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**IDENTIFYING THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON
ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY**

**A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organization Development**

**by
Alethea G. Young
August 2013**

This research project, completed by

ALETHEA G. YOUNG

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: August 2013

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Abstract

This mixed-methods case study examined the impact of leadership on practices to organizational agility. Leaders and employees from three organizations (two universities, one financial institution) participated in surveys and interviews to generate data related to the organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles exhibited, the degree of agility in the organization, and the impact of organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility. Study findings suggested that leadership varies based on industry- and organization-specific demands, organizational agility can exist across industries and organization types, and that adopting a long-term focus and practicing agile leadership behaviors throughout the organization may promote higher organizational agility. Organizations are encouraged to promote agile leadership through their hiring, learning and development, and performance review processes. Future research should utilize larger samples, improved data collection instruments, and focus on examining the critical few agile leadership behaviors that may most strongly predict organizational agility.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Throughout the history of commercial competition, companies have had to adapt their operations continuously to changing business climates" (Christian, Govande, Staehle, & Zimmers, 1999, p. 28). Uncertainty, turbulence, and competition are terms that organizations are familiar with and need to respond to if they intend to thrive and sustain themselves in a global marketplace. With economic downturns occurring both domestically and abroad, organizations are operating in moments of ambiguity more than ever before. It is important for organizations to have the ability to adapt and to be flexible as necessary in today's world. "To enjoy sustained success, companies need to develop a level of organizational agility that matches the increasing level of change and complexity in their business environment" (Joiner & Josephs, 2007, p. 36). The term *agile* is associated with these behaviors. Agility allows an organization to quickly adapt to unforeseen changes. Authors and researchers offer various definitions of agility and apply the term to many disciplines. Thus, the concept of agility is not precisely or uniformly defined across business disciplines (Kettunen, 2008).

Growth within the global marketplace continues to accelerate in an ever-changing world and economy. This is evidence that an organization's ability to sustain itself within a dynamic environment should be further explored outside of the construct of turbulent or uncertain times. Although it is difficult to foresee future developments, two trends on the rise: "the pace of change will continue to increase, and the level of complexity and interdependence will continue to grow" (Joiner & Josephs, 2007, p. 36). Given these trends, organizational change experts have urged business leaders to develop *agile* companies, meaning organizations that anticipate and respond to rapidly changing

conditions in ways that effectively manage both technical and stakeholder complexity. Many companies have not yet reached the point of agility and instead are still aspiring to achieve this quality strategically and operationally. One of the reasons achieving agility throughout the organization is not more of a reality is because of an *agility gap*, which Josephs and Joiner predict will be filled if leaders develop personal and professional agility first. In 1991, when organizations were not faced with such complexities in the marketplace, agile leadership traits included drive, leadership motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, knowledge of business, and other traits that did not have clear evidence at the time, such as charisma, creativity and originality, and flexibility (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

As a result of the current nature of the market in which organizations exist, the key traits of a leader as defined in 1991 still hold true. However, today's volatile business environment requires additional traits to help organizations survive (Blades, 2006). Namely, today's leaders require agility. "Senior executives say that agility is one of the most critical leadership capacities needed in their companies today" (Joiner & Josephs, 2007, p. 36). As innovation continues to rapidly grow and global markets expand the current environment as we know it, constant uncertainty and change has prompted an evolved style of leadership. Joiner (2009) added that agility is "the ability to lead effectively under conditions of rapid change and mounting complexity" (p. 11). Moreover, examination of the leadership literature suggests that leadership may play a key role in the degree of agility organizations may achieve.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the impact of leadership on organizational agility. Three questions were examined:

1. What organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles are exhibited in the organization?
2. What is the organization's amount of agility, as measured by its members?
3. What is the impact of organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility?

Significance of the Study

The world of commerce is constantly changing and evolving. Competition and technology both influence the way business is conducted. As our society moves toward globalization, the more the environment changes around an organization. For organizations to compete in the global marketplace, they must implement and devise ways to respond to rapid demands as well as sustain itself and remain ahead of the competition. Globalization is here to stay and will continue as companies and organizations attempt to grow and compete. For this reason alone, it is important for organizations to strongly consider change efforts and an agile strategy. Agility implemented as a strategy allows for consistent flexibility for organizations to respond to market demands, sustain themselves, and grow. However, more understanding is needed regarding how agility is achieved in organizations and what role leaders specifically play in promoting organizational agility. The present study produced insights about the unique role of leaders, thus, contributing to this important and growing area of literature.

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, including the study background, purpose, and significance. Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature, including a discussion of organizational agility, planned organizational change, and emergent organizational change. Chapter 3 describes the methods that will be used in this study, including the research design and the procedures related to sampling,

measurement, interviewing, and data analysis. Chapter 4 reports the results. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results, including key conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for additional research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This study examined the impact of leadership on organizational agility. This chapter examines literature relevant to this study. Three bodies of literature were reviewed: organizational agility, planned organizational change, and emergent organizational change. Leaders' contributions to organizational agility, their roles in planned organizational change, and their roles in emergent organizational change also are discussed.

Organization Agility

Four researchers at the Iacocca Institute of Lehigh University coined the term *organizational agility* in 1991 as part of their response to a U.S. Congressional request to produce a report on the strategy of industrial firms in the 21st century (Yusuf, Sarhadi, & Gunasekaran, 1999). Their report contended that the current system of mass production was not sufficient to ensure improvement and to help organizations keep up with competition—particularly competition coming from Asian companies that have developed a distinctive competence in flexibility. The researchers concluded that organizational agility was needed for organizations to remain competitive. This, in turn, would require a new system of production (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011). This launched the Agile Manufacturing Enterprise Forum, which promoted the concept of organizational agility within American firms. By the mid-1990s, the largest American firms—especially those in information technology and telephony sectors—had adopted the concept of agility.

Definition. Although the terms *agile* and *agility* are commonly used by commercial entities, concrete definitions of the terms are lacking (Sherehiy, Karwowski,

& Layer, 2007). Little research is available on the concept of organizational agility. What does exist fails to provide clarity surrounding its definition (Shafer, 1997; Sherehiy et al., 2007). The lack of definition poses serious limitations to operationalizing the concept (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011). Christian et al. (1999) conceptualized agility as continuous improvement, stating it is an excellent trait in an organization and that organizations need a process of ongoing change to meet the evolving demands of customers and consumers. Based on a synthesis of the organizational agility literature, *organization agility* is defined in this study as an organization's ability to move quickly in response to unforeseen changes and its capability to use foresight in order to seize opportunity. Agility is one of many frameworks for executing change.

Worley and Lawler (2010) added that agility requires responding quickly and easily to market and industry challenges (Moss, 2010). It emerges from a sense of purpose and a desire to avoid complacency in the best of times and a desire to sustain oneself during difficult times. Those internal values become actions. Worley and Lawler (2010) argued that agility needs to be embedded in an organization's design, as it is a cornerstone of a firm's competitive advantage and performance. They argued that agility is particularly needed as environments become more complex, uncertain, and unstable. However, the organization design features associated with agility are not well researched, and there are even fewer diagnostic frameworks. This article describes one comprehensive agility framework called "built-to-change" and the diagnostic process developed to assess an organization's agility. Key features of the agility framework include a robust strategy, an adaptable organization design, shared leadership, and a strong change capability. The agility diagnostic process was applied to the Acme Aerospace Company. A baseline agility profile was developed, and senior management

used it to develop a redesign agenda. The built-to-change agility assessment appears to provide comprehensive and actionable data for organizations interested in assessing their current level of agility or developing a transformation agenda to increase their agility capabilities.

Agility is an organization's ability to dynamically respond to internal and external factors that are complex, turbulent, and uncertain, and which demand change. Change is welcome and enacted routinely to sustain high standards of performance (Worley & Lawler, 2009). It also requires the organization to anticipate change, be innovative, and engage in constant learning (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011). Agility relates to an organization's need to be constantly adaptable. It must take advantage of the opportunities that change brings. Charbonnier-Voirin added that there are several components to organizational agility and that they must work in concert in order for it to be achieved. The characteristics of organizational agility include (a) agile levers, such as structure and organization, processes, technology, people, agile practices; (b) practices directed towards mastering change and cooperative practices; and (c) agile capabilities, such as mobilizing rapid response and reading the market (i.e., scanning, innovation).

Benefits of and needs for agility. The environment in which organizations exist today is ever-changing and organizations are faced with more challenges each day through the impact of globalization. Globalization has affected the business world by raising the level of competition in most industries (Lawler & Worley, 2006), "opening new markets, and challenging companies to deal with global consumers with the help of information technology" (p. 4). For many companies, organizational agility is thus considered a necessity to compete and survive (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). It affords companies the ability to respond to continuous change and to take advantage of new

opportunities (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011). Christian et al. (1999) maintain that an organization's competitive advantage is to remain dynamic and integrate agile strategies. The more sensitive and aware organizations are of the evolving global market, the better equipped it will be to embrace and endure ongoing change.

The need to implement change is typically the driving force for the implementation of agile strategies. Although Kettunen (2008) does not use the term *agile*, he describes a *flexible* organization as being able to respond to unpredictable changes cost-effectively and in a timely fashion, and pro-action creates future capabilities. Hoque (2010) believes it is important to distinguish the difference between agility and resilience. According to him, the ability to see and seize opportunities in the marketplace is agility, whereas resilience is the ability to react to unexpected changes. One can conclude based on both Kettunen's and Hoque's definitions of agility that it is not confined to the ability to react and respond to unforeseen changes, but also involves foresight and the capability of seizing opportunity in order for an organization to have a chance at a sustainable and successful future.

There are many reasons that prompt organization change for survival, growth, and success. These include keeping up with competition, adapting to business and economic demands, improving development, and strategic planning.

Achieving organizational agility. Agility is an organizational capability that, when integrated into strategic abilities, can result in an organization's responsiveness to change and remain competitive. There are three key organizational capabilities that essentially make up organizational agility.

The first is the organization's capacity or enacting a quick response to change. This is also known as an organization's absorptive capacity. "Absorptive capacity refers

not only to the acquisition or assimilation of information by an organization but also to the organization's ability to exploit it" (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, p. 131). It requires reactive flexibility and the ability to use existing resources in new ways. The second is the organization's ability to read the market, which allows the organization to determine potential opportunities for development and growth. The firm can translate information into value-generating action. The third is the organization's capacity for organizational learning. This involves efficient management and integrating gathered organizational knowledge as well as acknowledging the abilities of the organization's human resources and matching them to the organization's strategic plan (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011).

Implementing the concept of agility may be done in a few ways within an organization and can yield success if done properly and with well thought out precision. With coordination, and adequate support and communication, organizational change can be feasible and achievable.

Leaders' contributions to organizational agility. One of the features of an agile organization is the concept of shared leadership and identity. Leadership is thus not the trait of one individual but a characteristic of the organization as a whole. Many people are involved in decision-making, giving them a voice and a chance to develop leadership and management skills (Worley & Lawler, 2009).

