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## **An Exploration Using Narrative Analysis of How Employers and College Student Interns View and Explain the Development of the Career Readiness Competency, Leadership**

Troy Dean Nunamaker

*Clemson University*, [tnunama@clermson.edu](mailto:tnunama@clermson.edu)

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AN EXPLORATION USING NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF HOW EMPLOYERS AND  
COLLEGE STUDENT INTERNS VIEW AND EXPLAIN THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE CAREER READINESS COMPETENCY, LEADERSHIP

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Educational Leadership - Higher Education

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by  
Troy Dean Nunamaker  
May 2020

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Tony Cawthon, Committee Chair  
Dr. Rachel Wagner  
Dr. Matthew Boyer  
Dr. Michelle Boettcher

## ABSTRACT

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), career readiness “has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, workforce development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today’s graduates” (2016, p. 1). Students rate themselves high for each of the career competencies and believe they are ready for the workforce. Employers disagree and state that students need more competency development during college. Exploring the misconceptions and miscommunications about the leadership competency could be a first step in closing the gap for all of the career readiness competencies.

By determining what leadership type best aligns with internship experiences from a college student’s perspective and an employer’s perspective could help in developing more productive and intentional learning opportunities. In this study, I compare the transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership types as they relate to the internship experience. I find that students frequently describe leadership experiences using language aligning with transactional and transformational leadership, while mentors use language that does not align with any of the leadership types chosen. As Strong et al. (2013) point out in their encouragement for more leadership-oriented research, “faculty would gain a better understanding of their students and may better understand the leadership experience” (p. 182). As next steps, further research should be completed to see if other leadership types better align with the mentor comments.

*Keywords: career readiness, career competencies, internships, experiential education, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership*

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation achievement to my parents, Joe and Melody Nunamaker. These two created a loving and supportive environment to grow up in and set my sister and me on a path to explore the world. Having a family unit that valued a strong work ethic and experiential education opportunities like travel and “playing outside” molded me into the person I am today. Privilege comes in many forms. And through their guiding hands, I consider it a privilege to have learned the importance of setting goals, staying humble, and enjoying the here-and-now. Not a day goes by that I do not hear the childhood echoes of my parents and grandparents asserting “can’t never did nothing” and “only boring people get bored.”

I also dedicate this achievement to my incredibly intelligent wife, Dr. Susan Nunamaker. Susan was the first Nunamaker to achieve a doctorate, and she helped blaze the path for me. Her perseverance in all aspects of her life has been an inspiration, and I am thankful she chose me as a life partner. She has been a motivator, a sounding board, and an editor. Most of all, she has been the Louis to my Clark. Her response to the first time I asked her out was, “I don’t know. What would we do?” The answer to that question has led us on countless life adventures.

Lastly, I need to thank my sister, Tracie, and the entire Ridgeway family. Removing pins from my travel map and referring to me as Tony Nutcracker helped remind me that humility and a good sense of humor are necessary to survive the dissertation process. I look forward to our next family journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Neil Burton who became an advocate for me during the application process and graciously allowed me to use Center for Career and Professional Development historical records and resources during the data collection process. I am very fortunate to have him as a supervisor, and each campus I visit while away from Clemson reminds me of that more and more. Another career services person I need to acknowledge is Mr. Aaron James. Mr. James took an early interest in my career readiness work and acted as a great sounding board. We have had some great conversations along the way, and I look forward to seeing where his scholarly studies take him professionally.

I would also be amiss if I did not recognize Dr. Michelle Boettcher, Dr. Matthew Boyer, and Dr. Rachel Wagner for serving on my dissertation committee and for all of their patience during my learning process in and out of the classroom. I am a better writer and scholar because of each of them. Lastly, my sincerest gratitude goes to my dissertation chair, Dr. Tony Cawthon. Without Dr. Cawthon as a champion, advisor, and friend, I would have stalled out years ago. He may not remember it, but he saved my academic career long before the idea of a doctoral journey crossed my frontal lobe. Over 20 years ago, Dr. Cawthon personally walked a student application to the master's program over to the graduate school. He did not even know the student, but he must have believed in that student. I can thank him now for making that walk and starting me down the path to meet my wife and life partner, launch a career in higher education, and complete this doctorate.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of Problem**

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2016), career readiness “has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, workforce development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today’s graduates” (p. 1). A 2019 National Skills Gap Survey administered by Addeco (2019) confirmed that more young professionals are unsuccessful in the workplace because of soft skills proficiency issues than hard skills proficiency issues.

Prior to NACE’s above statement on career readiness, the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) released a college student employability report maintaining that attributes and personality traits known as soft skills, including leadership, communication, and teamwork, were perhaps more important for recent college grads than hard skills (Archer & Davison, 2008, p. 6). Jackson (2010) framed the importance of these soft skills succinctly in asserting, “never has the focus on the current state and future of skills been greater” (p. 29). According to NACE, the understanding, attainment, and proficient demonstration of these skills are an integral part of the successful transition into the workforce, but there remains a gap in how students and employers rate proficiency levels.

Evidence in college graduate, entry-level job skills studies by researchers such as Cappel (2002), Richards, Yellen, Kappelman, and Guynes (1998), Young and Lee

(1996), and Van Slyke (1998) supported the claim that soft skills are often desired by employers more than hard skills. Cappel's work unpacked this assertion by further exploring the gap between how much employers desire skills compared to the actual performance employers witnessed in new hires. In discussing employers' needs and observed performance outcomes, Cappel (2002) said, "Overall, employers rated non-technical skills even higher than technical skills, and the gaps between 'expected' and 'actual' performance tended to be greatest for non-technical skills" (p. 81).

NACE (2016) released a career-readiness follow-up report recognizing seven "soft skills" that employers are currently seeking in college students. These soft skills were identified as, "the qualities that employers are looking for beyond the specific qualifications of the job" (p. 1). Used synonymously with the word competencies, these soft skills are: (a) *critical thinking/problem solving*, (b) *oral/written communication*, (c) *teamwork/collaboration*, (d) *information technology application*, (e) *leadership*, (f) *professionalism/work ethic*, and (g) *career management*. An eighth competency of *global/intercultural fluency* was added shortly after.

NACE is not the only example of an organization addressing America's high need for identifying and cultivating soft skills in new hires. Recognizing that different size companies have varying types of needs, the CIHE identified a similar list of desirable competencies prior to NACE's 2016 rollout of eight competencies (Archer & Davison, 2008). Both organizations moved away from the term *skills* and towards the term *competencies* during the same timeframe. Both organizations included the proficiency levels of *understanding*, *attainment*, and *demonstration* as part of their competency

framework. CIHE's list only differed by adding the skills *character* and *confidence*.

Outside the United States, Andrews and Higson identified a similar trend in their 2010 European study. Global employers stated they struggled more with recruiting recent college grads possessing soft skills over recruiting college grads possessing hard skills. As reflected in the global writings of Cappel (2002), Richards, Yellen, Kappelman, and Guynes (1998), Young and Lee (1996), and Van Slyke (1998), these career competencies conversations included proficiency gaps and were not centralized to the United States.

Research commissioned by the United Kingdom's Edge Foundation, a charity dedicated to improving education in the UK, uncovered a similar consensus of the needs for attributes, characteristics, and skills on a global scale (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). The organization argued, "that specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes" (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011, p. 17).

Moving the terminology from soft skills to competencies helps framework career readiness, but agency reports, media, and scholarly writings continue identifying proficiency rating gaps between employers and recent college graduates. I intend to investigate how students and employers explain and view career readiness by studying the language they use to describe NACE's eight competencies. Specifically, I focus on students' and employers' descriptions of leadership development and the aptitude levels accompanying that competency. Moreover, by better understanding the similarities and difference associated with one competency gap, a model can be established to further explore how students and employers view the other competencies.

## Competencies

NACE (2016) identified eight career readiness skills. Those eight skills are classified as competencies and defined as:

- \* *Critical Thinking/Problem Solving:* Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.
- \* *Oral/Written Communications:* Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.
- \* *Teamwork/Collaboration:* Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure and can negotiate and manage conflict.
- \* *Digital Technology:* Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. The individual demonstrates effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies.
- \* *Leadership:* Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to

assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

- \* *Professionalism/Work Ethic*: Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.
- \* *Career Management*: Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is able to navigate and explore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.
- \* *Global/Intercultural Fluency*: Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences. (p. 1)

Employers need direction, vision, and innovation from future leaders to help the companies stay competitive in a global market. Strong, Wynn, Irby, and Lindner (2013) stated that employers seek college students that can leverage these competencies to grow with the company and help lead the organization into the next decade (p. 175). Following

the notion that a competency like leadership can be taught and learned in an academic environment led to what Strong et al. (2013) referred to as, “the proliferation of varied leadership education programs in American colleges and universities” (p. 174).

Strong et al. (2013) reported that professionals and business leaders are being asked to address new types of problems in the economy never experienced before and to keep up with ever-shifting demographics. As Generation Z (born from 1995-2015) enters the workforce and the Boomer Generation (born from 1946-1964) exits the workforce (Tanner, 2019), colleges are being asked to prepare professionals and business leaders that can address current problems and future demands.

### **Scholarly Work Substantiating the Problem**

Cappel (2002) conducted a mixed methods study on employers’ *expected* versus *actual* skills and discovered a statistically significant difference of more than .50 between employers’ for all of the career readiness competencies (p. 80). For example, with a  $p \leq .001$ , employers’ difference from *expected* to *actual* for the competency, leadership was 0.59. While examining the open-ended responses from the 27 employers that completed the survey, Cappel made an additional qualitative observation about the study. Cappel’s (2002) survey question asked of employers, “If I were to offer [students] a word of advice on preparing for their future career . . .” (p. 80). To which Cappel (2002) noted, “Interestingly, all participants wrote a response to this question, which is an unusually high rate of response for an open-ended survey item” (p. 80). With a 25.9% response rate, the number one written response was the employer suggestion to gain experience through work activities like co-ops and internships. Leveraging this statement, I use internship

experiences as the academic environment for my study.

One theory that could be used to explain the crossroads between college student competency *performance* and competency *need* is basic contingency theory. In short, employers', students', and society's perception of career readiness is solely contingent on the magnitude and external influences of the situation (Boyatzis, 2008). The actual proficiency level of the competency becomes a peripheral conversation. As Boyatzis (2008) pointed out, "maximum performance is believed to occur when the person's capability or talent is consistent with the needs of the job demands and organizational environment" (p. 6), but this does not explain away the bigger issue. As Bessen (2014) pointed out, 39% of employers in the U.S. "reported difficulty filling jobs due to lack of available talent" (p. 1).

Even with the agreed upon career competencies listed in the first part of this chapter, Nunamaker, Walker, and Burton (2017) revealed a long-lasting potential communication gap that exists between employers and college students. For centuries, seasoned professionals have been complaining about the career readiness of the younger generation entering the workforce. Castellon (2019) stated, "92% of business leaders don't think American workers are as skilled as they need to be" (p. 2). Of those leaders, 44% stated that competencies were their top concern. Even Socrates voiced concern over the youth's competence and emotional intelligence when speaking about his apprentice, Plato. Nunamaker et al. (2017) pointed out,

Each new generation that enters the workforce is believed to be less qualified and less motivated than the previous. However, even though business leaders,



supervisors, educators, and politicians hold a bleak view of how well-prepared college students are for entering the workplace, the [college students] themselves are very optimistic in their abilities to join the workforce and bring the desired employment skills with them. (p. 30)

With this in mind, college students' career readiness becomes central to the communication gap. To compound this gap issue, Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2013) reported that employers are seeing as many as five generations in the workforce now. With each generation comes unique values, work ethic, and preferred management and communication styles.

Alternately, as Peck (2017) stated, "...very few [students] indicate that they are not gaining these skills in college" (p. 63). Moreover, Crebert et al. (2007) completed a four-stage project supporting the argument that college students think they are ready to enter the workforce. Through surveys and focus groups, they found that recent graduates felt their higher education institution contributed to their competency development and readiness to enter the workforce. Students specifically cite experiential education opportunities as one academic practice effectively preparing them for the world of work. Again, we see an opinion-based gap in employability here. The issue...employers and students are "comparing and rating skills based on their own interpretation of the assigned skill term" (Jackson, 2010, p. 52).

I investigated how students and employers view and explain career readiness by studying the language they use to describe NACE's eight competencies. Specifically, I focused on students' and employers' descriptions of leadership development and the

various proficiency levels accompanying that competency. State previously, by better understanding the similarities and difference associated with one competency gap, a model can be established to further explore how students and employers view the other competencies. Now that a competency framework has been established by NACE and other organizations, my work helps contribute to the knowledge that reduces those competency gaps. Improved curriculum, communication, and transparency can be put into place by higher education administrators, policy makers and employers once there is a better understanding of how employers and students view and explain the career readiness.

### **Problem Statement**

A likely first step in responding to the soft skills gap is defining career readiness, but “the data clearly depicts a large variation in assigned definitions” for career readiness competencies (Jackson, 2010, p. 52). As mentioned, some higher education institutions and career centers have begun developing complete curriculums and programs around these NACE competencies to improve their student career readiness (Peck et al., 2016). Mason, Williams, and Cranmer (2009) found that, “structured work experience and employer involvement in degree course design and delivery have clear positive effects on the ability of graduates to secure employment” (p. 1), but Mason et al., acknowledged in the same study that those experiential education teaching efforts had no significant impact on labor market performance. This discrepancy creates questions about high impact practices like experiential education that I address later in this text.

A number of universities and colleges have developed programs related to

competency development. Stephen F. Austin State University (SFAU) implemented the Certified Student Leader program in efforts to assist students with developing their own version of NACE's competencies and to provide employers a guarantee that SFAU graduates developed the necessary competencies before entering the workforce (Folsom & Green, 2018). Similar to SFAU's programmatic work, administrators at other institutions have also worked toward competency integration into curricular and co-curricular activities. The University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the University of Florida Campus Recreation Department are working to provide competency development and career readiness guidance throughout their students' college years via structured activities like: mock 'elevator pitches', inventories that help to enhance competency awareness, program-wide professional development events and occurrences, and assigned mentor-mentee relationships (Kellison & James, 2011). These activities require significant staff and financial resource investments by the host institutions; all in an effort to close the career readiness gap.

This connection of mentors with mentees for the benefit of competency development has grown beyond student activities and into the realm of student employment (Peck et al., 2016). The University of Iowa implemented the "Iowa Grow" program whereby on-campus student-workers sit down twice a semester with their supervisors to engage in a structured conversation about linking classroom with work setting knowledge. Surveys and focus groups are also part of the experience for the University of Iowa students. These activities were implemented to encourage competency development, professional growth, and reflection. Stephen F. Austin State University, the

University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the University of Florida, and the University of Iowa, are just a few institutions that have developed curriculums and programs around to improve student career readiness.

### **Competencies and Co-curricular Experiences**

As Peck, Hall, Cramp, Lawhead, Fehring, and Simpson, (2016) stated, there are a number of individual researchers and professional associations (i.e., National Association for Campus Activities and the National Association of Colleges and Employers) that identify co-curricular experiences as one of the most transformative educational experiences available. The process of how the eight competencies are influenced by engagement in clubs and activities, intramural sports, student worker programs, living-learning communities, and many other co-curricular activities continue to be explored as *high impact practices*. The meta-analysis study by Peck et al. (2016) investigated several papers by Tinto (2012), Kamenetz (2015), Drucker (2014), Conner and Fringer (2015), Hullinger (2015), and Hanson (2015) supporting, “the conclusion that co-curricular activities contribute considerably to students’ development of soft skills” (p. 3).

However, Jackson (2010) countered by stating “without clarifying skills definitions, survey findings hold far less value than initially perceived. If all participants are ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’, we will be able to draw valid and reliable conclusions” (p. 52). Again, we see Peck et al., and Jackson identify competency definitions and interpretations as an issue for the career readiness gap.

Peck et al. (2016) wrote extensively about the critical role experiential education plays in the formula for gap reduction. In short, “experiential learning focuses on the

development of the whole student” (p. 1). Internships have been one such experiential learning activity that gained national attention in the media during the twenty-first century for a variety of reasons outside the realm of soft skills. A quick internet search reveals a plethora of scholarly writings and media coverage addressing the concerns over unstructured academic internship experiences (Bugeja, 2018), the legality and ethical concerns of unpaid internships (Fifield, 2018), and the socioeconomic inequities experienced by students during the placement process (Engle & Tinto, 2008). There are some adjustments higher education can make to improve the overall student and mentor internship experience.

According to a 2018 job outlook report by NACE (2018), internships remained one of the top entries employers look for on a resume when hiring recent graduates. Internships are also one of the few times that employers and college students interact directly with each other before the students enter the workforce in a fulltime capacity. Both groups, employers and student interns, are uniquely situated in the internship relationship to comment on and respond to the same experience. The internship creates a common ground for student interns, employers, and educators to look at competency development.

### **Purpose Statement**

Of the eight soft skills, or competencies, listed by NACE, I focus specifically on the competency identified as leadership in this study. NACE’s 2018 report revealed leadership as one of the three competencies employers identified as having the most substantial gap between desired proficiency and actual proficiency amongst recent

college graduates (see Figure 1.1). There are a multitude of definitional lenses to view the leadership competency through and entire textbooks dedicated to detailing these definitional lenses (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014).

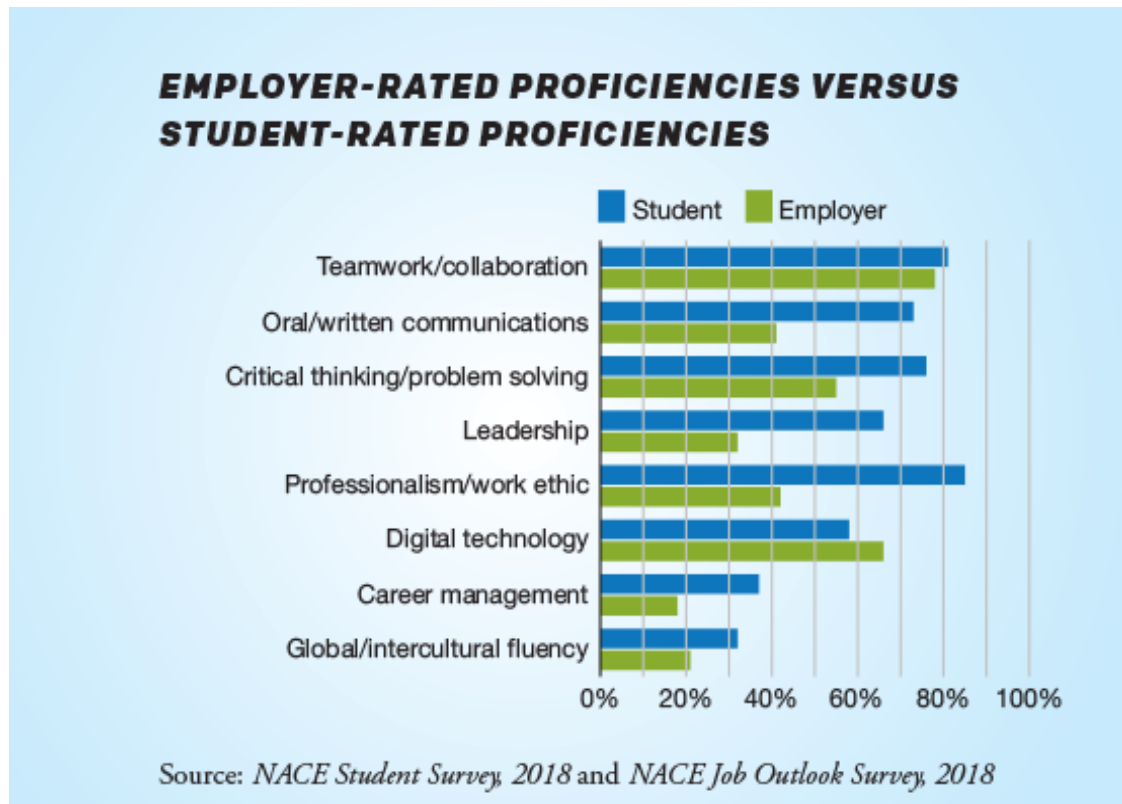


Figure 1.1. NACE competencies survey revealing a large leadership proficiency gap

From “Are your students career ready,” by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018. (<http://www.leadershipexchangedigital.com/lexmail/2018fall/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1426542#articleId1426542>). Reprinted with permission.

Analogously, there do appear to be discrepancies on the definition of leadership that are worth exploring. Transformational, transactional, and servant are examples of leadership types (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014). Definitional differences are a potential explanation to part of the competency gap debate. By determining what leadership type

best aligns with internship experiences, practitioners might be able to better focus their efforts on developing internship experiences with specific leadership definitional characteristics. Through research, student interns and mentors might also be able to better communicate and analyze leadership development during and after the experiential opportunity.

### **Experiential Education**

Experiential education has been a research focus since the early 1900s (Cooperative Education and Internship Association [CEIA], 2015, p. 1). Whereas CEIA professional journal publication dates back to 1964, the field of experiential education has credit-bearing roots starting at the University of Cincinnati in 1906 (CEIA, 2015). In addition, the correlation between experiential education and leadership has been a prevalent topic that has received research attention in higher education over the last decade.

In the “late 1800’s the Industrial Revolution was underway with new innovations and technologies creating a demand for specialized knowledge and training in the workplace”, and colleges needed to respond “with new courses of study – practical education – education for a specific field now became acceptable” (CEIA, 2018). As Herman Schneider, an engaged learning pioneer, pointed out in the early 1900s, “if you want to educate a student to become an engineer, then you should provide that student with the opportunity to practice being an engineer” (CEIA, 2018). Even then, experts identified experiential education as a career readiness activity.

Experiential education and internships are frequently interchangeable terms.

Experiential education is also referred to as cooperative education, rotations, and practicums. Consequently, this paper employed a commonly used definition of internships. As demarcated by CEIA (2015), “an internship is a well-defined, short-term work/learning experience to help students prepare for a chosen career field” (p. 1). To further help with defining the parameters of the study, only academic internships, or those transcript notated internships that are monitored by a university instructor, are analyzed in this study.

In exploring how mentors and student interns interpret the leadership competency, I used three leadership types to interpret data. Specifically, transactional, transformational, and servant leadership can be correlated to specific keywords and phrases. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is an inventory used to measure a broad range of leadership types by leveraging keywords to distinguish those leadership types (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These MLQ keywords are a good starting point for conducting a narrative analysis on how mentors and student interns describe leadership. Transactional and transformational leadership are two of those types showcased in the MLQ and often seen as opposing ends of a management spectrum. Servant leadership is a third leadership type often studied in conjunction with transformational leadership (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Leaders that employ transformational leadership tactics typically focus on altering the path of an organization and changing the culture within that organization. Transformational leaders provide: (a) individual consideration, (b) motivation and



inspiration to others, (c) charisma, (d) intellectual stimulation for team members, and (e) an outward focus on change (Bass & Avolio, 1994). They also require the organization to trust them, take risks with them, and follow a shared vision. In short, a transformational leader needs a certain amount of credibility to be effective in the role.

### **Transactional Leadership**

Contrary to transformational leadership, a transactional leader: (a) looks to employ reprimands and rewards, (b) is focused on results and outcomes, and (c) does not typically employ drastic changes to the structure of an organization (Lievens, Van Geit, & Coetsier, 1997). This leadership style utilizes a top-down management approach that excels at achieving short-term work goals. Roles within the organization are usually well-defined and maintain some form of consistency in structure, speech, and action under a transactional leader (Olivide, 2015).

### **Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership, ethical in behavior, is suggested to be studied alongside other leadership types and literature (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011). Specifically, servant leadership and transformational leadership have enough similarities to warrant being studied in concordance with each other. Reed et al. (2011) point out that, “servant leadership moves beyond the competency inputs and performance outputs traditionally used to measure leader effectiveness – emphasizing instead the moral, emotional, and relational dimensions” (p. 421).

### **Research Question**

I investigated how students and employers view and explain career readiness by

studying the language they use to describe competency development. Specifically, I wanted to identify the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency.

To help investigate this question, I used the seven supplemental inquiries:

(a) in what ways do the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with transactional or goal-orientation leadership variables,

(b) how closely does the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with transformational or meaning-and-purpose leadership variables,

(c) how closely does the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with servant or follower-focused leadership variables,

(d) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with transactional or goal-orientation leadership variables,

(e) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with transformational or meaning-and-purpose leadership variables,

(f) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with servant or follower-focused leadership variables, and

(g) how similar or dissimilar do the mentors' leadership language and student-interns' leadership language used to describe the internship experience align?

By better understanding the similarities and difference associated with the one competency of leadership, a model can be established to further explore how students and employers view proficiencies and gaps for the other seven competencies.

### **Delimitations**

I only explored student internship experiences that are associated with academic coursework and monitored by university instructors at one institution in this study. Students and employers that call their summer experience an internship but never connect with the university during those summer months are not included in this study. Likewise, I only analyzed student evaluations and mentor evaluations from the same zero-credit hour, academic internship course monitored by university instructors. Credit-bearing internship courses are not included in this study.

To that end, all students enrolled in the zero-credit hour internship course received a prompt with the same final evaluation format and text. Similarly, all mentors completing the final evaluation for the zero-credit hour internship course received a prompt with the same format and text. Finally, students and mentors both experienced final course evaluations that were prompted with very similar formatting and text. Although listed as a delimitation for narrowing the focus of the study, I hope to create more trustworthiness within this qualitative study by employing consistency in the participation type and question type via one zero-credit hour internship course.

As another delimitation, the Center for Career and Professional Development is the only department housing the pass/no pass, zero-credit hour internship course used in this study. I could have used more internship courses from specific majors or more

students from other institutions, but only looking at one internship course with representation from multiple majors and class levels will help produce consistency of the data. Likewise, looking at students from only one institution will also help produce consistency of the data.

