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Executive Succession in Community Action Agencies in a Southern State

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Abstract

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MPA, A Southern State University, 2007

BS, A Southern State University, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Public Policy and Public Administration

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Abstract

Without adequate succession planning (SP) for executive directors, nonprofit

organizations risk losing their mission and direction and their ability to sustain the quality

of program and services and maintain superior leadership. The purpose of this study was

to determine the degree to which SP was being developed and implemented in

community action agencies (CAAs) in a southern state. This study also focused on the

challenges that these organizations experienced from not implementing SP. This single

case study design was based on the theoretical framework of organizational change, using

Lewin's 3-stage model. Identified through purposive and snowball sampling, 17

participants from 5 CAAs in a southern state were interviewed using semi structured

questions. Both primary interview data and secondary data were analyzed through

constant comparison and the identification of themes and patterns, and verified through

triangulation, member-checking, and pattern-matching. Secondary data consisted of

succession plans, annual reports, bylaws, boards of directors' minutes, IRS 990s, and

strategic plans. Findings revealed that 3 of the CAAs under study had a succession plan

in place, while 2 did not. The challenges that these CAAs experienced from not

implementing SP focused on 5 primary themes: organizational identity, sustainability,

salaries, governance, and leadership development. The implications for social change

include informing the southern state's CAA leaders, funders, and other stakeholders

about the importance of developing written succession plans, integrating SP with

leadership development and executive transitioning practices, and the long-term benefits

of having these plans in place.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful daughter, Laurissa Marcell Campbell, for understanding and supporting me through this endeavor with her words of encouragement and her unselfish acts of unconditional love while I pursued my academic dreams. She will always be my greatest accomplishment and it was through her that gave me the aspiration to persevere even when I wanted to give up and just quit. I hope to have instilled in her the importance of a good education and the willingness to persevere and to work hard in anything that she pursues as well as in fulfilling her dreams.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Sellarstine Campbell, and my late father, Robert Lee Campbell, who believed in me and encouraged me to pursue my doctoral degree.

I love you all and thank God for allowing me the privilege and honor of having you in my life.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge God, who will always be the head of my life and without his holy spirit and guidance, I could do nothing.

This has been a long journey and I would like to acknowledge my committee members for their support. First, my committee chair and mentor, Dr. Wendy Andberg, I thank you for your friendship, encouragement, patience, and time. Words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation to you for working with me as well as helping me throughout the entire doctoral process. Second, Dr. Patricia Ripoll, my co-chair, I thank you for your expertise and knowledge that you shared throughout the dissertation process. I thank God for the both of you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The baby boomer generation has made and continued to make a critical impact on the U.S. society and its history. Many baby boomers are talented, experienced, and highly-educated workers who occupy critical leadership and senior management positions. Born between the years 1946 and 1964, they embody between 76 and 78 million individuals who are currently in their 40s and 60s (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2008; Eversole, Venneberg, & Crowder, 2012; Johnson, 2009). By 2016, approximately 77 million baby boomers were expected to retire (Su, 2007).

Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) have a reason for concern about the anticipated wave of retiring baby boomers. After conducting surveys, the XXXXX Foundation and XXXXX Center at XXXXX University reported that two thirds of the responding executive directors anticipated leaving their organizations between the years of 2007 and 2012 (Von Bergen, 2007). Once the baby boomers retire, organizations may find themselves in a difficult predicament if they fail to plan for their successors. The Center for XXXXX Advancement (2006) defined succession planning (SP) as the "process that an organization uses to identify and prepare candidates for high-level management positions that become vacant due to retirement, resignation, death, or new business opportunities" (p. 1). SP is a sound risk management practice and critical in ensuring the sustainability of the organization in the event of an executive director's unplanned or planned absence (Wolfred, 2008). By identifying and grooming prospective leaders, SP ensures they are prepared to take leadership (Wolfred, 2008).

Succession plans for nonprofit executive directors may provide continuity in mission, strategic goals, service to clients, and fundraising, and without a succession plan, NPOs may suffer critical challenges to their survival (Wolfred, 2008). For example, 69% of the executive directors of NPOs reported that they planned to terminate their positions within the next 5 years (Carman, Leland, & Wilson, 2010). Fewer than 23% of these organizations reported having a succession plan in place, while only 13% of them identified a successor to the executive director (Carman et al., 2010). On the other hand, Santora and Sarros (2012) performed a case study of one nonprofit organization that experienced not one unanticipated executive departure, but two over a period of a few years. They found that no form of a succession plan was set into place during the departure of the first or second executive leader. These two studies offered the significance of SP among NPOs. It ensures organizational continuity and stability (Khumalo & Harris, 2008).

The responsibility of SP rests with the boards of directors (Khumalo & Harris, 2008). Before the executive director retires or terminates their position, boards of directors must ensure that a viable succession plan is set into place (Khumalo & Harris). Zhang and Rajagopalan (2010) further suggested that SP was one of the boards' key responsibilities to ensure the organization will not be adversely affected by a vacancy in leadership. When boards are not prepared to replace a retirement or sudden departure of an executive director they may be forced to rely on external search firms versus hiring internally. According to Zhang and Rajagopalan (2010, these search firms may not

understand their clients' unique structure or cultures since they work for several organizations.

In community actions agencies (CAAs), executive directors who are part of the baby boomer generation are faced with an imminent retirement. CAAs are private nonprofit or public organizations that were created by the federal government to combat poverty in geographically-designated areas (NASCSP, 2010). There are over 1,000 CAAs in the United States included 16 in a southern state. Members of CAA boards of directors around the U.S. represent three sectors: (a) at least one third were from the low-income community, (b) one third were public officials, and (c) up to one third were from the private sector (CAP, 2015)). The average board size is 25 individuals (CAP). Opportunities, services, and support are offered through an abundance of programs to help individuals and families gain necessities and achieve economic self-sufficiency that will enable them to have more fulfilling, productive, and contributing lives (XXXXX Community Action Agencies, 2015). These programs help low-income individuals to attain education, training, employment, housing, food, transportation, child care, and other necessities. Each CAA provides a different combination of programs and services and is governed by their boards of directors. According to a stakeholder, many executive directors of CAAs in a southern state are eligible for retirement within the next 10 years. The number of such individuals was unknown as was the extent to which CAAs have some form of SP in place to prepare the next generation of leaders as these older employees retire.

The nonprofit leadership deficit will become impossible to ignore during the next 10 years, and the challenge to replace the current baby boomer leaders will be widely spread. According to Tierney (2006), by 2016, NPOs will need to attract and develop approximately 640,000 new managers. The number of nonprofit leaders' age bracket of 34 to 54 will increase by only three million (Tierney, 2006). In NPOs, the emerging concern about succession was driven in part by the potential retirement of baby boomers, a shrinking leadership pool, and the lack of SP being documented (Tierney, 2006). NPOs need to be attentive to the aging of this large cohort of baby boomers, especially considering concerns raised by researchers and other observers about a looming leadership crisis with the impending retirement of executives from NPOs.

The results of this study can raise the awareness of nonprofits and their stakeholders that they must contribute to the future success of their organizations by developing and implementing strategies to replace retiring executive directors with successors who are trained, educated, and prepared to maintain a healthy organization and continued services. Freeman (1984) defined stakeholders as those individuals or groups who can affect or be affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. Successors who are inexperienced leaders may weaken operations and be unable to generate funds to thrive, thereby reducing the effectiveness of services and programs (Sanders, 2011). The ultimate goal of a succession plan is to aid these leaders in increasing their organization's capacity to sustain itself through a transition process and to be prepared for new leadership. In the remainder of this chapter, I will describe the role of the executive director and the background of the study and provide a summary of

the literature on the topic while identifying the gap in the literature to be addressed in this study. The research problem, along with the study's purpose, a description of the research model, intent of the study, the theoretical framework, and the research questions will also be provided.

Role of the Nonprofit Executive Director

According to the U.S. Department of XXXXX (2011), NPOs may include: (a) charitable risk pools, (b) credit counseling organizations, (c) cooperative hospital service organizations, (d) certain organizations providing childcare, and (e) cooperative service organizations of operating educational organizations. According to Pakroo (2011), the most important role of the executive director of NPOs is to achieve the organization's mission. NPO executive directors, hired by the boards of directors, have full responsibility for the organization's daily operations and sustainability of its resources (Duta, 2011). Control of the organization's operations and resources allows the executive director to help the organization develop to its fullest potential. Carlson and Donohoe (2010) argued that in order to effectively perform the essential roles of a nonprofit executive director, five characteristics are necessary: (a) exhibit vision, (b) change agent, (c) build relationships with internal and external stakeholders, (d) locate resources, and (e) serve as communicator and community creator.

According to Carlson and Donohoe (2010), the executive director's role as a visionary is to bring focus to the vision with a plan, such as strategically thinking about how to meet the needs of the community, and inspiring passion to achieve goals and objectives. As a change agent the executive director's role include discovering and

articulating the values that form the guiding principles of the NPO and continually

evaluating the effectiveness of the organization in fulfilling the mission (Carlson &

Donohoe, 2010). As the relationship builder, the executive director must communicate

with internal stakeholders, such as staff, volunteers, and board members and manage

them in a healthy environment, to ensure that all members of the team are recognized and

valued (Fram, 2011). The executive director must also provide an open and transparent

organizational culture that allows respect and appreciation for differences (Carlson &

Donohoe, 2010).

