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Publication Date

2025-09-24

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF THE CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

Leading for Belonging: How Culturally Proficient Leadership Influences Underrepresented
Staff's Sense of Belonging in Nonprofits

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfactions of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Matthew Terry Garcia Monges

Committee in charge:

California State University San Marcos

Anthony Matranga, Chair

University of California San Diego

Carolyn Huie Hofstetter

Sherice Clarke

2025

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University of California San Diego

California State University, San Marcos

2025

Dedication

I am incredibly grateful for my loved ones who inspire me each and every day and who supported me through this journey. Thank you to my best friends, to my sisters, and to Jack and Kai. Thank you to the original educators who sparked my passion for this work: my mother and father. When I was born, my mom joked that one day I would have three letters after my name. These three letters are for you.

And most of all, thank you to my best friend - my wife. We did this together, every step of the way, one check list at a time.

Epigraph

The Orange

At lunchtime I bought a huge orange—
The size of it made us all laugh.
I peeled it and shared it with Robert and Dave—
They got quarters and I had a half.

And that orange, it made me so happy,
As ordinary things often do
Just lately. The shopping. A walk in the park.
This is peace and contentment. It's new.

The rest of the day was quite easy.
I did all the jobs on my list
And enjoyed them and had some time over.
I love you. I'm glad I exist.

— Wendy Cope

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Acknowledgements

I am eternally thankful for the academic team who coached me and supported me in all facets of the JDP experience. Thank you to my committee and thank you especially to Cohort 19 for the shared laughs, tears, and newly forming arthritis in all of our wrists and fingers from time spent on these keyboards. I would also like to recognize a few special individuals whose support was instrumental in making this journey possible:

Melissa Wolf, you are an angel and deserve to be anointed president, Queen, and ruler of the JDP Kingdom.

Dr. Theresa Meyerott, you are an inspiration in work ethic and generosity - thank you for your unrivaled dedication to helping our cohort and for your earnestness, sincerity, and friendship.

Dr. Alan Daly, your words and preachings of Ubuntu philosophies will never leave me and will forever shape my leadership practice.

And last, **Dr. Anthony Matranga**, thank you for your tireless support, flexibility, and careful eyes as my chair - you helped me grow to become a better writer, and researcher, far beyond what I ever thought possible.

Vita

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Leading for Belonging: How Culturally Proficient Leadership Influences Underrepresented Staff's Sense of Belonging in Nonprofits

by

Matthew Terry Garcia Monges

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of San Diego, 2025

California State University, San Marcos, 2025

Professor Anthony Matranga, Chair

The U.S. nonprofit workforce is becoming more diverse. This change in demographics mandates nonprofits transform their leadership practices to meet the needs of growing diverse staff populations and to accomplish their organizational mission. The nonprofit sector has been

led from a predominately White perspective, which has served as an obstacle for staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds to feel as though they belong. Individuals from underrepresented backgrounds are therefore at a disadvantage in nonprofit organizations as a result of historical discrimination and lack of representation. However, research suggests nonprofit leaders who empower the talents of historically underrepresented staff and develop an organizational culture which fosters a sense of belonging can improve organizational effectiveness and increase overall achievement. For nonprofit leaders to develop a culture which fosters a sense of belonging and to successfully harness the benefits of diversity, specialized leadership skills like adopting culturally proficient practices may therefore be required. Thus, the purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods research study is to explore associations between leadership's self-reported cultural proficiency, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices within a nonprofit organization.

The findings suggest higher levels of self-perceived cultural proficiency in nonprofit leadership are positively associated with historically underrepresented staff's perceptions of a sense of belonging. The exception is that cultural proficiency alone does not guarantee feelings of a sense of belonging from historically underrepresented staff. Many staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds also describe the importance of sharing cultural and racial identities with leadership, the influence of mission centered leadership, and the influence of direct supervisors as contributing factors to their sense of belonging. Implications of this research focus on culturally proficient leadership practices as a method to strengthen a sense of belonging for underrepresented staff, direct supervisors' role in fostering a sense of belonging for

underrepresented staff, the influence of mission centered leadership on staff from nonprofits, and the urgent need to diversify leadership of all levels across the sector.

Keywords: Sense of Belonging, Cultural Proficiency, Historically Underrepresented Staff, Leadership, Nonprofit

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context and Nature of the Study

Nonprofits are organizations which focus on social services and public benefit, not on generating financial gain (Osula & Ng, 2014; Nickels & Leach, 2021) and are important to understand as their mission driven work has direct implications for important areas of U.S. society (Noor et al., 2023). Although people of color will be the majority population in the United States by the year 2060 (Brion, 2022), nonprofits are lagging in their ability to support and elevate underrepresented and historically marginalized staff populations (Witwer, 2021). The changing landscape of the U.S. and its workplace demographics means nonprofit leadership must transform to meet the needs of a diversifying workplace and to accomplish their missions (Osula & Ng, 2014).

It is important for staff to experience a sense of belonging (SoB) to achieve mission success for a nonprofit organization with staff from underrepresented communities (Witwer, 2021). However, research suggests individuals from marginalized, underrepresented backgrounds have a greater challenge finding a SoB – the subjective feeling of deep personal connection to groups, places, individuals and collective experiences – within nonprofit organizations because of historical discrimination and lack of representation (Allen et al., 2021; McClelland, 2021; Witwer, 2021). To foster a SoB and to utilize the benefits of diversity, nonprofit leaders developing culturally proficient (CP) leadership practices may be a potential solution. Currently, there is limited research on aspects of leadership, CP, and associations to SoB, in nonprofits from the perspective of underrepresented and marginalized staff. Thus, it is imperative to better understand perceptions of SoB and leadership practices from perspectives of underrepresented nonprofit staff to center their voices and to meet their needs. Ultimately,

nonprofit staff perspectives are also important to understand because nonprofits are often focused on social services and public benefit and as such their work may have positive implications to U.S. society (Noor et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The nonprofit sector has been led and dominated by White leadership with a White cultural perspective; a perspective which must shift if nonprofits are to succeed with a diversifying workforce (Adejumo, 2021; Lee, 2023; Nickels & Leach, 2021). To help make this perspective shift, nonprofit leaders must remove barriers marginalized staff may experience to promote greater levels of SoB throughout the nonprofit sector (Noor et al., 2023). SoB is particularly important in areas where individuals or groups may feel different or foreign in a given setting (Strayhorn, 2012). Some key factors which contribute to a SoB include perceptions of group membership, perceived cohesion with a group, a sense or feeling of being valued, the sense of serving an important role in a group, and feelings of morale associated with membership in a group (Anderman, 2002; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn, 2024). A SoB is important in and out of the nonprofit work setting as it predicts many physical, emotional, and behavioral outcomes and can positively impact employee performance (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021; Parry et al., 2019). Research demonstrates a direct link between experiencing a SoB at work and increased opportunities for relationship building, professional development, and employee success (Filstad et al., 2019). Further, it is critical to foster a SoB in nonprofits as feelings of SoB have been shown to increase performance of individuals from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds and benefit organizational achievement (Azevedo et al., 2021; Brown, 2002; Witwer, 2021).

Despite this, research suggests individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds have a greater challenge finding a SoB within nonprofits (Allen et al., 2021; McClelland, 2021; Witwer, 2021). This challenge could be linked to marginalized staff's absence in mainstream nonprofit spaces and the historical bias towards Whiteness and masculinity in nonprofit leadership (Allen et al., 2021; Lee, 2023; Witwer, 2021). For example, while people of color consist of around 32% of the nonprofit workforce, less than 20% become executive leaders (Lee, 2023; Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017). Equally disheartening, 65% of Black identifying nonprofit staff in the U.S. feel they must work harder than White staff to advance in their organization (Adejumo, 2021). These feelings of being overworked compared to White peers are obstacles to historically marginalized staff's SoB, which ultimately lead to deteriorating retention rates and a lack of growth to leadership roles for underrepresented staff at nonprofits (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Lee, 2023; Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017). Combined, this creates a need to better understand how to engage staff from underrepresented backgrounds to uplift their perspectives and increase their SoB in the nonprofit setting. Doing so may elevate growth opportunities for underrepresented staff, which may help the sector better adapt to the growing diversity, and ultimately help nonprofits improve performance with a more diverse workforce.

To increase a nonprofit staff's SoB, leaders may benefit from adopting CP leadership practices. CP leadership can be defined as a way for leaders to create organizational transformation and prepare their organization to effectively respond and plan for challenges which may arise in a diverse environment (Brion, 2022; Welborn et al., 2022). CP leadership practices in a nonprofit setting can potentially impact a SoB for staff from marginalized backgrounds just as it has in the education field (Cross, 1989; Witwer, 2021). Management techniques like CP are especially important in nonprofits because extrinsic rewards like

compensation incentives are often scarcer in nonprofits or less valued by the employees who work in the nonprofit sector (Chen, 2014; De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans & Jegers, 2011; Knapp et al., 2019; Schepers et al., 2005). Leading with CP practices ensures leaders can develop trust and build relationships and facilitate equity and inclusion in an organization (Knapp et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study & Research Questions

The purpose of this research study is to explore associations between leadership's self-reported CP, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff's perceptions of leadership practices within a nonprofit organization. While there is existing research focused on the impact of individual elements of CP leadership on staff SoB, this research investigates the SoB for historically underrepresented staff whose leaders self-report comprehensively practicing most traits of CP. The guiding research questions of this study are as follows:

- Primary Research Question: What associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived culturally proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices?
 - Sub question 1: To what extent are leaders in the West Region at the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO; a pseudonym) culturally proficient?
 - Sub question 2: In what ways do staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds perceive their sense of belonging in organizations whose leaders rate high on the cultural proficiency scale?

- Sub question 3: What leadership practices do underrepresented and historically marginalized staff recognize in a nonprofit organization whose leaders are self-perceived as culturally proficient?

Methods Overview

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study took place in the West Region of a global nonprofit which has been assigned the alias of Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO). In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, quantitative data are collected first and qualitative data are collected second, to further explore a phenomenon in a specific context. I used this approach to first gather quantitative data to identify leaders who perceive themselves as CP using a self-assessment Likert style survey. Further, upon identifying a high scoring CP office, I then interviewed three senior executive leaders of that office to further understand their perceptions of CP leadership practices. Lastly, I also analyzed a 2024 retention report and DEI Strategic Action Plan Report from the GHO to further understand existing CP leadership practices and to potentially combat self-reporting bias from leaders who took the survey and partook in my interviews.

Combined, this allowed me to understand the landscape of existing CP leadership practices in my setting (sub research question one). Once this first stage of data was gathered, I then selected my qualitative sample of underrepresented staff to interview to understand their interpretation of a SoB and recognition of leadership practices in contexts where their leaders perceive themselves as CP (sub research questions two and three). This helped me better understand how underrepresented and marginalized staff perceive their SoB in organizations whose leaders rate high on the CP scale as well as what leadership practices staff recognize. When combined in this order, this research design allowed me to contrast perspectives and to

look across my qualitative and quantitative sets of data to help answer my primary research question. By exploring across my quantitative and qualitative data and comparing, I put myself in a position to best explore associations between nonprofit leadership's self-perceived CP, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices from an asset-based lens.

It is important to note that this research intentionally utilized an asset-based approach. An asset-based approach in educational research is important as literature suggests focusing on the strengths of a diverse setting when conducting research may better serve a culturally and ethnically diverse community and can better support individuals coming from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds (Krutowski, 2017; Lopez & Louis, 2009; White et al., 2016). As such, this research centered itself around an office whose leadership indicated strong self-perceived characteristics of CP.

Significance of the Study

Nonprofit organizations can play a significant role in advocating and representing the interests of underrepresented and marginalized communities by nature of their mission driven, social justice-oriented work (Nickels & Leach, 2021). Nonprofits serve as a reflection of U.S. society's moral compass and desire for equitable change. Therefore, it is critical for nonprofit organizations to be at the forefront of progressive, equitable, change initiatives like those which come as a result of adopting CP practices. By centering this research study on perspectives and experiences of marginalized and underrepresented identifying staff and their perceptions of leadership practices, this research raises awareness on the perceptions of belonging for the historically excluded. Implications of this research focus on culturally proficient leadership practices as a method to strengthen a sense of belonging for underrepresented staff, direct

supervisors role in fostering a sense of belonging for underrepresented staff, the influence of mission centered leadership on staff from nonprofits, and the urgent need to diversify leadership of all levels across the sector. In turn, this research may result in new understandings of how to improve achievement levels for such staff and for nonprofit organizations as a whole.

Positionality & Broader Political Context at my Research Setting

I used GHQ (a pseudonym) as my research setting as a result of my personal/professional connection to the organization thereby supporting accessibility to the settings and participants themselves. That said, my relationship to my research study is complex and intersectional in nature. I opted to open my study to participants who identify as a member of a nondominant group in any of the following categories: race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, socioeconomic class, education, and age. In regard to these categories, I identify primarily as an advantaged person. I am a United States born citizen, able bodied, heterosexual, cisgender male. As such, I anticipated many of my participants would have had backgrounds different from my own. I believed this was particularly possible given the diverse nature of the organization I studied. This is important to understand as privilege and bias are inescapably interwoven into any social setting including one centered around collecting research and therefore could have influenced participant responses.

My interest in equity work and building an inclusive society stems from my experiences with privilege and access as much as it does with my experiences as being mixed-race and coming from low socioeconomic status (SES). I am Yaqui and Mexican on my father's side, and German from my mother's side and I identify as multi-racial. I grew up in a lower-class family. My parents and I often lived paycheck to paycheck, and at times even lived out of our

Volkswagen van. My upbringing in a lower-class mixed-race family undoubtedly influenced my desire to understand and dismantle inequity in and outside of my community.

That said, my external facing identities are ones which convey privilege in more ways than one. Although I identify as a mixed-race individual and grew up in a mixed-race household, I am white passing and English speaking. Further, given my position as a scholarly researcher, with multiple degrees, working in a white-collar profession, it could be unlikely my participants would assume my SES background. Ultimately, I am addressing these aspects of my positionality as I acknowledge both the visible and invisible aspects of my identity shaped my own biases as well as how my research participants saw and associated me.

In addition to my own positionality, this research study must also be contextualized within the broader political and specific organizational context of the time the research was conducted. At the time of data collection in early 2025, the setting of this study referred to as GHO was navigating tremendous organizational change due to the new presidential administration's cutting of funding for organizations supporting refugees and resettlement as well as the government's attack against diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives across the US. These political shifts and cuts to government funded organizations like GHO translated into layoffs, funding cuts for refugee client resettlement support and programs, and an organizational climate where DEI was forcibly eliminated in language and practice throughout the many organizations, including GHO. As such, understanding the associations between underrepresented staff's sense of belonging and nonprofit leadership practices took on increased urgency and relevance when the same systems meant to support equity and inclusion were being forcibly dismantled from the US government itself.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Making the Case for Studying Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations comprise around twelve percent of the United States workforce and therefore account for a sizable percentage of the U.S. population (Salamon, 2018; Witwer, 2021). Not only is it true most adults spend a significant amount of time at work, but many of them spend time working for nonprofits (Salamon, 2018). In total, there are more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the U.S. alone (Witwer, 2021). The nonprofit industry ranks third behind retail trade and manufacturing in terms of largest workforces in the U.S. and employs more workers than other industries such as insurance, finance, construction, and transportation. It is also important to note the nonprofit industry is experiencing a diversifying workforce (Witwer, 2021). This ongoing change in demographics in the nonprofit industry means nonprofit leaders may need to transform their practices to meet the needs of diversifying staff force and to accomplish their organizational mission.

Nonprofit organizations are engaged in a wide variety of ethically conscious fields (i.e., social services, education, environmental protection, humanitarianism) which directly impact diverse communities at both a local and large scale (Osula & Ng, 2014). Therefore, and most importantly, nonprofit organizations are salient to study because of their focus, mission, and societal impact (Nickels & Leach, 2021; Noor et al., 2023). Given their collective emphasis on social service and public benefit, U.S. nonprofits mirror the social and economic values held by American society in their mission driven work (Noor et al., 2023). For example, many nonprofits are focused on serving marginalized communities and as such can play a prominent role in advocating and representing the interests of underrepresented communities in the United States (Nickels & Leach, 2021). While it is difficult to consistently define the nonprofit sector because

organizations are so diverse in size, scope, and mission (Osula & Ng, 2014; Nickels & Leach, 2021), common focus areas include social services, education, arts, environmental protection, humanitarianism, crisis support, healthcare research, and many more (Salamon, 2018). Thus, due to their wide array of altruistic services, it is useful to study nonprofits to understand how to elevate their potential to foster positive social change to U.S. society (Osula & Ng, 2014; Nickels & Leach, 2021). Taken together, the size and scope of the nonprofit sector, the importance of seeking a better understanding of a diverse workplace experience, and the societal implications for the mission driven work of nonprofits contribute to the purpose of this research.

Having now set the groundwork for the value of research about nonprofits, the following sections unpack the ideas of SoB, CP, and leadership as applied to the nonprofit sector in more detail.

The Importance of a SoB for Increased Nonprofit Performance

It is critical for staff to experience a SoB to achieve mission success for a nonprofit organization with staff from underrepresented communities (Witwer, 2021). SoB is defined as the subjective feeling of deep personal connection to groups, places, individuals and collective experiences (Allen et al., 2021; Filstad et al., 2019; Knekta et al., 2020; Strayhorn, 2012). A review of the literature suggests there are five critical indicators of a SoB including perceptions of group membership, perceived cohesion with a group, feeling valued within a group, feelings of morale associated with membership in that group, and the ability to assume an important role in that group (Anderman, 2002; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn, 2024).

Perceptions of Group Membership refers to group norms and values which are influenced by group characteristics as a result of their perception of being a part of the group. Without a

feeling of being a part of the group, an organization is simply an unlinked collection of individuals (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). *Perceived Cohesion* describes an individual's perception of their own standing in a group or organization and the extent to which an individual sticks together and remains united in their goals and objectives in that group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Carron, 1982). *Feeling Valued* occurs when others validate an individual's achievements, recognize them, and put value on their worth in their group or organization (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This is directly tied to *Serving an Important Role* within that group as when individuals see themselves as having purpose and making meaningful contributions to the group, they perceive themselves as necessary members of that group. In other words, the nature of belonging is that of a positive feedback loop - the more involved an individual is the greater they perceive they are serving an important role, and the more they feel their role is important, the further they get involved (Knekta et al., 2020). Lastly, *Feelings of Morale* is marked by an individual's positive and negative emotional responses in association with membership to a group or organization (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). A feeling of morale motivates individuals to value their membership in an organization, to evaluate their relationships within an organization, and to engage in social and/or task related group wide activities in that organization (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

In a nonprofit setting, a SoB can directly influence employee satisfaction and increase organizational retention rates (Knekta et al., 2020; Witwer, 2021). When the aforementioned indicators are met and a need for a SoB is satiated, it can lead to increased achievement and happiness for individuals in any setting (Knekta et al., 2020; Strayhorn, 2012), and particularly in nonprofits (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Witwer, 2021). In fact, research suggests a SoB is the most important factor by which individuals measure the worth of their organization

(Adejumo, 2021). This is because the feeling of a SoB directly correlates to how individuals identify with and feel valued by their organization (Belle et al. 2015; Knapp et al., 2019). Staff in nonprofit organizations are likely to feel a SoB for a variety of reasons including organizational alignment of interests, values, race, gender, culture, and capabilities (Bowles & Scull, 2019). When staff experience a SoB in their organization, they are more likely to believe they are treated fairly by their organization, and as a result are more likely to believe their organization is trustworthy and worth working for (Knapp et al., 2019; Witwer, 2021).

Nonprofit employees with a greater SoB also perform better in their roles (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021; Parry et al., 2019; Witwer, 2021). According to research, nonprofit staff who feel as though they belong in their workplace self-report a 56% higher level of job performance compared to those who do not (Witwer, 2021). One study found staff who experience a SoB showed job performance improvements in several manners including through staff innovation and engagement. In said study, nonprofit employees who experienced a SoB felt better able to contribute to their organization in a creative fashion and felt they could more deeply engage in the pursuit of the organization's mission (Witwer, 2021).

Studies also suggest staff's SoB can help staff experience a sense of flow while at work. A sense of flow can be described as intense immersion in which the individual experiences a feeling of peak positivity, and efficiency that can result in a transcendent achievement level. While the feeling may be rare and only exist for moments at a time, the positive impact of increased achievement can be long lasting for both the individual and their organization (Bowles & Scull, 2019).

The Effects of Not Having a SoB on Underrepresented Populations in Nonprofits

Without a SoB for staff, a nonprofit organization may face numerous challenges related to employee well-being (Baumeister et al., 2003; Knekta et al., 2020; Thau et al., 2007). For example, in an empirical literature review centered on SoB and implications for motivation, researchers found that individuals who did not experience a SoB in their organization were more likely to experience sadness, lowered self-esteem, or even depression as well as feelings of emotional distress, increased stress, increased health problems, and various forms of psychopathy (Baumeister et al., 2003). This empirical literature review noted this was because individuals who did not feel a SoB instead felt socially excluded and as though others thought they were stupid, impulsive, selfish, and even emotionally numb (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Nonprofit employees who do not experience a SoB in their organization are ultimately less likely to remain with their organization (Knekta et al., 2020; Thau et al., 2007; Witwer, 2021). In a study which unpacked a survey of 1,789 full time employees to understand their SoB in relation to effectiveness at work, researchers found that employees who did not experience a SoB were 50% more likely to leave their role (Witwer, 2021). This was because participants in the survey noted their perceptions of a lack of belonging also yielded lowered degrees of organizational identity, a lack of feeling included, lessened feelings of trust, and overall decreased work satisfaction (Witwer, 2021).

For those who remain in their role but without experiencing a SoB, research shows individuals are more likely to make risky decisions or perform ill-advised acts which can cause harm to themselves or the organization (Baumeister et al., 2003; Thau et al., 2007). In a study which examined the relationship between the experience of lacking belonging and work behavior of 213 participants, researchers found that employees who lacked belonging were more harmful

to themselves and to others in the workplace (Thau et al., 2007). This study noted this was the case because employees who felt socially excluded, were consequently more aggressive and would lash out since a fundamental need of a SoB was not met (Thau et al., 2007).

Unfortunately, individuals from marginalized backgrounds are often excluded and have their need for a SoB denied in a nonprofit setting at disproportionately high rates especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Nickels & Leach, 2021; Witwer, 2021). In a narrative review of existing SoB research in nonprofits, researchers found that the negative effects of lacking a SoB were more pronounced for those who identified as gender or sexually diverse, racial minorities, or individuals with mental health issues or disabilities (Allen et al., 2021). This study suggested this was the case as a consequence of the nonprofit sector's historically Western, White, and masculine perspective. The researchers noted that individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds felt their identities were neither affirmed nor represented to the same degree as their more systematically privileged peers. In turn, this study suggested that historically marginalized staff then experienced lowered retention rates, increased workplace conflict, lack of community, and reduced performance (Allen et al., 2021).

When organizations do not have a culture which fosters a SoB among a diverse community, CP leaders in the education setting have been able to facilitate necessary changes to promote an organizational culture which does (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborne et al.; 2022). This underscores the need for research on underrepresented staff perceptions of CP leaders and the association to a SoB in nonprofits. Findings from such research could lead to increased awareness on how to better nonprofit performance through increased staff retention, resiliency, creativity, cohesion, and satisfaction at work. The following section describes CP

leadership practices in more detail and unpacks some of the limited examples of CP practice which have been applied to a nonprofit setting in existing research.

CP Leadership and Associations with Organizational Achievement

One potential approach to cultivating a SoB for all staff, including staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds, is for leaders to implement CP leadership practices. CP leadership can be defined as a way for leaders to create organizational transformation; it is a mindset and a way in which leaders prepare their organization to effectively respond to and plan for challenges which may arise in a diverse environment (Brion, 2022; Welborn et al., 2022). Research suggests implementing CP leadership practices in a comprehensive fashion asks for the leader to *maintain self-awareness, emphasize trust and relationship building throughout their staff, actively engage with staff from all backgrounds, foster and demonstrate authenticity, and hire, retain, and develop staff from all backgrounds* (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022).

Comprehensively adopting CP practices is worthwhile for leaders of nonprofit organizations as doing so may meaningfully increase measures to build a SoB for historically underrepresented staff and collectively dismantle barriers to underrepresented groups. This is critical as studies suggest nonprofits are struggling to adapt to increased diversity of staff in the nonprofit sector (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Witwer, 2021). Without skilled leadership capable of navigating a complex, diverse, nonprofit environment, challenges as a result of increased diversity in a nonprofit setting can include lowered retention rates, staff conflict, lack of community and belonging, and reduced organizational performance (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Osula & Ng, 2014; Witwer, 2021). For example, one study found that historically

underrepresented staff without a SoB were absent 25% more often than staff who felt as though they belonged thereby negatively impacting overall organizational performance (Witwer, 2021).

To counteract these challenges, leaders committed to CP practices may help elevate a SoB for underrepresented and historically marginalized staff and enhance effectiveness across nonprofit organizations (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Witwer, 2021). Although CP leadership practices have been traditionally applied in the education field, these aforementioned individual elements are seen in research on nonprofits as having potential impacts on staff's SoB and organizational achievement.

Notably, CP and the associated elements served as a productive lens to better understand and characterize how nonprofit leaders have impacted organizational achievement and underrepresented staff SoB. In the following sections, I review existing literature on nonprofit leadership practices and the impacts on underrepresented staff SoB and organizational achievement through the lens of CP to provide background for the study. This is because CP in large part has not been researched outside of the education field. That said, there is a need in research for a better understanding of a holistic implementation of the aforementioned CP leadership practices and their impacts on historically marginalized and underrepresented staff as the outcomes of a comprehensive adoption of CP leadership practice in education have been beneficial (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022).

The following sections of this literature review will describe existing research on some of the limited and isolated examples of when nonprofit leaders demonstrate CP leadership practices including: maintaining self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationship building throughout their staff, actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds.

The Impact of Leaders who Build Trust and Relationships on Staff SoB and Organizational Performance

Leaders of nonprofits who have emphasized the CP practice of trust and relationship building in their organization have generated improved organizational outcomes like that of staff resiliency (Luthans et al., 2006; Page et al., 2021; Quist, 2009). Staff resilience in an organization is important because individuals and organizations which are resilient are more malleable to changing demands and more stable when faced with adversity (Luthans et al., 2006). A qualitative study centered on examining leadership qualities best fit to lead organizations through turbulent times found that leaders who emphasized trust and relationship building were particularly effective at developing organization and staff resiliency (Quist, 2009). In the study, employees who were interviewed noted that when they considered the leaders of their organization to be trustworthy, they felt their leaders had better integrity and in turn they felt the organization they worked for was more credible. Combined, employees who felt as though their leaders were trustworthy, and their organization more credible, then felt their organization and themselves better prepared to deal with existing and future challenges (Quist, 2009).

Research suggests nonprofit organizations which have created opportunities for trust building among staff from all backgrounds have also increased a SoB for their staff (Knapp et al., 2019). In a study focused on the ties between trust and a SoB, researchers sampled 196 nonprofit staff from various backgrounds, including historically underrepresented backgrounds, to understand their perceptions of trust with leaders and how it influenced their perception of SoB in the organization. The study revealed a majority of staff who experienced higher levels of trust with their leaders noted improved workplace morale, and a greater sense of cohesion at work, thereby improving their SoB in their organization and (Knapp et al., 2019). This study

noted leaders were able to accomplish trust building with their staff by demonstrating vulnerability, sustained character, composure, competence, and shared values to exhibit authenticity and credibility to their staff (Knapp et al., 2019).

