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IIA</th>
<th>IIB</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>MBE-A</th>
<th>MBE-P</th>
<th>LF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0.62</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>39.00</td>
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<td>2.03</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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</table>
Figure 4.2. Independent t-tests Examining Leadership Styles between Executive and Management, Management and Staff, and Executive and Staff Personnel as Self-Assessed ($N = 39$). Note. Bars below significance line (----) indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IIA</th>
<th>IIB</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>MBE-A</th>
<th>MBE-P</th>
<th>LF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Exec / Mgmt</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.31</td>
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<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exec / Staff</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgmt / Staff</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6

Alignment of Leadership Styles Across Executive, Management, and Staff Levels as Self-Assessed (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Value</th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive / Avoidant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Results with an * indicate statistical significance where p < 0.05.

Research question 3b. Is there alignment between a leadership style across all levels and (1) age, (2) educational background, (3) gender, (4) position membership? To sufficiently address research question 3b, \(\chi^2\) test was conducted for leadership styles of the executive team as self-assessed for each mediating variable. Table 4.7 highlights the results of the \(\chi^2\) test measuring the alignment of leadership styles and age which yields
no statistical significance as the p-values in each category of the nine MLQ 5X components is greater than the desired level of significance ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4.7

Alignment of Leadership Styles and Age ($N = 39$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>17.44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>15.85</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$.

As it relates to the alignment of a particular leadership style and educational background, $\chi^2$ tests found statistical significance between idealized influence (behaviors) (IIB) and educational background ($\chi^2 = 26.21, p < 0.05$) and management by exception (active) and educational background ($\chi^2 = 21.14, p < 0.05$) as highlighted in Table 4.8. All other MLQ 5X components failed to show any statistical significance in terms of alignment of a leadership style and educational background as the p-value failed to meet requirements for statistical significance.
Table 4.8

*Alignment of Leadership Styles and Educational Background (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>26.21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>7.06</td>
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<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>10.48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>21.14</td>
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<td>0.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>13.98</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$.

When examining the alignment of a particular leadership style and gender, $\chi^2$ tests found statistical significance across several components of the MLQ 5X. More so as represented in Table 4.9, statistical significance was found between gender and idealized influence (behaviors) (IIB) ($\chi^2 = 45.03, p < 0.05$), inspirational motivation (IM) ($\chi^2 = 17.11, p < 0.05$), inspirational stimulation (IS) ($\chi^2 = 41.47, p < 0.05$), individualized consideration (IC) ($\chi^2 = 16.03, p < 0.05$) and lastly, management by exception (passive) (MBE-P) ($\chi^2 = 19.90, p < 0.05$). Statistical significance was found in
all components of transformational leadership with the exception of idealized influence (attributes).

Table 4.9

Alignment of Leadership Styles and Gender (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
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<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>45.03</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
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<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>17.11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>41.47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>7.35</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>19.90</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where *p* < 0.05.

To conclude research question 3b, the alignment of a leadership style and position membership was examined. Table 4.10 presents the results of the *χ²* tests and corresponding statistical significance. Specifically, idealized influence (attributes) and position membership resulted in a significant alignment (*χ²* = 9.72, *p* < 0.05). The analysis also revealed statistical significance in management by exception (passive) and position membership (*χ²* = 11.11, *p* < 0.05).
Table 4.10

Alignment of Leadership Styles and Position Membership (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>9.11</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.48</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Results with an * indicate statistical significance where \( p < 0.05 \).

**Research question 3c.** Is there alignment in how executive, management, and staff perceive the assessment of organizational competencies: (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning? Figure 4.3 represents the perceived mean scores by executive, management, and staff when responding to specific statements regarding capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. The mean scores for each question yielded key points of similarity, but also important and substantial differences. For instance, the highest total mean score \( (M = 4.46) \) was a result of the employees’ ability to comfortably recite the organization’s mission, vision, and values (Q10). There also appeared to be some
consistency in means across executive, management, and staff levels in terms of the organization’s openness to new ideas and opportunities (Q7) \((M = 3.44)\) along with the resources available to aid employees in daily completion of tasks (Q6) \((M = 3.36)\).

In terms of notable differences, executive and management seemed to have varying perspectives on how change is communicated throughout the organization (executive: \(M = 3.20\), management: \(M = 2.41\)). More so, when analyzing the components of strategic planning, notable differences in the employee’s comfortableness in reciting the goals of the strategic plan was well demonstrated (Q12) (executive: \(M = 3.60\), management: \(M = 3.35\), staff: \(M = 2.47\)). Even though some levels of the organization appear comfortable in reciting the goals of the strategic plan, as a reliable and useful resource (Q13) it received the fourth lowest total mean score \((M = 2.77)\). More importantly, the executive leadership team provided their lowest mean score in relation to this statement \((M = 2.20)\). As demonstrated by the total mean score, the value of strategic planning was well received by all levels of the organization (Q14) \((M = 4.21)\).