Executive directors of an NPO are required to perform other duties. According to

Ritchie and Eastwood (2005), the nonprofit executive director is required to have

experience in obtaining resources, including recruiting, mentoring, and identifying

individuals to raise funds that allow the organization to be sustainable and achieve its

mission. Alaimo (2008) suggested that the executive director was also responsible for

ensuring sound financial management for the NPO. As a community creator, the

executive director must also communicate with external stakeholders, such as donors,

vendors, local governments, and clients (Alaimo, 2008). Other external stakeholders

include community organizations and leaders to ensure continued involvement and

interest in the organization's mission (Jang & Feiock, 2007). Carlson and Donohoe

(2010) underscored the importance of the executive director's role in NPOs to ensure

smooth transitions from one leader to the next and employ SP practices to sustain the

organization. The sustainability of many NPOs can be directly tied to the organization's

ability to ensure effective and efficient leadership transition, operation knowledge, and stakeholder relations (Carlson & Donohoe, 2010).

Background

Executive SP is paramount for any type of organization whether it is private, public, or a nonprofit. Although approximately 75% of U.S. NPO executive directors plan to leave their positions within the next 15 years, no more than 33% of nonprofits have established a formal plan or even an emergency plan (Santora, 2009). Wright (2012) examined the intentions of human service organizations to develop and implement both SP and a plan to retire from or transition out of leadership positions. Human service organizations are those that provide a variety of services to a vulnerable population such as individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Wright, 2012). Ten executives between the ages of 53 and 69 with an average of 26.75 years in leadership positions were interviewed Wright's (2012) study, and the findings revealed that the participants showed a favorable attitude towards SP, although such plans were developed only after announcing the founders' and executives' intentions to retire.

SP should be a priority for any organization and it should be both valued and practiced. The potential impact of baby boomer retirees not practicing some form of SP could result in unfavorable consequences for the organization. Sanders (2011) performed a phenomenological study to determine what value municipal leaders place on SP, and the findings suggested that, although these leaders believed that SP was important, 90% of them believed that there were barriers to implementing SP. With a survey instrument, Folkers (2008) conducted a similar study to determine the perspectives, experiences, and

perceptions of 286 state agency's leaders about SP practices in the context of addressing the impending workforce crisis. Folkers' (2008) findings indicated that there was a perceived value for SP in the context of addressing the impending workforce crisis among executive leaders in state government. Although both studies revealed some form of research was critical in addressing the impending workforce crisis of retiring baby boomers, SP practices were perceived as valuable by the participants.

Several studies indicated that some form of SP was being implemented in the organizations under study. Schmalzried and Fallon (2007) conducted a quantitative study to assess the degree to which local health departments prepared to replace retiring top executives. They sent questionnaires to 134 local health departments, with a response rate of 92% of their top executives. Even though only 43.7% of the responding executives planned to leave their current positions within 6 years, their findings revealed that only 27.6% of the health departments that responded had some form of SP in place.

Santora, Sarros, and Cooper (2007) conducted a similar study to illustrate the extent to which both a foreign country and U.S. NPOs planned for executive succession. They administered an online questionnaire to collect data on the issues of governance structures, operating strategies, and leadership development practices. Only 16% of U.S. NPOs, compared with 41% of nonprofits in a foreign country, reported having some form of SP in place. Although both studies found that some SP was being implemented, only a small percentage applied. It was obvious that many of these organizations were not ready for executive SP.

Froelich, McKee, and Rathge (2011) studied executive succession by surveying executive directors from charitable nonprofits and CEOs of cooperative organizations. Their findings revealed that there was no indication of organizational readiness for executive succession among their participants. Although approximately 75% of U.S. NPO executive directors plan to leave their positions within the next 15 years, no more than 33% of nonprofits had established a formal plan or even an emergency plan (Santora, 2009). Although SP is important for nonprofits' executive succession, SP practices are important in public school systems as well.

In a study in the field of education, Zepeda, Bengtson, and Parylo (2012) examined SP and management in four school systems and compared their practices to those in the private sector. Using a qualitative case study approach, the researchers focused on superintendents and their assistants, principals, and other central office staff members from elementary, middle, and high school levels as participants. Approximately 25% of the school systems were classified as urban/suburban in their study, while approximately 75% were classified as rural. Over a 4-month period, they collected data from 134 schools via 32 semi structured interviews and various documents. The data were analyzed through structured coding, using 15 characteristics of effective SP and management. Their findings revealed that three of the four school systems identified SP and management as significant. however, there was a large gap in the degree to which the characteristics of effective SP and management were in place. Policies and procedures were in place for the larger urban systems, which possessed 12 of

the 15 characteristics of effective SP and management, while the smaller systems possessed only a few of the characteristic (Zepeda et al., 2012).

I did not locate any research literature regarding the significance of SP nor the degree to which any form of SP is in place for NPOs, specifically CAAs. In a southern state, as elsewhere, SP is vital in preparing for the transfer of executive leadership for CAAs. I did not find any research literature that addressed SP among CAAs, nor was there any statistical documentation on the number of impending baby boomer retirements among their executive directors. On the other hand, there was an abundance of academic research and literature on the effects of baby boomer retirement and SP efforts across different sectors, including municipal governments, federal agencies, human service organizations, environmental organizations, health care organizations, local health departments, and foreign and other NPOs.

In this study, I determined the extent to which the executive directors of CAAs developed and implemented SP and the successes, challenges, and consequences these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. This type of planning is especially important as the baby boomer generation neared retirement age and large numbers of executive directors leave their positions. The results of this research could raise awareness for any organization and add to the limited literature on CAAs' SP practices. The findings of this study could also provide CAA stakeholders the information needed to explore the successes or challenges being faced by CAAs in a southern state to implement SP efforts. The OCS and a southern state's Community Action Agencies Association are two relevant organizations for CAAs. This association

is the support office for the 16 CAAs in a southern state. The OCS is the states CAAs'

funding source and partners with states, communities, and agencies to reduce the cause of

poverty, increase opportunity and economic security of individuals and families, as well

as revitalize communities (OCS, 2015).

Problem Statement

The departure of an executive director is a traumatic event that affects the

employees, boards of directors, and stakeholders as well as the organization's economic

and political climate (McKee & Driscoll, 2008). According to Tierney (2006), one of the

main challenges faced by NPOs is the leadership deficit or who will replace the current

executive director scheduled to retire. Santora (2009) projected that approximately 75%

of NPOs executive directors plan to leave their positions within the next 5 years. The

Keeley Group (2010) anticipated that 50% to 75% of the NPO leadership will be retiring

within the next 5 to 8 years. A year later, Cornelius, Moyers, and Bell (2011) reported

that 67% of NPO executive directors in the United States will depart from their

organizations within the next 5 years. With such high turnover rates, Santora stressed

that executive directors and their boards of directors should exhibit both diligence and

vigilance in implementing some form of SP to allow for minimum organizational

disruptions.

Barnett and Davis (2008) suggested a number of likely implications, trends, and

events that cause organizations to consider SP seriously: (a) demographic trends

supported the need to develop and retain talent in anticipation of baby boomer

retirements; (b) younger professionals have different values and attitudes toward their

jobs and employers than did their predecessors; (c) the retention and transfer of knowledge is critical as an organization's competitive advantage shifted to employee skills; and (d) the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX), which protected shareholders and the public from accounting errors and fraudulent practices and defined which records were to be stored and for how long (TechTarget, 2013). SOX forced boards to demand answers about leadership succession. Other trends included an increase in globalization, requiring more global leaders who have common organizational values and the acceleration of the rate and degree of change in markets, technologies, and customer preferences (Barnett & Davis, 2008).

The impending retirement of the large numbers of NPO executives and the anticipated shortage of workers to fill these positions underscores the need for SP. Numerous surveys and academic studies suggested that most NPOs do not have a succession plan in place. According to Santora (2009), no more than 33% of NPOs had established even an emergency plan, in the event of an untimely death or disability of the executive. On the other hand, 90% (Santora, Caro, & Sarros, 2007) and 87% (Froelich et al., 2009) of the survey respondents in their studies did not have a succession plan.

Wolfred (2008) offered several challenges to the implementation of SP in NPOs. First, most NPOs are relatively small and do not have the financial resources to consider SP. Second, NPO boards of directors would rather not take the time or engage in the demands from leadership that SP requires. Many NPO boards of directors do not understand their responsibilities in the transition of leadership, which is one of the most crucial events in the life of an organization. Finally, grantors may cut, decrease, or even

stop funding at any indication that the executive director may soon depart. Without some forms of SP in place, NPOs may find themselves in the danger of collapse from an executive director's departure (Wolfred, 2008).

SP is important in preparing for the transfer of executive leadership in NPOs, including CAAs, because it enables NPOs to examine and redefine their direction and mission, while identifying the qualities required by their leaders to achieve these ends. NPOs are growing in number and are being held increasingly accountable by donors, regulators, and the public (Tierney, 2006). Under relentless performance pressure from these sources, these organizations must employ executives with specialized skills (Tierney, 2006). With the near retirement of their baby boomer leaders, CAAs in a southern state can benefit from the results of this study on the perception and status of SP within their organizations because no research literature was available on this topic.