Research indicates that leaders have developed trust with staff in two central ways; the first is by directly developing their own relationships with staff (Fontaine, 2007; Osula & Ng, 2014). In one study, leaders were able to develop trust in their relationships with staff thereby improving a SoB in the following manners: intentionally initiating cross cultural relationships, creating space to share different cultural knowledge, and creating intentional space for meetings and working groups across the organizational hierarchy (Osula & Ng, 2014). By creating space for working groups across the organizational hierarchy, staff felt more deeply valued, which directly impacted staff's sense of identity, and self-worth while working in the organization (Osula & Ng, 2014). In the same vein, this study showed staff felt cared for and understood by their leadership when leaders made space for different cultural knowledge at work. In response, staff then indicated having a deeper care and concern for their leaders thereby improving cohesion between staff and leaders. This was noted as especially true when leaders demonstrated a commitment to all staff members not limited to a select group or demographic (Osula & Ng, 2014).

The second way leaders have developed trust with staff is through the cultivation of diverse staff-to-staff level relationships (Fontaine, 2007; Osula & Ng, 2014). In an empirical literature review focused on examining effective leadership techniques in culturally diverse settings, researchers found that leaders who curated a culture of trust through organizational practices were more likely to facilitate the development of trust and relationships among different cultural groups at work. In said review, researchers found leaders were able to

accomplish the development of staff to staff level relationships thereby boosting staff belonging in the following ways: intentionally allocating time and resources to solve systematic cross cultural barriers across the organization, creating appraisal and reward systems for employees who demonstrated strong behavior in alignment with organizational team cohesion goals, and setting intentional time for staff to work with others from across the organization they may not normally collaborate with (Fontaine, 2007). To exemplify one of the aforementioned practices, by setting time for staff to work with others they may not have normally worked with, the study revealed that challenges or conflicts like that of cultural stereotyping in diverse organizational settings were often reduced or mitigated thereby improving staff's SoB and organizational cohesion (Fontaine, 2007).

In summary, existing literature suggests leaders who have exhibited trust and relationship building with staff and facilitated trust and relationship building between staff have been shown to increase organizational outcomes. Performance outcomes include improved staff resilience, as well as organizational cohesion across staff from different backgrounds and between leaders and staff themselves. Further, existing literature also suggests staff's SoB has been increased from leaders emphasizing trust and relationship building as staff have consequently experienced improved feelings of morale, felt more deeply valued, and felt increased levels of perceived cohesion in their organization.

The Impact of Leaders who are Self-Aware, Encourage Authenticity, and are Engaged on Staff SoB and Organizational Performance

Leaders of nonprofits who have exhibited CP practices of being self-aware, engaged, and committed to building authenticity have helped improve organizational performance by helping the organization navigate challenges in diverse environments. Research suggests this is because

leaders with the aforementioned qualities elicit higher levels of commitment and dedication from staff to their roles (Filstad et al., 2019). This increase in commitment to staff 's work and responsibilities in turn makes it more likely staff will collaboratively navigate feelings of uncertainty during challenging times or conflict (Filstad et al., 2019; Luthans et al., 2006; Osula & Ng, 2014; Page et al., 2021). As such, studies suggest leaders who can help staff navigate uncertainty in the workplace by being self-aware, developing feelings of authenticity, and ensuring organizational engagement may help increase employee retention and satisfaction, thereby improving organizational performance (Almas et al., 2020; Osula & Ng, 2014).

Nonprofit leaders who are self-aware of their own biases have also been able to help nonprofit staff develop a greater SoB (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017; Lim et al., 2023; Nickels & Leach, 2021; Witwer, 2021). In a study concentrated on understanding the effects of leaders who intentionally built self-awareness by applying an analytical and intersectional lens to their leadership practices, leaders reported increasing their understanding of existing workplace challenges like those rooted in racism, sexism, and heteronormativity (Nickels & Leach, 2021). In turn, leaders then felt more equipped to dismantle some of the aforementioned challenges thereby counteracting the nonprofit industry's bias towards Whiteness and masculinity. The elevated self-awareness in organizational leadership and ability to disrupt bias in the workspace then contributed to greater feelings of morale (an indicator of a SoB) from staff from underrepresented backgrounds. By nature of leaders' improved self-awareness and ability to facilitate a more equitable work space, staff from underrepresented backgrounds reported feeling a more valued member of the organization and as though their lived experiences were more legitimized (Nickels & Leach, 2021).

Leaders of nonprofits who have encouraged authenticity rather than forced assimilation to a dominant culture have also helped develop a SoB for underrepresented staff in their organization (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012; Hapeta, et al., 2019; Witwer, 2021). For example, a study focused on understanding the experiences of historically underrepresented staff in nonprofits found underrepresented staff experienced an increase in SoB and better flourished in their role when they received affirmation of their traditional culture and heritage (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012). In said study, leaders who cultivated authenticity by incorporating practices which were informed by historically underrepresented and marginalized staff's cultural knowledge and values into their organization were able to benefit the health of underrepresented identifying people individually and collectively (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012). In turn, staff reported feeling they could better be their authentic selves in the workplace, and experienced a greater SoB, which led to improved work conditions and increased retention (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012).

Aside from cultivating an inclusive culture of authenticity, leaders of nonprofits have been effective at developing a SoB for historically underrepresented staff when leaders themselves have been engaged, intentional, and participatory in organizational equity efforts (Witwer, 2021). For example, research suggests nonprofit leaders who have actively partaken and facilitated various training sessions with their staff have experienced a direct correlation to higher retention rates of those staff (Almas et al., 2020). Similarly, leaders who have directly engaged with their staff in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related initiatives by sharing and discussing related materials like articles, or engaging in DEI related meetings and workshops, have better met the organization's DEI performance goals (McClelland, 2021). Further, when leaders of nonprofits have held frequent staff retreats, connection activities, and actively

participated, leaders have helped staff of all identities to build their organization's culture. In accordance, staff have been shown to be more adaptive to culture shifts, experience greater levels of a SoB, and collectively experience improved performance (Adejumo, 2021; Soelton et al., 2021).

Taken together, leaders have helped foster a SoB for underrepresented staff in nonprofits by being self-aware, encouraging and cultivating authenticity from staff from underrepresented backgrounds, and engaging with intention in organizational equity efforts. Existing literature suggests that doing so not only improves a SoB for staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds but also betters nonprofit organizational outcomes by increasing retention rates, improving staff performance, and elevating employee satisfaction.

The Impact when Leaders Recruit, Retain, and Develop Historically Underrepresented Staff on Staff SoB and Organizational Performance

Leaders of nonprofits who have diversified their leadership teams, retained, and developed underrepresented staff from within their organization have better engaged diverse constituents and traditionally marginalized community members thereby improving organizational achievement. To achieve the aforementioned benefits to organizational achievement pertaining to recruitment, retention, and professional development of underrepresented staff, some leaders of nonprofit organizations have built their organization to be a reflection of the community they serve by recruiting, retaining, and developing historically underrepresented staff (McClelland, 2021). In doing so, one study found increasing opportunity for underrepresented staff to serve in leadership roles led to improved organizational outcomes such as increased opportunities for fundraising as the aforementioned practices increased the scope and size of a nonprofit organization's client-base (Fredette & Sessler, 2019).

Aside from benefiting organizational achievement, nonprofit leaders have helped develop a SoB for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds through recruitment, retention, and professional development of underrepresented staff to leadership roles (Brown, 2002; Cross, 1989; McClelland, 2021; Witwer, 2021). A study focused on understanding nonprofits with CEOs from underrepresented backgrounds found that when leaders and staff shared similar racial backgrounds, the relationship and effectiveness of the leader and employee became more cohesive. In turn, the work experience as well as the SoB for that staff member were thereby improved (Lee, 2023).

In addition to recruiting historically underrepresented staff to fill leadership roles, nonprofit leaders have focused on retaining existing staff from underrepresented backgrounds to increase a SoB for the entire organization (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017; McClelland, 2021; Witwer, 2021). One way nonprofit leaders have boosted a SoB for underrepresented staff and in turn their retention, has been by creating growth pipelines for staff of historically underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds. In a recent study centered around equity initiatives in nonprofits, researchers found nonprofit leaders who created pipelines for growth through paid internships, created mentorship programs, and established supportive networks for staff at all career stages were able to better retain staff from underrepresented backgrounds (McClelland, 2021). In these examples, creating such opportunities helped to counteract existing nonprofit sector inequities such as that historically underrepresented and marginalized staff are often paid less, have less professional role models, lack social capital, and lack supportive professional social networks compared to their White peers (McClelland, 2021). Further, the aforementioned growth pipeline practices helped staff from underrepresented backgrounds to

feel more valued at work and as though their roles in the organization were important collectively improving their SoB (McClelland, 2021).

In sum, existing literature suggests leaders of nonprofits who have diversified their leadership teams, and retained, and developed underrepresented staff from within their organization have yielded an improved SoB for underrepresented staff. The aforementioned CP practices left staff from underrepresented backgrounds feeling more valued in their workspace and as though they were serving an important role, both indicators of a SoB. In turn, research suggests this has resulted in improved nonprofit organizational outcomes such as increased retention, and increased cohesion across entire nonprofit organizations.

Summary and Introduction to Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 served as a tool for framing my methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of my results. The review of the literature presented in the previous section points to numerous indicators of SoB, CP leadership practices, nonprofit organizational achievement, and relationships between these constructs and factors (see Figure 1). A comprehensive practice of CP leadership includes maintaining self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationships with staff, fostering and demonstrating authenticity with staff, actively engaging with staff, and hiring, retaining, and developing historically underrepresented staff. The five factors which must be met for staff to develop a SoB include a perception of group membership in the organization, perceived cohesion within the organization, feeling valued within the organization, feelings of morale associated with membership in the organization, and the ability to assume an important role in the organization (Anderman, 2002; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn, 2024). When these factors are met and a SoB for historically underrepresented staff is reached, existing literature suggests

improved organizational achievements for nonprofits in the following ways: increased retention of staff from historically marginalized backgrounds, increased resiliency for staff from those backgrounds, increased creativity from the organization, increased cohesion for the organization, and increased satisfaction levels for staff of all backgrounds (Almas et al., 2020; Osula & Ng, 2014; Quist, 2009).

It is clear from the literature that SoB results in increased organizational achievement as demonstrated in the framework. My review of the literature also points to the potential of CP leadership practices in nonprofits to impact staff's SoB. For example, as discussed above, there is evidence the CP leadership element of trust and relationship building can impact the SoB indicator of feeling valued for staff in an organization. However, what is unclear is the specific association between a comprehensive adoption of CP leadership practice and historically underrepresented staff's perceptions of their SoB. The potential implications of unpacking this further include a greater understanding of particularly impactful leadership practices for serving and uplifting the perspectives and needs of historically underrepresented staff and new understandings of how to improve achievement levels for nonprofit staff and for nonprofit organizations as a whole. These associations were further investigated as outlined in the methodology section.



Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework for Research Study

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The U.S. nonprofit workforce is becoming more diverse. This change in landscape mandates nonprofits transform their leadership practices to meet the needs of growing diverse staff populations and to accomplish their organizational mission. The nonprofit sector has been led from a predominately White perspective, which has served as an obstacle for staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds to feel as though they belong. Individuals from marginalized, underrepresented backgrounds are therefore at a disadvantage in nonprofit organizations as a result of historical discrimination and lack of representation. To help make this perspective shift, nonprofit leaders must remove barriers marginalized staff may experience to promote greater levels of SoB throughout the nonprofit sector (Noor et al., 2023). To increase a nonprofit staff's SoB, leaders may benefit from adopting CP leadership practices.

Nonprofit organizations can play a significant role in advocating and representing the interests of underrepresented and marginalized communities by nature of their mission driven, social justice oriented work (Nickels & Leach, 2021). The importance of seeking a better understanding of the historically underrepresented nonprofit staff's experience, the size and scope of the nonprofit sector, and the societal implications for the mission driven work of nonprofits contributed to the importance of this study.

It is important to note where and how this research filled a gap in the existing literature. While there is existing research studying the impact of particular aspects of CP leadership on staff SoB in nonprofits, this research explored the impact on historically underrepresented staff's SoB when leaders exhibit CP in a comprehensive fashion. By centering this research study on perspectives and experiences of underrepresented identifying staff and their perceptions of

leadership practices, this research also sought to shed light on the perceptions of belonging for the historically excluded.

The purpose of this research study was to explore associations between nonprofit leadership's self-perceived CP, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices within a nonprofit organization. Answering the research questions below helped to tell the story of nonprofit staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds and the impact from their perspective on how leadership practices have influenced their thoughts related to belonging. The guiding research questions of this study were as follows:

- Primary Research Question: What associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived culturally proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices?
 - Sub question 1: To what extent are leaders in the West Region at the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO) culturally proficient?
 - Sub question 2: In what ways do staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds perceive their sense of belonging in organizations whose leaders rate high on the cultural proficiency scale?
 - Sub question 3: What leadership practices do underrepresented and historically marginalized staff recognize in a nonprofit organization whose leaders are self-perceived as culturally proficient?

It is important to flag that this research intentionally utilized an asset based approach. An asset based approach in educational research is important as literature suggests focusing on the

strengths of a diverse setting when conducting research may better serve a culturally and ethnically diverse community and can better support individuals coming from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds (Krutowski, 2017; Lopez & Louis, 2009; White et al., 2016). On the other hand, focusing on perceived weaknesses or gaps may cause harm or be ineffective as it could yield results which are demoralizing and demotivating to historically marginalized individuals from underrepresented communities (Krutowski, 2017). As such, this research centered itself around offices whose leadership indicate strong self-perceived characteristics of CP.

Research Design: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Approach in Three Phases

Based on the research questions listed above, this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design organized by three distinct phases of research (Creswell, 2014). Mixed methods research is strengthened by its use of both qualitative and quantitative data, thus minimizing the limitations of each. In turn, it may help the study reach a more complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, quantitative data are collected first and qualitative data are collected second, in order to further explore a phenomenon in a specific context.

As a part of my first phase of my research, I used the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach to gather quantitative data to identify leaders who perceived themselves as high scoring in CP practice using a self assessment likert style survey. Upon identifying a high scoring CP office of choice, I then recruited three senior/executive level leaders from the office to understand their perceptions around CP and leadership practices via an interview. To conclude my first phase of my research design, I analyzed a 2024 GHO staff demographic and retention report as well as a 2024 GHO Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan Report to

understand where CP practice is described in said reports and to help combat potential self reporting bias from leaders in the surveys and interviews. Collectively, this allowed me to understand the landscape of existing CP leadership practices in my setting (sub research question one).

Once these data were gathered, I then progressed to my second phase of my research design and selected my qualitative sample of underrepresented staff to interview. By doing so, this allowed me to understand underrepresented staff's interpretations of their SoB and their recognition of leadership practices in contexts where their leaders perceive themselves as highly CP (Sub research questions two and three). This helped me better understand how underrepresented and marginalized staff perceive their SoB in organizations whose leaders rate high on the CP scale as well as what leadership practices staff recognize.

The explanatory sequential mixed methods sequence was important to my research because when combined in this order, the quantitative and qualitative data helped me to answer my overarching research question in my third and final phase of my research. By collecting my quantitative data first, I sought to understand where CP leadership is in practice at my setting (Global Humanitarian Organization). In knowing this, I then specifically targeted the experiences of underrepresented staff at an office in my setting where CP leadership is in practice. Further, this research design also allowed me to contrast perspectives and to look across my qualitative and quantitative sets of data to help answer my primary research question. For example, it was entirely possible the leaders in my sample may have said they were strong in various areas of CP practice (such as maintaining self-awareness or emphasizing trust and relationships with staff) while staff I interviewed may have recognized other areas outside of CP leadership as impacting their SoB. By exploring across my quantitative and qualitative data and comparing, I put myself

in a position to best explore associations between nonprofit leadership's self-perceived CP, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices from an asset based lens.

Setting and Context

The Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO) is a worldwide nonprofit organization which works in more than 40 countries and focuses on supporting people affected by humanitarian crises such as climate crisis, war, and natural disasters. I used GHO as a research setting because of their firm and widespread commitment to social justice and equitable practice. GHO has a long standing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts and has both a DEI vision statement and a global DEI strategic plan, of which all offices and employees of GHO are expected to work towards. GHO's DEI vision is to actively work to end systemic discrimination and to foster an inclusive working environment, and to reduce disparities driven by systemic inequality within and outside of the organization.

Globally, GHO has around 20,000 total staff and volunteers. In the United States, GHO has nearly 30 offices spread throughout various states among three distinct geographic regions all primarily focused on resettlement, asylum, and integration for refugees. For the sake of this research study, I focused on the estimated ten offices in the West Region of which for the purpose of this study are named as such: Pacific Northwest Office A, Pacific Northwest Office B, Pacific Northwest Office C, Southwest Office, Mountain West Office, North Coast Office A, North Coast Office B, North Coast Office C, North Coast Office D, and Mountain Central Office. Within these ten offices, I specifically looked to understand leaders and staff perspectives. Office leaders in this case were defined as any executive/senior level leader of an

office who supervises/ directly manages staff members. Inversely, staff were defined as any non-executive, non-supervisory professionals who do not manage others.

The work of staff and leaders at GHO is that of frequent intersection. Staff at GHO have a wide array of responsibilities. This includes direct contact and support for GHO clients such as picking up clients from airports, conducting home visits or clients, educating clients on professional development and career resources, helping clients with housing needs, and much more. If a staff member is not in a client centered role, they may have administrative duties, may serve as operations support in the form of technology use and the physical work space, may serve in human resources and people development, or may work as front desk staff to welcome guests, colleagues, clients, and visitors. Leaders frequently interact with GHO staff and may oversee individual teams or multiple teams and offer guidance and vision for operational issues, policies, and reporting, etc. Office leaders at GHO offices are in charge of establishing and articulating vision and strategy for their staff. They are responsible for the hiring, supervising, guiding, coaching, advising, and evaluating of staff in accordance with the organizational processes and values. There is a consistent interplay between staff and leaders at GHO offices because of the demand for leaders to plan and coordinate the flow of work for staff, provide organizational information, and because of their given decision-making authority.

Participants/ Sample

There were a total of ten offices in the West Region of GHO and approximately one to three overarching executive/senior leaders per office. Ultimately, the quantitative sample was seven office leader participants, across the ten individual offices. Of these ten total offices, I selected one office whose office leaders self-reported as high scoring on the CP self assessment and recruited three leaders to interview. As CP is a multidimensional and nuanced construct, I

used a combination of the self assessment CP survey instrument, interviews with leaders, and analysis of existing GHO DEI strategic action reports and retention data to combat potential leadership participant bias and to capture the nuance of CP leadership in practice.

Using the same high scoring office, I then sent out a recruitment email inviting self identifying historically underrepresented and marginalized staff participants for an interview (refer to the data collection section for additional details). Once I had a pool of potential historically underrepresented staff participants, the final seven staff participants for the qualitative interviews section were selected using purposeful sampling methods (Patton, 1990). In doing so, this study deliberately ensured relevant data was captured to answer the aforementioned research questions and to meet the goals of the study (Maxwell, 2013). I interviewed seven historically underrepresented staff members to ensure I gathered a rich pool of data without reaching a point of saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participants identified as having historically underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds in any of the following categories: race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, socioeconomic class, education, and age. Purposefully sampling these seven specific participants with the aforementioned characteristics helped to address the primary and supporting research questions to this study as critical to this research was capturing the voices of historically underrepresented and marginalized staff members in the nonprofit sector.

Overview of Instrumentation

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study utilized three different instruments to collect data: a semi-structured interview protocol for staff, a semi-structured interview protocol for leadership, and a self-assessment survey to assess perceptions of CP practice by leadership. Combined, these tools were created and adapted from other previously used scales to assess the

associations between perceptions of CP leadership practice and underrepresented staff's perceptions of sense of belonging in a nonprofit space. All three adapted instruments were pilot tested with peer doctoral researchers from UC San Diego to ensure clarity, applicability, and alignment with the research questions and accurate preservation of the original scales' intents.

To understand perceived CP practices among leadership and recognition of CP practices by underrepresented staff, I adapted the cultural competence self assessment survey used to understand CP practice in education settings (Lindsey et al., 2019). The original self assessment survey was selected as a basis for the leadership survey, the leadership interview, and the staff interview protocol section focused on CP recognition, due to its existing use in educational settings to evaluate CP practice across the different CP indicators.

To understand underrepresented staff's perceptions of their SoB, I used and adapted the perceived cohesion scale developed by Bollen & Hoyle (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). The original validated scale, used widely across educational research contexts, was adjusted to be used in interview format and helped to measure the understanding of perceptions of SoB across all SoB indicators. This adaptation preserved the original scale's conceptual intent while also allowing for deeper qualitative exploration of the underrepresented staff participant's narratives.

Phase 1: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis - Leadership Self-Assessment Surveys, Leader Interviews, and Key Organizational Reports

The purpose of my phase 1 quantitative data collection was to understand the extent to which office leaders at GHO perceive themselves enacting CP practice (Sub Research Question One). To better understand this, I collected quantitative data from office based leadership among ten individual GHO offices in the West Region of the U.S. I used a 5 point Likert style survey (which was used to self assess office leadership's understanding of their own CP leadership

practices), modified and adapted from a cultural competence self assessment survey (Lindsey et al., 2019). While the original tool was designed for organizational leaders to assess their own practices, I adapted this tool to align with my conceptual map and to serve as a research tool to specifically assess GHQ office leaders' perceived CP. The scale (listed in Appendix A) measured self-perceived understanding of how leaders in an organization maintain self-awareness, emphasize trust and relationship building throughout their staff, actively engage with staff from all backgrounds, foster and demonstrate authenticity, and hire, retain, and develop staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Once the survey was distributed and the data was collected, I then analyzed my quantitative data using Excel and an Excel Matrix. I used descriptive statistics and found the mean for each of the aforementioned individual elements (i.e. maintaining self-awareness) of the survey as well as in sum across all elements. Additionally, I generated memos that recorded strengths and weaknesses around CP practice throughout the duration of my analysis. Then, upon identifying the highest scoring office according to the survey results, I moved forward in recruiting leadership participants to interview.

The purpose of my phase 1 qualitative data collection in the form of interviews with leaders was to help me gain insight and understand the extent to which office leaders at GHQ perceive themselves enacting CP practice in the context of a high scoring CP office. Accordingly, I designed an interview protocol that allowed me to assess the indicators of CP, which included: maintaining self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationship building throughout their staff, actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

In congruence with the indicators listed in my conceptual map, I adapted the same cultural competence self assessment survey used to measure CP (Lindsey et al., 2019) to shape my interview questions to help me better understand office leadership's understanding of their own CP leadership practices at the GHO of choice. Two examples of interview questions taken from my staff interview protocol (found in Appendix B) centered around the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff are as follows: How do you foster professional growth opportunities for staff from underrepresented backgrounds? And, what specific professional growth opportunities have you offered?

Given that each office had between two to three senior/ executive leadership roles, I recruited three leadership participants to interview by emailing the senior/executive leaders of the high scoring office, who also took my survey, an invitation to partake in an interview. The email asked for leaders to volunteer sharing about their leadership practices through a one time, one on one, 60 minute long zoom interview. The interviews were semi structured because the semi structured format offered the flexibility needed to gather data and shift to the participants needs while simultaneously offering guidance and a foundation for the issues to be explored over the course of the interview (Maxwell, 2013). By conducting my interview over zoom, it made scheduling, recording, and transcribing the ten potential interviews more efficient and more accurate. Further, because the ten different offices were located in various cities through the West side of the U.S., zoom interviews aided with accessibility to potential qualitative participants. As such, the interviews were conducted with participants based on convenience for their schedule. Throughout the interview, I recorded notes in a field journal in order to reflect important details which may not be captured in the transcription or recording, such as body language, voice change, and other physical or emotional signs.

To analyze my interview transcriptions, I used modified grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The original qualitative research methodology known as grounded theory asks the researcher to analyze their collected data to inevitably construct theories or hypotheses based on their findings without using any prior research or theories ahead of time (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Modified grounded theory allowed me to analyze the data using existing research and existing theories for comparison to build and discover new relationships and findings from their data (Alnsour, 2022; Gill & Johnson, 2010). In essence, by using a modified grounded theory approach, I analyzed my interview transcriptions by first using existing sets of codes which reflected CP leadership practice per my conceptual framework. I also used an emergent set of codes arising from the data, which further characterized participants' leadership practices outside of what already existed from my conceptual framework and associated theories. It was important to capture emergent codes as emergent codes can often improve relevance and fit to the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). At each stage, with my indicator informed codes and my emergent codes in mind, I analyzed my transcriptions in an effort to find commonalities and themes throughout my qualitative data.

Finally, to complement my survey data, and interview data from leaders, and to deepen my understanding of CP in play at GHO, I analyzed two relevant, recent GHO reports. As a part of my role working at the GHO, I had access to an FY24 Retention report as well as an FY24 DEI Strategic Action Report. These documents were selected due to their reporting descriptions of leadership practices as described in the DEI Strategic Action Report, as well as staff experience as depicted by office and regional retention data. I reviewed the reports systematically, using CP indicators as codes and looked for themes in retention patterns in the West Region but in particular in the high scoring CP office. Collectively, this analysis provided

additional insight to existing CP leadership practices and helped to strengthen the study's credibility by combating potential leadership self evaluation bias in both the survey and via interviews.

Then, upon identifying the highest scoring CP office, completing interviews of leaders at that office, and analyzing relevant documents from that office, I moved forward in the qualitative portion of my research design with staff, which called for interviewing historically underrepresented and marginalized staff from that high scoring office.

Phase 2: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis of Interviews with Staff

The purpose of my qualitative data collection in the form of interviews with staff was to help me gain insight into underrepresented staff's perceived SoB and recognition of leadership practices when their leaders rate high on the CP scale (Sub Research Questions One and Two). Accordingly, I designed an interview protocol that allowed me to assess the indicators of SoB, which include: feelings of group membership, perceived cohesion in the organization, feelings of morale in working for the organization, feeling valued within their work, and feeling as though they serve an important role.

In congruence with the indicators listed in my conceptual map, I adapted the Perceived Cohesion Scale used to measure SoB (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990) to shape my interview questions to help me better understand underrepresented and marginalized staff SoB at the GHO. Two examples of interview questions taken from my staff interview protocol (found in Appendix C) centered around the SoB indicator of feelings of morale are as follows: How would you describe your enthusiasm for working at GHO? And, how would you describe your happiness levels related to working at GHO?

Additionally, the interview protocol was designed to assess if staff recognize CP leadership practices as contributing to their SoB (sub research question three). A few examples of interview questions taken from my staff interview protocol (found in Appendix C) centered around the CP leadership practice indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity are as follows: what role do you perceive the executive leader of your office has in fostering authenticity at GHO? And, do you feel as though you can be your authentic self in your workplace?

I recruited the final seven participants to interview by emailing all staff an invitation to partake in my research at the identified high scoring CP office. The email asked for staff who identified as having historically underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. Once the seven staff were identified, I collected data on their SoB and their recognition of leadership practices contributing to their SoB through one on one 60 minute long semi-structured Zoom interviews. Semi-structured zoom interviews were once again optimal because they offered the flexibility needed to gather data and shift to the participants' needs while simultaneously offering guidance and a foundation for the issues to be explored over the course of the interview (Maxwell, 2013). The interviews were randomly conducted with participants based on convenience for their schedule. Throughout the interview, I recorded notes in a field journal in order to reflect important details which may not be captured in the transcription or recording, such as body language, voice change, and other physical or emotional signs.