Succession planning also presented a great deal of variability. At an executive level, opportunities for growth and/or professional development (Q15) appear quite available \((M = 3.80)\), yet staff offered a different perspective \((M = 2.82)\). Another critical element of succession planning is being able to effectively communicate a plan for filling vacancies in a timely manner (Q17). The mean scores for this statement yielded the lowest total mean score of all statements \((M = 2.00)\). Table 4.11 illustrates the mean and standard deviation scores in aggregate by organizational competency. Out of a possible score of 15, communication resulted in the highest competency mean score \((M = 12.10)\). Succession planning yielded the lowest competency mean score \((M = 7.77)\).
**Figure 4.3. Perceived Mean Scores of Organizational Competencies by Organizational Level (N = 39)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
<th>Q9</th>
<th>Q10</th>
<th>Q11</th>
<th>Q12</th>
<th>Q13</th>
<th>Q14</th>
<th>Q15</th>
<th>Q16</th>
<th>Q17</th>
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</thead>
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<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management (n = 17)</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (n = 17)</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N = 39)</td>
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<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.11

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Organizational Competencies by Organizational Level*

(*N = 39*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Competency</th>
<th>Organizational Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Executive</td>
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<td>10.00</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>8.94</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>11.94</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>12.71</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>12.10</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
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<td>Staff</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>2.86</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession Planning</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
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<td>17.00</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>2.73</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to further examine the perceived alignment of organizational competencies, specific statistical procedures must be conducted to ensure homogeneity of variance is satisfied. As demonstrated in Table 4.12, the box’s test of equality of covariance, determines if the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met. When
combining the variation for the four levels of organizational competencies, it can be determined on a multivariate level that the conditions have been met ($p = 0.52$).

Table 4.12

*Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box's M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>$df_1$</th>
<th>$df_2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.69</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>519.01</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13 represents the Levene’s Test of Equality of Variance which confirms the assumptions of homogeneity of each employee’s competency scores.

Table 4.13

*Levene’s Test of Equality of Variance (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>$df_1$</th>
<th>$df_2$</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity for Change</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession Planning</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further address research question 3c a MANOVA was administered to see whether there is alignment in how executive, management, and staff perceived the assessment of organizational competencies. At a 95% confidence level the Wilks’ Lambda test was administered to check whether assumptions of the MANOVA were met. This statistical procedure revealed no significant difference in the perceived
organizational competency scores as demonstrated in Table 4.14 ($\lambda = 0.66, p = 0.08, \eta^2 = 0.19$).

Table 4.14

*Wilks’ Lambda Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Wilks' Lambda</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Eta-Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15 represents the test of between subjects effects which is commonly used to understand variation of specific samples. This statistical procedure is generally assessed alongside the MANOVA. In this case, since it is considering the perceived organization competencies by position membership (executive, management, and staff), an alpha level of 0.025 was considered. The analysis revealed the perceived organizational competency, capacity for change, by position membership was equal ($F(2,36) = 0.64, p = 0.54, \eta^2 = 0.03$). The between-subject also revealed communication as perceived by position membership was equal ($F(2,36) = 1.30, p = 0.28, \eta^2 = 0.07$). Similarly, the perceived scores for strategic planning among by position membership was equal ($F(2,36) = 1.10, p = 0.35, \eta^2 = 0.06$) and the perceived score for succession planning by position membership was equal ($F(2,36) = 0.84, p = 0.44, \eta^2 = 0.05$).
Table 4.15

*Test of Between-Subjects Effects (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>df_Error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Eta-Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Capacity for Change</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession Planning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research question 3d.** Is there alignment between a leadership style and (1) capacity for change, (2) communication, (3) strategic planning, (4) succession planning? To understand the alignment of a particular leadership style and an organizational competency, \( \chi^2 \) tests were administered for results as self-assessed (\( N = 39 \)) and assessed by their direct reports (\( N = 39 \)). Tables 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19 display the results related to each of the four organization competencies as self-assessed. Tables 4.20, 4.21, 4.22, and 4.23 display the results related to each of the four organizational competencies as assessed by direct reports.

As outlined in Table 4.16, the results indicated no statistical significance in terms of a leadership style as self-assessed and capacity for change as the resulting p-values were higher than the desired level of significance (\( p > 0.05 \)). Similarly, as represented in Table 4.17, no statistical significance was found in terms of the alignment of a particular leadership style as self-assessed and communication as the resulting p-values were higher than the desired level of significance (\( p > 0.05 \)). In Table 4.18, statistical significance was found between idealized influence (attributes) (IIA) as self-assessed and an element
of strategic planning. Specifically, because three statements were provided for each organizational competency, the statement yielding statistical significance specific to strategic planning asked employees if they found the strategic planning process valuable in their organization. The results indicated that this element of strategic planning was statistically significant when IIA is present ($\chi^2 = 31.47, p < 0.05$).