Purpose of the Study

Within the next 5 years, the executive directors of many CAAs are eligible for retirement. It is not known how many of them will retire, nor the degree to which some form of SP is being implemented in their CAA. To prepare the next generation of employees to take the rein of leadership, SP is vital to the livelihood and vitality of federally-funded NPOs, such as CAAs. The purpose of this case study was to determine the extent to which executive directors of CAAs practice SP as well as the successes, challenges, and consequences they experienced while implementing SP or as a consequence of not implementing it.

Research Questions

The research questions I developed to guide this study were:

RQ1: To what extent do a southern state's CAAs develop and implement SP for their executive directors?

RQ2: What successes, challenges, and consequences were these organizations experiencing from implementing or not implementing SP?

Research Design

The research approach I used for this study was the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research represents a type of interpretive inquiry in which the researcher interprets what they see, hear, and understand (Creswell, 2007). It is a form of field research where the participants being studied are in the natural courses of their daily lives (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007). The researcher also attempts to develop a complex picture of the problem under study (Creswell). According to Janesick (2004), qualitative studies demand that the researchers avoid trying to prove something; instead, it is imperative to understand the social setting and all that it entails, and not to begin the study with perceived answers. This type of approach is meant to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, I used a qualitative case study design to interpret and understand the extent to which the executive directors of CAAs in a southern state developed and implemented SP as well the successes, challenges, and consequences that these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. According to

Creswell (2007), case study research involves the study of a problem explored via one or more cases within a restricted system. On the other hand, Yin (2014) defined case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context. Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that case studies are more than simply conducting research on single individuals or situations. Consideration of how the context influences a phenomenon within which it is situated, enables the researcher to answer *how* and *why* type questions (Yin, 2003).

There are three types of case studies: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Yin. 2003). The determination of when to use each type is based around three conditions: (a) the type of research question posed (e.g., *who, what, where, how,* and *why* questions); (b) the extent of control the researcher has over behavioral events; and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary, as opposed to entirely historical, events (Yin, 2014). The goal of an exploratory study is to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry (Yin, 2014). This method focuses mainly on *what* questions (Yin, 2014). After an exploration of each design, I determined that an exploratory case study methodology was the most appropriate for this study because I was able to use it to explore the experiences of an organizational change within CAAs from the perspective of individual participants.

The case study is preferred when examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated (Creswell, 2009). This approach includes direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events (Creswell, 2009). Case studies allow the researcher to explore a bounded

system over time, by means of detailed and in-depth data collection (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative findings are developed from four kinds of data collection: (a) in-depth, (b)

open ended, (c) direct observation, and (d) written documents (Patton, 2002). Per Yin

(2003), this design allows the researcher to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics

of real-life events, such as organizational and managerial processes.

In this study, I used the purposeful sampling technique to capture primary data.

The data came from semi structured interviews with 5 executive directors and 12 boards

of director members from CAAs in a southern state. I identified, communicated with,

and recruited all participants through face-to-face interactions, phone calls, or e-mail by

using the snowball and chain sampling strategy techniques. To supplement the

interviews, I gathered secondary data from observations and physical documents from the

organizations such as succession plans, by-laws, strategic plans, and annual reports.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study on SP was comprised of theories of

organizational change. According to Finley (2007) and Tripon and Dodu (2011), several

theorists had developed numerous models of how change can be made within an

organization, as well as how change could result in a more efficient organization.

Lewin's (1951, 1958) organizational change theory model, which emerged from the

practice of planned change within an organization, was widely accepted in the field of

organizational development. This model was known as the 3-stage model of change:

Unfreezing, *moving*, and *refreezing*. Schein (1986) developed a 3-stage model for every

phase of Lewin's model, by applying psychological practices. Kilmann's (1989) model

described a total system through comprehensive organizational development, as well as by addressing the critical issues of organizational change. This model consisted of 5 stages and involved a holistic vision approach, as well as implementation of the changes. These theories were thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Of the three types of case studies mentioned earlier--explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Yin, 2003)—I chose to use exploratory inquiry in this study, a strategy in which the researcher explores a program, event, or process of one or more individuals bounded by time and activity (see Creswell, 2009). During data collection, case study research requires an inquiring mind, not just before and after the activity (Yin, 2014). A prerequisite for case study researchers is the ability to pose and ask good questions (Yin, 2014). According to Patton (2002), case studies employ various methods such as interviews, participant observations, and field studies. In addition, case study evidence comes from documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts (Patton, 2002). The goals of a case study design are to reconstruct and analyze a case from a sociological perspective (Creswell, 2009).

I used the case study method to explore and determine to what extent the executive directors of CAAs in a southern state practice SP as well as the successes and challenges that these nonprofits experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. This method allowed for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the topic under examination. I established the details by talking directly with the participants in their places of employment and allowing them to tell their story unencumbered by what I

expected to find or read in the research literature. During semi structured interviews, I observed the participants and took field notes. The qualitative research design method allowed me to understand the context in which the participants addressed the issue (see Creswell, 2007).

I collected secondary data by reading and evaluating documents and archival records from the organizations under study. NVivo software was used to collect, capture, store, and manage the data and assist with its analysis. NVivo has the capability to: (a) create sources to store video recordings; (b) create codes to capture and gather all the interviewing contents to a particular concept; (c) run queries to question the data, find patterns, and pursue ideas; and (d) create models to illustrate initial ideas about a particular project or to identify emerging patterns and connections (QRS International, 2011).

Definitions

Baby boomers: Those individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Community action agencies (CAAs): Private, nonprofit, or public organizations that were created by the federal government to combat poverty in geographically-designated areas (NASCSP, 2010).

Case study: The study of a problem explored via one or more cases within a restricted system. This type of approach allows the researcher to explore a bounded system over time, by means of detailed and in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2007).

Environmental organizations: Organizations that seek to protect, analyze, or monitor the environment against misuse or degradation or lobby for these goals (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014)).

For-profit organization: A business or other organization whose primary goal is to earn a profit. Employees and owners work to earn income and shareholders invest money in order to earn a return on their investment (University of XXXXX, 2014).

Founder: The person recognized as the responsible party in the establishment of a human service organization that has been operating for more than 10 years (Wright, 2010).

Gross domestic product (GDP): The total market value of goods and services produced by a nation's economy during a specific period of time (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Health care organizations: Nonprofit, public, and for-profit organizations that receive funding from a regional health authority to provide health services (Government of XXXXX, 2013).

Human service organizations: Nonprofit, public, and for-profit organizations that provide a broad range of social services for individuals or families (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Insiders: Individuals connected to or employed to the organization (Santora et al., 2007).

Interim CEO: An individual appointed by the organization's board of directors to temporarily assume the role of CEO during a time of transition or as the result of the sudden departure of the organization's preceding CEO (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Long-term executive: CEOs or senior leaders who were not founders but had been in an executive leadership role at least 10 years (Wright, 2010).

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs): Those legally constituted, nongovernmental entities incorporated under state law as charitable or not-for-profit corporations that had been set up to serve some public purpose and were tax exempt according to the XXXXX (Wolf, 1999, p. 21).

Organizational culture: The set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that influenced the way employees think, feel, and behave toward each other and toward people outside the organization (Yukl, 2010, p. 502).

Organizational identity: The set of features that members understand to be central, distinctive, and enduring within an organization (Balser & Carmin, 2009).

Outsiders: Individuals not connected to or not employed to the organization (Santora et al., 2007).

Public organizations: Federal, state, county, and city government agencies created to benefit the good of the public and funded by public taxes. Public programs and services include transportation and other infrastructure; schools, community colleges, and universities; and numerous other services (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Purposeful sampling: A qualitative method in which the researchers intentionally select participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored in the study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

Assumptions

This study involved several assumptions. My first assumption was that at least 12 participants would be available to be interviewed and their responses would be honest and unbiased. Another assumption was that the results from this study would serve as a literature blueprint on CAAs' executive SP efforts and would be useful and transferable. And lastly, I assumed that all executive directors and boards of directors would participate voluntarily in this study.

Scope and Delimitations

Defining boundaries helped establish the rationale and scope of a research study (Creswell, 2005). Boundaries to establish include the selected research study, geographic location, sampling, and population, which limit the scope of the study (Michael-Chadwell, 2008). The boundaries that I established for this study were: (a) SP among nonprofit executive directors, (b) a southern state as the geographic location, (c) the purposeful sampling method, and (d) a study population consisting of executive directors and boards of directors. The purpose of this case study was to determine the extent to which the executive directors of CAAs developed and implemented SP as well as their perceived implications to their organizations of implementing or not implementing SP. The scope of this study was limited to a minimum of six of the 16 CAAs in a southern state.

Delimitations are boundaries or restrictions imposed by the researcher to narrow the scope of the study (Creswell, 2003). Delimitations are those conditions or elements that researchers can control (Dusick, 2013). According to Michael-Chadwell (2008), controlled delimitations may limit the results. This study had two delimitations. First, the geographic location of the study was limited to CAAs in a southern state; consequently, the results may not be similar to executive directors and boards of directors in other U.S. CAAs. Lastly, I did not select all CAAs in the southern states for this study.