An organization's identity is an important concept in organizational agility. An organization's identity is its defining characteristic, and it is a stable element in an environment of constant change. When leaders act with the organization's identity in mind, they are less liable to propose courses of action and strategies that do not align with the organization's culture, brand, or image (Worley & Lawler, 2009).

Joiner (2009) defines leadership agility as the ability to lead effectively under conditions of rapid change and mounting complexity. Leadership agility is similarly defined as the capability to sense and respond to changes in the business environment with actions that are focused, fast, and flexible (Horney, Pasmore, & O'Shea, 2010). Thus, definitions of leadership agility are similar to definitions of organizational agility. For an organization to move toward an agile state, in addition to implementing change, it is crucial for employees and especially leadership to mirror the same traits and attributes of the organization. As Joiner and Josephs (2006) suggest, leadership agility is directly analogous to organizational agility. Leadership agility is the ability to take wise and effective action amid complex, rapidly changing conditions. In the Joiner and Josephs study, executives expressed their preference for agility over flexibility and adaptability although they are similar in nature. By themselves, flexibility and adaptability implied a passive, reactive stance, while agility implied an intentional, proactive stance.

An agile leader, for the purposes of this study, is defined as one who embodies the "key leader traits [of]: drive; leadership motivation; honesty and integrity; self-confidence; cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business. There is less clear evidence for traits such as charisma, creativity and flexibility" (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 48). An agile leader is effective during times of rapid change and rising complexity. A leader who possesses an agile mindset within an organization that adopts agile principles or has integrated agility as a part of its strategic plan has the power to influence and steer their organizations in the right direction for future success.

While the responsibility to adapt to an organization's environment is shared within the organizations' departments and members, the responsibility truly lies with the leaders and those in power to influence transformation efforts. This concept of

responsibility further supports the need for leaders to create and sustain agile organizations and to do so with the use of change readiness tactics. This task is especially challenging for leaders as resistance is a common reaction at all levels of the organization when change occurs. Drivers of resistance at higher levels within an organization include threats to power, control, and interests. At lower levels within the organization, the uncertainty of change brings about insecurity (Kumar, 2012).

Within the context of this study, agility was examined in relation to planned organizational change. This topic is explored in the next section.

Planned Organizational Change

Planned change originated with Kurt Lewin from the 1950s until the early 1980s. For him, planned change improves the effectiveness and function of an organization's human resources through participatory, team-oriented strategic planning around change (Burnes, 1999). After Lewin's death, the field of organization development expanded and updated his approach to planned change by applying it to organization-wide initiatives, such as culture and structural change programs.

Planned change is also addressed by Kanter et al. (1992), who contended that transformational change can be achieved in one fell swoop in an instance of rapid overall change, or in a process of accumulative change over a longer period of time. The long march approach is similar to Lewin's planned change method and this approach attempts to improve a firm's performance through the incremental development of its culture, professional development of its people, and the promotion of organizational learning (Burnes, 1999).

Organizational change is defined as an organization's movement from its present state to a desired future state with an increase in its efficiency and effectiveness (Kumar,

2012). Kumar defined managing organizational change as the means of planning and enacting change in an organization that maximizes employee buy-in and the effectiveness of the change effort, and minimizes the cost to the organization.

Planning and executing change. Prior to implementing change, it is important to assess readiness at the individual level in order to plan a strategy for intervention if necessary. Hicks and McCracken (2011) propose three factors for determining readiness for change: recognition of the need to change, willingness to invest the necessary effort, and capability of making the change. Tackling a behavioral change goal can be challenging as resistance may appear; recognition is the first step in the appraisal for readiness. It is important for the organization and the individuals to see a need for change and change readiness has been a key factor identified as promoting the success of change. The concept of readiness originated in studies on organizational change (Walinga, 2008).

Organizational change requires active participation at all levels within the organization, from senior leadership to the lowest level worker within the structure. People will resist change if they are not ready for it. To be ready is to be prepared mentally or physically for some experience or action, prepared for immediate use, willingly disposed, and immediately available. In this study, change readiness is exemplified by leaders and individuals who are prepared mentally or physically for some experience or action. They have the ability to recognize a need for change, are willing to change, and are able to change.

If individuals are lacking in this area, Hicks and McCracken (2011) advise techniques of educating and bringing awareness to the need for change. As soon as a workable level of recognition of the need to change is understood and achieved, willingness can be addressed. Willingness to participate in change involves a positive

answer to the “what’s-in-it-for-me” question. Individuals may have a good understanding of the need to change, but they could have low willingness to do so. Lastly, capability is the third factor to determine readiness for change. Again, an individual may recognize the need to and even be willing to change, but could lack the capacity or skills to do so. Examining readiness for change in individuals determines the cooperation or resistance that leaders can expect from them.

Almost two thirds of major change initiatives in organizations are not successful and executives of Fortune 500 companies associate that rate of failure with internal resistance to change (Maurer, 2009). It is important to note that resistance is only one of the many reasons why change fails. Another is that leaders’ plans for change create, at worst, opposition and often simply inertia or apathy. Kumar (2012) highlighted factors that may be attributed to the process of resistance to change, such as traditions, habits, and inertia; vested interests; insecurity and regression; homeostasis; selective perception; the nature of corporate culture; and super egos (particularly by executives). Maurer further elaborated that three typical levels of resistance exist: resistance emerging from a lack of information, resistance emerging from emotional reactions and dislike for the change, and resistance emerging from dislike for those leading the change.

Maurer (2009) presents similar findings as Kumar (2012) on what causes resistance to change. Sometimes people do not believe their actions exude resistance. Individuals typically view their behavior as a means of survival and often raise defenses to protect themselves from the unknown. Typically resistance arises as a response to how change is led. It is imperative for leaders and change agents to recognize this common reaction and devise ways to avoid it during go-forward change efforts. People do not by

nature resist everything with the intention to always ruin other people's plans. Rather, their resistance is a response to something else (Maurer, 2009).

Kotter (2007) addressed the successes and failures of corporate change efforts over time, and noted that most change efforts fail. Kotter believes that such failure is the result of a leader not acknowledging that wholesale change can take years to implement. He proposes that there is in fact a sequence of eight distinct stages in the change process, and attempts to skip steps to rush through the process are always problematic. Each stage must be completed successfully for the next stage to be tackled, so an error at any stage is devastating in that the organization cannot proceed to the next stage until that problem is resolved.

Kotter's (2007) eight stages are: (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (c) creating a vision, (d) communicating the vision, (e) empowering others to act on the vision, (f) planning for and creating short-term wins, (g) consolidating improvements and producing still more change, and (h) institutionalizing new approaches. This sequence relates to the two common themes found in literature regarding change readiness: the awareness of the need for change and the proper support by leadership to prepare for and to lead change efforts.

Kotter (2007) offers his eight steps to explain successful transformation as well as why transformations typically fail. If an organization is slow to respond to the dynamic market conditions and does not institute a sense of urgency regarding the necessity of change, detrimental effects may ensue. The group leading the change should have enough influence and the power to carry out the change. Yet another downfall of organizations is that plans may be in place to move forward with change but there is not enough centralized power with influential change agents to carry out the change. Lacking clarity

in direction or vision can also add to a failed transformation within an organization. A vision typically communicates the desired direction an organization wants to move in and this vision needs to be shared by all or at least a majority of leadership and employees. If the vision is not properly communicated, the organization runs the risk of not everyone being aligned. Consistent and constant communication before, during, and after transformation is key to success. Additional obstacles may include organizational structure, job scopes, and individual perceptions. If these items are not addressed or removed, change initiatives will be hindered. Failing to plan for incremental milestones during a transformation process and creating rewards could also lead to unsuccessful change. Celebrating short-term wins and milestones are acceptable, but prematurely celebrating complete victory can undermine transformation efforts. Lastly, forging ahead with change efforts that are not in sync with the organization's culture could result in disinterested employees and leaders.

Lewin's three-step model suggests how planned change should be done. The first step is unfreezing. In order for changes to be implemented, the current state needs to be unfrozen before old behavior can be removed and new behavior successfully adapted. The second step is moving. Leaders must consider all the forces at work to identify and evaluate, on a trial and error basis, all their available options. The third step is refreezing. This final step seeks to stabilize the group at a new equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviors are relatively safe from regression (Burnes, 1999).

In addition to Lewin's three-step model for planned change, Kanter et al. (1992) describes change as a long march involving change occurring incrementally over a long period of time. Beer and Nohria propose Theory O, a soft approach to improving organizational performance through accumulative changes to the capability of its human

resources and promoting organizational learning (as cited in Burnes, 1999). In contrast, Beer and Nohria's Theory E involves offering financial incentives for performance as well as downsizing staff and divesting low-performing businesses.

Benefits and drawbacks of planned change. According to Lewin, planned change is done to improve the productivity and effectiveness of the human resources in an organization (as cited in Burnes, 1999). Depending on the type of change that is required, planned change can be well received especially when it is driven from the top with clear objectives and a timescale.

When companies are faced with challenges, the typical response is to apply small and quick fixes such as increased quality control and improvement programs in a just-in-time fashion. This may not be the best route to success because, in such cases, organizations focus on isolated initiatives as opposed to comprehensively considering strategic thinking. Change of any kind may present hurdles before completing the transformation. Poorly executed organizational change can adversely affect leadership, individuals, and the organization as a whole.

Through the many global economic events since the 1970s, it became apparent that many organizations needed to transform themselves rapidly and often brutally if they were to remain competitive (Burnes, 1999). Thus, Lewin's theory of planned change was criticized for being simple and linear, and that it lacked consideration for the complex and dynamic issues organizations are faced with. Planned change garnered criticism because of the slow nature of its group-oriented participatory approach. Change being a complex and dynamic process, it cannot necessarily be seen as sequence of discrete events.

According to the Beer and Nohria Theory O, planned change centers on the people and the culture of an organization. It does not restructure to concentrate on core activities, thus failing to deliver shareholder value (Burnes, 1999).

In the case of Theory E, its application is valuable when an organization is performing so badly that its shareholders are demanding immediate wholesale change to mitigate financial disaster and improve financial performance. Theory E, in turn, is believed to achieve short-term financial gains. Despite this benefit, the cost of Theory E approaches are perceived to be high as they involve, for survival in the long term, stripping the organization of many of its people and the established organizational culture.

Leaders' roles in planned organizational change. Preparing the organization and its employees for change is considered the responsibility of leadership. As leadership prepares to facilitate change efforts, they are also faced with the task of reducing resistance to change and creating readiness for change. It is imperative that a leader has a good understanding of the organizational context in order to recognize the right approach to implement change successfully within an organization (Burnes, 1999). A leader should have foresight in the complexity of planned change and the potential causes for friction and resistance. The leader should also recognize if the organization is capable of implementing planned changes or if it requires outside help. A leader must gain buy-in and trust from subordinates and clearly communicate his or her commitment to the initiative in order for planned change to work.