Table 4.19 highlights the statistical significance between succession planning and several leadership components as self-assessed. Statistical significance was found with inspirational motivation (IM) and whether employees felt the organization understood the details of their positions (Q16) ($\chi^2 = 25.36, p < 0.05$). Statistical significance was also found in terms of the alignment of individualized consideration (IC) as self-assessed and the organization’s ability to communicate a plan for filling vacancies in a timely manner (Q17) ($\chi^2 = 22.66, p < 0.05$). Lastly, statistical significance was found between contingent reward (CR) and the organization’s ability to consistently provide its employees with an opportunity for growth or professional development (Q15) ($\chi^2 = 31.19, p < 0.05$).

Table 4.20 illustrates the alignment of leadership styles as assessed by the direct reports and capacity for change. The results indicate statistical significance in alignment of IIB, IM, and IS and the organization’s ability to provide sufficient resources to successfully complete tasks (Q6) ($\chi^2 = 33.71, \chi^2 = 37.38, \chi^2 = 32.27$, respectively; $p < 0.05$). Additionally, statistical significance was also present between IC and CR and the organization’s openness to new ideas and opportunities (Q7) ($\chi^2 = 34.31$ and $\chi^2 = 26.20$, respectively; $p < 0.05$).
Table 4.21 demonstrates the alignment of leadership styles as assessed by the direct reports and the organizational competency of communication. More so, four of the five transformational leadership components, IIA, IIB, IM, and IC were all in statistical alignment with the organization’s consistent messaging of its mission, vision, and values (Q9) ($\chi^2 = 30.78$, $\chi^2 = 29.09$, $\chi^2 = 33.53$, $\chi^2 = 27.20$, respectively; $p < 0.05$). LF leadership was also in statistical alignment with the organization’s consistent messaging of its mission, vision, and values ($\chi^2 = 26.51$, $p < 0.05$). Lastly, transformational leadership component, IC, was also in statistical alignment with the understanding that the organization’s donors, volunteers, and constituents fully understand the mission, vision, and values (Q11) ($\chi^2 = 29.47$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4.22 displays the alignment of leadership styles as assessed by the direct reports and strategic planning. More so, MBE-P was in statistical alignment with the employees’ understanding of the value of strategic planning (Q14) ($\chi^2 = 25.54$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4.23 outlines the alignment of a particular leadership style and succession planning. In more detail, statistical alignment was present with IC as assessed by the direct reports and the organization’s ability to provide sufficient opportunities for growth or professional development (Q15) ($\chi^2 = 26.84$, $p < 0.05$). As it relates to whether employees felt the organization understood all the details of their position (Q16), IIA and CR were found in statistical alignment ($\chi^2 = 26.19$ and $\chi^2 = 36.19$, respectively; $p < 0.05$). IIA was also present in terms of the alignment to succession planning statement, the organization communicates a plan for filling vacancies in a timely manner (Q17) ($\chi^2 = 26.77$, $p < 0.05$).
Table 4.16

*Alignment of Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed and Capacity for Change (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>13.68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>13.83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>15.07</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>13.15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 

91
Table 4.17

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed and Communication (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q9</th>
<th></th>
<th>Q10</th>
<th></th>
<th>Q11</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
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<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.70</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
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<td>0.57</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
<td>10.16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive / Avoidant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>12.67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>17.77</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where \( p < 0.05 \).
Table 4.18

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed and Strategic Planning (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Q14</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>12.50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>31.47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8.81</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.14</td>
<td>14.31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>9.46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
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<td>13.96</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>19.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
<td>15.10</td>
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<td>0.52</td>
<td>15.91</td>
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<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
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<td>14.81</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
<td>5.59</td>
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<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
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<td>0.53</td>
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</table>

*Note. Results with an * indicate statistical significance where \( p < 0.05 \).*
Table 4.19

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Self-Assessed and Succession Planning ($N = 39$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q15 Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Q16 Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Q17 Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>4.37</td>
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<td>0.82</td>
<td>11.21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behaviors)</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>7.34</td>
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<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
<td>25.36</td>
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<td>0.01*</td>
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<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
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<td>0.82</td>
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<td>5.87</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>23.37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>22.21</td>
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<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26.31</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17.24</td>
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*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 

94
Table 4.20

*Alignment of Leadership Styles as Assessed by Direct Reports and Capacity for Change (N = 39)*