To analyze my interview transcriptions, I once again used modified grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). By using a modified grounded theory approach, I analyzed my interview transcriptions by first using existing sets of codes which reflect each indicator for SoB and CP leadership practice per my conceptual framework. I also used an emergent set of codes

arising from the data which further characterized participants' SoB and recognized leadership practices outside of what already existed from my conceptual framework and associated theories. At each stage, with my indicator informed codes and my emergent codes in mind, I analyzed my transcriptions in an effort to find commonalities and themes throughout my qualitative data.

Phase 3: Mixed Methods Data Analysis

Looking across the qualitative and quantitative data helped me to answer my overarching research question: what associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived cultural proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices? My quantitative data helped me understand the landscape of existing CP leadership practices in my setting (GHO). My qualitative sample helped me understand how underrepresented or marginalized staff perceive their SoB in organizations whose leaders rate high on the CP scale as well as what leadership practices staff recognize. By exploring my quantitative and qualitative data and comparing, I explored associations between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived cultural proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices to their SoB.

Using excel to look across my qualitative and quantitative sets of data, I sought out themes and connections between office leaders' perceptions of their own CP leadership practices and associations to staff's SoB and descriptions of leadership practices as documented in interview transcripts. By coding the data of the interviews in Excel and by using an Excel matrix, I easily organized my data to compare across my qualitative and quantitative samples. While comparing my sets of data, I focused on patterns and various emergent insights which were related to my aforementioned indicators of SoB and CP leadership practice. I compared key

statistical metrics such as mean, median, and mode from office leaders' responses on the CP self assessment survey throughout each office and in particular the one high scoring office of focus. From there, I looked for indicators of CP and SoB in my interview transcripts and qualitative analysis to see if there is alignment between underrepresented staff's descriptions and the office leader's self-perceived scores of CP in each element (i.e maintaining self-awareness).

I also recorded analytical memos throughout each step of my data analysis. Analytical memos are written records of reflections and interpretations of the data which arise over the process of data analysis allowing additional insights and patterns to emerge (Lareau, 2021; Geertz, 1973). Within my analytical memos, I regularly reflected on my own biases and subjectivity and capture those thoughts using asides to further enrich my data (Peshkin, 1988). All data sets including recordings, transcription, interview observation notes, survey responses, and analytical memos, were identified and organized in google drive to ensure no data is lost over the course of the collection and analysis process.

Summary of Phases 1, 2, and 3

In sum, this explanatory sequential mixed methods design organized by three distinct phases helped me to address my research questions from an asset based lens. The design relied on first person, lived experiences, and storytelling from historically underrepresented staff from nonprofits in offices whose leaders scored highly on a CP self assessment scale. Those same descriptions from underrepresented staff members were in turn compared to the responses gathered from executive leaders to understand potential associations between SoB and CP practice at GHO. I distributed my survey, conducted interviews, and analyzed my data in a way which emphasized using the participant's own words and capturing the historically underrepresented staff voice. Thus, this study aimed to give voice to people who had been

historically marginalized in the nonprofit sector and helped shed light on the impact of potential leadership practices on historically underrepresented staff's SoB.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

I analyzed leadership survey responses, a relevant GHO report measuring retention and DEI initiatives in the West Region, interview transcripts from GHO leadership, and interview transcripts from self-identifying underrepresented staff members and found the following: leadership in the GHO West Region demonstrated high levels of CP practice (addressing sub research question one, and further discussed in Phase 1 of Chapter 4), underrepresented staff in the GHO West Region perceived themselves to have high levels of SoB, and underrepresented staff in the GHO West Region recognize GHO West Region's leadership's CP practices to varying degrees (addressing sub research questions two and three, and further discussed in Phase 2 of Chapter 4). This analysis provided a backdrop for my Phase 3 analysis, helping me to create my primary claim, revealing the following: there is a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB (addressing my primary research question).

In the following chapter, I briefly restate my research methods design, my approach to data analysis, and I describe my sample of participants in more detail. I then introduce each of the aforementioned sections of data from surveys, interviews, and a GHO report, supporting the aforementioned findings linked to each research question. From there, I discuss the results in more detail split across my three phases of analysis, including use of exemplar quotes from interview transcripts and key statistical data points from surveys, organized by CP indicators.

Research Questions

This chapter explores the findings derived from the explanatory sequential mixed-methods study to answer the following research questions:

- Primary Research Question: What associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived culturally proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices?
 - Sub question 1: To what extent are leaders in the West Region at the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO) culturally proficient?
 - Sub question 2: In what ways do staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds perceive their sense of belonging in organizations whose leaders rate high on the cultural proficiency scale?
 - Sub question 3: What leadership practices do underrepresented and historically marginalized staff recognize in a nonprofit organization whose leaders are self-perceived as culturally proficient?

Research Design Overview

The following procedures were followed for the successful collection of data for this mixed methods study:

1. Distribution of survey and collection of survey data to senior/executive office leadership in the West Region of GHO via a self assessment survey across ten distinct offices.
2. Document analysis of 2024 GHO staff demographic and retention data and of 2024 GHO DEI Strategic Plan Report
3. Interviews of senior/executive office leaders in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Office located in the West Region of GHO.
4. Interviews of Self Identifying Historically Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office of GHO.

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014). In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, quantitative data are collected first and qualitative data are collected second, to further explore a phenomenon in a specific context. I used this approach to first gather quantitative data to identify leaders who perceived themselves as CP using a self assessment Likert style survey. After reviewing my survey data from across the West Region of GHO, I identified the PNW Office as a high scoring office as leaders of that office on average had a higher scoring average across nearly all indicators of CP leadership practice when compared to the entire region. Upon identifying the PNW office as my high scoring CP office of choice, I then recruited three senior/executive level leaders from the office to understand their perceptions around CP and leadership practices via one on one interviews. I also analyzed a 2024 GHO staff demographic and retention report as well as a 2024 GHO Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan Report to understand where CP practice was described in said reports and to help combat potential self reporting bias from leaders in the surveys and interviews. Combined, this allowed me to understand the landscape of existing CP leadership practices in my setting (sub research question one).

Once this GHO leadership data was gathered, I then recruited my qualitative sample of underrepresented staff to interview to understand their interpretation of a SoB and recognition of leadership practices in contexts where their leaders perceive themselves as CP (Sub research questions two and three). This helped me better understand how underrepresented and marginalized staff perceived their SoB in an office whose leaders rate high on the CP scale as well as what leadership practices staff recognized.

The explanatory sequential mixed methods design sequence was important to my research because when combined in this order, the quantitative and qualitative data helped me to

answer my overarching research question: what associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived cultural proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices? This research design allowed me to contrast perspectives and to look across my qualitative and quantitative sets of data to help answer my primary research question.

Profile of Leader Participants from the West Region and a High Scoring CP Office

The following table outlines the self-descriptions of leadership as stated in survey responses. The first three leaders listed from the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Office were also interviewed after the office was selected because of its high CP score. For additional demographic context about GHO, as of 2024, 77 percent of leadership were women across the organization. In the West Region in particular, around 60 percent of leadership were women and 40 percent were men at the end of FY24. Interestingly, only three out of seven of the survey participants in the West Region were women. At the PNW office in particular, two of our three interview participants were women and one was a man. The dominant ethnicity group among leaders who participated in both the survey and in interviews was White. All seven participants indicated being White while three of the seven identified as being White and another ethnicity such as Latino/Latina or having two or more races.

Table 1.*Profile of Leadership Participants from GHO West Region*

Name Of Leader	Self Described Identities	Years worked at GHO	Work Format	Office Location	Method for Data Collection
Marisol	Two or more races, White, female	6 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Pacific Northwest A	Survey/Interview
Devon	White, male	4 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Pacific Northwest B	Survey/Interview
Charlotte	White, female	3-5 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Pacific Northwest C	Survey/ Interview
Manny	Latino and White, male	Less than one year	Hybrid/ In Person	Central West	Survey
Todd	White, male	More than 10 years	Hybrid/ In Person	North Coast A	Survey
Susanna	Latina, White, female	1-3 Years	Hybrid/ In Person	North Coast B	Survey
Hector	White, male	5-10 Years	Hybrid/ In Person	Mountain West	Survey

Profile of Historically Underrepresented Staff Participants from High Scoring CP Office

The following table outlines the self-descriptions of self identifying underrepresented staff as stated in interview responses. These interview participants were selected from the PNW office, because of its high scoring CP leadership.

Table 2.*Profile of Underrepresented Staff Participants from High Scoring CP Office*

Staff	Self Described Identities	Years worked at GHO	Work Format	Method for Data Collection
Kayla	Woman, Mother, Wife, A member of the Yoruba people of Nigeria in West Africa, Naturalized in the US and African-American	2 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Interview
Alexander	Man, Latin American, Peruvian	2.5 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Interview
Maggy	White woman, middle class background, late 20s	1.5 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Interview
Adela	Indo-Chinese, female, mid-20s, immigrated to the US at age 5, was asylum seeker	3.5 years	Remote	Interview
Jasmine	Immigrant to the US, female, Caucasian, heterosexual	3.5 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Interview
Leanna	Mexican-American, second generation immigrant, female, Heterosexual.	6 months	Remote	Interview
Christa	Immigrant, Muslim American, Indonesian, Southeast Asian, first generation college graduate.	5 years	Hybrid/ In Person	Interview

For additional context around staff demographics at GHO, as of 2024, 71% of staff were women at GHO. The organization was approximately 50% white, 16% Asian, 13% Black or African American, 13% Latino, 4% identify as being two or more races, 2% identify as middle eastern, and 1% identify as being American Indian or Pacific Islander, and 1% selected other. The sample of staff participants above is women dominant with 6/7 participants identifying as women and incorporates six different racial backgrounds including Nigerian, Peruvian, White,

Indo-Chinese, Mexican-American, and Indonesian. Collectively, the interview participants' average years of service for the GHO sit at just over 2.5 years. Ultimately, this research sample is one which shows strong diversity across identity demographics such as gender, race, and ethnic identity. Collectively, this aligns closely with GHO's overall demographics as described above and is representative of the GHO in some regards. However, it is important to note that White staff are underrepresented in this research sample compared to the GHO organization at large. Further, there is not any representation of staff who identify as Middle Eastern, or American Indian/Pacific Islander though collectively, Middle Eastern and American Indian/Pacific Islander staff combine for only 3% of the GHO staff population. Work format is also listed in the table above in the event that working in person, hybrid, or remote, should play a factor in staff responses regarding descriptions of leadership practices, CP leadership practices, and feeling of SoB. For further comparison to the rest of the PNW office, below is a small chart which outlines the total number of staff, average years of service, and average retention rate for the PNW office in particular measured at the end of the 2024 fiscal year.

Table 3.

Global Humanitarian Organization, PNW Office Staff & Retention Data

Office	Total Staff as of 2024	Avg Years of Service	% Retention Rate as of December 2024
GHO PNW	148	1.6	78%

Phase 1: Documenting High Levels of Perceived CP Practice in GHO West Region

Leadership

Sub research question one of my study was as follows: to what extent is leadership of the West Region at the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO) culturally proficient? To answer

sub research question one, I explored interviews from three leaders in the GHQ West Region from the PNW office, analyzed a survey measuring self-perceived CP practices across seven leaders in the GHQ West Region, and examined documents from an FY24 GHQ West DEI Report. The result of this analysis and subsequent claim is that leadership in the GHQ West Region demonstrates high levels of CP. As discussed above, CP leadership can be defined as a way for leaders to create organizational transformation; it is a mindset and a way in which leaders prepare their organization to effectively respond to and plan for challenges which may arise in a diverse environment (Brion, 2022; Welborn et al., 2022). Research suggests implementing CP leadership practices in a comprehensive fashion asks for the leader to *maintain self-awareness, emphasize trust and relationship building throughout their staff, actively engage with staff from all backgrounds, foster and demonstrate authenticity, and hire, retain, and develop staff from all backgrounds* (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022). In the following sections, I first provide an overview of my analysis in relation to this research question and then introduce and discuss data from these sources to provide evidence to support this claim in relation to each CP indicator. I utilize illuminating quotes from interviews with the three leaders selected to participate from the PNW office, data points from the CP leadership survey, and data from the FY24 GHQ West DEI Report, organized by the five distinct CP indicators to further convey the high demonstration of CP practice in the West Region of GHQ.

Below, Table 4 summarizes the average scores of the survey responses received from senior/executive level leadership in the West Region of the GHQ measuring leadership's self reported CP. A total of 7 survey responses were received from senior/executive level leaders across the West Region. The total points possible for each question was on a scale up to 5 with 5 meaning strongly agree and 1 meaning strongly disagree. The total average was 4.30 out of five

across all indicators which suggests leaders of the GHQ West Region perceive themselves to be highly CP overall.

Table 4.

Leadership of GHQ West CP Survey Scores

CP Survey Scores for GHQ West Region	Averages Per Indicator out of 5
CP Indicator: Awareness Avg	4.04
CP Indicator: Authenticity Avg	4.43
CP Indicator: Trust & Relationships Avg	4.50
CP Indicator: Engagement Avg	4.27
CP Indicator: Hire, Retain, Develop, Underrepresented Staff Avg	4.36
Total Average	4.30

To gather additional context about the West Region’s CP practices outside of the survey itself, thereby helping to curtail some of the potential self assessment and self reporting bias from the leadership survey, additional data was collected from a Fiscal Year (FY) 24 retention report and a 2024 DEI assessment report. These documents from the organization allowed triangulation to detect possible bias. In the 2024 DEI assessment report, leadership from GHQ West Region reported significant efforts made towards an organization-wide DEI Strategic Action Plan. This plan outlined organizational commitments; such as, diversifying leadership, improving equitable compensation practices, centering staff and client perspectives, and improving inclusive communication. These organizational commitments align with CP indicators such as hiring,

retaining, and developing underrepresented talent, and maintaining awareness of bias privilege and power.

Further, the GHO report on retention from FY24 suggests retention rates for the approximate 500 staff members working in the West Region were at 77% for the calendar year and the staff on average stayed in their positions for approximately 2.1 years. According to existing research, typical retention rates for US based nonprofits hover at 75% suggesting GHO retention in the West region is stable with similar averages for the sector (Phillips & Hernandez, 2018). This is significant as studies suggest leaders who demonstrate CP indicators of self-awareness, fostering authenticity, and actively engaging staff from all backgrounds help strengthen employee retention in nonprofit spaces (Almas et al., 2020; Osula & Ng, 2014).

For additional context, table 5 outlines the code count of CP indicators for each of the three leaders during the approximate 60 minute zoom interviews. The number of mentions of each indicator for CP practice by leaders over the course of a 60 minute interview suggests a high demonstration of CP across the three participating leaders of the West Region of GHO and in particular of the PNW office. Collectively, all three leaders mentioned all five CP indicators for a sum of 82 total times. Out of the three leaders, Marisol mentioned all five indicators the most over the course of her interview for a combined 34 total mentions, while Devon and Charlotte mentioned CP indicators at a similar rate of 23 and 25 mentions respectively. The most mentioned indicator across all three leader participants was engagement. The lowest scoring CP indicator mentioned in the interviews across all three leaders was at 14 total mentions for self-awareness of bias, privilege, and power.

Table 5.*Leadership Self-Perceived CP Practice Mentions during Interviews*

Staff Member	Self-awareness Mentions	Trust/Relationship Mentions	Hire/Retain/Develop Mentions	Authenticity Mentions	Engagement Mentions	Total Mentions by Leader
Marisol	5	6	6	7	10	34
Devon	5	4	3	5	6	23
Charlotte	4	6	7	3	5	25
Total by Indicator	14	16	16	15	21	82

In the section below, I discuss the perceptions of GHQ West Region leadership's CP practice in greater detail organized by each CP indicator. I do so by providing representative sample quotes, discussing survey data, and exploring analysis of a GHQ DEI report document, to provide evidence of the claim that leadership in the GHQ West Region demonstrates high levels of CP. Further, I also discuss an emergent theme in analysis when examining descriptions of CP practice; GHQ leadership also notes organizational imposed challenges in hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent.

GHQ West Region Leaders Fostered and Demonstrated Authenticity

Leaders' descriptions of their leadership practice indicated that the CP indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity was widely embraced by GHQ West Region leaders. Collectively, all three leaders of the PNW office mentioned the CP indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity in their office for a total of 15 times. Of the three leaders, Marisol mentioned the importance of authenticity seven times, Devon five times, and Charlotte three times. GHQ West Region leaders also scored themselves highly in the self assessment survey for the indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity at 4.43/5 in sum. Each of the three

leaders commonly described exercising vulnerability with their staff and intentionally sharing about themselves to cultivate authenticity.

During Marisol's interview, a senior director of the PNW office, she described exercising vulnerability to be authentic with her staff, an indicator of CP leadership. Marisol stated, "vulnerability is a big part of authenticity. It's allowing ourselves to be open about who we are and how we show up and not being afraid to reveal those parts of ourselves that make up who we are and how we approach things." This statement highlighted Marisol's commitment to authenticity and ability to navigate vulnerability to achieve it. Marisol elaborated further and said,

With that authenticity, people get to know you well enough to know that, yeah, that when you make a mistake, you'll admit it. So then it builds even more trust and authenticity. And it also creates a sense of like it's okay to make mistakes for me too because my boss is making mistakes and is open about it.

One thing to highlight in this passage is Marisol's description of admitting to her mistakes in order to demonstrate vulnerability, which she believed fostered authenticity. Here, Marisol underscored the cyclical nature of fostering and demonstrating authenticity as by being authentic herself, she then normalized authenticity with her staff.

Devon, another senior director of the PNW office, discussed his practices of sharing about himself to be authentic with his staff and how his staff were authentic in response. Devon stated,

I share as much about myself - how I'm doing - as I can, and I ask that of staff too... If I'm having a rough day or something I might say that. We also have other practices that we do in our office where we share gratitude before each of our all staff meetings. They can be things for things that are happening outside of work. And I think another way is again, getting to know people who I work with. Both about the work that they do, but also about who they are as people, and what they do outside of work as well.

A few pieces to emphasize in the passage above are when Devon said he shared about himself and asked that of staff too. In doing so, he emphasized getting to know staff for “who they are as people.” Devon illustrated the intentional efforts he made to create an environment where both he and his staff felt comfortable being genuine, open, and authentic, about their work and about their personal lives as a result of sharing about one another. This demonstrated how Devon used routine work practices, and sharing about himself in staff meetings, and check ins, to cultivate an office which valued the CP indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity.

In summary, as depicted in the data above, by exercising vulnerability with staff and intentionally sharing about themselves, it was clear that all three leaders deeply valued and exhibited the CP practice of fostering and demonstrating authenticity in their office.

GHO West Region Leaders Actively Engaged with Staff from All Backgrounds

Leaders’ descriptions of their leadership practice indicate the CP indicator of actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds was perceived as heavily practiced by leaders of the GHO West Region. This indicator was mentioned the highest number of times collectively between the three leaders, with a total code count of 21. Marisol discussed actively engaging with staff on ten separate instances, Devon discussed it six times, and Charlotte five times. Further, the GHO West Region leadership survey score for this indicator was 4.27 out of 5. Each of the three leaders commonly described utilizing informally and formally structured engagement opportunities to engage with staff as well as the importance of being active and present participants in their office.

Over the course of Marisol’s interview, Marisol specifically described the importance of informally structured engagement opportunities. Marisol said,

I've always tried to spend a lot of non-work time with staff and it doesn't mean like, you know, go out and do something with them, but more so be in the

hallways and have conversations about their families or how they're doing or having lunch or team building activities I think trust comes from understanding. And understanding comes from talking to each other.

One thing to highlight here is Marisol's emphasis on "hallway" conversations and connecting about family over lunch. This provided evidence of how Marisol used informally structured engagement opportunities as a method to actively engage with staff in her office. She went on to say she intentionally tried to engage with staff and build community by "really creating a culture of openness where we get to know each other" and that "being present is very important." This highlighted Marisol's commitment to cultivating high engagement spaces.

As an example of how leadership provided formally structured opportunities for engagement, Charlotte, another senior director of the PNW office, said the following:

Regardless of who they are or where they come from, when I have a new staff person, my intent is to have, like a sit down with them, to introduce myself and start to learn about them. I also try to attend team meetings. So I host our office meeting every other week. And I also try to attend the department, the team meetings on a regular basis... So lots of ways to engage.

It is important to note Charlotte's words, which emphasized formally structured meeting spaces like team meetings, office hours, and department meetings as spaces where she engaged staff. Here, Charlotte underscored evidence of formally structured opportunities for engagement and deliberate CP leadership practices of engagement with staff from different backgrounds.

Finally, Marisol provided a specific example of actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds by being active and present participants in the office, when she said the following:

You know we could as leaders go to a potluck. Grab a plate, talk to a couple of people and go back to our office. I mean, the work is going to be there... But I think what people appreciate is when you actually take time to be with them and to be present, not to be scrolling on our phone, not to be on our laptop. To talk to people. To ask them how they are, to sit with them and eat with them to just participate in a very active kind of way.

One thing to notice in the passage above is Marisol’s discussion of talking to people in her office without distraction and being fully present especially over informal settings like lunch. This example illustrated how Marisol intentionally remained active and present when engaging with her staff. Marisol took this a step further when she described that engagement was more than just being there; it was also about active participation in whatever the team was doing. Marisol said, “I show curiosity... If it was a team activity that they were doing, maybe team building or something to not be like a bystander. I like to really be in there with them.” This statement encapsulated Marisol’s CP leadership sentiment that engagement of staff went beyond just physical presence; it included actively involving herself with staff in activities, and conversations throughout the office.

In sum, as depicted in the data above, it was clear that all three leaders heavily valued and actively practiced engaging with staff from all backgrounds in their office, and did so by utilizing formally and informally structured engagement opportunities and by being active and present participants in their office.

GHO West Region Leadership was Self-Aware of Bias, Privilege, and Power

Leaders’ descriptions of their leadership practice indicated that the CP indicator of maintaining awareness of bias, privilege, and power is perceived as incredibly important. This CP indicator also averaged at 4.04/5 on the self assessment survey and was mentioned across all three leaders a total of 14 times. Furthermore, the GHO DEI FY24 report demonstrated that GHO leaders put this CP indicator into practice over the course of the year 2024. To Marisol, Devon, and Charlotte, awareness involved uplifting underrepresented cultures, leading with humility, and learning from the diverse perspectives in the office. Yet, leaders each also

described challenges and discomfort with some of the implications of their bias, privilege, and power, and said there was room for learning and improvement.

To begin with, the GHO DEI FY24 report demonstrated that leadership GHO West Region Leadership was self-aware of bias, privilege, and power. In the GHO FY24 DEI report, GHO West Region leadership of the PNW office noted attempts at diversifying leadership and talent development, though recognized that efforts were in early or inconsistent stages and that there was a significant lack of diversification, especially at higher levels of leadership. This discussion in the report can be connected to the CP indicator of awareness of bias, privilege, and power from leadership, as leadership explicitly noted that diversification of leadership positions was necessary to improve equitable decision making in the organization. The report stated, “while there is a noted increase in diversity among leadership, more intentional recruitment strategies and guidance are [needed] for advancement” and that there are “efforts to recruit from diverse backgrounds, particularly those with lived refugee experience. However, there are areas for growth in retaining and promoting diverse leadership roles.” Specifically, West Region leadership revealed a need for more content and learning to be done around topics such as “onboarding, hiring practices, discussions about race, racism, implicit bias, manager trainings, and accessibility with particular focus on supporting neurodiversity.” Identifying the need for this learning suggested a deeper level of awareness about existing biases, privileges, and power dynamics in the workplace. These observations ultimately suggested alignment between survey results and CP leadership in practice as described in the GHO report.

The CP indicator of awareness of bias, privilege, and power was further demonstrated in leadership interviews. When speaking with Charlotte, she described the importance of uplifting underrepresented cultures across the office. She said:

I think diversity [at GHO] is... acknowledging and honoring, acknowledging, respecting, and honoring our differences. I think sometimes there's a tendency to say, well, you know, there's no difference. And that's us being you know 'fair,' that like everyone's the same, we're all human you know. But that's not the truth and that's not the reality. We all have a package. Diversity is really acknowledging that package and respecting it. Honoring it. And bringing its strength to light.

Something to pay attention to here is Charlotte's counter argument to the idea that everyone was the same in the office. Charlotte said instead that everyone being the same was "not the truth" and "not the reality" and that "we all have a package" which deserved to have its strength brought to light. Charlotte's reflection underscored her demonstration of the CP indicator of maintaining awareness of her own biases, privileges, and power, as she intentionally attempted to uplift underrepresented cultures in the PNW office and described differences in identity based privileges.

Charlotte also said she recognized challenges and discomfort with some of the implications of her bias, privilege, and power, and said as a result, it was important to learn from diverse perspectives. In one instance, she reflected on interactions with staff from backgrounds different than her own that forced her to engage in self examination of her own identities. She described the moment below:

There's been moments where maybe the interactions are not as comfortable because of our different backgrounds and so it's kind of like an opportunity to check myself and be like, what can I learn from this particular staff interaction? What does this person have that I could learn from because it is very different? What can they help me shed light on in terms of maybe my judgments or my biases? But that's easier said than done.

It is important to pay attention to Charlotte's description about checking herself and learning from staff with different backgrounds. This reflection revealed Charlotte's ongoing journey and attempts at exhibiting the CP indicator of maintaining self-awareness of privilege,

bias, and power, through self reflection and growth, and a willingness to engage in uncomfortable moments as a way to become more self-aware.

Furthermore, in interviews with Devon and Marisol, each leader noted the importance of leading with humility in their role and being aware of their inherent privilege as leaders and individuals from White backgrounds. For example, recognizing his privilege in both his role and his identities as a cisgender, able bodied, White male, Devon emphasized the need to lead with humility when he said,

Soon after I joined [GHO], I very, very quickly realized that I was working and serving people from very, very different backgrounds and experiences. And quickly understood, too, that I needed to appreciate that. And to sort of step back and be humble and listen. Rather than always sort of leading from the front. I have realized I sort of see my leadership role as very much leading from behind if you will. And what that means is... Taking the time to listen and to try to understand people's perspectives, viewpoints, etcetera, before my viewpoints.

One thing to highlight in this passage is when Devon said he tried to “step back and be humble and listen” because he was leading a diverse office with individuals from backgrounds different from his own. Here, Devon highlighted leading with humility thereby demonstrating the CP indicator of awareness of privilege, bias, and power, when he described stepping back and centering the perspectives of those from underrepresented backgrounds to uplift their voices and give them power in the office.

In another example of both leading with humility, and learning from diverse perspectives in the office, Marisol described attempts at centering her staff’s viewpoints and needs. Marisol said, “I try to bring humility to my leadership style and role, knowing that I am, I’ve not experienced what many of the people I work with and the folks that I serve, I’ve not experienced what they have.” Here, it is important to note Marisol’s emphasis on “humility” and understanding that she was a “learner” in her office space as a result of not experiencing what

others from underrepresented backgrounds may have. Marisol's reflection illustrated her ability to lead with humility and learn from diverse perspectives of the office, which served as an example of the CP indicator of maintaining awareness of privilege, bias, and power.