Lastly, I could have used more leadership theories while coding the data. Explained further in the chapter two literature review, I also acknowledge that there is an inherent concern about the positionality and privilege associated with these leadership theories studied in this research, but I chose three commonly known theories to keep the study manageable.

### **Comments on Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Figure 1.2 outlines the conceptual framework I used in this study. Employers and recent college students disagree about students' career readiness. Exploring the misconceptions and miscommunications about one of those competencies could be a first step in closing the gap for all of the career readiness competencies. By using a narrative analysis technique, determining whether transformational, transactional, or servant leadership best aligns with student interns' and employers' perspectives on leadership development during the internship experience helps in developing well-defined competency outcomes.

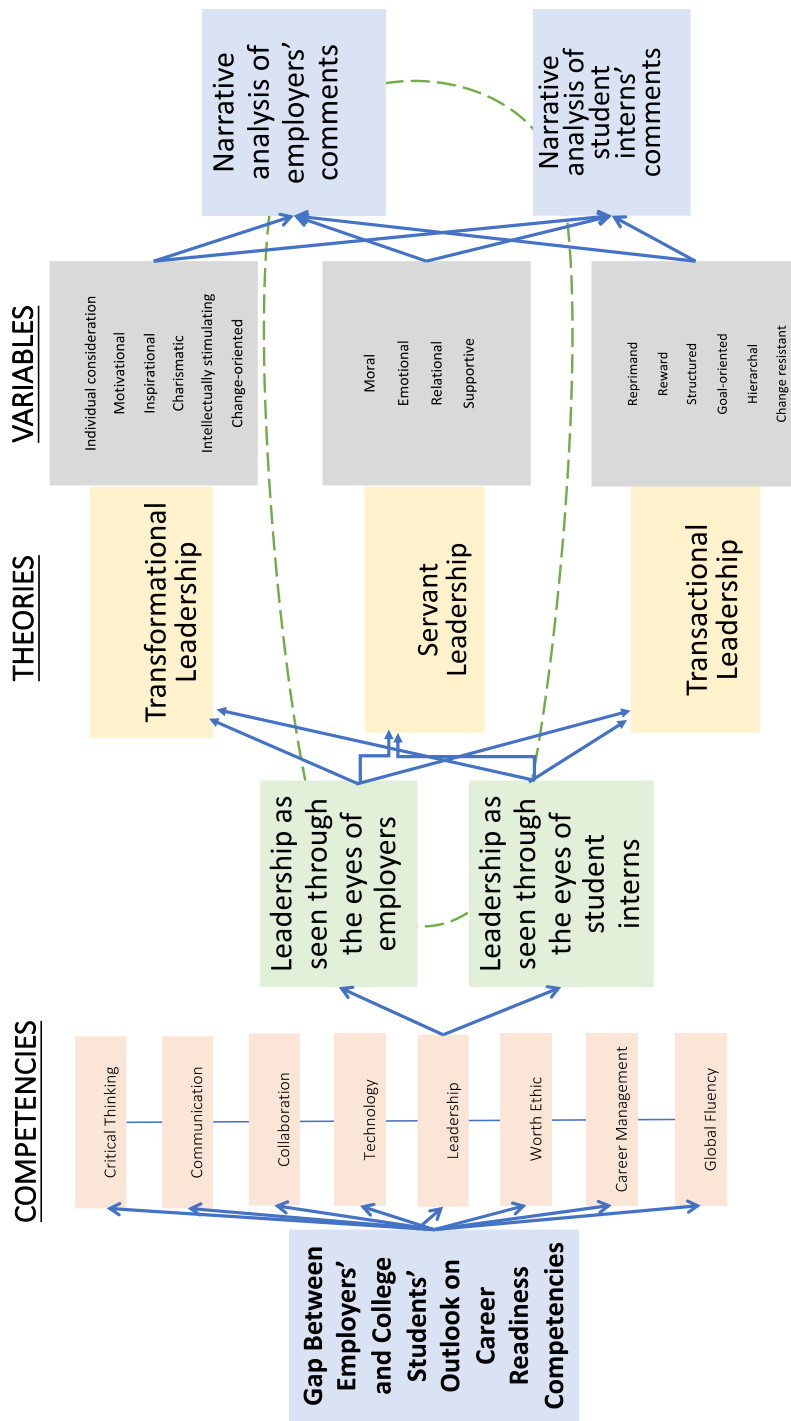


Figure 1.2. Conceptual model

The research design of this study is explained more in chapter three, but it is worth noting here that data was investigated and displayed with intentionality. For example, presenting the “data formally and explicitly, in a variety of data arrays” (Yin, 2010, p. 117) requires the utilization of visual charts and diagrams. By outlining variables, categories, and response rates, these visual representations of the findings should be clear and easy to understand. Moreover, because the narrative structure supports the concept that “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1994, p. 67) this inquiry is categorized under the *interpretivism* epistemology. Crotty classified this type of investigation as an *interpretivism* epistemological framework because it looks to cultural norms and historical reference points to help interpret life and the world. The *interpretivism* category is different from Crotty's explanation of *positivism*, *critical theory*, or *deconstructionism* epistemological frameworks because *interpretivism* defines the world based on individuals’ perspectives and viewpoints.

From an *interpretivist’s* view, my study is an inquiry only intended to describe what has occurred from a historical or cultural perspective (Crotty, 1994). The intent is not to describe why that scenario occurred, and the study does not explain the cause and effect of a situation through a *causal question* or *relational question*. Instead, I situate the study through a *descriptive question* (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006).

I examined the perceptions of intern mentors and undergraduate students at the completion of an internship experience in this study. As part of the coursework for the zero-credit hour internship class, intern mentors have been surveyed at the end of the

semester about their perspectives on the student interns' leadership development during the internship experience. Student interns have also been surveyed at the end of the semester about their perspectives on leadership development during the internship experience. At this point in the study, understanding the correlation between leadership development and internships by exploring a *causal-comparative* relationship is not intended to be the contributing knowledge for practitioners. Understanding that there is a difference in how these two populations, college students and the mentors that employ them, talk about leadership is the purpose of this study.

The perceived gap in leadership performance may not exclusively be in the students' proficiency of the competency, but rather the illustrative language associated with the leadership competency. Thus, the *descriptive*, one-point-in-time design is used to depict the leadership characteristics of the internship experience and, by research design, does not answer questions about how, when, or why these characteristics developed. The intent is to provide more information on employer and student perceptions surrounding career readiness. From there, educators can begin making positive dialogue changes in the internship field and help determine changes to the structure of competency development for student internships.

### **Research Design Summary**

Glesne (2016) defined narrative analysis as a research strategy that examines peoples' stories, experiences in life, and the way they explain those specific memories. Not only does the strategy seek to analyze the nature of the stories told and the perspective of the storytellers, but the narrative analysis also looks at the key incidents

and specific words being used by the individuals telling those stories. The researchers' goal is to understand how people make meaning from their experiences and frame their world through storytelling (Glesne, 2016). Identifying common themes and clusters of information amongst various stories help to define and explain how certain groups of people see and experience the world.

For example, conducting a narrative analysis on how student interns describe their leadership experience during their internship might be more effective at depicting what happened during the internship and whether or not the experience is situated around transformational or transactional leadership instead of describing why the leadership development experience happened during the internship.

#### **Four Step Process**

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggested approaching a narrative analysis using four steps. They also suggested leveraging this four-step strategy multiple times throughout the analysis process and reapplying the strategy with each story told within the study. The first step in the process is to define the topic. Under this step, the researcher defines parameters by identifying specifically what the inquiry will, and will not, be exploring. As an illustration, comparing student interns' development through multiple leadership theory lenses like Bass' and Avolio's (1994) transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership definitions help to set some parameters in this first step.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) second step is to discuss how a researcher applies a participant's story to the analysis process. In short, the researcher explains



examination process of the subject matter. Using transactional, transformational, and servant leadership keywords are part of the coding process during this step of the study. The third step in the process is to provide an example of a participant's story. Actual quotes from the student interns' evaluations are cut and pasted as illustrations under this step.

The final step is to analyze and interpret the story based on the context outlined in the definition and application text. Saldana (2010) stressed that repeating a consistent process multiple times throughout the narrative analysis helps to define the research and identify themes, storylines, and commonalities. I also use recycled processes during the analysis and interpretation sections of the study.

### **Additional Tactics and Methods**

In addition to the four-step process, Saldana (2010) identified various tactics and methods to be employed when conducting a narrative analysis. He mentioned the importance of partitioning data to: (a) find new ways to study the topic, (b) elaborate on patterns and trends, and (c) analyze the qualitative data. Some examples include, coding the language, clustering content to identify themes, triangulating, and grouping ideas and phrases. While employing these tactics, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) outlined the importance of providing a matrix that displays and explains the data in a visual format. As part of utilizing a matrix format, the need to continuously define, apply, provide examples, and analyze the data remains a large part of the four-step process leveraged throughout the study.

In the example of looking at leadership development using transformational versus transactional versus servant lenses, a few coding keywords Bass and Avolio (1994) aligned with transformational leadership are: (a) inspire, (b) stimulate, (c) encourage, (d) motivate, (e) persuade, (f) influence, (g) charisma, (h) charm, (i) appeal, (j) captivate, (k) change, (l) transform, (m) revolutionize, (n) personal, (o) vision, and (p) individual attention. Likewise, a few coding keywords Lievens, Van Geit, and Coetsier (1997) found to align with transactional leadership are: (a) structure, (b) reward, (c) outcome, (d) goal, (e) punish, (f) chastise, (g) discipline, (h) penalize, (i) reprimand, (j) correct, (k) compensate, (l) incentive, (m) result, (n) structure, and (o) produce. Coding keywords for servant leadership are: (a) community, (b) selflessness, (c) equality, (d) moral, and (e) integrity (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011).

### **Research Site**

I used a public, tier one research university located in the southeastern United States as the host site for this study. Housing seven academic colleges in 2018, the undergraduate enrollment at the host institution was 18,599 while the graduate enrollment was 4507 (Clemson University, 2018). With a 19-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio, the institution offered over 80 majors and over 110 graduate degree programs in 2018. The average SAT score of entering first-year students in 2017 was 1302, and over 78% of all graduating seniors participated in experiential education that same year (Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 4). Of the 78% of experiential education participants, approximately half of the students were enrolled in

one of the Center for Career and Professional Development's zero-credit hour, experiential education courses.

### **Participation**

The research site mentioned above allows for very a large sample size of students who have participated in an internship course. After securing the appropriate Institutional Research Review Board approval from the host institution, I leverage *random stratified sampling* in this study. *Random stratified sampling* can be defined as randomly selecting participants from homogeneous groups (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The homogeneous group consists of undergraduate students that have participated in the zero-credit hour course offered through the career services office.

I address external validity concerns later, but even utilizing only one institution should produce a very strong analysis of statistical power (Shadish et al., 2002). For example, approximately 3,000 students participate in an internship course at the host institution each year, and data from over 350 undergraduate student participants is collected through the Center for Career and Professional Development's internship course each semester. According to the Center for Career and Professional Development annual report, representation from each of the University's seven colleges comprise of anywhere from nine percent to 25% of the total internship population in the Center for Career and Professional Development's course (Clemson University Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 11).

Although not evenly distributed, students from each of the seven colleges are represented in the study via the Center for Career and Professional Development

internship course. The College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences has approximately 10% representation, the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Science has 35% representation, the College of Business has 26%, College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences has 13% representation, the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities has nine percent representation, College of Science has six percent representation, and the College of Education has one percent representation. As seen via these representative percentages, simply utilizing a Center for Career and Professional Development internship course that enrolls multiple majors allows for the results to be generalized on a broader scale versus focusing on specific majors or college internship courses. I used this 30-participant sample size precedent to help determine how many samples to pull from the internship final evaluation dataset. Employing randomized sampling techniques, I analyzed data from 15 students and 15 mentors.

### **Sources of Data**

Since the fall 2017 semester, the Center for Career and Professional Development has used a consistent zero-credit hour internship course final evaluation (Kathy Horner, personal communication, September 30, 2018). Consistent career competency-oriented questions are evident in each of the successive semesters. Open-ended questions about the student interns' leadership development were a part of the final evaluation of the internship course for student interns and mentors. Other than minor adjustments to the language, student interns and mentors encountered the same competency-focused questions. Student interns and mentors were asked to rate the student interns' proficiency level in each competency, including leadership. Those proficiency levels consisted of

awareness, basic, intermediate, advanced, and expert. After answering the proficiency level questions, both groups were asked in an open-ended question to describe why they chose the proficiency rating for each competency. The answer to this open-ended question about the leadership competency is the narrative text that I analyzed in this study.

At the end of the academic semester, participants were contacted via email and required to complete their final exam as part of the course curriculum. The final exam is the survey used in this study. Course instructors collected and saved responses using Campus Labs (2019). All students completing the evaluation received a passing grade. Those responses in Campus Labs were exported to an excel spreadsheet and cleansed of student and mentor names or identities before I began my coding and analysis work with the data.

Institutions across the United States commonly utilize Campus Labs (2019) as a means of coursework management. The system is password protected for the internship coursework, continually experiences updating in its firewall protection, and has backup mechanisms in place to avoid the risk of lost data. Leveraging an existing, trusted, and known software system employed in higher education helps to curtail research expenses. Using such software also ensures that the data has been collected and stored in a secure fashion consistent with the host institution's research policies and procedures.

### **Limitations**

Leveraging a trusted and popular technology like Campus Labs (2019) helps increase trustworthiness, but there remain areas identified as potential challenges in

conducting a narrative analysis. Levine, Kern, and Wright (2006) encountered limitations using computer-aided qualitative design assessment software (CAQDAS) versus manually coding data in their investigative work with experiential education. Looking at interns' leadership experience through transactional versus transformational lenses could produce the same challenges. For example, up to 2,000 internship evaluations are available for analysis at the host institution (Clemson University Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 9). As the primary researcher in this study, I need to determine the appropriate number of narrative responses to analyze...whether it be a manual analysis or technical, machine learning analysis.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) also wrote about the amount of manual effort required while employing CAQDAS. Machine learning software still requires human input, and they outlined a few challenges to be mindful of during the research process. Using historical narrations, a researcher might struggle with: (a) the Hawthorne Effect, (b) false identifications, (c) researcher bias, and (d) even miscounting errors. Within my study, student interns might respond in the final evaluation in a way they think the internship course instructors want them to respond. Interns might even have other individuals go into the evaluation and respond on their behalf. While coding language, clustering and grouping content, and triangulating data, I might also miscount responses or let my bias about transactional versus transformational leadership creep into the analysis process. These are a few additional challenges I need to defuse.

In addition, there is the risk that the leadership theories chosen to apply to the coding process are not evident in my narrative responses. Any number of other leadership

theories like *path-goal* or *leader-member exchange* could have been used in this study, but I chose three theories that appear frequently in literature reviews. Two of those theories, *transactional* and *transformational*, are often seen as opposing ends of the spectrum.

### **Significance**

There continues to be a gap between what the workforce expects and sees in a new hire and what competencies are being promised and delivered by higher education institutions and their students. Barrie (2012) stated, “For many years universities around the world have sought to articulate the nature of the education they offer to their students” and the employers that employ these students (p. 79). Students are confident that they are ready to enter the workforce, but employers disagree and state that students need more competency development during college. Exploring the misconceptions and miscommunications about the leadership competency could be a first step in closing the gap for all of the career readiness competencies.

By determining what leadership type best aligns with internship experiences from a college student’s perspective and an employer’s perspective, practitioners can better focus their efforts on developing experiential education opportunities with specific definitional characteristics as intended outcomes. In this study, I compare three leadership types as they relate to the internship experience. Mentors and practitioners alike will be able to structure internship programs that best benefit students and their leadership competency needs. As Strong et al. (2013) pointed out in their encouragement for more leadership-oriented research, “faculty would gain a better understanding of their

students and may better understand the leadership experience” (p. 182).

### **Conclusion**

To summarize chapter one, I introduced the background of the problem in this chapter followed by outlining the problem statement and purpose statement. I posed the questions of the study and consider delimitations. After a few comments on conception and theoretical framework, I reviewed the research design summary. Lastly, I completed chapter one discussing the limitations and significance of the study.

In chapter two, I conduct a literature review with a focus on internships as a *high impact practice* and the leadership theories: (a) transactional, (b) transformational, and (c) servant. Chapter three follows by describing my research design and methods. Discussion on narrative analysis, critical incident theory, and Saldana’s values, attitudes, and beliefs techniques are covered in chapter three. Data results are introduced in chapter four, and I conclude this study in chapter five with a discussion of the findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction to the Literature**

Chapter two of this study is a literature review focusing on implications that internship experiences have on leadership development and the unique developmental attributes of transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. In chapter one, I introduced an overview of career competency development and the career readiness gap vocalized by college students and employers. In addition, I outlined a summary of the keywords and codes used for identifying transactional, transformational, and servant leadership. The latter half of Chapter one concludes with the research question, limitations, and delimitations as part of the research design.

By conducting a thorough literature review, I intended to identify leadership theories and related leadership factors used in previous studies on internship experiences to explain how students and employers describe leadership development. This step in the literature review specifically aimed to produce historical content and relevant context related to the topics, internships and leadership approaches. The literature review progression also helped to identify language and preexisting inventories used for the study when developing the methods portion of the study. To achieve these goals, I leveraged keyword search terms and databases as part of the research process.

First, I contacted a university librarian to help identify appropriate keywords, databases, and scope. Experiential education keywords such as: ‘experiential education’ or ‘intern\* and leadership’ were used in the suggested academic databases. Afterward,

the keywords ‘practicum’, ‘work-study’, ‘co-op’, and ‘cooperative education’ were incorporated into the keyword search queue to gain additional content.

To complete the process, I further considered the keywords: ‘leadership theories’, ‘transformational leadership’, ‘servant leadership’, ‘transactional leadership’, ‘competencies’, ‘career readiness’, ‘internships’, and ‘student engagement’. Those leadership-oriented terms needed to be included with the experiential education terms during the ancestral searches to produce management results. Concisely put, the ‘and’ option rather than the ‘or’ option was utilized to narrow the results.

I found some of the more appropriate databases for this literature review to be: (a) ERIC, (b) Educator’s Reference Complete, (c) Education Research Complete, and (d) the Professional Development Collection. Under the Professional Development Collection, pulling articles from National Association of Colleges and Employers Journal and the Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA) publication were also beneficial. I used Google Scholar only after these previously listed databases were exhausted during the literature review process.

In gathering the literature for this chapter, I organized the content into seven themes. I began by introducing the research topic and providing background information. I then discussed *high impact practices* and *experiential education* through the internship lens. From there, I explored three leadership theories that were used in the study. Those three theories are transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a chapter summary.

## **Background Literature**

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (2009) reported that that over 70% of employers wanted higher education to place more attention on soft skills and competency development. A 2017 report by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation specified, “Somewhere along the road from education to employment, the system is not routinely equipping all students with all the skills they will need to succeed” (p. 3).

Tulgan (2018) reiterated, “There is a growing gap between the expectations of employers and how young talent is holding up in the workplace” (p. 2). Even though the younger generations entering the workforce now can offer new ideas, energy, and technical skills to the workplace, their underdeveloped competencies are holding them back. Adamsky (2016) claimed, “more people fail in the workplace due to lack of soft skills than hard skills” (p. 2).

Approaching this skills deficiency assertion from a different scholarly angle, Jackson (2010) was critical of this sentiment stating, “Only tentative conclusions on the relative importance and extent of skills gaps within and across developed countries can be drawn due to the ambiguity of skill definitions” (p. 53). Furthermore, a large number of articles exist discussing these soft skills and the activities that have an impacted on their development, but very few articles focused on how educators incorporate measurable soft skills into the curriculum (Kemery & Stickney, 2014; Loughry, Ohland, & Woehr, 2014; Ritter, Small, Mortimer, & Doll, 2018). As Jackson (2010) stated, “For the majority of cited employer surveys, participants are left to derive their own meaning of termed skills and homogeneity across respondents is simply assumed” (p. 52).

Various disciplines and organizations have tried to define career readiness through a shift from soft skills towards competency models (Shewchuk, O'Connor, & Fine, 2006). However, as Shewchuk et al. (2006) stated, "A major obstacle is that a common shared framework for competency development does not exist. The problem of being framework-less is that competencies derived from different research initiatives cannot be evaluated" (p. 369). Professionals in the healthcare, hospitality, and education led the way in questioning what it means to be career ready, but Stefl (2008) affirmed "higher education has struggled with the issues of competency-based education for some time" (p. 362).

Shewchuk et al. (2006) claimed, "an upsurge in interest in healthcare management competencies has been observed recently" (p. 367). Jauhari (2006) reiterated a similar interest in competency mapping for the hospitality industry and stated, "The relationship between competency mapping and workforce attributes needs to be explored" (p. 123). Succinctly stated, technical and global changes in the workplace across multiple disciplines have increasingly required more attention by educators and employers on career readiness (Zekeri, 2004).

The healthcare field has been one leader in the development and promotion of competency work partially due to the evidence-based nature of the profession (Stefl, 2008). The National Center for Healthcare Leadership (NCHL), the Healthcare Leadership Alliance (HLA), the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) and other healthcare organizations have competency initiatives already in place (Shewchuk et al., 2006), but Stefl (2008) also asserted, "The

emphasis on measurable outcomes on competencies did not happen overnight” (p. 361) and calls for more research on the topic. Even within Perera, Fernandes, and Paniker’s (2018) research on engineering students’ increased career readiness through employability development modules, the authors suggested more studies be “conducted on the perception and feedback of employers about graduates trained for employability skills” (p. 103). Again, a common competency framework could be a starting point for various research initiatives.

In their argument for a shared framework of career competencies, Shewchuk et al. (2006) identified eight potential outcomes: (a) workforce planning, (b) management and performance improvement, (c) coaching, and mentoring, (d) career development and succession planning, (e) recruitment and assessment, (f) curriculum and accreditation design, (g) organizational competition, and (h) professionalization of the field. Knowing that most United States employees have an average of 15 different job titles in their lifetime (Marker, 2015) and that up to 40% of the workforce will be considered contingent or contract-based by the year 2020 (Jeszeck, 2015), the career development outcome is of particular importance to college graduates and others entering the workforce.

A few years after the release of the AACU report calling for more attention on soft skills, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) re-couched these skills, naming and defining them as career competencies. Prior to the naming and defining of the competencies there was concern over “actual variations in skills requirements in different corporate environments versus differences in personal

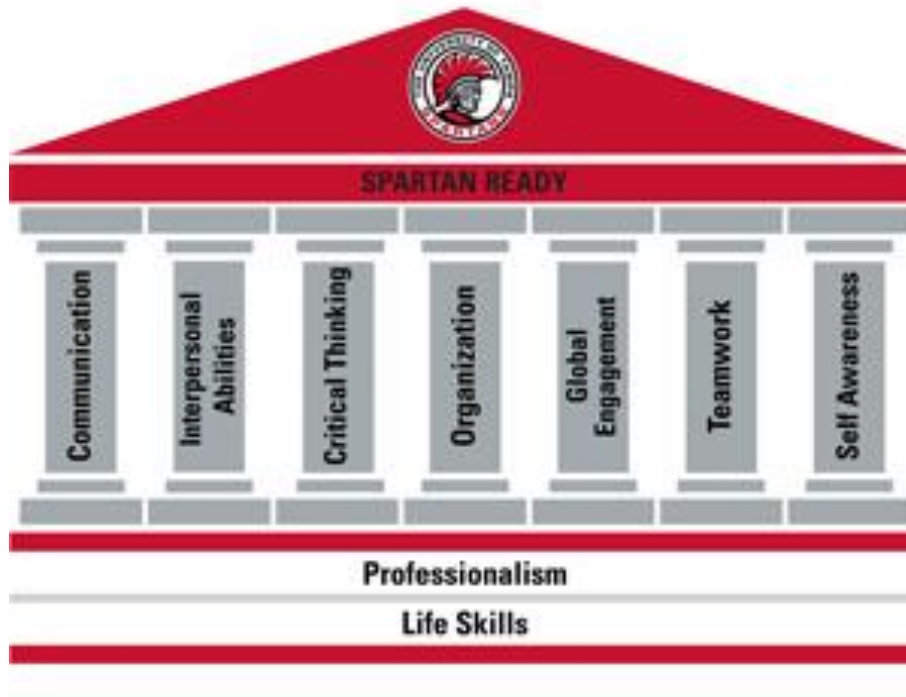
perception of what each skill actually means” (Jackson, 2010, p. 52). This adjustment from soft skills to competencies changed the course of the conversation (NACE, 2016). Moreover, the understanding, attainment, and proficient demonstration of these competencies were an integral part of NACE’s mapping for successful transition into the workforce. Jackson (2010) illustrated this change in language stating, “Career readiness is the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace” (p. 1). Career readiness included the eight competencies: (a) critical thinking/problem solving, (b) oral/written communications, (c) teamwork/collaboration, (d) digital technology, (e) leadership, (f) professionalism/work ethic, (g) career management, and (h) global/intercultural fluency (NACE, 2016).

NACE intentionally did not develop visual representations of the eight competencies in hopes that colleges and universities would embrace the framework and adapt the content to meet their own branding needs. A few exemplary visual representations of institutions branding the competencies as their own are from Lehigh University (see Figure 2.1), the University of Tampa (see Figure 2.2), the University of California at San Diego (see Figure 2.3), and Clemson University (see Figure 2.4).



*Figure 2.1.* Lehigh University Career Readiness competency model

From “Prepare next-gen game changers,” by Lehigh University, 2018  
 (<https://creativeinquiry.lehigh.edu/creative-inquiry/why-creative-inquiry>).  
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*Figure 2.2.* University of Tampa Spartan Ready competency model

From “Spartan Ready,” by the University of Tampa, 2018 (<https://www.ut.edu/spartanready/>). Reprinted with permission.



