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Leader - Member Exchange and Performance in Nonprofit Human Services Organizations

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Abstract

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MPA, Baruch College, 2011

JD, Brooklyn Law School, 2001

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Success of nonprofit human services organizations depends upon the ability to cultivate high quality performance among staff members. Employees of such organizations experience lower job satisfaction when managers disregard their opinions or treat them as unimportant. The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to explore employees' perspectives on the quality of their relationships with their supervisors and impacts of that perception on job performance. The central research questions regarded how employees understood those relationships and their impact on their work success. Using the framework of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, which centers upon the employee-supervisor relationship, data were collected through interviews with 32 participants including those at a supervisory level and direct-care providers. Archival documents from 2 non-profit human service organizations that reflected upon relationships between supervisors and employees were also utilized. Using Clark and Braun's thematic analysis strategy for coding and analysis, results indicated that manager-employee relationships characterized by themes of respect, understanding, positive interactions, and open communication allowed employees to feel comfortable and valued at work, and that relationships characterized by mutual loyalty, respect, and clear, reciprocal communication were optimal for promoting job performance. This study's potential impact for positive social change includes recommendations to non-profit service organizations to develop future leadership policies and training programs to assist managers and supervisors in improving relationships with their subordinates.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Nonprofit human services organizations must continue to meet high performance standards in the face of funding reductions that adversely impact their resources (Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015). Organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities have obligations to provide quality services to vulnerable clients while also maintaining policy compliance and operating within budget (Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015). The success of such organizations hinges upon their ability to cultivate high quality performance among staff members (Carr, 2014; Reed & Henley, 2015). Poor performance by staff can result in poor quality services to clients and exacerbate turnover, which creates high costs that are challenging for nonprofit service organizations to meet, given funding constraints (Reed & Henley, 2015). Factors that promote high quality performance by employees of nonprofit human services organizations are therefore important to understand.

The current study explored nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affects their job performance. Individual interviews with participants were conducted and archival documents reviewed to gain understanding of how leader-member exchange (LMX) dimensions influenced employee performance in management and direct support roles. This study was necessary because employee performance impacts nonprofit organizations' capacities to meet service quality requirements and to operate within their budgets (Carr, 2014; Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015). The findings of this study can improve understanding of how employee-supervisor relationships influence job performance. This information may be helpful in shaping

policy and practice related to supervisor training in ways that would ultimately improve performance of employees of nonprofit human services organizations. Improving performance of these employees may enhance quality of services to clients with disabilities, reduce turnover, and improve their organizations' financial management (Carr, 2014; Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015).

Provided here is a brief discussion of background research that was relevant to this study's research questions, which will be followed by a statement of the problem the researcher addressed in the study. Then the purpose of the study, its research questions, and a brief discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the inquiry in this study are presented. Subsequent sections will provide discussion of the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a summary of key points.

Background

Nonprofit human services organizations that provide services and support to individuals with disabilities rely upon their employees to accomplish organizational missions (Reed & Henley, 2015). Human services agencies that serve persons with disabilities may provide a range of assistance to clients, such as preparing meals, bathing, managing finances, obtaining medical care, and shopping (Carr, 2014; Firmin, Steiner, Firmin, & Nonnemacher, 2013). Direct support employees who provide such assistance to clients receive supervision and direction from supervisors and other leaders who may work at the same service site or out of an administrative office (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). Previous researchers have found that the relationships direct support employees had with their supervisors impacted their employment experiences and performance in important ways (Carr, 2014).

In one study of direct support staff who worked with persons with disabilities, Firmin et al. (2013) explored the perspectives of 28 employees regarding factors that affected the longevity of their employment. Participants discussed the high level of stress associated with this type of work, and the high frequencies of burnout amongst care staff as significant predictors of turnover and performance problems (Firmin et al., 2013).

They also discussed concerns about their relationships with supervisors and administrative employees, expressing perceptions that leaders in their organizations did not demonstrate respect for direct care employees because of their low status on the hierarchy (Firmin et al., 2013). Many participants felt that leaders showed low regard for their knowledge about clients, and did not include them in decision-making regarding individual planning (Firmin et al., 2013). The importance of feeling supported by one's supervisor was illustrated through other researchers' findings. Gray and Muramatsu (2013) found that high work stress was associated with a greater likelihood of turnover for direct support employees, but that this relationship was weaker for employees who perceived their supervisors as supportive.

These findings suggested that supportive leaders could moderate the negative effects of stress on direct support employees, which may have positive implications for both retention and performance (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). Similarly, Kozak, Kersten, Schillmöller, and Nienhaus (2013) found that feedback at work was the one psychosocial factor that negatively predicted burnout for direct support employees working with persons with disabilities. This finding suggested that consistent communication with supervisors decreased employees' risk of developing burnout, which had significant implications for other employee outcomes (Kozak et al., 2013). For example, participants who reported higher levels of burnout reported

lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intention, higher cognitive stress, lower life satisfaction, and poorer general health compared with participants who reported lower levels of burnout (Kozak et al., 2013).

Although researchers found that the employee-supervisor relationship had important implications for employee outcomes in nonprofit human services organizations, no studies were located in which researchers framed their inquiry using LMX theory. In contrast with other theories of leadership that are focused on traits or behavioral attributes of leaders, LMX theory is centered on the relationship between leader and follower, which is variable across employees (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). According to Pellegrini (2015), the four main dimensions used for measuring LMX are loyalty, affect, professional respect, and contribution. Researchers have investigated high- versus low-quality LMX relationships in association with a wide variety of employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and performance (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & van den Heuvel, 2015; Haynie, Cullen, Lester, Winter, & Svyantek, 2014; Kim, Liu, & Diefendorff, 2015). For example, Breevaart et al. (2015) found that high quality LMX relationships were associated with better job performance, and that job resources and work engagement mediated this relationship. In a review of LMX research, Pellegrini (2015) reported that high quality LMX relationships were associated with job performance, job satisfaction, and greater emotional commitment to the organization. Also, high quality LMX relationships have been found to negatively impact employee turnover (Pellegrini, 2015).

In spite of the contributions LMX theory could make to the study of employee-supervisor relationships in nonprofit human services organizations, no researchers had investigated this topic using LMX theory as a guiding framework. Findings of existing research

indicated that supervisory relationships exert powerful influences on the employment experiences and performance of direct support employees (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). Because of the apparent importance of this relationship, researchers have suggested that further studies are needed to investigate the effects of the supervisor-employee relationship and employee outcomes in human services agencies (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Kozak et al., 2013; Reed & Henley, 2015). The current study was needed to address this gap in the research literature, and to incorporate theoretical understanding of the influence of employee-supervisor relationships on job performance in nonprofit human services organizations.

Problem Statement

The success of nonprofit human services organizations depends upon their ability to cultivate high quality performance among staff members (Carr, 2014; Reed & Henley, 2015). Employees' relationships with organizational leaders in organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities are important predictors of job performance and satisfaction (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). Direct support employees who perceived their supervisors as supportive were less likely to report turnover intentions and to experience burnout, which can adversely affect performance (Carr, 2014; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). Researchers found that employees of nonprofit human services agencies felt less satisfied with their jobs when managers treated them disrespectfully, disregarded their opinions, or treated them as unimportant because of their lower ranking in the organizational hierarchy (Firmin et al., 2013). Conversely, perceptions of mutual trust and respect within the relationship with one's supervisor were associated with high LMX, and with a range of positive employee

outcomes, including job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015; Haynie et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015). Researchers have suggested that further studies are needed to investigate the effects of the supervisor-employee relationship and employee outcomes in human services agencies (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Kozak et al., 2013; Reed & Henley, 2015). Although the relationship between LMX and employee performance has been widely researched, no studies were located that examined the relationship between LMX and employee performance within nonprofit human services organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. Individual interviews with 20 participants were conducted, and archival documents reviewed to gain understanding of how LMX dimensions influenced employee performance in management and direct support roles; direct support positions included Direct Care Professionals, Medicaid Service Coordinators, and Quality Intellectual Disability Professionals. Manager titles included Program Managers, Program Coordinators, and Directors. Archival documents included job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory session agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation. Increased understanding of the relationship between LMX and employee performance provided information to organizational leaders and other policy-makers that could facilitate development of training programs that promote optimal supervisor-employee relationships in nonprofit human services organizations.

Research Questions

RQ1. How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee?

RQ2. How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The LMX theory of leadership guided inquiry and analysis within the current study. In the early 1970s, researchers began development of the LMX theory of leadership in response to unexpected findings of differentiated relationships between leaders and followers within work socialization studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). In contrast to prevailing theories of leadership, in which researchers presented effective leadership in terms of specific types of leader behavior, researchers found that employees of effective supervisors often described different types of leader behavior in positive terms (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Researchers found that employees' perceptions of the quality of relationships with supervisors predicted leadership effectiveness more strongly than specific types of leader behaviors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). From these early findings, researchers have continued to develop LMX theory as a relationship-based framework; the focus on the leader-follower in LMX theory differentiates it from other theories of leadership in which the leader or the follower is the domain of interest (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim et al., 1999).

According to LMX theory, leaders develop different types of relationships with

subordinates based upon similarities, shared values, and personality styles (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015). The LMX relationship refers to the manager-employee dyad, and ranges from low to high quality (Pellegrini, 2015). High quality LMX develops between the supervisor and employees who represent an in-group, and is characterized by higher employee access to resources, as well as mutual trust, respect, and loyalty (Pellegrini, 2015). In contrast, low quality LMX exists between the supervisor and employees who represent an out-group, and is limited to interaction pertaining to the employee's job description and financial relationship with the organization (Pellegrini, 2015).

Because high LMX relationships are associated with job performance, this theory provided a useful lens through which to consider the present study's findings. This theoretical framework also provided content structure for the interview protocol. In addition to the two primary research questions, the data collection instrument included specific probe questions related to the four key dimensions of LMX theory, which are affect, loyalty, professional respect, and contribution (Pellegrini, 2015). Chapter two will provide a more detailed discussion of LMX theory and its applications in related research.

Nature of the Study

The current research used a qualitative exploratory case study design that consisted of semi-structured interviews with 20 employees from both supervisory and direct care levels within two nonprofit human services organizations. The sample included 10 supervisory level employees and 10 direct care level employees. It was anticipated that a sample size of 20 employees would be sufficient to achieve data saturation; in other words, this sample size would allow the researcher to adequately explore a range of perspectives regarding employee-

supervisor relationships without resulting in excessive or overly-redundant data (Dworkin, 2012). Although determination of the exact sample size to achieve data saturation is not an exact process (Merriam, 2009), qualitative research typically includes fewer than 50 participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013), and a sample size of 20 to 30 participants is commonly sufficient in qualitative studies (Mason, 2010). Archival documents were reviewed from each organization that reflected upon relationships between supervisors and employees, which included job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory sessions agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation. In the current study, a qualitative approach was used because of its usefulness in gaining an understanding of participants' personal perspectives about their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This approach was also appropriate for the current study because of its utility in exploring phenomena that are not well understood (Maxwell, 2012). An exploratory case study design was selected because this approach is useful for gaining in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of individuals within bounded groups or systems, which in this study consisted of employees of nonprofit human services organizations (Pearson, Albon, & Hubball, 2015; Yin, 2013).

Definitions

Following are definitions of key terms used in the current study:

Direct support employees. In organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities, direct support employees assist clients with daily needs such bathing, preparing meals, shopping, completing housework, managing finances, obtaining medical care, and accessing recreation (Firmin et al., 2013).

High quality LMX relationship. This refers to the relationship that develops between a supervisor and employees who represent an in-group, and is characterized by

higher employee access to resources, as well as mutual trust, respect, and loyalty (Pellegrini, 2015).

Human services organization. This term refers to an organization that has a primary mission to provide services and support to individuals related to basic human needs, such as housing, community access, nutrition, and medical care (Eschenfelder, 2010).

Job performance. This term refers to the degree to which employees meet expectations related to their job descriptions, such as meeting deadlines, completing assigned tasks, following rules and policies, and demonstrating proficiency or quality (Haynie et al., 2014).

Low quality LMX relationship. This refers to the relationship between a supervisor and employees who represent an out-group, and is limited to interaction pertaining to the employee's job description and financial relationship with the organization (Pellegrini, 2015).

Nonprofit organization. In contrast with for-profit organizations, nonprofit organizations do not conduct business operations in order to amass profits, but instead conduct operations to accomplish specific missions that often involve social causes (McMurray Islam, Sarros, and Pirola-Merlo, 2012).

Assumptions

It was assumed that participants would respond openly and honestly to interview questions about their relationships with supervisors. It was also assumed that participants would be capable of reflecting on their relationships with supervisors in terms of their effects on their job performance, and of explaining their perspectives on this subject clearly. These

assumptions were necessary in the current study because the researcher was specifically interested in the first-person perspectives of employees. In this study, the researcher wished to explore employees' experiences of high and low LMX relationships with supervisors in relation to their general employment experiences and their job performance. Privileging the perspectives of employees allowed for exploration of information about supervisor-employee relationships in nonprofit human services agencies that had not been previously discussed in research. Adopting this methodology, however, required the assumption that participants shared honest and accurate information about their employment experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, the researcher included employees of nonprofit human services agencies, from both direct support and supervisory levels, as participants. The researcher did not include employees from for-profit organizations because different organizational priorities in these groups may have had bearing upon the nature of supervisory relationships with employees. The researcher had a specific interest in employee-supervisor relationships in nonprofit organizations, as this was an understudied yet important topic. To facilitate focus on the employee-supervisor relationship in nonprofit disabilities services organizations, the researcher also excluded employees who worked for nonprofit organizations that provided other types of services (i.e., housing assistance) or served different populations (i.e., homeless). Because of the specificity of this focus, the researcher anticipated that findings would be transferable to nonprofit human services organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities. This study's findings may not be transferable, however, to for-profit organizations or nonprofit organizations with other types of missions or clientele.

In the current study, the researcher limited exploration of leadership to employee

perceptions of the quality of the supervisor-employee relationship. The researcher was particularly interested in how the relationship between supervisors and employees affects the employment experience and performance of employees, which made LMX theory the most appropriate framework choice. Other theories of leadership were considered and rejected, as they focused on specific attributes of leaders rather than the employee-supervisor relationship. For example, transformational leadership theory was considered because this form of leadership has been associated with a wide range of positive employee outcomes in the research literature, including job satisfaction and performance (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012; McMurray et al., 2012). Transformational leadership is a theory that contrasts transactional, passive, and transformational leadership styles based on behavioral and interpersonal characteristics of leaders (Bass, 1985). This theoretical framework was not selected, however, because it would not have adequately framed exploration of the phenomenon of interest, which was the employee-supervisor relationship and its influence on employees.

Limitations

One limitation of this study emerged from its small sample size and limited recruitment pool. Based on recommendations from qualitative research experts, it was anticipated that 20 participants from two organizations would be sufficient to achieve data saturation; however, it could not be assumed that a sample of this size would provide findings that generalized to the entire population of similar employees in the United States. Also, because participants were selected from only two organizations, it could not be assumed that findings of this study would represent the experience of employees of all similar organizations. To address this limitation, the researcher provided thick description in the reporting of findings. This allowed others who review the study's findings to judge for themselves its relevance and applicability to their own

employment experiences and organizations (Merriam, 2009).

Another limitation of this study was associated with its qualitative design, which did not allow for analysis of statistical relationships between variables. A quantitative study would have permitted the researcher to examine correlational or causal relationships between LMX relationship quality and employee job performance, and to state with a higher degree of confidence how LMX quality influenced employee performance. It was not possible to address this limitation within a qualitative study; however, the researcher believed that the potential benefits of a qualitative design for this study's particular research questions offset this limitation. Use of semi-structured interviews within a qualitative analytic process allowed for exploration of greater detail and variability related to the employee-supervisor relationships as experienced by participants, which was expected to yield richer, more complex findings compared with a quantitative approach.

Finally, bias arising from the researcher's relationship to the phenomenon of interest might have affected study outcomes. At the time of data collection, the researcher was the acting CEO of a nonprofit organization that provided services and support to individuals with disabilities, and because of this experience, may have had beliefs or expectations about the effects of employee-supervisor relationships on employee performance in such organizations. To address this potential for bias, the researcher did not recruit participants from his own organization. The researcher also acknowledged and bracketed his own personal biases related to the research questions when conducting interviews and performing data analysis, in an attempt to avoid biased data collection or interpretation of findings (Merriam, 2009).

Significance

This study made a distinctive contribution by exploring the impact of LMX quality upon the performance of employees who work in nonprofit human services organizations. Leader-member exchange and performance had not been studied within this type of organization. The findings of this study contribute to knowledge an enhanced understanding of the types of supervisor-employee relationships that promote job performance, and also the relationship dynamics that degrade performance for employees of these organizations. This information may be useful to professionals who develop and provide training to management and supervisory staff of nonprofit human services organizations. It may be used to help supervisors to cultivate positive, professional and empowering relationships with employees that maximize their performance potential, while also helping supervisors to avoid relationship dynamics that degrade employee performance. These findings may ultimately lead to positive social change by improving employee performance in nonprofit human services organizations; improvement in performance would result in higher quality services to clients, and may also reduce costly turnover in organizations that are faced with funding constraints.

Summary

The success of nonprofit human services organizations that provide services and support to persons with disabilities depends on the performance of employees (Carr, 2014; Reed & Henley, 2015). Although the relationships between employees and supervisors in such organizations were important predictors of job performance (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013), no researchers had examined employee performance in such organizations through the framework of LMX theory. To address this gap in the research literature, the purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore nonprofit human services

employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. LMX theory was used as a framework to guide inquiry and analysis in this study, which used semi-structured interviews with 20 employees from two nonprofit human services organizations that provided services to individuals with disabilities at the time of data collection. The findings of this study may be used to shape policy and practice related to training of supervisors in ways that promote optimal employee job performance. The following chapter will provide a comprehensive review of the research literature related to the study's problem and purpose.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The success of nonprofit human services organizations hinges upon their ability to cultivate high-quality performance among staff members (Carr, 2014; Chang, Huang, & Kuo, 2015; Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015). Poor performance by staff can result in inadequate services to clients and exacerbate employee turnover, which creates high costs that are challenging for these organizations to meet given funding constraints (Lee, 2016; Reed & Henley, 2015; Walk, Handy, & Schinnenburg, 2013). Factors that promote high job performance in employees of nonprofit human services organizations are therefore important to understand.

One particularly significant factor is manager-employee relations (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013), or leader-member exchange. Although the relationship between LMX and employee performance has been widely researched, no studies were located that examined the relationship between LMX and employee performance in nonprofit human

services organizations. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance.