Role of agility in planned change. Although change can be forced within an organization, agility has been reported to support planned change, especially if it involves changes within a large organization's structure (Cashman, 2008; Joiner & Josephs, 2006).

When restructuring occurs from top to bottom, challenges arise and resistance occurs. For example, leadership may be at risk of having its responsibilities and power reduced. Individual contributors may find themselves having to work more collaboratively in a team. Essentially, when introducing change to an organization's structure it is not easy given that so many people, places, and things are involved. With that, planned change will be easier and more successful if the organization as a whole is agile, its people are agile, they recognize the need for change, and they are ready for it.

Thus, agility plays a role in how planned change is executed. The next section examines emergent organizational change, which reflects the ongoing and evolving nature of change in today's turbulent environment.

Emergent Organizational Change

Emergent change involves the ongoing adjustments that people make as they go about regular tasks. It takes place as a result of individuals handling breakdowns and making contingencies as they progress through a regular workday. It can go unnoticed because small changes do not seem to change the overall structure of things (Burnes, 1999). The primary objective of emergent change is to accomplish rapid overall change and to maximize shareholder value.

A case study was conducted at Kraft Foods' Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, manufacturing facility, and researchers followed the challenges faced by this organization in a period of rapid change. It was observed that the facility did not have the capacity (skills and people) to take on change efforts with its status quo business processes. The facility was challenged to improve to meet the demands from headquarters and the local market. Improvements needed to be made in the areas of shorter delivery times, increased variety in the production of products, and increased private-label brands. The history of

improvement initiatives at Kraft Foods shows that changes were typically implemented at individual facilities and lacked congruency with corporate-wide initiatives. The company did not take a comprehensive, system-wide approach to change (Christian et al., 1999).

This facility opted not to follow the traditional approach and instead elected to follow tactical tasks in support of an agility implementation framework. Kraft recognized the competitive advantage of organization agility to survive in the business environment. The organization as a whole abandoned its traditional hierarchical structure to adopt a more adaptive culture, and disbursed authority to all levels to respond to rapid changes. The Lehigh Valley facility was successful at applying the agility principles which led to future improvements. This study stresses the importance of strategic goals as well as strategic agility.

The rationale for the emergent approach stems from the belief that the cultural and political structure of an organization affects the ways in which decisions about deploying resources are made in response to demands, opportunities, and constraints (Burnes, 1999). An organization's ability to match its internal resources with the demands of the external world is important for its survival in this contemporary turbulent business environment (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Benefits and drawbacks of emergent change. The changes that occur through emergent approaches may be large or small, but they are all done with the intention of changing behavior and organizational culture, and thus improving performance (Burnes, 1999). Emergent change requires buy-in from everyone. Success occurs when everyone commits to the changes and participates in them. The resulting small-scale and incremental changes that occur with emergent change then cause changes in managerial strategy and indeed to the organizational culture.

Leaders' roles in emergent organizational change. Although change may be initiated by leadership, emergent change relies on everyone in the organization or who may be impacted by the change participating in and becoming committed to the changes (Burnes, 1999). Everyone involved in the success of the change is responsible for it, not just the organizational leaders. In fact, emergent change is often used as a means to reshape managerial behavior and organizational culture.

Role of agility in emergent change. Even with emergent change, agility may be a precursor to emergent change and benefit those undergoing change within an organization. Although decisions may be top-down and changes may be small and incremental changes (depending on the approach), there is significance in obtaining buy-in from those participating in the change (Burnes, 1999).

Conclusion

The world of commerce is constantly changing and evolving. Competition and technology both influence the way business is conducted, and as our society moves toward globalization the more the environment changes around an organization. For organizations to compete in the global marketplace, they must implement and devise ways to respond to rapid demands as well as sustain to itself and remain ahead of the competition. Globalization is here to stay and will continue as companies and organizations attempt to grow and compete. For this reason alone, it is important for organizations to strongly consider change efforts and an agile strategy. Agility implemented as a strategy allows for consistent flexibility in order for organizations to respond to market demands, sustain themselves, and grow.

Implementing change, even when following best practices, does not come without challenges. One of the primary challenges organizations face is resistance. Resistance

may appear in various forms such as from the outside environment and internally from leadership or employees. However, it can be overcome with a well-devised plan.

Leadership support and the organization recognizing the need for change upfront will help manage expectations and help to promote support from employees across the organization. Moreover, resistance may also be managed by leveraging change-readiness in order to properly prepare the organization and the employees for transformation.

Additionally, the notion of creating or sustaining an agile organization would further reduce the challenges of change, making the organization more malleable in response to the environment. As discussed above, there are several ways to execute transformation and they could be imperative to the success of leaders implementing change efforts. The next chapter describes the methods that were used in the present study.

Chapter 3

Methods

This study examined the impact of leadership practices on organizational agility. This study used a mixed-methods design, including a quantitative agility survey and semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods multiple case design. Mixed methods research involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative procedures for the purpose of constructing a rich understanding of the topic being studied (Johnson, 2006). Johnson added that mixed method approaches yield a combination of data collection and analysis techniques that allow for complementary strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of any one method. Additionally, stronger evidence can be achieved through convergence and corroboration of findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, words, pictures, and narrative can add meaning to the numbers generated and vice versa.

However, mixed method research is not without its drawbacks. It may be difficult for a single researcher to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research, especially if two approaches are to be used concurrently. The approach also may be more expensive and time consuming than others (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research was most appropriate for the present study because limited research was available on the study topic and this approach would yield a rich set of data about the topic.

Participants

Participant selection concerns issues of sample size, selection criteria, and selection procedures. Sample size in a study is determined based on the size of the

population, the nature of the topic, and the needs of the research methods. For example, survey methods typically require large sample sizes to achieve representative findings, whereas interview methods typically utilize smaller sample sizes to allow for in-depth data to be gathered (Creswell, 2009). According to the Raosoft (2013) sample size calculator, 74 respondents would be needed for a sample to achieve a 95% confidence level based on a population size of 100. Kvale (1996) recommended that interview sample sizes range from 5 to 25 participants, depending upon the nature and depth of the interview. The sample size for this study was 19 survey respondents across the three organizations: six were from City University, eight were from Home Bank, and five were from Acme University. More detailed demographic information was not collected for survey participants for the purposes of protecting their confidentiality. Thirteen respondents across the organizations volunteered to be and were subsequently interviewed. Of these, 10 were in leadership: 1 at City University, 7 at Home Bank, and 2 at Acme University.

Selection criteria are defined in research studies to help determine who should be included and who should be excluded from participation in the study. Criteria outline the characteristics that need to be reflected in the sample population to address the research question. Criteria may be based on demographic characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes and need to be prioritized if purposive sampling is to be employed (Wilmot, 2005). Two criteria were defined for this study: (a) the participant has been employed in the organization for a minimum of 1 year and (b) the participant must have had exposure or encounters with organizational leadership.

Participants were selected using convenience and snowball sampling. The researcher contacted executives, directors, and individual contributors at the three

organizations who were within her personal and professional network to invite them to participate. These individuals, in turn, were asked to recommend other possible study candidates.

Confidentiality and Consent Procedures

This study was conducted within the oversight of the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board. All human subjects protections were observed. Participants were informed of the nature, risks, and benefits of participation and required to provide written consent before completing they survey and interview. Confidentiality of the participants' identities and the data was maintained. Any hard copies of the consent forms will be kept separate from any hard copies of the data in locked cabinets accessible only to the researcher. The hard copies will be destroyed after 5 years. Raw data in electronic form will be kept indefinitely for research purposes.

Measurement

The survey used in the present study (see Appendix A) consisted of selected items from Worley and Lawler's (2009) Built to Change Agility Assessment, which was developed based on the researchers' Built to Change Agility Framework. The survey's reliability was confirmed after 20 organizations completed a pilot survey. The revised and final survey has been tested on 55 organizations. Scale reliabilities range from 0.65 to 0.93, which meets or exceeds accepted standards.

In addition to gathering consent, demographic information, and willingness to participate in an interview, 26 core survey questions organized into 8 scales were presented:

1. Change capability. Seven items assessed participants' views on the ability of the organization to plan and execute change. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, "Traditionally, this organization

considers the ability to change a strength of the organization.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.93.

2. Flexible resources. Six items assessed participants’ views regarding the organization’s ability to allocate resources according to changing demands. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, “Traditionally, this organization is capable of shifting its structure quickly to address new opportunities.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.89.
3. Shared leadership. Three items assessed participants’ views regarding the organization’s focus on cultivating leadership and responsibility throughout the organization. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, “Traditionally, this organization develops leaders at all levels.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.84.
4. Development orientation. Two items assessed participants’ views regarding the organization’s focus on growing its people. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, “Traditionally, this organization supports individuals developing new knowledge and skills.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.80.
5. Learning capability. Four items assessed participants’ views regarding the organization’s focus on leveraging and building knowledge and skill throughout the organization. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, “Traditionally, this organization widely shares ‘best practices’ information.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.89.
6. Change-friendly identity. Four items assessed participants’ views regarding the organization’s openness to change. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their agreement with, “Traditionally, this organization has a strong reputation in the marketplace for its ability to change.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.89.
7. Management focus. Participants were asked to indicate the amount of time senior managers spend focusing on fixing the business, running the business, and building the future business by distributing 100 points across these three activities.
8. Cultural values. Participants were asked to characterize their organization by choosing between pairs of values. For example, they were asked to indicate whether the organization was more “externally focused or internally focused?”

Interview Procedures

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was designed to provide additional information to deepen the findings gained through the survey related change capability,

flexible resources, shared leadership, development orientation, learning capability, change friendly identity, management focus, and cultural values. The script gathered data in four areas:

1. Self-reported leadership orientation. Managers at the three organizations were asked to describe their own leadership styles. For example, Question 1 asked, “How would you define your leadership style?” These data were subsequently analyzed for evidence of different types of orientations (e.g., organic vs. hierarchical).
2. Organizational leadership orientation. Managers at the three organizations were asked to describe the type of leadership practiced at the upper levels of the organizations. For example, Question 6 asked, “Think of a key policy or practice in your organization. Can you tell me about the origin of that policy or practice? Why is it important?” These data were subsequently analyzed for evidence of organizational agility features of change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, learning capability, and change-friendly identity.
3. Personal leadership agility styles. Managers at the three organizations were asked to describe their views and approaches to change. For example, Question 2 asked, “What are things that you consider when you are implementing changes in your organization?” Their answers, along with their descriptions of their own leadership styles (gathered through Question 1) were examined for evidence of organizational agility styles of change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, learning capability, and change-friendly identity.
4. Organizational agility. Participants were asked to evaluate the degree of agility in the organization. They also were asked to describe how the organization approaches change. For example, one question asked, “Describe a time that demonstrates your skill to anticipate, plan for, and mitigate complex departmental/organizational changes.” The resulting data were examined for evidence of organizational agility styles of change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, learning capability, and change-friendly identity.