In sum, when looking at survey data, interview transcripts from leadership, and the GHODEI Report depicted above, it was clear that GHOWest Region leadership valued and practiced self-awareness of their own biases, privilege, and power. Specifically, leadership exhibited this CP indicator through the practices of uplifting underrepresented cultures, leading with humility, and learning from diverse perspectives.

GHOWest Region Leadership Emphasized of Trust and Relationships

Leadership interviews indicated the CP indicator of emphasizing trust and relationships was deeply ingrained by leaders of the GHOWest Region. In fact, the highest scoring CP indicator across the West Region leadership survey was the CP indicator of building trust and relationships at 4.50/5. Each leader described creating intentional relationship building opportunities with staff from backgrounds different than their own, fostering trust and relationships between staff, developing cultural learning experiences, and creating staff led committees as ways they emphasized trust and relationships with staff of all backgrounds.

In an example of leaders creating intentional relationship building opportunities with staff different than themselves, Charlotte said:

I'm more intentional because I make assumptions that the folks who probably have more of a shared identity or something that's closer to my own, I make assumptions that they will initiate and feel a level of like access to me that others might not have. That others some staff because of language barriers. And there could be the kind of the hierarchical structures, the assumed view of a supervisor or director that might create more space, right? Make them less likely to initiate engagement. And so I lean in on that and I try harder. I try harder to build those relationships.

Something to highlight in this passage was Charlotte’s description of staff from underrepresented backgrounds being at risk of feeling “othered” and her desire to “lean in” and “try harder” to build those relationships as a result. Here, Charlotte highlighted her exhibition of the CP indicator of building trust and relationships with staff from diverse backgrounds, as she described attempts to break down perceived differences and power dynamics to foster meaningful relationships with staff in the PNW office.

In addition to fostering their own relationships with staff from all backgrounds, all three leaders noted the importance of fostering trust and relationships between staff relationships and in particular through cultural learning experiences. To do so, Marisol said that,

Every now and then I will send something to folks about, you know, an upcoming holiday. Or just acknowledging, you know, different events that are happening in different cultures and trying to create spaces for people to like it or comment so that there can be interactions between them. It's almost like, it's kind of like being in a school. Sometimes you know you have all these students, we're all learning. And we have to be really intentional about creating spaces for interaction.

It is worth noting in this passage that Marisol specifically said she is “really intentional about creating spaces for interaction” between staff of different backgrounds and compared the office to that of a school classroom. This practice demonstrated Marisol’s strategy of using cultural learning experiences as an intentional relationship building opportunity for staff. Ultimately, Marisol’s quote illustrated significant examples of practicing CP in fostering trust and relationship between staff members of different backgrounds in the office.

Additionally, according to both the FY24 DEI Report and leadership interviews, GHO West region leadership in the PNW office emphasized developing intentional, inclusive office practices aimed at enhancing staff trust and relationship building through the creation of staff-led DEI committees. These committees, composed primarily of underrepresented staff members, were established to address workplace inequities and elevate the voices and cultures of

historically underrepresented staff as well as to connect historically underrepresented staff with one another more regularly. This initiative aligned with the CP indicator of fostering trust and relationships, particularly between staff from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the FY24 DEI report indicated that every office in the West Region reported an “improved staff sense of belonging and engagement” in FY24 compared to FY23, largely attributed to trust-building efforts like that experienced from creating DEI committees. Finally, the report stated seven out of ten offices in the West region noted a particularly strong impact on staff to staff engagement, cohesion, and trust as a result of leadership support for these DEI committees, underscoring the practice’s alignment with the CP indicator of cultivating trust and relationships especially between staff.

In sum, when looking at survey data, interview transcripts from leadership, and the GHO DEI Report depicted above, it was clear that GHO West Region leadership emphasized trust and relationships with staff of all backgrounds. Specifically, leadership exhibited this CP indicator through the practices of: creating intentional relationship building opportunities with staff from backgrounds different than their own, fostering trust and relationships between staff, developing cultural learning experiences, and creating staff led committees.

GHO West Region Leadership Hired, Retained, and Developed Underrepresented Talent

Leaders’ descriptions of their leadership practice indicated that the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent was heavily valued and highly practiced by leaders of the GHO West Region. In interviews, West Region leadership of the PNW office mentioned hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent a total of 16 times over the course of their interviews. GHO leaders in the West Region also scored a 4.35/5 for this indicator suggesting high perception of CP practice. Common themes across leaders included pursuing

upward mobility for all staff, offering professional learning experiences and elevating underrepresented voices, valuing lived experience of underrepresented talent, and questioning policies which undermined underrepresented staff growth.

In an example of pursuing upward mobility for all staff, Charlotte mentioned a variety of ways in which she tried to leverage opportunities for growth for underrepresented internal staff, especially when it came to upward mobility and professional learning opportunities. Charlotte said,

One of my priorities is upward mobility for the team. So just making sure that there are professional opportunities for all of our staff internally. And all of the supervisors and managers are thinking with this lens too and providing opportunities for the staff to be out there connecting and maybe be the face of IRC at a community meeting.

One thing to highlight in this passage was Charlotte's emphasis on "professional opportunities" like being "the face of IRC" for growth and leadership experience. This illustrated Charlotte's intentionality in professional learning opportunities for her staff, thereby preparing them for opportunities for upward mobility. Charlotte explained that even as a director, she did not always need to be in the spotlight, as many of her staff could benefit from the leadership experience. She noted trying to give staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds the spotlight whenever possible, as sometimes diversity in staff background made them better suited to take on a leadership role. Charlotte went on to say, "I've been really intentional about that. Wanting everyone to feel like they have access to all the leaders in the stakeholders, equal access as I do. There's many, many, many other staff who are better suited to certain situations and conversations than I am." Here, Charlotte's descriptions of redirecting attention away from herself and intentionally encouraging her staff to take on the leadership spotlight for professional

learning experience demonstrated her commitment to the professional development and growth of underrepresented talent in the office.

Further, when describing her professional practices for recruitment and hiring of underrepresented talent more specifically, Charlotte expressed the importance of valuing the lived experience of underrepresented talent hiring decisions. She said,

Initially when we are looking for candidates, I'm reaching out to my community contacts, folks who are leaders within the different organizations or the refugee communities. Looking for those trusted partners to recommend folks as an organization. I think we are being very intentional about the lived experience being about equal value to the academic and professional experience. And we've definitely leaned in on that... [and it] builds trust within the office and builds trust with the communities that we serve.

One thing to highlight in this passage was when Charlotte said she values “lived experience” of underrepresented talent as much as traditional “academic and professional experience” when looking for candidates. This demonstrated Charlotte’s intentional focus on valuing the non-dominant, untraditional, yet pertinent lived experience which underrepresented talent sometimes have. In turn, this illustrated Charlotte’s commitment to the CP indicator of hiring, retaining and developing underrepresented talent in the PNW office.

In an example of questioning policies which undermined underrepresented staff growth, Marisol stated she regularly analyzed how current GHO operational practices served or disserved existing staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds. For example, Marisol stated, “I think it's our duty as leaders to step in and try to find solutions so that we can give access to more resources if people are struggling.” Marisol mentioned she often asked herself “are staff having a hard time because maybe they're not used to these platforms?” This is significant as it demonstrated Marisol’s intentionality in trying to meet staff where they are at and to catch them up to speed professionally when necessary.

Marisol also discussed intentional ways she offered professional learning experiences to elevate underrepresented voices while simultaneously questioning policies which undermined underrepresented staff growth. In one example, Marisol said,

There were a number of things that we talked through with the learning development team and actually they created a training. We couldn't say it was like, you know, if you've never worked in the American workforce or you're a refugee or whatever, but what they called it was something like “new to work in the US” that would also apply to interns that were taken on their first entry position. So regardless of background, race, experience, etcetera, we created this training for them.

One thing to highlight in this passage is Marisol’s framing and intentionality when she said that the training was meant to apply to anyone “regardless of background” despite it being originally created for a select group. Rather than singling out international staff or staff from refugee backgrounds, she helped design an inclusive training that supported multiple staff groups including those new to the U.S. workforce, interns, and any others unfamiliar with U.S. work culture. In doing so, Marisol demonstrated efforts to question existing organizational practices and simultaneously offered a window into her nuanced understanding of equity in underrepresented staff development. Here, Marisol addressed the specific needs of an underrepresented staff group and simultaneously avoided stigmatization of that group. In doing so she demonstrated direct evidence of the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff within the PNW office.

Finally, The GHO DEI FY24 report also demonstrated the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent in practice. According to the GHO DEI Report, leadership in nine out of ten offices of the West region noted a focus and improvement on office wide compensation equity and addressing pay gaps for staff, especially those from the nondominant gender or race. Additionally, nine out of ten offices “indicated an increase in

diversity of leadership positions in their office” in the West Region and six out of ten offices “indicated having some variation of talent progression dialogues in place for staff.” The GHO West Region offices were depicted in the report as having revised compensation systems, made market-rate adjustments to staff compensation levels, and evaluated and assessed pay gaps across staff from historically underrepresented genders and races. Regarding hiring efforts, an anonymous leader from the PNW office of the West Region was quoted in the report saying, “we implement practices such as providing interview questions in advance to promote fairness in the recruitment process.” Providing interview questions in advance was described as an important practice to level the playing field for English language learning applicants as well as neurodivergent applicants. These various practices, as identified in the report, suggest a focus and commitment from leaders in the West Region on the CP indicator of hiring, development and retention of historically underrepresented staff. Comparatively, leaders in the West Region scored a 4.35/5 for this indicator, suggesting alignment in the self assessment survey scores to CP practice as described in the GHO report.

In summary, when looking at survey data, interview transcripts from leadership, and the GHO DEI Report depicted above, it was clear that GHO West Region leadership hired, retained, and developed underrepresented talent. Specifically, leadership exhibited this CP indicator through the practices of: pursuing upward mobility for all staff, offering professional learning experiences, elevating underrepresented voices, valuing lived experience of underrepresented talent, and questioning policies which undermined underrepresented staff growth.

Leadership Noted Organizational Imposed Challenges in Hiring, Retaining, and Developing Underrepresented Talent

While Charlotte, Marisol, and Devon all clearly valued the benefits of having a diverse workforce, and described intentional measures to recruit, retain, and promote historically underrepresented talent, they also noted the practical challenge of creating such a workforce. Common themes across leadership interviews included structural barriers as a result of GHO organization wide hiring and promotion limitations, having to weigh promoting someone with a marginalized background and lived experience vs someone with a more traditional western background who may require less training, and challenges as a result of time sensitivity and urgency to fill roles.

For example, Charlotte described the professional development and growth of a few select underrepresented staff in the office, but also noted limitations on expanding these efforts as a result of GHO organization wide hiring and promotion limitations and time sensitivity and urgency to fill roles. She said:

I think we have two or three [underrepresented staff] who have started out as front desk receptionists and then have moved into case manager roles at the encouragement of myself and their supervisor, just by looking for - making sure you understand that there's interest in that and then helping facilitate and doing it. But like a lot of times it's been like pulling strings because [GHO] has these six month restrictions in a job... Stuff that feels like it could be a barrier in some of these development initiatives and mobility goals that I have. But often it's, you know, it's like a hardship for me because then I need to, you know, fill that role or cover the front desk myself.

One thing to highlight in this passage is when Charlotte said there were organizational “restrictions” and that sometimes it was like “pulling strings” which were a hardship for her when needing to fill a role in a timely fashion. Here, Charlotte described a level of success in developing underrepresented staff, and a commitment to doing so, but also an emphasis that

GHO at large imposed restrictive policies which hindered the efforts to promote internally and intentionally develop staff from underrepresented backgrounds. At times, this then forced Charlotte to fill roles with talent from outside of underrepresented backgrounds, out of urgency.

In another example, Jordan described the difficulty in promoting someone with a marginalized background and lived experience vs someone with a more traditional western background who may require less training. Marisol said she sometimes felt as though she had to face a cross road in decision making between uplifting and promoting someone with a marginalized background and lived experience vs someone with a more traditional western background, traditional education, and traditional work experience. Marisol said:

I think checking our biases is important... really looking at the whole picture in assessing the two individuals that are applying, for example, to a manager role. Is it going to be, you know, am I going to have an easier time with this person because maybe they write stronger emails and maybe they fully understand what I say when I say it. And is that going to get in the way, you know, am I really looking at both of them as whole individuals with all their strength and acknowledge that maybe this person has a harder time writing emails and clearly understanding what I might have to repeat - but they are of the [client] community. They do speak multiple languages and they can explain to the staff that are under them in their own mother tongue what we're expecting. They will serve the clients from a perspective of having been in that experience.

One thing to highlight in this passage was when Marisol said, even though some talent with traditional backgrounds may “write stronger emails,” and may require less in depth onboarding, they lack being a part of the “community” that GHO served. This acted as an example of how Marisol interpreted the complexity of weighing traditional western professional experience with culturally relevant lived experience from underrepresented staff, revealing challenges she navigated in hiring and promotion practices.

Like Charlotte, Jordan described structural barriers as a result of GHO organization wide hiring and promotion limitations. While Jordan believed the PNW office had indeed made

significant progress in hiring underrepresented talent she believed more was needed to be done. Marisol said, "we have very high expectations. And I don't think we do a good enough job." In particular, Marisol noted that GHO PNW office and GHO at large oftentimes offered the least compensation to staff from underrepresented backgrounds, and specifically those with similar backgrounds as clients, as a result of GHO pay restrictions. Marisol said with disappointment:

We pay the lowest to a group of staff members who have... the highest level of skills to be able to work with our clients. And on top of that, we dump all that documentation, federal programming expectations, to people that have never worked in our workforce, and have no resources or training when they come in to learn about the workforce, so they can be successful and efficient in these other areas.

One thing to highlight in this passage was when Marisol described some underrepresented talent as having the "highest level of skills" to work with GHO clients, yet were being paid the least. Here, Marisol's critique of GHO compensation practices in the quote above underscored her belief that GHO's hiring, retention, and development practices have made progress, yet still have large gaps to fill, to avoid inadvertently perpetuating inequities for underrepresented staff, and in particular those with the most culturally relevant lived experience.

In summary, when looking at survey data, interview transcripts from leadership, and the GHO DEI Report depicted above, it was clear that GHO West Region leadership hired, retained, and developed underrepresented talent yet also recognized the process of doing so as challenging. Specifically, leadership described the following obstacles: structural barriers as a result of GHO organization wide hiring and promotion limitations, having to weigh promoting someone with a marginalized background and lived experience vs someone with a more traditional western background who may require less training, and challenges as a result of time sensitivity and urgency to fill roles.

Summary of Phase 1

In closing, upon reviewing GHO West Region leadership survey responses, analyzing relevant documents measuring retention and DEI initiatives from GHO, analyzing PNW staff interviews on CP leadership, and analyzing PNW leadership interviews seeking to understand CP leadership practices from GHO PNW leaders themselves, there was a strong indication of CP leadership in practice in the West Region of GHO and even more so in the PNW office. Across all five CP indicators, leaders scored highly on the survey, and leaders regularly described CP indicators in practice in the West region and in the PNW office in particular. Further, the GHO DEI Strategic Action report supported some of the CP actions described in interviews by leaders. While there was still notable room for growth as described by leaders in areas such as hiring, retention, and development of underrepresented staff, as well as in the indicator of maintaining self-awareness of bias, privilege, and power, leaders themselves were oftentimes aware of these shortcomings themselves. Identified shortcomings include existing structural barriers as a result of GHO organization wide hiring and promotion limitations, having to weigh promoting someone with a marginalized background and lived experience vs someone with a more traditional western background who may require less training, and challenges as a result of time sensitivity and urgency to fill roles. While difficult to solve, GHO leadership demonstrated concern with bettering themselves in each of these challenge areas.

Phase 2: Interviews of Underrepresented Staff at a High Scoring CP Office

In the following sections within Phase 2, I first outline findings from my sub research question two, which is centered around underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB. From there, I address findings connected to my sub research question three, which is focused on

underrepresented staff's recognition of leadership practices in a nonprofit organization where leaders self perceive as highly CP.

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Indicated a Strong SoB in Interviews

Sub research question two of my study was as follows: in what ways do staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds perceive their sense of belonging in organizations whose leaders rate high on the cultural proficiency scale? To answer sub research question two, I explored interviews from seven self identifying historically underrepresented staff in the GHQ West Region from the PNW office. The result of this analysis and subsequent claim is that underrepresented staff in the GHQ West Region perceive themselves to have high levels of a SoB. As discussed above, SoB is defined as the subjective feeling of deep personal connection to groups, places, individuals and collective experiences (Allen et al., 2021; Filstad et al., 2019; Knekta et al., 2020; Strayhorn, 2012). A review of the literature suggests there are five critical indicators of a SoB including *perceptions of group membership, perceived cohesion with a group, feeling valued within a group, feelings of morale associated with membership in that group, and the ability to assume an important role in that group* (Anderman, 2002; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn, 2024).

Below, Table 6 depicts the codecount for underrepresented staff participants who identified any of the five indicators of a SoB including, group membership, perceived cohesion, feelings of morale, feeling valued, and serving an important role over the course of their interview. As depicted in the table, these seven underrepresented staff perceive themselves to have a high SoB in the West Region and in the PNW office in particular, where leaders rate highly on the CP scale. It is worth highlighting that all seven underrepresented staff participants' discussions of their experiences in the PNW office reflected all five indicators of SoB over the

course of their interviews. The table below also takes account of the total number of mentions of each SoB indicator as I interpreted from each underrepresented staff member. Combined, all PNW staff members with underrepresented backgrounds note all five indicators of a SoB for a total of 120 individual mentions during interviews. The most described indicator was the indicator of serving an important role which was described a total of 30 individual times across all seven underrepresented staff participants. In the following sections, I utilize illuminating quotes from interviews with the seven underrepresented staff members selected to participate from the PNW office, to further illustrate their perceptions of a high SoB.

Table 6.

Number of Mentions of SoB Indicator per Staff Member in Interviews

Staff Member	Group Membership Mentions	Perceived Cohesion Mentions	Feelings of Morale Mentions	Feeling Valued Mentions	Important Role Mentions	Total Mentions per Staff
Kayla	4	3	2	2	5	16
Alexander	3	2	3	3	5	16
Jasmine	4	2	5	3	5	19
Eleonor	3	7	3	4	3	20
Adela	2	2	3	2	6	15
Maggy	4	5	3	4	3	19
Christa	3	2	3	4	3	15
Total Mentions by Indicator	23	23	22	22	30	120

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Described High Levels of Group Membership

Combined, all seven underrepresented staff from the PNW office described the SoB indicator of group membership a total of 23 times. Staff commonly described a theme of positive

relationships with their current team and likened their team to friendships and family, which I interpreted as examples of the SoB indicator of group membership. The frequency and consistency of this theme across underrepresented staff participants provided strong evidence that underrepresented staff in the GHQ PNW office experienced high levels of group membership, a central component to SoB.

For instance, Kayla noted the positive impacts of relationships with her current team which I interpreted as an example contributing to her feelings of group membership and SoB. When Kayla was asked about the extent to which she felt a part of the community in the PNW office, a question designed to assess feelings of group membership, she said “I feel like I'm connected to the people that I need to be and want to be connected with.” This statement indicated that Kayla felt group membership with colleagues in the PNW office, in the ways she wanted to be and needed to be personally and professionally. When probed for additional explanation, Kayla expanded upon this statement and described the office space as one filled with friendship and family. She said,

Where I work is a family I know. I have an immediate family. So it's not like a replacement. It's just like an extension. I know I have friends. I have, you know, people where I work with... maybe that's the level of belonging. That's a certain level of belonging. [The] culture in our office is one of acceptance. And that plays into how colleagues work together.

One area important to highlight in this passage was Kayla’s use of words like “family” and “friends” and direct description of experiencing “belonging.” These words served as an example of her feelings of a SoB as they revealed her perceptions of group membership were high to the point where she felt as though her office was like that of a family. She noted having friends in the office and ultimately summarized her feelings by explicitly describing the familial, friendship infused, and accepting work environment to be one that gave her a direct SoB.

Taken together, the aforementioned underrepresented staff quotes from Kayla serve as examples of the strong feelings of group membership as experienced by underrepresented staff in the PNW office. Underrepresented staff often noted experiencing high feelings of group membership as a result of relationships with their current team, and frequently used words like friends and family to describe their level of group membership in the office.

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Described High Levels Perceived Cohesion

Combined, all seven underrepresented staff from the PNW office described the SoB indicator of perceived cohesion a total of 23 times. Staff commonly discussed themes of the office's community focused culture and intentional collaboration and connection building, which I interpreted as examples of SoB via the indicator of perceived cohesion. The frequency and consistency of these themes across underrepresented staff participants provided strong evidence that underrepresented staff in the GHQ PNW office experienced high levels of perceived cohesion, a central component to SoB.

When asking Jasmine about her experiences in the PNW office as it related to her identities as a woman and as an immigrant, I interpreted Jasmine's descriptions of the office's community focused culture as a positive influence to her perceived cohesion and her SoB. She said,

People tend to have a culture created around community and familial feel like the office I work at. I think a lot of people really bind together in a communal way with women staff. So that's really positive to see... And I think there is just a general comfortability to ask questions to maybe innovate or to push a little bit farther and think outside the box.

One thing to highlight in this passage was when Jasmine said that staff in the office "bind together in a communal way" especially with women staff. Here, I interpreted Jasmine's descriptions of community as a high level of perceived cohesion as Jasmine said the PNW office

was communal, and family-like, which not only perpetuated a strong sense of cohesion for women staff like herself, but also empowered staff to be highly collaborative and to take creative risks. From my interpretation, Jasmine's statement indicated she felt high levels of perceived cohesion as a result of the office's community focused culture thereby positively influencing her SoB.

Similarly, I interpreted Kayla's descriptions of experiencing intentional collaboration and connection building as feelings of the SoB indicator of perceived cohesion when she said,

I think that when you take opportunities to connect with people then you create that atmosphere where people feel comfortable with each other. The effort is made for collaboration. The groundwork is built such that teams work together... when teams work together and collaborate, we find something in common, we find reasons why we can engage with each other.

Something worth noting in this passage was how often Kayla used words like comfort, collaboration, and working together to describe cohesion levels in her office. Here, I interpreted Kayla's words to be an example of her perceptions of high levels of cohesion, as a result of intentional collaboration and connection building. Interestingly, Kayla described a cyclical experience of perceived cohesion in the PNW office, where the more connected she and her peers felt to one another, the more comfortable they felt collaborating. And the more they found in common, the more they wanted to work together and further collaborate.

In sum, the aforementioned underrepresented staff passages served as examples of the high degree to which underrepresented staff perceive cohesion in the GHQ PNW office. In particular, underrepresented staff each noted high levels of perceived cohesion as a result of intentional collaboration and connection building, and the office's community focused culture.

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Expressed Positive Feelings of Morale

Combined, all seven underrepresented staff from the PNW office described experiencing the SoB indicator of feelings of morale a total of 22 times. Across the different staff participants, the data I identified that reflected the SoB indicator of positive feelings of morale was the theme of meaningful, purpose driven work. The frequency and consistency of this theme across underrepresented staff participants provided strong evidence that underrepresented staff in the GHQ PNW office experienced high feelings of morale, a central component to SoB.

For example, I interpreted Alexander's descriptions of deep connection to meaningful, purpose driven work as feelings of high level of positive morale. When asked about his level of enthusiasm working in the PNW office, a question designed to assess his feelings of morale, Alexander said,

It is high, high. Yeah. I mean... This is the longest job I've actually ever had. It's been two and a half years... I've usually been, eventually just been like, I can't do this anymore. So yeah, I really appreciate this work that I do and you know, this is kind of what I went to school for helping serve those that are underrepresented in our community is something I care deeply about. So yeah, I...I am appreciative of being a part of GHQ.

It is worth noting that Alexander said his enthusiasm is “high, high,” and that his role at GHQ is the longest he has ever held a professional position. Here, I interpreted Xavier’s words to be an example of a high sense of morale as a result of meaningful, purpose driven work as Alexander describes wanting to stay in his role and a continued sense of motivation, when previously, he had left other roles and organizations.

Finally, Adela, who despite offering some criticisms for the organization over the course of her interview, also acknowledged the impact of GHQ’s meaningful, purpose driven work on her overall feelings of morale, when she said,

My enthusiasm. I think it you know even with these criticisms that I have. I think it's the best nonprofit I've worked for... because of what it does. Like in a scale of one to 10, I would say maybe a seven. I think I've been here for a really long time. I never... really stayed at a job for more than a year before this.

It is worth noting that Adela, like Alexander, described her time at GHO as the longest she had ever been in a role and that GHO was the ‘best nonprofit’ she had ever been a part of because of its organizational purpose. Here, I interpreted Adela’s words as descriptions that her work was meaningful, and purpose driven thereby contributing to her feelings of morale and ultimately her SoB.

Taken together, the aforementioned underrepresented staff passages served as examples of the high degree to which underrepresented staff feel a positive sense of morale. At the PNW office, underrepresented staff’s descriptions of positive sense of morale was most often rooted in being a part of meaningful, purpose driven work.

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Felt Valued

Combined, all seven underrepresented staff from the PNW office described the SoB indicator of feeling valued for a total of 22 times. Most often, underrepresented staff participants described a theme of regularly hearing praise and words of affirmation from colleagues and leadership which I interpreted as examples of the SoB indicator of feeling valued. The frequency and consistency of this theme across underrepresented staff participants collectively provided strong evidence that underrepresented staff in the GHO PNW office experienced high levels of feeling valued, a central component to SoB.

For example, Christa noted feeling very valued in part because she received plenty of words of affirmation from her direct manager and team. Christa said,

I felt... valued and supported and seen by my initial manager because I feel like there was intention to create more accessibility for my own professional learning... At first, I felt kind of silly. I don't like attention in that way, but then I

understood over time how important that was within the context of this professional base... And I felt valued in that they gave a lot of confidence in the ways that she encouraged me to pursue certain opportunities or like the confidence that she gave me to carry the team forward.

It is important to note when Christa said she felt “valued, supported, and seen” and “a lot of confidence.” I interpreted this as evidence of the SoB indicator of feeling valued as in the passage above, Christa directly articulated feeling valued and seen as a result of intentional learning and growth experiences, which were cultivated for her from her direct manager.

Furthermore, Leanna expressed experiencing similar feelings of value as a result of her direct manager giving her praise and words of affirmation when she said,

I think people recognize the work that I put through, that I do, based off of the supervisor that I had.... My supervisor has really noticed and not only noticed the work that I do, but also acknowledged and mentioned it to other leadership within the program and as a result I was able to be like, you know, I'm moving into this other position.... So I think that they recognized my value and really recognized it.

Something to emphasize in this passage was when Leanna said that leaders not only “noticed the work” that she did “but also acknowledged and mentioned it to other leadership.” I interpreted this as evidence of the SoB indicator of feeling valued as Leanna described feeling highly recognized in the PNW office in large part because her manager and other leaders in the PNW office gave recognition to her organizational contributions and helped her to grow into another role.

In sum, the aforementioned underrepresented staff passages served as examples of the high degree to which underrepresented staff feel valued in the GHQ PNW office. Across the different staff participants, feeling highly valued was most often as a result of regularly hearing praise and words of affirmation from colleagues and leadership.