Limitations

Dusick (2013) defined limitations as elements or conditions that a researcher has no control over. Creswell (2003) noted that limitations are potential weaknesses in the study that prevent generalization of the findings to other populations. Understanding the limitations of this research study was important for two reasons. First, limitations offer information on how to perform the study (Creswell, 2005). Second, limitations are important because factors may be identified that may affect the generalizability or transferability of the results to other groups, people, and situations (Creswell, 2007).

The limitations of this qualitative case study were that: (a) the study was a single case study that consisted of a minimum of six CAAs in a southern state, (b) CAAs were different in size, (c) time was restricted for the study, and (d) the subjectivity of the inquiry led to difficulties in establishing reliability and validity issues. This study contained elements of transferability. Transferability involves the replication of the study within a similar setting or context (Creswell, 2009). Other researchers may be able to replicate this research study in other CAAs by using the same research methodology;

however, the results may differ, depending on such factors as the design of the interview questions.

<div align="center">

Significance

</div>

The results of this study may be beneficial to board members and senior executives in NPOs when employing SP practices. Understanding the need for SP may help board members and senior executives reduce risks, such as loss of strategic opportunities and poor leadership. Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) stressed that organizations can take years to recover from losses incurred due to poor leadership or lack of opportunities.

SP transitions are important because they help organizations keep operations running smoothly. They may also enable NPOs to clarify vision and mission, build or rebuild infrastructure, identify board and executive leadership to move the organization forward, or maintain momentum or change directions (Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005). The results of this study may help NPOs avoid mistakes involved in transitions of new leadership as a result of not having a succession plan in place when these leaders depart.

Executive directors are the driving force of NPOs and some form of SP needs to be practiced to replace them when they leave. The population of this study was significant because I could find no extant literature or research studies on executive SP among CAAs. The findings of this study are also significant in their potential to add knowledge to the scholarly literature. The results may also be used as a research blueprint for not only CAAs, but NPOs as well.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I provided the introduction, or the framework, for the study. The term SP was defined, as was its significance to NPOs due to the retirement of their executive directors. I also provided a background section on SP practices for executive directors of NPOs and organizations in other sectors. The problem statement was based on the extent that executive directors and boards of directors of a southern states' CAAs practiced SP as well as the successes, challenges, and consequences that these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. In the chapter, I also described the theoretical framework of the study in terms of theories of organizational change as well as the nature of the study. The research questions were identified, and the research design was identified and justified. Chapter 1 also included definitions of terms specific to the study as well as the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, I will provide a review of the literature on key topics related to SP and its impact on the retirement of nonprofit executives. Topics will include the impending retirement of the large baby boomer generation the role of the nonprofit executive director; and SP in NPOs, public and for-profit organizations, and academic institutions. I will also describe the theoretical framework in greater detail.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

With the large number of retiring executive directors, SP for NPOs, specifically CAAs in a southern state, is vital to preparing for the transfer of executive leadership, thereby allowing for minimum organization disruption. SP is a formal, systematic effort to ensure leadership continuity in order to develop and retain the intellectual resources, knowledge, capital, and performance required in key executive staff positions (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Huang, 1999; Rothwell, 2001). Helton and Jackson (2007) suggested that SP was simply a method of identifying and developing quality employees to fill future staffing shortfalls. On the other hand, Condrey (2010) suggested that SP was an effort to identify potential leadership candidates within the organization and help them develop their skills and abilities to fill key senior roles if vacancies occur. SP can prepare NPOs for future vacancies in middle and senior management positions and can provide an opportunity to examine and redefine the NPO's direction and mission, while identifying the skills required of their leaders. According to Chavez (2011), the principles for establishing and implementing an effective succession plan are to identify successors and emerging leaders, to develop and engage employees for leadership, and to retain proven performers.

In the absence of a formal plan to identify and train other staff members to fill these positions to succeed executives, NPOs face a loss of expertise and experience from retiring executive directors. Although approximately 75% of the executive directors of U.S. NPOs planned to leave their positions within the next 5 years, no more than 33% of

nonprofits had established a formal plan or even an emergency plan (Santora, 2009).

National surveys conducted by the XXXXX Foundation and the Nonprofit Center at a

university in 2009 revealed that two thirds of the responding executive directors will

retire in a 5-year period (Froelich et al., 2011). Given these statistics, it is imperative for

NPOs to take the initiative to implement some form of a succession plan.

The U.S. XXXXX (2008) projected that more than 2.8 million people would

reach the age of 65 in the year 2011, with an annual increase for the next 10 years such

that, by 2020, this number was expected to surpass 4 million individuals. Between 2014

and 2024, 77 million baby boomers are expected to retire (Froelich et al., 2011). CEOs,

chief financial officers, and chief operating officers are the key executive positions to be

affected by the loss of talented professionals in NPOs. Identifying qualified and

motivated leaders to fill the leadership positions, opened up by retiring baby boomers is,

therefore, imperative.

Leadership transition is the specific process of replacing a current leader with a

new leader (Fisher, 2010). There is a difference between SP and leadership transition

activities (Bonavoglia & Mackinnon, 2006). The leadership transition process is

important when the executive has knowledge of their departure (Bonavoglia &

Mackinnon, 2006). On the other hand, SP is not tied to a specific date and comes in

either the form of an emergency succession plan or a long-range succession plan that

helps the organization to strengthen its leadership capacity in preparation for a future

transition (Bonavoglia & Mackinnon, 2006). Redington and Vickers (2001) suggested

several steps to the transition process for the successor: (a) the outgoing executive can

choose to spend up to 1 month with the successor in the executive director position; (b) the successor will be formally and informally introduced to organizational members, community leaders, boards of directors, and colleagues; and (c) the predecessor remains in contact with the successor on a consultant fee basis for a brief period of at least 6 months following departure. The responsibility of the organization's succession plan rests with the board of directors (Santora & Sarros, 2012).

Boards of directors of NPOs tend to underestimate the risks and costs associated with making a bad hiring decision (Carman et al., 2010)). They often fail to invest the necessary time, energy, and resources needed to fill such leadership positions (Carman et al., 2010). The authors also suggested that SP should be an agenda item of board meetings as well as a part of the organization's strategic plan. Both the executive directors and their boards of directors play major roles in the succession management process as well as in the planning, recruiting, and developing of future leadership (Carman et al., 2010). Recently, the OCS added an organizational standard that required all CAAs to have a written succession plan for their CEOs/executive directors, approved by the boards of directors, and implemented by 2016 (Community Action Partnership, 2015). In light of these changes, the number of SP practices among CAAs in a southern state, as well as other CAAs, may change.

NPOs contribute greatly to the U.S. economy. According to the Urban Institute (2012), NPOs contributions of product and services in 2010 added $779 billion to the nation's GDP. These organizations accounted for 9% of salaries and wages paid in America and were considered a major employer (Urban Institute, 2012). NPOs provide

goods and services that the public and business sectors do not deliver (Weerawardena, McDonald, & Mort, 2010). Between 2001 and 2011, the number of NPOs increased by 25%, both in size and budget (Urban Institute, 2012). The Urban Institute further indicated that the rate of growth and size for these organizations has surpassed that of organizations in the business and government sectors. Hence, it is imperative that NPOs employ executives with specialized skills.

The purpose of the case study was to determine the extent to which executive directors of CAAs developed and implemented SP as well as the successes, challenges, and consequences that these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. I performed most of the research for this literature review via the Walden University Online Library, using the Management & Organization Studies, Sage Full-Text Collection, ProQuest Central, ABI/Inform Complete, the Business Source Complete, and EBSCOhost databases and search engines such as Google Scholar. The literature review was supplemented with dissertations from Walden University's ProQuest database. The key search terms used were *SP*, *succession management, SP and NPOs, SP among executive directors, baby boomers SP, baby boomers and executive retirement, executive succession, contingency planning, management planning, replacement training, executive transition planning,* and *leadership SP*. The literature review consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles as well as other scholarly literature published from the years of 2000 to 2018.

Theoretical Framework: Theories of Organizational Change

I based the theoretical framework of this study on the theories of organizational

change from the perspective of numerous authors.

Cummings and Huse (1985) defined organizational change as a state of transition

between current and future time periods. Organizational change may also be interpreted

as a continuous process of preparation for a new organizational system, as well as a way

to ensure the success of this new system (Tripon & Dodu, 2011). According to Purser

and Petranker (2005), organizations continue to struggle with the challenges of

anticipating and responding to rapid and unexpected change, despite the emphasis on the

pervasiveness of change and influx. This type of change implies a temporal dimension or

transition in a direction that actualizes a new reality that differs significantly in form or

function from the current state of affairs (Purser & Petranker, 2005). This transition is

considered to take place in some projected future. The success of a change is the degree

to which the change: (a) reaches the goal for which it has been implemented, (b) does not

exceed the deadline or the budget set for it, (c) leads to positive economic and operational

results in a reasonable amount of time, and (d) was perceived as a success by both inside

and outside members of the organization (Tripon & Dodu, 2011).

Decisions on organizational change may be made for several reasons. According

to Tripon and Dodu (2011), most organizational changes are planned by management for

reasons related to either internal or environmental pressures or strategic changes.