It was important to gather impressions about the organization (specifically the upper management level) and the managers interviewed because agility and orientations at each level may differ. Detecting any differences in agility (e.g., discovering a highly agile manager within a relatively minimally agile organization) could reveal nuances in the data, pointing to limitations in the study data or additional directions for research.

Thirteen respondents across the organizations volunteered to be interviewed: two at City University, nine at Home Bank, and two at Acme University. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in-person, depending upon the location and preferences of the interviewee. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes each. Data were captured using audio-recording and handwritten notes. Verbatim transcripts were created for later analysis.

Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated to determine each organization's agility subscores, overall agility score, management focus, and cultural orientations. Analyses of variance were conducted to determine whether any significant differences emerged across the organizations. Where significant differences were found, Tukey's tests were performed to identify the exact origin of the differences.

Interview data were examined and coded according to the following macro themes: leadership orientations (e.g., organic, hierarchical, externally focused), agility competencies (e.g., change capability), and organizational agility. Micro themes were identified within these macro codes as needed.

The impact of leadership on agility was determined by comparing the organizations with higher agility to the organization with lower agility, and identifying significant differences in agility competencies, management focus, and cultural orientations.

Finally, the data were compared to determine the impact of leadership agility on organizational agility. To do so, the qualitative and quantitative data were examined by organization to detect the presence of any patterns in the data. The next chapter reports the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

This multiple case study examined the impact of leadership on organizational agility. Three questions were examined:

1. What organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles are exhibited in the organization?
2. What is the organization's amount of agility, as measured by its members?
3. What is the impact of organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility?

This chapter reports the results of the study. First, survey and interview data are presented for organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles exhibited in the organization. Second, results for the organizational agility are presented. Third, results related to the examination of the impact leadership on organizational agility are presented.

Leadership Orientations and Styles

Organizational focus and orientations. Survey data were gathered about participant's perceptions of how management spends its time (see Table 1). The survey asked respondents to indicate the percentage of time management focused on fixing the business, running the business, and building future business. Participants were required to distribute 100 points across these three activities. Respondents at all three organizations reported that management focused first (and roughly half of the time) on running the business, ranging from 48.3% to 55.0% of the time; second on building future business, ranging from 21.0% to 30.0% of the time; and third on fixing the business, ranging from 18.3% to 21.7% of the time. The amount of time management focused on these areas was

not significantly different between the businesses, according to the ANOVA tests:

$F(2,14) = .23, p > .05$ (fixing the business), $F(2,14) = .83, p > .05$ (running the business),

and $F(2,14) = .71, p > .05$ (business future business).

Table 1

Management Focus

Organization	Mean (SD)	Frequency Distribution		
		1-33	34-66	67-100
City University ($N = 6$)				
Fixing the business	18.33 (9.31)	83%	17%	
Running the business	55.00 (15.17)	17%	50%	33%
Building future business	26.67 (17.22)	83%	17%	
Home Bank ($N = 6$)				
Fixing the business	21.67 (11.26)	83%	17%	
Running the business	48.33 (13.29)	17%	66%	17%
Building future business	30.00 (10.49)	50%	50%	
Acme University ($N = 5$)				
Fixing the business	21.00 (4.18)	100%		
Running the business	58.00 (8.37)		80%	20%
Building future business	21.00 (6.52)	100%		

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; ANOVA tests revealed the following statistics when comparing the company results: $F(2,14) = .23, p > .05$ (fixing the business), $F(2,14) = .83, p > .05$ (running the business), and $F(2,14) = .71, p > .05$ (business future business).

The survey gathered data about the perceived organizational orientations related to organizational focus, rule orientation, creativity orientation, operations focus, and time orientation (see Table 2).

In terms of focus, with “0” meaning completely internally focused and “1” meaning completely externally focused, participants at the two universities rated their organizations as being more internally focused (City University 0.17; Acme University 0.20). Participants at Home Bank rated their organization as being more externally focused (0.75).

In terms of type of structure, with “0” meaning completely organic and “1” meaning completely hierarchical, City University was rated as being more organic (.33),

whereas Home Bank (.88) and Acme University (.83) were rated as being more hierarchical by all or nearly all participants.

In terms of creative or equilibrium focused, with “0” meaning completely creative and “1” meaning completely equilibrium focused, City University (.50) and Home Bank (.63) were rated as being roughly equally creative and equilibrium focused and Acme University was rated as completely equilibrium focused.

In terms of people or results orientation, with “0” meaning completely people-oriented and “1” meaning completely results-oriented, City University (.00) reported the organization as being completely people oriented. Home Bank (.88) was reported as being very results-oriented. Acme University (.60) was reported as being equally people- and results-oriented.

In terms of long- or short-term focus, with “0” meaning completely short-term and “1” meaning completely long-term, City University (.50) was rated as being equally short- and long-term focused, whereas Home Bank (1.00) was rated as being completely long-term focused and Acme University (.20) was rated as being primarily short-term focused.

Table 2

Organizational Orientations: Quantitative Results

	City University <i>N</i> = 6	Home Bank <i>N</i> = 8	Acme University <i>N</i> = 5
Focus: Internal v. External ¹	.17	.75	.20
Rule orientation: Organic v. Hierarchical ²	.33	.88	.83
Creativity orientation: Creative v. Equilibrium ³	.50	.63	1.00
Operations focus: People v. results ⁴	.00	.88	.60
Time orientation: short- vs. long-term ⁵	.50	1.00	.20

¹0 = completely internal, 1 = completely external; ²0 = completely organic, 1 = completely hierarchical; ³0 = completely creative and 1 = completely equilibrium focused; ⁴0 = completely people-oriented and 1 = completely results-oriented; ⁵0 = completely short-term and 1 = completely long-term

Interviewees' responses were analyzed and then mapped to organizational orientations. Limited data were gathered regarding the organizations' orientations from the interviews (see Table 3). However, all the interviewees described their organizations as hierarchical, reflected in actions such as upper levels making decisions autocratically, needing to seek management approval for decisions, and needing political savvy to navigate the organization effectively. One participant at City University explained the criticality of political savvy in her position:

Politics definitely plays a role. In my position, I have to manage a fine line between an advocate and an administrator working with colleagues and with students. So, how will this next move I plan to make be received by my colleagues and what will my students think? Will they think I'm advocating for them? Or paper pushing as an administrator without their best interests at heart? So being politically savvy is extremely important in this field because you don't want to lose the support of your stakeholders—In my case, my colleagues, students, and alumni. Being able to effectively manage change in a manner that is beneficial to some degree for all involved but is savvy enough politically to maintain existing relationships and establish new ones is very important.

Table 3

Organizational Orientations: Qualitative Results

Organizational Orientation	City University N = 2	Home Bank N = 9	Acme University N = 2
Hierarchical Orientation	100%	78%	50%
Upper levels make decisions autocratically		11%	
Need to seek management approval for decisions		44%	
Need political savvy to navigate effectively	100%	11%	11%
Politics can erode morale when it focuses on power struggles		11%	11%
People Orientation	50%	56%	11%
Think about different stakeholders' needs			11%
Build relationships to support knowledge sharing and smoother operations	50%	11%	
Relationship building is integral to motivating others to work toward your goals		44%	

*No data were gathered related to organizational focus, organic rule orientation, creativity orientation, results-orientation, or time orientation

Four participants (44% of the sample) at Home Bank reported that some decisions require management approval; this limits autonomy but also offers benefits mentioned

needing to seek management approval for decisions. A middle manager at Home Bank explained how needing to seek approval can have benefits:

Whether or not I'll roll something out without discussing with my manager, that's the hierarchy part of the business. You have to go through the right channels. That's not a bad thing, I want to hear her view of things because she sees things from a different angle and I am so focused on the day to day I may not see something [my manager] can point out to me that might save money or something that is more in depth that I might not be looking at which has happened in the past.

The organizations also were described as being people-oriented (City University, n = 1; Home Bank, n = 5; Acme University, n = 1), including thinking about different stakeholders' needs and emphasizing the importance of building relationships. The interviewee from Acme University how she incorporated various stakeholders' needs into the redesign of the building:

Even the placement of doors in the building [was deliberate]. There's the front entrance, which was meant to be for continuing students and the proximity to the garage to hopefully guide them from coming out of the garage and knowing, "This is my entrance." Thinking about if I'm a current student and I'm in between classes, "Do I necessarily want to fight my way through this big group of students who are high schoolers and just sort of there awe-ing when I've got to go make sure that I can register for my class then I have to get to my next class?" So, even that kind of scenario, having to think through that. So, yes. There's another entrance that allows them as they're leaving classes [in another building] that is more convenient coming through that door. Just a different thought process than we needed in our own little world.

Self-reported leadership orientations. Managers at the three organizations were asked to describe their own leadership styles. Examination of the responses from the manager at City University indicated no particular leadership orientations as it pertained to the orientations investigated in this study. The manager at Acme University described herself as being "supportive and attentive," suggesting that she was people-oriented. Seven managers were interviewed at Home Bank and these participants described a range

of orientations they exhibited. Two described having an organic orientation, expressed in terms of being hands-on. One Home Bank manager explained,

I would probably say I'm a hands-on type of leader. I like to get in there and do the work so they see that not only am I giving them direction but I'm doing the work with them. I'm very big on leading by example.

Two managers described themselves as supportive and attentive. One of these managers explained,

I like to be informal. I get along with my team and I try to help them whenever they like it and always . . . , well, I don't have my doors open, but I'm available for when they need that. Not only for my team but for other[s] . . . also.

The most commonly reported orientation at Home Bank was results orientation, such as using face-to-face interaction to rapidly expose misunderstanding and gain clarity (n = 4), setting aside personal views when needed to advance organizational goals and get employees on board (n = 2), having demanding standards (n = 1), and relying on transactional communication (n = 1). One manager described how the use of face-to-face interaction allowed her and her team to identify misunderstandings surrounding the new rules, sift through overwhelming amounts of information, and rapidly make progress during their initiative to comply with Dodd-Frank regulations:

the best way to deal with it, instead of constantly shooting out emails, is to just get everyone together and let them vent what they think they heard. So that way, I have everyone in the same room and can guide them to the right paths. A lot of them might have misunderstood. And to get it on the table, we're able to discuss and understand exactly what's expected of us. When there's so much information, face-to-face time is what can get you safely through to the point of where everyone understands what they're supposed to do.

This same manager also explained that she sets aside her personal views and even misgivings when needed to advance organizational goals and get employees on board:

In this environment, you have to know when to hold your tongue and when to smile and take it and do the best you can with implementing what they have set forth. You have to almost accept it and get on board, even if you don't necessarily

agree with the points. That's where you have to get your game face on and that's where you can't let how you're feeling inside show to your direct reports, because we have to all come together at some point. And it's the vision and values of the company and I want to bring everyone's attention back to that. However we can get to that, I'll do whatever I have to. But I don't want it to be seen by my team. I want me to have to deal with it internally and put a good face forward to get them on board.