Past research has indicated that the quality of employees' relationships with organizational leaders is a strong predictor of job performance and retention (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). More specifically, a number of researchers have found that perceptions of mutual trust and respect in employees' relationships with their supervisor were associated with high leader-member exchange, and were associated with a range of positive employee outcomes, including job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015; Hassan & Hatmaker, 2015; Haynie et al., 2014; Jokisaari, 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Lee, 2016; Sharif & Scandura, 2013). Other researchers have suggested that employees felt less satisfied with their jobs when managers treated them disrespectfully, disregarded their opinions, or treated them as unimportant because of their lower ranking in the organizational hierarchy (Firmin et al., 2013; Laschinger, Wong, Cummings, & Grau, 2014; Rowold, Borgmann, & Bormann, 2014). This was relevant to the present study because a strong association has been found between job satisfaction and job performance (Abdullah & Wan, 2013; Kim, Egan, Kim, & Kim, 2013; Peng, 2014; Thamrin, 2012; Wellens & Jegers, 2014). Other researchers have linked supportive managerial behaviors, such as coaching, to employee performance and retention (Baines, Charlesworth, Turner, & O'Neill, 2014; Carr, 2014; Czech & Forward, 2013; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Hesselgreaves & Scholarios, 2014; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). These findings suggested that an investigation of the effects of LMX on job performance in nonprofit human services organizations would be both useful for the organizations themselves, and of interest as an extension of a large body of research and theory.

In this literature review, the researcher provides an examination of the literature related to LMX and job performance, LMX and job satisfaction, and leadership in human services organizations. The *search strategy* section details the literature search methods used to find the literature and research treated in subsequent sections. The *theoretical foundation* section discusses the theoretical framework of the study, which is the LMX theory of leadership. The *literature review* section will describe the ways in which similar problems have been approached in recent studies, and will analyze the relevance and weaknesses of these approaches and discuss their applicability to the present study. Finally, the *summary and conclusions* section will

synthesize these findings into an overview of the state of research in this area, and point out the research gap, which the present study addressed.

Literature Search Strategy

The search strategy for this literature review began with specific attention being paid to LMX theory within nonprofit organizations. Iterative searches were conducted within Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost), ProQuest, Emerald Insight, JSTOR, and Science Direct databases to retrieve articles containing key search terms and combinations of key terms. These key terms included: *leader-member exchange theory, LMX, leader-member and non-profit, leader-member exchange and job performance, LMX and direct care staff, leader- member relationship quality, leader-member exchange and transformational leadership, leader-member and organizational justice, qualitative research and organizational studies.* The keywords and combinations of keywords listed above were entered into each of the listed databases and search engines within each of the following disciplines: organizational psychology, organizational behavior, management studies, media and communication, social

behavior, public administration, business ethics, and nursing.

Reference pages for relevant articles were searched for additional relevant sources, which were then located by searching in the aforementioned databases and search engines. For this review, five book chapters and 100 journal articles were read in full text. A total of two book chapters and 73 journal articles were included, with 86.7% of the source material published in the last five years.

Theoretical Foundation

The LMX theory of leadership served as the theoretical foundation and framework for this study. Prior to the development of LMX theory, researchers using the prevailing average leadership style theories of leadership had assumed that the followers of a given leader were similar enough that they could be treated as a unitary group, and that the leader behaved in essentially the same way toward all followers (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim et al., 1999). LMX theory (originally called vertical dyad linkage theory) was developed in the early 1970s by George Graen and colleagues in response to the unexpected findings of work socialization studies, which indicated that leaders form a unique relationship with each follower (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Liden & Graen, 1980; Paik, 2016; Pellegrini, 2015), and that employees' perceptions of the quality of relationships with supervisors predicted effectiveness more strongly than leader behaviors alone (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim et al., 1999; Unnu & Kesken, 2014). In accordance with these early findings, researchers developed LMX theory as a relationship-based framework, with a specific focus on the leader-follower dyad

(Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Leader-member exchange theory was founded in part on the finding that the quality of LMX relationships varies, so that a continuum can be defined, in which LMX ranges from low quality economic exchanges that do not extend beyond work requirements to high quality social exchanges that extend beyond work (Pellegrini, 2015). Another central finding involved the concepts of in-groups and out-groups (Sheer, 2014). Due to time constraints, leaders tend to develop high quality LMX relationships with some, but not all of their followers; the followers with whom the leader has established high quality LMX relationships are referred to as the "in-group," while the followers with whom the leader maintains low-quality LMX relationships are referred to as the "out-group" (Sheer, 2014). High quality LMX/in-group relationships are defined as those in which employees are more likely to receive positive treatment, access to resources and developmental opportunities, and high-profile job assignments in exchange for harder work and higher performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Pellegrini, 2015; Sheer, 2014). These relationships are characterized by a mutual expectation of positive interactions, such that the reciprocation of favors does not have to be in the short term and in kind, but can instead be generalized into long-term maintenance of the relationship's mutually beneficial character (Pellegrini, 2015).

Researchers have found that high quality LMX relationships are positively associated with job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceptions of organizational justice, and organizational-citizenship behaviors (Breevaart et al., 2015; Haynie et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015; Lee, 2016; Pellegrini, 2015; Sharif & Scandura, 2013). Further, high quality LMX relationships have been found to reduce turnover, role ambiguity, and role conflict, and to lead to more positive perceptions of workplace politics (Pellegrini, 2015). These

outcomes have been attributed to the observed characteristics of high quality leader-member exchanges; in these relationships, supervisors interact more frequently with employees, and the interactions are more friendly and inclusive. Supervisors and employees experience mutual trust and respect, and their interactions are characterized by positive affect, whereas low quality LMX/out-group relationships are characterized by an absence of social exchanges, such that communication between supervisors and employees does not extend beyond work requirements

(Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Carter, Armenakis, Feild, & Mossholder, 2013; Krot & Lewicka, 2012; Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016).

Research into the means by which high quality LMX relationships are generated has so far been relatively sparse (Choy, McCormick, & Djurkovic, 2016). Investigations of the range over which LMX quality can vary have, however, indicated four dimensions that characterize any given leader-member exchange: affect, or how much the participants "like" each other; loyalty, or the degree to which the participants publicly support each other; contribution, or the amount and quality of work the participants see themselves and each other as doing; and professional respect, or the participants' perceptions of their own and each other's occupational standing (Jha & Jha, 2013; Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Qualitative inquiry into LMX relationships has also been comparatively sparse, in spite of its significant potential (Tse & Troth, 2013). Tse and Troth (2013) argued that, in using quantitative methods, researchers may have lost the depth and richness of data needed for a full understanding of the ways in which individuals experience high and low quality LMX relationships. Fritz (2014) attributed the relative scarcity of qualitative studies in this area to the topic's position at the intersection of interpersonal and organizational communication, two

fields in which researchers have traditionally relied on quantitative methods. In recent qualitative studies of interest, researchers have interviewed staff in human services organizations regarding factors that affect longevity of employment, including supervisor behaviors (Firmin et al., 2013), have explored the relationships between LMX and pregnancy discrimination (Mäkelä, 2012), and have examined employees' emotional experiences with LMX relationships of different qualities (Tse & Troth, 2013). The qualitative approaches taken in these studies allowed the researchers a "flexibility to tap the expected richness of data" (Kong, 2015, p. 466), which may have been lacking in quantitative analyses.

Because LMX relationships are strongly associated with job performance, LMX theory provided a useful lens through which to consider the present study's findings. Researchers have suggested that further studies are needed to investigate the effects of the supervisor-employee relationship on employee outcomes in human services agencies (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Kozak et al., 2013; Reed & Henley, 2015). The use of LMX theory in the present study brought these effects into focus, thus addressing an identified need. The research questions allowed the conclusions of LMX theory to be tested in an organizational context where they had not previously been verified.

Review of Relevant Literature

No studies were found that examined the factors affecting job performance within nonprofit human services organizations, using LMX theory as a theoretical lens. This brief review of the literature will therefore include the recent findings of researchers who have investigated leadership in nonprofit organizations using other theories, and of researchers who have examined the effects of LMX within other organizational contexts. The discussion will address leadership in nonprofit organizations, with specific discussion of transformational

leadership; outcomes associated with LMX in the workplace, with specific discussion of the effects of LMX on job satisfaction and job performance; leadership in human services organizations, with specific discussion of leadership and employee outcomes in human services organizations; and qualitative studies of LMX. A review of the findings related to these topics will indicate that a significant gap exists in the literature, which the present study addressed.

Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are increasingly required to function in "business-like" ways in order to maintain accountability to funding sources and function in a cost-effective manner (Gilmer & Hughes, 2013). These organizations have increasingly regarded the cultivation of effective leadership as a means of reducing the costs associated with employee turnover and inadequate performance (Gilmer & Hughes, 2013). Accordingly, many nonprofit organizations have attempted to develop leaders internally, by adjusting organization-level human-resources policies in ways that promote effective management (Gilmer & Hughes, 2013).

In order for nonprofit organizations to implement leadership-development policies, the style of management that such policies should be designed to facilitate must be identified. With respect to managers' role as guides of organizational strategy, Kovner (2014) argued that evidence-based management was an effective framework for strategic decision-making in nonprofit organizations. In evidence-based management, stakeholders translate management problems into answerable questions and then evaluate the available evidence to ensure that it is of the highest possible quality (Kovner, 2014). Kovner (2014) argued that nonprofit managers should be trained to use this framework, and that strategic decision-making would thereby be

improved.

In a review of the literature, Hess and Bacigalupo (2013) found that at the tactical "in-the-trenches" level, leaders in nonprofit organizations had three distinct roles: they served as developers, inspirational figures, and change agents. Success in all three of these roles was strongly associated with the use of emotional intelligence in relations with subordinates: as a developer, the nonprofit leader had to balance obligations to external stakeholders and internal followers; as a change agent, the nonprofit leader had to react effectively to economic, technological, and regulatory changes, which required the leader to make strategic decisions while also emotionally supporting followers through transitions in process; and, as an inspirational figure, the nonprofit leader had to maintain hope among associates and promote investment of time and energy in the organization's goals (Hess & Bacigalupo, 2013).

Transformational leadership in nonprofit organizations. The style of leadership in which the manager motivated his or her subordinates in the ways Hess and Bacigalupo (2013) described--that is, by empowering them, by caring about their interests, by inspiring them to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of an organizational vision, and by appealing to their higher-order needs--is called transformational leadership (Men, 2014). The transformational style has been contrasted with transactional leadership, in which the leader appeals to followers' lower-order needs in *quid pro quo* economic transactions, and with laissez-faire leadership, in which the leader is indifferent to his or her followers (Men, 2014). The organizational culture of shared values which transformational leadership tends to produce (Men, 2014; Osula & Ng, 2014) can be particularly valuable to nonprofit organizations, both by contributing to commitment and retention (Osula & Ng, 2014), and by improving employee performance in other ways (Allen, Smith, & Da Silva, 2013).

Allen et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between leadership style within nonprofit organizations and organizational climates for change and creativity. The psychological climate was defined as an individual worker's perceptions of the working environment, which was compared with the organizational climate, defined as the aggregation of all workers' perceptions within a given working environment. Participants were 178 members of six churches who completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to evaluate their pastor's leadership across three dimensions: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Participants also completed measures of psychological climate for organizational change readiness and organizational creativity. The researchers found that transformational leadership was positively associated with psychological climates for change and creativity, while transactional leadership had no significant relationship with either outcome, and laissez-faire leadership was negatively related to both. These findings indicated that change and creativity were more likely to occur under transformational leaders, defined by these researchers as leaders who were inspirational and who communicated a shared vision (Allen et al., 2013). McMurray et al. (2013) qualified the findings of Allen et al. (2013), but upheld the conclusion that transformational leadership was the most effective style for nonprofit organizations. McMurray et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between leadership style, innovation in the workplace, and organizational climate within a nonprofit organization. Participants were 43 employees from various divisions of a nonprofit organization in Australia who completed surveys that included measures of transformational leadership, organizational climate, and innovation. Dimensions of organizational climate were autonomy, pressure, trust, cohesion, fairness, support, recognition, and encouragement from supervisor. The innovation measure assessed this variable on the level of the individual, the team, the organization, and overall

climate. The researchers found that the strongest leadership predictors of workplace innovation at all levels of management in a nonprofit organization were the transformational practice of individual support and the transactional practice of contingent punishment; the latter result contradicted previous researchers' findings that contingent punishment had a negative effect on innovation (McMurray et al., 2013).

In another study in which the researchers confirmed the effectiveness of transformational leadership within nonprofit organizations, McMurray et al. (2012) examined the effect of leadership style on workgroup performance and climate. Participants were 43 employees working in different departments of a church-based nonprofit organization who completed surveys to evaluate their supervisors in terms of transformational leadership qualities and the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership. Participants also completed measures related to workgroup climate and performance. The researchers found that transformational leadership was associated with higher workgroup performance in nonprofit organizations. The high-performance expectations of transformational leadership were found to have a strong relationship with workgroup climate, indicating that transformational leadership was associated with building teamwork and creating motivation among team members to accomplish shared goals (McMurray et al., 2012). Taken together, the findings discussed above suggested that transformational leadership (possibly with an infusion of contingent punishment) was the style most conducive to the creative and values-based culture that was essential to a successful nonprofit organization (Allen et al., 2013; McMurray et al., 2012, 2013).

Outcomes Associated with Leader-Member Exchange in the Workplace

Implementation of the transformational style of leadership can complement the development of LMX, but the two models are distinct, in the sense that transformational

leadership describes leader behaviors that are applied across all followers, while LMX quality describes the unique relationship between one leader and one follower (Rowold et al., 2014). As discussed in the theoretical foundation section of this chapter, researchers have found that leaders form a unique relationship with each follower (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Pellegrini, 2015), and that employees' perceptions of the quality of relationships with supervisors predicted effectiveness more strongly than leader behaviors alone (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Unnu & Kesken, 2014). Thus, while the transformational leadership model can serve as a general orientation for leaders in nonprofit organizations, these organizations can also benefit from the concurrent development of LMX quality.

Rowold et al. (2014) confirmed the efficacy of LMX and transformational leadership in their investigation of the relationships between six leadership constructs and perceptions of leadership effectiveness in nonprofit versus for-profit employment contexts. The six leadership constructs examined were transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire, LMX, consideration, and initiating structure.

Leadership effectiveness was indicated through three work outcomes: job performance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment. Participants were 196 employees of for-profit organizations and 133 employees of nonprofit organizations; participants completed surveys that included measures for each of the leadership constructs and the three work outcomes. The researchers found that, of the six models of leadership, LMX was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction, followed by transformational leadership. Rowold et al. (2014) further found that LMX was more strongly associated with affective commitment in nonprofit organizations than in the for-profit sector. This suggested that an understanding of the ways in which leader-member exchange operates in an organizational setting could be of particular value to leaders of

nonprofit organizations.

Leader-member exchange and job satisfaction. A number of recent studies have indicated a strong association between LMX quality and job satisfaction. Furunes, Mykeltun, Eirnarsen, and Glasø (2015) investigated employee outcomes associated with low LMX relationships with supervisors among Norwegian participants. The researchers used random samples of 409 teachers, 406 blue-collar industrial workers, and 1,024 transportation workers. Participants completed surveys to evaluate the LMX quality of their relationships with their supervisors, and also completed several measures related to work outcomes, such as role clarity, social support, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. The researchers found that high quality LMX was strongly correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Participants who reported lower levels of LMX with their supervisors were more likely to report higher levels of negative outcomes, including work stress, bullying, discrimination, and unfairness in the work environment. The researchers suggested that low LMX created additional risks for employees of being mistreated by superiors or customers, and left the employees less protected from harms in the workplace compared with employees who experienced higher LMX relationships. The administration of surveys to large random samples of employees in three unrelated occupations suggested that the findings of Furunes et al. (2015) were particularly robust.

These results were consistent with those of Fisk and Friesen (2012), who confirmed the existence of a strong association between LMX and job satisfaction when they examined the relationships between employees' LMX relationships with supervisors, supervisors' emotional regulation, and employees' experiences of job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors. The researchers were interested in two types of emotional regulation: *deep acting*

and *surface acting*. Deep acting referred to a changing of one's emotional response to match expectations for outward behavior, while surface acting referred to alterations made only to one's outward expressions in order to match social expectations. Participants were 126 individuals recruited online who completed surveys regarding their supervisors' emotional regulation, the LMX relationship quality with their supervisor, and work attitudes. In agreement with other researchers discussed in this section, Fisk and Friesen found that LMX had a direct effect on job satisfaction. For participants with high LMX relationships, the frequency of deep acting did not have a significant effect on job satisfaction, but frequency of deep acting increased job satisfaction for participants with low LMX relationships with their supervisors. The researchers suggested that the typically negative effects on job satisfaction of low LMX relationships were mitigated by participants' perceptions that their supervisors were making an effort to present themselves positively.

Zhang, Tsingan, and Zhang (2013) likewise found a strong association between LMX quality and job satisfaction. In their investigation of the ways in which LMX mediated the relationship between role stressors and job satisfaction, Zhang et al. administered surveys to 162 employees from multiple organizations in a city in northern China. The surveys contained measures of two forms of job stress (role ambiguity and role conflict), LMX, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Zhang et al. found that high-quality LMX mitigated the negative effects of job-related stress on job satisfaction.

Koçoglu, Gürkan, and Aktas (2014) again found a strong association between LMX and job satisfaction when they investigated the relationship while considering the role of workload and demographic factors. Participants were 255 Turkish employees of a government organization who completed surveys that included measures of LMX quality, job satisfaction,

workload, and demographic factors. The researchers found that high LMX was directly related to job satisfaction, and that workload was also positively related to job satisfaction. The researchers suggested that the unusual finding that high workload was associated with job satisfaction was possibly related to the level of job security indicated by a higher workload. Further, the researchers found that workload partially mediated the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. Results also indicated that education, gender, and status were not significantly related to workload, LMX, or job satisfaction.

The association between LMX quality and job satisfaction was robust enough to "trickle down" into employees' perceptions of components of the work experience. Dusterhoff, Cunningham, and MacGregor (2014) investigated the relationship between employees' perceptions of performance appraisals received from supervisors, perceptions of organizational justice, and the quality of their relationships with their supervisors (LMX). Participants were 71 employees of a single organizational unit who completed surveys to evaluate their perceptions of their last performance appraisal, LMX relationship with their supervisors, and organizational justice. The researchers found that employees with high LMX relationships with their supervisors were more likely to report perceptions of high utility of and overall satisfaction with their performance appraisals.

The researchers also found that perceptions of organizational justice were positively and independently associated with favorable perceptions of performance appraisals. The researchers interpreted these findings as suggesting that employees judged the quality of their performance appraisals based on moral justifiability. In other words, if employees viewed the performance appraisal as being morally justified, they were more likely to perceive it as satisfactory, compared with employees who viewed their appraisals as being morally

unjustified.