Underrepresented Staff in the PNW Office Felt They Served an Important Role

Combined, all seven underrepresented staff from the PNW office described the SoB indicator of serving an important role for a total of 30 times, the highest number of mentions for any indicator. Underrepresented staff regularly cited themes including their ability to advocate for clients and other staff, and possessing unique skills, which I interpreted as examples of the SoB indicator of serving an important role. The frequency and consistency of these themes across underrepresented staff participants provided strong evidence that underrepresented staff in the GHQ PNW office experienced high levels of serving an important role, a central component to SoB.

For example, I interpreted Christa's descriptions of advocating for clients and other staff, as experiences which contributed to her feelings of serving an important role. Christa said,

I felt purpose in being able to advocate for my fellow staff members compensation or increases or whatever it may be. Maybe that's a weird way of talking about a sense of belonging but once I was able to actually have the opportunity to hold some of those responsibilities like those I felt like a more active member of the community. I felt like I could contribute differently.

It is worth underscoring Christa's explanation that her "purpose" and "responsibilities" in advocating for others directly contributed to her SoB. I interpreted these words to be direct evidence of the SoB indicator of serving an important role. In this quote, Christa explained how assuming a role as an advocate for others not only allowed her to make meaningful contributions to the office but also enhanced her own SoB within the office. By having an opportunity to help build others up, in combination with her spectrum of organizational responsibilities, she in turn felt she was more integral to the office community.

Similarly, I interpreted Kayla's descriptions of possessing her own unique skills as reinforcing her feelings of serving an important role and her SoB. Kayla said,

I'm the only one who can function in this role that I'm working in. At least currently. Maybe in the long run, we may have other people who are groomed to also be able to function in that role. But as of right now, I'm the only one who can do the work that I'm doing right now. That makes it feel like a very important role.

It is important to pay attention to when Kayla explicitly said she felt like she had a very important role because she was a unique contributor to the office. I interpreted this as evidence of the SoB indicator of serving an important role as Kayla's statement illustrated how possessing unique skills not only enhanced her own perceptions of purpose but also her feelings of importance serving within the organization itself.

Collectively, these staff reflections and aforementioned quotes suggested when underrepresented staff members felt uniquely positioned to contribute to the mission through possessing unique skills, or by advocating for others, their feelings of serving an important role, and feelings of SoB were also strengthened. In sum, the aforementioned underrepresented staff passages served as examples of the high degree to which underrepresented staff felt they were serving an important role. In particular, staff cited their unique skills, their spectrum of organizational responsibilities, and their ability to advocate for others including clients and other staff as contributing factors to their feelings of serving an important role and ultimately their SoB.

Summary of SoB as Perceived by Underrepresented Staff in GHO PNW Office

In sum, upon reviewing and analyzing interviews from seven self identifying underrepresented staff members in the PNW of the GHO West Region, there was a strong indication of high perceptions of SoB for staff from underrepresented backgrounds. As previously described in the code count, all seven underrepresented staff participants described experiencing all five indicators of SoB over the course of their interviews for a total 120

collective mentions. Those indicators included group membership, perceived cohesion with a group, feeling valued within a group, feelings of morale associated with membership in that group, and the ability to assume an important role in that group. Taken together, these findings suggest the seven underrepresented staff participants of the PNW office at GHO had high perceptions of feeling valued, felt as though they served an important role, felt high levels of morale, cohesion, and group membership, and collectively, experienced high perceptions of SoB.

Underrepresented Staff Recognized CP Leadership Practices to Varying Degrees and Supportive Direct Supervision

Sub research question three was as follows: what leadership practices do underrepresented and historically marginalized staff recognize in a nonprofit organization whose leaders are self-perceived as culturally proficient? To answer sub research question three, I explored interviews from the same seven self-identifying historically underrepresented staff in the GHO West Region from the PNW office. The result of this analysis and subsequent claims is that underrepresented staff in the GHO West Region recognize GHO West Region's leadership's CP practices to varying degrees and also note the significance of supportive leadership practice from their direct supervisors in particular. In the sections below, I further discuss underrepresented staff's recognition of leadership's CP practices in the PNW office as well as their recognition of supportive direct supervisors. Beginning with recognized CP practices, each section is categorized by individual indicators of CP. I utilize illuminating quotes from interviews with the seven underrepresented staff members selected to participate from the PNW office, to further illustrate their recognition of CP practices by leadership. At the end of this section, I also describe the additional emergent leadership practice recognized by underrepresented staff participants of supportive direct supervision, which fell outside of the

umbrella of CP. Following a discussion around supportive direct supervision, I then summarize the experience and descriptions of Adela, in particular, as her experience differed drastically when compared to her peers.

For additional context, below is Table 7, which identifies the number of underrepresented staff participants who identify any of the five indicators of a CP including, self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationships, hiring, retaining, and developing diverse underrepresented talent, fostering authenticity, and actively engaging. Collectively six out of seven underrepresented staff participants recognized all five indicators of CP leadership practices from their office leadership over the course of their interviews, thus suggesting a high level CP leadership demonstrated in the PNW office of the West Region of the GHQ. In particular, seven out of seven staff mentioned leaders demonstrating awareness of bias and privilege, six out of seven staff noted that leaders emphasize trust and relationship building, seven out of seven noted that leaders intentionally hire, retain, and develop underrepresented staff, six out of seven staff note that leaders foster and demonstrate authenticity in the workplace, and six out of seven staff note that leaders actively engage with staff from all backgrounds in the office.

Table 7 also takes account of the total number of mentions of each CP indicator by underrepresented staff members. Combined, underrepresented staff members note all five indicators of a CP leadership practice demonstrated by leaders in their office for a total of 98 individual mentions during interviews. The most mentioned indicator was the indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff, which was mentioned a total of 25 individual times across all seven underrepresented staff participants. Inversely, the least mentioned indicator by staff was the CP leadership practice of being self-aware of one's biases, privilege, and power.

Table 7.*Number of CP Practices Mentioned by Underrepresented Staff Participants*

Staff Member	Self-awareness Mentions	Trust/Relationship Mentions	Hire/Retain / Develop Mentions	Authenticity Mentions	Engagement Mentions	Total Mentions by Staff
Kayla	2	5	4	3	5	19
Alexander	1	3	2	3	2	11
Jasmine	1	4	2	4	2	13
Eleonor	3	3	6	3	4	19
Adela	1	0	1	0	0	2
Maggy	3	4	4	3	3	17
Christa	4	2	6	2	3	17
Total Indicator Mentions	15	21	25	18	19	98

In the sections below, I further discuss underrepresented staff's recognition of leadership practices including all five CP practices and an emerging leadership practice of supportive direct supervision. Additionally, I also summarize Adela's experience and recognition of GHQ leadership practices, in particular, as her experiences differed drastically when compared to her peers. I do so by highlighting representative sample quotes to provide evidence of the claim that underrepresented staff in the GHQ West Region recognize GHQ leaders' CP leadership practices, and the aforementioned emergent leadership practice of supportive direct supervision.

Underrepresented Staff Depicts PNW Leadership as Skilled at Developing Trust and Relationships with Staff and Between Staff

The CP indicator of emphasizing trust and relationships with staff from all backgrounds was mentioned second most across all indicators by PNW staff from underrepresented backgrounds, with a code count of 21. This suggested that leadership's intentional efforts to

connect with staff and to build trust and relationships, was a significant aspect of how underrepresented staff perceived leadership's CP practices. Across interviews with underrepresented staff, there was an emphasis on the importance of consistent presence and efforts from leadership to build relationships and trust and leaders facilitating relationship building across the organization and between colleagues.

For example, Maggy depicted the importance of the senior leadership teams' consistent presence and efforts to develop trust and relationships in the PNW office. Maggy said,

Our executive director, she's really great. Very... Charismatic. She tries to get to know everybody in the office. She tries to make everyone feel connected and build a community in the office, which is really great. The [senior leadership team] are very present. And so I would say I feel comfortable talking to all of the executive leadership. They are very welcoming. They create a sense of community within the office.

It is important to pay attention to when Maggy specifically says, office leadership "tries to make everyone feel connected and build a community in the office." Here, Maggy underscored the significance of PNW Leadership's continued efforts to build relationships and personally get to know each staff member in the office thereby demonstrating recognition of the CP indicator of fostering trust and relationships. Maggy described that the senior leadership team and the executive director's efforts fostered a sense of trust, made leadership feel more approachable, and reinforced the feeling that staff were valued and included in the office community.

Additionally, Christa extended the theme when she noted that PNW leadership was particularly intentional about facilitating relationship building across the organization and between colleagues. Christa shared,

One thing with some of the professional development opportunities is, as I was going about it, what I realized is leadership was giving us access to colleagues in other offices at different levels. So I wasn't just with [my team], I wasn't just with

coordinators, I was with managers, I was with finance folks, I was with folks of a wide array of positions and different levels of the organization and that's learning as well, right? Like there's so much learning happening in different directions and I think that helped me grow my comfort too and my sense of belonging.

It is important to underline when Christa emphasized being with “a wide array of positions and different levels of the organization” and that doing so helped her grow in her comfort and SoB. This served as an example of the CP practice of fostering trust and relationships because as depicted in the quote, Christa’s experience suggested leaders of the PNW office facilitated opportunities for staff to engage with colleagues from different departments and areas of the office. As a result, staff like Christa then felt increased individual and collective connection.

Taken together, these various underrepresented staff reflections suggest that PNW leadership’s focus on trust and relationship building were viewed as a critical and impactful leadership practice by underrepresented staff. Specifically, staff identified an emphasis on the importance of facilitating relationship building across the organization and between colleagues, and consistent presence and efforts from leadership to build relationships and trust.

Underrepresented Staff Saw PNW Leadership as Intentional in Hiring and Development yet Sought More Underrepresented Leaders

The CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing historically underrepresented talent was mentioned the most across all indicators by PNW staff from underrepresented backgrounds, with a code count of 25. As such, this CP indicator emerged as a focal point in interviews with underrepresented staff of the PNW office. Staff described existing leadership as being intentional about professional development for underrepresented staff, and receptive to underrepresented staff feedback on the selection process for other underrepresented candidates. At the same time, some underrepresented staff also called out a need for a greater number of leaders from

underrepresented backgrounds and that current leaders from underrepresented backgrounds had limited influence and autonomy in their roles.

For example, when discussing her leaders' hiring practices during the recruitment of a Latina, Spanish speaking candidate, Leanna described collaborating and aligning with her supervisor. In doing so, Leanna described her leadership as being receptive to underrepresented staff feedback during the selection process for other underrepresented candidates. Leanna said:

In my mind, [my supervisor] gets it. She understands the two worlds - she gets the anglo, very formally structured world, but then also the Latinos - and you know how we are, different in culture, and music, and dance, and love, and all these things. And I transcribed [for this candidate] through the interview process, right? So I was trying to convey everything to my supervisor. But [my supervisor] is from a different background, right? Like she's not Hispanic or Latino. But I think she has enough to kind of get it. So I was like, is this a safe space to say? And she's like, yes. So I'm like, okay, she gets it. And so as I'm telling her, right, I'm like, this [candidate] is like, this person has these qualities and she's like, hmm, that's interesting. So like, I'm seeing [my supervisor's] brain kind of go like I think I know where [Leanna] is going.

In the passage above, Leanna underlined how her supervisor's actively listened and trusted Leanna's interpretation of Latino culture specific nuances, when making a hiring selection. Leanna described this hiring decision making and communication process as "a safe space" where her supervisor "gets it." This was an example of PNW leadership demonstrating an inclusive and intentional hiring practice through being receptive to underrepresented staff feedback on the selection process for other underrepresented candidates.

In a different example, Christa discussed her experiences with PNW leadership decision making regarding professional development of staff from underrepresented backgrounds. Christa said,

What I observed is there was a different intention of how to advance staff, but also build up in skilled staff to be able to hold those [leadership] positions. So let's say someone had been with that department and organization for a number of years, but maybe didn't necessarily hold skills in a particular area, let's say grant

writing. There were opportunities created to skill up long-term staff who were really experts in that department and that work, but maybe needed that boost, and specifically for staff of color to be able to hold those higher level positions.

It is worth noting Christa described that leaders specifically built opportunities to “skill up long term staff” and “specifically staff of color.” This quote illustrated that PNW leadership made intentional pathways for underrepresented staff, and in particular staff of color, to professionally develop, acquire new skills, and ultimately advance to new roles. Christa expressed she saw these efforts in practice even when some underrepresented staff may not have initially met the initial qualifications for upward mobility, thereby depicting a strong example of leadership’s CP practice of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff in the PNW office.

Adela echoed similar sentiments as Christa regarding professional development of staff from underrepresented backgrounds, but also added an important caveat about the extent to which underrepresented staff who were promoted to leadership had influence and autonomy in their roles. Adela said,

I know GHO is really good at keeping internal staff. And just like staying, having them stay within the organization, trying to find them opportunities for them no matter what. And I think there have been like POCs [People of Color] that do get promoted. But I just don't think it's enough, like I think there has been directors that are like POCs that are doing great but those directors are sometimes - I don't want to say like corrupted by white culture or by capitalism - but I would just say like if they had their own spaces where everyone with lived experiences were able to just be the decision makers, and not be influenced by the white Culture, then I think their decisions would be different.

One area to focus on was when Adela said underrepresented staff such as people of color “do get promoted” but that it was not enough as underrepresented staff promoted to leadership were still “influenced by the White culture.” This served as an example of recognition of the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent yet Adela’s passage also

described certain limitations for hiring and retention practices in the current structure of the office. Adela explained that while underrepresented staff were sometimes promoted, and GHO PNW was skilled at retaining underrepresented staff, the continued existence of a dominant organizational White culture, still limited underrepresented staff and underrepresented leadership from making authentic changes, they might otherwise pursue. Adela's perspective suggested that while the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff was in fact in practice, there were still systemic barriers that prevented underrepresented leader's from realizing an equitable space with equal decision making power.

Taken together, the staff perspectives and exemplar quotes described in this section revealed both significant progress and active practice of the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff, and also areas for growth. Specifically, there was significant excitement from underrepresented staff about current leadership efforts to offer professional development for underrepresented staff, and receptiveness to underrepresented staff feedback on the selection process for other underrepresented candidates. At the same time, there was a desire for progressing more underrepresented staff into higher leadership roles to further dismantle dominant White culture norms and for more autonomy and influence for existing leadership from underrepresented backgrounds.

Underrepresented Staff Recognized PNW Leadership's Efforts to Foster Authenticity

The CP indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity was mentioned a number of times by PNW staff from underrepresented backgrounds, with a code count of 18. Collectively, underrepresented staff highlighted the importance of authenticity as a key leadership practice, and described that leaders for the most part had created an environment where staff of all backgrounds felt comfortable being themselves. Common themes included leadership setting the

tone for an authentic work culture, leadership creating space for genuine self expression, and leadership's support of a DEI committee as meaningful to fostering authenticity for staff from underrepresented backgrounds.

For example, Alexander described how leadership allowing PNW staff to be authentic, set the tone for the entire PNW office culture when he said,

I think... they should and do play a role in... supporting and making, like a good environment. Like, what's the energy? That energy is there when you walk into the office, right? I think they play a role in that. But I don't think... they should be playing a role in... This is how it has to be, or this is how it's going to be. It's more like, I think, by like allowing the team to be authentic, you're creating an authentic environment at the office.

It is important to highlight Alexander's emphasis on PNW leadership "allowing the team to be authentic" as it showed that fostering authenticity was not mandated by leaders but fostered through supportive leadership in a way which allowed staff to shape the environment. Alexander's words thus directly reflected recognition of the CP indicator of fostering authenticity by leaders of the PNW office.

Kayla reinforced the concept that when leaders of the PNW office created space for self expression and authenticity, staff could be themselves more freely and more genuinely. Kayla said,

Leadership will influence how people present themselves, how people act in that environment. And so it really depends on what culture has been established in the organization. If it's a culture that allows people to be authentic, then people will be authentic. But if it's a culture that is top heavy, so everyone panders to the leaders, then it would be difficult to be authentic in a situation like that. So thinking about it in this location where I work, I think it's a pretty good culture in terms of people being able to be authentic.

It is important to highlight Kayla's contrast between "a culture that allows people to be authentic" and "a culture that is top heavy." In these statements, Kayla suggested PNW leadership had the ability to either empower or suppress authenticity. Ultimately, Kayla's quote

exemplified her recognition that in the PNW office, leaders were able to successfully create space for genuine staff authenticity and a healthy work culture.

Lastly, Leanna described that PNW leadership's support of the DEI committee was an effort she saw as fostering authenticity for underrepresented staff like herself. She said having leaders who intentionally fostered and outwardly supported a staff led group meant to combat systemic barriers and to uplift historically underrepresented voices made her feel as though she could be more authentic. She said the initiative "is just so awesome. So it just feels like a welcoming space, and the fact that, you know, we have cohorts available to be able to have a safe space to have these conversations. I think it's just awesome." Here, Leanna described how leadership's support of authentic space for equity driven dialogue was essential for underrepresented staff expression, helping individuals like herself feel more seen, valued, and like their cultural identities mattered to the office.

Taken together, these various underrepresented staff narratives from interview transcripts demonstrated how PNW leadership's CP efforts to foster and demonstrate authenticity were recognized and deemed impactful by underrepresented staff themselves. Specifically, staff recognized leadership as successfully developing authenticity by setting the tone for an authentic work culture, creating space for genuine self expression, and supporting a DEI committee for all staff to participate.

Underrepresented Staff Recognized PNW Leadership to be Actively Engaging

The CP indicator of leaders who actively engage with staff from all backgrounds was mentioned by PNW staff from underrepresented backgrounds for a code count of 19. This suggested that intentional, active engagement practices were recognized by PNW underrepresented staff as meaningful. Notably, staff often described the CP indicator of

engagement with staff from all backgrounds when leadership made intentional efforts to genuinely understand underrepresented staff needs and individual experiences, and when leaders initiated engagement spaces such as town halls and informal listening opportunities.

For example, Kayla described some of her senior leaders' efforts to actively engage with staff in the office and genuinely understand their needs and individual experiences when she said,

We have a director who I feel like she wants to be able to connect with everyone. And [she wants] to be able to ensure that everyone has what they need to succeed at the work that they do. I have... Supervisors also who are willing to go the extra mile to ensure that I have the tools that I need to succeed. If a supervisor is trying to connect with an individual on a level that they feel comfortable engaging, I think that's like going the extra mile... I think the idea that when you're in an organization [like the PNW office], everyone finds a way of connecting with each other. And so the leadership, I guess, models that by ensuring that they make sure that they engage with each person at a quality level where workers feel comfortable coming to work and discharging their duties.

It is worth focusing on Kayla's observation that GHO leaders went "the extra mile" when it came to engaging staff in the PNW office. In Kayla's quote above, she reflected on how PNW leadership of different levels, from her supervisor to an office director, made intentional efforts to engage with staff and to genuinely understand their needs and individual experiences. This served as an example of Kayla recognizing the CP leadership practice of engaging with staff of all backgrounds because Kayla explicitly stated that leaders "engage with each person at a quality level."

Furthermore, Christa noted the significance of leadership in the PNW office initiating engagement spaces such as in town halls and informal listening opportunities. Christa said leaders at one point held something along the lines of:

Formal listening sessions, but they were something else. They were just like - not really office hours - they were spaces for people to come and talk and voice and there would be explicit times when leadership would not be present. So to give

folks the comfort of talking freely amongst each other. And then there would be spaces when leadership was present specifically, so that was almost like a town hall.

It is important to highlight Christa's descriptions of engagement opportunities similar to "listening sessions" and "spaces for people to come and talk." Christa's experience underscored how PNW leadership created both formal, structured, engagement opportunities and informal, unstructured engagement opportunities, with and without leadership presence. Combined this served as an example of Christa recognizing the CP leadership practice of engaging with staff from all backgrounds. In turn, Christa claimed these leadership engagement practices helped staff to feel connected to leadership and as though leadership was highly accessible, yet also cognizant of a need for staff independence.

In sum, the CP indicator of engaging with staff from all backgrounds was recognized by staff as significant in interview transcripts. Underrepresented staff emphasized a variety of ways in which leadership actively engaged with staff from all backgrounds including when leadership made intentional efforts to genuinely understand underrepresented staff needs and individual experiences, and when leaders initiated engagement spaces such as town halls and informal listening opportunities.

Underrepresented Staff Depicted PNW Leadership as being Self-Aware with room for Growth

The CP indicator of self-awareness of biases, privilege, and power, was mentioned the least across all indicators by PNW staff from underrepresented backgrounds, with a code count of 15. This suggested that while the CP indicator of self-awareness was recognized as an important aspect of leadership practice, it was not as widely recognized as the other CP indicators. In fact, there was a mixed range of feelings from underrepresented staff on the level of awareness from leadership in the PNW office. Common themes across underrepresented staff

participant interviews included mixed sentiments around the inconsistencies of PNW leadership's self-awareness, but also positive intention and attempts to maintain self-awareness from leadership.

For example, Kayla summarized her feelings of PNW leadership's mixed and inconsistent self-awareness when she said, "I would say that there's a big attempt to maybe understand their biases and maybe learn from that and use that in engaging with people. But maybe not so much aware of their privileges." It is worth noting Kayla says leaders "understand their biases" but are "maybe not so much aware of their privileges." Here, Kayla described a distinction between leadership's recognition and awareness of their biases compared to their recognition of their own privilege, highlighting a potential gap in the depth of self-awareness in leadership in the PNW office. This suggests while PNW leadership may have made efforts to be self-aware and address their identity based biases, they may have been less aware of how to examine their privileges more critically.

On the other end of the spectrum, Leanna primarily noted positive intention and self-awareness from leadership in the PNW office when she said, "they are aware of existing bias and ready to put in the work. [They are] recognizing white privilege and its historic background and the fact that we do not have that privilege and [they are] not only recognizing it, but [they are] doing something about it too." Here, Leanna described a recognition of leadership's emerging consciousness regarding their own systemic privilege, particularly around race, and the effort to address and combat racial inequities for underrepresented staff who lack that same privilege. However, the use of the phrase "they're recognizing" suggested that PNW leadership's awareness was still a work in progress, but at minimum, a positive step, and one which was also backed up by action.

Taken together, these reflections suggested that while underrepresented staff of the PNW office recognized that leadership had made strides towards the CP indicator of self-awareness, staff also recognized a noticeable gap between intention and practice. In particular, underrepresented staff participant interviews described mixed sentiments around the inconsistencies of PNW leadership's self-awareness, but also described positive intention and attempts to maintain self-awareness from leadership.

PNW Underrepresented Staff Deeply Valued the Relationship and Leadership of their Immediate Supervisor

A significant emergent theme identified by all seven underrepresented staff regarding PNW leadership practices was the value of supportive and impactful leadership from immediate supervisors. This theme was mentioned for a code count of 27 times when combined across all interview transcripts. Common staff descriptions of supportive direct supervisors included direct supervisors who harnessed the strengths of their employees, demonstrated high degrees of emotional support and emotional intelligence, and were skilled at offering praise and recognition.

To begin with, Christa recognized the positive impact of her supervisor's leadership style, emphasizing how her supervisor harnessed the strengths of her employees, which improved Christa's working experience. Crediting her direct supervisor's leadership style, Christa said,

I think for me that comes very much from her [supervisor's] management and her style of management, which is very much harnessing the individual she's working with and their independent skills... I felt she's pushed me forward into exploring what I'm good at.

It is important to highlight when Christa said her supervisor "harness[ed] the individual she's working with and their independent skills." This served as an example of Christa recognizing particularly supportive leadership from her direct supervisor. Christa continued and said that her direct supervisor often checked in and asked questions like, "where are you not

being supported? And maybe what needs are you having? What guidance do you need? Or like what needs do you have that aren't being met? There [was] a lot of recognition of capacity as well.” Combined, Christa’s reflections demonstrated her recognition of leadership practice from her immediate supervisor as supportive and impactful especially as it related to remaining cognizant of staff working capacity and providing tailored guidance.

Jasmine also recognized a high degree of emotional support and emotional intelligence from her direct supervisor’s supportive leadership style when she said,

I think that definitely from my manager, there is very much a maternal instinct, I think, that I feel from her at least. where... She's very, very considerate and helpful and I think emotionally in tune when talking to people.

It is worth noting Jasmine’s reference to her direct supervisor being “emotionally in tune” when working with her staff. This served as an example of Jasmine recognizing particularly supportive leadership from her direct supervisor especially via high emotional intelligence. Jasmine’s passage above illustrated how she recognized her emotionally attuned and supportive direct supervisor helped to foster a sense of connection and care for underrepresented staff like herself in the PNW office.

Together, these experiences underscored the substantial influence that underrepresented staff recognized immediate supervisors to have on their work experience in the PNW office. Common staff descriptions of supportive direct supervisory practices included direct supervisors who harnessed the strengths of their employees, demonstrated high degrees of emotional support and emotional intelligence, and were skilled at offering praise and recognition.

A Different Tale: Adela

Unlike the six other underrepresented staff participants who mentioned collective CP indicator practices by PNW leadership for an average code count of 16, Adela only listed two

specific examples of CP leadership practices and did so with caveats. For example, Adela described PNW leadership as having a level of awareness of their privilege, biases, and power though not without inconsistencies.

Adela shared her mixed sentiments around the inconsistencies of PNW leadership's self-awareness and their actual practices at work when she said the following, "I think they definitely try, you know, like they attend all those trainings, with like trauma-informed practices you know... they're trying, but at the same time you know, they slip up, they forget sometimes." It is worth paying attention to Adela explaining that leaders "definitely try" but that they ultimately "slip up" and "forget sometimes." Adela's statements emphasized the complex, inconsistent nature of PNW leadership's efforts to increase self-awareness through intentional learning opportunities, when compared to their application and practice of combatting their own biases, privilege, and power dynamics in the office.

Ultimately, Adela's perspective highlighted a potential critical gap between leadership's stated intentions and Adela's lived experiences, underlining that not all underrepresented staff recognized PNW leadership's CP practices the same way. Unlike other underrepresented staff who described more consistent CP indicators in their recognition of impactful leadership practice, Adela's interview suggests that PNW leadership efforts were uneven, and not resonating with all underrepresented staff.

Summary of Recognized Leadership Practices as Perceived by Underrepresented Staff in GHOPNW Office

In sum, upon reviewing and analyzing interviews from seven self identifying underrepresented staff members in the PNW of the GHOWest Region, there were a number of leadership practices which underrepresented staff recognized in the high scoring CP PNW office,

including varying degrees of all CP indicators and the idea of supportive direct supervisory leadership. As previously described in the code count, all seven underrepresented staff participants noted all five indicators of CP leadership practice for a total of 98 individual mentions during interviews. Recognized CP leadership practices included demonstrating self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationships, hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented talent, fostering authenticity, and actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds. Outside of CP practices, PNW underrepresented staff also identified immediate supervisory support as significant and impactful leadership which influenced their work experience.

Regarding building trust and relationships for example, underrepresented staff highlighted the importance of informal interactions and casual conversations initiated by leadership. While discussing recognition of leadership's active engagement practices, Christa mentioned how town halls and informal listening sessions facilitated by leadership allowed staff to voice concerns and feel more included in office decision making. Additionally, Kayla went so far as to describe her supervisors as going "the extra mile" in ensuring staff felt supported in their roles. This sense of engagement was not experienced by all staff, however, as Adela noted challenges in feeling connected to leadership, highlighting discrepancies in how engagement is experienced by different underrepresented staff. Finally, while most underrepresented staff members acknowledged PNW leadership's efforts of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff, Adela expressed the need for greater intent, especially in promoting underrepresented staff to higher leadership roles. Collectively, these findings suggest that while underrepresented staff recognized GHQ PNW leadership efforts in CP practices, there were gaps where further development was necessary.