Management communicates about organizational changes in order to explain a planned

change and to describe the analysis and process of anticipated change (Tripon & Dodu, 2011).

Lewin (1951, 1958) believed that organizations in favor of maintaining the status quo were more likely to resent than to support change. The major perception in the field is that organizations need a time for reflection and involvement to become ready for change (Purser & Petranker, 2005). Lewin developed the three-stage theoretical model of organizational change. The first stage, known as *unfreezing*, refers to minimizing the forces that maintain the system's behavior at the current level (Tripon & Dodu, 2011). Purser and Petranker (2005) suggested that organizations had to become unfrozen to counter complacency and stasis and uproot habitual patterns and routines. The second stage, *moving*, refers to the development of new behaviors, values, and attitudes through organizational structure changes and processes (Tripon & Dodu, 2011). Stage 3 involves *refreezing* the organization when the desired behavior has been achieved and fully integrated (Tripon & Dodu, 2011). During this stage, the system must settle down or it will not continue to exist (Purser & Petranker, 2005). The Lewinian approach is a recipe for organizations to temporarily use to enter the time of transition; to make modifications to their identity; and then to refreeze into a condition of stasis, preserving those modifications in such transitions (Purser & Pertranker, 2005).

Schein (1986) developed a three-stage model of organizational change by attaching psychological practices to each of Lewin's three stages. In the first stage, in order to replace old behavior patterns with new ones, an individual must reach a state of psychological comfort with the idea of change (Schein, 1986). Stage 2 involves the

process of cognitive reconstruction, with individuals needing written evidence that implementing the change will be desirable and positive (Schein, 1986). Finally, Stage 3, *refreezing*, entails the acceptance of the new change. In order for the changes to remain viable in the new social environment, members of the organization must incorporate these new changes into their organizational culture (Schein, 1986). The main difference between Lewin's model, which was designed at the organizational level, and Schein's (1986) model, which was designed at the individual level, was that of implementation of changes (Tripon & Dodu, 2011).

Kilmann (1989) developed a total system change model that had five stages: (a) initiation of the program, (b) diagnosis of the problem, (c) setting course of action, (d) implementing course of action, and (e) evaluating results. Initiation of the program required the involvement of and support from those in leadership positions (Kilmann, 1989). Setting the course of action and implementing the plan involved five critical points for organizational change: (a) the cultural aspect, (b) managerial abilities, (c) team building, (d) strategy-structured aspect, and (e) the reward system. This model normally required 1 to 5 years to be implemented successfully (Kilmann, 1989).

Kilmann (1989), Schein (1986), and Lewin (1951, 1958) offered several models of organizational change theory. I selected Schein's and Lewin's systems as the framework for this study. Both models helped to address CAAs' reactions to the successes, challenges, and consequences that these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. Lewin believed that those organizations in favor of maintaining the status quo were more likely to resent the change rather than to support

it. Schein argued that, in order to replace old behavior patterns with new ones, an

individual must reach a state of psychological comfort with the idea of change.

The concept of executive succession had roots in the organizational development

field, with theoretical underpinnings in systems theory, as well as organizational change

theories (Finley, 2007). According to Levinson (1972), the CEO of an organization

represented the personality of the organization and affected its interaction patterns. The

longer a CEO remained in leadership, the more the personality of the organization

crystallizes. Replacing an executive director, especially one who had been in place for a

number of years, likely will result in organizational change.

Theories of organizational change may provide insight into the complex

relationships between nonprofit executive directors and their responses to SP, given the

impending retirements of an entire generation of nonprofit executive directors. It is

anticipated that these theories will explain both planning and the failure to plan for this

loss of the experience and expertise of retiring nonprofit executive directors. Finally,

theories of organizational change may demonstrate the economic and social implications

of such failure, as well. The remainder of this chapter described the significance of the

impending retirement of the baby boomers, as well as a review of the literature used in

the study.

Impending Retirement of the Baby Boomers

The aging and eventual retirement of the baby boomer generation was a major

demographic and sociological phenomenon that had far-reaching repercussions for

organizations, the government, and society as a whole. This generation had managed to

influence every social and governmental institution it has encountered. Callanan and

Greenhaus (2008) addressed the difficulties faced by employers as they confronted and

responded to the challenges posed by the impending retirement of these workers. Some

of these challenges included coping with a shortage of labor and replacing retiring

Boomers with managerial and technical talent (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2008).

Baby boomers' departure from the workforce resulted in a loss of talent,

experience, and expertise. Given the concern about the anticipated number of retiring

baby boomers, Froelich et al., (2011), studied executive succession by surveying

executive directors of 501 (c)(3) charitable nonprofits and CEOs of 501 (c)(4)

cooperative organizations. A survey exploring the details of SP was sent to executive

directors of 800 charitable nonprofits and 859 cooperative organizations in two

Midwestern states. These cooperatives consisted of credit unions, electric cooperatives,

and farm supply and grain marketing cooperatives. Findings revealed that, although SP

was important in both nonprofits and other types of organizations, there was no indication

of organizational readiness for executive succession in charitable nonprofits or

cooperative organizations. According to Froelich et al. (2011) additional research was

needed to aid NPOs in developing and implementing some form of SP. Also, similarities

between charitable nonprofits and cooperative organizations had sparked an area of

interest that invites further research (Froelich et al., 2011).

Demographics had shown evidence of a widening gap between baby boomers

who were near retirement without successors and young managers who lack the skills and

experience. The goal of the study by Khumalo and Harris (2008) was to highlight the

leadership gap created by a terminated CEO when a succession plan was not implemented. The study found that corporate companies had experienced a more effective leadership transition when a SP was in place than companies that did not have a SP in place when the CEO departs from their position. Authors argued that top level managers must be future-oriented and prepare for the soon-to-retire baby boomers (Khumalo & Harris, 2008). This study was based around the executive directors of CAAs who were part of the baby boomer generation. I will illustrate SP in NPOs in the next section.

<p align="center">**Succession Planning in Nonprofit Organizations**</p>

The U.S. Bureau of XXXXX estimated that 20% or more of 150.9 million jobs in the U.S. economy must be replaced because of the aging workforce (Rothwell, 2011), resulting in a limited pool of candidates for nonprofit executive positions, as well as a leadership gap in the nonprofit sector. Several key studies examined the effects of baby boomer retirement in the nonprofit sector, as well as leadership transition and SP practices. According to Balser and Carmin (2009), to ensure that there was a smooth transition from one leader to the next, it was imperative that NPOs identify the next generation of leaders. Leadership transition may be considered as threats to the core features of organizational identity, as well as disrupting the daily routines of a nonprofit.

Balser and Carmin (2009) conducted a case study to examine the dynamics among employees that follow when the founder of a nonprofit environmental organization has stepped down. This study, conducted from the viewpoints of its employees, considered how their interpretations of organizational identity and future

change shaped their responses to leadership transition. Findings revealed that the

succession process can expose underlying disagreements about an organization's identity

and may cause internal conflicts (Balser & Carmin, 2009)

McKee and Driscoll (2008) conducted a case study on executive succession in a

nonprofit health care organization. In this case, the objective was to understand how

senior members prepared themselves for significant leadership transition. The

participants of the study consisted of the senior administration team and the senior

directors of the business unit leaders of the organization who would be affected

immediately by the transition and who were actively involved in the SP process. The

senior administration team included the president and CEO, chief operating officer, a

senior vice president, chief financial officer, and the director of communication and

public relations. Because the succession event had not occurred, the focus was on

antecedents of the succession process.

McKee and Driscoll's (2008) sources of data were documents that included

annual reports, values and mission statements, and internal newsletters; participant

observation with the management team and organizational staff; and semi-structured

interviews with the study participants. Data suggested that the senior administration

team, along with the senior directors, had taken a number of strategic steps to prepare and

strengthen the organization for the next phase of its life cycle (McKee & Driscoll, 2008).

These strategic steps included linking various parts of the organization and helping to

ensure a stable course takes place following an executive's departure. An organizational

succession plan was developed, and the organization was restructured into three strategic

business units. A strategic plan was developed, and a more participative leadership style was adopted. Safety nets were also put into place to support retiring or departing leaders, as well as the organization.

Santora et al., (2007) study also focused on the succession of executive directors in NPOs. In this study, however, the objective was to determine whether insiders (current employees) or outsiders (individuals not connected to the organization) were the most likely candidates to replace those executive directors who were departing. A questionnaire was administered, and interviews were conducted with 20 executive directors of community-based NPOs. Fifteen percent of the executive directors were between 60 and 69; 60% were between the ages of 50 and 59; 20% were between 40 and 49, and 5% were between 30 and 39. Executives between 50 and 69 indicated that they were close to retirement.

Santora et al., (2007) suggested several typical reasons chief executive officers depart from an organization: (a) relocation, (b) illness or burnout, (c) personal, (d) new challenges or change, (e) retirement, and (f) mismanagement and forced resignation. The executive directors speculated on whether an insider or outsider would replace them. Santora, et al. attempted to determine if any hiring patterns existed for the organizations' predecessors. They found that half of the executive directors' predecessors were outsiders, while 25% were insiders, and 25% were founders of their agencies. Findings revealed that these executive directors speculated about their possible replacements, with one half of the executive directors believing that an insider would replace them, while

40% believed that outsiders would replace them (Santora et al., 2007). Two executive directors, or 10%, were ambivalent.