Saeed, Waseem, Sikander, and Rizwan (2014) also took a more focused approach, and investigated the effects of LMX, emotional intelligence, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance upon employees' turnover intentions. Participants were 166 employees from different levels of an organization's hierarchy who completed surveys that included measures of these variables. "Emotional intelligence" referred to the participants' qualities, not to the supervisors'. The researchers found that participants reported lower levels of turnover intention if they had higher job satisfaction and self-rated their job performance as higher. High-quality LMX relationships with supervisors were significantly associated with lower turnover intentions among participants.

Emotional intelligence did not have a statistically significant relationship with turnover intentions. Contrary to the researchers' hypothesis, organizational commitment was not negatively associated with turnover intentions. The researchers suggested that in difficult economic conditions, employees might have been more strongly motivated to remain in their jobs in spite of a lack of organizational commitment. These results were consistent with those of Zhang et al. (2013), which also indicated that LMX was negatively associated with turnover intentions.

In another study that focused on a specific aspect of the work experience, Liu, Lin, and Hu (2013) investigated the relationship between LMX and unethical behavior by employees, considering the role of job satisfaction. Participants were 249 managers who worked for four Chinese finance companies. These managers completed surveys that included measures of LMX, job satisfaction, and unethical behavior. The researchers found that participants who reported low LMX relationships with their supervisors were more likely to report engaging in unethical

behavior in the workplace. The researchers also found that participants who reported high LMX relationships with their supervisors were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction compared with participants with low LMX relationships with their supervisors. Participants with higher levels of job satisfaction were less likely to report engaging in unethical behavior in the workplace.

Finally, the researchers found that the negative relationship between LMX and unethical behavior was mediated by job satisfaction. These findings indicated that employees' low LMX relationships with supervisors had a negative influence on job satisfaction, which then positively influenced the likelihood of unethical behavior in the workplace.

Mediators between leader-member exchange and job satisfaction. While a strong, positive association between LMX quality and job satisfaction has been found by a number of researchers, the mechanism through which LMX influences job satisfaction has been the subject of an ongoing dispute. As discussed above, Fisk and Friesen (2012) suggested that the typically negative effects of low LMX on job satisfaction were mitigated by participants' perceptions that their supervisors were making an effort to present themselves positively, while Koçoglu et al. (2014) suggested that the LMX-job satisfaction correlation was partially mediated by workload, with higher workloads being associated with higher job satisfaction, perhaps because they functioned as an indicator of job security.

Graves and Luciano (2013) identified a different mediator when they investigated the role of leaders in enabling employee self-determination. Their study involved testing the associations between employees' leader-member exchanges, psychological need satisfaction, autonomous motivation, and attitudinal outcomes. Surveys completed by 283 graduates and

current working students of one business school indicated that employees' perception of LMX quality was associated with feelings of competence and autonomy; these feelings were associated with autonomous motivation, which, in turn, correlated with job satisfaction. Loi, Chan, and Lam (2014) identified a different mediator when they examined the influence of LMX on employee organizational identification and job satisfaction by administering a two-phase survey to 306 employees of two companies in southern China. These researchers found evidence that the mediator between LMX quality and job satisfaction was organizational identification: high LMX quality encouraged employees to identify with the organization and its mission, and this identification led, in turn, to higher job satisfaction. Han and Bai (2014) examined the ways in which LMX differentiation (that is, the differences in LMX quality experience by different employees) affected nurses' perceptions of organizational justice by administering surveys to 187 nurses in a U.S. Midwestern hospital. The researchers found that differential LMX mediated the relationships between LMX and perceptions of fairness and turnover intentions. Han and Bai recommended that nursing supervisors be trained to treat subordinates consistently, to avoid the appearance of unfair or preferential treatment.

Concluding remarks on the relationship between leader-member exchange and job satisfaction. An understanding of the association between LMX and job satisfaction can be useful to leaders, and particularly to leaders in nonprofits, where the effect of LMX on affective commitment is strongest (Rowold et al., 2014). Although the existence of a strong correlation between LMX quality and satisfaction both with the job overall and with specific aspects of the job has been repeatedly confirmed (e.g., Furunes et al., 2015; Koçoglu et al., 2014), the mechanism through which the influence is transmitted is not well understood (Loi et al., 2014). The studies relating LMX and job satisfaction discussed above were all quantitative, relying

exclusively on surveys as data- gathering instruments. Survey responses and other quantitative measures cannot easily be made to indicate relationships that the survey's designers have not contemplated in advance; the researcher must decide beforehand what he or she is looking for and tailor the instrument to capture it. When the mechanism by which an association is mediated has not been decisively identified, as in the case of LMX and job satisfaction, qualitative methods may be preferable, as the comparatively open-ended structure of an interview can allow the researcher to "happen upon" unexpected data that suggest hypotheses not previously considered.

The relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. Researchers have consistently found a strong association between job satisfaction and job performance (Abdullah & Wan, 2013; Wellens & Jegers, 2014). In one study, Thamrin (2012) administered surveys to 105 employees of shipping companies in Jakarta, Indonesia to analyze the effects of transformational leadership and organizational commitment on job satisfaction and job performance. The results indicated that transformational leadership had a significant positive influence on both organizational commitment and job performance, but no significant effect on job satisfaction, while organizational commitment had a significant positive effect on both job satisfaction and job performance. In addition, job satisfaction was found to have a significant positive effect on job performance.

Kim et al. (2013), in their examination of the associations between perceived managerial coaching behavior and employee outcomes, administered electronic surveys to 482 employees in a government organization in South Korea. The survey included measures of perceived managerial coaching behaviors, such as, "To help me think through issues, my manager asks questions, rather than provide solutions" and "My manager provides me with constructive

feedback" (Kim et al., 2013, p. 320). Measures of job satisfaction and job performance were also included. The results indicated that managerial coaching behavior directly influenced employee role clarity and satisfaction with work, and that role clarity and satisfaction with work were significantly and positively associated with performance.

Peng (2014) examined the ways in which intrinsic job satisfaction (how the employee feels about the work itself) and extrinsic job satisfaction (how the employee feels about the context of the work, e.g., work environment, supervisor behavior, and pay) were related to two types of job performance: task performance (i.e., performance of duties required by the employee's job description) and contextual performance (i.e., spontaneous actions that enhance the workplace). Questionnaires were distributed to 735 university librarians at 80 university libraries in Taiwan. These questionnaires were coded to allow each librarian to be paired with a colleague; 554 dyads of matching questionnaires were usable. The results indicated that both dimensions of job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic) were significantly related to both task and contextual performance, with intrinsic satisfaction being more strongly related to both outcomes in the population sampled, perhaps (the researcher suggested) because people entered the profession of librarian more for the sake of the intrinsic rewards associated with helping others than for remuneration, prestige, or other extrinsic factors. This researcher's supposition that respondents were motivated more by intrinsic than extrinsic factors suggested that these results may be particularly relevant to nonprofit organizations in general.

Leader-member exchange and job performance. As with the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, researchers have consistently found a strong association between LMX and job performance (Martin et al., 2016). In a recent meta-analysis of the relationship between LMX and three dimensions of job performance (task, citizenship, and

counterproductive performance), Martin et al. (2016) examined 195 publications. Their findings indicated that LMX was positively associated with task performance (doing what was in the employee's job description) and citizenship performance (spontaneous behaviors that had a positive effect on the organization), and negatively associated with counterproductive performance (behaviors that were contrary to the organization's goals). The researchers concluded that the strong, positive association between LMX and performance was robust enough to carry across all means of measurement.

Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, and Wu (2014) examined the relationship between authentic leadership and job performance, considering the roles of LMX and psychological capital. Authentic leadership was described as ethical, genuine, and positive, while psychological capital referred to an individual's sense of hope, resilience, optimism, and efficacy. Participants were 49 leaders and 794 subordinate employees who worked for a logistics organization in China. Leader participants completed measures to evaluate their subordinates' job performance, and subordinate participants completed surveys that included measures of authentic leadership, LMX, and psychological capital. The researchers found that authentic leadership was positively related to performance, and that this relationship was moderated by psychological capital. The relationship between authentic leadership and performance was stronger for participants with high psychological capital. Results also indicated that authentic leadership was positively associated with LMX. Significantly for the present discussion, the positive relationship between authentic leadership and job performance was mediated by LMX, although LMX was more strongly related to performance among participants who had higher levels of psychological

capital.

Le Blanc and González-Romá (2012) found a relationship not only between LMX and performance, but also a limited association between LMX differentiation and performance, when they investigated the relationship between LMX differentiation and team outcomes of performance and commitment. Participants were 269 Dutch teachers who worked on 33 different teams, with team sizes ranging from three to 22 teachers. Participants completed measures of LMX quality, which were used to evaluate the level of LMX differentiation within teams; higher variability in perceptions of LMX quality within teams indicated a higher level of LMX differentiation. Participants also completed measures to evaluate team performance, individual affective commitment to the team, and perceptions of dissimilarity in work values among team members. The researchers found that LMX differentiation was positively associated with team performance and with affective commitment in teams in which the median LMX was low. These relationships were not significant for teams in which the median LMX was high. Leader-member exchange differentiation was also positively related to greater perceptions of values dissimilarity within teams.

Jokisaari (2013) also investigated the influence of LMX on work-group performance, in an examination of the effects that LMX and social network relationships had on job performance, work-group-member performance, and organization-member performance of 110 new employees of three Finnish municipalities. The three dimensions of performance were rated by the new employees' supervisors using surveys, and a survey was administered to the new employees three months into their employment to measure LMX and social network relationships (that is, the newcomers' informal relationships with more experienced peers). Findings indicated that employees whose social networks were sparse (characterized by low

interconnectedness) tended to have higher in-role performance, perhaps because network members who were not densely interconnected with one another had more opportunities to participate in other connections, which could bring a greater variety of information and opportunities to the network's focal point, in this case the new employee. New employees with social networks characterized by strong ties tended to have better work-group performance, perhaps because the high quality of exchange in strong ties prompted repayment from the new employees in the form of increased commitment to the work group. Finally, higher LMX was associated with higher organization-member performance, perhaps because high-quality LMX encouraged employees to go beyond the requirements of their job descriptions.

Kim and Park (2015) found an exception to the expected positive correlation between LMX and performance, obtaining evidence that LMX could be negatively associated with job performance when certain other factors were present. In their investigation of the effect of emotional exhaustion, transactional leadership, and LMX on employees' affective commitment and in-role performance, these researchers administered surveys to 332 employees of a South Korean engine-manufacturing firm. Kim and Park found that employees' in-role performance tended to be poor when the employees were emotionally exhausted and subject to transactional leadership with high LMX, perhaps because frequent, spontaneous interactions with a demanding leader who was not emotionally supportive and had the authority to evaluate work, punish, and so on, caused or exacerbated stress. The researchers suggested that high LMX could be harmful to employees when it was coupled with transactional leadership, particularly for employees who suffered from the vulnerability associated with emotional exhaustion.

High LMX can also negatively affect performance when managers abuse employees (Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012). Lian et al. (2012) found new ramification of the LMX-

performance association when they examined the interactive effects of LMX and abusive supervision upon organizational deviance by employees, considering psychological need satisfaction. Organizational deviance was described as counter-normative employee actions that specifically targeted the employer (i.e., theft, unauthorized Internet use). Participants were 260 employees from a variety of employment contexts who completed online surveys in three waves. In the first survey, participants completed measures of abusive supervision and LMX, and in the second survey, participants completed measures of needs satisfaction, organizational justice, and social-exchange quality on an organizational level. The final survey related to organizational deviance. The researchers found that LMX moderated the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance; specifically, high LMX exacerbated the effects of abusive supervision, increasing the likelihood of organizational deviance. Basic need satisfaction mediated the relationship between the LMX-abusive supervision interaction and organizational deviance. The researchers suggested that mistreatment within a high-LMX relationship was damaging to the sense of basic need satisfaction of employees.

Ethical behavior at work is, of course, an aspect of job performance. Like Lian et al. (2012), Liu et al. (2013) examined the relationship between LMX and unethical behavior when they investigated this aspect of the LMX-performance association, considering the role of job satisfaction. In this case, though, the LMX-unethical behavior association was found to be negative. As discussed above, the researchers found that the negative relationship between LMX and unethical behavior was mediated by job satisfaction. These findings indicated that low-quality relationships with supervisors had a negative influence on job satisfaction, which then positively influenced the likelihood of unethical behavior in the workplace.

It is notable that Lian et al. (2012) and Liu et al. (2013) both linked LMX to one aspect

of employee performance, i.e., unethical behavior (negatively in the case of Liu et al., and positively in the case of Lian et al.), and that both sets of researchers identified a mediator of the LMX-unethical behavior association, namely job satisfaction by Liu et al. and basic need satisfaction by Lian et al. As was found to be the case with the LMX-job satisfaction association, the nature of the mediator between LMX and job performance was still very much in dispute. Breevaart et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between LMX and employee performance, considering the roles of job resources and employee engagement. Participants were 847 Dutch police who completed online surveys regarding their relationships with supervisors, job resources, work engagement, and job performance. The researchers found that high quality LMX relationships were associated with better job performance, and that job resources and work engagement mediated this relationship. This indicated that high quality LMX relationships influenced a higher degree of investment and engagement in work activities, which positively influenced job performance. Similarly, high LMX influenced perceptions of job resource availability, which positively influenced job performance. Job resources had three dimensions: autonomy, social support, and developmental opportunities. Autonomy was not significantly related to LMX, but the other dimensions of job resources did have a significant relationship with LMX. The researchers suggested that autonomy was a less important facet of work for this sample (police officers), and that this finding might not be representative of samples from other professions.

Evidence that samples from other professions would yield a different result were found by Volmer, Spurk, and Niessen (2012). These researchers investigated the relationship between LMX and employee creativity, considering the role of job autonomy. Participants were 144 employees of a manufacturing company in Germany who completed two sets of surveys that

were lagged three months apart. In the first survey, participants responded to measures related to LMX and job autonomy, and in the second survey they completed a measure of creative work involvement. The researchers found that high LMX relationships were associated with higher levels of creativity in the workplace. The researchers also found that job autonomy moderated the relationship between LMX and creative work involvement; specifically, LMX was positively related to creative work involvement when job autonomy is high, but these variables wereunrelated when job autonomy was lower. The researchers offered these findings as a possible explanation for previous mixed findings in the literature related to LMX and creativity. In spite of the benefits of a high LMX relationship, LMX was not sufficient to enhance creativity under working conditions that constricted worker control and choice.

Kim et al. (2015) likewise found a strong, positive association between LMX and job performance, but identified different mediators between them, in this case organizational tenure, psychological empowerment, and "taking charge." "Taking charge" referred to voluntary behaviors by employees that influenced the ways work was completed in their own jobs, in their work groups, and in the organization as a whole. Participants were 212 leader-subordinate pairs from eight large corporations in China. Subordinate participants completed surveys that included measures of LMX, psychological empowerment, and taking charge; leader participants completed measures to evaluate their employees' job performance. The researchers found that taking charge was positively related to job performance, and that taking charge mediated the positive relationship between LMX and performance. Further, LMX had a positive relationship with taking charge that was mediated by psychological empowerment. These findings indicated that high quality LMX positively influenced a sense of empowerment in employees, which influenced them to engage in taking charge behaviors; these behaviors positively influenced their

overall performance. Organizational tenure moderated the positive relationship between LMX and performance, indicating a weaker influence of LMX upon performance as employees gained experience within the organization. Haynie et al. (2014) also found a strong, positive association between LMX and performance, but with distributive justice as a mediator.

These researchers investigated the relationship between LMX and employee performance as it was influenced by distributive and procedural justice. Procedural justice reflected employees' perceptions of the degree to which leaders fairly applied policies across the group, and distributive justice referred to employees' perceptions that leaders gave recognition and rewards to employees in a fair manner. The researchers used supervisor-employee dyads in their sample; participants were 90 employees of a manufacturing organization in the Midwestern United States along with 27 supervisors. Subordinate participants completed surveys that included measures of LMX and justice climate, and leader participants completed surveys to rate their employees' task performance. The researchers found that procedural justice positively influenced task performance.

Distributive justice moderated the relationship between LMX and performance; specifically, these variables had a positive relationship when distributive justice was high, but had a negative relationship when distributive justice was low. The researchers suggested that when employees perceived the work climate as low justice, they were more likely to view LMX differentiation as unfair, which adversely impacted performance. On the other hand, if employees viewed the work environment as generally fair, they were less to likely to view LMX differentiation as unfair or indicative of favoritism.

Another effect of apparent leadership bias could be found in a study by Hassan and Hatmaker (2015), in which the researchers examined the relationship between LMX and job

performance, considering the effects of gender difference between manager and employee. The researchers administered two surveys to 477 employees and 161 managers in a large state government agency. The results indicated that performance ratings tended to be high when LMX was high, but, contrary to the researchers' expectation (that mixed-gender dyads would be associated with lower performance ratings), the only gender effect on the ratings was found in dyads with a male supervisor and a female employee, in which case the performance ratings tended to be higher.

Choy et al. (2016) suggested that the mediators they identified also served as generative mechanisms through which the quality of LMX relationships was improved. These researchers administered surveys to 268 employees of a large public-sector organization to examine the role of delegation and participation (i.e., manager-subordinate collaboration) as mediators of the LMX-employee performance relationship. They found that a strong, positive association linked LMX and job performance, and that both participation and delegation mediated this relationship. The authors suggested that participation and delegation allowed the manager and subordinate to develop all of the dimensions of LMX identified by Liden and Maslyn (1998), that is, affect, loyalty, professional respect, and contribution, and that this, in turn, encouraged the subordinate to act beyond his or her contractual obligations, so that his or her performance was improved. This was in agreement with the suggestion of Jokisaari (2013), discussed above, that high LMX encouraged employees to "give extra" to their organizations.

Huang, Wang, and Xie (2014) found evidence that the degree to which the employee identified with the leader, and the leader's reputation, mediated the relationship between LMX and the aspects of employee performance that were captured in the category of organizational citizenship behaviors. These researchers administered surveys to 262 leader-member dyads in

15 companies located in three major cities in southern China. Subordinate participants used Likert scales to rate LMX, leader's perceived reputation, and identification with the leader. Participants expressed their degree of leader-identification by rating their agreement with statements such as "My immediate supervisor represents values that are important to me" and "I have complete faith in my immediate supervisor" (Huang et al., 2014, p. 1705). Leader participants completed measures of subordinate participants' organizational citizenship behaviors; these measures addressed the frequency with which the employee undertook activities that benefitted the organization but were not part of the employee's job description. The results indicated that the relationship between LMX and organizational citizenship behaviors was mediated by employees' degree of personal identification with their immediate supervisors, and that identification was, in turn, facilitated by a positive perception of the leader's reputation.