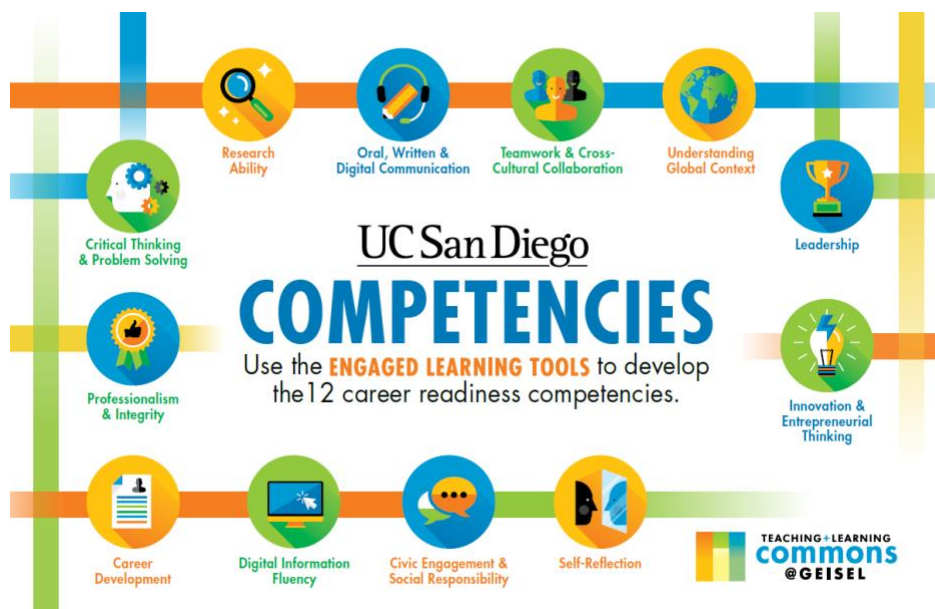


Figure 2.3. UC San Diego competency model

From “UC San Diego competencies,” by the University of California at San Diego, 2018 (<https://elt.ucsd.edu/competencies/index.html>). Reprinted with permission.



Figure 2.4. Clemson University Core Competency model

From “Core competencies,” by Clemson University, 2018 (<https://career.sites.clemson.edu/core/>). Reprinted with permission.

### **The Influence of Westernization and Discrimination**

Even with career readiness defined, there are problems and limitations with some of the quantitative career readiness assessments as they relate to white privilege and westernization bias (Hambur, Row, & Tu Luc, 2002). The Graduate Skills Assessment, for example, has a multistage validity study that connects career readiness competencies, or as vocalized in the literature, “transferrable skills”, to educational coursework and year-in-school, but the same study also connects career readiness competencies with English speaking skills (p.14). Native English speakers score higher on the inventory than

non-English speakers, creating some questions around inventory bias and generalizability.

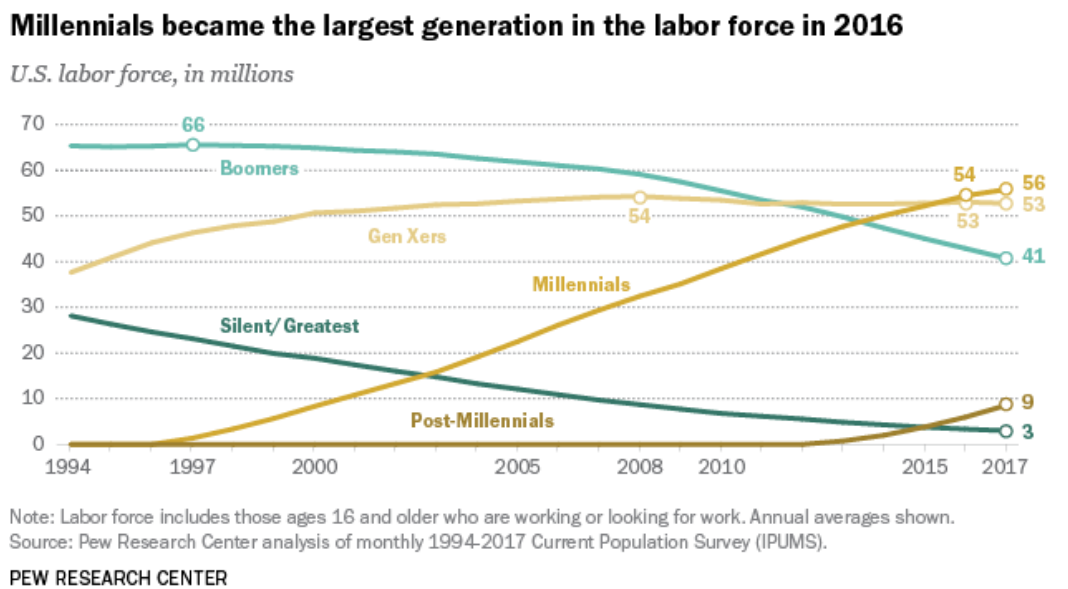
Over 600 million hires occur in the United States each year, and all of them fell under the purview of the Department of Labor's discrimination laws (Bendick & Nunes, 2012, p. 238). Nonetheless, studies find systematic evidence of gender and race discrimination in the hiring process (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016, p. 1117). Zschirnt and Ruedin's (2016) twenty-five-year meta-analysis highlighted, "that current legislation seems to be inefficient and that discrimination remains common place" (p. 1117). Minorities have to apply to approximately twice as many job openings as their majority counterparts to secure the same amount of interviews (Bendick & Nunes, 2012, p. 244). Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) asserted, "more research is needed to understand how these policies fail to make a dent on discrimination in hiring" (p. 1127). More studies need to occur that advance hiring practices and reduce statistical discrimination.

Employers are adamantly stating their needs for career-ready candidates and lobbying academia to appropriately respond to the needs through strategic and purposeful curriculum change that meets the demands of the workplace. As Ritter et al., (2018) stated, "Employers hire for these skills because it is increasingly the human resources that give organizations a competitive advantage" (p. 80).

### **Five Generations in the Workforce**

As part of those human resource struggles, Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2013) reported employers are seeing as many as five generations in the workforce now. As a comparison, previous decades would typically experience two to three generations in the

workforce. Millennials born from 1981 to 1994 currently have the highest number of individuals in the workforce at over one-in-three, followed by Generation X born from 1965 to 1980 (Fry, 2018). Generation Z born from 1995 to 2015 are entering the workforce at the quickest speed (see Figure 2.5). According to Fry’s 2018 publication, “Last year, 9 million Generation Z-ers were employed or looking for work, comprising five percent of the labor force” (p. 2).



*Figure 2.5.* PEW Research Center’s labor force break down by generation

From “Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force,” by PEW Research Center, 2018 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>). Reprinted with permission.

With each generation comes unique values, work ethic, and preferred management and communication styles. A 2011 study found that cross-generational relations were one of the top three challenges for employers (Gratton, 2011). Each generation has unique values, work ethic, and preferred management styles based on the

societal factors and critical events that they grew up with (see Figure 2.6). Also, Howe and Strauss (2007) stated, “On the basis of historical precedent, we can foresee how the generations that are alive today will think and act in decades to come” (p. 41). As Tanner (2019) pointed out, many current workers agree they are confused by other generations’ belief systems associated with professionalism, career readiness, and proficiency in competencies.

5 GENERATIONS IN WORKPLACE					
Description	Traditionalist	Baby Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y/ ZA Millennials	Gen Z / Born-free Generation
Date of Birth	1927 - 1945	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1994	1995-2010
Age	> 73	54-72	38-53	24-37	8 - 23
Iconic technology	Radio, Motor vehicle	TV, Audio cassette	VCR, Walkman, IBM PC	Internet, E-mail, DVD, Playstation, Xbox, iPod	iPad, Wii, PS3, Google
Value	Rules, Sacrifice, Duty before pleasure	Equal rights, Personal growth, Spend now, Question everything	Diversity, Independent, High job expectations	Ubuntu, Health & Wellness, Challenging tasks	Change, Equality, Education, Sense of Purpose
Technology	Largely disengaged	Early IT Adapters, Rise of Silver surfers	Digital Immigrants	Digital Natives	Digital Integrators
Communication	Formal manner, Use good grammar & language	Use body language, Present options, Face to face	Straight talk, present facts, Direct approach	Use motivational language, be positive, Do not talk down.	More realistic, want to use technology to communicate.
% in Workforce in 2025	0,64%	5,13%	22,14%	31,61%	40,48%
Work is :	Obligation , Long term career	Career, Work then retire	A contract, just a job. It is more about challenge not job title.	Place I WANT to work, not have to work. Committed to purpose.	My Cubicle is my bed, Serious about contribution.
Training focus	Traditional , On the job,	Technical, Data evidence based.	Practical, Case studies, Application of learning	Emotional, Stories, Participative	Multi-model, E-learning, Interactive, Self driven.
Sales & Marketing	Print & Radio, Persuasive	Mass, Traditional media, Above-the-line	Direct, Targeted media, Below-the-line	Electronic media, Through Friends	Interactive campaigns, Positive brand association

Figure 2.6. Workplace descriptions for five generations

From “Generations worksheet,” by 5 Gen, 2016 (<https://www.5gen.co.za/generation-worksheet/>). Reprinted with permission.

### High Impact Practices and Competencies

Returning to the previous career readiness conversation, multiple studies point to internships and experiential education as being an important aspect of developing competencies (Barnett, Shoho, & Copland, 2010). The Pedagogy for Employability

Group (2004) argued that the employability of college graduates could be increased by engaging students in experiential education, cultivating a full range of their competencies, and helping them to reflect on and articulate “these capacities and attributes in a range of recruitment situations” (p. 9).

Known as a *high impact practice* (HIP), internships are considered by many scholarly writers as an exemplary educational experience of a HIP. Crow and Whitman (2016) stated, “The positive findings from these authors’ literature review include positive effects on leader knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (p. 120). Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, and Basom (2011) specifically focused on the leadership competency and found that interns are more comfortable to lead after the internship as compared to before the internship. there remains much to be learned about the curricular design behind internships.

As a process improvement design, it is important to know: (a) whether internships are being organized in a way that maximizes leadership development, (b) why there is still a discrepancy between employers’ and students’ responses to career-readiness, and (c) whether student interns and employers are even describing a competency like leadership the same way. As Crow and Whiteman (2016) stated, “some scholarly authors have also found that internships can maintain the status quo” (p. 120). If not appropriately designed, Crow and Whiteman (2016) implied that internships can become a learning hurdle to the competency development process. The purpose of this study is to explore the similarities and differences in how student interns and employers describe leadership development.

## **Internships**

According to the Institute of Directors (2007), leadership was among the career readiness competencies employers witnessed least frequently in recent college graduates. The leadership competency also displayed one of the largest gaps between required skills and satisfaction in that required skills rating by that group (NACE, 2018). Additionally, even though the correlation between experiential education and leadership has been a prevalent topic receiving research attention in higher education over the last decade, experiential education, itself, has been a focus of research since the early 1900s (CEIA, 2015). While CEIA's professional journal publications date back to 1964, the field of experiential education has credit-bearing roots starting at the University of Cincinnati in 1906 (CEIA, 2015, p. 1). According to Dr. Neil Burton, the Executive Director of the Center for Career and Professional Development at Clemson University, there is a trend within the last decade to house experiential education activities like co-ops and internships out of career services offices (personal communication, October 2, 2016). Dr. Burton confirmed that the Center for Career and Professional Development at Clemson University houses an established and robust internship program, so I used a common definition of internships that aligns with the Center for Career and Professional Development's program for this paper. As defined by CEIA (2015), "an internship is a well-defined, short-term work/learning experience to help students prepare for a chosen career field" (p. 1).

### **High Impact Practices and Leadership**

The notion of connecting internship experiences to the development of leadership

competencies is not a new research topic. For example, utilizing a panel of some of the best-known practitioners and academics in the field, Morgan, King, Rudd, and Kaufman (2013) also found that there appears to be a correlation between internships and leadership development. They pointed out in their research on leadership development programs that, “real work practice and application are vital components of true leadership development” (p. 150).

Likewise, leveraging the responses from 5,922 college seniors, Soria, Snyder, and Reinhard (2015) determined that a student’s involvement in student-centered pedagogies like civic engagement, service learning, experiential education (internships), and multicultural awareness are positively associated with the student’s integrative leadership orientation. In a twelve-month study on 66 undergraduate students, Winiewski (2010) clustered and categorized a leadership education model whereby internships were identified as one of the key learning processes. As Wisniewski (2010) pointed out, “Twenty-first century learners thrive on active learning in interactive settings” (p. 67). The unique thing about all of these studies on internships and leadership is that neither leadership nor internships were defined in the text. The researchers supported the correlation but failed to set clear parameters.

### **Internships and Leadership: A Closer Examination**

Many researchers agreed to the idea of a connection between leadership and internships, but there has been little work completed outlining a definition of leadership within the research on leadership and internships. When viewed through other leadership definitions, internships and leadership do not always appear to align and correlate. Dugan



and Komives (2010) reported college seniors did not see an alignment with the social change definition for leadership and on-campus employment or internships. Using this social change leadership approach, eight socially-responsible leadership outcome measures were developed to better aligned with faculty mentoring, participation in community services, and socio-culture conversations with peers. Those eight leadership outcomes were identified as: (a) consciousness of self (b) congruence, (c) commitment, (d) collaboration, (e) common purpose, (f) controversy with civility, (g) citizenship, and (h) change. Leadership and internships did not have a significant connection under Dugan's and Komives's (2010) framework.

Trying to determine what specific leadership types are most applicable when strategically planning an internship program has not readily been explored in higher education. To that end, Connaughton, Lawrence, and Ruben's (2003) work on agriculture leadership development outlined the importance of faculty and peer interactions. They recommended that, "leadership development initiatives should be systematic, multidisciplinary, and have several experiential components" (p. 46). The use of structure, foresight, and planning for the internship experience is strongly encouraged by their work. Determining how student interns and employers think about and describe leadership can only help to develop a structured, planned internship experience for the intended outcome of competency development.

### **Leadership Types**

Strong et al. (2013) indicated, "leadership characteristics and abilities should be evaluated to assist in learning student traits and to better prepare students for their

professions” (p. 174). As such, they explored the relationship between students’ leadership styles and self-directed learning levels by specifically examining transactional versus transformational leadership traits. Overall, they found that students were drawn more to relationship-oriented leadership traits over task-oriented leadership traits. Determining whether today’s students resonate more with a modern transformational leadership style over the more traditional transactional leadership style is the next logical step in building a high impact practice that helps with competency development.

Transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership are the three working definitions of leadership types utilized throughout my study. Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) focused on these leadership types in their exploratory work because they have become popular in recent years and “received substantial attention in the contemporary leadership field” (p. 349).

### **Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leaders work within their organizational cultures following existing rules, procedures, and norms. Transactional leaders are not known for changing or realigning cultures nor are they known for incorporating new visions, assumptions, values, or norms (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p 112). A transactional leader looks to employ reprimands and rewards, is focused on results and outcomes, and does not typically employ drastic changes in the structure of an organization (Lievens, Van Geit, & Coetsier, 1997). This transactional leadership style utilizes a top-down management style that excels at achieving short-term work goals. Roles within the organization are usually well-defined and maintain some form of consistency in structure, speech, and action

(Olivide, 2015).

A transactional leader can help maintain the performance of an organization that operates in a stable market. Under this scenario the organization does not have a need for change (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Instead, delivering on company objectives becomes the overarching priority (Lievens et al., 1997). As an upshot of transactional leadership, the direction of the company, moral compass of the organization and leadership, and reciprocal relationships between supervisors and employees are less likely to be considered unclear or in question.

Conversely, if that transactional leader is trying to motivate through rewards that do not align with employees' interests and objectives, then productivity and morale problems can arise (Bryman, 1996). The extended coercion of risks and reprimands may also result in long-term job satisfaction complications. Moreover, if transactional leaders try to pursue too many projects at one time, they may only be able to interact with employees on an individual level while intervening in extreme situations. Day-to-day rapport building suffers, which can be detrimental to developing dyadic relationships. Bass (1990) responded, "Experience has shown that transactional leadership tends to limit employee effort and satisfaction" (p. 19). Employees that flourish under the daily collaboration and personal attention of a leader may not be suited to evolve professionally in a transactional environment (Olivide, 2015).

Bass and Avolio (1993) contended, "Strategic thinking builds the vision of the future, the leaders then construct a culture that is dedicated to supporting that vision" (p. 112). With that conviction in mind, a few coding keywords used for transactional

leadership are: (a) structure, (b) reward, (c) outcome, (d) goal, (e) punish, (f) chastise, (g) discipline, (h) penalize, (i) reprimand, (j) correct, (k) compensate, (l) incentive, (m) result, (n) structure, and (o) produce (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Lievens et al., 1997). These transactional leadership traits helped in the narrative coding outlined in chapter three.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Lievens et al. (1997) defined a transformational leader as an agent of change. Transformational leaders “elicit performance beyond expectations by instilling pride, communicating personal respect, facilitating creative thinking, and providing inspiration” (Lievens et al., 1997, p. 416).

Bryman (1996) stated that an organization following a transformational leader is well-suited for changing industry practices and keeping up with an evolving market. Likewise, motivated and intellectually-inspired employees were likely to develop new ideas and be positioned to move into leadership roles as vacancies become open in the organization under a transformational structure. Collectively, the organization and employees can move forward together and set their agenda, ethical standards, and best practices.

Transformational leaders change their culture by first understanding it and then realigning the organization’s culture with a new vision and revision of its shared assumptions, values, and norms (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p 112). The four unique factors of transformational leadership are outlined as: (a) *charisma*, (b) *inspiration*, (c) *intellectual stimulation*, and (d) *individual consideration* (Lievens et al., 1997, p. 419; Humphreys, 2005, p. 1411). Transformational leadership’s *charisma* is defined by Lievens et al.

(1997) as, “how others develop trust in the individual to overcome any obstacle” (p. 419). On the other hand, *inspiration* exemplifies a symbol of success and accomplishment. *Intellectual stimulation* refers to the individual’s ability to become known for introducing new projects and challenges. Finally, *individual consideration* refers to an individual’s tendency to listen to others’ concerns. These factors collectively define transformational leadership.

Of transformational leadership, Spears (2004) reported:

that ethical transformational leadership should rest on three foundations. The three foundations include the moral character of the leader, the ethical authenticity of the values underlying the leader’s vision, and the morality of the social processes grounding the leader’s interactions with followers. (p. 26)

Two hallmarks of common transformational leadership assumptions are that people are trustworthy and purposeful (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 113). There is a belief that each team member has a unique contribution to make, and complex problems are handled at the lowest level possible (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

There are also critics of transformational leadership. Harrison (2011) discredited the transactional leadership notion that “all members of an organization can lead regardless of their place in the hierarchy” (p. 46). Harrison reported that transactional leadership is more about positionality and power than many scholars originally thought to be true. Bryman (1996) also stressed that employees can become desensitized and untrusting of a charismatic and motivational leader over time. Transformational leaders seen as not following through or as delegating too many responsibilities result in

leadership fatigue or burnout. Employees can similarly lose interest in following the leader because they become saturated and experience the same thought inspiring and motivational tactics over and over. Also, there is a risk that various levels of manipulation can occur as: (a) employee/leader/organizational goals diverge, (b) heroic leadership bias appear, (c) trust and respect break down, and (d) confusion around reciprocal services emerge (Bryman, 1996). Lastly, the theoretical tactics behind transformational leadership omit any punitive actions sometimes leveraged to correct negative behavior (Olivide, 2015).

It should be noted here that Lievens et al. (1997) also used the *laissez-faire* leadership style when they were identifying the challenges individuals face in distinguishing between transactional and transformational leadership traits. *Laissez-faire* refers to an individual's tendency to "avoid getting involved when important issues arise" (Lievens et al., 1997, p. 419) and is a measure of a non-leadership dimension. All of these transformational leadership traits support the narrative coding outlined in chapter three.

### **Servant Leadership**

According to the University of Tampa's Associate Dean of Career Development and Engagement, Tim Harding, *servant leader* is a term frequently used by students during the internship site visit (personal communication, June 17, 2019). Regardless of how much interns consciously know about the actual mechanics of servant-leadership, the question needs to be proposed as to whether or not the strategies are employed in an internship setting. Along these lines, Greenleaf (1977) asked of servant leadership:

Do those being served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become

healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 17)

Conversely, Johnson (2001) proposed that the advantages of servant leadership are altruism, simplicity, and self-awareness. Greenleaf (1977) explained altruism as, “foundational in describing the servant leader assuring that followers’ highest priority needs are served. Simplicity can be observed in the servant leader’s willingness to serve first and let go of motivations that can drive leaders toward attaining perks, publicity, power, and prestige” (p. 31). Presently, it is important to determine if mentors or students view the competency through a servant-oriented lens, a transformational lens, or a transactional lens when describing leadership development. After that determination, discussions regarding what type of educational strategies should be employed by higher education to reduce the competency gap can ensue as a next step.

Reed et al. (2011) provide a working definition of servant leadership, but they also outline a brief definitional comparison between the servant leadership type they explore and the transformative leadership type described by Lievens et al. (1997). Similarities between these two types would include integrity, altruism, ethical decision making, and role modeling. Differences lie in the fact that “servant leaders emphasize ethical standards and moral management (more transactional)”, while “transformational leaders emphasize vision, values and intellectual stimulation” (Reed et al., 2011, p. 420).

Reed et al. (2011), go on to framework the four primary and unique factors of servant leadership as: (a) *interpersonal support*, (b) *building community*, (c)

*egalitarianism*, and (d) *moral integrity* (p. 425). Listed as the fifth factor for servant leadership, *altruism* also shows up as a transformational leadership factor (p. 420). Thus, Reed et al. (2011) excluded it from their definitional comparisons. The work of Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuy (2017, p. 4) supported this servant leadership framework in their systemic literature review of 87 articles that sought to answer the four questions: (a) What are the characteristics of a servant leader? (b) What are the competencies of a servant leader? (c) How is servant leadership measured? and (d) What organizational outcomes are linked to servant leadership?

Coetzer et al. (2017) described servant leadership behaviors aligned with *interpersonal support* as compassion, empathy, caring for others, being kind and *altruistic*, forgiving others for mistakes, and accepting and appreciating others. Valuing people, desiring for their wellbeing, and building trustful relationships are also traits aligned with interpersonal support. Lastly, displaying servant leadership traits through the creation of an environment of care, support, encouragement, and acknowledgment were behaviors associated with interpersonal support, all of this while the leader is also trying to understand the needs, aspirations, aptitudes, and mental state of the followers. More simply put, Reed et al. (2011) defined servant leaders' *interpersonal support* as the ability to nurture and help others succeed (p. 425).

Liden, Wayne, and Zhao (2008) reported that servant leadership differs from traditional approaches in a number of ways, including the emphasis on forming strong long-term relationships (p. 162). Conversely, servant leadership extends outside of the organization via *building community* and exemplifying a spirit of cooperation and



organizational commitment (Reed et al., 2011; Liden et al., 2008). Moving forward a few years in the servant leadership research world, Coetzer et al. (2017) worked with the *building community* behavioral literature review criterion: (a) taking accountability for the common interest, be that of a society, an organization, or individuals, (b) leaving a positive legacy, and (c) possessing an attitude of a caretaker, not that of an owner.

Of servant leadership's *egalitarianism*, Coetzer et al. (2017) mentioned an overarching feel of equality in rights and opportunities with specific attributes like authenticity, empowerment, humility, and accountability rounding out the definition. Reed et al. (2011) and Liden et al. (2008) referred to egalitarianism as a belief in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. Coetzer et al. (2017), Reed et al. (2011), and Liden et al. (2008) define servant leadership's *moral integrity* as being honest, fair, and having firm conviction and principles. Servant leaders with this last trait behave ethically and create an ethical work climate.

The work by Stone et al. (2004) revealed multiple similarities between servant leadership and transformational leadership types, but “while transformational leadership has been well researched, and has become popular in practice, servant leadership needs further support” (Stone, 2004, p. 359). Irving (2014) looked at the transformational versus servant leadership via a more streamlined technique by consolidating some of the leadership traits.

Irving also argued that even among the similarities between the leadership types, transformational leadership primarily focuses on the goals and purpose of the organization while servant leadership is primarily follower-oriented. Using this context,

Irving (2014) developed a Purpose-in-Leadership inventory that explored follower-focused variables, goal-oriented variables, and meaning-and-purpose variables. All of these servant leadership traits support the narrative coding outlined in chapter three.

### **Servant and Transformational Leadership: Further Distinctions**

There appear to be similar attributes between servant leadership and transformational leadership. Reiterating these similarities, Washington, Sutton, and Sauser's (2014) stated, "Supervisors perceived as servant leaders were likely to also be perceived as transformational leaders" (p. 21). Some scholars even consider servant leadership a subset of transformational leadership. Chin and Smith (2006) contended that transformational leadership traits align with many of the servant leadership traits.