Table 4

Self-Reported Leadership Orientation

Self-Reported Personal Leadership Orientation	City University N = 1	Home Bank N = 7	Acme University N = 2
Organic Orientation Hands-on and lead by example		2	
People Orientation Be supportive and attentive		2	1
Results Orientation		6*	
Use face-to-face interaction to rapidly expose misunderstanding and gain clarity		4	
Set aside personal views when needed to advance organizational goals and get employees on board		2	
Have demanding standards		1	
Rely on transactional communication		1	
Realist driven by numbers, data, and efficiency			1

Note. Only the leader participants from each organization were included in this analysis. Although one or more participants reported multiple subthemes, each participant is counted only once at the theme level

Organizational leadership agility styles. Interview data were examined and coded for organizational agility features of change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, learning capability, and change-friendly identity (see Table 5). According to participants' responses, organizational leadership at City University demonstrated one of the six agility styles—shared leadership, reported by both participants. One interviewee there elaborated,

I would say the way, one of the main ones, is the open-door policy that is really obviously apparent throughout all aspects of the organization. Any staff member is always open to hearing other staff members, open to hearing to what the public has to say “maybe you should do this, maybe you should do that.” My supervisor, particularly, is always open to hearing “Hey, I have a suggestion about how we can do this, why don't we look into this, can't we do this?” So that's definitely a benefit. There's also the benefit of being on a committee that represents your

entire department, so you know there's definitely many ways for that communication to happen.

Table 5

Organizational Leadership Agility Styles

	City University N = 2	Home Bank N = 9	Acme University N = 2
Change Capability Feasibility assessment and value proposition		1	
Development Orientation		2	
Recognize strengths and build confidence		1	
Share knowledge		1	
Shared leadership	2	7	
Solicit subordinates' ideas and feedback	1	4	
Leaders support subordinates' autonomous action		2	
Subordinates have input into decisions	2	2	
Flexible Resources Time off limited to avoid backlog		1	
Learning Capability Seek opinions across departments		4	1
Total Organizational Agility Styles Reported	1	5	1

*No data were gathered for Change Friendly Identity. The number of unique participants that reported the theme or subtheme are provided. Although one or more participants reported multiple subthemes, each participant is counted only once at the theme level

Responses from the Home Bank participants suggested that their organizational leadership displays five of the six agility styles. The most commonly reported style was shared leadership (n = 7), in terms of soliciting subordinates' ideas and feedback (n = 4), leaders supporting subordinates' autonomous action (n = 2), and allowing subordinates input into decisions (n = 2). One subordinate offered an example of how his idea was implemented throughout his department:

What I was doing was identifying the signing authority document because risk participation agreements are only for big banks that may have multiple to various authority documents but you have to have a specific signing authority. [I instituted a certain way of notating the certificate] in the comments. I brought that up in one of our team meetings and that's a go-forward process now because it's assisting our auditors now they don't have to look through every single authority document until they find the signature or signing authority to be able to deem that compliant they know where to look. Basically, that's helped them a lot.

The second most commonly cited agility style was that opinions are sought cross-departmentally (n = 4), indicating that learning capability exists across the organization.

One manager shared,

I'd say I have a voice [throughout the organization]. It's more of an opinion, not so much "take action on my opinion" type of deal. But I do feel any feedback or suggestions I might have on the groups that directly relate to our group are heard and taken under advisement.

Other ability styles reported by Home Bank participants included change development orientation (n = 2), capability (n = 1), and flexible resources (n = 1).

The Acme University participant reported that opinions are sought cross-departmentally, indicating that learning capability exists across the organization:

[I am] open to accepting invitations to be a part of a discussion in other areas outside my own where they're seeking an admissions perspective. That can be either by giving up a lunch hour to go to a lunch meeting to discuss something that doesn't directly impact admissions but where part of the larger university community maybe I have some thoughts or input that could be considered. In most cases, it's pretty direct in terms of input. While I don't control things outside of my department, if I feel like I'm invited, I have to take that invitation seriously and treat it as a responsibility.

Personal leadership agility styles. Managers' descriptions of their leadership styles also were coded according to the organizational agility styles (see Table 6). The manager at City University described traits that exhibited five personal agility styles. She shared that she creates and uses communication plans to guide change, depicting change capability and explained that she focuses on developing subordinates and assigning and delegating tasks based their strengths and the goal to build capacity in employees, which indicate a development orientation. She additionally emphasized that she cultivates a positive view of change within herself and others, indicating a change friendly identity. She shared,

I encourage embracing change regularly. There's no fear of change. . . . I often communicate with my staff [to think in difficult situations] "okay, change has given me the option to move in a new direction and to make sure the endeavor is successful."

She also described encouraging participation and shared responsibility (indicating shared leadership), and balancing information gathering with proactive intervention, suggesting learning capability. She explained her approach to decision making:

I typically take some time. I don't like to shoot from the hips; but if I have to, I will. I prefer to take a day to think about it. You know what will work and what won't, so I'll take a day to make well informed decision what is best for my department and then I'll move forward. If I have time to consult the staff, I will.

Table 6

Self-Reported Leadership Agility Style

Personal Leadership Agility Style	City University N = 1	Home Bank N = 7	Acme University N = 2
Change Capability	1	6	1
Create communication plan	1	5	
Feasibility assessment and value proposition		3	1
Determine needed resources		1	1
Create change plan		1	1
Development Orientation	1	3	
Develop subordinates	1		
Assign and delegate tasks based on strengths and goal to build capacity in employees	1	3	
Change Friendly Identity	1		
Promote openness to change	1		
Be adaptable and willing to change one's approach	1		
Shared Leadership	1	4	1
Encourage participation and shared responsibility	1	3	
Allow autonomy		3	1
Flexible Resources		1	1
Make adjustments to meet deadlines and achieve results			
Learning Capability	1	3	
Engage in open communication		2	
Balance information gathering with proactive intervention	1		
Take initiative to learn and persevere through obstacles		2	
Personal Agility Styles Practiced by the Leaders (Total = 6)	5	5**	3

*Saturation levels indicate the number of unique participants that reported the theme or subtheme. Although one or more participants reported multiple subthemes, each participant is counted only once at the theme level; ** across 6 participants

Six of the seven managers interviewed at Home Bank reported behaviors that suggest agility. Across these managers, five of the six personal agility styles were indicated. The most commonly reported agility style was change capability (n = 6), including creating a communication plan for change (n = 5), conducting a feasibility assessment and creating a value proposition for change (n = 3), determining needed resources (n = 1), and creating a change plan (n = 1). Regarding the communication plans, the managers stressed the importance of customizing the messages to the audience, providing rationale for change, and continually communicating to minimize misunderstandings. One manager elaborated:

I think about how everyone will respond to it, for one thing. Um, and then I think about how I am going to explain it to them so they are very clear about why the decision was made. . . . Then you have to go back in for another session saying this is what we're doing, how do you feel about this and I get their input. I'm always surprised because I'm like "I thought I explained this in the beginning . . .," but I'm learning you have to go back. There's always a misunderstanding somewhere.

Another manager explained her process of evaluating whether the change is possible and beneficial:

If we change one certain thing, we need to see how it'll affect a different process that we have in place. And how much time and effort it will take, and the benefits. Is it more beneficial if we put it in place or if we don't at all?

The second most commonly cited agility style among Home Bank participants was shared leadership (n = 4), reflected in behaviors such as encouraging participation and shared responsibility (n = 3) and allowing autonomy (n = 3). One way the managers described sharing leadership was through soliciting feedback. One participant shared,

I always like to hear feedback and what people think might be issues with the changes. Sometimes I don't understand the whole change, so I take it one step at a time. I like to hear what people think, not just what I think at all levels: Peers and down.

Another manager explained her views on allowing autonomy:

I don't micromanage. If you have a way to do your job and you are successful you can do it however you want as long as we get the right outcome. I'm not going to be hovering over you. . . . but if you do not approach me and the outcome is not what we're looking for then we have to address it. But I won't be over your shoulder, because I don't like that done to me.

The manager at Acme University self-reported leadership behaviors of (a) allowing autonomy, indicating shared leadership and (b) making adjustments to meet deadlines and achieve results, indicating flexible resources. For example, she emphasized the importance of adapting her schedule and approach to adapt to her clients' needs—in this case, prospective students who visit. She elaborated,

we're available as we can be for folks who want to come to visit. . . . If students want to be here, we want them to come and visit us. We want them to talk with other students [and] sit down with an admissions counselor, because we know the on-campus living experience is extremely important. . . . I'd say from last March until mid-March this year, we had actually hosted about 10,000 visitors through the admissions area. It's a lot of people. We have to be able to accommodate them and do as many sessions as we can to make sure that people are available to greet them and sit down with them. I think it's just important to be agile in any service-oriented environment. People are looking for your service, you have to be agile. Their schedules don't always fit with yours, but you make it work.

Organizational Agility

Participants were asked to evaluate the degree of agility in the organization (see Table 7). Both participants at City University described their organization as highly agile. One participant shared,

I would say that, generally, my department and our organization rates 5 [out of 5], simply because there is always some sort of change that needs to happen, or that it's unavoidable—being that a student staff takes on a position and then graduates 4 months later. And then the position needs to be redefined to something that has someone that is going to be around for a year or longer, or something like that. Or, of there's a law that is handed down from the State of California or something like that. I feel my department is very suited to handle change and be considered fairly agile.

Most participants at Home Bank did not directly answer this question. The three who did expressed views ranging from highly agile, to agile with limitations, to minimally agile, which stemmed from the agility levels within their own groups or departments. They expressed their views as follows:

We are completely flexible and go with the flow with whatever direction is given. I cannot complain about my team. They exceed my expectations when it comes to just . . . forgetting this way and going in another direction. Everyone expects that nowadays. They can rebound so quickly. It's mindboggling how easily they adapt to switching gears. (highly agile)

When we see change, we meet it head on. But there's always limitations to how much we can change. (agile with limitations)

Everything is more reactive these days than proactive. This was not the case in the past. It depends on the situation. (Minimally agile)

Table 7

Organizational Agility: Qualitative Results

	City University <i>N</i> = 2	Home Bank <i>N</i> = 9	Acme University <i>N</i> = 2
Highly agile	2	1	
Agile, with some limitations		1	1
Minimally agile		1	
No data		6	1

Organizational agility also was evaluated using the survey instrument (see Table 8). City University's overall average agility score was 4.14 (SD = 0.55), indicating that the respondents believed the organization was agile "to a moderate extent." The agility scale receiving the lowest mean score was development orientation (M = 3.60, SD = 1.52). Home Bank's overall mean agility score was similar: M = 4.15, SD = .68. The lowest mean score was reported for flexible resources (M = 3.66, SD = .82). Acme University received the lowest overall mean agility score: M = 3.20, SD = .67, indicating that participants believed the organization was agile "to some extent." The lowest score

was reported for learning capability ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .65$), indicating that the capability existed somewhere between “a little” and “to some extent.” Only one scale received a mean score that was in the “moderate extent” range: development orientation ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .79$). ANOVA statistics indicated that significant differences in the mean scores across the three organizations were exhibited for four scales: change capability $F(2,16) = 3.78$, $p < .05$, change friendly identity $F(2,16) = 4.19$, $p < .05$, shared leadership $F(2,16) = 3.95$, $p < .05$, and learning capability $F(2,15) = 17.16$, $p < .01$. The overall mean agility scores also were significantly different: $F(2,16) = 4.03$, $p < .05$.