In the meta-analysis of 195 publications by Martin et al. (2016), discussed at the beginning of this section, the researchers identified trust in the leader, motivation, empowerment, and job satisfaction as mediators of the relationships between LMX and task performance and LMX and citizenship performance, with trust being the strongest mediator in both cases. The researchers further identified organizational commitment as a mediator of the relationship between LMX and citizenship performance. Martin et al. suggested that the absence of organizational commitment as a mediator of the LMX-task performance association might be explained by employees' paying back the obligations involved in a high LMX relationship through task motivation, rather than through commitment to the organization. Contrary to expectations, findings indicated that role clarity did not mediate the relationship between task or citizenship performance. This finding was consistent with those

of Choy et al. (2016), in the sense that delegation and role ambiguity could both seen as providing the employee with discretion and empowerment.

Concluding remarks on the relationship between leader-member exchange and job performance. A strong, positive association between job satisfaction and job performance has been found by a number of researchers (Martin et al., 2016). The most recent studies of the relationship between LMX and job performance have indicated that, while the relationship is for the most part positive and strong (unless factors such as abuse or a combination of emotional exhaustion and transactional leadership are present), the mediators of the relationship have not been decisively identified. Proposed mediators have included delegation, manager-employee collaboration (i.e., participation), job satisfaction, trust in the leader, the respective genders of manager and employee, and employee empowerment. The recentness of the results of Martin et al. (2016), combined with the fact that these results were gathered from an extensive meta-analysis, indicate that the findings of these researchers are likely to prove exceptionally robust. These findings included a confirmation of the existence of a strong, positive association between LMX and performance, and an identification of trust, motivation, empowerment, and job satisfaction as mediators between those two variables. It should be noted, however, that all of the studies discussed above used quantitative methods, and the researchers relied exclusively on surveys as data-gathering instruments. Moreover, none of the literature reviewed in this discussion examined the relationship between LMX and job performance in nonprofit human services organizations. A qualitative study of the LMX-job performance link has the potential to bring aspects of the LMX experience into focus which have not previously been considered, and an investigation of the LMX-performance association as it operates within nonprofit human services organizations has the potential to test the results of the research discussed above in a

context in which they have not previously been verified.

The generative mechanisms of leader-member exchange. The positive effects of high-quality LMX relationships on employees' job satisfaction and job performance indicated that organizations could benefit from fostering these relationships between leaders and workers. Three of the generative mechanisms of high LMX found by researchers in recent studies were delegation and participation (Choy et al., 2016), and affiliative humor (Pundt & Herrmann, 2015); there is potential for organizations to provide guidance to managers in employing all three of these mechanisms. Choy et al. (2016), in their study discussed above, proposed that delegation and participation not only mediated the association between LMX and employee performance, but also improved LMX quality when successfully used. Both delegation and participation involved employees in decision-making processes, such that respect was shown for the employee's judgment and the employee's need for autonomy was met. When the employee dealt successfully with his or her increased responsibilities, the manager was encouraged to trust the employee, the employee felt more responsible for his or her work, and was therefore likely to work harder and go beyond his or her job description. Choy et al. therefore recommended that managers be encouraged to involve employees in participative decision-making, both to improve LMX quality and increase the effect of LMX on job performance.

Pundt and Herrmann (2015) identified affiliative humor as another mechanism through which high-quality LMX was generated. These researchers administered surveys in two waves, with a six-week time lag between them, to measure LMX and the frequency of two forms of humor employed by supervisors. The two types of humor measured were affiliative humor and aggressive humor, with the affiliative style comprising positive humor intended to amuse other

people and enhance relationships, and the aggressive style comprising negative humor intended to mock or belittle other people; inappropriate jokes were also classed as aggressive. The researchers found affiliative humor, as rated at the time of the first survey, to correlate positively with LMX as rated at the time of the second survey, even after controlling for LMX in the initial survey; aggressive humor was found to be negatively associated with LMX. As with participation and delegation, this aspect of leadership was to some extent accessible to organization-level policies.

Leadership in Human Services Organizations

Leaders in human services organizations need to be particularly versatile in order to be effective (Gilbert, Myrtle, & Sohi, 2015). Gilbert et al. (2015) investigated the relationships between vocational context and perceptions of leadership effectiveness for supervisors with different leadership styles. The researchers conducted this study within work environments that were categorized as social (social services) or realistic (mechanical). The researchers obtained a sample by asking supervisors in for-profit manufacturing and nonprofit social services organizations each to select two peers, two of their managers, and two of their subordinate employees as participants. For 16 manufacturing supervisors and 86 social services managers, the researchers obtained a total sample of 934 individuals who responded to surveys that evaluated these supervisors. The surveys asked participants to evaluate the supervisor on relational leadership qualities and effectiveness. Relational leadership was composed of five dimensions: calming influence, organizational followership, partner, team player, and organizational outreach. For manufacturing managers, only two dimensions (team player and partner) were significantly associated with perceptions of effectiveness. For social services supervisors, however, all five of these dimensions were associated with perceptions of leadership

effectiveness. This suggested that nonprofit human services workers demanded more of supervisors than employees in for-profit organizations, perhaps because nonprofit human services workers desired help in sustaining the higher levels of intrinsic motivation that nonprofit work required.

Reed and Henley (2015) found evidence that nonprofit human services workers often received little of this help, and that supervisors in this sector received little training to guide them in delivering it. These researchers investigated the performance management and training received by behavior analysts working for community-based service providers for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Participants were 382 employees certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board or employees with pending certification. Participants completed surveys to provide information about the type and level of training they received from their employers, and the types of incentives their employers offered. The researchers found that about half of participants received pre-service training, and that 71% of participants were offered ongoing training and development through their employers. Fewer than half of the participants reported receiving feedback on their performance during their initial training periods, however.

About 25% of participants reported that their employer offered monetary incentives for performance, but the highest frequency for incentives was once per year. Of the 75% of participants who performed supervisory duties, a majority reported that they received no training on methods and practices of supervision when accepting these responsibilities. The researchers suggested that disabilities services agencies needed to invest more in staff training and supervision in order to meet their obligations to provide quality services to clients and to reduce turnover expenses.

Leadership and employee outcomes in human services organizations. Nonprofit

human services employees may have certain advantages in coping with work-related stress (Carr, 2014; Hamann & Ren, 2013). Hamann and Ren (2013) investigated the effects of wage inequality on employee effort and service quality in nonprofit versus for-profit organizations. The researchers obtained data on wages through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and obtained data regarding service quality from nursing facility resident surveys from the state human services department. The researchers also used data from 121 surveys they had previously administered in nursing facilities. The researchers found that in for-profit settings, participants reported lower effort under higher wage inequality conditions, but that there was no relationship between wage inequality and employee effort in nonprofit settings. The authors suggested that nonprofit employees were more intrinsically motivated, and that wages had comparatively less effect on their efforts than with for-profit employees.

Carr (2014) identified another characteristic of human services workers that helped to mitigate job stress. This researcher summarized the findings of a study that investigated the relationships between employee pay, status, and quality of care in organizations that provided direct care services to individuals with disabilities and other care needs. Carr found that direct support workers were strongly motivated by their relationships with clients, and that promotion of quality relationships between staff and clients by management was key to retention of these employees. The researcher emphasized the importance of supportive relationships with managers and human resources personnel as key to promoting performance and retention.

Although nonprofit human services employees may have high intrinsic motivation and rewarding relationships with clients to help them meet the difficulties of their jobs, these difficulties can still be overwhelming (Firmin et al., 2013). In a qualitative study, Firmin et al. (2013) explored perspectives of direct support staff in organizations that provided support to

individuals with intellectual disabilities, regarding factors that affected longevity of employment. Participants were 28 direct support employees from two residential services organizations in the Midwestern United States who participated in semi-structured interviews. Participants discussed the high level of stress associated with this type of work and the high frequencies of burnout among care staff as a significant predictor of turnover and performance problems. They also expressed frustration with agency policies regarding professionalism with clients, suggesting that these policies imposed unnecessary restrictions upon their relationships with clients and degraded their job satisfaction. Participants discussed concerns about their relationships with supervisors and administration; many expressed that leaders in their organizations did not demonstrate respect for direct care staff because of their low status in the hierarchy. Many participants felt that leaders showed low regard for their knowledge about clients, and did not include them in decision-making regarding individual planning. Further, participants felt that leaders' expectations of them were unrealistic and not grounded in the reality of day-to-day functioning in clients' homes.

Gray and Muramatsu (2013) found the capacity of effective leadership to mitigate the effects of job stress in their investigation of the relationship between work stress, perceived job resources, and turnover intention among direct support workers in community-based organizations that provided services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Participants were 323 direct support staff employed at five different agencies in the Chicago area. Participants completed surveys that included measures of turnover intention, work stress, supervisory support, coworker support, and locus of control. The researchers found that the work overload dimension of work stress was positively associated with turnover intention, and that more positive perceptions of supervisory support were associated with lower intentions to

quit.

Kozak et al. (2013) likewise found that supervisory support could mitigate the effects of work stressors. These researchers investigated the predictors of burnout in direct support workers in organizations that provided services to individuals with intellectual disabilities, and also investigated the personal and work-related outcomes associated with burnout for these employees. Participants were 409 employees of 10 residential service providers who worked at 30 different facilities in Germany. Participants completed the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire, which included measures of job-related psychological outcomes, and also completed a measure of burnout. Findings indicated that 40% of participants reported high levels of burnout, and that burnout was significantly and positively predicted by four psychosocial factors: emotional demands, work-privacy conflict, role conflict, and job insecurity. Feedback at work was the one psychosocial factor that negatively predicted burnout, suggesting that consistent communication with supervisors decreased employees' risk of "burning out." Participants who reported higher levels of burnout reported lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intention, higher cognitive stress, lower life satisfaction, and poorer general health compared with participants who reported lower levels of burnout.

The results discussed in this section indicated that, while nonprofit human services employees may have higher intrinsic motivation and rewarding relationships with clients to augment their resiliency (Carr, 2014; Hamann & Ren, 2013), the stresses associated with their jobs could still lead to frequent burnout and high turnover (Firmin et al., 2013). Managers could mitigate the effects of job stressors by including employees in decision-making processes, listening to employees' opinions regarding care plans with specific clients, showing respect and consideration for employees, and ensuring that job expectations and client-interaction restrictions

were realistic and necessary (Firmin et al., 2013; Gray and Muramatsu, 2013; Kozak et al., 2013). The results of the qualitative study discussed in this section (Firmin et al., 2013) suggested that qualitative methods, and particularly semi-structured interviews, could serve as a useful complement to the quantitative methods that have been so frequently employed in studies of leadership. By speaking at length with participants in semi-structured interviews, Firmin et al. (2013) were able to identify aspects of supervision that affect job satisfaction, but which the other researchers discussed above did not include (e.g., the negative effects of restrictions regarding professionalism in interactions with clients, and the negative effects of unrealistic performance expectations). Furthermore, none of the researchers mentioned in this section investigated a specific consideration of leader-member exchange theory. The considerable body of current research related to LMX theory has the potential to bring the effects discussed in this section into sharper focus, through the application of a broader and richer theoretical perspective than has so far been employed in studies of the nonprofit human services sector.

Qualitative Studies of Leader-Member Exchange Relationships

The qualitative study of Firmin et al. (2013) discussed above did not involve any consideration of LMX theory. Other researchers using qualitative methods have, however, taken LMX into account. Fritz (2014) and Tse and Troth (2013) noted the overwhelming predominance of quantitative methods in research of manager-employee relationships. Tse and Troth, in their qualitative investigation of the ways in which employees experience the differential quality of their relationships with their supervisors, and of employees' experiences of LMX, conducted interviews with 25 full-time employees of two organizations. The organizations were a large private health service provider and a medium-sized construction material company, and the employees interviewed were all subordinates in their leader-

member dyads. The researchers found that themes emerged from employees' descriptions of their experiences with different qualities of LMX relationships. The themes that emerged from descriptions of high quality LMX relationships included helping and caring, mutual trust and respect, and good communication. The first theme (helping and caring) was mentioned most frequently; descriptions of mutual trust and respect had the second-highest frequency.

Themes that emerged from descriptions of low quality LMX relationships referred to (in descending order of frequency) poor communication, lack of care and support, and lack of trust and respect. The emotions most frequently associated with high quality LMX relationships included comfort, happiness, fun, strength, and a sense of being active, while emotions associated with low quality LMX relationships included fear, stress, pressure, and fury. Although these findings were consistent with the results obtained using quantitative methods discussed above, they enriched the understanding of the affective dimension of LMX relationships and indicated the relative degrees of priority, which subordinates assigned to the different dimensions of LMX.

Mäkelä (2012) focused on the relationship between LMX and pregnancy discrimination, obtaining data through two rounds of interviews with five women. This researcher was interested in achieving a deeper understanding of the inequities that working women face. The results indicated that even women in high LMX relationships experienced pregnancy discrimination, although these women tended to describe their experiences in more positive terms than did women in low LMX relationships. The researcher pointed out that this finding challenged the prevailing view that high LMX relationships lead to positive outcomes.

The two studies discussed in this section, and the work of Firmin et al. (2013) discussed in the previous section, indicated that there is considerable potential for researchers using

qualitative methods to enrich the current understanding of leader-member relationships, and to expand the scope of investigation to encompass factors and relationships not previously considered. Tse and Troth (2013) argued that qualitative methods could provide a "deeper understanding, supported by much richer descriptions" (p. 273) of participants' experiences of LMX relationships. Qualitative methods may therefore be an effective way to meet the need (identified by Gray & Muramatsu, 2013; Kozak et al., 2013; Reed & Henley, 2015) for studies of LMX in the context of nonprofit human services organizations.

Summary and Conclusions

Several major themes have emerged from the literature reviewed in this chapter. First, the cultivation of a high quality of leadership is essential to nonprofit organizations as they confront budgetary constraints and the high costs associated with inadequate employee performance and turnover. Nonprofit organizations must develop the best possible understanding of the styles of leadership that are effective in the nonprofit context in order to shape human resources policies so as to encourage those styles and behaviors. The transformational leadership style, in which managers show respect for employees and develop a values-based organizational culture by sharing organizational missions and appealing to employees' higher-order needs, is demonstrably effective as a general managerial orientation within the nonprofit sphere. Transformational leadership describes a set of supervisory behaviors that are applied to all employees, however, and research has shown that in practice, leaders develop a unique relationship with each follower, and that the quality of these relationships is a better predictor of outcomes than leader behaviors alone. LMX theory, in which the object of investigation is the leader-member dyad, provides a framework through which these relationships can be better understood.

High-quality LMX has been shown to be strongly and positively associated with a number of desirable employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and job performance. A large body of recent research has confirmed the existence of the strong association between LMX and employee job satisfaction, but the means by which LMX influences an employee's satisfaction with his or her job has not been decisively identified. Different researchers have found evidence that organizational identification, autonomous motivation, satisfaction of the need for a feeling of

competence, and the perceived effort of supervisors to conform to organizational expectations mediate the LMX-job satisfaction link. Research in this area is ongoing, however.

The association between LMX and job performance has also been repeatedly documented. Again, however, the mediator through which the association is effected is a subject of ongoing investigation. Evidence has shown that delegation, participation, distributive justice, psychological capital, job autonomy, job satisfaction, and trust in the leader, among other factors, may serve as mediators of this association. A recent meta-analysis identified trust in the leader as the most salient of these factors.

That human services organizations can benefit greatly from an improved understanding of leadership has been indicated by a number of studies. Researchers have shown that human services leaders must be highly versatile to be seen as effective; these leaders must not only be team players, but must exhibit other leadership characteristics that speak to employees' higher-order needs, such as organizational followership and a willingness to partner with employees. There is evidence that human services leaders do not currently receive adequate guidance in the development of these leadership traits. This is unfortunate, because other evidence has indicated that the high levels of stress experienced by human services employees can be significantly

mitigated by manager behaviors, such as treating employees with respect, listening to employees, and having realistic expectations. The absence of these positive behaviors, or the presence of their opposites, can contribute to burnout and turnover among employees.

The need to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which leaders affect employee performance and job satisfaction in the nonprofit human services sector is therefore an urgent one. Although other researchers have shown the effectiveness of high-quality LMX relationships in producing positive outcomes in other organization types, the effects of LMX within the nonprofit human services context had not yet been investigated. The current study served as an attempt to address this gap in the literature. In addition, qualitative investigations of LMX have been relatively rare. Only two qualitative studies were found that addressed LMX specifically, despite the significant potential of qualitative methods to enrich the current understanding of how different qualities of LMX are experienced and how LMX influences performance and other outcomes. The current study addressed two needs that previous researchers have identified: the need for a better understanding of LMX as it operates within nonprofit human services organizations, and the need for further qualitative investigation of employee experiences of LMX. The next chapter will include a more detailed discussion of the method employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affects their job performance. Individual interviews were conducted with participants and archival documents reviewed to gain understanding of how LMX dimensions influence employee performance in management and direct support roles; direct support positions included Direct Care Professionals, Medicaid Service Coordinators, and Quality Intellectual Disability Professionals. Manager titles include Program Managers, Program Coordinators, and Directors. Archival documents included job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory session agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation. Increased understanding of the relationship between LMX and employee performance provided information to organizational leaders and other policy-makers who could facilitate development of training programs that promote optimal supervisor-employee relationships in nonprofit human services organizations.

This chapter will provide a detailed description of the methods used to address the purpose of the current study. The next section will explain the chosen research design and provide a rationale for its use in this study. Next will be a description of the role of the researcher, including discussion of how the role of the researcher may have introduced bias or ethical concerns and how these issues were addressed. The next major section will describe the methodology for the study, including participant selection, instrumentation, recruitment procedures, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. The following sections will discuss issues of trustworthiness and how they were addressed in the study, as well as

ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary of key points discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative exploratory case study centered on the following research questions:

RQ1. How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee?

RQ2. How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance?

A case study design allows the researcher to study phenomena for purposes of description, explanation, and exploration (Yin, 2013). In the current study, the researcher used a case study design to explore employee-supervisor relationships in relation to employee performance in nonprofit human services organizations. An exploratory design was an appropriate choice for this study because this phenomenon had not been widely studied (Yin, 2013). The researcher chose a case study design because this approach facilitates in-depth examination of complex phenomena within bounded systems or groups (Yin, 2013). The current study was concerned with exploring employee-supervisor relationships and how they influenced job performance, specifically within nonprofit human services organizations. The researcher anticipated that employee-supervisor relationships would be multifaceted and have complex relationships with job performance, which made a case study design an appropriate choice for this study (Yin, 2013). Because the study concerned the effects of the supervisor-employee relationship specifically within this type of service organization, a case study was a more

appropriate choice compared with other options such as narrative research, which explores participants' life stories (Pearson et al., 2015). A case study design was more suitable to this study's goals compared with qualitative approaches such as grounded theory, which aims to develop theory based upon data derived from observation and participant input (Charmaz, 2014).