Phase 3: CP Leadership Practices and Associations to Perceptions of SoB in Underrepresented Staff

My primary research question was as follows: what associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived culturally proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices? To answer my primary research question, I explored interviews from three leaders in the GHQ West Region from the PNW office, analyzed a survey measuring self-perceived CP practices across seven leaders in the GHQ West Region, and cross examined and compared that data with interviews from seven self identifying historically underrepresented staff in the GHQ PNW office. The result of this analysis and subsequent claims are the following: (1) there was a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, (2) supportive direct supervisors played a significant role in reinforcing underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB, (3) leadership practice aligned with the organization's mission was positively associated with underrepresented staff SoB, (4) CP leadership cannot fully make up for lack of shared identities with underrepresented staff, and (5) Adela represented a compelling case in which she experienced high levels of SoB because of peer and client relationships, yet described no associations between her SoB and CP leadership practice.

For additional context, Table 8 below, identifies the number of underrepresented staff participants who identify any of the five CP indicators having an association to their SoB in accordance with any SoB indicator. In the following sections, I further unpack this table to provide evidence of the aforementioned claims. Overall, there was a very high level of association between perceptions of CP leadership and underrepresented staff perceptions of their

SoB. Six out of seven underrepresented staff noted a strong association to their SoB in four out of five CP indicator categories. This includes actively engaged leaders, of which leaders scored 4.27/5 on the survey, authentic leaders of which leaders scored 4.43/5 on the survey, hiring, retaining and development practices of which leaders scored 4.36 on the survey, emphasizing trust and relationship building of which leaders scored 4.50/5 on the survey. There was the lowest level of association between underrepresented staff SoB and the CP leadership practice of awareness with only two out of seven staff indicating an association. Coincidentally, awareness also scored the lowest in the self assessment survey from leaders at 4.04/5, suggesting an alignment between underrepresented staff perceptions and PNW leadership perceptions of the CP indicator of demonstrating awareness of biases, privilege, and power.

Table 8.

Underrepresented Staff who recognize CP Leadership Practice Impacting their SoB

CP Indicator	Kayla	Alexander	Jasmine	Leanna	Adela	Maggy	Christa	Staff identifying association
Actively engaged	X	X	X	X		X	X	6/7
Self-Aware				X			X	2/7
Authentic and foster authenticity	X	X	X	X		X	X	6/7
Hire, Retain, Develop	X	X	X	X		X	X	6/7
Trust/ Relationship	X	X	X	X		X	X	6/7

In the section below, I discuss the associations of leaders' perceptions of CP practice to underrepresented staff's perceptions of a SoB, across various SoB indicators, in greater detail. The highest level of associations between CP leadership and underrepresented staff's SoB were found in the following four CP practices: emphasizing trust and relationship building, actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds. As such, I utilize illuminating quotes from interviews with the seven underrepresented staff members and the three GHO leaders organized by the four aforementioned CP indicators. I provide representative sample quotes from underrepresented staff and leaders, and discuss survey data to provide evidence of the claim that there is a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB.

There were High Associations between Engaged Leadership and Underrepresented Staff SoB

Leadership actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds emerged as highly associated with underrepresented staff's sense of belonging at GHO. Evidence of this association was visible in six out of seven staff transcripts and GHO leadership scored a 4.27/5 on the CP indicator of actively engaged leaders in the self assessment survey. Furthermore, the CP indicator of actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds was mentioned the highest number of times, collectively between the three leaders with a code count of 21. Common themes across staff transcripts were that leadership's emphasis on connection, investment of time, and frequent engagement with staff were impactful strategies influencing underrepresented staff SoB. The following representative excerpts from staff and leadership transcripts further illustrate the associations between this CP leadership practice and the SoB for underrepresented staff at GHO.

For example, Jasmine described how leadership's emphasis on connection was critical to her feelings of SoB. In the passage below, I interpreted Jasmine's articulation around a connection between engaged leadership as having an impact on her SoB via the indicator of perceived cohesion. When discussing how her office leadership influenced the office culture, Jasmine said,

[I] feel that leadership is more approachable, which I think is really positive in fostering a better work culture but also an effective and efficient environment. I think if people are scared of leadership or not comfortable talking with them, that'll just create more conflict eventually because people are afraid to ask questions and have more hesitation approaching specific people. So I think when I see that from leadership, it really creates a lot of space for connection and collaboration.

One area important to highlight in this passage was when Jasmine stated the PNW leadership was "approachable" and fostered space for "connection" and "collaboration." Here, Jasmine's words reflected leadership behaviors I interpreted as actively engaged leadership. Furthermore, when Jasmine said these leadership practices made staff in the PNW office feel "really positive" and more "effective and efficient," I interpreted her words as descriptions of SoB via the indicator of perceived cohesion. Collectively, Jasmine's quotes offered clear evidence that she associated engaged leadership practices like creating connection opportunities with staff as directly influencing her sense of cohesion in the office. This supported the notion and broader finding that CP leadership behaviors like actively engaging with all staff were associated with underrepresented staff SoB.

Similarly, Kayla, who expressed having a high SoB and recognized high levels of CP leadership practice in the PNW office, discussed how engaged leaders directly influenced her SoB in the PNW office through the investment of time and frequent engagement. Kayla said,

[Leaders engage] on a frequent basis. Because if it's not staff meetings, then it's some event that's being hosted by the office where many of the people who work

at that location are expected to come. And so that gives an opportunity not just to be in a room as workers, but to engage with each other on a personal level. Which I think builds teams and it gives people confidence to collaborate with others.

One area important to highlight in this passage was when Kayla described “frequent” engagement from leadership giving staff the feeling of being a part of the team and the “confidence to collaborate with others.” When Kayla said leaders engaged on a “frequent basis,” in “staff meetings” and “event[s],” I interpreted this as an example of the CP leadership practice of actively engaging staff through the investment of time and frequent engagement. When Kayla said doing so gave staff like herself the “confidence to collaborate with others,” I interpreted her words as an example of feelings of SoB via the indicators of group membership and perceived cohesion. Combined, Kayla’s passage illustrated evidence that actively engaged leaders who invested time and frequently engaged with staff contributed to the sense of belonging of underrepresented staff.

Aside from staff, I also interpreted GHQ West Region Leadership’s intentional engagement efforts to invest time, frequently engage, and emphasize connections with staff as methods to build staff SoB via perceived cohesion and group membership. In the following interview quote, Marisol said,

I've always tried to spend a lot of non-work time with staff and it doesn't mean like, you know, go out and do something with them, but more so be in the hallways and have conversations about their families or how they're doing or having lunch or team building activities I think trust comes from understanding. And understanding comes from talking to each other. Really creating a culture of openness where we get to know each other.

A few areas to highlight in this passage were when Marisol said she intentionally spent “non-work time” to create “a culture of openness” where staff could better understand each other and feel “team building.” When Marisol described spending “non-work time” connecting in hallways and conversing about family, I interpreted this as an example of the CP practice of

actively engaging staff through investing time, frequently engaging, and emphasizing connection. Further, when Marisol said doing so created “a culture of openness” and “team building,” I interpreted this as an intentional decision to foster staff SoB by creating cohesion and group membership with her staff. Collectively, Marisol’s words underlined and reinforced the notion that frequently engaging with staff by creating space for connection, and investing time with one another, was not only recognized as an effective leadership practice by underrepresented staff, but also one that was intentionally practiced by leadership to build feelings of cohesion and group membership, indicators of SoB.

Taken together, the aforementioned underrepresented staff and GHO leadership quotes along with survey data served as examples of the strong associations between the CP leadership practice of actively engaging staff from all backgrounds and underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB. Frequently engaging with staff by creating space for connection, and investing time with one another, was not only recognized as an effective leadership practice by underrepresented staff, but also one that is intentionally practiced by leadership to build feelings of cohesion and group membership, indicators of SoB.

There were High Associations between Authentic Leadership and Underrepresented Staff SoB

Leadership fostering and demonstrating authentic leadership emerged as highly associated with underrepresented staff’s sense of belonging at GHO. Evidence of this association was visible in six out of seven underrepresented staff transcripts and GHO leadership scored 4.43/5 on the CP indicator of fostering and demonstrating authenticity on the survey. Common themes across leadership and staff transcripts included the idea of leadership instilling confidence in staff to be themselves, an emphasis on connecting about interests outside of work, and creating safe spaces for vulnerability and authenticity to flourish. The following

representative excerpts from staff and leadership transcripts further illustrate associations between this CP leadership practice and the SoB for underrepresented staff at GHO.

Christa described an example of leadership instilling confidence in staff to be themselves, a method of fostering authenticity, thereby improving her experiences of SoB. Over the course of her interview, Christa highlighted a recognition of GHO leadership practicing and fostering authenticity in the PNW office and also described experiences which I interpreted as all five indicators of a SoB. Below, Christa depicted in her own words an association between leaders who fostered authenticity and her feelings of a SoB via the SoB indicator of feeling valued.

Larrisa said,

I felt valued in that [my Director] gave me a lot of confidence to be myself... like the ways that she encouraged me to either consider [professional development] or pursue certain opportunities or like the confidence that she gave me to be me. That did instill confidence in me, but also in reflection, I felt valued.

One thing to highlight in this passage is when Christa said her director gave her the confidence to be herself. Christa's words served as an example of the CP practice of fostering authenticity by GHO leadership. Further, Christa said that when leadership helped her feel confident to be herself, she "felt valued." Here, Christa's statement illustrated how GHO leadership's ability to foster authenticity therefore cultivated feelings of value among underrepresented staff like herself. This reinforced the notion that the CP practice of demonstrating and fostering authenticity is associated with a work space where underrepresented staff like Christa experienced a SoB via the indicator of feeling valued.

GHO West Region Leadership also stated intentional efforts to build a SoB via fostering authenticity with staff. For example, Devon elaborated on the idea of connecting about interests outside of work with staff as a method to create authenticity thereby positively influencing staff SoB. Devon said:

[I] just kind of walk in the halls, you know, and I do that purposely... And, you know, as I do that too, I'll just say hello and have those little conversations... And part of, I think, building an authentic and inclusive office is doing those little rounds... So that's, again, why I end up kind of taking these little walks at least a couple of times a day.

Something worth noting here was how Devon said he intentionally sought to create “an authentic” office by “having little conversations” with his staff and was intentional in doing so every day. I interpreted Devon’s descriptions of the CP practice of demonstrating and fostering authenticity by connecting about interests outside of work as an intentional method to develop the SoB indicator of feelings of cohesion. This was because Devon directly pointed to his CP leadership practice of fostering authenticity by “having little conversations” as one which built “inclusivity.” Therefore, Devon’s passage exemplified his intentional CP leadership efforts to foster authenticity as a means of strengthening cohesion, an indicator of SoB, with his staff.

In an example of leadership creating safe spaces for vulnerability and authenticity to flourish, Marisol described creation of spaces in the office which encouraged staff of all backgrounds to be open with one another. In turn, Marisol said this perpetuated authenticity and helped improve feelings of cohesion and feelings of morale. Marisol said she emphasized,

Creating spaces that feel safe for [underrepresented staff] to be open and vulnerable. Creating spaces where they're not afraid to make a mistake or say something wrong. And kind of creating spaces where they feel like the space is an opportunity to grow in.

Something to highlight in this passage was Marisol’s stance on ensuring staff felt safe to be “open and vulnerable” without fear of “[making] a mistake or [saying] something wrong.” I interpreted this as an example of Marisol's emphasis on creating safe spaces for underrepresented staff vulnerability and open dialogue, which highlighted her intentional practice of the CP indicator of fostering authenticity. Furthermore, Marisol’s emphasis on helping staff feel “safe” and as though they can “grow” demonstrated a bridge between her CP leadership practice and

her intentional development of SoB for staff in indicators such as feelings of morale and feelings of cohesion.

Taken together, the aforementioned underrepresented staff and GHO leadership quotes along with survey data served as examples of the strong associations between the CP leadership practice of fostering and demonstrating authenticity and underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB. In particular, leadership and staff highlighted the importance of leadership instilling confidence in staff to be themselves, an emphasis on connecting about interests outside of work, and creating safe spaces for vulnerability and authenticity to flourish as impactful strategies influencing underrepresented staff SoB.

There were High Associations between Hiring, Retention, and Development Practices and Underrepresented Staff SoB

Leadership hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff emerged as highly associated with underrepresented staff's sense of belonging at GHO. Evidence of this association was present in six out of seven underrepresented staff transcripts and GHO leadership scored a 4.36/5 on the self assessment survey for the CP indicator of hiring, retaining, and developing underrepresented staff. Underrepresented staff participants and GHO leadership regularly pointed to critical themes like the impact of hiring of peers with similar cultural identities to existing underrepresented staff, and valuing nontraditional work experience of underrepresented talent, as contributing factors to underrepresented staff SoB. The following representative excerpts from staff and leadership transcripts further illustrate the associations between this CP leadership practice and the SoB for underrepresented staff at GHO.

For example, when discussing GHO leadership's hiring practices, Leanna, who described experiencing a high level of a SoB, associated leadership hiring practices with feelings of

perceived cohesion and feelings of morale, two indicators of SoB. Below, I interpreted Leanna's specific example of leadership hiring staff with similar cultural identities as positively influencing her SoB. Leanna said,

I was assisting with the onboarding this afternoon. And all of them on the call were Latinas. I've never... in my life, experienced where I was training individuals and they were all Hispanic and we all could identify as latina bilinguals. And I was just... It was kind of like, inside a moment of like, this is so awesome. And so I was able to, I felt comfortable conducting the meeting, but being able to share parts that I just felt like saying in Spanish. And everyone is nodding their head. Where they're like, yeah, like they get it. And I was like, this is just so awesome. I just absolutely loved it.

Something to highlight in this passage was when Leanna said she not only "felt comfortable conducting the meeting" but also felt it was "awesome" being able to "share parts that [she] just felt like saying in Spanish," and that "she absolutely loved it." Here, Leanna described elevated feelings of morale and experiences of office cohesion when she uses words like "love" and "awesome" to describe her work experience. Further, I interpreted these improved feelings of SoB as being as a result of leadership hiring staff with similar cultural identities to her own. While Leanna does not directly reference hiring practices in her passage above, she does describe helping lead onboarding practices with newly hired Latina staff. This suggested that leadership in the GHQ PNW office hired underrepresented talent such as those with LatinX backgrounds. In turn, Leanna described as a part of her role, she had the opportunity to onboard these staff whose cultural identities matched her own. As a result of sharing these experiences with newly hired Latina staff, Leanna explained she was able to share parts of herself she ordinarily could not - such as speaking Spanish with the entire group. Thus, Leanna's passage offered a window as to how leadership's hiring of new staff with similar cultural identities to existing staff contributed to improved cohesion and morale, and collectively, underrepresented staff's SoB.

Not only did underrepresented staff associate hiring, retention, and development practices as contributing to their SoB at GHO; it was also clear from the transcripts that PNW leadership made intentional efforts to hire, retain, and develop underrepresented staff as a way to improve office cohesion. Charlotte depicted valuing nontraditional work experience for underrepresented talent in hiring decisions when she said, "I think I have been very intentional about the lived experience being about equal value to the academic and professional experience" when looking for underrepresented candidates to hire. Here, Margaret described valuing nontraditional work experience for underrepresented talent thereby demonstrating evidence of the CP practice of hiring, retaining and developing underrepresented talent. Further, Margaret explained that by prioritizing lived experience, it "builds trust within the office and builds trust with the communities that we serve." Here, I interpreted Margaret's description of hiring underrepresented talent to build "trust" with her office and the community they served as evidence of attempting to foster improved cohesion with staff through CP hiring practices.

In summary, the aforementioned underrepresented staff and GHO leadership quotes along with survey data served as examples of the strong associations between the CP leadership practice of hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds and underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB. In particular, leadership and staff highlighted the impact of hiring peers with similar cultural identities to existing underrepresented staff, and valuing nontraditional work experience of underrepresented talent, as contributing factors to underrepresented staff SoB.

There were High Associations between Leaders who Emphasize Trust and Relationships and Underrepresented Staff SoB

The CP leadership practice of emphasizing trust and relationships had a high association to underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB. Evidence of this association was visible in six out

of seven staff transcripts and GHO leadership scored a 4.50/5, which was the highest score overall on the survey. Underrepresented staff participants regularly pointed to GHO leadership's abilities to cultivate shared experiences with staff and between staff and to dismantle boundaries between roles and departments. The following representative excerpts from staff and leadership transcripts further illustrate the associations between this CP leadership practice and the SoB for underrepresented staff at GHO.

In an example of an underrepresented staff member describing the impact of GHO leadership cultivating shared experiences as having an influence to their SoB, Jasmine said the following:

I think [leadership's] presence at wellness events is another way that leadership tends to engage with staff, engage with members... I think a lot of it is just conversational. Sometimes feeling intentional, but a lot of the time, by kind of walking through...it makes our relationship. And it takes it so that we are working together in a cohesive, collaborative relationship.

Something to highlight in this passage was when Jasmine explained that leadership's intentional engagement at events "makes [their] relationship." Jasmine's quote illustrated the ways in which GHO leadership cultivated shared experiences in events, which I interpreted as evidence of the CP practice of building trust and relationships with staff. It is also worth noting when Jasmine said that leadership presence at wellness events, and in walk through conversations as a method to cultivate shared experiences, turned their partnership into a "cohesive, collaborative relationship." Here, Jasmine's words served as evidence of the CP leadership practice of building relationships and trust with staff as improving her feelings of SoB via the indicator of perceived cohesion.

Similarly, Christa discussed the importance of GHO leadership supporting relationship building across the organization by dismantling boundaries between roles and departments,

which in turn made her feel increased feelings of group membership and office cohesion, two indicators of SoB. She said,

What I realized is leadership was giving us access to colleagues in other offices at different levels. So I wasn't just with [my team], I wasn't just with coordinators, I was with managers, I was with finance folks, I was with folks of a wide array of positions and different levels of the organization and that's learning as well, right? Like there's so much learning happening in different directions and I think that helped me grow my comfort too and my sense of belonging.

It is worth noting when Christa said she felt connected to “a wide array of positions and different levels of the organization” and “leadership was giving [her] access to colleagues in other offices at different levels.” This served as evidence of Christa recognizing the CP leadership practice of trust and relationship building through dismantling boundaries between roles and departments. Further, it is also important to highlight when Christa says as a result of her connection to “different levels of the organization,” she grew in her “sense of belonging.” Collectively, I interpreted this as an example of GHQ leadership’s ability to dismantle boundaries between roles and departments to build relationships between staff thereby allowing for increased feelings of group membership and levels of cohesion, for underrepresented staff like Christa.

The association between the CP indicator of fostering relationships and trust building and underrepresented staff SoB also extended to leadership’s transcripts as well. For example, Marisol regularly highlighted the power of dismantling boundaries between roles and departments, to develop trust and relationships with staff from all backgrounds. Marisol described doing so in an effort to improve office wide cohesion and help staff feel as though they are serving an important role, two indicators of SoB. She said,

I think [one thing] that's helped people, maybe trust me as a leader is that... I try not to kind of behave as if because of my position I know everything. I really try to lean on others' strengths. Because I'm not, I don't know everything. It's creating

a sense of teamship, I think has built trust over time as well. Everybody sort of has a role - an equal role in it, even though there's a hierarchy... But yeah, creating a sense of strong teamship has helped with building trust.

Something to highlight here was when Marisol said she “leans on others’ strengths” and tries “not to kind of behave as if because of my position I know everything.” This served as an example of how Marisol developed relationships with staff by dismantling boundaries between roles. Something else important to highlight was when Marisol said in doing so she attempted to create “a sense of teamship” to build trust and so everybody “has a role.” This served as an example of how Marisol facilitated a cohesive work environment meant to instill the feeling that staff were serving an important role in the office. In doing so, I interpreted Marisol’s passage as one which described intentional trust and relationship building tactics with two SoB indicators in mind.

Taken together, the aforementioned underrepresented staff and GHO leadership quotes along with survey data served as examples of the strong associations of CP leadership practice of emphasizing trust and relationships and underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB. In particular, leadership and staff highlighted the importance of cultivating shared experiences with staff and between staff and the impact of dismantling boundaries between roles and departments as trust and relationship building strategies influencing underrepresented staff SoB.

Emergent Themes in Leadership Practice and Underrepresented Staff’s SoB

In the following sections, I explore emergent leadership practices which had associations to staff SoB as described by the seven underrepresented staff participants. These emergent leadership practices included supportive leadership from direct supervisors and mission centered leadership. Further, I also discuss an emergent challenge as described by the seven underrepresented staff participants; the absence of underrepresented staff sharing cultural

identities with GHQ West leadership had a negative effect on underrepresented staff's SoB.

Finally, I discuss Adela's experience in particular who I interpreted as having a high SoB as a result of connections to fellow underrepresented peers and the organization's clients yet described zero association to any leadership practices and her SoB.

Supportive Leadership from Direct Supervisors was Critical to foster Underrepresented Staff's SoB

There was a high association between underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB and supportive leadership from their direct supervisors. Evidence of this association was visible in six out of seven underrepresented staff transcripts and was mentioned for a code count of 27 times when combined across all underrepresented staff interviews. Commonalities across transcripts included supportive direct supervisory leadership characterized by intentional professional development, and offerings of praise and giving credit. I interpreted these practices as having associations with staff's SoB indicators such as feelings of morale, feeling valued, and serving an important role.

In an example of supportive direct supervisory leadership via intentional professional development, Maggy expressed how her immediate supervisor made her feel and improved sense of morale, an indicator of SoB, by offering her intentional professional development opportunities and emphasizing her career growth. As noted previously, Maggy said,

I think in leadership terms, [my direct supervisor] was just a lot more supportive and made me a lot more optimistic and she was very transparent with everyone... and not just passionate about the programs, but passionate about her team and so she's really supportive of career growth and development. And she's like, she really provides a lot of opportunities for career growth through training and just teaching and giving more responsibility.

Here, it is important to highlight when Maggy said her direct supervisor "really provides a lot of opportunities for career growth through training and just teaching and giving more

responsibility.” Maggy’s words illustrated how her direct supervisor in particular sought to offer intentional professional development for the staff she oversaw. Further, when Maggy said her direct supervisor “made me feel a lot more optimistic,” I interpreted this as reflection of improved feelings of morale, an indicator of SoB. Collectively, I found Maggy’s quote about her supervisor and her own feelings of morale illustrated evidence of association between underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB and the supportive leadership of their direct supervisors

Furthermore, Jasmine explained she felt as though she was serving an important role in part because of her direct supervisor’s supportive leadership via intentional professional development. Jasmine said,

I think that feeling of what I'm doing - feeling like it matters - has to do with my nuclear team a lot too... I think for me that comes very much from [my supervisor’s] management and her style of management, which is very much harnessing the individual she's working with and their independent skills. And kind of I felt she's pushed me forward into exploring what I'm good at.

It is noteworthy when Jasmine said “what I’m doing [feels] like it matters.” This quote served as direct evidence that she felt as though she was serving an important role, an indicator of SoB. Further, it is also worth noting when Jasmine said she felt this way in part because of her “[supervisor’s] management and style of management” and especially because her direct supervisor tried to push her “forward into exploring what [she is] good at.” Here, Jasmine’s words were significant because they served as an example of supportive direct supervisory leadership via intentional professional development. Together, I interpreted Jasmine’s quote to demonstrate an association between supportive direct supervisory leadership via intentional professional development, and her feelings of serving an important role. Therefore, this quote

illustrated evidence of association between underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB and the supportive leadership of their direct supervisors

In a final example of associations between supportive direct supervisory leadership and underrepresented staff SoB, Christa described feeling especially valued from her immediate supervisor by nature of how her manager offered praise and gave credit for her work. Christa said,

I felt... valued and supported and seen by my initial manager because I feel like there was intention to create more accessibility for my own professional learning, and sharing that time and credit giving space [and in] office-wide meetings to name [my] accomplishments.

Here, it is important to highlight when Christa said her direct supervisor was skilled at “sharing that time and credit giving space” and did so in “office-wide meetings to name [her] accomplishments.” Christa’s words illustrated how her direct supervisor in particular offered praise and gave her credit for her work. It is also important to note that as a result, Christa said she “felt valued and supported and seen.” Here, Christa’s quote described her sense of feeling valued, an indicator of SoB, as a result of her direct supervisor’s supportive leadership practice. Collectively, I found Christa’s passage above to demonstrate an association between supportive direct supervisory leadership via offering praise and giving credit and Christa’s feelings of being valued, thereby illustrating evidence of association between underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB and the supportive leadership from direct supervisors.

In summary, underrepresented staff in the PNW office consistently discussed the important role of supportive leadership from their immediate supervisors having an association to their SoB via a variety of indicators. Key supportive direct supervisory behaviors included intentional professional development and the offering of praise and credit. Ultimately, the

consistency of these themes across six out of seven staff interviews underscores the significant influence immediate supervisors have on fostering a SoB for underrepresented staff.

Mission Centered Leadership can Foster SoB for Underrepresented Staff

There was a high association between underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB and leadership centering the organization's mission in their work. Evidence of this emergent theme was clear in six out of seven underrepresented staff transcripts and was mentioned for a code count of 26 times when combined across all underrepresented staff interviews. Commonalities across transcripts included that when leaders modeled the mission by prioritizing client service, and reinforced a shared purpose of the mission through practice, underrepresented staff experienced increased morale, and a stronger sense of serving an important role, two indicators of SoB.

In an example of leadership modeling the mission by prioritizing client service, Kayla discussed the influence of leaders centering the mission on her sense of morale, and indicator of SoB. Kayla said,

I'm happy working at GHO. I believe in the work that I do. So I function effectively in the role. And I'm happy to see lives transformed by the work that I do. Everyone is committed to the mission. And so we do all that we can to function in our roles, which is a little piece of the larger picture of achieving that purpose. So leadership essentially contributes by ensuring those working in the space are just as committed to the mission.

It is worth noting when Kayla said she was “happy working at GHO” and “happy to see lives transformed by the work” she did. Here, Kayla’s words illustrate a high sense of morale, an indicator of SoB, as well as a deep personal connection to the mission herself. Taking it a step further, Kayla then directly stated that “leadership essentially contributes” to those feelings of morale “by ensuring those working in the space are just as committed to the mission.” Here, I interpreted Kayla’s words as an example of leadership modeling the mission by prioritizing

client service when she said that leaders “ensure” the office is “just as committed to the mission.” Collectively, Kayla’s passage demonstrated an association between leaders modeling the mission by prioritizing client service and Kayla’s feelings of morale. In turn, Kayla’s quote served as evidence of the association between mission centered leadership and underrepresented staff SoB.

In another example, Christa described how reinforcing a shared purpose of the mission through practice influenced her feelings of morale and serving an important role, two indicators of SoB. Christa said,

I think it's... an organization worthy of honor and pride. Because over 70 years, for almost 90 years now. The leaders of this organization have built this humanitarian organization that reaches out to people and helps the most destructed, the most downtrodden people, and makes provision for their basic needs. And I think that motivates me. It inspires me to do the work that I do in the little space that I do the work in.

It is worth noting when Christa said “leaders of the organization” have built GHO to help “the most downtrodden people.” Here, I interpreted Christa’s words as an example of how GHO leaders reinforced a shared purpose of the mission through practice. When Christa said, “that motivates” her and “inspires” her to work at GHO, I interpreted this as evidence of her feelings of serving an important role, an indicator of SoB, as a result of leadership’s practice. Further, it was also worth highlighting when Christa said the organization was “worthy of honor and pride” as it suggested an elevated feeling of a sense of morale. Combined, Christa’s passage and highlighted quotes served as an example of how mission centered leadership instilled in her both feelings of serving an important role, and improved feelings of morale, thereby contributing to her SoB.