Table 8

Analysis of Variance across Organizations for Agile Routines

	City University $N = 6$		Home Bank $N = 8$		Acme University $N = 5$		ANOVA
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Change Capability	4.15	0.53	3.95	0.90	3.04	0.47	$F(2,16) = 3.78$, $p < .05^*$
Development Orientation	3.60	1.52	4.56	0.56	4.00	0.79	$F(2,15) = 1.61$, $p > .05$
Change Friendly Identity	4.14	0.47	4.31	0.98	3.05	0.76	$F(2,16) = 4.19$, $p < .05^*$
Shared Leadership	4.39	0.57	4.38	0.58	3.33	1.03	$F(2,16) = 3.95$, $p < .05^*$
Flexible Resources	3.96	0.55	3.66	0.82	3.20	0.78	$F(2,16) = 1.45$, $p > .05$
Learning Capability	4.42	0.38	4.29	0.64	2.60	0.65	$F(2,15) = 17.16$, $p < .01^{**}$
Organizational Agility	4.14	0.55	4.15	0.68	3.20	0.67	$F(2,16) = 4.03$, $p < .05^*$

*Significant at the .05 level; **Significant at the .01 level; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Post-hoc Tukey analyses revealed the origin of these significant differences (see Table 9). City University was rated higher than Acme University for two agile routines: change capability (mean difference = 1.11; 95% CI = 0.00, 2.22; $p = .05$) and learning capability (mean difference = 1.82; 95% CI = 0.92, 2.71; $p < .01$).

Home Bank was rated higher than Acme University for three agile routines: change friendly identity (mean difference = 1.26; 95% CI = .09, 2.43; $p < .05$), shared leadership (mean difference = 1.26; 95% CI = -.01, 2.09; $p < .05$), learning capability

(mean difference = 1.69; 95% CI = .82, 2.55; $p < .01$). Home Bank also was rated higher than Acme University for overall organizational agility (mean difference = 0.95; 95% CI = .01, 1.89; $p = .05$)

Table 9

Tukey Analysis for Agile Routines

Dependent Variable	(I) Organization	(J) Organization	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Change Capability	City University	Home Bank	0.20	0.38	0.86	-0.78	1.19
		Acme University	1.11*	0.43	0.05	0.00	2.22
	Home Bank	City University	-0.20	0.38	0.86	-1.19	0.78
		Acme University	0.91	0.40	0.09	-0.13	1.95
Acme University	City University	-1.11*	0.43	0.05	-2.22	0.00	
	Home Bank	-0.91	0.40	0.09	-1.95	0.13	
Change Friendly Identity	City University	Home Bank	-0.17	0.43	0.92	-1.28	0.94
		Acme University	1.09	0.48	0.09	-0.15	2.33
	Home Bank	City University	0.17	0.43	0.92	-0.94	1.28
		Acme University	1.26*	0.45	0.03	0.09	2.43
Acme University	City University	-1.09	0.48	0.09	-2.33	0.15	
	Home Bank	-1.26*	0.45	0.03	-2.43	-0.09	
Shared Leadership	City University	Home Bank	0.01	0.39	1.00	-0.98	1.01
		Acme University	1.06	0.43	0.07	-0.06	2.17
	Home Bank	City University	-0.01	0.39	1.00	-1.01	0.98
		Acme University	1.04*	0.41	0.05	-0.01	2.09
Acme University	City University	-1.06	0.43	0.07	-2.17	0.06	
	Home Bank	-1.04*	0.41	0.05	-2.09	0.01	
Learning Capability	City University	Home Bank	0.13	0.32	0.91	-0.69	0.95
		Acme University	1.82**	0.34	0.00	0.92	2.71
	Home Bank	City University	-0.13	0.32	0.91	-0.95	0.69
		Acme University	1.69**	0.33	0.00	0.82	2.55
Acme University	City University	-1.82**	0.34	0.00	-2.71	-0.92	
	Home Bank	-1.69**	0.33	0.00	-2.55	-0.82	
Organizational Agility	City University	Home Bank	-0.01	0.35	1.00	-0.90	0.88
		Acme University	0.94	0.39	0.07	-0.06	1.94
	Home Bank	City University	0.01	0.35	1.00	-0.88	0.90
		Acme University	0.95*	0.36	0.05	0.01	1.89
Acme University	City University	-0.94	0.39	0.07	-1.94	0.06	
	Home Bank	-0.95*	0.36	0.05	-1.89	-0.01	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. **mean difference significant at the .01 level

Evidence of organizational agilities also was sought through content analysis of the interviewees' responses. No data were found for any of the organizations regarding development orientation, although respondents at both City University and Home Bank

described instances of the other five agilities at their organizations. Four agilities were reported at Acme University.

Table 10
Participants' Evaluation of Organizational Agility

Trait	City University N = 2	Home Bank N = 9	Acme University N = 2
Change Capability	2	2	2
Feasibility assessment and value proposition	1	1	2
Determine resource needs			2
Communication plan used to create change readiness	1	2	2
Change process used	1		
Change Friendly Identity	2	8	2
Change is valuable if well designed and implemented	1	2	2
Change is frequent in the organization	2	7	2
People often fear and resist change*	1	1	1
Change is necessary for growth and improvement	1	4	2
Adapt working style according to environment and needs	1		1
Shared Leadership Take initiative	1	1	1
Flexible Resources	1	6	1
Adapt to different workload and customer demands	1	6	1
Contemplate one's contribution to the larger system			1
Learning Capability	1	2	2
Gather information and best practices	1	2	2
Create and share best practices	1		
Total Organizational Agility Styles Reported (Total = 6)	5	5	5

Note. No data were generated related to development orientation. *Fear of change is a negative indicator related to change friendly identity

One of the most commonly cited agilities at City University was change capability (n = 2), such as conducting feasibility assessments and creating a value proposition for change, using communication plans to create change readiness, and using a change process. Regarding feasibility and benefits, one participant explained, "Initially, I look at long-term and I think about the direction I'm going in. If it's sustainable, does it add longevity to specific areas or the overall department." This leader also described a specific 3-year change process she uses:

I'll take a year to implement the change and get to know what's going on. Then I'll take the next year to take a certain level of comfort with it kind of like a been

there done that mentality. We've had 2 years with it implemented, and the third year we think about what areas need improvement, those types of things.

Both participants at City University also noted its change friendly identity. Much of this came from the leader, who commented that change is valuable if well designed and implemented and necessary for growth and improvement. Both participants remarked that change occurs frequently in the organization. Nevertheless, one of the participants at this organization pointed out that people often fear and resist change:

Change is not comfortable we can operate from a mindset of always done it one way. I have colleagues I've worked with for 8 years and I might implement a program. Next time it's time for us to travel down that road again, and the first thing I hear is "We've always done it this way!" No, actually, we implemented that last year. I think that it's a defense mechanism because people are so scared of change.

Change friendly identity also was the most commonly cited agility at Home Bank (n = 8), with seven participants remarking that change occurred frequently in the organization. Four participants acknowledged that change is necessary for growth and improvement. One participant elaborated,

It's always necessary. Sometimes you have to change to keep up and to improve things—the way things function and process. I guess trying to create more efficiency and less chances for human error. I guess for me I hate seeing repetitive work, so I watch people's process and see how to get rid of that.

The second most commonly cited agility was flexible resources (n = 6). Specifically, participants described adapting to different workload and customer demands. One participant commented on her staff members' adaptability:

The people who have been here for a while, they are [highly agile] and will explain to the new people [that join the department] that's just how it is and to roll with the punches. That's just how it is.

The participant interviewed from Acme University described organizational behaviors that indicated the organization's change capability, change friendly identity,

flexible resources, and learning capability. For example, she described her complex feelings about change:

I view change as necessary, sometimes difficult, and catapults up to the next thing. So I'm not someone who necessarily embraces change, but I know it's necessary. I know in my experience, it tends to be difficult but in order to get to where you have to get to it's a necessary evil, if you will. . . . I think in higher education, there is constant change. Nothing stays the same for very long. If it does; it's problematic. . . . You have to be forward thinking and moving. We can't do admission for the class of 2013 like we did for the class of 2006. It changes and the expectations and needs change.

Impact of Leadership on Agility

Comparison of higher agility organization to lower agility organization.

Home Bank and Acme University were determined to be significantly different regarding change friendly identity, shared leadership, and overall organizational agility, suggesting that Home Bank was more agile than Acme University. These organizations were compared using an independent samples t-test to determine whether any significant differences existed specifically regarding their management focus (e.g., internal v. external focus) and leadership orientations (e.g., organic v. hierarchical). Table 11 presents the results. One significant difference was found: Home Bank had a significantly longer-term orientation, $t(4) = 4.00, p < .05$.

City University and Acme University were determined to be significantly different regarding change capability and learning capability. These organizations were compared using an independent samples t-test to determine whether any significant differences existed regarding their management focus and leadership orientations (see Table 12). Two significant differences were found related to leadership orientation. City University was more organic ($M = 1.33, SD = 0.52$), whereas Acme University was more hierarchical ($M = 2.00, SD = 0.00$), $t(5) = -3.16, p < .05$. Additionally, City University

was more long-term focused ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.55$), whereas Acme University was more short-term focused ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 0.45$), $t(9) = .98$, $p < .05$.