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<th>Q7</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.01*</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>21.56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.00*</td>
<td>23.45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>17.53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>25.10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>21.88</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>34.31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Transactional                            |       |    |      |       |    |      |       |    |      |
| Contingent Reward                        | 16.72 | 16 | 0.40 | 26.20 | 16 | 0.05*| 20.97 | 16 | 0.18 |
| Management by Exception (Active)         | 10.27 | 16 | 0.85 | 14.69 | 16 | 0.55 | 16.91 | 16 | 0.39 |

| Passive / Avoidant                       |       |    |      |       |    |      |       |    |      |
| Management by Exception (Passive)        | 19.82 | 16 | 0.23 | 18.93 | 16 | 0.27 | 25.59 | 16 | 0.06 |
| Laissez-faire                            | 12.34 | 16 | 0.72 | 15.46 | 16 | 0.49 | 14.83 | 16 | 0.54 |

*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 
Table 4.21

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Assessed by Direct Reports and Communication (N = 39)

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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>17.21</td>
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<td>0.37</td>
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<td>0.48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
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<td><strong>Passive / Avoidant</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>14.39</td>
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<td>0.57</td>
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*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 

96
Table 4.22

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Assessed by Direct Reports and Strategic Planning (N = 39)

<table>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Attributes)</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
<td>16.14</td>
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<td>(Behaviors)</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>17.63</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.35</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>15.19</td>
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<td>0.51</td>
<td>22.53</td>
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Note. Results with an * indicate statistical significance where $p < 0.05$. 
Table 4.23

Alignment of Leadership Styles as Assessed by Direct Reports and Succession Planning \( (N = 39) \)

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</tr>
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*Note.* Results with an * indicate statistical significance where \( p < 0.05 \).
Summary of Results

This chapter presented the results on the alignment of leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies at a nonprofit organization. The statistical procedures used, descriptive statistics, independent $t$-tests, $\chi^2$ tests, and a MANOVA, yielded key results in how executive, management, and staff perceive leadership and competencies within this organization. More so, these statistical procedures resulted in several statistically significant findings related to the individual components of the MLQ 5X and organizational competencies. The paragraphs to follow present the key findings of this study.

In analyzing the mean scores of leadership styles of the executive team as self-assessed, the results indicated the executive leadership team saw themselves as primarily transformational leaders. This was also consistent with the results as assessed by the direct reports, however the ratings to which the executive team was viewed as transformational varied greatly. In fact, when rated by their direct supervisors, the mean scores of transformational and transactional components decreased significantly and were oftentimes lower than the norm data except for inspirational motivation (IM). More so, increases in passive/avoidant leadership styles were much more apparent and, in both cases, higher than the norm data.

Using $\chi^2$ tests, specific leadership components of the MLQ 5X yielded statistical significance in terms of alignment between executive and staff, and management and staff levels. No statistical alignment was found when assessing leadership styles across executive and management. Statistical significance was also present in the alignment of
executive leadership styles and gender, educational background, and position membership.

When assessing the mean scores by organizational competency, communication and specifically the comfortability by employees in reciting the organization’s mission, vision, and values, resonated as the highest scoring competency. Contrary to this, succession planning by way of analyzing the means presented several challenges for the organization. Lastly, the alignment of leadership styles as self-assessed to perceived organizational competencies presented interesting findings as statistical significance was only found in components of strategic planning and succession planning. When the leadership styles were assessed in alignment to organizational competencies, statistical significance was found in components related to each organizational competency.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine leadership styles and the alignment to perceived organizational competencies at a nonprofit organization. Using a quantitative, anonymous survey-based approach, employees across executive, management, and staff levels of the Bryant Organization assessed their own leadership style and the leadership style of their direct supervisor using the MLQ 5X-Short Form and rated the organization’s ability to deliver on four organizational competencies concerning the areas of capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning.

This study provided some significant findings when examining the components of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership as self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports in alignment to competencies of capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. This study also found some significant findings when examining various leadership components to mediating variables. In this chapter, the implications of the findings, the limitations and delimitations of the study along with recommendations for practice and future research are provided.

Implications of Findings

This study provided the responses from 39 research participants across three organizational levels of the Bryant Organization. Descriptive statistics revealed the employees of the Bryant Organization are well educated with 87% of staff having a
bachelor’s or master’s degree. The significance of having a college degree appears necessary in leadership development and success. According to a 2015 report, 97% of Standard & Poor’s 500 CEOs held a bachelor’s degree (Lake, 2015). This study also found statistical alignment as outlined in Table 4.8, between leadership components of IIA and MBE-A and education background. These components of transformational and transactional leadership could be driven by education practices, particularly in terms of MBE-A where corrective actions are applied to alleviate any further discourse. The knowledge and skills to effectively and proactively respond to crises could potentially be acquired through educational sessions.