Because the opportunity existed to sample from two or more nonprofit human services organizations, a multiple case study design was considered, but ultimately rejected in favor of a single case design. A multiple case study design follows replication logic, and facilitates repeated examination of phenomena of interest across multiple cases (Yin, 2013). Although multiple case studies can yield more robust findings compared with single case studies, the overall intent of this study was not to compare and contrast findings related to employee-supervisor relationships across multiple organizations. It was not the aim of this study to seek replication of findings across multiple organizations; therefore, a multiple case design was not appropriate (Yin, 2013). Using the employee-supervisor relationship as the unit of analysis within the bounded system of the nonprofit human services organization, a holistic single case design more appropriately captured the intent of this study (Yin, 2013). A single case design can be used to explore cases that are unusual, exceptional, or common; because of the lack of research related to the employee-supervisor relationship in nonprofit human services organizations, it was assumed that the relationships explored in this study represented the common case (Yin, 2013). A single case study design allowed for an in-depth exploration of the employee-supervisor relationship in nonprofit human services organizations, which was well suited to this study's purpose.

A qualitative design was an appropriate choice for the current study because this approach supports exploration of complex processes as perceived and experienced by individuals who participated in the study (Merriam, 2009). In comparison with a quantitative design, a qualitative approach allows the researcher greater freedom to explore the nature and variability of participants' experiences in relation to the research questions (Maxwell, 2012). In this study, the objective was to learn about how employee-supervisor relationships influenced employee job performance in nonprofit human services organizations. Using a qualitative approach allowed for exploration of a variety of experiences and perspectives associated with employee-supervisor relationships in such organizations (Merriam, 2009). Although a quantitative approach would have allowed for statistical analyses of relationships between quantified variables, this approach was not compatible with the current study's purpose (Maxwell, 2012). The employee-supervisor relationship in nonprofit human services organizations had not been widely studied, and because of the dearth of research on this topic, the researcher made the choice to explore the topic using qualitative methods that facilitated greater depth of inquiry (Maxwell, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

At the time of data collection, the researcher was the acting CEO of The THRIVE Network, which is a nonprofit human services organization that provides services to individuals with disabilities. Although participants for this study were not recruited from The THRIVE Network, the researcher recruited employees to participate in the study from similar organizations that are overseen by CEOs who are personal acquaintances of the researcher. It is possible that employees of these organizations who choose to participate in the study were aware of the researcher's CEO status and acquaintance with their own organizations' leaders. This may

have created a condition of power imbalance between the researcher and participants that reduced participants' comfort with sharing critical or negative perspectives of leaders in their organizations. Participants may have felt hesitant to share controversial information about leaders in their organizations due to fears of retaliation. To address this issue, the researcher assured participants that all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential. The researcher did not share identifiable information, and obtained written consent before using any direct quotes from participants in disseminated works.

In qualitative research, the researcher has close involvement with participants during data collection; therefore, it is essential to consider how the role of the researcher could affect interpretation of data (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) proposed that the researcher in qualitative studies performs the functions of a data collection instrument. Because of this, qualitative research is especially vulnerable to issues of bias related to the researcher's own particular relationship to the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). It was therefore important for the researcher to recognize how past experiences, personal beliefs, and assumptions might have created a source of bias in this study (Merriam, 2009). Because the researcher was a top leader in a nonprofit human services organization at the time of data collection, past experiences had certainly affected his performance expectations of supervisors. These expectations may have colored the researcher's perceptions of what constituted the optimal employee-supervisor relationship, and how this relationship impacted employee performance. To address this potential source of bias, the researcher fully acknowledged personal opinions on the research topic, and bracketed these while conducting data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Methodology

This section will provide a description of the methodology used in the current study. The first section will discuss participant selection, including sampling strategy and target sample size. The next sections will discuss the instruments used in this study, procedures for recruitment, data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures.

Participant Selection

A case study design requires the researcher to clearly define the bounds of the group or population of interest (Yin, 2013). Employees of nonprofit human services organizations who fulfilled both direct support and management roles constituted the population of interest in the current study. The researcher used a purposeful sampling technique to obtain 20 participants for this study. Purposeful sampling refers to a method in which the researcher deliberately selects participants based on their abilities to provide rich information and insight related to the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). The researcher anticipated a sample size of 20 employees would be sufficient to achieve data saturation; in other words, this sample size would allow the researcher to adequately explore a range of perspectives regarding employee-supervisor relationships without resulting in excessive or overly redundant data (Dworkin, 2012). Although determination of the exact sample size to achieve data saturation is not an exact process (Merriam, 2009), qualitative research typically includes fewer than 50 participants (Ritchie et al., 2013), and a sample size of 20 to 30 participants is commonly sufficient in qualitative studies (Mason, 2010). If data saturation had not been achieved after interviewing 20 participants, data collection would have continued with additional participants until data saturation had been achieved.

To facilitate exploration of a variety of perspectives regarding employee-supervisor relationships within these organizations, the sample included approximately equal numbers of supervisory and direct client support level employees from each organization (Elo et al., 2014). Direct support positions included Direct Care Professionals, Medicaid Service Coordinators, and Quality Intellectual Disability Professionals. Manager titles include Program Managers, Program Coordinators, and Directors. To be eligible for inclusion, employees must have been employed with the organization for at least one year; the purpose of this requirement was to ensure that participants had sufficient time to develop relationships with their supervisors, as this relationship was of primary interest within the current study.

Two of the researcher's colleagues assisted with sampling employees from their organizations, which provided services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The researcher prepared flyers that included a description of the study and the researcher's contact information, which were distributed to employees by the researcher's colleagues. Interested employees were encouraged to contact the researcher by email or phone, at which time the researcher verified that they met inclusion criteria for the study, which were previously specified.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted each interview using an instrument that consisted of open-ended questions in a semi-structured format (see Appendix A), which created the structure to ensure discussion of each key feature of the research questions (Stuckey, 2013). The researcher developed the interview guide, which consisted of the two primary research questions along with additional probe questions related to the core dimensions of the theoretical framework LMX theory. These were loyalty, affect, professional respect, and contribution (Pellegrini,

2015). The researcher constructed the interview guide based on the key aspects of LMX theory to establish content validity of the instrument.

Following the interview guide created consistency across interviews by ensuring that the same questions were discussed in each interview with the same phrasing (Elo et al., 2014). Use of a semi-structured format provided flexibility for participants to discuss associated thoughts and perspectives without these being specifically addressed by the researcher as they arose naturally during the course of the interview (Merriam, 2009). A semi-structured approach also allowed the researcher the freedom to ask probe questions to elaborate discussion of thoughts participants expressed, which resulted in greater texture in participant responses compared with a structured interview approach (Stuckey, 2013).

The researcher also used a protocol to guide review and analysis of archival documents (see Appendix B). The researcher developed this protocol based on this study's two primary research questions and the four core dimensions of LMX: loyalty, affect, professional respect, and contribution (Pellegrini, 2015). The researcher constructed the interview guide based on the key aspects of LMX theory to establish content validity of the instrument. Use of this protocol to guide review of archival documents supported a consistent process across documents. Using the protocol ensured that the researcher attended to each aspect of the research questions and extracted data from documents in a consistent manner. Archival documents included job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory sessions agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Case study methodology requires use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 2013); in accordance with this requirement, the researcher collected data through semi-structured

individual interviews and archival document review. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with participants that lasted approximately one hour, and reviewed archival documents from each organization that reflected upon the relationships between supervisors and employees. The researcher followed the framework in the document review protocol to extract data from each archival document, which was organized into written reviews of documents that pertained to each participant. The researcher conducted one audio-recorded interview with each participant and did not anticipate the need for follow-up interviews.

After initial screening of potential participants by phone or email, the researcher scheduled an interview with each participant in a private location that was conveniently located for the participant. Before each interview, the researcher engaged in an informed consent process with participants that involved explanation of the purpose of the study, description of possible risks and benefits of participation, and description of procedures the researcher used to ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality. During the informed consent process, the researcher also explained that participation was voluntary, and that the participant was free to withdraw consent at any time. Before the interview, participants signed an informed consent form that included permission for audio recording of interviews. After each interview, participants were permitted to ask any additional questions about the study, but there were no specific debriefing procedures. If initial recruitment efforts did not yield the desired sample size, the researcher would have asked his colleagues to distribute recruitment flyers throughout their organizations a second time.

Document analysis added robustness to this study's findings by supporting triangulation (Yin, 2013). The documents requested from participants were important to this study because they provided another source of information on the relationships between

employees and supervisors. Analysis of additional sources of data in conjunction with findings from individual interviews allowed for evaluation of data convergence, or the degree of agreement between interviews and documents (Yin, 2013). Incorporating document analysis into this study lent strength to the ultimate interpretations of supervisor-employee relationships as discussed in interviews.

The specific types of archival documents for review were selected based upon their relevance to this study's research questions. Documents such as job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory sessions agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation were expected to provide additional insight into the LMX relationships between employees and supervisors who participated in this study. Because the aims of this study were to examine elements of loyalty, affect, professional respect, and contribution in relationships between employees and their supervisors (Pellegrini, 2015), documents that in any way reflected these dimensions of employee-supervisor relationships were expected to make valuable contributions to this study's data.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher audio recorded interviews and transcribed them verbatim; transcript coding was aided by use of qualitative analysis software. The researcher also imported the written reviews of archival documents to the analysis software, which supported analysis of the data alongside interview transcripts. Although data analysis in case studies is often driven by the testing of theoretical propositions, the exploratory case study design did not necessarily carry this requirement (Yin, 2013). In an exploratory case study, it is appropriate for the researcher to approach data analysis from the "ground up," and to develop description of patterns in the data through the process of analysis (Yin, 2013).

To begin the analysis process, the researcher reviewed each transcript and archival document repeatedly to derive a holistic sense of their meaning and content (Malterud, 2012). The researcher began by using open coding procedures, which involved labeling units of meaning that related to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Coding and development of themes was organized according to each of the two primary research questions, so that resulting findings could be clearly attributed to a specific research question. Once an initial set of primary themes was established, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and archival documents again with a goal of detecting additional themes, sub-themes, and associations between themes (Malterud, 2012). The researcher used a cross-sectional approach to coding, attempting to detect emergent themes and sub-themes in the data, with an ultimate goal of identifying convergent and divergent themes across and within interviews and archival documents (Malterud, 2012). Analysis of archival documents facilitated triangulation, and to this end, the researcher specifically analyzed the degree to which archival documents provided data convergence (Yin, 2013). Finally, the researcher used deviant case analysis to support trustworthiness. The purpose of deviant case analysis was to ensure that rare or contradictory findings were clearly acknowledged in the analysis and not unduly incorporated into one of the existing themes (Petty et al., 2012).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Several procedures were employed to promote trustworthiness of analysis. The researcher used triangulation to promote trustworthiness of analysis by reviewing for correspondence between content expressed in interviews and findings regarding supervisor-employee relationships in archival documents (Pearson et al., 2015).

Triangulation enhances trustworthiness of data analysis in relation to construct validity through evaluation of the level of convergence between data derived through interviews and documents (Yin, 2013). Triangulation supports the credibility and dependability of the study, and confers additional strength to the case study design (Yin, 2013).

The researcher promoted credibility of findings by participating in peer debriefing; this involved review of the researcher's emerging coding and analysis by another party, which provided multiple perspectives on data interpretation (Merriam, 2009). The researcher also conducted member checking to promote trustworthiness of findings. Member checking is a process that involves verifying transcripts and the researcher's interpretations with each participant to ensure accuracy (Petty et al., 2012). Transferability of findings was promoted through provision of thick description of the participants, setting, and data (Merriam, 2009). Provision of such richness in descriptive accounts of data permits others to evaluate for themselves the degree to which this study's findings are transferable to circumstances in their organizations (Merriam, 2009).

Another procedure that promotes trustworthiness is use of an audit trail. Throughout data collection, the researcher maintained an audit trail that reflected any problems that emerged, questions, or decisions the researcher made to address any issues that developed during any phase of the study (Merriam, 2009). An audit trail also established documentation of the researcher's interpretive process in relation to the data (Petty et al., 2012). Because the audit trail created documentation of decisions made during data collection and interpretation, this process promoted dependability and confirmability of findings (Merriam, 2009).

Ethical Procedures

Before engaging in recruitment or data collection, the researcher secured IRB approval for the proposed study, which was based on the following ethical considerations. The researcher also obtained permission from the CEOs of the organizations from which participants were recruited before beginning the recruitment process. The researcher engaged in an informed consent process with each participant, which consisted of providing them with written information about the study's purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits of participation, and description of procedures to protect anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent materials also clearly communicated the intent to audio record all interviews. The researcher verbally explained informed consent information to participants, and assured them that consent to participate was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. The researcher offered participants the opportunity to ask questions about the study before obtaining their written consent to participate.

Because participants could have expressed negative information about their supervisors, the risk to participants could be non-minimal. Sharing negative or critical information about supervisors could have created a risk of retaliation in the workplace if such comments were linked to specific participants; however, the process of engaging in an interview itself was not anticipated to cause participants psychological or emotional harm. To ensure participant protection from retaliation or other adverse supervisor actions, the researcher ensured data confidentiality by keeping all participant responses in locked files or password-protected electronic files. To protect participant anonymity, the researcher organized participant responses by assigned participant numbers, and ensured that participant responses were not identifiable in works that disseminated this study's findings. Direct quotes from participants were used only

with explicit permission from participants that was documented in writing. In spite of these measures to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality, the small sample size used in this study could have increased the risk of identification of participants in disseminated works. As an additional safeguard against this risk, the researcher emphasized the risk of identification before interviewing participants, suggesting that participants alert him to potentially sensitive information as it emerged during interviews.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. The researcher conducted individual interviews with 20 participants and reviewed archival documents to gain understanding of how LMX dimensions influenced employee performance in management and direct support roles. Participants included both direct support employees and managers from two nonprofit human services organizations that provided services to persons with disabilities at the time of data collection. The researcher used a cross-sectional approach to coding, attempting to detect emergent themes and sub-themes in the data, with an ultimate goal of identifying convergent and divergent themes across and within interviews and archival documents (Malterud, 2012). A number of processes supported trustworthiness, including triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and thick description (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). Ethical considerations were described that safeguard participants against risks of harm related to participation in this study.

Chapter 4: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. Two research questions guided the study:

RQ1. How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee?

RQ2. How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance?

This chapter includes a description of the setting, or the relational (between researcher and interviewee) context in which the data was collected. Next, the relevant demographic characteristics of the study participants are presented, followed by a description of the implementation of the data collection and data analysis procedures that were discussed in chapter 3. The chapter then proceeds with a description of the evidence of the trustworthiness of the results, and then with a presentation of the results themselves. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Setting

The researcher was the acting CEO of The THRIVE Network at the time of data collection, which is a nonprofit human services organization that provides services to individuals with disabilities. Although participants for this study were not recruited from The THRIVE Network, the researcher recruited employees to participate in the study from similar organizations that were overseen by CEOs who were personal acquaintances of the researcher. It

was conceivable that employees of these organizations who chose to participate in the study were aware of the researcher's CEO status and acquaintance with their own organizations' leaders. This created the potential for a power imbalance between the researcher and participants that might have reduced participants' comfort with sharing critical or negative perspectives of leaders in their organizations. To address this issue, the researcher assured participants that all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential. The researcher did not share identifiable information, and obtained written consent before using any direct quotes from participants in disseminated works. There were no other personal or organizational conditions at time of study that might have influenced the interpretation of results.

Demographics

Participants were 32 employees of two nonprofit organizations who filled either direct support or management roles. Table 1 depicts relevant demographics for the 14 participants from the first organization in this case study, "A."

Table 2 depicts the relevant demographics for the 18 participants from the second organization in this case study, "B." Participants B3 and B5 were removed from the study by the researcher because they had been with B for less than one year, and therefore may not have had time to establish a stable LMX with their supervisors.

Table 1

Organization "A" Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Job title	Years with organization	Duties
A1	M	Employment Specialist	6	Employment support
A2	M	Innovative Solutions Specialist	3	Technology and business solutions
A3	F	Day Habilitation Manager	3	Supervises assisted living facility
A4	F	Day Habilitation Specialist	2	Direct support
A5	F	Direct Support Professional	1	Direct support
A6	F	Medicaid Service Coord. Manager	3	Oversees five case managers and own caseload
A7	M	Direct Support Professional	10	Direct support - developmental disabilities
A8	F	Direct Support Professional	2	Direct support
A9	M	Applied Behavior Science Specialist	3	Writing behavior plans
A10	F	System Manager	5	Supervises direct support professionals
A11	F	Manager of Support Employment	8	Oversees patterned employment
A12	F	Assist. Manager	5	Oversees residential facility
A13	M	Assoc. Exec. Dir. for Admin. Services	3	In charge of organization's physical assets
A14	F	Quality Improve./ Staff Development	18	Investigation and recommendation

Table 2

Organization "B" Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Job title	Years with organization	Duties
B1	F	Group Leader	1	Direct support
B2	F	Group Leader	9	Direct support
B4	F	Assistant Group Leader	1	Direct support
B6	F	Group Leader	1	Direct support
B7	M	Education Coordinator	2	Supervises teachers
B8	M	Program Supervisor	6	Supervises group rooms
B9	F	Assistant Group Leader	1	Direct support
B10	F	Group Leader	1	Direct support
B11	F	Senior Behavior Specialist	2	Oversees behavior departments
B12	F	Group leader	4	Direct support
B13	F	Director of Children's Services	3	Oversees classrooms
B14	F	Assistant Group Leader	26	Direct support
B15	F	Behavior Specialist	2	Direct support
B16	F	Assistant Group Leader	13	Direct Support
B17	M	Program Coordinator	4	Coordinates day-to-day activities
B18	F	Administrative Assistant	10	Assists staff and consumers
B19	F	Community Needs Coordinator	11	Respite supervisor and direct support
B20	M	Behavior Intervention Coach	1	Direct support

Data Collection

The researcher conducted one face-to-face semi-structured interview with each of the 32 participants in January and February 2017. Each interview took approximately one hour, and each interview was conducted in a private place of the participant's choice. These settings included the participants' homes. All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recording device. Additionally, the researcher conducted a review of archival documents from organizations A and B. The documents included job descriptions, staff meeting agendas and notes, supervisory sessions agendas and notes, performance evaluations, and disciplinary action documentation. These documents provided additional insight into the LMX relationships between employees and supervisors who participated in this study. There were no deviations from the data collection plan presented in chapter 3, and no unusual circumstances were encountered during data collection.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and analyzed the transcripts using NVivo software. To begin the analysis process, the researcher reviewed each transcript and archival document repeatedly to derive a holistic sense of the meaning and content. The researcher began by using open coding procedures, which involved labeling units of meaning that related to the research questions. Coding and development of themes was organized according to each of the two primary research questions, so that resulting findings could be clearly attributed to a specific research question. Once an initial set of primary themes had been established, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and archival documents again with a goal of detecting additional themes, sub-themes, and associations between themes. The researcher used a cross-sectional approach to coding, attempting to detect emergent themes and sub-themes in

the data, with an ultimate goal of identifying convergent and divergent themes across and within interviews and archival documents.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The researcher promoted the credibility of findings by participating in peer debriefing; this involved review of the researcher's emerging coding and analysis by another party, thus providing multiple perspectives on data interpretation. The researcher also conducted member checking to promote trustworthiness of findings. Member checking involved verifying transcripts and the researcher's interpretations with each participant to ensure accuracy. Transferability of findings was promoted through provision of thick description of the participants, setting, and data. Throughout data collection, the researcher maintained an audit trail that reflected any problems that emerged, questions, or decisions the researcher made to address any issues that developed during any phase of the study. This audit trail also established documentation of the researcher's interpretive process in relation to the data. Because the audit trail created documentation of decisions made during data collection and interpretation, this process promoted dependability and confirmability of findings.