Table 11

Comparison of Management Focus and Orientations for Home Bank and Acme University

	Home Bank Mean (SD) $N = 8$	Acme University Mean (SD) $N = 5$	t-test results
Management Focus			
Internal (1) v External (2)	1.75 (0.46)	1.20 (0.45)	$t(11) = 2.11$, $p > .05$
Fixing the business (%)	16.25 (13.82)	21.00 (4.18)	$t(8.869) = -0.91$, $p > .05$
Running the business (%)	36.25 (25.04)	58.00 (8.37)	$t(11) = -1.85$, $p > .05$
Building the future business (%)	22.50 (16.48)	21.00 (6.52)	$t(9.863) = 0.23$, $p > .05$
Leadership Orientation			
Organic (1) v. Hierarchical (2)	1.88 (0.35)	2.00 (0.00)	$t(11) = -0.78$, $p > .05$
Creative (1) v. Equilibrium (2)	1.63 (0.52)	2.00 (0.00)	$t(7) = -2.05$, $p > .05$
People (1) v. Results (2)	1.88 (0.35)	1.60 (0.55)	$t(11) = 1.11$, $p > .05$
Short (1) v. Long (2)	2.00 (0.00)	1.20 (0.45)	$t(4) = 4.00$, $p < .05^*$

*significant at the .05 level

Table 12

Comparison of Management Focus and Orientations for City University and Acme University

	City University Mean (SD) $N = 6$	Acme University Mean (SD) $N = 5$	t-test results
Management Focus			
Internal (1) v External (2)	1.17 (0.41)	1.20 (0.45)	$t(9) = -.13$, $p > .05$
Fixing the business (%)	18.33 (9.31)	21.00 (4.18)	$t(9) = -.59$, $p > .05$
Running the business (%)	55.00 (15.17)	58.00 (8.37)	$t(9) = -.39$, $p > .05$
Building the future business (%)	26.67 (17.22)	21.00 (6.52)	$t(9) = .69$, $p > .05$
Leadership Orientation			
Organic (1) v. Hierarchical (2)	1.33 (.52)	2.00 (0.00)	$t(5) = -3.16$, $p < .05^*$
Creative (1) v. Equilibrium (2)	1.50 (.55)	2.00 (0.00)	$t(9) = -2.05$, $p > .05$
People (1) v. Results (2)	1.00 (.00)	1.60 (0.55)	$t(9) = -2.45$, $p > .05$
Short (1) v. Long (2)	1.50 (.55)	1.20 (0.45)	$t(9) = .98$, $p < .05^*$

*significant at the .05 level

Impact of leadership agility styles. As a final step, the quantitative and qualitative data gathered about each organization's leadership styles and agilities were compared. Table 13 presents the combined results for City University. The leader participant reported that she exhibited five of the six leadership agility competencies. The

two interviewees reported that at the organizational level, they witnessed shared leadership. The six survey respondents agreed that the organization was agile ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .55$). The two interviewees similarly reported that five of the six organizational agility routines were evident. These results suggest that a relationship may exist between agile personal leadership and organizational agility.

Table 13

City University Combined Results

	Personal Leadership $N = 1$	Organizational Leadership $N = 2$	Organizational Agility $N = 6$	Organizational Agility $N = 2$
Change Capability	1		4.15 (.53)	2
Development Orientation	1		3.60 (1.52)	
Change Friendly Identity	1		4.14 (0.47)	2
Shared Leadership	1	2	4.39 (0.57)	1
Flexible Resources			3.96 (0.55)	1
Learning Capability	1		4.42 (0.38)	1
Totals	5 (max = 6)	1 (max = 6)	4.14 (0.55)	5 (max = 6)

At Home Bank, the seven leader participants reported that they exhibit five of the six leadership agility competencies, although the leaders did not uniformly report they personally exhibited all five of these competencies (see Table 14). Similarly, the nine total interviewees reported that, at the organizational level, they witnessed five of the six leadership agilities being exhibited. The eight survey respondents agreed that the organization was agile ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .68$). The nine interviewees similarly reported that five of the six organizational agilities were evident. These results suggest that a relationship may exist between agile personal leadership and organizational leadership and between agile organizational leadership and organizational agility.

Table 14***Home Bank Combined Results***

	Personal Leadership <i>N</i> = 7	Organizational Leadership <i>N</i> = 9	Organizational Agility <i>N</i> = 8	Organizational Agility <i>N</i> = 9
Change Capability	6	1	3.95 (.90)	2
Development Orientation	3	2	4.56 (.56)	
Change Friendly Identity			4.31 (.98)	8
Shared Leadership	4	7	4.38 (.58)	1
Flexible Resources	1	1	3.66 (.82)	6
Learning Capability	3	4	4.29 (.64)	2
Totals	5 (max = 6)	5 (max = 6)	4.15 (0.68)	5 (max = 6)

Table 15 presents the combined results for Acme University. The leader participant reported that she exhibit two of the six leadership agility competencies. Similarly, she reported that, at the organizational level, she witnessed two of the six leadership agilities being exhibited. The five survey respondents were neutral about whether the organization was agile ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .67$). The sole interviewee reported that four of the six organizational agilities were evident. Given the generally moderate scores for leadership agility and organizational agility, these results suggest that a relationship may exist between agile personal leadership and organizational leadership and between agile organizational leadership and organizational agility.

Table 15***Acme University Combined Results***

	Personal Leadership <i>N</i> = 2	Organizational Leadership <i>N</i> = 2	Organizational Agility <i>N</i> = 5	Organizational Agility <i>N</i> = 2
Change Capability	1		3.04 (0.47)	1
Development Orientation			4.00 (0.79)	
Change Friendly Identity			3.05 (0.76)	1
Shared Leadership	1		3.33 (1.03)	1
Flexible Resources	1		3.20 (0.78)	1
Learning Capability		1	2.60 (0.65)	1
Totals	3 (max = 6)	1 (max = 6)	3.20 (0.67)	5 (max = 6)

Summary

Management focus at City University was reported as being primarily dedicated to running the business, followed by building future business, and fixing the business. The organizational leadership was perceived to be primarily internally focused and organic (although interviewees perceived it as hierarchical), both creative and equilibrium focused, people-oriented, and both short- and long-term focused. Organizational leadership also was reported to practice shared leadership. Additionally, the leader interviewed in the study self-reported behaviors that reflected change capability, development orientation, change friendly identity, shared leadership, learning capability. City University was reported as being agile or highly agile by its participants on the survey and during the interviews (see Table 16).

Table 16

Summary of City University Data

Variable	Data (Based on data from two interviews and six surveys)
Management Focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Running the business 2. Building future business 3. Fixing the business
Organizational Leadership	
Orientations	Primarily internal [survey] Primarily organic [survey] Hierarchical [interview] Creative and equilibrium focused [survey] People-oriented [survey and interview] Short- and long-term focused [survey]
Agility Styles	Shared leadership
Personal Leadership	
Orientations	None reported
Agility Styles	Change Capability Development Orientation Change Friendly Identity Shared Leadership Learning Capability
Organizational Agility	Agile or highly agile

Management focus at Home Bank was reported as being primarily dedicated to running the business, followed by building future business, and fixing the business. The

organizational leadership was perceived to be primarily externally focused, hierarchical, more equilibrium focused, primarily results-oriented, and long-term focused. Leaders interviewed for this study described being somewhat organic and people-oriented, but mostly results-oriented. Interviewees described behaviors at the organizational leadership level as well as behaviors they practice themselves that reflect change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, and learning capability. Home Bank was reported as being agile or highly agile by its participants on the survey and during the interviews (see Table 17).

Table 17

Summary of Home Bank Data

Variable	Data (Based on data from nine interviews and eight surveys)
Management Focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Running the business 2. Building future business 3. Fixing the business
Organizational Leadership	
Orientations	Primarily external [survey] Primarily hierarchical [survey and interview] More equilibrium focused [survey] Primarily results-oriented [survey] People-oriented [interview] Long-term focused (n = 8)
Agility Styles	Change capability Development orientation Shared leadership Flexible resources Learning capability
Personal Leadership	
Orientations	Organic orientation (2 leaders) People orientation (2 leaders) Result-oriented (7 leaders)
Agility Styles	Change Capability Development Orientation Shared Leadership Flexible Resources Learning Capability
Organizational Agility	Agile [survey] Varying agility [interview]

Management focus at Acme University was reported as being primarily dedicated to running the business, followed by building future business, and fixing the business.

The organizational leadership was perceived to be primarily internally focused, hierarchical, equilibrium focused, people- and results-oriented, and primarily short-term focused. Organizational leadership also was reported to exhibit learning capability. Additionally, the leader interviewed in the study self-reported behaviors that reflected people orientation, shared leadership, and flexible resources. Acme University respondents were neutral about its agility; however, the interviewee reported it as being agile (see Table 18).

Table 18

Summary of Acme University Data

Variable	Data (Based on data from two interviews and five surveys)
Management Focus	1. Running the business 2. Building future business 3. Fixing the business
Organizational Leadership	
Orientations	Primarily internal [survey] Hierarchical [survey and interview] Equilibrium focused [survey] People- [survey and interview] and results-oriented [survey] Primarily short-term focused [survey]
Agility Styles	Learning Capability
Personal Leadership	
Leadership Orientations	People-oriented
Agility Styles	Change Capability Shared Leadership Flexible Resources
Organizational Agility	Less agile [survey] Agile with some limitations [interview]

Examination of the data revealed several findings related to the impact of leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility (see Table 19). External orientation appears to be associated with higher development orientation. Organic orientation appears to be associated with higher change capability, flexible resources, learning capability, and overall organizational agility. People orientation appears to be associated with flexible resources. Long-term orientation appears to be associated with

higher scores for change-friendly identity, shared leadership, learning capability, and overall organizational agility. Management focus, internal focus, hierarchical orientation, creative or equilibrium focus, results-orientation, or short-term focus were not found to be associated with higher agility. Moreover, comparison of the data by organization additionally suggests that a relationship may exist between agile personal leadership and organizational agility and between agile organizational leadership and organizational agility.

Table 19

Summary of Impacts of Leadership Orientations on Agility

Leadership Orientation	Change Capability	Development Orientation	Change Friendly Identity	Shared Leadership	Flexible Resources	Learning Capability	Organizational Agility
External		X					
Organic	X				X	X	X
People-oriented					X		
Long-term			X	X		X	X

Note. No significant differences in agility were found associated with management focus, internal, orientation, hierarchical, creative or equilibrium focus, results-orientation, or short-term focus

Chapter 5

Discussion

This multiple case study examined the impact of leadership on organizational agility. Three questions were examined:

1. What organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles are exhibited in the organization?
2. What is the organization's amount of agility, as measured by its members?
3. What is the impact of organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility?

The chapter provides a discussion of the results. Conclusions are presented first, followed by recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for continued research.

Conclusions

The following sections review the findings and discuss the implications for each of the research questions.

Leadership orientations and styles. All three organizations reported similarities and differences related to leadership focuses and orientations at an organizational and individual level. The universities reported exhibiting only one agility routine each at the level of organizational leadership, but reported practicing more agility routines individually. Organizational and personal leadership at Home Bank was reported to exhibit five of the six agilities: change capability, development orientation, shared leadership, flexible resources, and learning capability. These findings reveal some similarities in the leadership patterns across the universities and differences when comparing the universities to the bank and suggest that there may be some differences in organization type or industry that lead to differences in the organizational and personal leadership needed for success—that is, conditions affecting higher education institutions

may lead to certain leadership qualities that are differ from those needed in the banking industry. It follows that leadership is not one-size-fits-all and, instead, should be customized based on the environmental, human resource, and customer, and other industry- and organization-specific demands.

Literature was not found regarding organizational and industry differences in leadership; therefore this study added to the existing body of literature. It also should be acknowledged that there may self-report bias inflating the answers at the individual level for participants who wanted to present themselves in a favorable light.