Findings also suggest the Bryant Organization is predominately female with 85% of survey participants indicating so. The demographic data presented in this study relative to gender is in-line with the findings from the digital survey conducted by Sargeant and Day (2018) to a network of nonprofit leaders resulting in 1,141 responses, which suggested nonprofit organizations were majority female. As noted earlier, this study found statistical alignment between leadership components and mediating variables of gender and education background. According to a recent study by Zenger and Folkman (2019), women in leadership positions were perceived to be as equally, if not more effective than their male counterparts. Of 19 possible leadership capabilities, women outscored men in 17 of them. Some of those leadership competencies include the ability to inspire and motivate others, champion change, and innovate; some of which have been thoroughly analyzed in this study. The consistency in these findings should encourage scholars to further understand the impact education and gender have on nonprofit leadership. Doing so, may enrich the conversation in defining the skills,
competencies, and leadership styles needed across the next generation of nonprofit leaders in their quest to effectively navigate complex social environments.

Results as self-assessed indicated the executive team observes themselves as primarily transformational leaders. In some cases, this is notably higher than the norm data. Yet, when observed by management and staff, the five Is of transformational leadership (IIA, IIB, IM, IS, and IC) all resulted in scores lower than the norm data. This may suggest a lack of self-awareness on behalf of the executive leadership team as their understanding of their own leadership style appears to be less effective when perceived by the rest of the organization. In the nonprofit sector, where executive decision making can change the quality of life for a single individual and/or an entire community, transformational leadership is vital for establishing higher levels of commitment, trust, loyalty, and performance (Avolio, 2011). Transformational leaders articulate a clear vision for the future by acting confidently and optimistically. They communicate risks to their followers and demonstrate the words and actions associated with the organization’s values. Transformational leaders are concerned with ethical and moral conduct and are seen by their followers as intensely moral individuals (Burns, 2003; Sargeant & Day, 2018). The notable differences in mean scores when self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports may indicate inconsistencies in the behaviors associated with transformational leadership and is worth reexamining at the Bryant Organization.

More so, the perceived organizational competencies as a result of this study suggest areas of great uniformity across executive, management, and staff levels, but also severe disconnects that warrant further conversation. Understanding an organization’s ability to change is fundamental; particularly for nonprofit organizations where resources,
capital, human, or otherwise is often limited. Nonprofit organizations continue to explore various uses of technology to digitally transform their operations in hopes that it will improve efficiencies, maximize charitable giving efforts, and strengthen communication with stakeholders (Shin, 2019). For example, increases in online giving made by a mobile device jumped from 9% in 2014 to 21% in 2017 (Shin, 2019). This example alone demonstrates the need for nonprofit organizations to further understand the role and impact technology can play in fundraising and relationship management.

Findings from this study indicate the Bryant Organization welcomes new ideas and opportunities and that employees are appropriately resourced in their efforts to successfully carry out day-to-day tasks. In order to ensure long-term sustainability, the Bryant Organization will need to continue innovating. The ever-changing environment that presents many complexities for nonprofits requires that these organizations are using the best and most recent systems, tools, and practices to effectively communicate, plan, and respond to crises. For these reasons, it is important to analyze the many components of capacity for change and specifically technology in the context of resource dependence theory. Understanding the role innovation can play in transforming business operations to address resource limitations and the leadership styles needed to execute this transformation will dictate the effectiveness of nonprofits for years to come.

Communication in this study can be assessed in terms of its effectiveness to internal and external stakeholders. It is clear the organization’s mission, vision, and values resonate with stakeholders internally and it is perceived (by management and staff) to be well understood by the organization’s external stakeholders.
Notable findings from the executive team indicate external constituents may not completely understand the organization’s mission, vision, and values. Assumptions can be made that the executive team has a broader network as their audience usually includes boards, committees, donors, vendors, among other stakeholders to name a few. Although the mission and vision of the Bryant Organization appear relatively simple, the complexities in delivering on this business model can be easily misunderstood. The Bryant Organization may benefit from internal conversations resulting in continuous education efforts with external stakeholders to ensure communication of the organization’s mission, vision, and values is thoughtfully transferred.

The Bryant Organization embarked on their first ever strategic planning exercise and is now concluding year 3 of their original plan. While encouraging that the organization has completed the strategic planning process, findings from this study suggest areas of opportunity. Specifically, the results from this study indicate staff is less likely to remember the goals of the strategic plan when compared to executive and management levels. Staff, for a variety of reasons is typically not included in the development of the strategic plan which is consistent with the study by Sargeant and Day (2018), as 55.8% of nonprofit leaders reported that staff across all levels were engaged in the process. More so, the findings from this study indicated that the value of strategic planning is well understood across all levels of the organization. However, additional findings suggest the Bryant Organization’s strategic plan lacks the reliability and usefulness generally offered in well thought out planning exercises. This is also consistent with the literature on strategic planning which suggests that 90% of nonprofit leaders have engaged in the strategic planning exercise, but the quality of the plan itself is
in question, as only 47.4% of nonprofit leaders were reviewed against those plans (Sargeant & Day, 2018).