Washington et al. (2014) added, "These researchers suggested that while servant leaders are transformational leaders, the reverse may not be true" (p. 21). Although the general definitions of the two leadership styles seem to have some consensus and crossover, the "explicitly distinct conceptual components have proven more difficult" (Humphreys, 2005, p. 1414). In mapping characteristics of each leadership type (see Figure 2.5), Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) said, "it is suggested that servant leadership leads to a spiritual generative culture, while transformational leadership leads to an empowered dynamic culture" (p. 80). Spears (2004) addressed five statistically significant items distinguishing the two leadership forms by describing a:

- (a) primary focus on meeting the needs of the organization (transformational) or individual (servant),
- (b) first inclination to lead (transformational) or to serve (servant),
- (c) primary allegiance and focus toward the organization

(transformational) or individual (servant), (d) customary (transformational) or unconventional (servant) approach to influencing (e) attempt to control (transformational) or give freedom(servant) through influence and persuasion. (p 64)

**Table 1. Mapping of the Characteristics of Transformational and Servant Leadership\***

<b>Transformational leadership</b> (Bass and Avolio, 1988, 1994, 1994b; Bass, 1985, 1996)	<b>Charismatic leadership/idealized influence</b> - Role modeling - Emphasis on the needs of others - High ethical and moral conduct	<b>Inspirational motivation</b> - Motivate and inspire followers - Display enthusiasm and optimism - Communicate expectations and create shared vision	<b>Intellectual stimulation</b> - Encourage innovation and creativity - Willing to abandon not useful practices and systems - Risk taking is necessary for long-term success	<b>Individualized consideration</b> - Attention to followers needs for achievement and growth - Create new learning opportunities - Empower to make decisions
<b>Servant leadership</b> (Spears, 1998; Laub, 1999)				
<b>Values people</b> - Believe in people - Serve other's needs before his or her own - Receptive, non-judgmental listening	Serve other's needs before their own	Believe in people		
<b>Develops people</b> - Provide opportunities to learn and grow - Model appropriate behavior - Encouragement and affirmation	Model appropriate behavior	Encouragement and affirmation	Encouragement and affirmation	Provide opportunities to learn and grow
<b>Builds community</b> - Strong personal relationships - Collaboration with others - Value other's differences	Strong interpersonal relationships	Strong interpersonal relationships		Collaboration with others Value other's differences
<b>Displays Authenticity</b> - Open and accountable to others - Willing to learn from others - Maintain integrity and trust	Open and accountable to others Maintain integrity and trust	Maintain integrity and trust		
<b>Provides leadership</b> - Envision the future - Take initiative - Clarify goals		Envision the future Clarify goals	Take initiative	
<b>Shares leadership</b> - Facilitate a shared vision - Share power and release control - Share status and promote others		Facilitate a shared vision		Share power and release control Share status and promote others

\* Behaviors in the cells represent those behaviors common to both theories

*Figure 2.7. Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko's mapping characteristics for transformational and servant leadership.*

From "Transformational and servant leadership: Content and contextual comparisons," by B. Smith, R. Montagno, and T. Kuzmenko, 2004, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 10(4), p. 83. Copyright 2004 by SAGE Publications. Reprinted with permission.

Parolini (2007) unveiled five similar distinctions between transformational and servant leadership: (a) leader moral, (b) focus, (c) motive and mission, (d) development, and (e) influence distinction (p. 5). Parolini (2007) claimed a transformational leader's

action can be viewed as moral “in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led” (p. 6). Burns (1978) also held this sentiment.

Transformational leadership is morally uplifting through its emphasis on the character of the leader, ethical values underlying the leader’s vision, and a morally grounded collective process between leader and followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 2000). In a 2001 publication, Kanungo explained that transformational leaders are moral through their use of empowering strategies as a means of transforming followers’ self-interest into collective goals.

Conversely, servant leaders emphasize conscious service as intentional sacrifice. Greenleaf (1977) identified four key dimensions to servant leader’s moral conscience: (a) sacrificial service through submitting one’s ego to higher purposes, (b) conscience to become part of a cause worthy of the leader’s commitment, (c) teachings implicating the ends and means are inseparable, and (d) a move from independence to interdependence through relationships and a commitment to the followers’ individual needs. Parolini (2007) confirmed Greenleaf’s finding by stating, “The servant leader is servant first. It begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 7).

The idea that transformational and servant leaders aim to create distinct cultures helps to distinguish Parolini’s (2007) differences in motive and mission.

Transformational leaders want to recreate the organization to survive some exterior challenge while servant leaders view individual growth and development as the goals.

Stated differently, transformational leaders produce empowered, dynamic cultures while servant leaders produce spiritually generative cultures.

Burns (1978) pointed out, “That people can be *lifted* into their better selves is the secret of transforming leadership” (p. 462). Whereas transformational leaders influence others primarily through charisma, servant leaders influence through serving others (Parolini, 2007, p. 9). In truth, the influencing factor stems from how the leader develops into their position. Transformational leaders intend to lead, have a self-interest, and develop followers with similar values and purpose along the way, while servant leaders have a desire to serve first and foremost. Servant leaders ensure that others’ high priority needs are met, they seek to develop other servants, and they aspire to have their constituents develop as future leaders as part of the process (Parolini, 2007). Parolini (2007) referenced servant leadership work when asking the questions, “Do those being served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servant leaders?” (p. 1230). These servant and transactional leadership distinctions support the narrative coding process outlined in chapter three.

### **Summary of the Literature**

Astin and Astin (2000) conveyed that higher education professionals should seek new ways to partner with professionals on and off campus and to recognize educators’ and employers’ power to affect change through the authentic mentoring of students. Internship programs allow for professionals in a variety of disciplines to partner with higher education institutions and employ students in a mentoring capacity. Given the

three distinct definitions of leadership and a working definition of internships, this study looks to determine whether transactional leadership, transformational leadership, or servant leadership best describes the competency development for students participating in an internship program. Looking for individual differences in career-readiness, the language mentors and student-interns use to describe leadership development was investigated using narrative analysis techniques. From there, initiatives on how to best systematically and authentically mentor students toward leadership development can be investigated in future research designs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction to the Research Design and Methods**

In chapter three, I outline the qualitative methodology of historical narrative analysis and my use of the technique in this study. Specifically, narrative analysis is a useful tool for exploring the language that student interns use to describe their leadership development during the internship experience compared to the language that mentors use to describe student interns' leadership development during the same internship experience.

In studying student interns' and mentors' storytelling, I leverage the evidence-based tactics associated with the fundamental descriptive methods of narrative analysis while also borrowing from the widely-used critical incident technique. Reissman (1993) commented, "By studying the sequences of stories and the thematic and linguistic connections between them, an investigator can see how individuals tie together significant events and important relationships in their lives" (p. 40). Reducing student-intern and mentor leadership stories to their messaging core, examining how word choice, inspecting the structure of the storytelling, and action sequences unfold, and grouping phrases based on differing theoretical lenses are all part of the narrative analysis process (Reissman, 1993). Looking at the language student interns and mentors use to describe competency development may help colleges and employers better understand the career-readiness gap.

## **Target Population**

In this study, I examine the internship final evaluation responses of student interns and their mentors. My data was collected from a public, tier one research university located in the southeastern United States. The institution enrolled 18,599 undergraduate students while the graduate enrollment population settled in at 4,507 (Clemson University, 2018). Touting a 19-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio, the institution offers over 80 majors and over 110 graduate degree programs across 7 colleges.

Of the undergraduate population at the site institution, 82.9% identified as White or Caucasion, 6.8% identified as Black or African American, and 10.3% identified as Other, which includes Hispanic/Latino/Latina, Asian, or Unknown. Of the freshman class in 2017, 12.8% identified as first-generation students, and the male-to-female proportion was 52.3% male to 47.7% female (Clemson University, 2018). The average SAT score of entering first-year students in 2017 was 1302, and over 78% of the 2017 seniors participated in experiential education, (Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 4). Of that 78% participation rate, approximately half of students enrolled in one of the Center for Career and Professional Development's zero-credit hour experiential education courses. Stated differently, approximately 2,300 students enroll in the Center for Career and Professional Development's experiential education courses each year. Around 1,100 of those enrollments are in the university sponsored internship course.



## **Participation**

Using the research site mentioned above allowed me to utilize a large sample size of students who have participated in an internship course. After securing the appropriate Institutional Research Review Board approval from the host institution, I used the random stratified sampling method to collect data. Random stratified sampling is defined as randomly selecting participants from homogeneous groups (Shadish et al., 2002). The homogeneous group was undergraduate students who have participated in the zero-credit hour course offered through the career services office.

Keeping in mind that external validity concerns are addressed in a later portion of this text, even utilizing only one institution should produce a robust analysis of statistical power (Shadish et al., 2002). For example, approximately 3,000 students participate in an internship course at the host institution each year, and the Center for Career and Professional's internship course collects data from over 350 student intern participants each semester. According to the Center for Career and Professional Development annual report, representation from each of the University's seven colleges comprise of anywhere from nine percent to 25% of the total internship population in the Center for Career and Professional Development's course (Clemson University Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 11). Discussed further under the Institutional Research Review Board portion of chapter three, all identifying information was removed from the data set, so I did not have access to demographic information for this study.

Although not evenly distributed, the Center for Career and Professional Development internship course represents students from each of the seven colleges. The

College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences has approximately 10% representation with 218 enrollment responses, the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Science has 33% representation with 673 enrollment responses, the College of Business has 27% with 575 enrollment responses, College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences has 14% representation with 291 enrollment responses, the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities has eight percent representation with 157 enrollment responses, College of Science has seven percent representation with 142 enrollment responses, and the College of Education has one percent representation with 22 enrollment responses. As seen via these multi-discipline percentages, securing data from the Center for Career and Professional Development internship course will allow for the results to be generalized on a broader scale. The Center for Career and Professional Development sample produces more generalizable results than focusing on specific major or college internship courses. Employing randomized sampling techniques via the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet formula RAND(), I analyzed data from 15 students and 15 mentors.

### **Sources of Data**

Since Fall Semester 2017, instructors at the host institution have consistently employed internship course final evaluations using career competency-oriented questions. The implementation of those career competency final evaluation questions was strategically coordinated with the National Association of Colleges and Employers' 2016 introduction of career readiness language. Through a task force of college career services and HR/staffing professionals, the National Association of Colleges and Employers

(NACE) developed a definition, consulted employers about those definitions, and identified the eight competencies associated with career readiness. Introduced in chapter one and chapter two, those eight competencies are: (a) critical thinking/problem solving, (b) oral/written communications, (c) teamwork/collaboration, (d) digital technology, (e) leadership, (f) professionalism/work ethic, (g) career management, and (h) global/intercultural fluency (NACE, 2019).

At the end of the academic semester, participants in the Center for Career and Professional Development internship course were contacted via email and required to complete their final evaluation as part of the course curriculum. The course instructor utilized the final evaluation as a learning outcome tool and a final exam. The questionnaire and curriculum version I used for this study was implemented during the fall 2017 semester.

The final evaluation included Likert scale and open-ended questions on each of the competencies. Interns and their mentors were asked to respond on the intern's critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communications, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, and global/intercultural fluency competencies (see Appendix A). All responses were collected and saved using Campus Labs (2019).

Campus Labs (2019) is commonly utilized by higher education campuses across the United States as a means of coursework management and institutional assessment. The company started in 2001 as a means for "collecting student feedback to help improve campus services" (p. 1). Employing over 150 staff members and serving over 1400-

member campuses throughout the United States, CampusLabs now offers “integrated software and cloud-based assessment tools for higher education with a focus on empowering and transforming colleges and universities through strategic data insights” (p. 1).

The system is password protected for the internship coursework, continually experiences updating in firewall protection, and has backup mechanisms in place to avoid the risk of lost data. Leveraging existing systems already employed on campus helps to curtail expenditures and ensures that the data has been collected and stored in a secure fashion consistent with the host institution's research policies and procedures.

As part of the final evaluation, interns and mentors are first asked to rate the intern's proficiency level for each of the eight competencies using a five-point Likert scale. Those proficiency levels for each of the competencies are *awareness*, *basic*, *intermediate*, *advanced*, and *expert*. (See Figure 3.1). Following the proficiency level rating, mentors and students are asked to respond to an open-ended question justifying the proficiency level rating with a story or example. Stated differently, the internship final evaluation houses separate qualitative and quantitative questions addressing each of the eight NACE competencies.



# DETERMINING YOUR PROFICIENCY – LEADERSHIP

Use the descriptions to determine your current and desired level of proficiency

Engagement		
Communication	Collaboration	Leadership
Engaging in dialogue that leads to productive outcomes and points of connection by effectively articulating one's self to individuals within and outside of one's industry or area of expertise.	Developing authentic and mutually beneficial relationships by valuing everyone and taking responsibility for one's role within a team.	Being able to recognize, respect, develop, and capitalize on the unique strengths of individuals from all backgrounds and being an active member in a group that achieves a shared vision.
Level of Proficiency	Description	
<b>Awareness</b> <i>theoretical knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledges respecting and capitalizing on everyone's unique strengths contributes to a stronger society</li> <li>Understands leadership is about groups developing and working towards achieving a shared vision</li> </ul>	
<b>Basic</b> <i>limited experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observes how others recognize, respect, develop, and capitalize on the unique strengths of individuals from all backgrounds</li> <li>Participates in groups where there is an opportunity to contribute achieving a shared vision</li> </ul>	
<b>Intermediate</b> <i>practical application</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes, respects, develops, and capitalizes on individuals' unique strengths from all backgrounds</li> <li>Encourages discussion where individuals can express different points of view to develop a shared vision</li> </ul>	
<b>Advanced</b> <i>extensive experience and application</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimizes the unique strengths of individuals that creates inclusive and collaborative environments</li> <li>Empowers others to achieve a shared vision and communicates group accomplishments to stakeholders</li> </ul>	
<b>Expert</b> <i>recognized for mastery and attainment in all areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalizes on the opportunity to connect individuals across disciplines to leverage strengths</li> <li>Serves as a conduit to assist groups in aligning objectives with broader organizational or global objectives</li> </ul>	

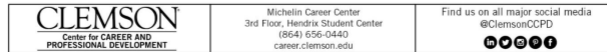


Figure 3.1. Competency proficiency levels for leadership

From “Complete competencies and proficiencies,” by Clemson University, 2019 ([https://career.sites.clemson.edu/core/documents/CCPD\\_Complete\\_Competencies\\_and\\_Proficiency\\_Packet.pdf](https://career.sites.clemson.edu/core/documents/CCPD_Complete_Competencies_and_Proficiency_Packet.pdf)). Reprinted with permission.

Other than minor language adjustments to address specific audience needs, the same competency-focused questions were asked to student interns and mentors. In this study, I analyzed the narrative text answers to the open-ended question about the leadership competency. Responses to the leadership question were coded and viewed through transactional, transformational, and servant leadership theoretical lenses to determine similarities and differences in how students and mentors view the competency, leadership. I explored the language mentors and students used while describing

leadership development to help explain the competency gap referred to in chapter one and chapter two. I specifically looked for conceptual versus operational differences in the way students and mentors talk about leadership by coding the narratives using the transactional, transformational, and servant leadership lenses.

### **Institutional Research Review Board**

In a correspondence with an IRB administrator (Nalinee Patin, personal communication, December 18, 2018), I received approval to use the Campus Labs (2019) data to explore the student intern and mentor narratives from the Center for Career and Professional Development internship course. In stating that I would not receive identifiable data (names, student IDs, identifiers) for the study, the Office of Research Compliance staff informed me that a complete IRB application was not necessary (see Appendix B). Since I did not collect prospective data, student names, or IDs, in the export from Campus Labs (2019), I did not need to submit the expedited application form or obtain written consent from the students and mentors. In not receiving access to identifiable data, I also did not have the ability to analyze data based on demographic information.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative research involves examining materials produced by participants wanting to tell a story (Squire, 2013). The narrative analysis process explores people's values, desires, beliefs, and theories about specific circumstances in their lives (Bruner, 1991, p. 7). Defina and Georgakopoulou (2015) stated, "the idea of narrative as a mode of understanding is its retrospective dimension, that is, the fact that narratives always and

necessarily entails looking backward, from some present moment, and seeing in the movement of events episodes that are part of some larger whole" (p. 27).

Using historical data like essays and final evaluations allowed me to examine how student interns and mentors understand leadership. The Center for Career and Professional Development's internship course final evaluations were the data source for this study. The University's Institutional Research Review Board considers student intern and mentor responses historical information, and all data was de-identified as part of the IRB approval process. Data was stored in Campus Labs (2019) and contained open-ended responses for each of the eight career-readiness competencies, including leadership.

After collecting the data within final evaluation responses, Squire (2013) conveyed that the next step is to analyze the data for featured themes within the records. As Defina and Georgakopoulou (2015) argued, "it stands to reason that we might at times want to look at people, at the lives of real human beings, and there is no more sensible way of doing so than through the stories they tell, whether big, small, or in-between" (p. 28). Hence, narrative analysis works well for investigating the career-readiness gap in this instance because the student interns and employers are responding to the final evaluation questions via telling a story about their experience.

As an intended narrative analysis outcome, the language we use in storytelling can be approached not only as a demonstration of our thoughts but also as an insight into our cultural norms (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). In other words, culture involves many complex influences, generational gaps, and socioeconomic disparities that affect the way a storyteller perceives the world. What is more, ethnic differences, discourse,

uncertainties, and intertextualities can be revealed through the words we use in our narrations (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 59). Succinctly put by Andrews et al. (2008), "Stories have truths rather than a single truth" (p. 59). As such, narrative research is useful for topics like the career competencies gap. Narrative analysis is useful for topics that are not typically discussed fully (Squire, 2013). Stated differently, with values, beliefs, and norms being cognitive products, culture can be viewed as a cognitive product (Clandinin, 2007). Exploring stories helps to explore place-and-time, culture and subculture, and generational variances. Multiple stories describing the same circumstances can look very different based on cognition and perspective.

Of narrative analysis, DeFina and Georgakopoulou (2015) reported, "It is also often qualitative rather than quantitative and seeks to take into account the cultural situatedness of human lives" (p. 29). They stress the importance of looking at values, norms, and beliefs. DeFina and Georgakopoulou (2015) stated:

What all this suggests is that portions of narrative inquiry are as close to literature as to science, at least as traditionally conceived, and that we ourselves need not only to be researchers, dispassionate data-gatherers, but ethnographers and writers, better attuned to cultural context, better able to see how this context has been woven into the fabric of both living and telling, and, not least, better able to draw upon the poetic power of language in conveying the ambiguity, messiness, and potential beauty of people's lives. (p. 29)

Bruner (1991) described the qualitative researcher as an investigator employing a wide array of skillsets from multiple expertise areas. Rather than thinking about data



from a strictly quantitative perspective, tools from disciplines like linguistics, education, sociology, psychology, and political science are used as part of the narrative analysis process. As a final note on the matter, this multi-disciplined approach to my study aligns with my epistemology beliefs of *interpretivism*.

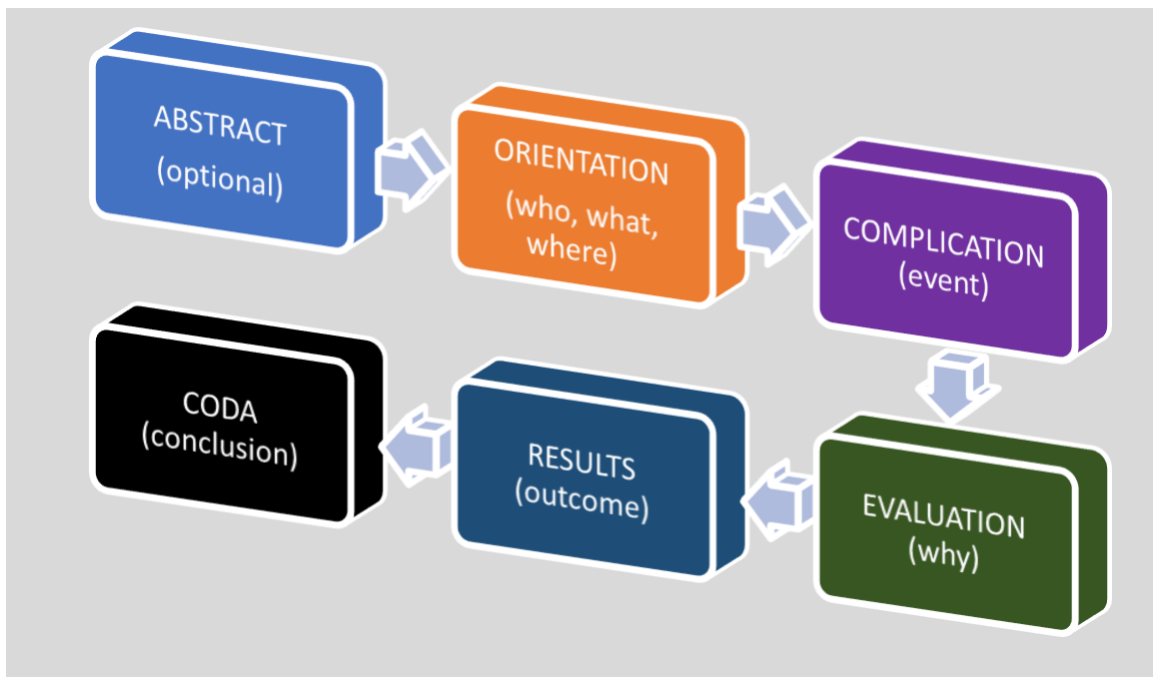
### **History of Narrative Analysis**

Narrative research has roots stemming back to Aristotle's work in rhetoric, literacy, and folklore (Propp, 2010). Labov's scholarly efforts in 1972 are viewed as the seminal work pioneering the "study of oral personal narratives through the examination of the interface between cultural and linguistic issues" (DeFina & Georgakopoulou, 2015, p. 79). Labov and Waletzky proposed a model of narrative work in 1967 which was a pivotal point for Labov's scholarly efforts on the topic. The concept of *narrative analysis* was later developed and refined by Labov in a 1972 publication, *Language in the Inner City* (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 119). DeFina and Georgakopoulou (2015) explained, "Labov shifted a paradigm from an isolated linguistic form (i.e., syntax or the grammatical sentences of a language) to a linguistic form in human context" (p. 79). The focus moved from analyzing grammatical structures of the sentence to analyzing the cognitive sentiment of the sentence.

Labov published his narrative model as a sociolinguistic approach and focused on how "some questions seem to obtain more causal, natural speech patterns because speakers become more personally involved in what they were saying" (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 43). Through Labov's influence on the narrative analysis and Cortazzi's comments on providing an effective platform to tell a person's story, we can recognize and provide a

linguistic account of narrative structure. Labov and Cortazzi provided a mechanism for storytellers and researchers to explore, "what happened and why it is worth telling" (Bruner, 1991, p. 12).

Labov's sociolinguistic model (see Figure 3.1) had the six stages of: (a) Abstract (optional), (b) Orientation (who what, where), (c) Complication (the occurrence/situation), (d) Evaluation (why is it important), (e) Result (outcome), and (f) CODA (conclusion of story).



*Figure 3.2. A sociolinguistic model for analyzing a narrative*

A second sociological model leveraging fewer stages came into practice shortly thereafter (Bruner, 1991). Goffman's framework model for narrative analysis (see Figure 3.2) is considered the second seminal approach from the same time era, and the technique is known for moving through four stages: (a) a proposal from the storyteller, (b) an

acceptance from the listener, (c) narrative from the storyteller, and (d) receipt from the listener (Bruner 1991).

Speaker Role	Indexical Devices That Instantiate the Role
	5. Shifts to a second person pronoun in otherwise first person narration. (O'Connor, 1994) 6. Laughter (Jefferson, 1984) 7. Gasps 8. Interjections that contribute only to indexing affect, and not to reference. (Jakobson, 1960; Goffman, 1978/1981) 9. Sighs Ex., <i>et puis j'sais plus c'que, trop c'qu'elle m'a dit</i> and then I don't remember what, too much <i>what she said to me</i>
<i>Narrator/Interlocutory</i> Narration with embedded interlocutory commentary. Laminates markers of current interlocutory stance on to narration of plot.	Ex., <i>e ela chega-se só ao pé de mim, e cada uma, levei tantas naquele dia</i> and she comes <i>right up to me, and each one (blow), I really got it on that day</i>
<u>Character</u> Performance of characters in direct quotation; deictics no longer point to reporting, but to reported event.	Ex., <i>puis, j' fais, 'Quais chuis allée r'acheter ton cadeau' then, I'm like, 'Yeah, I went to buy you your present'</i>
<u>Narrator/Character</u> Performance of characters in indirect quotation. Indirect quotation/free indirect discourse: deictics point to reporting event.	Ex., <i>elle m'a demandé où j'étais allée</i> she asked me <i>where I'd gone.</i>
<u>Interlocutory/Character</u> Fusion of current stance with that of quoted character. Segments where one could attribute speech to both here-and-now speaker and to performed character.	Ex., <i>e depois ela, 'Onde é que tu foste, não sei o quê, ganana. 'and then she [said], 'where were you, blabla, blabla.'</i>

SOURCE: From *Selves in Two Languages: Bilinguals' Verbal Enactments of Identity in French and Portuguese* (pp. 102–103), by M. Koven, 2007, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Figure 3.3. Goffman's four-stages used for collecting and analyzing narrative

From *Selves in two languages: Bilinguals' verbal enactments of identify in French and Portuguese* (pp 102-103), by M. Koven, 2007, Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Reprinted with permission.

The summary of narrative analysis' past should not be left without mentioning two other significant historical factoids. Firstly, Ginsburg is mentioned as a renowned anthropologist that focuses on the sequence in which stories are told rather than the timeline of the actual story. The strategy was considered different from traditional ethnographic approaches and helped to lay the foundation for the modern-day narrative analysis (Reissman, 1993, p. 27). Ginsburg's work facilitated looking at narration differently, moving away from simply reporting a story's timeline and towards interpreting the psychology behind the text and the sequencing of the storytelling.

Secondly, narrative analysis has experienced some inconsistent use over the last half-century. The technique's credibility was questioned right before the turn of the twenty-first century due to overuse and use-without-caution by researchers (Sartwell, 2000, p. 67). Applying narrative analysis to investigations outside the scholarly world, as well as, straying from research-based investigative practices diluted the techniques' respect amongst the academic community. With that, the technique failed to spread into other disciplines, stifling its growth, development, and popularity in the twenty-first century (Sartwell, 2000). Described in depth in a later portion of this chapter, I borrow strategies from other research methods to help combat some of narrative analysis' credibility and trustworthiness concerns that arose before the turn of the twenty-first century.