Results

This presentation of results is organized by research question. The results related to the first research question include participants' perceptions of how LMX quality affected employees. The results related to the second research question include participants' perceptions of how LMX quality affected employees' job performance.

Research Question 1

The data related to the first research question fell under three main themes. Data related to the *mutual respect and understanding* theme indicated that employees and supervisors almost unanimously believed that manager-employee relationships exhibiting these qualities were beneficial to employees. Participants also expressed that *positive interactions* between employees and supervisors were beneficial to employees. Finally, data coded under the third theme, *communication*, indicated that most participants believed open communication from employees to managers and from managers to employees was good for employees.

Mutual respect and understanding. All participants except one (A14) expressed the perception that the qualities of mutual understanding and respect in the relationship between supervisors and employees had a positive effect on employees. Participant B8 explained the mutual respect and understanding between employees and supervisors could help everyone feel more satisfied with their jobs:

I think the fact that you don't always understand what someone else is going through until you're in their shoes. If you understand them and what they're going through, then you'll kind of say, "You know what? Then maybe my job isn't as bad or as hard as I'm making it seem." (Participant B8)

Participant A12 described how her participation in day-to-day chores helped her subordinates feel understood, respected, and relaxed:

I will say not everything-everything, but I do understand being that I walk in that shoe before. I walk on that path already. I know what it is. I know like five years ago compared to now, things do change, but sometime I'm on the floor doing the same thing they are doing. If they're doing shower, I shower with them.

Sometime I'm on the staff, I cook. I do medications. Everything they do, I do the same thing too, so I see the frustrations. By them seeing me on the floor doing the same thing that they are doing, I feel like they feel more relaxed. "You know what? [First name redacted] does it, the same thing, so she sees the challenge that I'm going through," especially when you're working with some individuals that requires more attention than the others. I feel like they understand more and they give me more credit for doing that with them. (Participant A12)

Participant A10 gave her supervisory perspective on one way in which a manager's appreciation of employees' needs could help staff cope with a personal crisis:

If I hear somebody talking on the floor and they sound frustrated, I'll tell them. I'll say, "Come here, I don't know what's going on this morning you don't have to tell me, if it has something to do with the job, then I am expecting you and maybe by the end of the day to tell me what's bothering you for you to behave in this way but if you don't tell me I [won't 00:23:04] know, but for now at this minute and this moment, I need for you to get off the floor, go take a walk around the corner, go get yourself a cup of coffee, I'll stay here with the individual till you get back and you feel better." (Participant A10)

Participant B11 described how she had gained respect for her subordinates, and how she had tried to earn her subordinates' respect:

[Staff] may see me coming, "Oh, look, she comes in the classrooms, tells us what to do, and leaves. She doesn't have to clean a butt or do this or do this." I think that should be established and communicated day one so that everyone knows why everyone's coming to the table and what everyone's role is. That's okay if there's a little intertwining. If you do need help wiping a butt, I'm here. That's just not in my job description, but of course I'm here to do it...I don't think that introduction was made when I first got here what anyone's role was or what my

role was, so it kind of took years to learn. As I know about the staff's role, I have huge respect for them. That's not an easy job. Once I started familiarizing myself with the DSP's role, it's an extremely challenging job, and they do not get paid enough money for it, for all the work that they do. (Participant B11)

There was a negative side to supervisor-employee understanding, however. Participant A6 expressed the perception that the ability of middle management to empathize with staff put these supervisors in a position to prevent employee burnout, but that the closeness between mid-level managers and staff also meant that dissatisfied managers were likely to transmit their distress to their subordinates:

I think middle management can understand whoever they're directly supervising a little bit better than when it gets to like the coordinator, assistant director, director level because at that point you're kind of just like, "this needs to be done." And then middle management has to get it done and then middle management has to put that pressure on everybody else. So I think the biggest problem when it comes to I guess finding out where the burnout starts, would be management. Because when your middle management starts to feel like the workers, whatever they're feeling they're going to reflect to the workers. (Participant A6)

A lack of understanding and mutual respect between employees and managers could cause staff to feel dissatisfied with the organization:

This is my bare honest opinion. There is a requirement to be in management that you need to have a degree. But, they don't require a lot of experience to become management. So, you'll have a staff that has 15 years of experience in this field but then you have a manager who graduated from college six years ago. And, no experience in this field. So, it comes off as, "Why am I listening to you? If you've never done what I've done. If you never changed the diaper of a

grown man ... how can you tell me the proper way to change a diaper? If you've never given medication to anybody ... How can you tell me to give medication? (Participant A4)

Participant A4 described how a manager's lack of respect for her work had made her feel:

Let's say we've been doing our monthly reports ... Every month for six months straight and we've been turning them in to the assistant manager. And, then the assistant manager decides for the past six months, "Oh, I'll file them later ... I'll file them later." Now six months later the Senior Manager is like, "Where the past six months of reports?" And the Assistant Manager's like, "Oh, I don't have them." And now you go back to the employees like, "Could you do them again?" Where was your obligation? We did your part. I feel disrespected, because all the work that I put in and then you just brushed it off like it was nothing. And, then you're coming back to me to redo it. I already did it the first time and it was done correctly the first time. (Participant A4)

Participant A9 provided an example of how a mid-level manager's lack of understanding and respect had contributed to employees' desire to quit:

In my previous job, there was a person that would bark orders, watch you sweat. Watch you get injured and would sit there arms crossed and would go back to her office and never break a sweat. Never would get down, but couldn't tell you what to do, was not willing to do it herself, and I had no respect for her because of that. I mean, she made a lot of people want to leave the company, because she was...she had no humanity about her. (Participant A9)

Participant A2 discussed the opposite extreme of manager-employee familiarity, expressing the perception that too much rapport could be detrimental to the relationship:

Stop seeing your management in the light of being a manager, it takes away a lot of the respect. Just in the ways you talk to them day to day. Those types of things they go on and once you begin like speaking to your manager in a way you talk to like a regular person, you unwillingly start doing things that wouldn't be okay. (Participant A2)

Participant A6 pointed out that employees could have trouble respecting supervisors who were younger than they were:

It's so hard because a lot of the times, especially when you first start supervising somebody they're like wow you're so young and it's like avoiding that conversation becomes really hard. Especially when the person is clearly 20 years older than you. (Participant A6)

Participant A1 had left a supervisory role because he disliked being responsible for the unsatisfactory work of subordinates; he described how the level of respect between a manager and an employee could affect management as well as staff:

Why I'm in a more of a direct care position now than I was, instead of a supervisor role like I was...I feel like I've always wanted to be held accountable for my work and my work alone. And to carry somebody, which I feel like there's only been so many instances where I've been partnered up with somebody in dayhab where I'm just like, okay cool. I know that they're gonna match my intensity. I know that they're gonna do what they need to do. I'm gonna do what I need to do and this day's gonna run smooth. There's days [*sic*] that I've walked into and about to work in dayhab, and I was just like, oh my God I can't do that with this person. I'm like I know I'm carrying this whole entire day right now. (Participant A1)

Participant A5 described a happy medium between managerial aloofness and over-familiarity, in which managers were not condescending, and were willing to work with employees: "I don't like when your boss is always showing you or letting you know that they

are the superior. That's basically how it is. Just communication and honesty is the best thing I can say." Participant B6 described how mutual understanding and respect between employees and supervisors could make employees feel comfortable and make the job fun:

I think mutual respect is for here I can say it's okay. I don't know other places. Because I used to work other places. I know some people, they think, like one of the supervisors, 'I'm the supervisor'.. But here it's like ... they make you feel comfortable, comfortable enough not to go like you home and so. But I think to even respect each other, we're ... respect for each other 'you won't tell me this, I won't tell you anything to make you feel uncomfortable.'...I feel comfortable, I can come in the morning and do better with my ... Because once you give me stress, I cannot do well with my individuals. What can I say? Like I'm on the edge all day. But it's like I'm comfortable, I can work and make the day fun. (Participant A6)

Participant A14 was the only respondent who felt that her supervisor's understanding of her duties was irrelevant to how well she performed and how supported she felt. Asked whether her supervisor's understanding of her duties influenced these outcomes, she responded, "Not really. I still do my job [to] the best of my ability." Participant A14 did, however, express the belief that her supervisor was obligated to understand her duties, "Because he's my supervisor and he's the one that actually assigned [the] responsibility to me."

Positive interactions. Participant A6 reported that sharing an office with her boss had allowed them to have more positive interactions, and that these interactions had caused her to feel more supported:

I feel like every since we started to share an office my relationship with her has gotten better because in the middle of that whole thing with the merger [organization A had recently merged with another organization] we sat in meetings together, I knew she was the coordinator

but we didn't have that like the sense of actually knowing each other. Now that we sit together we literally are getting to know each other. Not just on a professional level but you know kind of on a personal level where it's a good relationship balance. So like I know that if I need help with something, maybe I can't make it to something, I can ask her and I'm not scared like oh my god I cannot make it to this meeting. I can openly ask her and she does the same thing with me... It's a little scary sometimes 'Cause I'm like wow I'm putting more work on myself again. No, but it has. The fact that I can feel that comfortable with asking her for help with something and that flexibility like sometimes maybe I'm going to be late 'cause I have kids, she understands. She's not gonna be like no Amy you can't do that. So I feel like it does help to know that that person is gonna give you that support you need. (Participant A6)

Participant A2 also reported that frequent, positive interactions with his supervisor had allowed him to feel more comfortable and confident at work:

I mean for me personally, I had a great relationship with my manager...We worked together, like communicating daily...We was on the same page, talking like pretty much every day. Like this is what I did, this is what I need to get done. We were just up to date on what we were doing from day to day. Without that little communication it probably would have fell [sic] apart...Just being on the same page with my manager was probably the best thing. Let's say if there was, I needed some flexibility in my schedule whether it be school or I have a final coming up, they worked with me. They were able to be like all right, take this day off. You can make it up this day and we go from there. So no matter what the problem was I was always comfortable and felt confident enough to go to my manager and be like this is what's going on, what do I do, where do I go from here. (Participant A2)

Participant A13 described how a long history of positive, respectful interactions had strengthened his relationship with his supervisor over time, and stated that this allowed him to feel "good" and "comfortable":

My supervisor used to be a peer of mine. And that respect remains. I think it remains to a point where he trusts my insight into different things as a former executive director. So the executive director is my supervisor now. So that remains, and even though we have a supervisor-subordinate relationship, I follow his direction, I certainly respect him in front of others. We may have our private disagreements but they're good conversations. Nobody's stupid, nobody's 'you don't know what you're talking about.' There's none of that, it's very respectful give and take...I feel good. I feel comfortable. (Participant A13)

Participant A9 described how his positive interactions with his supervisor allowed him to feel that he could "breathe":

I think it's very friendly in like we have a ... it's not overly formal like, you know. It's a ... we kind of laugh at meetings...If I feel that I'm not gonna be on edge because of a supervisor and I can breathe at a job, and have some flexibility, like say with my shifts coming in at like, if I'm, 'I'm gonna come in a half hour late, I'll stay a half hour late tomorrow? Is that cool?' Like that sort of stuff. Like the flexibility and the respect is very important. And the fact that they're not threatening your job constantly. (Participant A9)

Participant B11 described how frequent, public praise from her supervisor "felt good":

I have a lot of positive experiences with my supervisor. For instance, we were at a large team meeting, several of our large team meetings. He always speaks highly of the behavior department. He always highlights a lot of the things that we are doing and asks that the other

supervisors and the other staff really try to observe what we're doing and follow what we're doing. So that always feels good, and he does that a lot. (Participant B11)

For Participant B19, having frequent access to her supervisors made her "feel good":

Makes me feel good...Just knowing that if I had a question, I'm not being turned away. There is a open door policy with all of the supervisors that I've dealt with here. They always tell me, "Patricia, if you have a question, come see me." I always have questions. I will come to them with an agenda. They love that about me. Because I will come in and say, "This is my agenda." They're like, "Oh, okay. Go ahead. We'll talk about your agenda and then we'll talk about anything else that needs to go." Definitely, I always felt that I can come to them and have that conversation if I had any concerns. (Participant B19)

Participant A8 described how her manager's frequent advice and advocacy had helped her to feel respected:

When I first started here, it just was more welcome and more ... interesting, and they were more loving to the individuals. They didn't just treat them like dogs or cats on the street, so that's why I really respect them. Again, it was my supervisor. She's amazing, even though she needed us...She's fair, and she fights for you, and she makes everybody feel respected. She don't try to disrespect nobody, and if she have something to say, she say it, and she voices her opinion. And, she also tries to teach you what you don't know, help you understand ...

She'll do things that you don't understand ... She's just a good mentor, I would say. (Participant A8)

Frequent interactions could be negative, however, as when being micromanaged made Participant B19 feel that she was not trusted to do her job:

When I felt I was doing a little better with my skills and getting that micromanagement kind of portion, it did kind of make me feel like, "Maybe they don't trust me and maybe they don't think I'm doing a good job." (Participant B19)

Participant A14 described how her unsatisfactory interactions with her supervisor had caused her to feel "cheated":

I like my supervisor to tell me that, "Okay, Sharon, you're doing this right, and you're doing this wrong. You need to ... Let's work on this so we can build your skills better, so we can build whatever better." I'm not getting that. We do our evaluation and evaluation is, "Oh, I did evaluation for you, and I just give everybody a good grade."...I feel cheated! Because what am I learning? Am I learning? You supposed to be teaching me for your job. (Participant A14)

Communication. Twenty-eight participants indicated that better communication between managers and employees would have a positive effect on employees; no participants stated that better communication between supervisors and employees would have a negative or neutral impact on employees. Participant B18 described how good communication between managers and employees could help employees feel more comfortable at work:

The staff should report things to the supervisors better. Then the supervisors should listen. They should listen to the staff better...Maybe a staff may come tell the supervisor, "I'm not comfortable in this room." That's why they're not performing the way that they should, even though they may say, "Well, that's your job description," maybe they're not comfortable in that role. If you put them in a different new room, they may perform better. (Participant B18)

Participant B13 expressed the belief that communication from supervisors should involve leading by example as well as talking:

I think talk to their staff, listening to their staff. Also, demonstrate for their staff. The values that we want to bring to life here at Block, we should be demonstrating those first. If we don't, then ... If we want you to be more respectful or we want you to be more accountable, I need to be more respectful and accountable. I think that relationship with supervisor versus employee is so important. You need to be that role model for them. (Participant B13)

Participant A6 explained how more personal attention and open communication from managers could not only help employees feel more appreciated, but could alleviate their fear during organizational transitions:

I think actually getting to know who each employee is, granted some agencies are huge so I'm not saying everybody's gonna know everybody but at least making the effort to acknowledge the person not just when there's an issue...And I think letting us in on changes is a big one, like with [Organization A] right now there's a whole big thing going on with care coordination and the way it was presented was so scary that everybody was like I'm gonna start applying to other jobs. And it was a very scary time. (Participant A6)

Like Participant A6, Participant B11 spoke in favor of managerial transparency:

I think transparency. Just knowing the why behind. You don't have to necessarily know all the confidential things, but if your supervisor can kind of give you the gift of why you're doing something, I think that would help a lot.

Communication. Huge. Must communicate. Even if you're over-communicating, I think it's better than no communication. Feels really terrible to be the last one to know something, because you don't feel a team if you're always the last to know. Another thing. Trust. I think trust is a big one. I know my supervisor trusts me. (Participant B11)

Managerial openness should be tempered by mindfulness and respect, however, according to Participant A8:

Just try to understand everyone and listen to everyone's thoughts, and things like that, and ... Yeah, just be mindful of how people feel. Because, some supervisors forget that people is human, too. I've seen some of them yell at them like dogs, and ... Like they don't have no respect for them at all, so it's very good for a supervisor to be mindful of how they talk, and react to other coworkers. (Participant A8)

Communication between supervisors and employees could make employees feel cared for when managers were good listeners:

Be a listener and caring, and basically being a human...Being a human, not just like you're a robot, like, "Okay, I can care less." Somebody have their family pass away and all you're asking, "Can you come to work?" Being a human, the person is crying right now. Just be a little sympathetic. If you know the person was sick, "How are you doing today"? Or the person is on vacation, "Oh, how was your vacation? Did you enjoy your vacation? Are you ready to come back to work?" Things like that, you don't have to do it, but because you do it, they feel like, "You know what? Oh, she cares. He cares, so why not bending over for her also?" (Participant A12)

Participant A3, a supervisor, agreed that communicating concern and curiosity about employees could help employees feel valued and comfortable:

Supervisor, like I said, they got to have a conscience. They got to ... You got to take out that five minutes and find out. How are you doing today? How was your weekend? You know, it's good, all right, cool, you good? You sure? That takes two minutes if you do it to every staff around...We do this every morning for the last three years. They're so used to it right now that,

like, staff is having separation anxiety right now. Because I'm getting ready to leave them.