To improve the quality of the strategic plan, nonprofit leaders may consider developing clear metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs), and objectives to support overarching strategic initiatives. Engaging the board in the exercise may also yield constructive thoughts or ideas. Clearly, the Bryant Organization would benefit from reevaluating their strategic planning efforts by engaging stakeholders across all levels of the organization and doing so regularly. This opportunity may yield some worthwhile feedback to be considered for the next iteration of the strategic plan.

Succession planning in the nonprofit sector may differ greatly in definition and practice versus other sectors. It’s anticipated in the coming years that nonprofit organizations will face increased competition for leadership talent (Sargeant & Day, 2018). Given the typical size of nonprofit organizations and the need for employees to carry out multiple functions, succession planning becomes a vital function beyond the executive level for ensuring long term sustainability. More so, given the multiple and sometimes competing job responsibilities, it is necessary that nonprofit organizations and their supervisors understand the magnitude of tasks.

As outlined earlier, Hopkins et al. (2014) has highlighted the growing concern as a shortage of nonprofit managers is forcing professionals into roles where they hold limited knowledge and skill. The results of this study indicate similar concerns as employees of the Bryant Organization hardly feel as if the organization understands the intricacies of their positions. Given the statistical alignment identified in Table 4.10, the executive team yielded significance in terms of IIA and MBE-P. The MBE-P may be a
contributor to this problem as leaders with this trait tend to intervene only when serious issues arise. These inconsistencies coupled with poorly timed communication strategies pertaining to employee vacancies has resulted in succession planning having the lowest overall mean score of all competencies as represented in Table 4.11.

These insights again align to the troubling results identified by Sargeant and Day (2018) where only 40.8% of nonprofit leaders had identified future leaders and 17.3% of respondents performed a gap analysis of leadership competencies. With notable differences in mean scores as self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports in executive leadership styles, its likely succession planning is an afterthought for the Bryant Organization. With higher levels of passive/avoidant leadership styles as assessed by their direct reports, it is not surprising that specific strategies and a formal succession planning process within the Bryant Organization is lacking. Due to this it is possible the talent needed to propel the Bryant Organization through the next set of challenges is severely absent.

Limitations

This study was conducted at a Northeast based human services nonprofit organization spanning three regional offices. Differences may exist in the perception of leadership styles and organizational competencies by regional office, yet to ensure anonymity this information was excluded from the study. Similarly, the findings from this study may not be relevant to other nonprofit organizations, human services organizations, or organizations working directly with children diagnosed with severe illnesses. Additionally, the findings from this study may not be relevant in organizations with different organizational structures and therefore should be leveraged in moderation.
Given the sample size of this study ($N = 39$) researchers should express caution when generalizing the data to other nonprofit organizations or to specific organization levels (executive, management, or staff). Results from the executive level as self-assessed should be leveraged with great thoughtfulness as the limited number may not be applicable or representative of nonprofit executive teams ($n = 5$). Moreover, findings from this study may not be applicable to specific executive level roles such as those identified in this study (CDO, CFO, CMO, COO, and regional director).

Additionally, the study also elected to forego questions related to years of experience or tenure as anonymity could not be guaranteed when examined across certain organizational levels. Specific employees were excluded from participating in this study to address concerns of coercion including the researcher and the researcher’s two direct reports. Similarly, the CEO of the Bryant Organization was also excluded from the study as the individual’s anonymity could not be guaranteed.

**Delimitations**

The organizational competencies selected for this study were specific to those recommended by BoardSource and relevant to recent challenges within the Bryant Organization. More so, this study was limited to a single nonprofit organization within a federated model where several similar sized nonprofit organizations could have been selected. Additionally, part-time or temporary employees along with volunteers were excluded from this study.

**Recommendations**

In the sections to follow, recommendations for practice along with recommendations for future study are provided. Such recommendations may be specific
to the Bryant Organization and may not be applicable to other nonprofit organizations. These recommendations should be considered by researchers to strengthen the results of future studies.

**Recommendations for practice.** Given the differences in perceived leadership styles, the Bryant Organization may benefit from implementing 360 reviews. These 360 reviews would provide an opportunity for employees, regardless of level, to receive feedback on their own performance from various stakeholders within the organization. These reviews could be a useful tool and process for understanding leadership or managerial effectiveness as implementing such a practice may assist employees in their development of soft skills such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and communication. Staff surveys and/or interviews may be a viable alternative for understanding differences in perceived leadership styles across the organization.