### **Alignment with Interpretivism**

As a defining trait of the technique, narrative analysis is about the language associated with a storyteller's effort and how the storyteller relays the importance of a

specific situation (Clandinin, 2007). In addition, narrative analysis is about a listener's extraction of meaning from that storyteller's situation. Bruner (1991) reported, "The acceptability of a narrative obviously cannot depend on its correctly referring to reality; else there would be no fiction. Realism in fiction must then indeed be a literary convention rather than a matter of correct reference. Narrative "truth" is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability" (p. 13). Stated differently, identifying and examining the distinctions in peoples' stories help to construct truth. The subjectivity of each person's story is rooted in time, place, and personal experience (Reissman, 1993). A student intern's truth about leadership development is likely different from a mentor's truth about leadership development, but one does not negate the other.

This distinction of exploring individuals' unique perspectives is central to the students' career competency language versus employers' career competency language investigation. In telling about their experience, storytellers create a sense of self...how they view the world, and how they would like to be viewed by the world (Clandinin, 2007). Each story, taken individually and then collectively, can begin to reveal patterns about the storyteller's group or subculture. For example, college students' space-and-time is described differently than employers' space-and-time. DeFina and Georgakopoulou (2015) recounted, "Analysts wish to take account of the fact that, while the interaction is contingent and locally produced, it is influenced and shaped by these large social processes" (p. 131). How student interns describe competency development will continue to be different than how employers describe competency development, thus perpetuating the career-readiness gap between students and employers.

Being mindful a participants' background, their heritage, and how they have developed as a member of their society helps to situate the conversation. Andrews et al. (2008) reported, "Indeed, recognition of the importance of the local and wider social contexts means that it is possible to see the preoccupations of the narrator and the identity claims they make" (p. 74). Narratives are representations, and the narrative analysis "offers the comfort of a long tradition of interpretive inquiry" (Reissman, 1993, p. 61).

Moreover, as an interpretive inquiry on college students' and employers' narratives, Reissman situated the narrative analysis in the epistemological camp *interpretivism*. Those space/time orientations revealed in storytelling are never neutral social affairs, but rather expressions of social context or class distinction (Harvey, 1989). Defina and Georgakopoulou (2015) said, "The aforementioned definition also illustrates the nature of cultural psychology, stipulating that social interactions are culturally constrained" (p. 77). The distinction of how two people, two groups, or two generations view the same experience is a fundamental part of *interpretivism*.

### **Mechanics of Narrative Analysis**

Within narrative analysis, options for collecting data include: (a) using data that exists already (written, media, naturally occurring conversations), (b) asking people for their stories (interviewing), (c) and using semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Squire, 2013). This study leverages course final evaluation results that fall into the first option of existing data, hence my use of the term *historical narrative analysis* throughout this paper.

Squire's text also reiterates the fact that there is no one way to conduct a narrative analysis. There are many different approaches to leveraging narrative analysis as Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2008) stated:

Some have argued that coherence should be the criterion – the narrative must hang together – but what does this mean? Does coherence depend on temporal ordering, or can a narrative be organized in other ways? Must there be a neat beginning, middle and end? As narrative researchers, we can limit our interpretive horizons when we carry the criterion of logical consistency too far. (p. 82)

Some parameters help guide the narrative analysis process. For example, recording, taping, and transcribing are all considered essential tools of narrative analysis (Reissman, 1993). It is up to the researcher to select, reduce, and transcribe the stories as part of the second step of leveraging these tools. Because of these processes, "meaning is fluid and contextual" (Reissman, 1993, p. 15). Even with historical narrations such as the data used in my study, it is the researcher's interpretation of the storyteller's understanding of the world that defines the narrative analysis technique.

A narrative analysis best practice involves employing interview questions that open subject matters and allow participants to develop their answers fully (Clandinin, 2007). Open-ended questions are an example of how to accomplish this best practice. Likewise, it is not recommended to use restrictive or limiting questions that limit responses. The storyteller should feel compelled to "convince a listener who was not there that something important happened" (Reissman, 1993, p. 20). Thus, the open-ended questions in the internship course final evaluation encourage respondents to explore their

answers in more than one-sentence responses. Longer narrations provide more content to analyze for transactional, transformational, and servant leadership themes.

Labov (1972) supported the notion that using at least 30 participants was significant enough of a sample size to produce sufficient results for a narrative analysis. I used this 30-participant sample size precedent to help determine how many samples to pull from the internship final evaluation dataset. Employing randomized sampling techniques, I analyzed data from 15 students and 15 mentors.

During the transcription and reporting phase of the process, appropriate formatting and organizing are also key elements to best practices. DeFina and Georgakopoulou (2015) stated, “transcripts should be formatted following the guidelines of Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT), so that they were readable by the computer program Computerized Language Analysis (CLAN)” (p. 82). The content needs to be organized in a way that reflects a sequential thought and timeline. For example, Labov included: (a) an abstract of narrative (what is it about), (b) orientation to who/when/where, (c) a complicating action (or key pivotal text in the narrative), (c) evaluation of the "so what", and finally, (d) the results (Andrew et al., 2008, p. 26). Labov coded the five themes as [A], [O], [CA], [E], and [R]. Following a similar protocol of organization and sequential thought, my codes, *transactional*, *transformational*, *servant*, and *unknown*, are explained later in this chapter.

A narrative analysis needs to be presented in a fashion that helps demonstrate validity. Reissman (1993) outlined four steps to validate narrative work: (a) *persuasiveness*, (b) *correspondence*, (c) *coherence*, and (d) *pragmatism*. *Persuasiveness*



addresses the question, "Is the interpretation reasonable and convincing?" (Reissman, 1993, p. 65). It is important to recognize again that the "truth" is situated in space and time. Student interns and employers can describe the same competency development story in very different fashions.

In the second step of *correspondence*, the researcher is encouraged to take the findings back to the participants for confirmation. This confirmation step is one of the more difficult steps of Reissman's validity structure and almost impossible for me since all names and identifiers are removed before I review the data.

*Coherence*, the third step, is an effort to ensure the message stays consistent throughout the story and the timespan. For this step, I looked at final evaluations from multiple semesters to help increase coherence. The wide breadth of majors represented in the internship course will also help with coherence and generalizability.

Lastly, *pragmatism* indicates the need to be transparent in the data collection, storage, and interpretation activities. For my study, final evaluation responses from student interns and their mentors were collected and stored using the assessment software, Campus Labs (2019). Further explanations about Campus Labs data collection and storage are found in an earlier portion of chapter three.

### **Narrative Analysis Over Discourse Analysis**

Narrative analysis gives voice to peoples' expressions and identity, uses large amounts of data to group those voices, and sequentially develops themes based on the stories told (Squire, 2013). This process is different from the collective and thematic research technique known as *discourse analysis*. As opposed to the narrative analysis

approach, discourse analysis specifically focuses on small segments of discourse or disagreement across an interview. Squire (2013) pointed out that narrative analysis is better situated for looking at large scale structures compared to the micro level approach of discourse analysis (Squire 2013). The approach helps to, "examine the informants' stories and analyzes how they are put together, the linguistic and cultural resources they draw on, and how they persuade a listener of authenticity" (Reissman, 1993, p. 2).

There are some similarities between narrative analysis and discourse analysis, though. Not unlike discourse analysis, narrative analysis "requires attention to subtlety: nuances of speech, the organization of a response, local contexts of production, social discourses that shape what is said, and what cannot be spoken" (Reissman, 1993, p. 69). Moreover, both techniques explore: (a) the organization of the story, (b) why a participant develops the story in a specific way, and (c) what implied thoughts are not told through the storytelling process (Reissman, 1993, p. 61).

### **Further Narrative Analysis Considerations**

As a signature trait of the research technique, narrative analysis is co-constructed data between the researchers and the participants (Andrews et al., 2008). Riessman (1993) acknowledged, "a personal narrative is not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror of a world or historical truth. Narrativization assumes a point of view" (p. 64). Narratives of the same event can be constructed differently based on the individual's perspective that is narrating (Chafe, 1980). As part of that storyteller-listener relationship, sometimes the content within the story is lost or reduced during the delivery phase, and frequently there are multiple ways to consume the content during the

recording phase. Reissman (1993) reported, "it is naïve to think one can just present the story without some systematic method of reduction" (p. 43). Additionally, Cortazzi stated, "there is no explicit method of moving narrative text to the understanding of its significance" (1993, p. 35). As with any research technique, there are assumed risks and inherent flaws in the narrative analysis process.

Narrative analysis is also not the best strategy to employ when language barriers surface (Defina & Georgakopoulou, 2015). In chapter two, I acknowledged that westernization bias has crept into some of the previously used career readiness tools. Technologies have helped to reduce some of the challenges associated with language barriers during the interview process, but Andrews et al. (2008) reminds us that sentiment can be lost or inappropriately interpreted during the interview process. The internship course instructors addressed this concern in stating all non-native English-speaking participants were required to pass a language proficiency exam for entrance into the university (Clemson University, 2019). Subsequently, all non-native English-speaking participants were required to pass a language proficiency exam for enrollment in the zero-credit internship course.

There should be no language barriers observed in the internship course final evaluation results. In addition, I heeded the advice from the internship course instructor to continually examine the relational aspects of the work, the participants, and the research, especially as it relates to sensitive issues like mental illnesses, Title IX concerns, and other unsafe working environments (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 135). Even though I examined historical narrations, I was mindful to exclude unnecessary and

inappropriate content in my results. I also contacted the course instructors if I read any narratives referencing harm-to-self or harm-to-others. Again, the concerns that narrative analysis is not the best strategy for research involving language barriers or sensitive topics will not be problematic in this study.

As a last note on narrative investigation considerations, it should be pointed out that, "within a strictly Labovian analysis, there is no allowance made for the inevitably partial and constructed nature of any account of personal experience" (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 30). Firmly adhering to the Labovian approach impedes the investigation, and some types of data become lost. Andrews et al. (2008) reported, "focusing solely on chronologically ordered past tense clauses, analyzing them in isolation from the rest of the transcript, and taking no account of the context in which, the narrative was produced, can only produce an overly simplistic, reductive analysis and interpretation" (p. 32).

Leveraging techniques that are similar to the narrative analysis and utilizing new technologies and investigative practices only helps to enrich the results of my study. Specifically, using tools employed with the critical incident technique and Saldana's pragmatic descriptive methods of qualitative coding will help to alleviate the concerns of using a non-contextual, strictly Labovian, narrative analysis.

### **Critical Incident Technique**

Reissman (1993) reported, "there is no single method of narrative analysis but a spectrum of approaches to texts that take the narrative form" (p. 25). Mixing and matching inquiry strategies and traditions employed by similar research methods help build trustworthiness and lessens some of the criticisms of narrative analysis (Butterfield,

Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005, p. 481). More pointedly, Butterfield et al. (2005) said, "even though there is a lack of literature regarding standards or recommended ways to instill trustworthiness, a few suggested tactics are to use multiple reviewers, drawing different samples from the same population" (p. 485). To help instill trustworthiness, I used a mix of inquiry strategies in this study.

Specifically, I used inquiry strategies from the popular method known as a *critical incident technique* for this study. As Butterfield et al. (2005) claimed, "The CIT has become a widely used qualitative research method and today is recognized as an effective exploratory and investigative tool" p. 475). To further add to the versatility of the technique, Douglas, Douglas, McClellan, and Davis (2015) observed that, "very few changes had been made to the original technique made popular by Flanagan, and scholars regard the critical incident technique as both valid and reliable" (p. 333). Moreover, CIT should be thought of as a flexible set of principles that can be modified and adapted to meet any number of settings (Flanagan, 1954, p. 335). Critical incident technique provides me the stability of an inquiry strategy with a longstanding history while also pairing nicely with the narrative analysis technique.

Flanagan (1954) defined a critical incident as, "an incident that must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects" (p. 327). The critical incident technique associated with those critical incidents are meant to explore significant moments in a person's timeline that, in turn, help to set parameters for even larger ideas or themes.

The critical incident technique is particularly fitting for the analysis of intern and mentor final evaluation exam narratives, "given that the technique involves asking respondents to recall and describe a story about something they have experienced" (DeFina & Georgakopoulou, 2015, p. 333). Through this process of letting students and mentors describe their experiences as the reporting of behavior-based facts, the researcher's interpretations and opinions are more likely to be avoided in the study (Flanagan, 1954, p. 355). In doing so, Flanagan (1954) stated, "reporting can be limited to those behaviors which make a significant contribution to the activity" (p. 355).

In mixing and matching methods, I used another critical incident strategy that focuses on the length of open-ended responses. As Reissman (1993) stated when describing some of the challenges associated with a narrative analysis, "there is no standard set of procedures compared to some forms of qualitative analysis" (p. 54). This challenge includes setting parameters for an appropriate length of a response. Even with the open-ended questions, some of the responses initially collected for the internship final evaluation competency questions were only a few words in length. Looking to the critical incident technique for guidance on the minimum number of words to yield a quality anecdote (narrative), Douglas et al. (2015) suggested, "a word length average of just over 30 words, although some had exceeded 100 words" (p. 333). Therefore, I only examine responses with at least 30 words.

Flanagan (1954) outlined five main procedural steps for effectively conducting the critical incident technique (CIT). Those steps including defining the: (a) general aims, (b) plans and specifications, (c) collection of data, (d) analysis of data, and (e)

interpretation and reporting strategies. I apply each of these procedural steps while looking at how student interns and mentors describe leadership development.

### **General Aims: First CIT Procedural Step**

Flanagan (1954) said, "No planning and no evaluation of specific behaviors are possible without a general statement of objectives" (p. 336). Butterfield et al., (2005) further explains the CIT approach with two clarifying questions (p. 478). One question focuses on the objectives of the activity, while the second question focuses on the expected accomplishments for the person engaged in that objective-based activity. For my study, analyzing student and mentor leadership narratives to determine situational differences is the objective of the research. I hope to find differences in the way student interns and mentors talk about the career competency, leadership, and thus encourage further investigative work and programming to reduce the career-readiness gap.

### **Plans and Specifications: Second CIT Procedural Step**

Of planning a study, Flanagan (1954) stated this, "One of the primary aims of scientific techniques is to ensure objectivity for the observations being made and reported. Such agreement by independent observers can only be attained if they are all following the same set of rules. It is essential that these rules be clear and specific" (p. 339).

Although I am using existing questions and data, clearly defined directions that ask students and mentors about a specific leadership development experience within the internship timeframe helps to frame the objective. Likewise, using existing research that describes leadership theories, keywords, and related phrases helps to reduce confusion.

Finally, ensuring that the interface is in a user-friendly format additionally supports the reduction of confusion.

### **Collecting Data: Third CIT Procedural Step**

Butterfield et al. (2005) restated CIT's "four ways of obtaining recalled data in the form of critical incidents" (p. 478). Among those listed as acceptable forms, questionnaires allow for collecting a large amount of data quickly, but Butterfield et al. (2005) warned that the collection needs to be specified and secure. Staying consistent with these data collection guidelines, all of the directions, questions, and responses associated with the internship final evaluation were disseminated to student interns and mentors, collected from student interns and mentors, and stored for later analysis using the data analytics software, Campus Labs (2019).

### **Analyzing Data: Fourth Procedural Step**

On the fourth procedural step listed as analyzing data, Butterfield et al. (2005) stated:

This necessitates navigating through three primary stages: (1) determining the frame of reference, which generally arises from the use that is to be made of the data (e.g., the frame of reference for evaluating on-the-job effectiveness is entirely different from that required for selection or training purposes); (2) formulating the categories (an inductive process that involves insight, experience, and judgment); and (3) determining the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the data. (p. 479)



In navigating these three steps, I employed Saldana's prescriptive measures for data analysis. The pragmatic approach to viewing values, attitudes, and beliefs will be covered later in this chapter.

### **Interpreting and Reporting: Fifth CIT Procedural Step**

In discussing the last procedural step of interpreting and reporting data, Flanagan (1954) claimed, "In many cases, the real errors are made not in the collection and analysis of the data but in the failure to interpret them properly" (p. 345). Addressed further in chapter five of my study, the results are interpreted and described as precisely as possible with the goal of using the sample to generalize "to all groups of this type" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 346).

The critical incident technique was used in this study to explore how respondents recall and describe a meaningful story about leadership, and Butterfield et al. (2005) claimed that mixing and matching inquiry research methods strengthens a study design (p. 481). To that end, using Saldana's values, attitudes and beliefs technique helps to add a practical structure and layering in my work. Whereas the critical incident technique can be used to explore the complexity and depth of responses, Saldana's first and second cycle coding help with grouping the responses.

### **Saldana's Techniques on Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs**

Focusing on Saldana's pragmatic qualitative data analysis techniques, I addressed the fundamentals for coding data, categorizing, developing themes, and pattern identification in this portion of chapter three (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). I used techniques borrowed from Saldana's work on values, attitudes, and beliefs to help to

guide my narrative analysis efforts. Saldana (2014) addresses the importance of first cycle codes as a starting point. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana defined codes as, “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during s study” (p.71).

Codes are typically linked to chunks of data and can be of varying size and complexity (Miles et al., 2014), but the labels coupled with codes are typically descriptive and categorical. Coding is the analytical process of qualitative research and much more than preparatory, technical work. Miles et al. (2014) clarified, “Whether codes are prespecified or developed along the way, clear operational definitions are indispensable so they can be applied consistently over time” (p. 84). Coding requires deep reflection, interpretation, and meaning-making from the researcher. Of coding, Miles et al. (2014), had this to say, “Codes are primarily, but not exclusively, used to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme” (p. 72). Analysis and conclusions can then follow the process of chunking, clustering, and grouping data.

As a step within the coding process, data condensation is the act of retrieving the most meaningful material, chunking data based on thematic content, and then further condensing the content into analyzable parts (Miles et al., 2014). Coding is naturally heuristic because of this intimate and interpretive process. Codes must also be precise, and their meaning must be shared amongst analysts. Accuracy in sharing content will “help drive the retrieval and organization of the data for analysis” (Miles et al., 2014, p.

84). For example, TRANSACTIONAL is a First Cycle code I use in this study to refer to transactional leadership.

Miles et al. (2014) also stated, “not every portion of the field notes or interview transcripts must be coded” (p. 86). As with any narrative analysis, some content is not relevant to the research question and can be isolated as such during the coding process. Effectively employing first cycle coding techniques to exclude trivial, useless, dross data only helped to produce efficient second cycle coding steps and final analysis efforts.

### **First Cycle Coding**

First cycle codes were the identifiers initially assigned to data chunks (Miles et al., 2014). In reading through narratives and identifying chunks of informative data, first cycle coding is used to begin organizing and clustering pieces of data within a single narration. To organize and cluster the data there are three *elemental methods* employed during the first cycle of coding. They are: (a) In Vivo, (b) process coding, and (c) descriptive coding. I used descriptive coding for this study, because I already knew the synonyms and thematic language associated with the leadership theories. In Vivo’s use of words or short phrases to code participants’ language was not helpful. Process coding, or the “use of gerunds to connote observable and conceptual action” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 75), was also not useful in this study.

Descriptive coding is the best first cycle coding method for this study. Instead of In Vivo or process coding, descriptive coding assigns labels to data that “summarize the basic topic in a word or short phrase” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 74). Descriptive coding was the first cycle coding technique employed in this study. As

Saldana points out, this strategy helps to provide an inventory of categories and indexes that streamline the second cycle coding.

Moreover, since I already have a conceptual framework that I looked for in the data, leadership type, I used *deductive* coding as the elemental, descriptive method (Miles et al., 2014, p. 81). This provisional “start list” of codes aligning with my pre-identified, key variables is different from the progressive, emerging codes method known as *inductive* coding. As part of the coding process, sub-coding is the act of tagging second-order assignments. Miles et al. (2014) stated, “The method is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for content analysis. Sub-coding is also appropriate when general code entries will later require more extensive indexing, categorizing and subcategorizing into hierarchies or taxonomies” (p.80).

Since my first cycle and second cycle coding use the same descriptive leadership codes, adding the second layer of sub-coding based on numerical identifications helped to quickly and efficiently search for data during the analysis process. Consequently, my descriptive, deductive, first cycle codes consist of four categorizations: (a) TRANSACTIONAL1, (b) TRANSFORMATIONAL1, (c) SERVANT1, and (d) UNKNOWN1.

A few coding keywords used for transactional leadership are: (a) structure, (b) reward, (c) outcome, (d) goal, (e) punish, (f) chastise, (g) discipline, (h) penalize, (i) reprimand, (j) correct, (k) compensate, (l) incentive, (m) result, (n) structure, and (o) produce (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Lievens et al., 1997). Anytime language, phrases, or synonymous text were aligned with these concepts, they were thematically grouped, or

*chunked*, and then coded on the same spreadsheet row and adjacent column, TRANSACTIONAL1. Each subsequent chunk read and coded follows the first cycle coding series, TRANSACTIONAL1.1, TRANSACTIONAL1.2, and TRANSACTIONAL1.3.

A few coding keywords used for transformational leadership are: (a) inspire, (b) stimulate, (c) encourage, (d) motivate, (e) persuade, (f) influence, (g) charisma, (h) charm, (i) appeal, (j) captivate, (k) change, (l) transform, (m) revolutionize, (n) personal, (o) vision, and (p) individual attention (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Anytime language, phrases, or synonymous text were aligned with these concepts, they were thematically grouped, or *chunked*, and then coded on the same spreadsheet row and adjacent column, TRANSFORMATIONAL1. Each subsequent chunk read and coded followed the first cycle coding series, TRANSFORMATIONAL1.1, TRANSFORMATIONAL1.2, and TRANSFORMATIONAL1.3.

Coding keywords for servant leadership are: (a) community, (b) selflessness, (c) equality, (d) moral, and (e) integrity (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011). Anytime language, phrases, or synonymous text can be aligned with these concepts, they were thematically grouped, or *chunked*, and then coded on the same spreadsheet row and adjacent column, SERVANT1. Each subsequent chunk read and coded followed the first cycle coding series, SERVANT1.1, SERVANT1.2, and SERVANT1.3.

Lastly, some content within the leadership question responses might not easily be categorized into the transactional, transformational, or servant leadership groupings, but the content might still be identified as relevant. The focal point of the sentence may

potentially have powerful leadership competency implications. Implications and the focal point of these chunks of data might need to be reevaluated and further analyzed at a later date. Anytime language, phrases, or synonymous text can be aligned with these unknown leadership concepts, they were thematically grouped, or *chunked*, and then coded on the same spreadsheet row and adjacent column, UNKNOWN1. Each subsequent chunk coded followed the first cycle coding series, UNKNOWN1.1, UNKNOWN1.2, and UNKNOWN1.3.

### **Second Cycle Coding**

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) compared the second cycle coding leveraged by qualitative researchers to “the cluster analytic and factor analytics devices used in statistical analysis” by quantitative researchers (p. 86). Second cycle coding is a way of grouping summaries from first cycle codes into more meaningful units of analysis. I can consolidate categories, themes, and constructs from the first cycle into meta-code.

There are four functions associated with second cycle coding, or what is also known as pattern coding (Miles et al., 2014). Those functions are:

1. Condensing large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytics units
2. Getting the research into analysis during data collection, so that the later fieldwork can be more focused
3. Helping the researcher elaborate on a cognitive map and the evolution of a more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions

4. For multi-case studies, laying the groundwork for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes. (p. 86)

Applying these functions to this study, I used the second cycle or pattern coding to consolidate the multiple first cycle codes associated with the chunking down to a single secondary code for each narration. By categorizing an overall code for each narration, I was able to better focus my analysis work on overall themes when comparing student intern responses to mentor responses. As outlined in function three, I also used the second step pattern coding to develop a transparent cognitive map during the analysis process. This step helped to create more succinct visual representations and matrixes of the study.

I determined an overall sense of leadership style based on first cycle coding for each narrative. In looking at the individual chunks for a narrative, responses that could collectively be aligned with transactional leadership were labeled TRANSACTIONAL2. Each subsequent secondary cycle coded as transactional leadership followed the series, TRANSACTIONAL2.1, TRANSACTIONAL2.2, and TRANSACTIONAL2.3.

Following that same pattern, responses that could collectively be aligned with transformational leadership were labeled TRANSFORMATIONAL2. Each subsequent secondary cycle coded as transformational leadership followed the series, TRANSFORMATIONAL2.1, TRANSFORMATIONAL 2.2, and TRANSFORMATIONAL 2.3. Responses that were collectively aligned with servant leadership were labeled SERVANT2. Each subsequent secondary cycle coded as servant leadership followed the series, SERVANT2.1, SERVANT2.2, and SERVANT2.3. Some

content within the leadership question responses were not easily categorized into the transactional, transformational, or servant leadership groupings, but they might be perceived as having leadership attributes. Those unknown leadership responses were labeled UNKNOWN2. Each subsequent secondary cycle coded followed the series, UNKNOWN2.1, UNKNOWN2.2, and UNKNOWN2.3.

After completing the secondary cycle coding process, I utilized a matrix in the form of a spreadsheet to illustrate the data. Utilizing a matrix display helped me “organize the vast array of condensed materials into an at-a-glance format for reflection, verification, conclusion drawing, and other analytical acts” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 91). The matrix was also more conducive to the categorical-type coding I conducted versus the course mapping or diagram matrix that is better situated in process flow or thought-route mapping.

As previously mentioned, using the two similar techniques, critical incident technique and Saldana’s values, attitudes and beliefs, strengthened my narrative study. Specifically, the versatility in these techniques assisted in increasing validity and trustworthiness. Whereas the critical incident technique helped to reveal the complexity and depth in the extended narrative responses, Saldana’s technique helped to provide practical structure and visual aids via the first and second cycle coding matrix.

### **Validity, Authenticity, Trustworthiness and Reliability**

I utilized several measures to assist with authenticity, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. Firstly, there is a risk of committing an external validity error by using a single institution and a single course rubric (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002), but I



alleviated some concern by starting with a data set of over 2,000 responses that was then used to randomly select a Labovian significant sample size of 15 mentors and 15 students (DeFina & Georgakopoulou, 2015).