Although the study of Santora et al., (2007) was predicated on the importance of the decision to hire insiders or outsiders, the issues of executive turnover and SP were important to examine, as well. Carman et al., (2010) study examined those issues in NPOs. Among executive directors, the rate of turnover was anticipated to be approximately 70% during the next 5 years. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect the data, using a 40-question online survey for executive directors. Participants from 299 NPOs with a 501(c) (3) status were asked about their career path intentions, and avenues for succession and transition planning. In addition to participating in the online survey, seven executive directors participated in a focus group to discuss how they were hired and the extent to which their organizations were engaged in SP. Findings suggested that fewer than 23% of the organizations had a succession plan and only 13% had identified a successor to the executive director. The authors suggested the necessity of future research on the extent to which executive turnover will be an issue in other communities (Carman el al., 2010).

When leadership vacancies were not filled because of failed succession plans, NPOs may have no choice other than to place unprepared employees into key leadership roles. Santora et al., (2011) suggested three themes that tended to dominate much of the literature on this problem: (a) majority of NPOs failed to develop a succession plan, (b) they are not prepared for succession, and (c) NPOs had been faced with a significant leadership crisis. The purpose of this exploratory study was to illustrate the extent to

which NPOs in a foreign country and the United States planned for executive succession.

A 64-item questionnaire was developed to collect data on governance structures,

operating strategies, and leadership development practices for participating organizations.

Findings showed that 41% of the 51 nonprofit executive directors in the foreign country

had a succession plan, compared with only 16% of the 31 nonprofit executive directors in

the United States. Also, findings suggested that, at all organizational levels, SP in NPOs

remained a comparatively unexplored area of research (Santora et al., 2011).

For society's most vulnerable populations, human service organizations provided

support, protection, and advocacy. Wright (2012) examined the intentions of human

service organizations to develop and implement SP, strategies for leadership

development, and employees' plans to retire or transition out of leadership positions.

Wright's (2012) study was conducted by interviewing 10 founders and long-term

executives that were selected the membership database of a national organization of

human service organizations. These organizations had participated in quantitative studies

on succession practice that involved senior leaders of their member organizations

(Wright, 2012).

Subjects were selected from a variety of for-profit, as well nonprofit human

service organizations to increase generalizability (Wright, 2012). These organizations

also varied in organizational size and dispersion across the United States. Semi-

structured interviews were conducted by phone, in person, and by e-mail, with study

participants, who were between the ages of 53 and 69 and who averaged 26.75 years in

leadership positions. Although the study showed that the participants had a favorable

attitude towards a succession plan, some of the executives of these organizations revealed that these plans were developed only after announcing the intentions of founders and executives to retire, at the request of the board, or in an emergency (Wright, 2012). SP in NPOs were not a routine task, as were revenue diversification and strategic planning (Wolfred, 2008). These organizations may lose resources that were vital to their success if they were not well-prepared for senior leadership transitions, risking losing their effectiveness and reputation.

Succession Planning in Public Organizations

Other studies had focused on SP in local, state, and federal agencies. Schmalzried and Fallon's (2007) quantitative study assessed the degree to which local health departments prepared to replace retiring top executives. One hundred and thirty-four questionnaires, consisting of seven items, were sent to top executives of local health departments around the state, asking executives about their departmental SP efforts, generating a response rate of 92%. Findings revealed that over 27% of these local health departments had a succession plan in place. Such planning was not a priority among the majority of these agencies, despite the fact that 43.7% of its top executives planned to leave their current position within six years (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). According to Wertheimer (2007), SP should be a priority in every organization because it identifies and nurtures future leaders.

While Schmalzried and Fallon's (2007) study of the local health department revealed that approximately 75% of its top executives did not have a succession plan in place, Marbury (2012) addressed the level of preparation for succession events for federal

agencies across the United States in a quantitative descriptive study. The extent of both written succession plans and leadership development programs were also illustrated. The purpose of the study was to document the present state of SP to deal with the anticipated deficiencies in human capital. A quantitative descriptive survey replicate study was used to determine the trends and variables associated with SP efforts in executive branch federal agencies. Variables for the study were SP, leadership development, and federal agency-preparedness (Marbury, 2012).

The study replicated Hughes Butts' (2008) research but utilized a different population. Marbury's (2012) population consisted of 7,645 federal employees all of whom were surveyed. Findings revealed that 54% of the members had no knowledge about whether the agencies had succession plans in place. The majority of the members believed that senior level executives within the organization would not have proper successors designated in the succession plans. Other findings indicated that the employees believed leadership development programs should began early in employees' careers (Marbury, 2012).

From the viewpoint of a municipal organization, Jarrell and Pewitt (2007) explored whether these agencies were capable of building a functioning and effective talent pipeline by implementing some of form of SP. The findings were based on interviews from a municipal organization, by using a narrative analysis with a focus on interpretive design. Researchers were interested in (a) how a public agency developed a succession plan, (b) how participants were selected and trained, (c) in what ways has SP affected workforce sustainability, (d) how results were measured and evaluated, and (e)

what made this municipality successful in SP (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Findings suggested that government agencies were capable of building a functioning and effective talent pipeline by implementing some type of SP.

The purpose of Leland, Carman, and Swartz's (2012) study was to learn how city and county governments viewed and engaged in SP. According to Leland et al., (2012) organizations tended to underestimate the risks and costs associated in making an unwise hiring decision, and they failed to invest the time, energy, and resources necessary in hiring executives. The time period between the departure of the executive and the hiring of a new executive was fraught with risks. Without a plan in place, these decisions tended to be reactive rather than proactive, while placing these employers at a disadvantage in the competition for talented professionals.

A web-based survey was used to collect data on the demographic characteristics of managers, career paths of managers, local government size, staff and budget size, and usage of succession plans. Survey responses came from 76% of the town managers and 26% were county managers. Only 14 % of the respondents reported having a succession plan in place. Furthermore, 25% of them believed SP were the managers' central responsibility. Also, while the succession plans focused on grooming new leadership within the organization, only 10% identified a successor. For those that did not have a succession plan, 54 % were due to time constraints, 40% due to political constraints, and 40% due to lack of information (Leland et al., 2012).

Jarrell and Pewitt (2007) suggested that public organizations were facing numerous economic, social, and demographic issues, such as downsizing, hiring freezes,

budget cuts, an aging population, and a smaller population size of the next generation.

These authors argued that SP in public agencies were rarely undertaken for a myriad of

political reasons. Given political ties to a particular administration, elected or appointed

government officials and their leadership may have had tenure limitations. Because of

this, they may had been reluctant to take on additional tasks, as well as assumed any

succession issues that were beyond their scope of work. Despite these limitations, Cohn,

Khurana, and Reeves (2005) suggested that SP reinforced the desired perceptions of the

organization, fostered employee legitimacy, built on the strategic plan to manage the

organization through future challenges, met the demands of the public, and addressed the

strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

School Systems and Institutions of Higher Education

Local, state, and federal agencies were just a few of the public organizations that

practiced SP. Other types of public organizations also practiced some form of SP. They

included school systems and local governments. Zepeda et al., (2012) examined SP and

management four school systems, in order to analyze the practices used for handling

principals' succession. Study participants were superintendents, assistant superintendents,

principals, and other central office leaders from elementary, middle, and high school

levels. To gain an understanding of principal succession from a system perspective, semi

structured interviews were conducted for each of the 32 participants that described how

each school system planned and managed the succession of school principals.

The focus of Zepeda et al., (2012) study was not on each of the four school

systems as subjects of the study, but on the SP and management practices that occurred

among these school systems. The researchers also used Rothwell's (2011) 15

characteristics of effective SP. Data were collected during a 4-month period, through 32

semi structured interviews and Rothwell's characteristics were applied to each of the four

school systems. Findings revealed that, while there was a wide discrepancy in the degree

to which components of SP and management were in place, three or 75% of the school

systems recognized SP and management as being important. There was a wide variance

in the degree to which the characteristics of effective SP and management were in place

(Zepeda et al.,).

Galbraith, Smith, and Walker (2011) turned their attention to SP for librarians of

who were near the age of retirement at XXXXX University. Of 18 library leadership

positions at the university, 15 or 83%, of these positions were expected to be vacant

within the next 5 years--55% becoming vacant due to retirement eligibility. Under those

circumstances, Galbraith et al., (2011) studied the accomplishments in SP of academic

institutions, specifically those who were members of the ARL. Surveys were sent to 112

of the 125 ARL institutions who were selected to participate, with a response rate of 34

or 30.4% (Galbraith et al., 2011).

The survey instrument consisted of 25 open-ended, multiple choice, Likert-scaled

questions. These survey questions addressed the (a) opinions about the importance of SP,

(b) ages of the library leaders, and (c) specific preferences and practices in hiring library

leaders internally or externally. Library leadership positions included university

librarians, department chairs, and assistant university librarians. The age data showed

that approximately 33% of the library leaders were approaching the retirement age of 65.