This study has presented clear examples of communication barriers within the Bryant Organization. Certain internal processes, such as those incorporating aspects of change including new technology, resources, or organizational strategies such as succession planning, are rarely communicated to management and staff in an effective manner. The future development of clear communication strategies or vehicles within the organization could produce a timeline of events and offer a continuous feedback loop that engages stakeholders across all levels. Also, opportunities to examine employee communication styles across executive, management, and staff levels of the organization may improve the flow of information and collaboration. Common tools like the DiSC Profile may be an effective method for understanding different leadership and management styles.
The DiSC Profile is an essential tool for increasing your self-knowledge, understanding your motivations and stressors, how to facilitate better teamwork, and manage more effectively by understanding the responsibilities and priorities of employees and team members (DiSC Profile, 2010). To effectively discuss the results in leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies as outlined in this study, nonprofit leaders and managers may want to first develop a platform for thoroughly understanding each employee’s DiSC Profile and how they might work more collaboratively to tackle the many challenges facing nonprofits. Executive or leadership coaching may also prove beneficial to the organization considering employees at this level have the greatest opportunity to influence the organization’s stakeholders either directly or indirectly. As research indicates, an investment in leadership development in the nonprofit sector may result in more effective delivery of social interventions and the attraction of additional resources (Callanan et al., 2014).

Establishing consistent practices for monitoring and reviewing performance in relation to the organization’s strategic plan could improve employee engagement, customer service, and business results. The strategic planning process has an opportunity to align stakeholders internally and externally if its delivery is timely, authentic, and purposeful. Organizations that rated themselves as more successful in strategic planning delivered better service to their communities while maximizing fundraising efforts. On the contrary, organizations that rated themselves as less successful in strategic planning, were deemed reactive in their efforts to respond to crisis or unexpected risks (Sargeant & Day, 2018).
The results of this study found components of succession planning largely absent within the Bryant Organization. Given its utility as a tool for driving timely productivity and performance, succession planning is also a strategy to drive engagement and retention. Since employees feel the organization lacks a complete understanding of their role, developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) may be necessary to ensure an adequate understanding of the tasks at hand. SOPs can also serve as instructional guides for new employees to aid them in their onboarding. Implementing this practice ensures that the organization is revisiting its important internal or external processes all the while empowering employees.

**Recommendations for future study.** This study was executed at a single nonprofit human services organization in the Northeastern United States. Broadening this study across several nonprofit organizations would be helpful in further understanding the alignment of leadership styles to perceived organizational competencies. Additionally, broadening this study to include other nonprofit organizations would increase the sample size across executive, management, and staff levels. This study may also benefit from including the perceptions of the board, volunteers, and/or donors.

Given that only 37.6% of nonprofit leaders were actively working to identify gaps in leadership competence, future researchers should consider other or additional organizational competencies than the four offered in this study (Sargeant & Day, 2018). Scholars should continue to build on resource dependence theory as a framework for understanding how leaders and managers effectively respond to resource limitations. Given the often-limited resources available to nonprofit organizations and their executive
leaders, this dynamic is important to consider particularly in any nonprofit environment. Additionally, researchers should continue to add to the extensive literature on the MLQ, but also consider the MLQ 5X in a nonprofit setting to further its reliability, validity, and versatility.

Future studies would benefit from a mixed-methods approach where quantitative and qualitative results are leveraged to address a research problem. Researchers with an emphasis in organizational leadership may use this approach to improve the accuracy of their judgements by using multiple forms of data (Jick, 1979). This approach, termed triangulation, would further strengthen the reliability and validity of the alignment of leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies. Researchers may leverage similar quantitative methodology using a survey-based approach and enhance those findings through a series of interviews with members of the executive leadership team or focus groups containing personnel across all levels of the organization. Triangulation may be beneficial as it leverages the subjectivity of the research participants and helps understand the reason why such results exist.

Presented in this quantitative study are some findings of statistical significance in terms of the alignment of specific leadership components of the MLQ 5X and components of capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning. Although statistical alignment was suggested in both leadership components as self-assessed and assessed by their direct reports in alignment to perceived organizational competencies, researchers should consider building on this study to ensure its findings are reliable and valid.
Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations have made significant strides in their attempt to bring about opportunities of fairness, justice, sustainability, and equality. Addressing a barrage of social, economic, and health related issues, these organizations have created a vehicle for responding to complex demands by society. More so, government and business entities have increased their dependency on nonprofit organizations as they lack the capacity and desire to address the breadth of challenges across the social sector. The importance of the nonprofit sector is without question. The impact of these charitable organizations on a global scale and the breadth of issues they attempt to address is unmatched. Yet, in a sector of rapid expansion, the resources to effectively aid future nonprofit leaders is limited. Scholarly research is inadequate, specifically in terms of the leadership styles and the core organizational competencies needed to propel these charitable organizations to long-term sustainability or even scalable growth.