Wednesday will be my last day. So, one of their main fears right now is who ... They're not even scared about who's going to take over. (Participant A3)

In addition to being receptive to communications from employees, supervisors could earn the respect and understanding of employees by being open about their own work:

I think your supervisor, if he explains his job duties to you ... 'cause sometimes you think, "Oh, my supervisor's doing nothing all day." And maybe if you're actually saw like a detailed thing what they do you would understand why they're equally busy, or why they need the things from you the way they need them. (Participant A9)

Participant A9 described how negative or inadequate communications with supervisors had made him want to leave previous employers:

I mean that's been the reason why I've wanted to leave certain organizations where it's just lack of communication, total lack of appreciation, overcritical. You know, total inability to empathize or even care about your job, about what your day is. Or the fact that you are stressed. Some supervisors don't care. (Participant A9)

Open communication from employees to managers was just as important as open manager-to-employee communication. Participant B13 described how employees occasionally got in over their heads because they did not approach their managers soon enough:

What happens is they try to work out their problems and it doesn't work and they just let it sit. We have told them, "If there's a problem that you cannot work out, you need to come to us because we can help." What happens is they sometimes still feel like, "I don't want to come to her with this. This is immature. I should be able to work this out myself." We know, I've seen it, they can't. Sometimes it doesn't, so we ask them to come to us for that help...When I say it's

open door, it's really open door. We preach this to them all the time, "If you see something, say something." If you see an employee doing something with a student that you don't think is right, you need to tell us and a lot of people have gotten better at that. (Participant B13)

Employees might also benefit from initiating communication about supervisory responsibilities, in order to promote respect and understanding between staff and management:

I think sometimes they can try to get information on what their supervisor actually does. Like I said, sometimes it's about them just genuinely caring and saying, "Okay" ... You never know. One day you might be in that position, so it might be good to understand what a person's going through. I think another thing is they always have to communicate with them. If you hold things in, it could bubble over, and it could cause problems that didn't need to be brought up in the first place if you communicate. (Participant B8)

Employees could also benefit by asking questions generally, according to Participant B7: "Ask questions. Ask questions of what your supervisor's doing...Ask questions about like, 'Hey, what's going on?'" Sometimes, however, the curtailment of communication was more beneficial to employees than venting openly would be:

I tell [colleagues], sometimes, "Stop talking!"...Your mouth can get you in a lot of trouble. And, just sometimes you've got to suck it up. This world is not designed for everybody to get upset because this one is mad, or they upset at ... Everybody have their own emotions, so you've got to learn to suck it up and avoid the little stuff. (Participant A8)

Research Question 2

The data related to the second research question has been organized under three broad themes. The first theme, *loyalty*, includes data indicating that trust, honesty, and respect for confidentiality between managers and employees had a positive effect on staff's job

performance. The second theme, *respect*, includes participant responses indicating that mutually respectful relations between managers and employees were associated with effective job performance. Finally, data related to the third theme, *communication*, includes participant responses indicating that employees had to be clear and open about their needs with managers, and managers had to be clear and open about their needs with employees, in order for staff to do their duties effectively.

Loyalty. Participant A14 said, "Loyalty means everything to me as an employee." For Participant A4, loyalty meant keeping small disputes in perspective and not letting them interfere with job performance:

My Manager, yeah. I cannot even lie. I'm loyal to her...Oh, we've butt heads, we've literally had times where we're like, "I'm not talking to her." Like, I'll send somebody else to say something to her that I need done. But, when stuff hits the fan she's shone that she's just ... She's still just as loyal. Because, we can disagree on something stupid. It can be like, "I feed him from the left side ... You feed him from the right side." And it can get heated because everybody cares for the individual. But, loyalty is where something bigger happens like, we could not be talking today, right now in this moment. But, something bigger happens like, somebody falls and actually hurts themselves. And, you come to me and we ... That's loyalty. Like, where we can put this disagreement aside and know that at the end of the day. It's me, you and we got this. (Participant 4)

Participant A2 described how loyalty or trust between supervisors and employees helped employees to feel comfortable at work, and how this feeling of comfort was essential to job performance:

If there's not a trust between both the staff and the supervisor, you're not really going to get much done. You're gonna be on different terms, different levels, and it's just not gonna work. It comes back down to not feeling comfortable at work...So, I mean from personal experience, I've seen where a supervisor and a staff, like they weren't getting along for whatever happened. The manager had feelings toward the staff and vice versa. In the range of getting stuff done, the supervisor lets the staff know what they need to do. The staff has like resentment in doing that task, like they don't even want to do it. Even though they have to do it, they're not gonna do it exactly, or do it bad on purpose. (Participant A2)

For Participant A5, a loyal supervisor was a condition of continued employment, because this allowed him to feel safe:

Without loyalty I probably wouldn't be able to work here, because how can I feel safe?... I know my boss has my back. There's never been a way where I feel like she'll throw me under the bus or she's only looking out for herself. I always felt that she has my back. (Participant A5

Participant A13 explained how his loyalty to his employees earned him their loyalty, and how their loyalty contributed to their job performance:

Loyalty for me is very important in that respect because I like to think that no matter what happens, people who work for me would walk across coals to get something accomplished that we need to accomplish, because they're loyal to me or the organization. I think loyalty on the reverse side, so my loyalty to my employees, if I'm not loyal to them I'm not going to get it back. So that's a reciprocal thing, as is trust. (Participant A13)

Participant A10 said of the effect her staff's loyalty to her had on their job performance, "Anything I ask my staff to do, it never fails, they get it done, anything."

For Participant B16, loyalty meant honoring the confidentiality of private communications, and this contributed to his job performance: "It's a big thing with me. If I tell my supervisor something, I feel that he can keep that to himself, and I feel better like that…It makes me work more." Participant A1 stated that a supervisor's loyalty to her staff could be conditioned on job performance:

When I first became a DSP and I was working at [former employer's name redacted] I felt like my supervisor was very loyal to her staff. Even my supervisor now with [Organization A], she is very driven by staff and she's looking to take on our opinions and it seems like she's loyal to the job and the performance of that job. And I guess in tale that means that there's loyalty to us, because if we're performing, we're doing what we're supposed to be doing, then she's got our back. And I feel like that should be the basis of most relationships in work. If I'm doing my job and I'm making your life easier, and in tale making my life easier, because teamwork makes the dream work and so on. That's the type that does affect me as an employee for sure. Cause I wanna feel like somebody has my back. (Participant A1)

Participant B1 also expressed the perception that loyalty could be conditioned on job performance, and that this conditional loyalty could, in turn, have a positive reciprocal effect on job performance:

I always tell my assistants, if you do the right thing, I'll have your back, but if you do the wrong thing, then don't expect my name on the line, on the line for you. I guess I do the right thing, so I would like to think that [my supervisors] have my back. (Participant B1)

Respect. Participant B13 described the striking difference in employees' job performance when they were in the presence of a superior they respected, as opposed to a superior they did not respect:

In those instances she may, and this happens often in the classroom, where the teacher tries to manage her staff and her staff don't do what she's asking them to do. There is that lack of respect because when we come in, and this happen often here, we do a supervision observation and everything is perfect but the reason why we went in there is because the teacher said, "No one's listening to what I tell them to do. They're not following the schedule. They're not doing this.

They're not doing that." We go in, it's perfect and they say, "Because you're in there. They respect you but they're not respecting me." That teacher is getting frustrated and just feels that lack of respect. She should have more respect than that, just like we do. (Participant B13)

A supervisor's respect for his or her staff also affected job performance, according to Participant A6:

I think respect plays a big role in how people act or how they feel and how they perform because, just as little as knowing somebody's name or acknowledging the fact that you know that this person works for this department makes a huge difference. But when a worker comes in and you have to introduce yourself every time you meet somebody, they're like wow you don't even know what I do. You don't even know how important I might be to your department. So I've seen how that also has played a big decrease in how a lot of workers perform. (Participant A6)

Participant A12 described how a manager's respect for her subordinates could lead to more open communication about obstacles to job performance, and that this communication could, in turn, reduce the employee's resistance to difficult tasks or prevent the manager from forcing the employee inappropriately:

If the manager ask nicely, "I understand," you may not want it or something in that aspect, and ask in a way that you say, "You know what? I'll do it," but if you ask me, "You know

what? I know you are the assistant manager, I need you to do this," I have the choice to say,

"You know what? I don't know how to do it." In that aspect, I feel like since that is disrespectful

— I don't like it — I can choose not to do it. With my staff, I tell them with respect, "Can you do

this?" "Okay, I can do it," or, "No, I cannot do it." "I understand you cannot do it, but can you

tell me why you can't do it?" Then we can logic about it. If it's something, you know what?

Maybe I'll back off on this one, but do something else instead of the one I asked you before.

(Participant A12)

For Participant B10, respect from supervisors was necessary, in order to keep

employees' indignation from interfering with their work:

If I feel the respect in any type of way, let's say it's the tone of voice or how can I say,

or they talk to you like they child, not another professional, like you're a worker, of course

you're not going to have the bag to work all day. You're going to be mad all day, it's going to

affect your job with you and the individuals.

You're not going to have a good day, you're not going to want to be here...it is going to

ruin my whole day. And the next day. And the next day, 'til you get an apology I guess.

(Participant B10)

For Participant A9, a manager's respect for him and his work was an impetus for taking

on extra duties:

With lack of respect, I'll do bare minimum. With respect I might be willing to take on a

volunteer...The worst is when you set aside your time ... you do something for somebody else

and it's completely ignored. Or the fact that you do nine right things and one wrong thing, and

the wrong thing gets criticized and the right things never get mentioned. (Participant A9)

Like Participant A9, Participant B16 equated respect with appreciation and saw her supervisor's respect for her work as a reason to do more than the minimum; she stated that a lack of respect kept her, "Just doing what I have to do, put it that way. I ain't doing no extras, because they don't appreciate what you do."

Participant A13 described respect as necessarily mutual, saying that supervisors and employees needed to reciprocate it for it to be meaningful:

Respect, they all kinda go hand in hand in that way. You give and you get, what you give and you get. So respect, we started teaching something different here. Golden rule, do unto others as you would like to have done unto you. Everybody kind of understands that. We began to teach, do unto others as they want to be treated. Understand them, what's their motivation? What don't they like? And when you treat people the way that they want to be treated, instead of how you want to be treated, you turn things around 180 degrees. (Participant A13)

Participants B4, A8, and A10 were the only respondents who indicated that respect was irrelevant to their job performance. Participant B4 said of the influence of her manager's respect for her on her job performance, "It doesn't matter." Participant A10 stated:

I try not to let [a lack of respect] affect my ability to do my job because my job, is not about the money, it's not about the finances but it's about my heart. It's how I feel about the people I serve and for me, if my stuff is happy, the people am supervising, they're happy, they'll do their job a 100%. (Participant A10)

Participant A8 said of her manager's respect for her, "I really just could care less about ... Because, I will just do what I have to do anyway, so whatever people feel is not worth it...So, she can piss me off, I'm still going to do it." Participant A8 also said, however, that mutual respect in

the form of tolerance for different communication styles was necessary when people needed to work well together:

Respect is a number one issue because people got to understand that everyone comes from all types of backgrounds, and was raised differently. So, certain people don't like working here. When I first came, I didn't understand why certain people talked to me, or come at me this way, and then I had to realize, "Oh, she came from here," or, "They wasn't raised the same way I was raised," so there's pretty much everybody is different in they own way and you got to respect that that person is different and try to understand where they coming from. (Participant A8)

Communication. Participant B10 pointed out that employees cannot do their jobs when their duties are not communicated to them:

What is bad about it is like if something is going on [at Organization B], we don't really get informed the way we're supposed to and it's like we get informed at the last minute. It's like we don't have a communication, when they hold the meetings, [supervisors] know what's coming, they know what's going to happen but we never get information, only at the last minute... then you don't get it done right away, of course it's going to affect whatever the situation is. (Participant B10)

Communication needed to be combined with respect in honest communications, according to Participant A8, who gave the following example of a breakdown of honest communication and the resolution:

The assistant manager told another coworker to get on a run, and another coworker was doing a run, so the supervisor asked, "Who told you to get on the run?" And, the assistant manager never said nothing. The coworker said, "The assistant managers told me to get on the run." And, then it's like "He say, she say," because nobody's telling the truth...It was kind of like

... No communication, and lying, and no respect, all in one. But, it got resolved because there was a big meeting over it, and they worked it out. So now, them coworkers know to confirm things with the supervisor and to tell the truth, and then so on and so on, so there will be no confusion or anybody lying. (Participant A8)

Appreciation for job performance was worthless if it was not communicated, as Participant B17 explained:

If you communicate either way, being constructive or criticizing people constructively, that way you can prove a performance. Absolutely. If you think a person is doing so well, I think communicating and complimenting them will go a long way. It will make them eager to want to do more. If not, then that's stagnant, and they feel like they're not doing as much as expected. If you communicate as often, and even if you're not happy with things, you need to let them know. That way things can be amended. (Participant B17)

Employees needed to communicate with managers, just as managers needed to communicate with employees, in order for the job to get done:

Communication is important because if I don't know what you're thinking, I don't know that you know what I'm asking you to do. Especially with supervising staff, I always tell them, "Communicate with me. Let me know that you're having a hard time with this. Or this children is having a difficulty in the classroom and you need support." But if you're not communicating to me, I'm going to sit in my office and think you're doing okay. (Participant B19)

A review of its archival documents indicated that Organization B used a number of formalized procedures to facilitate communication between managers and employees about matters related to performance, including continuing education/training meetings, verbal disciplinary warnings, written disciplinary warnings, written job descriptions, formal staff

evaluations, and written procedures. Written warnings were given on a form (the "Performance Correction Notice"), which included ample space (seven lines) for responses to each of the following prompts: "Narrative of performance issue"; "Organizational impact" (in which the impact of the performance issue on Organization B as a whole was described), and; "Employee comments and/or rebuttal," in which the employee was given the opportunity to add his or her perspective on the incident to the formal record. Additional information from the supervisor could and in most cases was attached to these forms on a separate sheet.

Written job descriptions were three to four pages in length and provided a high level of detail about performance expectations. Each job description included a brief summary, followed by information under five main headers, beginning with "Job duties and responsibilities," a section which was typically two or more pages in length, and which consisted of a series of items such as "maintain special projects, charts, schedules, database lists, or forms as required," and "Responsible for Program's supply orders, petty cash, cell phone and van key distribution and tracking" (from the Administrative Assistant job description). Each job description also included information under the headers "supervisory responsibilities" (when applicable), "competency" (describing skills and abilities needed for successful job performance), "physical demands," and "work environment."

Staff evaluation forms at Organization B consisted of 26 binary items under six headers, with the available responses keyed as "meets or exceeds standards" and "below standards" (a supervisor could also select "not applicable" if necessary). The six headers or areas for evaluation included "Organization" (a field comprising seven items) and "Relationships" (comprising five items). A space was provided under each header for supervisor comments. Staff

continuing education or training meetings treated topics such as "health and safety" and "communicating with children."

A review of job descriptions from Organization A indicated that job performance expectations were clearly communicated to employees. Job descriptions for all positions were two pages long. Each description began with a summary, which included an overview of responsibilities. The job responsibilities were then presented in greater detail in a bulleted list, which included descriptors such as, "Provide hands-on training to assist individuals to develop skills, partake in chosen activities, and participate in community activities" (from the Day Habilitation Specialist job description). Under the header "Essential Functions," the physical demands of the job were detailed in a bulleted list (e.g. "Sitting: Day Habilitation Specialist may sit 50-60% of the working day"); a description of the work environment was also included. Under the "Qualifications" header, the education and experience requirements for the job were described. The document was concluded with a space for the employee's signature, which indicated acknowledgment and acceptance of the responsibilities and conditions described. Table 3 depicts the frequencies (i.e., number of occurrences across all data sources) of the six identified themes.

The frequency counts depicted in Table 3 suggest that participants perceived the quality and quantity of reciprocal communication between employees and supervisors as having the strongest impact on employees. Data coded under the RQ1: Communication theme typically referred to communications regarding work, while statements concerning

Table 3

Theme Frequencies

Theme	Frequency
Research question 1: Mutual respect and understanding	61
Research question 1: Positive interaction	27
Research question 1: Communication	85
Research question 2: Loyalty	51
Research question 2: Respect	39
Research question 2: Communication	49

communications about personal lives were more often perceived as more general *positive interactions,* a less prominent theme. Mutual respect and understanding, considered as a quality of the supervisor-employee relationship that emerged from but which over time became somewhat independent of individual communications and interactions (as illustrated by, for example, the possibility that two workers could argue without losing their mutual respect) was also an important theme to participants, as indicated by the high frequency of this theme. In relation to the second research question, the most prominent theme was loyalty, by a narrow margin (with "communication" having only two fewer occurrences).

Loyalty, like communication, was perceived by participants to be reciprocal, such that supervisors were expected to be loyal to their employees (e.g. by standing up for them) just as employees were expected to be loyal to their supervisors. The appearance in all six themes of interactional or mutual behaviors or attitudes indicated the importance to participants of supervisors and employees both contributing to effective working relationships and to employees' experiences on the job.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. In order to do this, the researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with 32 employees and supervisors from two nonprofit organizations. The first research question that guided the study was: How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee? Data indicated that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by respect, understanding, positive interactions, and open communication allowed employees to feel comfortable and valued at work. The second research question that guided the study was: How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance? Results indicated that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by mutual loyalty, mutual respect, and clear, reciprocal communication were optimal for promoting job performance. Chapter 5 will proceed with a discussion of the implications of these results, and with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. Direct support employees who perceive their supervisors to be supportive are less likely to report turnover intent and experience burnout, which may adversely affect performance (Carr, 2014; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). The overall success of nonprofit human services organizations depends upon their ability to cultivate high quality performance among their staff members (Carr, 2014; Reed & Henley, 2015), as these organizations must continue to meet high performance standards in the face of funding reductions that adversely impact their resources (Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015). Employees of nonprofit human services agencies feel less satisfied with their jobs when managers treat them with disrespect, disregard their opinions, or treat them as unimportant as a result of their lower ranking (Firmin et al., 2013), which is why this qualitative study explored the relationships of employees with their managers. Individual interviews were conducted with participants and archival documents were reviewed to understand how LMX dimensions influenced employee performance in management and direct support roles.

The first research question guiding this study aimed to explore how the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide support and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affected the employee. The second research question explored how nonprofit organization employees perceived the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance. The interviews were conducted with 34 employees (14 and 20 respectively) of two nonprofit organizations, who filled either direct support or management

roles. The results for the first research question showed that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by respect, understanding, positive interactions, and open communication allowed employees to feel comfortable and valued at work. The results of the second research question showed that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by mutual loyalty, mutual respect, and clear, reciprocal communication were optimal for promoting job performance. The rest of this chapter will discuss the findings in more detail, and with relation to the literature. This chapter will also discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, as well as the implications for practice and end with a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings for Research Question One

The results of this qualitative study yielded significant results for both research questions, which may have a profound impact on future practice. The interviews were found to be insightful, and assisted with the understanding of manager-employee relationships. This section is discussed in light of the available literature, and is done by research question and theme.