I also created more authenticity within this qualitative study by employing consistency in the participation type, evaluation dissemination type, and question type. I accomplish this consistency by leveraging a single zero-credit hour internship course rubric. Using the trusted, secure, and popular Campus Labs (2019) helped address the false identifications, researcher bias, and miscount challenges mentioned by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). Similarly, these steps improved trustworthiness and reliability.

Lastly, employing two complementary narrative analysis techniques, critical incident technique and Saldana's values, attitudes and beliefs technique, further strengthened the authenticity and trustworthiness of my study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The critical incident technique helped to reveal the complexity and depth in extended narrative responses housing over 30 words. Douglas et al. (2015) referred to the 30-word minimum limit as a "both valid and reliable" practice for the critical incident technique (p. 333). Then, combining an interpretivism epistemology, multiple semesters worth of data, Campus Labs technology, and Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs technique helped further alleviate concerns by addressing Reissman's (1993) (a) persuasiveness, (b) correspondence, (c) coherence, and (d) pragmatism steps of narrative validation.

## **Researcher's Relationship with the Topic**

Leveraging a master's degree in guidance and counseling with a concentration in student affairs and a master's degree in human resource development, I currently serve as the chief solutions officer for Clemson University's nationally ranked Center for Career and Professional Development. The Center for Career and Professional Development has been ranked by Princeton Review Rankings (Princeton Review, 2018) as a top ten career services office for over ten consecutive years. The Center is listed as number one in career services for three of those years. Also, approximately 20 to 30 higher education institutions from across the country visit the office or conference call with the staff each year to benchmark services, experiential education programs, and career readiness initiatives.

Working in career services and experiential education since 2000, I have built on-campus, off-campus, and international internship programs that have received national attention and rankings as experiential education best practices. In 2015, the Center for Career and Professional Development's leadership team worked together to develop new strategies and blueprints for keeping career services relevant in the twenty-first century. NACE had similar discussions occurring at the same time, and these congruent conversations evolved into the competency and career readiness initiatives outlined in this research study.

In collaboration with the University of Tampa's career services professionals and the staff members at NACE, Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development leadership team hosted over 100 institutions for the first career competency

symposium in 2017. Since that inaugural gathering, the symposium has become an annual event drawing career services, faculty, and employer participation from across the United States. Within the same timeframe, Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development team has become recognized as a national leader in the career readiness and competencies discussion.

Of the eight competencies outlined by NACE, I focus on leadership in this study partially due to my professional growth and personal interest in the competency as a developing manager. Although I do not align with any of the leadership approaches investigated in this study, I acknowledge that transactional, transformational, and servant leadership are widely cited and researched leadership theories. Instead, I try to emulate *extraordinary leadership* model attributes (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) in my career. The five critical elements under this leadership approach are: (a) modeling the way through observable commitments, (b) inspiring a shared vision with a focus on results, (c) challenging the process through courageous actions, (d) enabling others by building trust, and (e) encouraging the heart via team member celebrations and accountability.

### **Chapter Summary**

In chapter three, I have explained the research design and methodology I used in this study. After a brief statement on the language employers and college student interns use to explain leadership development, I describe the target population for this study via descriptions of the population, sources of data, and Institutional Research Review Board approval process. I reported on narrative analysis and discussed the history of narrative analysis, how narrative analysis aligns with interpretivism, and the basic mechanics of

narrative analysis. Within that same section, I addressed why I chose a narrative analysis over a discourse analysis for this study and what narrative analysis is not intended to accomplish.

I intend to investigate how students and employers view and explain career readiness by studying the language they use to describe competency development. Specifically, I want to identify the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency.

To help investigate this question, I used a narrative analysis technique and the seven supplemental inquiries:

- (a) in what ways do the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with transactional or goal-orientation leadership variables,
- (b) how closely does the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with transformational or meaning-and-purpose leadership variables,
- (c) how closely does the language students use to explain their academic internship experience align with servant or follower-focused leadership variables,
- (d) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with transactional or goal-orientation leadership variables,
- (e) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with transformational or meaning-and-purpose leadership variables,

- (f) how closely does the language mentors use to explain an interns' leadership development align with servant or follower-focused leadership variables, and
- (g) how similar or dissimilar do the mentors' leadership language and student-interns' leadership language used to describe the internship experience align?

By better understanding the similarities and difference associated with the one competency of leadership, a model can be established to further explore how students and employers view proficiencies and gaps for the other seven competencies. Furthermore, by determining what leadership type best aligns with on-campus internship experiences from a college student's perspective and an employer's perspective, mentors and practitioners alike will be able to structure internship programs that best benefit students and their leadership competency needs. As Strong et al. (2013) stated in their encouragement for more leadership-oriented research, "faculty would gain a better understanding of their students and may better understand the leadership experience" (p. 182). Leadership is only one of the eight competencies outlined by NACE, but leadership could serve as a starting point for employers' and academia's much-needed work on closing the career-readiness gap.

I dedicated the latter portion of this chapter to describing critical incident technique's five procedural steps and the first and second cycle coding practices of Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs design. CIT and VAB are both used to supplement the narrative analysis in this study. I concluded chapter three by addressing a few additional comments on validity, authenticity, trustworthiness and reliability. Chapter

four is dedicated to the results of this study, and chapter five is dedicated to the discussion of the findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

#### **Introduction to Findings and Results**

In chapter four, I outline the findings and results of the historic narrative analysis designed to explore how employers and student interns describe leadership development during the internship experience addressed in chapter one. In chapter two, I conducted a literature review on career readiness, internships as a *high impact practice*, and the leadership types known as transactional, transformational, and servant. Chapter three described the methodology associated with this narrative analysis investigation. Furthermore, chapter three describes how I used narrative analysis as the methodology by borrowing from research methods like critical incident technique and Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs.

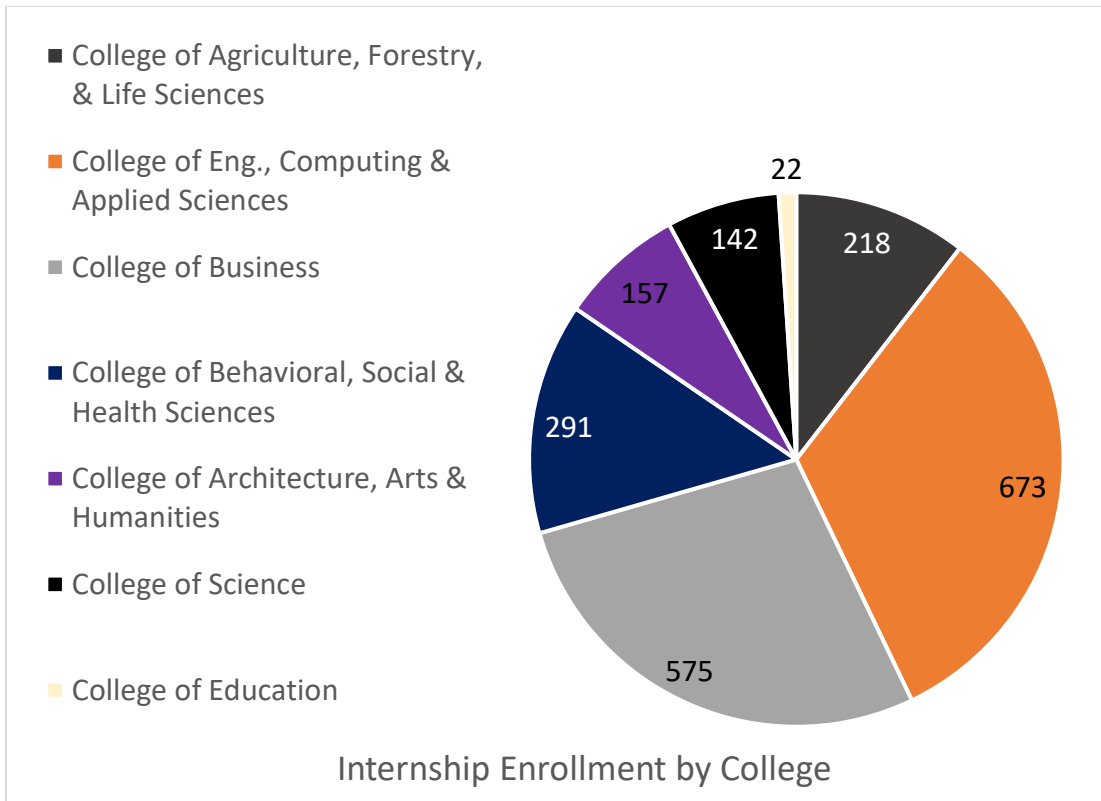
As a step within the narrative analysis coding process, data condensation is the act of retrieving the most meaningful material, chunking data based on thematic content, and then further condensing the content into analyzable parts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In reading through narratives and identifying chunks of informative data, I used first cycle coding to begin organizing and clustering pieces of data within a single narration. I then grouped summaries from the first cycle codes into more meaningful units of analysis to form my second cycle coding. Stated differently, I consolidated categories, themes, and constructs from the first cycle into meta-code for analysis in chapter five.

## **Description of the Data Source**

I used a public, tier one research university located in the southeastern United States as the host site for this study. Housing seven academic colleges in 2018, the undergraduate enrollment at the host institution was 18,599 while the graduate enrollment was 4507 (Clemson University, 2018). Over 78% of all graduating seniors at the host institution participated in experiential education that same year (Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 4), and approximately half of those students enrolled in one of the Center for Career and Professional Development's zero-credit hour, experiential education courses.

The Center for Career and Professional Development internship course represents over 2000 students from each of the 7 colleges. Consisting of the largest internship course enrollments, the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences has approximately 10% representation with 218 enrollment responses, the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Science has 33% representation with 673 enrollment responses, the College of Business has 27% representation with 575 enrollment responses, and the College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences has 14% representation with 291 enrollment responses. Comprising of the smaller numbers in the INT course, the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities has eight percent representation with 157 enrollment responses, the College of Science has seven percent representation with 142 enrollment responses, and the College of Education has one percent representation with 22 enrollment responses (see Figure 4.1).





*Figure 4.1.* Internship course enrollment by college

As seen via these multi-discipline percentages, securing data from the Center for Career and Professional Development internship course will allow for the results to be generalized on a broader scale the multiple disciplines. The Center for Career and Professional Development sample of over 2000 responses produced more generalizable results compared to focusing on specific major or college internship courses. Starting with this large data set of over 2000 responses, I then used random stratified sampling to identify a significant sample size of 30 participants (DeFina & Georgakopoulou, 2015) with narratives housing over 30-words (Douglas et al., 2015). The 30 participants consisted of 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses.

## **The Internship Course**

Since the fall 2017 semester, the Center for Career and Professional Development has used a consistent zero-credit hour internship course final evaluation with identical questions and format (Kathy Horner, personal communication, September 30, 2018). The final evaluation included Likert scale and open-ended questions on each of the competencies. Interns and their mentors were asked to respond on the intern's critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communications, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, and global/intercultural fluency competencies (see Appendix A). As part of the final evaluation, student interns and mentors were asked in an open-ended question to describe why they chose the proficiency rating for the leadership competency. I used the written responses to this question for the narrative analysis.

### **First Cycle Code Findings of the Study**

I applied first cycle and second cycle coding to the 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses using the same leadership codes for both cycles. Adding a second layer of sub-coding based on numerical identifications helped to quickly and efficiently search for data during the analysis process (see Figure 4.2).

STUDENT INTERN RESPONSES		
Student ID	Word/Phrase/Cluster/Chunk	Chunk/First Cycle Code
S1	dedication to courtesy	Unknown1.1
	engaging with the guest	Transformational1.1
	express his/her concerns	Transformational1.2
	learn from each other	Servant1.2
	take each input	Servant1.3
S2	managing	Transactional1.1
	assisted staff	Unknown1.2
S3	providing an example to strive towards	Transformational1.3
	norm of "slacking"	Transactional1.2
	many tough conversations and arm-twisting	Transactional1.3
	norm of *quality*	Transactional1.4
S4	group discussion	Servant1.4
	working in collaboration	Servant1.5
	encouraging others around you	Transformational1.4
	encourage my fellow intern	Transformational1.5
	constructively criticize in the most honest way possible	Servant1.6

*Figure 4.2. First cycle coding sample*

Consequently, my first cycle codes consisted of four categorizations: (a) **TRANSACTIONAL1**, (b) **TRANSFORMATIONAL1**, (c) **SERVANT1**, and (d) **UNKNOWN1**. Subsequently, those first cycle codes were coded in a chronological series including **TRANSACTIONAL1.1**, **TRANSACTIONAL1.2**, **TRANSACTIONAL1.3**, **TRANSFORMATIONAL1.1**, **TRANSFORMATIONAL1.2**,

TRANSFORMATIONAL1.3, SERVANT1.1, SERVANT1.2, SERVANT1.3, UNKNOWN1.1, UNKNOWN1.2, and UNKNOWN1.3. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 student-intern responses, there were 16 transactional leadership codes, 13 transformational leadership codes, 18 servant leadership codes, and 6 unknown leadership codes (see Figure 4.3). Of the first cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 8 transactional leadership codes, 5 transformational leadership codes, 2 servant leadership codes, and 9 unknown leadership codes (see Figure 4.3).

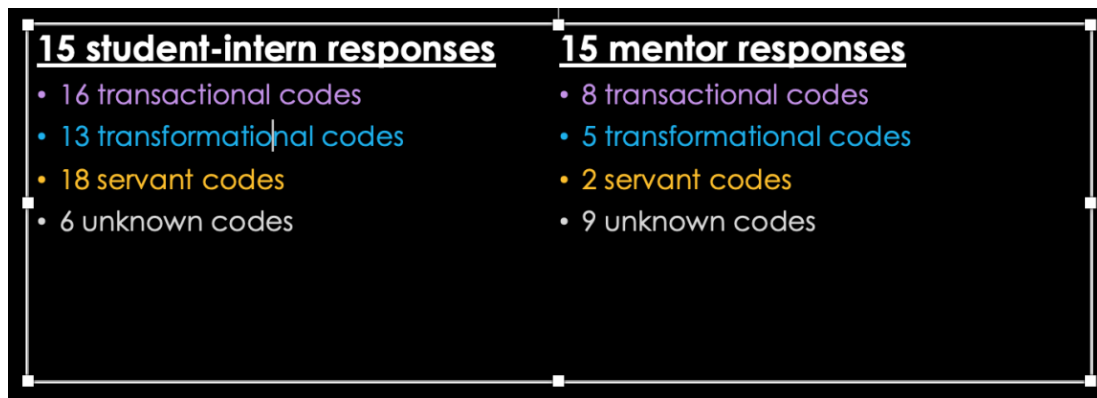
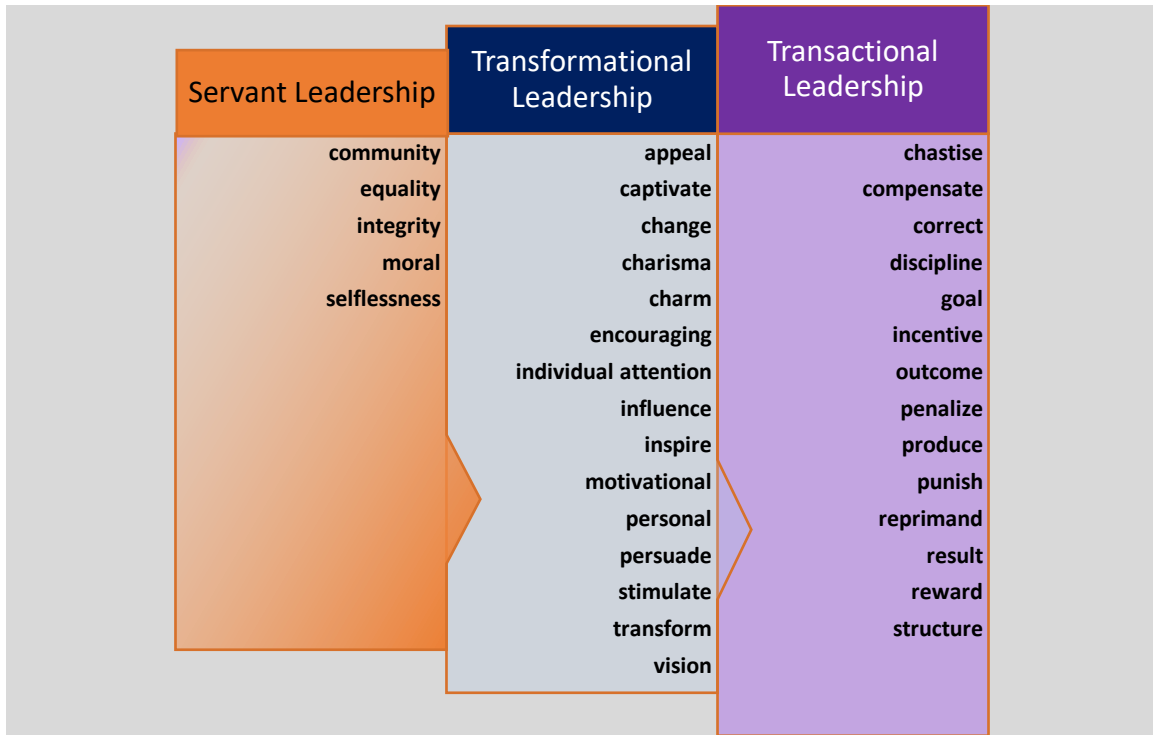


Figure 4.3. First cycle coding totals

### First Cycle Transactional Leadership Codes for Student Interns

Logging the second-most first cycle codes for student interns, transactional leadership accounted for 16 of the 53 codes. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) structure, (b) reward, (c) outcome, (d) goal, (e) punish, (f) chastise, (g) discipline, (h) penalize, (i) reprimand, (j) correct, (k) compensate, (l) incentive, (m) result, and (n) produce (Lievens, Van Geit, & Coetsier, 1997). These keywords are unique compared to the language used by Bass and Avolio (1994) to align with transformational leadership traits and the

language used by Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, and Colwell (2011) to align with servant leadership traits (see Figure 4.4).



*Figure 4.4.* Keywords for transactional, transformational, and servant leadership

Directing, managing, leading, and creating norms were common themes within these transactional leadership coded phrases and aligned with transactional leadership keywords (see Figure 4.4). Directive terms like “assigning tasks and responsibilities” and “leading the conversation” accompanied hierarchical terms like “boss,” “manager,” and “supervisor.” Two students identified so ardently with the vertical reporting structure of transactional leadership that they stated “we had to convey why this was such an important success to the employees below us,” and “we showed them why they were wrong in their approach.”

Consistent with transactional leadership, punitive comments were also present in the student intern responses. One student mentioned “many tough conversations and arm twisting” while another commented on the need to “punish employees to address the norm of slacking.” Likewise, “rewards and incentives” or “goals and accomplishments” were keywords used throughout as a means for conveying productivity and results.

### **First Cycle Transformational Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

There were 13 transformational leadership codes identified in the first cycle coding process for student interns. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) inspire, (b) stimulate, (c) encourage, (d) motivate, (e) persuade, (f) influence, (g) charisma, (h) charm, (i) appeal, (j) captivate, (k) change, (l) transform, (m) revolutionize, (n) personal, (o) vision, and (p) individual attention (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These keywords are unique compared to the language used by Lievens et al., (1997) to align with transactional leadership traits and the language used by Reed et al. (2011) to align with servant leadership traits (see Figure 4.4).

Encouraging others, expressing concern for others, and respecting others were reiterated throughout the transformational clusters. Over half of the transformational codes specifically addressed include encouraging colleagues, discussion, employees, interns, and others around them. As part of the persuasion and influence attributes, one student intern even communicated the need “to answer questions thoroughly” and “talk about certain styles of photography for different occasions.” Inspiring, persuading, and transforming others through “listening to concerns/interests” and “providing examples to

strive towards” were also examples of transformational coding within the student responses.

Lastly, a component of being a personal and inspirational transformational leader, students made efforts “to get to know people” and “keep everyone engaged.” While reflecting on admiral actions, one student observed individual attention being showcased by a leader via “asking individual questions,” and “referencing specific things that she remembers about each of us.”

### **First Cycle Servant Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

Logging the highest number of first cycle codes for student interns, servant leadership accounted for 18 of the 53 codes. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) community, (b) selflessness, (c) equality, (d) moral, and (e) integrity (Reed et al., 2011). These keywords are unique compared to the language used by Lievens et al., (1997) to align with transactional leadership traits and the language used by Bass and Avolio (1994) to align with transformational leadership traits (see Figure 4.4).

Sharing with others, assisting others, and helping others were prevalent themes within these codes. Phrases like “I assist groups,” “I served others,” “sharing ideas,” and “helping employees become more successful” were frequent comments within the narratives.

Furthermore, the concepts of collaboration, personal growth, and open dialogue had a strong presence in the servant leadership codes. One student mentioned “asking if anyone had relevant suggestions” while another student even talked about servant

leadership feedback by stating “constructively criticize in the most honest way possible.” Phrases like “voicing their opinions,” “we were able to discuss,” “learning from each other,” or “taking and providing input” were interconnected throughout each narration. Moreover, one student went so far as to identify the servant leadership attribute by “recognizing the strengths of others.”

### **First Cycle Unknown Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

I noticed a few instances where student interns were using leadership language, but I could not confidently categorize the codes into a transactional, transformational, or servant leadership classification. There were nine unknown leadership codes identified in the first cycle coding process for student interns. These chunks of data primarily had a focus on creating positive environments and have an optimistic persona. Terms like “dedication to courtesy,” “assisting staff,” and “creating a very friendly atmosphere” were chunks of data coded as *unknown leadership*. Action items like “I took feedback” and “it fits with the Ambassador’s vision” were also included in the unknown coding category.

I did not pair any of the unknown leadership codes with other unknown leadership codes of the same narrative. Stated differently, I never identified more than one unknown leadership code per student response. Transactional, transformational, or servant leadership codes always accompanied the unknown leadership code.

### **First Cycle Transactional Leadership Codes for Mentors**

Logging the second-most first cycle codes for mentors, transactional leadership accounted for eight codes. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within



the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) structure, (b) reward, (c) outcome, (d) goal, (e) punish, (f) chastise, (g) discipline, (h) penalize, (i) reprimand, (j) correct, (k) compensate, (l) incentive, (m) result, and (n) produce (Lievens et al., 1997).

All of the mentor chunks of data coded as transactional leadership involved outcomes and results. “Leveraging others to be more effective,” “necessary to remain in close to communication,” and “quick to settle on a course of action” are examples of chunks of data falling into this category. Some of the narratives that mentors used to answer this question also had a strong focus on interacting with others in either a directive or punitive fashion. For example, “practice leadership by dealing with others,” “learning to push others,” “strong guiding force,” and “not held accountable” are phrases that imply a hierarchical structure in the organization.

### **First Cycle Transformational Leadership Codes for Mentors**

There were five transformational leadership codes identified in the first cycle coding process for mentors. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) inspire, (b) stimulate, (c) encourage, (d) motivate, (e) persuade, (f) influence, (g) charisma, (h) charm, (i) appeal, (j) captivate, (k) change, (l) transform, (m) revolutionize, (n) personal, (o) vision, and (p) individual attention (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Mentor comments like “she recognized individual strengths” and “inspires those around her” aligned with the transformational keywords of individual attention and inspire. Likewise, the chunks of data “receives feedback for alternate approaches” and “brainstorms with colleagues” pair with the keywords change and transform. Similarly,

“developing, communicating, and bringing to fruition” was also a chunk of data coded as transformational leadership because of the orientation to the keywords change, transform, and vision.

### **First Cycle Servant Leadership Codes for Mentors**

Servant leadership accounted for only two codes amongst the mentors. Conceptual keywords that were initially searched for within the narratives under this leadership type were: (a) community, (b) selflessness, (c) equality, (d) moral, and (e) integrity (Reed et al., 2011). Aligning with the keywords community and selflessness, the phrases from two mentors “encourage others to be well” and “never afraid to jump in and help others” were the only two chunks of mentor data coded as servant leadership language.

### **First Cycle Unknown Leadership Codes for Mentors**

I noticed a few instances where mentors were using leadership language, but I could not confidently categorize the codes into a transactional, transformational, or servant leadership classification. Logging the highest number of first cycle codes for student interns, the unknown leadership category accounted for nine codes. Confidence, maturity, and initiative were themes amongst these chunks of data.

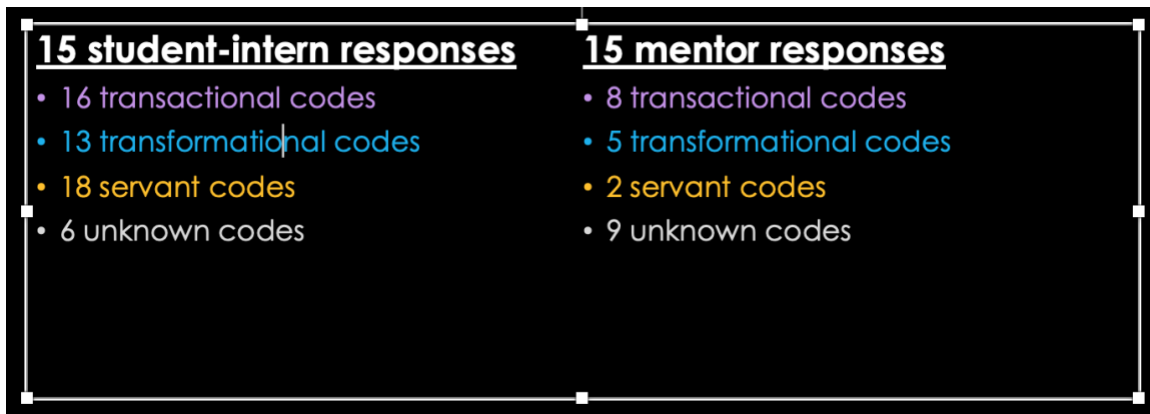
“Work ethic,” “gain confidence,” and “initiative and maturity” are examples of chunks of data coded as unknown leadership. Furthermore, “performed as a leader to organize and conduct” and “being challenged and supported” were also unknown leadership phrases used by mentors. I noted that the term self-awareness came to mind while reading through the mentor chunks of data coded as unknown.