Survey results revealed that 47% of the ARL respondents were fairly established in implementing SP, while 41% indicated that they were not established in implementing SP. There was a preference among the survey participants to hire internally versus externally. It was also found that numerous libraries were not equipped to fill the vacancies of library leadership positions (Galbraith et al., 2011).

Klein and Salk (2013) examined the degree of SP for presidents within private colleges and universities. The roles of the presidents, as well the boards of trustees, were also explored. Finally, the benefits and opportunities to SP were pursued. Of the 7,006 accredited institutions of higher education in the United States, 60% of them were private colleges and universities (Betts, Urias, & Chavez, 2009). No formal documentation existed of presidential SP efforts for a majority of the universities and colleges (Klein & Salk, 2013). Nonetheless, a few studies had focused on SP among community colleges. According to Klein and Salk (2013), 79% of community college presidents would retire by 2012, and 84% would retire by 2014.

Using a qualitative research design, Klein and Salk (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with 17 presidents and six boards of trustees' chairpersons from private higher educational institutions, along with two representatives from a national search firm that secured candidates for presidential positions of higher education. The interviews were intended to elicit participants' views and perceptions of SP and the current practices in their institutions. The questions for each participant were the same except for those of the search firm. Their questions were generalized to their overall experience. Participants described the extent to which SP was implemented for the presidency,

according to four principal themes: (a) SP is not being addressed well and (b) addressed at the interim president level, (c) mentoring and development of senior administrators, and (d) reliance on national search firms (Klein & Salk, 2013). Findings revealed that 19 of the 25 participants indicated that SP was not being practiced for the succession of their presidents. The study also indicated that 64% of the participants discussed the idea of practicing SP, but only at the interim president's level (Klein & Salk, 2013).

Succession Planning in For-Profit Organizations

Several globally integrated firms were advocates of SP. Other small and large global companies did not have any form of a succession plan in place. Their boards of directors struggled to find replacements when their chief executives left abruptly (Cascio, 2011). The author suggested that approximately 98% of global companies regarded CEO SP as a critical piece of the overall process of corporate governance; only 35% of those same companies were prepared for the departure of their CEOs, but they did not have a succession plan in place. According to one expert (Cascio, 2011),

> Some CEOs find the prospect of succession downright depressing. For them it means failure or organizational death. They love the job; it is their identity. They think of building a cohort of potential leaders, not as the path to growth and prosperity, but as a sure route to lame-duck status. (p. 1)

A similar study by Kowalewski, Moretti, and McGee's (2011) determined whether the best companies to work for in the state of XXXXX in 2010 had some form of succession plan in place. A two-part survey was conducted of all the states' public, for-profit, and NPOs that had been in business for at least one year and employed at least 15

employees. The survey was used to help identify the best companies to work for. Forty companies that were named the best companies to work for were sent an online survey to determine whether they had succession plans. Twenty-five companies, or 62.5%, responded to the survey. Findings revealed that 84% of the respondents had a succession plan or will have one in place within the next 3 years (Kowalewski, et al., 2011). While this study has shown that a majority of their companies have some form of succession plan in place, most of the studies performed by NPOs, public and private organizations had shown that SP is not being practiced.

The major problems regarding the use of SP in colleges and universities were that: (a) current presidents were aging, resulting in significant turnover; (b) current replacements for these leaders were limited, and (c) superior candidates would be very competitive (Bornstein, 2010). Challenges for public organizations without an SP were time constraints (54%), political constraints (40%), and lack of information (40%) (Leland, et al.,2012). No similar data were located for nonprofit or for-profit organizations.

Summary and Conclusions

Various sectors differed in their use of succession plans. Studies had shown that the majority of NPOs and public organizations do not practice SP. Participants from NPOs revealed that only 23% of these organizations had a succession plan in place (Carmen et al., 2010). For NPOs in a foreign country versus those in the United States 41% of 51 nonprofit executive directors had a succession plan in place compared to only 16% of 31 nonprofit executive directors in the United States (Santora et al., 2011). On

the other hand, public organizations like local health department, revealed that approximately 30% of these departments practice some form of SP (Schmalzried & Fallon 2007). An association in Marbury's (2012) study revealed that 54% of its members had no knowledge about whether a succession plan was in place.

Studies on the implementation of SP in for-profit organizations had shown mixed results. For example, companies from the state XXXXX study reported that 84% of the survey respondents had a succession in place (Kowaleswski at al., 2011). On the other hand, firms reported that only 35% of these companies had a succession plan in place (Cascio, 2011). Studies of colleges and universities show mixed results, as well: While only 47% of university librarians (Galbraith et al., 2011) were fairly established in implementing SP, 76% of university presidents (Klein & Salk, 2013) did not have any form of SP in place. Obstacles to practicing SP include limited replacement for leaders, time constraints, political constraints, lack of funding, and a lack of expertise in SP efforts.

Chapter 3 include the purpose of the study and my role as a researcher. Descriptions of the theoretical framework and research design and methodology will also be provided. I also addressed the issues of internal and external validity and required ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The executive directors of many CAAs are eligible for retirement in the next 5 years, and SP is vital to the continuity and vitality of these federally-funded NPOs in order to prepare the next generation of professionals to fill these leadership positions. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the extent to which the boards of directors in a southern state's CAAs had a succession plan in place with an implementation strategy for their executive directors and to identify the successes, challenges, and consequences they experienced in implementing or not implementing SP. For this study, I collected primary data from study participants' semi structured interviews and secondary data through the review of documents from the organizations under study, such as by-laws, succession plans, and other operating documents and archival data. In this chapter, I will detail the research methodology of the study, including the research design and its rationale, and my role as a researcher, including any ethical issues and biases that may have occurred. The sampling strategy, data collection instruments, and other sources of data will also be identified as well as issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The research questions I developed to guide this study were:

RQ1: To what extent do a southern state's CAAs developed and implemented SP for their executive directors?

RQ2: What successes, challenges, and consequences were these organizations experiencing from implementing or not implementing SP?

This qualitative case study reflected pragmatic worldviews, in which researchers seek understanding of the world in which they live having developed subjective meaning of their experiences (see Creswell, 2007). This stance leads researchers to look for a complexity of views rather than narrowing the meaning into a few ideas or categories (Creswell). The participants' views were only meaningful within the context of understanding the value of SP because it was their understanding and actions that lead to success.

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is defined as a "means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 232). This research approach requires that researchers study things, programs, events, people or culture, in their natural settings and make sense of or interpret the meanings people bring to those experiences (Cole, 2012). The researcher is the instrument of data gathering and analyzing data in qualitative research rather than relying on surveys and statistical analysis (Merriam, 2009). These data may be derived from interviews. Interview questions can be altered somewhat depending on the interview flow, the needs of the study, the responses provided by the participant, and as long as the researcher maintains focus on the research questions (Cole, 2012).

The proposed qualitative case study reflected pragmatic worldviews, in which researchers sought understanding of the world in which they lived (Creswell, 2007), having developed subjective meaning of their experiences. This will lead the researchers

to look for a complexity of views rather than narrowing the meaning into a few ideas or categories. The participants' views were only meaning within the context of understanding the value of SP because it was their understanding and actions that lead to success. The objective of this study was to determine the extent to which CAAs in a southern state practice SP and what successes, challenges, and consequences these organizations experienced from implementing or not implementing SP.

Research Design

I used a single case study design to focus on the 16 CAAs in a southern state. This method was used in order to develop a rich, holistic understanding of the extent to which nonprofit executive directors, along with their boards of directors, practiced SP efforts. The results of this study also illustrate the successes and challenges resulting from implementing or not implementing SP. In addition, I examined the differences among the succession plans to connect them to the failure or success of SP. I conducted semi structured interviews with five executive directors and 12 board members from five CAAs in a southern state. The interview questions were adapted from the Neighborhood Partnership Fund's 2006 Succession Planning Project Report. I derived secondary data from organizational documents, such as by-laws, annual reports, succession plans, and strategic plans.

Research Design Rationale

In order to find the in-depth meaning of a problem, portion of the culture, or phenomenon, researchers typically used qualitative inquiry (Williams, 2013). I considered the designs of narrative research, phenomenology, and a case study for this

study. The focus of a narrative involves the life of an individual, while the focus of a

phenomenology is on the lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon among several

individuals (Creswell, 2007). On the other hand, a case study involves a specific case

with the intent of examining an issue (Creswell, 2007). Narrative research is a qualitative

strategy in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or a small

number of individuals to provide detailed stories or experiences about their lives

(Creswell, 2009). According to Patton (2002), a narrative analysis includes interview

transcripts, historical memoirs, and biographies. This type of analysis reveals cultural

and social patterns through the lens of these individual experiences (Patton, 2002). A

narrative research design is appropriate in capturing the lived experiences of nonprofit

executive directors' personal lives but not for addressing the extent to which nonprofit

executive directors practice SP. An individual's personal story would not have answered

the research questions.

Phenomenological studies describe the human experiences of a concept or

phenomenon of several individuals as opposed to a narrative analysis of a single person's

experience (Creswell, 2007). This type of study focuses on the images of what

individuals experience and how it was that they experienced what they did (Patton,

2002). According to Merriam (2009), this type of design is appropriate for studying the

sentimental, emotional, and most intense experiences of a human being's life. I did not

select this design because it pertained more to the experiences of an individual's life

rather than the experiences of a change within an organization, from an individual

perspective.