Using a quantitative, survey-based approach, this study tested for the alignment of leadership styles and perceived organizational competencies. Moreover, this study offers findings related to the specific leadership components of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant styles across executive, management, and staff and the perceived delivery of four organizational competencies concerning capacity for change, communication, strategic planning, and succession planning.
References


Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2019). Women are rated better than men on key leadership capabilities. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/visual-library/2019/06/women-are-rated-better-than-men-on-key-leadership-capabilities

Appendix A

Survey Tool

Demographic Information:

1. Age range:
   a. 25 and under
   b. 26 to 35
   c. 36 to 45
   d. 46 and above

2. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Transgender / Non-binary
   d. Prefer not to declare

3. Educational background (highest degree completed):
   a. High School
   b. Some College
   c. Bachelors (B.S., B.A.)
   d. Masters (M.B.A., M.S., M.Ed.)
   e. Post-Graduate (Ph.D., Ed.D.)

4. The level you identify with is:
a. Executive (C-Suite)

b. Management (Supervises Staff)

c. Staff (Does Not Oversee Staff)

5. The level of your direct supervisor (the individual you are completing the MLQ for):
   a. Executive
   b. Management

Organizational Competency Assessment:

Capacity for Change:

6. I have all the resources needed to successfully complete my tasks (technology, personnel, etc.):
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

7. The organization welcomes new ideas and opportunities:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

8. Change is communicated to us in a timely and effective manner:
a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
c. 3 = Neutral
d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
e. 5 = Strongly Agree

Communication:

9. The organization consistently messages its mission, vision, and values:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
c. 3 = Neutral
d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
e. 5 = Strongly Agree

10. I can comfortably recite the organizations mission, vision, and values:
    a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
c. 3 = Neutral
d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
e. 5 = Strongly Agree

11. Our donors, volunteers, and constituents fully understand the organizations mission, vision, and values:
    a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
c. 3 = Neutral
12. I can comfortably recite the goals of the strategic plan:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

13. I find the strategic plan to be a reliable and useful resource:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

14. I understand the value of strategic planning in my organization:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

Succession Planning:
15. I’m consistently provided with opportunities for growth and/or professional development:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

16. The organization understands all that my position entails:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

17. The organization communicates a plan for filling vacancies in a timely manner:
   a. 1 = Strongly Disagree
   b. 2 = Somewhat Disagree
   c. 3 = Neutral
   d. 4 = Somewhat Agree
   e. 5 = Strongly Agree

MLQ Form 5X-Short (Self):

Transformational Leadership Styles:

18. Idealized Influence (Attributes): I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group:
a. 0 = Not at all
b. 1 = Once in a while
c. 2 = Sometimes
d. 3 = Fairly often
e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

19. Idealized Influence (Behaviors): I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

20. Inspirational Motivation: I talk optimistically about the future:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

21. Intellectual Stimulation: I reexamine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
22. Individualized Consideration: I help others to develop their strengths:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

Transactional Leadership Styles:

23. Contingent Reward: I make clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

24. Management by Exception (active): I keep track of all mistakes:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles:
25. Management by exception (passive): I wait for things to go wrong before taking action:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

26. Laissez-faire: I avoid making decisions:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

MLQ Form 5X-Short (Rater):

Transformational Leadership Styles:

27. Idealized Influence (Attributes): My supervisor goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always
28. Idealized Influence (Behaviors): My supervisor considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

29. Inspirational Motivation: My supervisor talks optimistically about the future:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

30. Intellectual Stimulation: My supervisor makes critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate:
   a. 0 = Not at all
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

31. Individualized Consideration: My supervisor helps others to develop their strengths:
   a. 0 = Not at all
b. 1 = Once in a while

c. 2 = Sometimes

d. 3 = Fairly often

e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

Transactional Leadership Styles:

32. Contingent Reward: My supervisor makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved:

   a. 0 = Not at all
   
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

33. Management by Exception (active): My supervisor keeps track of all mistakes:

   a. 0 = Not at all
   
   b. 1 = Once in a while
   
   c. 2 = Sometimes
   
   d. 3 = Fairly often
   
   e. 4 = Frequently, if not always

Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles:

34. Management by exception (passive): My supervisor waits for things to go wrong before taking action:

   a. 0 = Not at all
   
   b. 1 = Once in a while
c.  2 = Sometimes

d.  3 = Fairly often

e.  4 = Frequently, if not always

35. Laissez-faire: My supervisor avoids making decisions:

a.  0 = Not at all

b.  1 = Once in a while

c.  2 = Sometimes

d.  3 = Fairly often

e.  4 = Frequently, if not always
Appendix B

Legend:

(L) = Executive Leader (5)
(M) = Management (17)
(S) = Staff (26)
(X) = Excluded from study (4)