## Second Cycle Code Findings of the Study

I determined an overall sense of leadership style based on first cycle coding for the second cycle coding of each narrative (see Figure 4.5). In looking at the individual chunks for a narrative from first cycle coding, responses that I could collectively align during second cycle coding with the transactional, transformational, servant, and unknown leadership types were categorized: (a) TRANSACTIONAL2, (b) TRANSFORMATIONAL2, (c) SERVANT2, and (d) UNKNOWN2. I subsequently coded these second cycle entries in a chronological series like TRANSACTIONAL2.1, TRANSACTIONAL2.2, TRANSACTIONAL2.3, TRANSFORMATIONAL2.1, TRANSFORMATIONAL2.2, TRANSFORMATIONAL2.3, SERVANT2.1, SERVANT2.2, SERVANT2.3, UNKNOWN2.1, UNKNOWN2.2, and UNKNOWN2.3. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 student responses, there were 6 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 2 unknown codes (see Figure 4.6). Of the second cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 3 transactional codes, 2 transformational codes, 1 servant code, 6 unknown codes, and 3 responses that did not relate to leadership (see Figure 4.6).

<b>STUDENT INTERN RESPONSES</b>			
<b>Student ID</b>	<b>Word/Phrase/Cluster/Chunk</b>	<b>Chunk/First Cycle Code</b>	<b>Meta/Second Cycle Code</b>
S1	dedication to courtesy	Unknown1.1	Servant2.1
	engaging with the guest	Transformational1.1	
	express his/her concerns	Transformational1.2	
	learn from each other	Servant1.2	
	take each input	Servant1.3	
S2	managing	Transactional1.1	Transactional2.1
	assisted staff	Unknown1.2	
S3	providing an example to strive towards	Transformational1.3	Transactional2.2
	norm of "slacking"	Transactional1.2	
	many tough conversations and arm-twisting	Transactional1.3	
	norm of *quality*	Transactional1.4	
S4	group discussion	Servant1.4	Transformational2.1
	working in collaboration	Servant1.5	
	encouraging others around you	Transformational1.4	
	encourage my fellow intern	Transformational1.5	
	constructively criticize in the most honest way possible	Servant1.6	

*Figure 4.5. First and second cycle coding sample*



*Figure 4.6. Second cycle coding totals*

### **Second Cycle Transactional Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

Logging the highest number of second cycle codes for student interns, transactional leadership accounted for 6 of the 15 codes. A number of the student intern narratives used punitive and directive language aligned with transactional leadership keywords like reward, outcome, punish, penalize, and discipline throughout the second cycle codes (Lievens et al., 1997). Second cycle coding for student intern three's and student intern ten's narratives are examples. Student intern two wrote:

This is repeated from before, but also with the stipulation that throughout this whole process I performed the basic-level shifts to show how they \*should\* be done, providing an example to strive towards. When I started up as CPT, a bunch of SPOs were, basically, awful- sleeping in cars, not scanning all buildings, not meeting scan times, going inside, etc. This was at first due to lack of viewable scans when we were transitioning between systems, but it continued afterwards once the norm of "slacking" was established. Changing that was difficult and took many tough conversations and arm-twisting (both for SGTs and LTs to watch for

this, as well as with the offending SPOs). With our low numbers now and lack of scan checks with the move and issues for the past month beforehand, there was a danger that this slack-ness would return. I am happy to say it has not, which I think is attributable to a new norm of \*quality\* to the shifts done, even if we are low on SPOs (student intern two, personal communication, August 1, 2018).

Likewise, student intern 10 wrote:

The employee recognition and reward program within Development is very developed and has been one of my favorite projects to work on throughout the duration of my time at the Development office. My mentor serves as the Director of Talent Management and Operations, which includes our reward/incentive program that involves monthly recognition based on goal accomplishments and allows for a very supportive environment. She is also great at recognizing the strengths of others and respecting their interests, and she does a great job in assigning tasks that match both skillset and interest without limiting opportunities among four part-time interns at a time (student intern 10, personal communication, December 1, 2017).

Again, these examples show the use of punitive and directive language that aligns with transactional leadership.

### **Second Cycle Transformational Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

Among the second cycle codes for student interns, transformational leadership accounted for 5 of the 15 codes. Student interns used phrasing and language in their narratives that aligned with transformational leadership keywords like encourage,

motivate, and persuade (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Student intern four's comments and student intern eight's comments are examples. Student intern four wrote:

Throughout my internship, there were multiple opportunities for group discussion during meetings with the GIS team or just working in collaboration with my fellow interns. I think one important characteristic for someone who believes that they have qualities of being a leader, is encouraging others around you to criticize you or your work. Frequently my mentor would criticize my work or ideas in a constructive way of course, but just as frequently, I would encourage my fellow intern to take a look at my program or map and constructively criticize them in the most honest way possible. The discussions we had over our work very frequently led us to positive results, which was especially crucial when we were working towards the same goal on a joint project (student intern four, personal communication, August 1, 2018).

Student intern eight wrote:

My entire internship centered around my ability to encourage discussion among individuals (mainly professors). One particular story that pertains to this interview question is my meeting with the chair of the materials science and engineering department at the beginning of the semester. I explained to him my intentions of getting the entire department involved in the updating of content on the website, and he agreed that this would be the most effective way of creating a better webpage for the department. After our meeting, he sent out an email to every professor in the department asking if anyone had relevant content or suggestions

on how to make the website better as well as my contact information. This created a platform for professors and other members of the department to get in contact with me to voice their opinions and communicate relevant information (student intern eight, personal communication, December 15, 2018).

Inspiration, influence, and engagement (Bass & Avolio, 1994) were other transformational themes observed in the second cycle coding process. For example, student intern nine wrote:

I had the opportunity to go to a co-create event: Photography Bootcamp. I spent the entire day with a large group of about 30-40 people. The main speaker was able to keep everyone engaged, answer questions thoroughly, provide great examples, and teach us a lot about photography. He knew people in the crowd, so he was able to use individuals in examples and talk about certain styles of photography for different occasions. He took us on a "photo walk" so that everyone would have a chance to try out what we had learned from his presentation and to see how he takes different types of pictures in and outdoors. Overall, he was a great instructor and leader (student intern nine, personal communication, August 1, 2018).

Lastly, personable and individual attention, as well as, vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994) were transformational themes observed in multiple second cycle narratives.

Student intern 13 stated:

During the internship, we had monthly department meeting chaired by our department manager. In the meeting, the department supervisor would first



summarize the accomplishments of the department during the previous month. Then, he would encourage colleagues to give their comments on the department or other employee in a very friendly atmosphere. I felt that the meeting went very successful. The supervisor always made it sound so encouraging when he was summarizing the accomplishments of the department. After the meeting, he also talks to someone individually, in order to get to know the people more deeply. He also tried to come up with suggestions or plans to help employees to become more successful in their career (student intern 13, personal communication, December 15, 2018).

As another example of individual attention and vision, student intern 14 wrote:

My mentor and I started the summer with 1:1 meetings every week and we more recently started including one of the graduate assistants (whom I've worked and communicated with most after my mentor) in our weekly meetings. In these meetings, my mentor is able to lead the meeting very well by opening with questions about our lives as a little warm-up, and she asks individual questions referencing specific things that she remembers about each of us. She then continues to mostly speak with me, since the GA's main purpose in the meetings is to shadow, and she makes me feel very comfortable with how she speaks, asks questions, and provides feedback on my projects (student intern 14, personal communication, August 1, 2018).

Again, this is important because student interns used phrasing and language like encourage, motivate, and persuade in their narratives that aligned with transformational leadership.

### **Second Cycle Servant Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

Second cycle servant leadership codes accounted for two of the student intern narratives. I noticed the concepts of integrity, community, selflessness, and serving others (Reed et al., 2011) in these second cycle codes. Student intern one's comments and student intern 12's comments were examples of servant leadership. Student intern one wrote,

As a merchandise associate for Disney, we are constantly reminded of our guests' high expectations and our dedication to courtesy. After working for a few weeks, I was able to take a class called 'Next Level Courtesy,' which outlined tools and techniques to provide exemplary service to each guest. This involves engaging with the guest to form a great first impression, discovering what makes each guest unique, recommending products that fit the guests need, and closing the interaction. For older cast members, this was a different method than they were previously using. Each cast member was able to express his/her concerns about these changes and their effectiveness. We were all able to learn from each other and take each input to form the best process (student intern one, personal communication, May 1, 2018).

Likewise, student intern 12 wrote:

I served as a conduit to assist groups in aligning objectives with broader goals of the Honors College in my role of leading the Honors Ambassador Committee.

This is a group of student ambassadors who create novel ideas of how to make the prospective student experience as well as ambassador program more beneficial.

This semester, I partnered with some of the committee members during the interview process for new ambassadors. In part of the interview, we were role-playing what a prospective visit would be like with a student to evaluate how personable each applicant was. Initially, the role-playing was not as professional as I wanted it to be, so I was able to discuss what I imagined the role-playing situation would be like with the committee member. Working with them, I was able to align our goals to the overall goal of the Honors College to have personable and knowledgeable ambassadors to help the prospective students (student intern 12, personal communication, December 1, 2018)!

To reiterate, the concepts of integrity, community, selflessness, and serving others are showcased these second cycle servant leadership codes.

### **Second Cycle Unknown Leadership Codes for Student Interns**

I noticed an instance where student interns were using leadership language, but I could not confidently categorize the second cycle code into a transactional, transformational, or servant leadership classification. I coded this narrative as unknown leadership. The chunks of unknown leadership data primarily focused on creating positive environments and have an optimistic persona. Student intern 11's narrative fit into this category. Of leadership, student intern 11 wrote:

As an intern in the development office, when I first started working there, the onboarding process was very complicated, and if you were not that meticulous, it was easy to not learn necessary materials. I proposed to my boss that I take on a project to create an entire new intern manual from scratch. This manual would have everything from the confidentiality pledge to instructions on how to communicate with donors and everything in between. At first, she was reluctant to have a first-year intern handle such a large task but was convinced when I showed her my rough draft plan and explained how I knew what would be best to go in the manual because of my experience going through onboarding as an intern. After agreeing to let me create this manual and new onboarding system, I worked to create a very thorough, robust, and informational new intern manual. I took feedback from the other interns and team members we worked with to create a one-inch thick binder that all the incoming interns will use to become an immersed member of the Development Team. When I showed my boss what I had created, she was impressed with the thoroughness of the information and suggested that I help train the interns for the following year (student intern 11, personal communication, December 1, 2017).

As mentioned, I could not confidently categorize this second cycle code into a transactional, transformational, or servant leadership classification.

### **Second Cycle Transactional Leadership Codes for Mentors**

Accounting for 6 of the 15 codes, transactional leadership had the second highest number of second cycle codes for mentors. The mentors' narratives incorporated chunks

of data about outcomes, accountability, and results. (Lievens et al., 1997). Second cycle coding for mentor three's and mentor six's narratives are examples. Mentor three wrote:

The student did an amazing job during his internship and has a lot of leadership potential. I think the first couple of months he was getting acquainted with everyone and finding out other strengths to leverage. I listed this as an area of improvement as I believe some things he was working on independently he could've asked for help sooner or leveraged others to be more effective.

Regardless, he is a Rockstar intern to have, and I felt very comfortable having him practice leadership by dealing with other teams and managers directly (mentor three, personal communication, December 15, 2017).

Similarly, mentor six stated:

The student is reserved and can easily get lost in the crowd if he is not held accountable or challenged on a regular basis. Knowing this, it was necessary to remain in close communication with the student to ensure that he was doing ok and being challenged and supported (mentor six, personal communication, December 15, 2017).

Keywords in these narratives that aligned with outcomes, accountability, and results were part of coding these mentor comments as transactional leadership.

### **Second Cycle Transformational Leadership Codes for Mentors**

Transformational leadership accounted for two second cycle mentor codes. Mentor chunks of data aligning with individual attention and organizational or process

transformation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) led to the transactional leadership second cycle coding. Relatedly, mentor seven wrote:

This may be only my perception, since I was not close with the student 8 hours a day, but I feel he could learn new things faster or solve problems more efficiently by brainstorming with colleagues and formulating rough ideas to others and receive feedback or alternate approaches (mentor seven, personal communication, August 1, 2018).

Again, these mentor chunks of data aligned with individual attention and organizational or process transformation and were coded as transactional leadership.

### **Second Cycle Servant Leadership Codes for Mentors**

With the lowest number of second cycle codes, servant leadership accounted for one mentor narrative. The concepts of community and selflessness (Reed et al., 2011) were present in the mentor 11's narrative according to the text:

The student's ability to lead and inspire those around her is inspiring and a great reflection of her success in this internship. She encouraged her residents (members of the Wellness LLC) to be well and take part in different wellness opportunities on campus (mentor 11, personal communication, December 15, 2017).

### **Second Cycle Unknown Leadership Codes for Mentors**

Accounting for the highest number of mentor second cycle codes, the unknown leadership category comprised of narratives that I could not confidently categorize into

the transactional, transformational, or servant leadership classifications. The unknown leadership category account for 6 of the 15 mentor second cycle codes.

Initiative was a theme amongst these narratives. Mentor 5 comments and mentor 15's comments support this theme:

The student shows tremendous initiative and maturity in developing, communicating, and bringing to fruition her vision for Clemson's Sustainability initiatives. She has outstanding leadership skills that will take her far in her career (mentor five, personal communication, May 1, 2018).

I feel leadership is the greatest area for improvement for the student because she is willing to take on any task given to her, but does not take the lead herself.

While she has been my social media & marketing intern for three rotations, she still lacks some initiative to get projects started and push other marketing interns to do the same (mentor 15, personal communication, May 1, 2018).

Confidence was another unknown leadership theme that qualified for second cycle coding of mentor narratives. A mentor nine wrote,

The student is incredibly bright and talented. She was competent and completed her work. At times she seemed to lack the confidence to dig deep into projects. I valued Jordan's work ethic and would expect given more time in our organization she would gain the confidence needed to tackle larger projects and take on additional responsibilities (mentor nine, personal communication, May 1, 2018).

Lastly, I noted that the term self-awareness came to mind while reading through the mentor narratives coded as unknown. For example, mentor 10 reflected:

Much less a reflection on the student, as the role had limited potential for leadership outcomes; The student actually did serve as a leader among her peers, both as a senior of high academic performance, highly involved in student life and various organizations, as well as a subject matter expert who had regular opportunities to advise students on global engagement opportunities in her college. That said, I'd love to see the student apply herself in increasing leadership roles as she transitions to a regular full-time position after graduation. I have full confidence that she'll do great things for her new employer (mentor 10, personal communication, May 1, 2018)!

### **Nonexistent Second Cycle Leadership Codes for Mentors**

I need to note that I did review a mentor response that I could not code for leadership. Although mentioning leadership throughout the text, none of the language used by the mentor aligned with leadership traits. Instead, I interpreted the comments to have an apparent lack of leadership language. As evidence, mentor four said:

So, I didn't see a lot of leadership in her this semester, which is why I'm choosing it for this. I really think she has it in her, but I don't know that she really had an opportunity to do that this semester, either. She tended to work alone, and was generally quiet and focused when in the office, even if other interns were also here at the time. However, she is very driven and focused on doing good work (mentor four, personal communication, December 15, 2018).



## **Conclusion and Summary of the Chapter**

Through this historic narrative analysis, I explored how employers and student interns describe leadership development during the internship experience. Borrowing from research methods like critical incident technique and Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs, I used narrative analysis to code mentor and student intern data chunks and complete narratives into the categories of transactional leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and unknown leadership types.

Starting with a large data set of over 2000 responses representing 7 different colleges at a public, tier one research university, I used random stratified sampling to identify a significant sample size of 30 participants (DeFina & Georgakopoulou, 2015). The 30 participants consisted of 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses, and each of the responses contained narratives with over 30-words (Douglas et al., 2015).

I applied first cycle and second cycle coding to the 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses using the same leadership codes for both cycles. First cycle codes consisted of TRANSACTIONAL1, TRANSFORMATIONAL1, SERVANT1, and UNKNOWN1. Second cycle codes consisted of TRANSACTIONAL2, TRANSFORMATIONAL2, SERVANT2, and UNKNOWN2. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 student-intern responses, there were 16 transactional codes, 13 transformational codes, 18 servant codes, and 6 unknown codes. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 8 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 9 unknown codes. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 student responses, there were 6 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 2 unknown codes.

Of the second cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 3 transactional codes, 2 transformational codes, 1 servant codes, 6 unknown codes, and 3 responses that did not relate to leadership.

The findings and results of chapter four display differences in students' perspectives of leadership development during the internship experience and mentors' perspectives of leadership development during the internship experience. Student comments and narratives were readily organized into transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership approaches. Meanwhile, mentors' comments and narratives did not align with the three leadership theories chosen in this study. Chapter five addresses implications and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS

#### **Introduction to the Analysis**

Introduced in chapter one as a study designed to explore how employers or internship mentors and student interns describe leadership development during the internship experience, chapter five concludes this historic narrative analysis. Reflecting on chapter two, I conducted a literature review on career readiness, internships as a *high impact practice*, and the leadership theories known as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Chapter three described the methodology associated with this narrative analysis investigation. I also addressed the logic and steps I leveraged while borrowing from a few additional research tactics related to narrative analysis in chapter three. For example, critical incident technique and Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs approach are listed as supplemental research tactics. The results of the study listed in chapter four follow chapter three. First cycle and second cycle coding are discussed throughout the fourth chapter. Finally, I outline my analyses of the research results and suggestions for future research in this concluding fifth chapter. Student intern final evaluation comments and mentor final evaluation comments support my analyses and comments throughout chapter four.

#### **Focus of the Study**

National organizations such as the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2016), Addeco (2019), and the Council for Industry and Higher Education (Archer & Davison, 2008) have published reports claiming a shortage of and

demand for career readiness amongst recent college graduates. Known as soft skills or career competencies, these career readiness attributes include leadership, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, technology, work ethic, intercultural fluency, and career management (NACE, 2016). According to NACE, the understanding, attainment, and proficient demonstration of these skills are an integral part of the successful transition into the workforce. Nonetheless, there remains a gap in how students and employers rate proficiency levels (Archer & Davison, 2008).

Investigating how students and employers view and explain career readiness by studying the language they use to describe competency development is a first measure in closing that gap. Focusing solely on the leadership competency, I want to identify the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency.

### **Connection to the Literature**

College graduate, entry-level job skills studies by researchers such as Cappel (2002), Richards, Yellen, Kappelman, and Guynes (1998), Young and Lee (1996), and Van Slyke (1998) supported the claim that soft skills are often desired by employers more than hard skills and that a gap between desired proficiencies and actual proficiencies exists. Cappel's (2002) work on the topic even included the insightful statement, "Overall, employers rated non-technical skills even higher than technical skills, and the gaps between 'expected' and 'actual' performance tended to be greatest for non-technical skills" (p. 81).

Compounding the issue, employers are seeing as many as five generations in the workforce now (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2013). A 2011 study found that cross-generational relations are one of the top three challenges for employers (Gratton, 2011). With a focus on increasing productivity, finding ways to resolve the workforce differences and challenges amongst the generations is a priority for employers. Each generation has unique values, work ethic, and preferred management styles based on the societal factors and critical events that they experienced while growing up (Strauss, 2007). As Tanner (2019) pointed out, many current workers agree they are confused by other generations' belief systems associated with professionalism, career readiness, and competency proficiencies. This confusion has the potential to hinder productivity.

### **Problem Statement**

A likely first step in responding to the soft skills gap is defining career readiness, but “the data clearly depicts a large variation in assigned definitions” for career readiness competencies (Jackson, 2010, p. 52). Understanding how students and employers describe each of the competencies will be part of assigning definitions. Analogously, there do appear to be discrepancies in the definition of leadership as a competency that is worth exploring. Even as transformational, transactional, and servant are examples of commonly researched leadership types (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014), we still do not know which leadership types students and employers most readily align with.

As mentioned in chapter one, some higher education institutions and career centers have begun developing complete curriculums and programs around these NACE competencies to improve their students' career readiness (Peck et al., 2016). A

metanalysis study by Peck et al. (2016) investigated several papers by Tinto (2012), Kamenetz (2015), Drucker (2014), Conner and Fringer (2015), Hullinger (2015), and Hanson (2015) supporting, “the conclusion that co-curricular activities contribute considerably to students’ development of soft skills” (p. 3). Internships are considered one of those co-curricular activities. This connection as a *high impact practice* creates a platform for investigating student and mentor comments about college students’ leadership development.

### **Purpose Statement**

Of the eight soft skills, or competencies, listed by NACE, I focused specifically on the leadership competency in this study. NACE’s 2018 report revealed leadership as one of the top three competencies with a substantial gap between desired proficiency and actual proficiency amongst recent college graduates. There is a multitude of definitional lenses to view the leadership competency through, and entire textbooks are dedicated to detailing these definitional lenses (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014).

By determining what leadership type best aligns with the internship experiences of today’s student, practitioners might be able to better focus their efforts on developing internship experiences with specific definitional characteristics of leadership. Through research, student interns and mentors might also be able to better communicate and analyze leadership development during and after the experiential opportunity. Furthermore, insightful research on the leadership competency might lead to further investigations on other career competencies.

## **Overview and Summary of the Study**

### **Data Collection**

Since the fall 2017 semester, the Center for Career and Professional Development has used the same zero-credit hour internship course final evaluation (Kathy Horner, personal communication, September 30, 2018). Consistent career competency-oriented questions were evident in each of the successive semesters. Open-ended questions about the student interns' leadership development were a part of the final evaluation of the internship course for student interns and mentors. Other than minor adjustments to the language, student interns and mentors encountered the same competency-focused questions (see Appendix A). Student interns and mentors were asked to rate the student interns' proficiency level in each competency, including leadership. Those proficiency levels consisted of awareness, basic, intermediate, advanced, and expert. After answering the proficiency level questions, both groups were asked in an open-ended question to describe why they chose the proficiency rating for each competency. The answer to the open-ended, competency question on leadership development is the narrative text I analyzed in this study.

At the end of the academic semester, student interns and their mentors were contacted via email and required to complete the final evaluation as part of the course curriculum. The final evaluation was the survey used in this study. Course instructors collected and saved responses using Campus Labs (2019). The CampusLabs software is password protected for the internship coursework, continually experiences updating in its firewall protection, and has backup mechanisms in place to avoid the risk of lost data.

Responses in Campus Labs were exported to an excel spreadsheet and cleansed of student and mentor names or identities before I began my coding and analysis work with the data. The excel randomizing function was used to pull a stratified sample of 15 student intern narratives with at least 30 words and 15 mentor narratives with at least 30 words.

### **Action Plan**

Borrowing from the critical incident technique, the first steps of my study included identifying the general aims of the study, planning and specifying processes to help ensure objectivity, and collecting the data (Flanagan, 1954). The last two critical incident technique steps included analyzing data and interpreting and reporting data for which I turned to Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs technique for additional guidance (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Specifically, I used first cycle coding and second cycle coding to assist with the analyzing, interpreting, and reporting steps.

To help with accuracy and objectivity, my first cycle codes were the identifiers initially assigned to data chunks (Miles et al., 2014). In reading through narratives and identifying chunks of informative data linked to leadership language, first cycle coding was used to begin organizing and clustering pieces of data within a single narration. Those first cycle codes were labeled TRANSACTIONAL1, TRANSFORMATIONAL1, SERVANT1, and UNKNOWN1.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) compared the second cycle coding leveraged by qualitative researchers to "the cluster analytic and factor analytic devices used in statistical analysis" by quantitative researchers (p. 86). Second cycle coding was a way



for me to group summaries from first cycle codes into more meaningful units of analysis. I consolidated leadership-related categories, themes, and constructs from the first cycle into meta-codes labeled TRANSACTIONAL2, TRANSFORMATIONAL2, SERVANT2, and UNKNOWN2.

### **Review of Findings**

I applied first cycle and second cycle coding to the 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses using the same leadership codes for both cycles. Adding a second layer of sub-coding based on numerical identifications like 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 helped to quickly and efficiently search for data during the analysis process. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 student-intern responses, there were 16 transactional leadership codes, 13 transformational leadership codes, 18 servant leadership codes, and 6 unknown leadership codes. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 8 transactional leadership codes, 5 transformational leadership codes, 2 servant leadership codes, and 9 unknown leadership codes.

I determined an overall sense of leadership style for the second cycle coding of each narrative based on the results of the first cycle coding. In looking at the individual chunks for a narrative from first cycle coding, I then used a second cycle coding process to align each narrative with the transactional, transformational, servant, and unknown leadership types. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 student responses, there were 6 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 2 unknown codes. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 3 transactional codes, 2

transformational codes, 1 servant code, 6 unknown codes, and 3 responses that did not relate to leadership.

In this second cycle coding, there is a distinction between student intern narratives and mentor narratives. Keeping in mind that servant leadership is considered by some scholars to be a type of transformational leadership, most of the student comments could be aligned almost equally with transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Over 86% of the student narratives could be classified into one of these two leadership types.

However, the mentor narratives trended in a different direction. The highest portion of second cycle codes amongst the mentor narratives was categorized as unknown. Unknown leadership codes included narratives that had text, chunks of data, and phrases that displayed aspects of leadership, but they could not be categorized as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, or servant leadership. Combined with mentor narratives that did not display any leadership coding, unknown and non-leadership codes accounted for over half of all the mentor narratives. Stated differently, over 53% mentor narratives could not be classified as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, or servant leadership.