In sum, when leaders modeled the mission by prioritizing client service, and reinforce a shared purpose of the mission itself through practice, underrepresented staff experience an

association between their leadership's practice and perceptions of SoB. Specifically, leaders who centered the mission in their leadership practice demonstrated a direct association with underrepresented Staff SoB in indicators such as serving an important role and feelings of morale.

A Missing Piece - CP Leadership Cannot Fully Make Up for Lack of Shared Identities with Underrepresented Staff

A significant theme across staff interviews is the perception that existing predominantly White GHQ leadership poses a barrier to underrepresented staff fully identifying with leadership practices and can hinder underrepresented staff's SoB. As previously discussed, CP leadership practices were often positively associated with underrepresented staff's SoB. However, a recurring caveat emerged in staff interviews: four out of seven underrepresented staff noted the lack of shared cultural identity with leadership limited their connection to those practices and their impact to their SoB. Shared sentiments across transcripts reflecting these findings are as follows: some underrepresented staff feel they have to further prove their worth when working with White leadership, underrepresented staff lack an inherent social and cultural connection with White leadership which sometimes hinders their professional growth, and lack of underrepresented leaders prevents additional diversity from joining the organization. The following representative excerpts from staff transcripts further illustrate how a lack of shared cultural identity with leadership limited underrepresented staff's connection to CP leadership practices and the subsequent positive association to their SoB.

In an example of underrepresented staff feeling they had to further prove their worth when working with White leadership, Adela described a time where not only was it more difficult for her to relate to White leaders, but it was also more difficult working alongside them.

Below Adela talks about a time where she felt as though she had to prove herself more as an underrepresented identifying person to get her points across. Adela said,

It was just so menial. I wanted to change the small wording and [the director] had to debate it with me for like 30 minutes. And just being really aggressive about it... [It was] just so invalidating and belittling and just completely inconsiderate of like, I went through this. And yeah... just like the constant debate over such menial things and like I think it's very White culture to always have to prove yourself through logical reasoning. And in the culture that I come from in Indonesia, and in the culture that a lot of the people with lived experiences come from, a lot of things go unspoken. You know, there's just this instinctive understanding... I don't know, just having to explain that to a White person for 30 minutes is so exhausting.

Here, it is important to highlight when Adela said the experience was “invalidating and belittling” and that it was “exhausting” to have to advocate for herself when working with White leadership. These sentiments demonstrated a diminished SoB as connected to leadership in indicators like feelings of morale and feeling valued. As previously mentioned in an earlier section, Adela acknowledged that if she did have a supervisor, who was like her, shared racial identity and had lived experience, she would likely be happier working with those leaders.

In an example of underrepresented staff describing a lack of inherent social and cultural connection with White leadership thereby hindering their professional growth, Kayla discussed the impact of the dominant culture of leadership influencing the GHO PNW office:

The macro culture, however you want to call it, and the... social system has a way of building on itself, building upon itself... when there's a person who looks like you and maybe speaks like you and maybe enjoys the same social activities that you enjoy, I think it's easier for people to mentor such people. As opposed to someone who's from a different culture who does not really understand your jokes sometimes and your manner of speaking. And also... Certain things that you do, I guess that are cultural, certain ways that you behave that impresses other people. So it's easier to mentor a person who looks like you... where you connect on a social level.

It is important to highlight when Kayla said it's "easier to mentor a person who looks like you" and who understands “your manner of speaking.” This served as an example of Kayla

recognizing limitations in existing White leaderships abilities to develop staff from underrepresented backgrounds as the “the social system” was set up to where if one did not “connect on a social level” their capabilities and impressions as an underrepresented person were sometimes less valued by White leadership.

Additionally, Alexander discussed his feelings on how the lack of underrepresented leaders prevented additional diversity from joining the organization. Alexander said he was the only Latino on his immediate team and claimed that having a Latino in higher level leadership would positively impact him when he said:

I just think [having a Latino leader] would be having a much greater impact on the community. And I think with the work that I do, it would just increase the diversity of teams that we work with. And I think, yeah, more diversity is always better than less diversity... I think it would have a positive benefit to everybody involved in the office.

Here, it is important to highlight when Alexander said more diversity in leadership, like having a Latino leader, “would have a positive benefit to everybody involved in the office.” This served as an example of how the absence of leadership from underrepresented backgrounds contributed to a sense of isolation for existing underrepresented staff, thereby limiting their feelings of group membership and cohesion, indicators of SoB. Alexander’s words also suggested that limited underrepresented background in leadership created broader limitations for growth of organizational diversity. In turn, this reinforced the notion that representation of underrepresented backgrounds in leadership was essential for fostering associations to leadership practices and underrepresented staff SoB.

Furthermore, Christa gave an example of a lack of inherent social and cultural connection with White leadership hindering underrepresented staff’s professional growth. In particular, Christa noted challenges and caps to hiring as a result of the values of White leadership thereby

negatively impacting feelings of morale and feeling valued for existing underrepresented staff.

She said sometimes staff from underrepresented backgrounds:

Do not feel included, do not feel like there's opportunities for advancement or there's always a cap of like, you can always become senior coordinator, maybe closer to manager, but then there'll always be an external candidate who predominantly was White. So like all of the manager positions - if I'm not mistaken at the time were primarily [White]. It just didn't look as diverse as the actual staff population, let alone the client population.

It is worth noting when Christa said “there’s always a cap” and described how leadership and management roles often went to external White candidates instead of internal candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Christa’s words served as an example of how existing White dominant leadership in GHQ negatively shaped access to opportunity for underrepresented staff growth, and diminished underrepresented staff’s feelings of being valued, an indicator of SoB.

Finally, in a more radical passage, Adela emphasized that underrepresented staff lacked an inherent social and cultural connection with White leadership which hindered their professional growth. Adela stated that the only way to combat this discrepancy was to have underrepresented leaders replace existing White leadership entirely. She said,

These White people - it's just not ingrained in them. Because of their identity, it's hard for a White person to know exactly what a POC [person of color] perspective would be because they're just not like [us]. That's just the fact, that's the reality of it. And they're never going to understand because they don't have the lived experiences no matter how many trainings they attend. And so it's not going to be ingrained in them in the way that they're not ever going to slip out... they're just not ever going to be completely on our side because it doesn't relate to them on a personal level... [and] to be honest, and this might sound quite radical because I stated, like those kind of innate reasons of why they're just never going to understand, I think the only way to empower POCs is just by stepping down and making space for POCs to be in leadership positions. To, you know, just, yeah, like humbly step down and be aware like, this is an organization like this where it's humanitarian and directly supporting refugees and immigrants - it should be led by someone that has gone through those experiences.

It is critical to highlight when Adela said White leadership “is never going to understand because they don’t have the lived experiences” Here, Adela exemplified shared sentiments from other staff that leaders from White backgrounds had a fundamental limitation to how much they could authentically embody or advocate for the perspectives of people from underrepresented backgrounds. Adela’s words reflected a shared belief that to maximize feelings of a SoB for staff from underrepresented backgrounds, leadership identities must reflect that of the same communities the organization served and that of the diversity of staff in the office.

In summary, as depicted above, four out of seven underrepresented staff participants described a lack of connection to leadership practices as a result of missing shared cultural identities. In particular, this was because of the following: some underrepresented staff felt they had to further prove their worth when working with White leadership, underrepresented staff lacked an inherent social and cultural connection with White leadership which hindered their professional growth, and lack of underrepresented leaders prevented additional diversity from joining the organization. In turn, this led to underrepresented staff feelings of limitations and caps on their experiences of a SoB as it relates to CP leadership and other recognized leadership practices.

Adela’s Story: Belonging with other People of Color but not with White Leadership

It is worthwhile to note that out of the seven underrepresented staff members, six of them described some sort of association to leadership practices and their SoB to varying degrees. However, Adela’s experience served as an outlier. While Adela consistently described high levels of perceived SoB over the course of her interview, my analysis did not reveal any associations between Adela’s SoB and her recognitions of CP leadership practice. Instead, Adela described experiencing high levels of SoB via connections with staff from underrepresented

backgrounds and a connection to the GHO community. This is important to highlight as it suggested that while CP leadership can serve as a formative contributor to staff's SoB, so too can meaningful reciprocal relationships with colleagues with similar lived experiences.

In a noteworthy quote in which Adela described feelings of SoB as a result of connections with staff from underrepresented backgrounds and from a connection to the community, she said the following:

I think I belong because I'm not only working with white people. I'm also working with other people of color. I think sometimes where I don't belong is like when a white colleague tries to be particularly aggressive with me. And not really valuing my opinions. It kind of feels oppressive when they do that. I really feel comfortable when I'm talking with other people with lived experiences. Like just the other day, I had a conversation with someone that was working in [GHO] and he told me the story about his process of getting the special immigrant visa. And I told him my experiences with how long it took me to get a green card and to get citizenship. So that's where I feel really nice and comfortable.

Adela's passage was powerful because it highlighted how shared lived experiences with fellow underrepresented staff may have contributed to her SoB. Adela said the opportunity to talk about getting her citizenship with another staff member going through the same process made her "feel really nice and comfortable" which I interpreted as an improved sense of morale, an indicator of SoB. Adela's quote was significant because it highlighted how underrepresented staff who feel a connection to other underrepresented peers and with the GHO community may in turn experience improved perceptions of SoB.

In sum, Adela's perspective sheds light on two major themes. First, underrepresented staff may experience a SoB from connections to other underrepresented peers. Second, there is a critical gap between leadership's practices and Adela's lived experiences, underlining that not all underrepresented staff experienced an association between their SoB and PNW leadership's practices the same way. Unlike other underrepresented staff who described more consistent

associations between leadership practices and their perceptions of a SoB, Adela's interview suggested that PNW leadership did not resonate with her. At the same time, Adela's high perceptions of SoB as a result of her connection to underrepresented peers and the GHQ community suggest that underrepresented staff can still feel a SoB, even in the absence of associations to leadership.

Summary of CP Leadership and Emergent Leadership Practices and Associations to Underrepresented Staff SoB

In sum, analysis of the GHQ West Region leadership practices combined with analysis of underrepresented staff experiences in a shared office demonstrated that CP leadership was strongly associated with perceptions of a SoB among underrepresented staff. Notably, four out of five CP leadership practices including emphasizing trust and relationship building, actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds, emerged as critical in association to SoB indicators such as perceptions of group membership, perceived cohesion, feeling valued, serving an important role, and feelings of morale for underrepresented staff. Additionally, alignment with the organization's mission, and supportive direct supervisors, played a significant role in reinforcing underrepresented staff perceptions of SoB.

However, the data also pointed to a key limitation as depicted by underrepresented staff in interviews. CP leadership by itself could not fully compensate for the lack of shared cultural identities between leadership and underrepresented staff. While many GHQ West Region leaders exhibited self-awareness and a commitment to equity in the organization, the relational gap tied to identity remained a consistent barrier for some staff in experiencing a SoB in association with their leadership's practices. This was clear in cases like Adela's, where leadership practice of any

kind had no meaningful impact on her perceptions of SoB but connection with peers from underrepresented backgrounds did. This underscores the complex, intersectional nature of perceptions of a SoB for staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds and the importance of both practice and representation in nonprofit spaces.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The final chapter begins by summarizing a review of the study's purpose, the research questions, and the methodology within the context of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks. From there, this chapter discusses findings from Chapter 4 within the context of the literature. This discussion of the findings will include assertions and implications along with recommendations. Finally, this chapter concludes with sections outlining limitations, areas for future research, and a conclusion.

Summary of the Study

As previously noted, the nonprofit sector has been historically led by and dominated by a White cultural perspective, a perspective that must shift to accommodate an increasingly diverse nonprofit workforce (Adejumo, 2021; Lee, 2023; Nickels & Leach, 2021). To help make this perspective shift, nonprofit leaders must remove barriers marginalized staff may experience to promote greater levels of SoB throughout the nonprofit sector (Noor et al., 2023). SoB is particularly important in areas where individuals or groups may feel different or foreign in a given setting (Strayhorn, 2012) and is important in and out of the nonprofit work setting as it can positively impact employee performance (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021; Parry et al., 2019). Despite this, research suggests individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds have a greater challenge finding a SoB within nonprofits (Allen et al., 2021; McClelland, 2021; Witwer, 2021). This lack of SoB leads to lowered retention and limited professional advancement, highlighting the urgency to build strategies which promote a SoB and uplift underrepresented voices. The literature asserts that to increase a nonprofit staff's SoB, leaders may benefit from adopting CP leadership practices as CP leadership practices in a

nonprofit setting can potentially foster a SoB for staff from underrepresented backgrounds just as it has in the education field (Cross, 1989; Witwer, 2021).

Purpose of the Study & Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to explore associations between leadership's self-reported CP, historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, and historically underrepresented staff's perceptions of leadership practices within a nonprofit organization. While there is existing research focused on the impact of individual elements of CP leadership on staff SoB, this research sought to investigate the SoB for historically underrepresented staff whose leaders self-report comprehensively practicing most traits of CP. The guiding research questions of this study were as follows:

- Primary Research Question: What associations are there between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived culturally proficient practices, historically underrepresented staff's perceived sense of belonging, and historically underrepresented staff perceptions of leadership practices?
 - Sub question 1: To what extent are leaders in the West Region at the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO) culturally proficient?
 - Sub question 2: In what ways do staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds perceive their sense of belonging in organizations whose leaders rate high on the cultural proficiency scale?
 - Sub question 3: What leadership practices do underrepresented and historically marginalized staff recognize in a nonprofit organization whose leaders are self-perceived as culturally proficient?

Methods Summary

This asset based, explanatory sequential mixed methods study was conducted in the West region of a nonprofit called the Global Humanitarian Organization (GHO). The study began with quantitative data collection using a likert-style self-assessment survey. This survey helped me to identify offices where leaders in the West region of GHO perceived themselves as high in CP practice and to answer my first sub research question. After analyzing survey results, I selected the PNW office as a high scoring CP office to further investigate. I interviewed three senior executive leaders from the PNW office to explore their perceptions of CP leadership in qualitative fashion. I also analyzed a 2024 retention report and DEI Strategic Action Plan Report from the GHO to further understand existing CP leadership practices and to combat self reporting bias from leaders. From here, I conducted seven qualitative interviews with PNW staff who self identified as having underrepresented backgrounds to understand their SoB and recognition of leadership practices. This helped me answer my second and third sub research questions. Combined in this order, this research design allowed me to contrast perspectives and to look across my qualitative and quantitative sets of data to help answer my primary research question. I analyzed data by finding key statistics in the self assessment survey, coding and comparing across leadership and staff interview transcripts, and triangulating findings with existing GHO internal documents.

Discussion of the Findings

Each of the following findings were prominently described in the seven underrepresented staff interviews and across the three leadership interviews for this study. Additionally, these findings were supported by the CP leadership survey and GHO DEI document analysis. Through the first two phases of my research analysis, I revealed that leadership in the GHO West Region

demonstrates high levels of CP practice (Chapter 4, Phase 1), underrepresented staff in the GHQ West Region perceive themselves to have high levels of SoB (Chapter 4, Phase 2), and underrepresented staff in the GHQ West Region recognize GHQ West Region's leadership's CP practices to varying degrees (Chapter 4, Phase 2). This analysis provided a backdrop for my Phase 3 analysis, helping me to create my primary claim, revealing the following: there is a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB.

In accordance with the findings from my Phase 3 analysis, I further discuss my primary claim: (1) there is a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB, as well as the following additional claims: (2) supportive leadership from direct supervisors plays a critical role in fostering SoB for underrepresented staff, (3) mission-centered leadership can enhance a SoB among underrepresented staff, (4) CP leadership alone cannot fully compensate for a lack of shared identities between leaders and underrepresented staff, and (5) Adela's connection to the mission as a result of her intersectionality may serve as a potential lens to understand her high SoB despite her lack of associations to CP leadership practice. Each of my interpretations and implications from the aforementioned claims is described in greater detail below.

Comprehensive CP Leadership is Highly Associated to Perceptions of SoB in underrepresented Staff

This study's primary claim is that there is a substantial level of association between nonprofit leaders' self-perceived comprehensive CP practices and historically underrepresented staff's perceived SoB. Notably, comprehensive CP leadership practices include exhibiting all of the following: maintaining self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationship building, actively

engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022). This primary claim aligns with the broader literature, which highlights that some indicators of CP leadership have served as contributing factors to various indicators of SoB (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Witwer, 2021). However, it is important to emphasize that while there is existing research studying the impact of particular aspects of CP leadership on staff SoB in nonprofits, this research explored the impact on historically underrepresented staff's SoB when leaders exhibited CP in a comprehensive fashion thereby filling a gap.

This study's primary claim is important as existing research suggests the changing landscape of the U.S. and its workplace demographics means nonprofit leadership may need to transform to meet the needs of a diversifying workplace and to accomplish their missions (Osula & Ng, 2014). As such, this study's findings highlight that comprehensive CP leadership practices may serve as a potential strategy to better support the diversifying nonprofit sector by helping to develop a SoB for staff from underrepresented backgrounds. This is especially critical as studies suggest current nonprofits are struggling to adapt to increased diversity of staff in the nonprofit sector (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; Witwer, 2021).

In particular, underrepresented staff participants from this study emphasized when leaders embodied comprehensive CP practice in a consistent and integrated way, instead of as one-off trainings or as performative gestures, the workplace felt more inclusive, and tailored to the lived realities of historically marginalized staff. This emphasis on consistency of practice is seen in existing literature, as research suggests nonprofit leaders who have actively partake and facilitate various training sessions with their staff have experienced a direct correlation to higher perceptions of SoB for those staff (Almas et al., 2020). Similarly, leaders who have consistently

engaged with their staff in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related initiatives by sharing and discussing related materials like articles, or engaging in DEI related meetings and workshops, have better fostered a SoB for underrepresented staff and were more likely to meet the organization's performance goals (McClelland, 2021).

Furthermore, this study revealed that the presence of comprehensive CP practices in leadership appeared to influence a SoB for underrepresented staff thereby generating positive organizational outcomes such as improved retention for those staff. As described in Chapter 4, numerous underrepresented staff participants cited their positions in GHO were the longest tenured professional roles they ever had and that they felt high enthusiasm working for GHO. These findings are in alignment with existing research, which suggests that staff who experience a SoB have been shown to be more adaptive to culture shifts, more satisfied in their roles, and more likely to remain with their organization (Adejumo, 2021; Soelton et al., 2021). Additional studies support this idea that CP leadership practices can enhance organizational retention by strengthening staff's SoB, as multiple studies have found that nonprofit staff with a strong SoB tend to perform better and remain in their roles longer (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021; Parry et al., 2019; Witwer, 2021).

Supportive Leadership from Direct Supervisors is Critical to foster Underrepresented Staff's SoB

An unexpected finding of this study was that underrepresented staff consistently discussed the important role of supportive and impactful leadership from their immediate supervisors in association to their SoB. Key supportive direct supervisory behaviors included intentional professional development and the offering of praise and credit. Ultimately, the

consistency of these themes across six out of seven staff interviews underscored the powerful influence immediate supervisors have on fostering a SoB for underrepresented staff.

This finding is significant because it reinforces that underrepresented staff's perceptions of their SoB are not only influenced by top level leadership, but also heavily through their relationships with their closest level of leadership. According to existing literature, cultures of organizations and workplace experiences for staff are often heavily dictated by the experiences and relationships and direct supervisors and their employees (Soelton, 2021). Furthermore, existing literature suggests direct supervisors and middle managers who have exhibited aspects of culturally proficient practice like maintaining awareness and emphasizing trust and relationships are able to positively influence the SoB and workplace experience for staff from underrepresented backgrounds (Fontaine, 2007). This is worth highlighting as it demonstrates that immediate supervisors' actions, whether positive and culturally affirming or negative and culturally destructive, may either grow or dismantle the feelings of SoB for underrepresented staff, despite a nonprofit organization's intentions otherwise.

Mission Centered Leadership can Foster a SoB for Underrepresented Staff

This study found that when leaders model the mission by prioritizing client service, and reinforce a shared purpose of the mission itself through conversation, underrepresented staff recognize an association between leadership practice and their SoB. Notably, underrepresented staff described that when leadership consistently centered the mission in their communications, decision making, and recognition practices, it directly contributed to their SoB in indicators such as serving an important role, feelings of group membership, and feelings of morale.

These findings are in alignment with existing literature as nonprofit research suggests that management techniques should be rooted in developing intrinsic motivation for staff (Chen,

2014; De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans & Jegers, 2011; Knapp et al., 2019; Schepers et al., 2005). Therefore, it may be important for leaders to foster motivation of their staff through mission alignment and intentional engagement around the mission with staff (Chen, 2014). According to research, and as revealed in this study, when nonprofit leaders do foster alignment between staff roles and organizational purpose and mission, staff may then report higher levels of a SoB (Knapp et al., 2020). Coincidentally, with increased SoB, underrepresented staff may then experience higher levels of job satisfaction, increased resilience, and a deeper connection to their workplace (Knapp et al., 2020).

For many underrepresented staff, whose SoB may be shaped by intersectional dynamics related to identity, and personal identity ties to the organization's community of focus, a clear alignment with the organizational mission can serve as a unifying, identity-affirming force. When nonprofit leadership reinforces that staff are contributing meaningfully to client impact and wellbeing, in turn, leadership may foster an office culture where underrepresented staff feel valued, experience group membership, feel as though they are serving an important role, and ultimately, feel grounded in something larger than themselves (Knapp et al., 2020).

CP Leadership Cannot Fully Make Up for Lack of Shared Identities with Underrepresented Staff

The findings also point to the limit of the extent to which CP leadership practice alone can foster a SoB for underrepresented staff. As depicted by underrepresented staff in interviews, CP leadership by itself cannot fully compensate for the lack of shared cultural identities between leadership and underrepresented staff. While the GHQ West Region leaders of this study exhibited CP practice comprehensively, and demonstrated a commitment to equity in the organization, the relational gap tied to identity remained a consistent barrier for some

underrepresented staff to experience a SoB in association to leadership practice. This is in alignment with existing research as literature suggests underrepresented staff in nonprofit organizations may be less likely to experience a SoB without leadership alignment to their interests, values, race, gender, and shared cultural identities (Bowles & Scull, 2019).

The need for shared cultural identity between staff and leadership is most clearly illustrated in this study in interviews with underrepresented staff and is most obvious in cases like Adela's, where leadership practice of any kind has no meaningful impact on her perceptions of SoB. Adela regularly points to her leadership's White identities as hindering her work experience and various indicators of her SoB. Further, she also claims she envisions her experience would be entirely different if she were to have nonprofit leadership who shared her lived cultural experience as a historically underrepresented and marginalized individual. This underscores the complex, intersectional nature of the perceptions of a SoB for staff from historically underrepresented backgrounds and the importance of not only practice but also representation in nonprofit spaces. Existing literature suggests that the dynamic and intersectional nature of underrepresented staff experiences are deeply layered, tied to relationships and the workplace setting, and connected to how underrepresented staff see themselves represented in their office and by leadership (Nickels & Leach, 2021). Thus, while CP leadership is a powerful tool to foster a SoB for underrepresented staff, it may not be considered a substitution for diverse representation in leadership.

When underrepresented staff do not see their identities reflected in leadership, even leaders who demonstrate comprehensive CP practice, with the best of intentions, can fall short at maximizing underrepresented staff's SoB. This underlines the urgent need for diverse representation in leadership positions to ensure SoB for underrepresented staff and to improve

organizational performance for the diversifying nonprofit sector. This reflection is in alignment with recent research, as while people of color consist of around 32% of the nonprofit workforce, less than 20% become executive leaders (Lee, 2023; Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017). This is troubling as research suggests that when leaders and staff share similar racial backgrounds, the relationship and effectiveness of the leader and employee becomes more cohesive. In turn, the work experience as well as the SoB for that staff member can improve (Lee, 2023). According to recent literature, some nonprofits have responded to this need for representation by building their organization to be a reflection of the community they serve via recruiting, retaining, and developing historically underrepresented staff to leadership roles (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; McClelland, 2021). In doing so, research suggests increasing opportunity for underrepresented staff to serve in leadership roles led to improved organizational outcomes such as increased opportunities for fundraising as the aforementioned practices increased the scope and size of a nonprofit organization's client-base (Fredette & Sessler, 2019; McClelland, 2021). Collectively, these research backed findings are significant because they reinforce the importance of dismantling Whiteness in nonprofit leadership to better serve and support the experiences of underrepresented staff and to improve nonprofit performance.

An Intersectional Connection to the Mission: A Potential Explanation for Adela's Case

A potential explanation for the unexpected findings of Adela's experience could be attributed to the influence of her connection to the mission at GHO. As previously stated, nonprofit staff can benefit from leadership styles which foster intrinsic motivation like those found in mission-driven environments (Chen, 2014; De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans & Jegers, 2011; Knapp et al., 2019; Schepers et al., 2005). This is because mission driven environments may provide employees, especially those with identity ties to the mission, with a

strong sense of purpose, thereby contributing to their feelings of a sense of belonging (Drucker, 1990). Additional research has shown that when staff strongly identify with a nonprofit's mission, regardless of leadership practice, the mission of the organization itself may then evolve into the staff's primary source of connection and motivation at work (Light, 2002). Given this context, it is possible Adela's descriptions of strong connections to her fellow underrepresented peers and the organization's refugee clients, coupled with her personal alignment and lived experience connecting her with GHO's mission, may serve as lens for understanding her high levels of SoB despite her lack of association between her SoB and CP leadership practices at GHO.

Furthermore, Adela's case is especially critical to understand when considering her intersectional identities as a woman of color and a former refugee, especially as someone who is working for a nonprofit like GHO focused on supporting refugees and asylum seekers. According to research, an individual's intersectionality can shape the way they experience feelings of a SoB and ties to their organization, as individuals of all backgrounds utilize the multiple pieces of their identity to find affiliation within organizations and group settings (Crenshaw, 2013). As such, it is possible Adela may have relied more strongly on her fellow underrepresented peers and connections to clients, and had a deeper connection to the mission, as a means to foster her own SoB. In sum, Adela's case, and the concept of intersectionality when applied to underrepresented staff like Adela, highlights the complexity of experiencing feelings of SoB for staff like Adela who have multiple underrepresented identities.