Organizational agility. City University and Home Bank participants reported being agile or highly agile in both survey and interview results. Acme University respondents were neutral about its agility in the survey; however, the interviewees reported being agile. Moreover, City University and Home Bank were rated as being significantly higher in agility in specific areas compared to Acme University.

The present study's findings suggest that organizational agility can exist across industries, organization types, and organization sizes. Thus, although leadership styles may need to vary based on organizational or environmental factors, organizational agility can remain a goal or even a success factor, regardless of the specific organization's industry type.

Leadership impact on organizational agility. Several leadership orientations were related to specific aspects of organizational agility, including being externally focused, organic, people-oriented, and having a long-term orientation. When the above features are present in a company's organizational and personal leadership—and, moreover, when organizational and personal leadership styles demonstrate agility behaviors, overall organizational agility may be present. Organizational agility, in turn,

has been associated with improved support for planned change (Cashman, 2008; Joiner & Josephs, 2006) and even a critical ingredient to competitive advantage (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2011; Christian et al., 1999) and organizational survival (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). Other authors have expressed that agility is particularly necessary given the global nature of business (Lawler & Worley, 2006). It follows that to enhance agility and gain the associated benefits, leaders throughout the organization may be advised to adopt an external focus, an organic and people-oriented approach, and a long-term orientation.

Accordingly, the organizations examined in this study reveal that the organization with the least agility—Acme University—exhibited these orientations to the least degree. Home Bank, which had high agility scores, was reported as expressing the greatest number of these traits, including being externally focused, organic (at a personal leadership level), people-oriented, and having a long-term focus. The results for Home Bank are particularly noteworthy, given that it also was described as being hierarchical and results-oriented—orientations that are not normally associated with higher agility. Reflecting on these results, it appears that a long-term focus might be a critical factor that boosts organizational agility. However, this conclusion needs to be confirmed through additional research.

Moreover, examination of the combined results across the three organizations revealed that the leadership at City University and Home Bank expressed more agility behaviors in their interviews than leaders at Acme University. Additionally, City University and Home Bank were found to have significantly higher organizational agility than Acme University. These results suggest that organizations that practice agile leadership behaviors tend to have higher organizational agility.

Although literature was not found regarding the impact of leadership orientations on organizational agility, in general, these findings are similar to Joiner and Josephs (2006), who asserted that leadership agility is directly analogous to organizational agility. Cashman (2008) asserted that leaders who recognize the importance of this issue know that agility underlies more than just the development and success of their talent. Additionally, it can be a powerful basis for strategy and competitive advantage. The following section describes the recommendations that are advised based on this study.

Implications for Practice

Although needed leadership styles appear to vary based on organization type and industry, the study findings revealed that organizations across these two industries can achieve organizational agility. Specifically, it appears that adopting a long-term focus and striving to practice agile behaviors throughout the levels of leadership are associated with heightened organizational agility. It follows that if organizational agility is a goal, human resources (and other interested parties) should design learning and development offerings, such as formal and informal mentoring, training, and development opportunities that help to cultivate agile behaviors. Moreover, these competencies, such as change capability, development orientation, change friendly identity, and others could be instilled through the employee base as well. The more that organization members practice agility, the more agility will be exemplified in the organization and even become a long-standing norm reinforced from employee to employee (Schein, 1984).

Other organizational processes also should be adapted to promote and reinforce agile behaviors in the organization. For example, performance review processes should incorporate measurement and recognition of agile behavior in employees and leaders. Employee selection and hiring procedures also could be adapted to screen for these

behaviors. Worley and Lawler's (2009) agility assessment could serve as a starting point for designing hiring, review, and development approaches to this end.

Limitations

Several limitations affected this study. First, the study was conducted using only three organizations and a very small sample per organization. Therefore, the results can only be considered suggestive, not definitive. Moreover, the results must be considered to be exploratory and descriptive of the study organizations, rather than generalizable to other higher education institutions, financial institutions, or organizations at large. Future studies could avoid this limitation by expanding the study to include more organizations and more industries.

Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which are subject to many biases, such as socially desirable answering (answering to put oneself in a favorable light), hypothesis guessing (telling the researcher what she "wants" to hear), or other personal distortions (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, the managers in the study decided who would be involved in the study, which may have further biased the data. Future studies could avoid this limitation by gathering 360-degree data or unobtrusive performance data that might reveal the leadership styles, orientations, and degree of agility in the organizations.

Third, the survey did not define the orientations for respondents or the researcher. Therefore, it was left to each person's interpretation what was meant by, for example, "creative" versus "equilibrium" focus. It would be preferable in future studies to provide more description of what is being asked. Additionally, the interview script did not always directly gather the desired information about the organizational and personal leadership orientations, resulting in a lack of data at times. Future studies could avoid this limitation

by revising the data collection instruments and iteratively piloting and revising the instruments until the instruments gather the desired data.

Suggestions for Future Research

A primary suggestion for future research is to repeat the study using larger sample sizes and improved instruments. Given more participants and clearer instruments capable of collecting complete and accurate information, more conclusive and significant results may be generated. In future studies, it would be preferable to design a survey instrument that measures (a) executive leaders' practice of agile leadership behaviors, (b) executive leaders' orientations (with clear definitions provided) (b) middle and lower-level leaders' practice of agile behaviors, (c) middle and lower-level leaders' orientations (with clear definitions provided) and (d) organizational agility. Moreover, a sample should be drawn from each organization involved such that a 95% confidence level is achieved. Given these conditions, a correlational study could be performed that could confirm, clarify, extend, or refute the present study's findings. In particular, one conclusion of the present study is that long-term orientation is a critical factor for agility. This proposed research study could help to confirm (or refute) that assertion.

Another suggestion for research is to examine the other agilities discussed by Worley and Lawler (2009). In addition to the six agilities examined in this study, Worley and Lawler identified nine other behaviors they assert lead to organizational agility, including develops robust strategies, encourages innovation, information transparency, sense of shared purpose, flexible reward systems, vertical information sharing, strong future focus, flexible structure, and sustainability. It would be beneficial to discuss the role of these behaviors in promoting agility, keeping in mind the limitations and suggestions for research discovered through the present study. Ultimately, 15 leadership behaviors is

a substantial number of competencies to be developing in an organization and it would be helpful to identify which small number of competencies might be the critical few that generate agility within the organization.

Summary

This multiple mixed-methods case study examined the impact of leadership on organizational agility. Leaders and employees from three organizations (two universities, one financial institution) participated in surveys and interviews to generate data related to the organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles exhibited, the degree of agility in the organization, and the impact of organizational and personal leadership orientations and styles on organizational agility.

The study findings suggested that leadership is not one-size-fits-all and, instead, should be customized based on the environmental, human resource, and customer, and other industry- and organization-specific demands. Additionally, it was found that organizational agility can exist across industries, organization types, and organization sizes. Thus, although leadership styles may need to vary based on organizational or environmental factors, organizational agility can remain a goal or even a success factor, regardless of the specifics of the organization. Third, it appears that adopting a long-term focus and practicing agile leadership behaviors throughout the organization may promote higher organizational agility.

Based on these findings, organizations are encouraged to promote agile leadership through their hiring, learning and development, and performance review processes. Suggestions for continued research are to repeat the study using a larger sample and improved data collection instruments and continue examining additional agile leadership

behaviors to determine the critical few that may most strongly predict organizational agility.

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Appendix A: Organizational Agility Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of leadership and change at your organization. For each of the items below, please select the response that most closely corresponds to your beliefs about your organization. There are no right or wrong answers; we are looking for your honest opinion. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Only summaries of the data will be presented.

Demographic Questions

1. What is the name of your organization? _____
2. What is your Department/Business Unit? _____

Traditionally, this organization...

		Not at all	A little	To some extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	Do not know
3	...considers the ability to change a strength of the organization	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
4	...supports individuals developing new knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
5	...has a strong reputation in the marketplace for its ability to change	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
6	...has a track record of effectively sharing what is learned in one part with other parts that could benefit	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
7	...encourages everyone to share leadership activities	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
8	...has a culture that embraces change as normal	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
9	...has work assignments that are flexible and easily changed	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
10	...encourages managers to develop the leadership skills of their direct reports	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
11	...has a well-developed change capability	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
12	...is able to implement changes better than most organizations	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
13	...regularly reviews learnings from change efforts	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
14	...has a shared, enterprise-wide change management model	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
15	...has core values that reflect a change-ready organization	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
16	...easily reassigns key people and talent to respond to marketplace opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
17	...has change management, talent management, and strategic planning processes that are well coordinated	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
18	...has a track record of delivering on the goals of change initiatives	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
19	...is known in the industry as an organization that effectively manages change	1	2	3	4	5	DNK

		Not at all	A little	To some extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	Do not know
20	...reallocates resources (e.g., budgets) easily as circumstances require	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
21	...can successfully manage several change initiatives simultaneously	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
22	...widely shares "best practices" information	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
23	...develops leaders at all levels	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
24	...is capable of shifting its structure quickly to address new opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	DNK
25	...has a strong commitment to developing people	1	2	3	4	5	DNK

26. Roughly, what percentage of the time does senior management spend...

- a. Fixing the business _____ %
 b. Running the business _____ %
 c. Building the future business _____ %
 TOTAL 100%

27. Please consider each pair of values below and check the box indicating which orientation best describes how people think and act in the organization. We are very interested in knowing about the values that actually guide behavior and decision-making.

Is this organization more...

- Internally focused or Externally focused
 Organic and free-flowing or Hierarchical and rule-bound
 Creative/innovative or Equilibrium-oriented and stable
 People oriented or Results oriented
 Short-term focused or Long-term focused

28. Are you available to participate in an interview with me?

- a. Yes
 b. No

If Yes, please provide your contact information...

Appendix B: Interview Script

1. How would you define your leadership style?
2. What are things that you consider when you are implementing changes in your organization?
3. What is a short description of how you view change?
4. How often are you faced with change initiatives?
5. Based on a definition of agility, how would you rate your organization/department (1-5 scale with 5 being the most agile) and explain the rating you gave?
6. Think of a key policy or practice in your organization. Can you tell me about the origin of that policy or practice? Why is it important?
7. What role does organizational culture and politics play in fostering change? Have you ever had to adjust your personal style to be more effective due to culture or politics? If so, can you describe what happened? If you haven't had such a time, can you tell me how you use understanding of culture and politics to effect change?
8. Describe a time that demonstrates your skill to both anticipate and solve complex departmental/organizational problems. What was happening, what did you do?
9. Have you ever built and used effective relationships and networks, both inside and outside of an organization? If so, can you describe what you did?
10. Describe a situation that you had to use your skills to maneuver through complex changes. Did what you do work? What did you learn?
11. Describe a time that demonstrates your skill to anticipate, plan for, and mitigate complex departmental/organizational changes.
12. In what ways do you have the ability to take action to improve strategic decisions in your department? Across departments?
13. Are there ways leadership could better support your involvement with decision-making and the implementation of new initiatives?