### **Implications for Higher Education**

According to NACE (2016), the understanding, attainment, and proficient demonstration of career competencies are an integral part of the successful transition into the workforce, but there remains a gap in how students and employers rate proficiency

levels. Addeco (2019) confirmed that more young professionals are unsuccessful in the workplace because of career competencies issues than hard skill issues.

The findings in this study support the belief that there is a gap between what the workforce expects and sees in new hires and what competencies are being promised and delivered by higher education institutions and their students. Adding to some of the quantitative data already available, my findings begin to look at how employers and students explain competencies and career readiness. As Jackson (2010) pointed out, “Only tentative conclusions on the relative importance and extent to skills gaps within and across developed countries can be drawn due to the ambiguity of skills definitions” (p. 53). My research helps to confirm the idea that there is ambiguity in the skills definitions.

Students are confident that they are ready to enter the workforce (Crebert et al., 2007), but employers disagree and state that students need more competency development during college (Cappel, 2002). Nunamaker et al. (2017) pointed out,

Each new generation that enters the workforce is believed to be less qualified and less motivated than the previous. However, even though business leaders, supervisors, educators, and politicians hold a bleak view of how well-prepared college students are for entering the workplace, the [college students] themselves are very optimistic in their abilities to join the workforce and bring the desired employment skills with them. (p. 30)

The miscommunications about how each group defines and explains the leadership competency become apparent in this study, and previous scholarly writings tell

us that frameworks like the social change model are not the right leadership theories to bridge the communication gap (Dugan & Komives, 2010). As Peck (2017) stated, "...very few [students] indicate that they are not gaining these skills in college" (p. 63). Rather, this study supports Jackson's (2010) statement that employers and students are "comparing and rating skills based on their own interpretation of the assigned skills" (p. 52).

A 2017 report by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation claimed, "somewhere along the road from education to employment, the system is not routinely equipping all students with all the skills they will need to succeed" (p. 3). Jackson (2010) was critical of this sentiment stating, "Only tentative conclusions on the relative importance and extent of skills gaps within and across development countries can be drawn due to the ambiguity of skill definitions" (p. 53). The findings in this study help to discredit the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's statement and support Jackson's work. Mirroring Jackson's (2010) statement about "participants are left to derive their own meaning of termed skills" (p. 52), my study reveals a disconnect in how students and employers describe leadership traits.

### **Implications for Practice**

Knowing that students primarily see leadership through a transactional and transformational lens while employers frequently view leadership through some other type of leadership lens is a first step in adjusting experiential education practices. This study supports the idea that transactional, servant, and transformational leadership

theories are not approaches employers identify with, so future curriculums should not be aligned with any of these three leadership theories.

Tuberville (2014) stated, “Despite an increase in enrollment in higher education experiential learning courses, limited research exists to assist faculty members who engage in this type of instructional strategy” (p. 1). Focusing on just the leadership competency, Strong et al. (2013) point out in their encouragement for more leadership-oriented research, “faculty would gain a better understanding of their students and may better understand the leadership experience” (p. 182). More research on all of the competencies is needed to assist educators with improving instructional strategies. As a first step, more implementation of competency pedagogies and learning outcomes into the instructional strategies will also help with developing research content.

Nonetheless, the findings in this study contribute to the scholarly work needed to begin the process of refining career development instructional approaches. I only explored one of the eight competencies through the narrative analysis process, and suggestions for further research are addressed later in this chapter. Stated earlier, Generation Z, born from 1995 to 2015, are entering the workforce at the quickest speed (see Figure 2.5), and they will soon overtake the X-ers and Millennials as the largest generation in the workforce. Many current workers agree they are confused by other generations’ belief systems associated with professionalism, career readiness, and proficiency in competencies (Tanner 2019). It is imperative to put educational practices in place that reduce the competency gap before the plague of another generation dogged by career readiness enters the workforce. As Wisniewski (2010) pointed out, “Twenty-

first century learners thrive on active learning in interactive settings” (p. 67), so making curriculum adjustments to internship courses is a great way to refine how leadership and other competencies are taught to students.

I should note here that a peer-to-peer evaluation would not be a curriculum adjustment useful in reducing the competency gap. Up and coming competency proficiency platforms like CareerSpots, Skills Survey, and the University of South Florida’s badging system leverage peer evaluators to help measure and verify essential competency development (Dr. Neil Burton, personal communication, August 26, 2019). Dr. Burton pointed out that this practice of using peer evaluators is partially due to the need to scale-up proficiency measurements across a campus beyond the staffing capacity of most career services. However, my findings support the concept that students and employers explain and define competencies differently. Having a student evaluate another student’s proficiency level does not reflect the employer’s differing views on competencies and proficiencies. Thus, it does not help to reduce the career readiness gap. A portion of the student performance evaluation needs to remain amongst employers.

In addition to contributing to the scholarly writings and knowledge-base on the topic, the higher education community can use this information to better discuss with employers what type of leadership skills are being developed by students. Barrie (2012) stated, “For many years universities around the world have sought to articulate the nature of the education they offer to their students” and the employers that employ these students (p. 79). This approach contradicts the United Kingdom’s Edge Foundation’s stance that “specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to

promote such transferrable skills and fostering attributes” (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011, p. 17), and we see in my study how much variance there can be in the language used to describe just one career competency. My findings more readily challenge the United Kingdom’s Edge Foundation stance and support Barrie’s work.

Revisiting NACE’s (2016) statement that career readiness “has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, workforce development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today’s graduates”, this finding in this study supports the idea of using consistent language to help reduce the competency gap (p. 1). Desired leadership traits outside of the transactional, servant, and transformational approaches will need to be clearly expressed and then introduced into either the educational curriculum or employment onboarding process. University officials can clearly communicate to employers that recent graduates entering the workforce see leadership through a transactional and transformational lens.

### **Implications for Policy**

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (2009) reported that over 70% of employers wanted higher education to place more attention on soft skills and competency development. Yet, higher education has been slow to make any significant adjustments to the way the curriculum is organized and delivered to students (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). Mason, Williams, and Cranmer (2009) found that, “structured work experience and employer involvement in degree course design and delivery have clear positive effects on the ability of graduates to secure employment” (p. 1), but Mason et al., acknowledged in the same student that those experiential education

teaching efforts had significant impact on labor market performance. My study helps to explain this phenomenon by revealing a disconnect in how students and employers define career readiness and competency performance.

Administrators and policymakers have an opportunity to implement *high impact practice* requirements that have been known to move the competency needle. Leveraging employer-centric language in the curriculum, and incorporating experiences such as internship and co-ops into every discipline could have powerful effects on reducing the skills gap. Based on Cappel's (2009) research investigating employer opinions on the significance of internships and co-ops, implementing such requirements would also go a long way towards strengthening the relationship between higher education and employers. Doing so would also be a step at diminishing the articulation gap seen in this study.

Administrators, accrediting agencies, and policymakers should also look at the option of verifying and certifying competency attainment during the education process. Shewchuk, O'Connor, and Fine (2006) allude to the idea of qualifying proficiency levels in their 2006 studies of competency models, and a few institutions are already breaking ground on the concept. Stephen A. Austin State University, University of South Florida, University of Maryland, and Purdue University are a couple of institutions with some form of a certification program (Dr. Neil Burton, personal communication, August 26, 2019). Better defining competencies through a verification and certification process might help to reduce the variance in student and employer language found in my study,



but these type of activities require significant staff and financial resource investments by higher education institutions.

Scalability also continues to be a challenge for this initiative, but successful integration could be a victory for hiring practices in the United States and beyond. Over 600 million hires occur in the United States each year, and all of them fall under the purview of the Department of Labor's discrimination laws (Bendick & Nunes, 2012, p. 238). Nonetheless, studies find systematic evidence of gender and race discrimination in the hiring process (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016, p. 1117). Building frameworks that tie candidates' application materials to proficiency levels instead of some of the other biased employment qualifiers currently used has the potential to reduce discriminatory practices while also further protecting applicants and employers. Succinctly stated, A universal and verifiable competency framework and proficiency scale could help with hiring and promotion inequities.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations present in this study that warrant revisiting. For example, using historical narrations and human researchers might have had a negative impact on the study. First, any erroneous responses associated with the Hawthorne Effect and the historic relevancy associated with the timeliness of this study are considerations. Second, researcher bias could have been present. While addressing manual coding, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) might have similarly been able to investigate the data differently and produced results distinct from the human researcher (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Looking at interns' leadership experience through transactional versus transformational lenses was also identified as a potential challenge in chapter one. There was the risk that the leadership theories chosen were not evident in the student and mentor responses. Any number of other leadership theories like *path-goal* or *leader-member exchange* could have been used in this study. However, I chose three theories that frequently appeared in literature reviews. Two of those theories, *transactional* and *transformational*, are often seen as opposing ends of the leadership spectrum (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Lastly, over 2,000 internship evaluations were available for analysis at the host institution (Clemson University Center for Career and Professional Development, 2018, p. 9), but I only used 30 evaluations for this assessment. Leveraging a random stratified sampling technique to identify 15 student responses and 15 mentor responses might not have been enough narratives to identify qualitative trends. Other themes within the narratives may have surfaced by using different responses or a more significant number of responses.

Moreover, all of the evaluations were from a single, zero-credit hour course at one institution. This study did not include students and employers that call their summer experience an internship but never connect with the university during those summer months. Likewise, credit-bearing internship courses through specific majors were not included in this study. I could have used more internship courses from specific majors or more students from other institutions, but only looking at one internship course, with one final evaluation, and representation from multiple majors and class levels helps to

produce consistency of the data. Likewise, looking at students from only one institution also helped to produce consistency of the data.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Earlier in this chapter, I discuss the implications of this study. Within that section, I mention that desired leadership traits outside of the transactional and transformational approaches can be introduced into either the educational curriculum or employer onboarding process. Before that process occurs, educators need first to determine what leadership types best align with employers' comments. Now knowing that transactional and transformational leadership approaches do not resonate with the majority of mentors and employers, further research should be conducted on analyzing leadership types that might align with mentor narratives. Since themes like confidence, self-awareness, and initiative were present in the mentor coding for this study, the leadership identity development theory (Komives, Casper, Longersbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2004) is one model that might align with employers' view of leadership.

Moreover, exploring other facets of leadership dynamics in the workplace will also help better explain how mentors and student interns explain leadership differently. Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) stated that the three dimensions used to measure the relationship between leadership style and work production show equal allocation among the dimensions. Dimensions including, "organizational context, follower commitment and leader performance, and the relationship between the personality and the leadership" (p. 105) remain consistent regardless of personality factor variances in leadership styles. Thus, educators and employers need to look to other aspects of leadership outside of

personality and style when discussing career readiness. Through additional qualitative research methods like focus groups and ethnographic studies, educators and employers might more effectively communicate with each other through improved frameworks and definitions that ultimately close the competency gap.

Future Time Perspective Theory might also be taken into consideration for future work. As Simons, Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Lacante (2004) stated, “some people are able to foresee the future implications of their present behavior” (p. 121). They understand that their current performance directly ties to their future aspirations. Self-efficacy, causal attributes, and locus of control are aspects of Future Time Perspective (Shell and Husman, 2001). “Research indicated that positive outcomes are likely when people foresee the future consequences of their behavior by themselves and when contexts orient people toward those future consequences” (Simons et al., 2002, p. 135). Understanding the differences between how students describe leadership and how employers describe leadership will help students and employers better grasp the consequences and direction of behaviors, and research on student self-awareness as it relates to the leadership competency will also help educators and employers understand the discrepancy in career readiness.

Lastly, exploring the remaining seven career competencies in a similar historical narrative analysis fashion might further reduce all the gaps associated with career readiness. By first conducting individual qualitative research studies on communication skills, critical thinking, collaboration, technology, work ethic, career management, and

intercultural fluency, current scholars interested in these individual competencies can pave the way for a metanalysis by future scholars interested in overall career readiness.

### **Conclusion**

In chapter one, I introduced the background of the problem in this chapter, followed by outlining the problem statement and purpose statement. I posed the questions of the study and considered the delimitations. Specifically, I wanted to identify the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency.

After addressing the study's conception and theoretical framework in chapter one, I reviewed the research design summary. Lastly, I completed the first chapter by discussing the limitations and significance of the study before moving on to chapter two, where I conducted a literature review with a focus on internships as a *high impact practice* and the leadership theories: (a) transactional, (b) transformational, and (c) servant.

Chapter three begins with a statement on the language employers and college student interns use to explain leadership development. Specifically, I identified the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency. While focusing on the research design and methodology in chapter three, I also described the target population, sources of data, and Institutional Research Review Board approval process. I then described how I intended to use a narrative analysis technique while borrowing aspects of critical incident technique and Saldana's values, attitudes, and beliefs design to

conduct this investigation. I concluded chapter three by addressing the validity, authenticity, trustworthiness, and reliability of the study before moving on to chapter four.

In chapter four, I reported the results of first cycle and second cycle coding applications to 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses using the same leadership codes for both cycles. First cycle codes consisted of TRANSACTIONAL1, TRANSFORMATIONAL1, SERVANT1, and UNKNOWN1, and second cycle codes consisted of TRANSACTIONAL2, TRANSFORMATIONAL2, SERVANT2, and UNKNOWN2. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 student-intern responses, there were 16 transactional codes, 13 transformational codes, 18 servant codes, and 6 unknown codes. Of the first cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 8 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 9 unknown codes. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 student responses, there were 6 transactional codes, 5 transformational codes, 2 servant codes, and 2 unknown codes. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were 3 transactional codes, 2 transformational codes, 1 servant codes, 6 unknown codes, and 3 responses that did not relate to leadership.

This final chapter addressed implications and suggestions for future research. The findings and results display differences in students' perspectives on leadership development during the internship experience and mentors' perspectives on leadership development during the internship experience. Student comments and narratives are readily organized into transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant


leadership approaches. Meanwhile, a large portion of mentors' comments and narratives did not align with the three leadership theories chosen in this study.

This discrepancy in the way students and employers talk about leadership development during the internship could be part of incongruent leadership proficiency rating problem for these two groups. Likewise, looking at the subject matter through an interpretivist's lens, the incongruent language that students and employers use could be attributed to how these two groups view and interact with the world. Again, there is more generational diversity in the 2019 workforce than ever before. Reflecting on the very first sentence of this study, NACE (2016) stated: "career readiness has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, workforce development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today's graduates" (p. 1). Continued exploration of how students and employers view, explain, and discuss their understanding of each of the eight competencies has the potential to reduce the career readiness gap.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Sample Internship Final Evaluation

  
**CLEMSON**  
INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

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**INT Course Final Exam - Student Evaluation of Employer**  
Center for Career and Professional Development

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**EMPLOYER INFORMATION**

Employer (Company/Organization Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Employer Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**GENERAL EXPERIENCE AND CORE COMPETENCIES QUESTIONS**

Please evaluate your current internship site by answering the following questions as honestly as possible. The information will assist in placing future internship students.

How challenging was the internship position?

Very Challenging                      Moderately Challenging                      Not at all

What was your degree of responsibility?

A Great Deal of Responsibility                      Moderate Degree of Responsibility                      Very Little Responsibility

How relevant did you find your internship to helping you pursue your academic and career goals?

Very Relevant                      Moderately Relevant                      Not Relevant

Please indicate how you would rate the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Unacceptable
Relationship between you and your internship site mentor					
Communication patterns between you and your internship site mentor					
The level of support and engagement you received from other full-time employees					
The overall quality of the internship					





We are now going to have you self-assess your proficiency level on each of the nine competencies. You will be presented with 5 behavioral interview questions based on the proficiency levels. Read through each question and decide which level you can answer with an example from your internship. **YOU ARE NOT ANSWERING ALL 5 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EACH COMPETENCY.** Then, choose your proficiency level and enter a brief story from your internship to answer the ONE question related to the proficiency level you selected. We suggest you save these answers for your own interview preparation.

**COMMUNICATION**

*Awareness:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you had to compose a message that provided ideas and supporting information.

*Basic:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you tailored your communication style or message to different audiences while maintaining your intended outcome.

*Intermediate:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you adapted your message to others' learning styles, languages, cultural backgrounds, and/or levels of understanding to foster dialogue and productive outcomes.

*Advanced:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you anticipated others' reactions and prepared for questions and counterarguments when presenting complex or sensitive information.

*Expert:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you modeled inclusive communication (e.g. taking into account others' learning styles, languages, cultural backgrounds) and assisted others in developing strategic communication plans.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness       Basic       Intermediate       Advanced       Expert

Story:  
  

---

**COLLABORATION**

*Awareness:*  
Tell me about a time when you understood the importance of building genuine relationships at your internship site.

*Basic:*  
Tell me about a time during your internship when you contributed to a team-based initiative and observed how different teams function and value its members.



*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you formed relationships with people outside of your immediate area/department and contributed to a company goal.

*Advanced:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you led a team and created a positive and supportive team environment by accepting responsibility, meeting team commitments, valuing others, and sharing relevant information or resources to help others.

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you served as a connector for individuals seeking to build networks and learning how to leverage networks in mutually beneficial ways.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:



**LEADERSHIP**

*Awareness:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you observed a supervisor or other employee developing a group and leading them towards achieving a shared vision or goal.

*Basic:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you observed a supervisor or other employee recognize, respect, develop, and capitalize on the unique strengths of individuals from all backgrounds.

*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you encouraged discussion where individuals could express different points of view to develop a shared vision or achieve a common goal.

*Advanced:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you empowered others to achieve a shared vision and communicated group accomplishments to stakeholders.

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you served as a conduit to assist groups in aligning objectives with broader organizational or global objectives.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:



## ADAPTABILITY

### Awareness:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you observed a supervisor or other employee acknowledging that new approaches and ways of thinking can be beneficial.

### Basic:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you incorporated feedback and considered new approaches to problems when the current methods were not yielding desired outcomes.

### Intermediate:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you voluntarily sought feedback from a variety of individuals to determine if skill proficiency had increased.

### Advanced:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you promoted creative solutions to conquer challenges and recognized that failure is part of the learning experience.

### Expert:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you anticipated changes in industries and in an ever-changing world that demand long-range planning, creative solutions, and flexibility.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness

Basic

Intermediate

Advanced

Expert

Story:

XXXXXXXXXX

## ANALYTICAL SKILLS

### Awareness:

During your internship, how would you obtain, process, and synthesize different kinds of information?

### Basic:

Tell me about a time during your internship when your supervisor identified a problem and then how you obtained, processed, and synthesized different kinds of information to solve the problem.

### Intermediate:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you identified a problem and then obtained, processed, and synthesized different kinds of information to solve the problem.

### Advanced:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you weighed the pros and cons of a plan to solve the problem and made a recommendation for a course of action.

### Expert:

Tell me about a time during your internship when you promoted and maintained a culture where others were able to imagine alternatives and were empowered to identify and solve problems that led to organizational improvement.



Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:

\*\*\*\*\*

**TECHNOLOGY**

*Awareness:*

Tell me about how you learned about current and emerging software and tools that are used in your internship to solve general and industry-specific challenges.

*Basic:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you used basic software and tools with the assistance of others to solve general and industry-specific challenges.

*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you used basic software and tools and were able to troubleshoot issues independently before asking for assistance from others.

*Advanced:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you articulated strengths and shortcomings of current and emerging software and tools in solving sophisticated general and industry-specific challenges and made recommendations for adoption.

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you were recognized as a resource on current and emerging software and tools and were sought out by others on how technology can help solve general and industry-specific challenges.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:

\*\*\*\*\*

**SELF-AWARENESS**

*Awareness:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you sought out opportunities to learn about how your interests, skills, and work values intersect.

*Basic:*

Tell me about how this internship helped you learn about your interests, skills, and work values and how they align with your educational and professional goals.



*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time when you applied strengths, acknowledged limitations, managed emotions, and overcame biases during your internship.

*Advanced:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you recognized your emotions or biases when working with others and how you adjusted to remain productive in achieving goals in an inclusive environment.

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you adjusted educational and professional goals based on your interests, skills, and work values even when doing so was difficult or disappointing.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:

\*\*\*\*\*

**INTEGRITY AND ETHICS**

*Awareness:*

Describe the difference between integrity and ethics.

*Basic:*

Tell me about some of the rules and policies that guided your work at your internship site and how you learned them.

*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you exhibited a commitment to integrity and ethics – “walked the talk” – and sought feedback from others to guide decisions and actions.

*Advanced:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you evaluated implications of different courses of action (e.g. likely consequences) that could have had an impact on others or the organization as well as yourself (e.g. character/brand).

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you focused on the greater good by challenging others when integrity and ethics were not being considered.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness      Basic      Intermediate      Advanced      Expert

Story:



**BRAND**

*Awareness:*

Tell me how your supervisor would describe you as a result of your time at your internship site.

*Basic:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you tried to intentionally align your intended and perceived reputation by applying feedback from others.

*Intermediate:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you initiated a conversation to gain feedback from your supervisor or others on site.

*Advanced:*

During your internship, how did you develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that led you to make a positive impression in every facet of your life?

*Expert:*

Tell me about a time during your internship when you served as a resource to and supported others as they sought help with developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that led to making a positive impression in the workplace.

Circle the level of proficiency and enter your story that answers the above behavioral interview question.

Awareness

Basic

Intermediate

Advanced

Expert

Story:

\*\*\*\*\*

How would you rate the amount of time supervisors and other employees spent in observations and conferences with you?

- a. Spent too much time in observations and conferences
- b. Spent adequate time in observations and conferences
- c. Did not spend adequate time in observations and conferences

**SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOME EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

---

Please describe major projects you tackled throughout the semester.

What were the most unattractive aspects of your internship experience? Please explain.



Please explain the significance of this internship experience in relation to your future career goals. (Please list specific companies or professions you might now be interested in pursuing after graduation.)

Discuss in detail your personal and professional development during the internship experience. (Discuss your achievements as well the areas in which need further improvements.)

Do you have any additional feedback concerning the internship site?

Please use the space below for additional comments.

OPTIONAL: If you have a picture of your internship site that can be used for media, please email it to [bcwson@clemons.edu](mailto:bcwson@clemons.edu).

**STUDENT INFORMATION**

---

Student Name:	Student CU ID Number:	
Course Code/Number: (INT 1010, 1020, 1030, 2010, 2020, 2030, 3010, 8010)	Major/Program:	
Total Hours Worked:	Start Date:	End Date:
Term: (semester and year)		

# CLEMSON

## INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

### INT Course - Mentor Evaluation of Student

Center for Career and Professional Development

#### STUDENT INFORMATION

Student's Name:

Student's Position:

Term (Fall/Spring/Summer and Year):

Will this evaluation be discussed with the student? Yes / No

What is the total number of hours your student intern worked during the internship term?

- Over 320 site hours
- Between 160 and 320 site hours
- Under 160 site hours

#### EMPLOYER INFORMATION

Employer (Company/Organization Name):

Employer Location:

Your Name:

#### SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES, COMPETENCIES & EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Please briefly describe the major project(s) "tackled" by the student intern.

In comparison to other students you have hosted as an intern, how does this student compare?

- Much better
- Slightly better
- About the same
- Slightly worse
- Much worse



In coordination with faculty, staff, and employers, the CCPD has developed the nine competencies employers and graduate/professional schools seek in college graduates. Learn more at [career.denison.edu/core](http://career.denison.edu/core).

Each competency has five proficiency levels ranging from Awareness to Expert. These levels are experiential based, and can be developed by students through classwork, projects, work experience, volunteer work, extracurricular involvement, and similar activities. Since competency development occurs over a lifetime, very few students will reach Expert before graduation. Understanding this background information, please rate your intern in the nine competency areas.

	Awareness theoretical knowledge	Basic limited experience	Intermediate practical application	Advanced extensive experience & application	Expert recognized for mastery & attainment in all areas
Communication - articulating one's self					
Collaboration - working with others					
Leadership - leveraging others' strengths to achieve a vision					
Adaptability - embracing opportunities for improvement and resilience					
Analytical Skills - identifying and solving problems					
Technology - employing current and emerging software/tools					
Self-Awareness - understanding strengths, limitations, and goals					
Integrity & Ethics - demonstrating integrity and ethics in different settings					
Brand - maintaining a positive reputation					

Which of the following competencies do you see as the intern's GREATEST STRENGTH?

- Communication - articulating one's self
- Collaboration - working with others
- Leadership - leveraging others' strengths to achieve a vision
- Adaptability - embracing opportunities for improvement and resilience
- Analytical Skills - identifying and solving problems
- Technology - employing current and emerging software/tools
- Self-Awareness - understanding strengths, limitations, and goals
- Integrity & Ethics - demonstrating integrity and ethics in different settings
- Brand - maintaining a positive reputation

Why?

## Appendix B

### Institutional Research Review Board Approval

**From:** Nalinee Patin <npatin@clermson.edu>  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 18, 2018 at 12:03 PM  
**To:** Troy Nunamaker <tnunama@clermson.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to work with historic data

Hi Troy,

Our office was closed on Friday, and with a skeleton crew this week, I am still making my way down my inbox.

If the study team does not need the identifiable data (names, student IDs, etc.) for the project, then I recommend having the instructors remove all of the identifiable data before sharing the data with you. You do not need an IRB application if the data has been de-identified and you do not plan to collect prospective data.

If the study team plans to collect prospective data as well and need the student names and IDs, then your team would have to submit the Expedited application form and either obtain written consent from the students to use their data for research purposes or receive a FERPA exception from the registrar's office. The guidance and FERPA exception request are available on our website at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/resources.html>.

Kind regards,  
Nalinee

**Nalinee Patin, CIP**

**IRB Administrator**

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**

Clemson University, Division of Research

391 College Avenue, Suite 406, Clemson, SC 29631, USA

P: 864-656-0636

[www.clemson.edu/research](http://www.clemson.edu/research)

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