Recommendations for Future Nonprofit Research

Chapter 2 offered detailed background to the two core guiding educational theories behind this study. These theories included the SoB theory and the CP framework. This chapter

now discusses recommendations for future research in connection with these educational theories for nonprofit researchers in the nonprofit sector.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to SoB Theory and the CP Framework

Historically, SoB theory and the CP framework have been applied primarily in education research contexts. There has been well documented relevant research about the benefits of a comprehensive adoption of CP leadership practice in education (Cross, 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022). Further, there has also been impactful research on the experiences and positive influences of experiencing a SoB for underrepresented staff and students in education spaces (Strayhorn, 2012). However, there has been limited research on the application of each theory in nonprofit workspaces, and particularly when applied together to understand nonprofit leadership and underrepresented staff dynamics. To help fill this gap, my study's findings suggest that when nonprofit leadership self-report demonstrating high levels of CP practice, underrepresented staff in that workplace experience a high level of SoB. In turn, this study supports the interdisciplinary adaptability of CP leadership practice to promote a SoB for underrepresented staff. In doing so, this study helps highlight that utilizing a CP and SoB lens in other nonprofit settings can enable practitioners and researchers to better understand how nonprofit leadership practices may shape the workplace experience for underrepresented staff in a diversifying sector. Therefore, I recommend that nonprofit researchers do the following:

I recommend that other nonprofit researchers seek to understand how leadership's CP practice and underrepresented staff's SoB may or may not be associated in additional nonprofit organizations across the sector. Doing so would further the understanding of how these educational theories function in nonprofit spaces across different contexts. This is important because the nonprofit sector is incredibly diverse in size, scope and mission and varies greatly

from organization to organization (Osula & Ng, 2014; Nickels & Leach, 2021). The significance of this additional research would be twofold: it could possibly lead to a richer, more nuanced understanding of how to improve the SoB experienced by historically underrepresented staff in association to leadership practices across additional mission driven spaces with different areas of focus; and it could potentially help the nonprofit sector at large strengthen organizational performance by deepening the understanding of how to apply CP practice in various nonprofit spaces to create SoB for underrepresented staff.

In addition, I recommend that nonprofit researchers adapt their definition of leadership in future studies. Whereas this research centered itself around understanding CP practice of senior and executive level leadership, understanding CP practice in middle management could be beneficial. This is because direct supervisors and middle managers often serve as the first point of contact with staff and serve as a liaison to executive leadership. As such, direct supervisors and middle managers may play a significant role in shaping the culture of nonprofits, and influencing how underrepresented staff experience a SoB. Implications could include helping nonprofits to identify specific leadership behaviors, practices, and communication styles in middle management which foster or hinder underrepresented staff's SoB. Collectively, by expanding the CP and SoB lens to target middle managers and direct supervisors, other nonprofit researchers could strengthen the sector wide understanding of how to develop inclusive leadership practices which foster better workplace experience for underrepresented talent.

Further, I recommend that nonprofit researchers adapt their definition of underrepresented staff in future studies. While this research sought to understand the perspective of any staff who self identified as underrepresented in a variety of identity categories, researchers who focused on a particular demographic background (ie Latina women, BIPOC men,

transgender staff, etc) could reveal powerful insights aimed at understanding the experiences of those staff in particular. This could help shed light on how to better target equity centered strategies to support the SoB and well-being of specific underrepresented groups in the nonprofit sector.

The unexpected findings stemming from Adela's experiences indicate yet another valuable opportunity for future research. It could be beneficial for future nonprofit researchers to explore how a connection to a nonprofit's mission may be in association with the SoB of underrepresented staff members, especially as it relates to various intersectional identities of staff in nonprofit settings. Further research could therefore investigate how or if underrepresented staff with feelings of strong mission alignment may also experience heightened SoB through organizational platforms outside of leadership practices, as well as how the mission centered induced SoB can impact nonprofit performance long term. By investigating the connection between mission-centeredness and underrepresented staff SoB, future researchers could gain insights as to how to foster a SoB for underrepresented staff even with leadership identity misalignment or a lack of consistent CP leadership practice in that setting.

I also recommend future nonprofit researchers to conduct a longitudinal study designed to understand the impact of CP leadership on nonprofit organizational performance across multiple nonprofit organizations. While existing literature suggests a positive contribution to organizational performance as a result of CP leadership and improved underrepresented staff's SoB, this study's primary focus was to understand the association between CP leadership and underrepresented staff's SoB, not the organizational impact. As such, a research study which seeks to measure organizational achievement over time would be greatly beneficial to better

understand the business gain of enacting CP leadership and fostering underrepresented staff's SoB.

Finally, I recommend future researchers conduct a large, cross organizational, quantitative study meant to examine SoB for underrepresented staff while honing in on patterns and changes based on variables like gender, race, position, and tenure. While this research study primarily focuses on the staff perspective via a qualitative approach, future research could explicitly examine the SoB of underrepresented staff using surveys and the validated SoB perceived cohesion scale, adapted for interviews in this study, to get a larger sample and understanding of the experience of SoB for underrepresented staff across many nonprofits. In doing so, future research could discover additional insights as to the SoB as experienced by underrepresented staff to a broader degree.

Implications to Leadership Practice

The findings of this study have meaningful implications for leadership of all levels across the nonprofit sector. This research is especially topical as existing literature suggests the changing landscape of the U.S. and its workplace demographics means nonprofit leadership must transform to meet the needs of a diversifying workplace and to accomplish their missions (Osula & Ng, 2014). In response to this need, this study suggests that leaders who adopt CP practices can potentially foster a SoB for historically underrepresented staff. In doing so, leaders of nonprofits may better support underrepresented staff's experiences, help them perform better in their roles, and help the organization achieve its mission. This chapter now discusses the implications for leadership practices in the following categories: (1) CP leadership strengthens belonging for underrepresented staff, (2) the pivotal role of direct supervisors, (3) leaders of all levels must be mission centered, and (4) the urgent need to diversify nonprofit leadership.

CP Leadership Strengthens SoB for Underrepresented Staff

This study's findings suggest leaders who adopt CP leadership practices can foster a strong SoB for underrepresented staff. This is significant as literature suggests a SoB can directly influence employee satisfaction, increase organizational retention rates (Knekta et al., 2020; Witwer, 2021), and leads to increased achievement and happiness for individuals in nonprofits (Adejumo, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Witwer, 2021). Thus, it may benefit nonprofit leaders to recognize the importance of CP in practice as a potentially essential element to the success and ethical accountability for the future of the sector. In accordance, I recommend that leadership of nonprofits adopt CP leadership practice in their organizations in the following ways:

- Integration of CP practice into leadership development programs focused on CP indicators of maintaining self-awareness, emphasizing trust and relationship building throughout staff, actively engaging with staff from all backgrounds, fostering and demonstrating authenticity, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds into new and existing leadership and management training i.e recurring structured workshops, and mentorship programs, with measurable, achievable outcomes.
- Recruit, retain, and promote individuals from underrepresented backgrounds into leadership positions by establishing intentional growth pipelines, mentorship and sponsorship programs, and transparent promotion criteria which values lived experience alongside formal, Western focused, professional experience.
- Embed CP practices into core organizational structures and policies in the following ways: create onboarding experiences for leaders and staff aimed to improve awareness around identity and positional bias, privilege, and power dynamics, develop performance evaluations for leaders and staff using CP indicators as performance metrics (i.e.

assessing engagement levels of staff by leadership), develop inclusive internal communication practices aimed at enhancing trust and relationship building, and create identity based employee resource groups, and cultural advisory committees with connection to leadership (to foster and affirm cultural authenticity and to develop trust and relationships in the office).

- Regularly evaluate all staff's SoB through consistent pulse-surveys to assess and understand existing SoB for staff by race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other relevant identities to inform organizational decision making and organization strategy related to people and culture.

The Pivotal Role of Direct Supervisors

While this study primarily centers itself on understanding the perspectives and impacts of senior and executive leadership, it was clear from staff transcripts that direct supervisors play a crucial role in facilitating underrepresented staff perceptions of their SoB. Direct supervisors in positions of middle management in nonprofits act as the connection between high-level organization strategy and the day-to-day staff experience and are therefore deeply intertwined in shaping the experiences of staff from all backgrounds. As a result, hiring and promoting supervisors and middle managers who reflect the identities of the staff they serve (for further detail on how I recommend doing this, reference The Urgent Need to Diversify Nonprofit Leadership subsection below), and who demonstrate CP leadership practice, may be a necessary priority.

To advance towards having more direct supervisors who demonstrate CP practice, it may be important that nonprofit organizations invest in professional development for direct supervisors and middle management which build a skill set in CP. Senior leaders of nonprofits

can offer professional development for direct supervisors and middle management by integrating CP leadership competencies into performance evaluations and promotion criteria as a strategy to ensure CP leadership is prioritized in promotion, onboarding, and hiring procedures. Doing so may result in more CP responsive and inclusive direct supervisor and middle management leadership practices, thereby creating direct supervisors which are more capable of affirming and uplifting the professional needs of underrepresented staff.

Leaders of all Levels Must be Mission Centered

Another key implication of this research study is the significance of mission centered leadership. This study's findings reinforce the value of centering the mission of the organization across all leadership decision making and in everyday interactions with staff and are significant because they shed light on yet another nonprofit leadership nuance of how to develop a SoB for underrepresented staff. According to underrepresented staff, when leaders clearly connect staff roles, and demonstrate leadership decision making to be rooted in the organizational mission, underrepresented staff feel as though their roles are important, and that their work is of value, two indicators of SoB. In accordance, I recommend that leadership of all levels center the mission in their leadership practice in the following ways:

- Regularly communicate how individual staff roles contribute to the broader mission of the organization. Doing so could help staff from underrepresented backgrounds see how their own work immediately contributes to the larger goals of the organization. As a result, implications could be that staff feel enhanced feelings of purpose, value, and SoB to the organization itself thereby positively influencing motivation and commitment to their work.

- Ensure mission alignment serves as a cornerstone of strategic planning and resource allocation and externally communicate alignment in decision making with staff. Doing so may reinforce trust and transparency between staff and leadership, especially when staff are communicated with in a manner which helps them feel included and respected. Potential implications could be that staff perceive the organization and their leaders as values driven, self-aware, and actively inclusive, which could enhance staff morale and organizational cohesion.
- Foster and model the organization's mission through values-driven behavior and communication that reflects the mission in action. Doing so may be important because it reveals leadership practice which is authentic and in alignment with both the organization's words and practice. In doing so, implications could be that staff from underrepresented backgrounds feel a stronger tie to leadership, and improved feelings of trust with leadership, thereby reinforcing their SoB and commitment to the organization.

The Urgent Need to Diversify Nonprofit Leadership

Despite the growing cultural and racial diversity within the nonprofit space, leadership positions remain disproportionately White (Lee, 2023; Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017). While nearly all staff interviewed in this study expressed associations between their SoB and their leadership's CP practices, the predominance of White leadership emerged as an impediment for some staff from underrepresented backgrounds to experience a deeper SoB in association to leadership. In cases like Adela's, White dominant leadership hindered her work experience and caused harm to her sense of feeling valued, feelings of cohesion, and feelings of group membership, all indicators of SoB. As such, this research sheds light on the urgent need for diversifying all levels of leadership positions in nonprofits to better foster a SoB for

underrepresented staff and to reap the benefits of a diverse workplace. Nonprofits can approach diversifying leadership, ranging from senior leadership to middle management, by doing the following:

- Establishing internal pipelines for underrepresented staff to grow into leadership positions. This can be done through various processes including: mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership development programs centered around increasing equity and access for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.
 - Revising hiring and promotion practices to eliminate or reduce biases towards White-dominant cultural norms such as traditional Western education, and instead value alternative relevant experience such as lived experience, community engagement experience, and cultural knowledge.
 - Establishing diversity goals in all levels of leadership positions and creating accountability measures for reaching those metrics; and additionally, regularly communicating progress of those metrics to promote transparency with staff.
 - Creating inclusive interview and recruitment processes by involving underrepresented staff and existing leaders in hiring panels, partnering with DEI and culturally based committees to create interview questions, and explicitly sourcing and recruiting from known communities that reflect the same client populations the organization serves.
- Further, potential implications of adopting the aforementioned recommendations for

leadership hiring practices could be the following:

- Underrepresented staff could see themselves more easily reflected in positions of leadership, which according to this study, may increase perceptions of their SoB.

- Nonprofit organizations could benefit from diverse leadership perspectives, resulting in improved internal organizational cohesion and potential for improved external impact.
- Long-term, these efforts to diversify leadership positions in various levels could improve a number of organizational achievement metrics including: retention of staff, innovation, and mission alignment, all of which are essential to the sustainability and credibility of the sector.

Issues of Validity, Reliability, & Trustworthiness

There were several threats to validity in this research study. First off, my role within GHO and experience working for the organization inherently came with a level of bias. Thus, a potential threat was if I made an assumption that there was in fact a direct correlation between CP leadership practices and increased staff SoB to begin with, based on my own lived professional experiences. On the contrary, there could have been various other factors which offered greater influence to staff SoB than CP leadership practices. Further, since I had personal and professional connections to the nonprofit setting which I used in this study, it was critical I do not allow previous knowledge or bias pertaining to leaders and staff to influence my perspective.

Personal relationships with participants could have also impacted responses from participants during the interviews. Knowing of me and my role in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department could have influenced participant responses. Additionally, my personal biases and positionality may have impacted my understanding of the participants' reasoning in their answers especially as it related to my relationship with that participant. My own understanding and definition of organizational achievement based on my own SoB to the organization may have impacted my ability to accurately convey the participants' experiences.

This is why conducting respondent validation - confirming my participant's words and descriptions in my interviews with the participants themselves - was so critical.

I used methods such as member checking (or respondent validation), researcher self reflection, and asking peer researchers to verify findings to help address some of the aforementioned validity threats. I regularly reflected on my own biases and subjectivity and captured those thoughts in asides throughout my data (Peshkin, 1988). I used member checking practices throughout my interview process to ensure I accurately understood and conveyed what my participants told me (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2022). Finally, I used peer debriefing with at least two other doctoral students and had them review my transcripts to understand their interpretation of coding and themes of my data (Lareau, 2021).

Challenges with generalizability include that because nonprofits are so diverse in size, scope, and mission, it is challenging to broaden the findings of one study on nonprofits and use it to inform the inner workings of all nonprofits. However, it is important to note the goal of this study was not to be generalizable but instead to better the understanding of existing social processes and to conduct a deep dive of these particular participants at this particular setting; in this case, the SoB experienced by these underrepresented staff as it relates to their impression of leadership within the chosen nonprofit organization (GHO).

Limitations of the Study Design

There is a need for research to understand how CP leadership practices may be associated with underrepresented and marginalized staff's SoB in nonprofit organizations. This study however is limited in context and scope. This study examines one nonprofit organization by itself and only captures the stories of up to ten individual staff members. This study also has limitations in regard to duration of the research as collection of data only lasted a few months. It

is possible that a study, which is larger in scope, lasts longer, and includes several nonprofits could broaden the understanding of this research further.

It is also important to note the research tools I selected for my leadership self assessment survey and staff interview protocol may have come with limitations. Each of my sampling tools stem from educational research settings and have been adapted to fit a nonprofit research study. I attempted to find an existing reliable/valid survey which measured CP leadership in existing literature with no success. Therefore, I did the next best thing which was to draw from other sources which have attempted to assess CP.

Taken together, as with much of qualitative research, the end goal of this research was not meant to be generalizable. Instead, it was to capture the voices and elicit stories from the underserved populations of this specific nonprofit setting in an effort to understand their lived experiences. While each staff member's story may have been unique in nature, there were commonalities across their stories which can prove useful for nonprofit leaders to understand for the benefit of their own leadership practices.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations occupy a unique and powerful space in US society. As mission-driven institutions, they often exist to combat inequity and uplift the needs of historically marginalized peoples and communities. Thus, nonprofits must not only pursue social justice externally, they must also embody social justice internally through their leadership and organization wide cultures (Nickels & Leach, 2021). Ultimately, this dissertation research study highlights the necessity for nonprofits to lead by example in making meaningful change to the lives of their historically underrepresented staff. Findings from this study affirm that nonprofits

with comprehensive CP leadership can foster a meaningful SoB for historically underrepresented staff.

This research explored nonprofit leadership and underrepresented staff perspectives in one nonprofit setting, and in doing so shed light on the significant role that comprehensive CP leadership can play in molding the SoB for historically underrepresented staff for the better. While CP practices like demonstrating authenticity, engaging with staff of all backgrounds, fostering relationships and trust, maintaining awareness of bias privilege and power, and hiring, retaining, and developing staff from all backgrounds are each shown to support underrepresented staff's SoB, this research also underscores that diverse representation in leadership is paramount. As depicted by underrepresented staff, a lack of shared identity between leadership and staff can hinder a full SoB for some, elevating the notion that CP leadership practice must be paired with shared cultural and racial presence in leaders of the highest level.

In conclusion, by centering the stories of underrepresented staff and utilizing frameworks from education and applying them to understand the cultural impacts of nonprofit leadership, this research study attests to the interdisciplinary relevance and utility of CP leadership in nonprofits. For nonprofits to meet the needs of their mission, and to live up to the ideals they set for themselves, nonprofit organizations must mirror the inclusive and equitable change they seek to produce in the world, beginning within their own office walls.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire for Leaders

Maintain Self Awareness of One's Own Identities, Biases, and Privilege						
1.	I am aware of my own identities, privilege, and disadvantages	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I am comfortable talking about my privilege and entitlements	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I know the effect my identities may have on the people in my work setting	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I recognize microaggressions when they occur and how they affect individuals and the organization's culture	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I recognize when current cultural norms do not serve well everyone in the organization	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I seek to learn about the cultures of this organization's clients as well as my staff	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I anticipate how this organizations clients and employees will interact with, conflict with, and enhance one another	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I check myself to see if an assumption I am making about a person is based upon facts or upon stereotypes about a group	1	2	3	4	5

Encourage and Foster Authenticity with Staff from All Backgrounds						
9.	I welcome a diverse group of clients and colleagues to be their authentic selves in the work setting	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I recognize diversity is vast, intersectional in nature, and is more than gender, ethnicity, and gender orientation	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I learn from both the challenges and opportunities diversity brings	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I share my appreciation of diversity with my coworkers	1	2	3	4	5
13;	I bring my authentic self including my own identities into the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I encourage an authentic learning community with the clients I serve and the staff I oversee	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I teach the cultural expectations of my organization or department to those who are new or may be unfamiliar with the organization's culture	1	2	3	4	5

Emphasis of Trust & Relationships in a Diverse Setting						
16.	I recognize conflict can be a normal occurrence in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I work to build trust with my staff develop skills to manage conflict in productive ways	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I help others to understand what appear to be clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in culture or background	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I seek to build trust and personal relationships with my staff to understand how to overcome cultural conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I accept that the more diverse our group becomes the more we will change and grow	1	2	3	4	5

Active Engagement with Staff from All Backgrounds					
21.	I continuously learn from my staff to understand the challenges which may be caused by differences	1	2	3	4 5
22.	I engage with staff from all backgrounds to enhance equity in the substance and structure of my work	1	2	3	4 5
23.	I actively share with my staff the resources or power which I receive from my personal and professional privileges	1	2	3	4 5
24.	I proactively seek to learn about the people and cultures unfamiliar to me in my office	1	2	3	4 5
25.	I actively participate in trainings and educational opportunities focused around diversity and inclusivity alongside my staff	1	2	3	4 5

Hiring, Retaining, and Developing Diverse Staff					
26.	I work to influence the culture of this organization so its policies and practices are informed by our client and staff community	1	2	3	4 5
27.	I speak up if I notice a policy or practice unintentionally discriminates against or causes an unnecessary hardship for a particular group in this organizations community	1	2	3	4 5
28.	I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my colleagues	1	2	3	4 5
29.	I advocate for the marginalized and voiceless among my colleagues and community	1	2	3	4 5
30.	I seek to create opportunities for my colleagues, managers, clients, and the communities we serve to learn about one another	1	2	3	4 5
31.	I intentionally try to hire staff from underrepresented backgrounds or backgrounds which align with the client we serve	1	2	3	4 5
32.	I intentionally foster professional development and growth opportunities for staff from underrepresented backgrounds or backgrounds which align with the clients we serve	1	2	3	4 5
33.	I proactively seek to interact and uplift the cultures of people's whose backgrounds are different than mine	1	2	3	4 5

Appendix B: Leadership Interview Protocol

Thank you _____, for agreeing to be a part of my research study. Your contributions are important to me and this research. Preface here about my own identities (personal and also professional related to GHQ), reasoning behind the research, why I am conducting this research study. Please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers; I'm here to learn from your experiences and insights. Feel free to share as much detail as you're comfortable with. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and stop this interview at any time. Additionally, your responses are confidential, and all data will be stored securely. No identifying information will be connected to your responses in any reporting of the research findings. The interview will take between 60-75 Minutes. Do I have your permission to record this interview? If you're ready, I will hit record and start the transcription and we'll start off with some brief introductory questions.

First of all, please tell me your name, how long you have been working at GHQ, and what you do at GHQ.

Next, can you tell me a bit about how you would describe your identity(ies)?

Thank you. Next I'd like to ask you questions about your leadership practices. Given the broader context of the organization and the challenges introduced by the Trump administration, I encourage you to reflect on your entire tenure in this role—not just the current sociopolitical climate—when responding. Let's begin.

Questions to be included to understand CP Indicator 1: (Leaders who maintain self-awareness of their own identities, biases, and privilege)

1. In what ways do your own identities, privileges, and disadvantages, influence your leadership style?

- a. Can you share an example of a time when you openly discussed your identities including your privilege or entitlement with colleagues or staff?
 2. Can you give me an example of how your identities shaped your interactions with colleagues or staff in your workplace?
 3. How do you respond when cultural norms in your organization are not serving everyone equitably?
 - a. How do you recognize an inequity?
 - b. Can you describe a situation where you recognized a microaggression in your organization and how you addressed it?
 4. What steps do you take to learn about the diverse cultures of staff in your organization?
 - a. What triggered your interest to take these steps?
 5. How do you navigate potential conflicts that arise from the diverse identities of your organization's employees?
-

Questions to be included to understand CP Indicator 2: (Leaders who encourage and foster authenticity with staff from all backgrounds)

9. What does diversity mean to you?
 - a. How do you recognize and support diversity in your organization?
 - b. In what ways does diversity matter to you?
 - c. What experiences led you to this belief?
 10. What does authenticity mean to you?
 - a. In what ways do you create an environment where staff feel comfortable being their authentic selves?
 - b. Can you give an example?
 - c. How do you know when staff are comfortable being their authentic selves?
 11. In what ways do you bring your authentic self into the workplace?
 - a. How do you know when you are being authentic?
 - b. How does being authentic affect your team?
 12. How do you foster authenticity among your staff?
 - a. Can you give an example?
-

Questions to be included to understand CP Indicator 3: (Leaders who emphasize building trust & relationships in a diverse setting)

16. What strategies do you use to build trust with your staff?
 - a. How does developing trust with your staff influence your organization?

17. How do you approach workplace conflicts, particularly those arising in a diverse environment?
 - a. Can you give an example?
 18. How do you build personal relationships with your staff?
 19. How does building relationships and trust influence your ability to address cultural conflicts?
 20. How has diversity in your organization shaped your approach to leadership and collaboration with your staff?
 - a. Probe for specific examples
-

Questions to be included to understand CP Indicator 4: (Leaders who actively engage with staff from all backgrounds)

21. What does typical staff engagement look like in your role?
 - a. What does engagement with staff from backgrounds different than your own look like in your role?
 22. How do you learn about cultures or perspectives unfamiliar to you in your workplace?
 - a. What does that process look like in practice when you learn about cultures different from your own in the workplace?
 23. Can you share an example of how you have shared power derived from your personal or professional privileges with your staff?
 24. What has your experience been in participating in diversity and inclusivity training alongside your staff?
 - a. How have these experiences influenced your leadership?
-

Questions to be included to understand CP Indicator 5: (Leaders who emphasize hiring, retaining, and developing diverse staff)

26. How do you work to shape organizational policies and practices to reflect the needs of your staff?
 - a. Can you share a time when you spoke up about a policy or practice that unintentionally caused hardship for a particular group?
27. What does advocacy for marginalized staff look like in your role?
 - a. Can you share a specific example?
28. In what ways do you create opportunities for staff to learn and develop from one another?
29. What strategies do you use to hire staff from underrepresented backgrounds?
 - a. Can you walk me through specific examples?

30. How do you foster professional growth opportunities for staff from underrepresented backgrounds?
- a. What specific professional growth opportunities have you offered?
 - b. Can you share a particular example?

We have reached the end of my set list of interview questions for you. Thank you so much for your time and valued contributions. Is there anything you would like to add which we have not yet talked about today?

Appendix C: Staff Interview Protocol

Thank you _____, for agreeing to be a part of my research study. Your contributions are important to me. Preface here about my own identities (personal and also professional related to GHO), reasoning behind the research, why I am conducting this research study. First I'd like to start off with some brief introductory questions.

Introductory Questions:

- Please tell me your name, how long you have been working at GHO, and what you do at GHO.
- Next, can you tell me a bit about how you would describe your identity(ies)?

Thank you. Next I want to ask a few questions about your interactions and relationship with leaders in your office. Let's begin.

Perceptions of Cultural Proficient Practices Focus:

- Can you describe your experiences interacting with the executive leader in your office?
 - In what ways does the executive leader of your office support your identity(ies) in your office?
 - In what ways might the executive leader of your office if at all build space for diverse voices in your office?
- How engaged is the executive leader with staff in your office (be sure to probe for specific examples)?
 - When the executive leader of your office actively engages in DEI work such as through workshops, or by engaging committees, how does that make you feel?
 - How does it make you feel when the executive leader of your office advocates for DEI related efforts such as equitable compensation practices?

- What role do you perceive the executive leader of your office to have in fostering authenticity at GHO?
 - Do you feel as though you can be your authentic self in your workplace?
 - If so or if not, in what ways does the executive leader of your office contribute to these feelings?
 - How does the executive leader influence how you see yourself and your identity in GHO community?
- In what ways does the executive leader of your office develop authentic relationships if at all?
 - Does your office executive leader promote opportunities for staff to engage and openly discuss each other's differences? How so or how not?
 - In what ways does the executive leader of your office validate or invalidate authenticity of staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds?
- How aware do you perceive your office executive leader of their own biases, privileges or lack thereof, and power? Can you give an example?
 - Does the executive leader from your office incorporate practices which are informed by non dominant culture's or people's perspectives?
 - How does it make you feel when the executive leader of your office integrates different cultural norms in the workplace such as through celebrations of holidays?

- How does it make you feel when the executive leader of your office integrates different cultural norms in the workplace such as through cultural office decor, and art?
- Does the executive leader in your office promote opportunities for growth for BIPOC individuals or individuals from nondominant backgrounds?
 - Does the executive leader of your office place an emphasis on hiring staff from underrepresented and historically marginalized backgrounds? Can you give an example?
 - Does the executive leader of your office emphasize supporting and retaining individuals from underrepresented backgrounds? Can you share any practices you have seen?

Optional Additional Questions:

- What efforts does the executive leader in your office do to build community in your office?
 - In what ways does the executive leader contribute or contract from a sense of community in your office?
 - In what ways does the executive leader's efforts contribute or contract from your sense of community in your office?

Next I would love to dig a bit more deeply on the topic of your feelings and experiences related to a sense of belonging while working at GHO.

SoB Focus:

- How would you describe your enthusiasm for working at GHO?

- In what ways have your executive leader's leadership practices influenced this?
- How would you describe your happiness levels related to working at GHO?
 - Can you describe a time when you were especially happy working at GHO?
 - Who may have contributed to these feelings of happiness from the organization?
- In what ways do you see yourself as a member of the GHO community if at all?
 - Can you give an example of when you felt this way?
- In what ways if at all do you see yourself playing an important role at GHO?
 - Can you give an example of a time when you felt this way?
- How valued do you feel working at GHO?
 - In what ways if at all does your executive leader contribute or take away from this?
- In what ways do you feel a sense of belonging to GHO if at all?
 - How would you describe executive leadership's influence on your sense of belonging?
- How does GHO leadership compare in supporting your identities in particular?
 - Can you give an example of when your identities felt supported?
- How does GHO compare to other nonprofits in your opinion?

We have reached the end of my set list of interview questions for you. Thank you so much for your time and valued contributions. Is there anything you would like to add which we have not yet talked about today?