Mutual Respect and Understanding

Three main themes emerged related to the first research question. Regarding the *mutual respect and understanding* theme, employees and supervisors almost unanimously believed that manager-employee relationships with this characteristic were beneficial to employees. The positive effects of mutual respect and understanding between employees and supervisors included everyone to feel more satisfied with their jobs, helping staff to cope with personal crises, and preventing employee burnout. Gray and Muramatsu (2013) found that more positive

perceptions of supervisory support were associated with lower intentions to quit. Mutual respect and understanding between supervisors and employees may contribute to the positive perception of supervisory support. Burnout may also lead to turnover intent. The results of the current study thus gave insight to one of the possible components of not only effective leadership, but also insight to the positive perception of supervisors to employees. One participant stated that a lack of understanding and mutual respect between employees and managers could result in staff feeling dissatisfied with the organization.

Adversely, too much rapport was perceived to be possibly detrimental to the relationship, and that close proximity between mid-level managers and staff may result in unhappy managers transmitting their distress to their subordinates. Similarly, Lian et al. (2012) suggested that high LMX could be harmful to employees when it was coupled with transactional leadership, particularly for employees who suffered from the vulnerability associated with emotional exhaustion. So, according to the researchers, high levels of communication between supervisor and employee may lead to emotional exhaustion, depending on the form of leadership. As such, these results are somewhat in agreement with the results of the current study. One participant also noted that employees may find it challenging to respect supervisors who were younger than they were.

Positive Interactions

Regarding the second theme for the first research question, participants expressed that *positive interactions* between employees and supervisors were beneficial to employees. Benefits for employees included that employees felt more supported, more comfortable and confident at work, and "good". Liu et al. (2013) also stated that employees with high LMX relationships with their supervisors were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction compared with

participants with low LMX relationships with their supervisors. All of the benefits listed for positive interactions may lead to greater job satisfaction. Frequent, public praise from a supervisor was also explained as feeling good. Adversely, frequent interactions could be negative, as it may be perceived as being micromanaged, and result in an employee to feel that they are not trusted to do their job. Researchers also found similar results, postulating that employees' perceptions of the quality of relationships with supervisors predicted effectiveness more strongly than leader behaviors alone (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Unnu & Kesken, 2014). Ensuring the perceptions of the employees are positive may be a more difficult task than just being an effective leader, as perceptions are related to each individual's previous experiences, which cannot be controlled.

Communication

Finally, regarding the third theme of the first research question, *communication*, participants believed that open communication from employees to managers and from managers to employees was good for employees. Communication as a theme is also the third theme for the second research question, and 28 participants indicated the benefits and importance of better communication between managers and employees, where no participants stated better communication to have a negative or neutral effect on employees. Communication is thus regarded as a very important aspect in the workplace.

The benefits of good communication resulting in managerial transparency included that employees were feeling more comfortable at work, were feeling more appreciated, and were feeling less anxious during organizational transitions. Wang et al. (2014) found that authentic leadership was positively related to performance, while Kozak et al. (2013) found that burnout was significantly and positively predicted by job insecurity, amongst others. Authentic

leadership and leader transparency could thus affect employee turnover. These results were in agreement with the current study. It was also stated that communication from supervisors should involve leading by example.

One participant also stated that the adverse effect of negative or inadequate communications with supervisors was intention to leave. Carr (2014) found that direct support workers were strongly motivated by relationships, and that the promotion of quality relationships between staff and clients by management was key to retention of these employees. Even though this study was related to employee-client relationships, it does show the importance of a good relationship. This study thus expanded the literature, by showing that inadequate communication, and thus a lack of relationship, may increase an employee's intention to leave. Employees also occasionally got in over their heads because they did not approach their managers soon enough. Liu et al. (2013) found that participants who reported low LMX relationships with their supervisors were more likely to report engaging in unethical behavior in the workplace. The results of the current study may be in agreement with these researchers, providing that "getting in over their heads" involved unethical behavior.

Interpretation of the Findings for Research Question Two

Loyalty

There were also three major themes for the second research question. The first theme, *loyalty*, included data indicating that trust, honesty, and respect for confidentiality between managers and employees had a positive effect on staff's job performance.

Another participant mentioned that loyalty meant to keep small disputes in perspective and not to let it interfere with job performance. The benefits of being a loyal supervisor towards

employees included continued employment, employees feeling safe, earning employees' loyalty, and increased job performance. In agreement, Rowold et al. (2014) stated that leadership effectiveness was indicated through job performance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment.

Respect

The second theme, *respect*, included participant responses indicating that mutually respectful relations between managers and employees were associated with effective job performance. The benefits of a supervisor's respect towards employees included increased job performance, more open communication, a reduction in employees' resistance to take on difficult tasks, and increased willingness of employees to take on extra duties. One participant noted the significant difference of employees' job performance when in the presence of a superior they respected, as opposed to a superior they did not respect. Martin et al. (2016) also postulated the strong, positive association between LMX and performance. Only three participants stated that they and their job performance was not affected by mutual respect, which may indicate excellent work ethics from them, being focused on their performance, not being affected by external influences. These participants may also still be focused during a personal or company related crises, as they appear to be less emotionally inclined and ego-driven.

Communication

Data related to the third theme, *communication*, included participant responses indicating that employees had to be clear and open about their needs with managers, and managers had to be clear and open about their needs with employees, in order for staff to do their duties effectively. Kozak et al. (2013) found that feedback at work was a psychosocial

factor that negatively predicted burnout, suggesting that consistent communication with supervisors decreased employees' risk of burning out. As mentioned previously, communication was identified in both research questions, and its importance is further echoed in the literature. Participants indicated that communication should be combined with respect, and that appreciation for job performance was worthless if it was not communicated. Employees are unable to do their jobs if their duties are not communicated to them thoroughly.

Archival Documents: Organization A

For Organization A, job performance expectations were clearly communicated to employees. The physical demands of the job and a description of the working environment was included on the comprehensive, two-page job description. The document concluded with a space for the employee's signature, indicating acknowledgment and acceptance of the responsibilities and conditions described by the employee.

Archival Documents: Organization B

Organization B used a number of formalized procedures to facilitate communication between managers and employees about matters related to performance, including continuing education/training meetings, verbal disciplinary warnings, written disciplinary warnings, written job descriptions, formal staff evaluations, and written procedures, which also indicated clear communication with employees. Reed and Henley (2015) found that about half of participants received pre-service training, and that 71% of participants were offered ongoing training and development through their employers.

Only Organization B was providing ongoing training, while pre-service training did not form part of this study's exploration. Written warnings included space for responses on several factors, as well as the perspectives of different parties.

Job descriptions were extensive and comprehensive, including information on supervisory responsibilities, competency, physical demands, and the work environment. Kim et al. (2013) found that managerial coaching behavior directly influenced employee role clarity and satisfaction with work, and that role clarity and satisfaction with work were significantly and positively associated with performance. With regards to the results of the second research question's third theme, communication, which explicitly stated the importance of communicating task and expectations to employees, the comprehensive job descriptions of Organization A and B, and the study results of Kim et al., it seems that all is aligned and in agreement. In contradiction, Martin et al. (2016) found that role clarity did not mediate the relationship between task performance and citizenship performance. Choy et al. (2016) also adversely stated that delegation and role ambiguity might both be seen as providing the employee with discretion and empowerment. This misalignment may be as a result of the type of organization, the industry of the organization, or the hierarchical level of the employee within the company. Staff evaluation forms consisted of 26 binary items under six headers, with the available responses keyed as "meets or exceeds standards" and "below standards", with space for supervisor comments.

Theoretical Framework

The LMX theory of leadership served as the theoretical foundation and framework for this study. LMX quality describes the unique relationship between one leader and one follower (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Pellegrini, 2015; Rowold et al., 2014). A qualitative approach

allowed for the exploration of the supervisor-employee relationship of each participant, yet themes emerged throughout the sample. This may indicate that supervisor-employee relationships may not each be as unique as expected.

Furthermore, several studies measuring LMX found similar results as the current study, and for that reason the theoretical framework was found to be appropriate. Employees' perceptions of the quality of relationships with supervisors predicted effectiveness more strongly than leader behaviors alone (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Unnu & Kesken, 2014). Rowold et al. (2014) found that LMX was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction, followed by transformational leadership.

Limitations of the Study

The first expected limitation of this study was its small sample size and limited recruitment pool. Yet, the data yielded significant results with possible implications. Based on recommendations from qualitative research experts, it was anticipated that 20 participants from two organizations would be sufficient to achieve data saturation; however, with the 34 participants of this study, it could still not be assumed that the findings would be generalizable to the entire population of similar employees in the United States. Thirty-two participants were interviewed for this study, and six definite themes emerged. The similarity of the interview answers from the participants was promising and could indicate similar result for other nonprofit human services within the United States. The sample size was thus not found to be a significant limitation.

The second predicted limitation of this study was associated with its qualitative design, which did not allow for analysis of statistical relationships between variables. A quantitative study would permit the researcher to examine correlational or causal relationships

between LMX relationship quality and employee job performance. The benefits of a qualitative design for this study's particular research questions provided insightful results, adding to and expanding the literature. Even though qualitative analysis cannot measure relationships, it does provide for enriched information, giving greater understanding of a subject. This limitation was also not found to be a significant limitation.

The third predicted limitation was possible bias arising from the researcher's relationship to the phenomenon of interest. The researcher was the acting CEO of a nonprofit organization at the time of data collection, and because of this experience may have had beliefs or expectations about the effects of employee-supervisor relationships on employee performance in such organizations. The researcher did not recruit participants from his own organization.

The researcher also acknowledged and bracketed his own personal biases related to the research questions when conducting interviews and data analysis, in an attempt to avoid biased data collection or interpretation of findings (Merriam, 2009). After the analysis of the data, it may be assumed that bias was not such a significant factor. Bias is often a challenge, and even after taking all possible preventative measures, there may still have been a small, yet hopefully insignificant, effect of bias.

The fourth possible limitation, which emerged during analysis, was the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews guide a discussion, and may thus not reach data saturation in the similar way as open-ended interviews. The researcher thus extracted all the relevant info for this study, and may have missed some information that was not touched on during the discussion. Because the researcher extracted all relevant information, this limitation was also not significant. Firmin et al. (2013) suggested that qualitative methods, and particularly

semi-structured interviews, can serve as a useful complement to the quantitative methods that have been so frequently employed in studies of leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first suggestion for future research is to utilize a qualitative case study design to explore the differences between LMX in non-profit orientated and profit orientated organizations. Because this study only included participants from non-profit organizations, it would be interesting to explore the possible similarities and differences between a non- profit organization and a profit orientated organization. Results of such a study will add to the available literature, and provide more generalizable results.

The second recommendation for future research is to utilize a quantitative intervention study to improve LMX levels in different departments of a nonprofit organization in need. The results of this current study can be used to develop a training program for employees and supervisors. LMX levels should be measured before, and again after training and implementation of the training program and the skills learned. Such a study could provide significant data regarding skills that are successfully teachable, and which skills cannot be taught.

The third recommendation for future research would be to conduct a correlational study to investigate the significance of the relationships between the six themes identified and turnover intent and burnout. Conducting a quantitative study will result in the possibility of a much larger sample, and may provide statistically significant results. The results of this proposed correlational study could provide insight to the most significant and least significant contributor to turnover intent and burnout.

The fourth recommendation is similar to the second recommendation. Future research could conduct an experimental study with an intervention component, utilizing the triangulation

of data from observations, interviews, and surveys. Such a mixed methods approach could be focused on top-level management or supervisors, guiding them to explore different leadership techniques and different ways of communication, while observing the reactions of employees. The participants can be interviewed to explore their experiences of these different approaches. Surveys can be used to measure job satisfaction and performance of employees after each experiment. Such a study would add to the literature immensely on several levels, and would clear up many contradictions.

Recommendations for Practice

One recommendation for practice would be to use the findings from this study, the six themes that emerged, to develop a leadership training program, which can assist all managers and supervisors in improving their relationships with their subordinates. By focusing new, or already employed managers and supervisors on the important aspects of their relationships with their followers, they will gain insight on where the may have been lacking. It may also be that they have recognized challenges, but did not know how to resolve them, and such a program could assist them in solving these problems.

A second recommendation for practice would be to use the findings from this study regarding the six themes and the archival data from the documentation of the organizations to adjust the current documentation and policies in use. However, it may be necessary to employ an objective party to assist with this, as employers and employees who constantly work with the documentation and policies of an organization may cease to see its shortcomings. The restructuring of policies and expectations may result in resistance from employees, and the implementation and reasoning behind changes should be explained thoroughly and properly. Furthermore, following the implementation of new policies, employers and managers/supervisors

will have to make sure that the new structuring is being followed, and should have routine checkpoints in place, as well as repercussions for not adhering to the new policies.

Implications

Six definite themes emerged from this study, which yielded several possible implications. The findings of this study improved the understanding of how employee-supervisor relationships influence job performance. Supervisors or managers may thus find this study to be helpful, as through improving their approach, they may create a more productive and positive climate at work. This study would be more helpful to supervisors as opposed to employees as employees are in a reactive position much more than a driving position. Supervisors examining this study may realize where they may be going wrong, or find confirmation of where they are going right. A more positive working environment will lead to higher job performance and thus a proper and sufficient use of resources. Higher job performance will assist a non-profit organization to reach their goals timeously, and may have a positive effect on the environment they serve as a result.

The results of this study may be helpful to policymakers (organizers of non-profit organizations) in shaping policy and practice related to supervisor training in ways that would ultimately improve the performance of employees of nonprofit human services organizations. The results of this study can be applied to create pre-employment training, as well as ongoing training within the organization. Implementation of such training will have significant positive effects within an organization, and as stated previously, may lead to positive changes in the environment they serve, as they would be able to reach the organizational goals more timeously. Improving the performance of employees may enhance the quality of service provided to clients with disabilities, reduce turnover, and improve their organizations' financial management (Carr, 2014; Eschenfelder, 2010; Reed & Henley, 2015).

Top management and policy makers could also use the results of this study to evaluate the state of their own organization, and implement certain policies for their supervisors and employees to adhere to. The first aspect to improve may be the current documents being used. Evaluating the state of the standard documentation should not be a difficult task, and would already provide insight to the communication in the organization. Improving the documents may already have a significant positive effect on the working environment. Next, policy makers can observe their supervisors, and determine if they incorporate the characteristics revealed through the six themes of this study in their relationships with other employees. Supervisors could then receive feedback, and suggestions for implementation. After some time the policy makers could observe again and make changes as necessary until job performance and working climate is satisfactory.

An organized working environment, where managers and employees know what is expected of them, is often the most productive. Communication and structured leadership within an organization is of utmost importance. The results of this study implied that communication and trust is a vital part of a successful working relationship, and the state of working relationship has an effect on productivity. Miscommunications may lead to misunderstandings resulting in wasted time. The leaders of non-profit organizations should therefore implement structured communication channels that all employees should adhere to. Channels could include weekly meetings for management, weekly meetings for management and their teams and emails. It should be stated that all official communication should be conducted through email, and sent to all relevant personnel including the manager of that department. Procedures should facilitate communication in a way that managers and employees are sure that a task is understood properly. For example, all employees should be requested to reply to emails, and the sender

should follow up with receivers to make sure that they received and understood the email. Such a policy may sound excessive, yet it may save a lot of time in the long run as employees will be aware of what is expected of them and when. Managers should be prepared for meetings and save time by conducting the meeting in a focused way. Challenges with employees should be discussed in private, which will facilitate trust and build stronger relationships, and will also avoid wasted time of other employees.

The results of this study also yielded several possibilities for future research, utilizing the results of this study to create surveys, experimental approaches as well as intervention training programs. The results of this study also added to the literature in several ways, as well as provided confirmation of some concepts in the literature. This study also provided the first application of the LMX model in a qualitative study, which expanded the literature in its own right.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore nonprofit human services employees' perspectives on how the quality of their relationships with their supervisors affected their job performance. The literature indicated that direct support employees who perceive their supervisors to be supportive are less likely to report turnover intent and experience burnout, which may adversely affect performance (Carr, 2014; Gray & Muramatsu, 2013). The first research question guiding this study aimed to explore how the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affected the employee. The results for the first research question showed that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by respect, understanding, positive interactions, and open communication allowed employees to feel

comfortable and valued at work. The second research question explored how nonprofit organization employees perceived the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance. The results of the second research question showed that manager-employee relationships that were characterized by mutual loyalty, mutual respect, and clear, reciprocal communication were optimal for promoting job performance. Furthermore, six distinct themes emerged from the data: mutual respect and understanding, positive interactions, communication, loyalty, respect, and again communication (for both RQ's). Limitations included concerns of sample size, study design, bias and the choice of interview structure, and how these limitations influenced the study.

Recommendations for future research included utilizing a qualitative case study design to explore the differences between LMX in non-profit orientated and profit orientated organizations and to utilizing a quantitative intervention study to improve LMX levels in different departments of a non-profit organization in need, amongst others. The findings of this study improved the understanding of how employee-supervisor relationships influence job performance. The study yielded several implications including that supervisors or managers may use this study to improve their approach, which may create a more productive and positive climate at work. Policymakers (organizers of non-profit organizations) could use this study in shaping policy and practice related to supervisor training in ways that would ultimately improve performance of employees of nonprofit human services organizations. The results of this study also added to the literature in several ways, as well as provided confirmation of some concepts in the literature. This study also provided the first application of the LMX model in a qualitative study, which expanded the literature in its own right. This discussion in Chapter 5 concludes the study.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introductory discussion: To open the interview, ask participants to explain the type of position they hold in the organization, briefly describe their job duties, and state how long they have been employed in this position.

Research question 1: How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee?

-Sub-question: How does the affective or emotional tone of the employee-supervisor relationship affect the employee?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of loyalty in the relationship affect the employee?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of mutual obligation in the relationship affect the employee?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of professional respect in the relationship affect the employee?

Research question 2: How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance?

-Sub-question: How does the affective or emotional tone of the employee-supervisor relationship affect the employee's job performance?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of loyalty in the relationship affect the employee's job performance?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of mutual obligation in the relationship affect the employee's job performance?

-Sub-question: How does the presence or absence of professional respect in the relationship affect the employee's job performance?

Appendix B: Archival Document Review Protocol

For each participant included in this study, ask the primary recruitment contacts if they can provide documentation that is relevant to that employee's relationship with his/her supervisor. Each document will be reviewed in accordance with the following guidelines:

Research question 1: How does the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employees who provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities in a nonprofit organization affect the employee?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the affective or emotional tone of the employee-supervisor relationship on the employee?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of loyalty in the relationship on the employee?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of mutual obligation in the relationship on the employee?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of professional respect in the relationship on the employee?

Research question 2: How do nonprofit organization employees perceive the quality of the professional relationship between leader/supervisor and employee as affecting the employees' job performance?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the affective or emotional tone of the employee-supervisor relationship on the employee's performance?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of loyalty in the relationship on the employee's performance?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of mutual obligation in the relationship on the employee's performance?

-Sub-question: What does this document indicate about the effect of the presence or absence of professional respect in the relationship on the employee's performance?