I believe a case study was the appropriate design for this study because it allowed me to explore the contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context and is preferred in situations in which the main research questions were *how* or *why* questions and the researcher has little or no control over behavioral events (Creswell, 2009). This design allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, relationships, communities, or programs and supports the deconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Yin, 2003). This type of study can include single or multiple cases, can be limited to quantitative evidence, and can be a useful method in doing an evaluation (Yin, 2014).

The qualitative case study is an approach in which the researcher explores a case or cases such as a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007). The cases are bounded in time through the detailed, in-depth data collection of multiple sources of information over a sustained period (Creswell, 2007). In this study, these multiple sources of information included observations, interviews, documents, and reports. Similarly, Williams (2013) defined a case study as an event, program, community, or some other unit of study. In a single case study, the researcher focuses on the issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue (Creswell, 2009). According to Berg (2009), by concentrating on a single individual, institution, community, or phenomenon, researchers may uncover the manifested interactions of significant factors characteristic to the phenomenon, individual, institution, or community. With multiple case studies, on the other hand, the researcher focuses on one issue and then select multiple cases to study to illustrate the issue (Creswell, 2009).

When conducting a case study, a rigorous methodological path should be followed (Cole, 2012). This begins with a thorough literature review, along with the careful and thoughtful posing of research questions (Cole, 2012). A dedication to formal and explicit procedures when doing the research is also equally important (Cole, 2012). The researcher should understand and openly acknowledge the strengths and limitations of a case study research (Baster & Jack, 2008). According to Baster and Jack (2008), one of the pitfalls associated with case study is the tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study. A way to avoid this problem is to place boundaries on what will and will not be studied, in order to ensure that the study remains manageable in scope. Once the research question and the case and its boundaries have been determined, a decision must be made on the type of case study that will be appropriate (Baster & Jack, 2008).

The three types of case studies are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies (Yin, 2014). The goal of an exploratory study is to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry (Yin, 2014). This method focuses mainly on *what* questions. Any of the five exploratory case study's research methods can be used. These five methods are experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study (Yin, 2014). According Yin (2003), the exploratory case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. How the product innovation process is managed and organized in small-sized firms is an example of a research question that is suitable to be answered with this type of case study (Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

In contrast, *how many* and *how much* questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case study, history, or experiment as the preferred research method (Yin, 2014). This type of case study is used when seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed casual links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies (Yin, 2003). An example of this type of research question would be: What were the outcomes for a particular managerial reorganization? (Yin, 2003).

A descriptive case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life content in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). This particular method forms the *how many* or *how much* line of inquiry and favor survey methods or the analysis of archival data (Yin, 2014). This method is beneficial when the research goal is to describe the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon or when it is to be predictive about certain outcomes (Yin, 2014). For example, this type of case study can be used to provide rich, evidence-supporting statements such as "family businesses were very likely to fail during the succession process" (Massis & Kotlar, 2014, p. 16).

After an exploration of each design, I determined an exploratory case study methodology to be the most appropriate because I it allowed me to explore the experiences of an organizational change in CAAs from the perspective of individual participants. In this single case study, the unit of study was SP practices among five of the 16 CAAs in a southern state. The case study method requires that the unit of analysis must be chosen. The unit of analysis relates to the fundamental problem of defining the case to be studied (Patton, 2002). For example, the researcher may seek to analyze the

individual, a group of individuals, a process, or a program. For this study, the unit of

analysis was the process of SP for CAA executive directors in a southern state.

Role of the Researcher

I had worked for a CAA for the last 20 years serving in a variety of capacities. I

was a manager and coordinator and work closely with other senior level members of

CAAs in a southern state. I also worked with other local, state, and federal agencies or

stakeholders that support CAAs. Yin (1994) suggested that researchers' previous

practical experience validated their knowledge of the subject. Knowing the techniques

and issues of the topic first hand was helpful in designing probing questions,

understanding the experiences of the participants, and being aware of the issues

(Williams, 2013). Given my broad experience with CAAs in a southern state, I made

every attempt to identify any biases, as well as control any personal biases that I may had,

throughout the entire proposed study, in order that the research will not be compromised.

Because I was currently employed at one of the southern state's CAAs, it was a part of

this study.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The sample consisted of five of the 16 CAAs in the state of a southern state. The

participants of the study included five CAA executive directors and 12 board members.

Three of the board members represented the community sector, four were from the public

sector, and five represented the private sector. I used the purposeful sampling technique,

which allows the researcher to use subjective judgment and provides the opportunity to

select sampling units that appear to be representative of the population (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Of the several strategies for purposeful sampling, I used the typical case sampling strategy, as well as the snowball or chain sampling approach.

The typical case sampling strategy illustrated what is typical, normal, or average. According to Patton (2002), the processes described for the typical program may be used to provide a frame of reference for case studies of poor or excellent sites when entire programs were the unit of analysis. For the study, three small and three large CAAs were selected, to gain a holistic approach in determining the extent to which SP was being practiced. The snowball or chain sampling approach was used to obtain recommendations to determine which six CAAs in a southern state to interview regarding SP practices. I will also use the snowball approach to obtain recommendation from executive directors to determine which of their boards of directors will be interviewed. This strategy was appropriate for locating rich information from knowledgeable informants (Patton). For this study, participants included executive directors and boards of directors of five of the 16 CAAs in a southern state.

The criteria to be used to determine the inclusion or exclusion of subjects for the proposed study was each executive director and board members for each of the sectors. Boards of directors participated in the study based upon executive directors' recommendations. I identified contacted and recruit all participants through snowball strategy techniques. Five CAAs in a southern state will be a part of this study. I will conduct additional interviews until data are saturated, that is, until the interviews provide no further insight or new information. If I am not able to identify a sufficient number of

participants to interview, I will consider additional board members per CAA or other

CAAs in a southern state.

Data Collection

Participants. Initial contacts were made with six executive directors of the 16

CAAs in a southern state to inform them of the study. To follow appropriate protocol,

advice and instructions were sought from each executive director as to how to best

approach and advise their board members of the study. Each director was also requested

to select three board members, one from each sector, to participate in the study. I

planned to interview one executive director, along with three board members per site,

depending on recommendations from both purposive and snowball sampling techniques.

I contacted potential participants via face-to-face communications, e-mail, or telephone,

and scheduled interviews were conducted for 1-day trip to each CAA. I used my

personal vehicle to commute to and from each CAA in a southern state that will

participate in the study. All sites were located within a 100-mile radius from my current

residence.

The date and time for the interviews were arranged via phone contact with the

board members, executive directors, or their administrative assistants once all participants

forwarded a copy of their informed consent form. Informed consent forms were e-mailed

to all participants. Upon receipt of signed consent, date and time for interviews were

arranged via phone contact. I requested in advance that executive directors provide me

with copies of secondary data on the day of the interviews. My request included:

succession plans, annual reports, bylaws, board minutes from the last 3 years, strategic plans, and IRS Form 990s.

The informed consent form described the purpose of the study, the reason I requested participation, and the participants' and researcher's responsibilities. The consent form also specified the voluntary nature of their participation, the risks and benefits, the lack of compensation, and the confidential nature of the study. The participants also had the opportunity to review and revise their interview transcriptions, which enhanced the validity of the results. All interview transcriptions were e-mailed, and the participants had two weeks to reply, after which time I assumed transcriptions were accurate. Lastly, the contact information, as well as Walden's Institutional Review Board approval identification number were included. Walden's University's approval number for this study is #02-16-16-0183809.

In addition, study participants were notified that their privacy were protected by employing two methods. First, I stored all electronic data with password protection on my personal computer, and all paper data in a locked file. I was the only person who had access to these electronic and paper data. Second, without revealing individual interviewees, study results will be presented in the form of themes and concepts, with no names or other identifying information attached to quotes, paraphrased, or summarized information, or other data.

Interviews. I attempted to interview the executive directors and three board members from each of six CAAs, to determine the extent to which SP was being practiced; as well as the successes, challenges, and consequences that these organizations

experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. I assigned specific numbers to

all participants in order to protect their privacy. This list of names, along with the

assigned numbers, will be stored in a safe place, in order that others do not have access.

In order to compare the perspectives of different participants from different points of

view, as well as to increase validity, it would advantageous to interview 18 board

members. According to Patton (2002), triangulating data sources involves comparing

and cross-checking the consistency of information derivative at different times and by

different means.

I used semi structured, open-ended interview questions, and informed potential

participants that the interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview

questions are listed in Appendix A. These questions were adapted from the

Neighborhood Partnership Fund's SP Project Report. I conducted each interview from

the participants' offices or within an enclosed area of the CAA in order to eliminate or

minimize interruptions. A digital audio recorder was used to record all interviews. A

transcription service was hired to transcribe the interview data. During the interviews, I

took field notes to record nuances of the interview that may help to interpret findings, and

to formulate new questions that may arise during the interviews. Also, taking notes of

what was said will facilitate later analysis and serve as a backup in the event the recorder

malfunctions (Patton, 2002).

Other data. I collected secondary data that included succession plans, annual

reports, bylaws, boards of directors' minutes from the last 3 years, IRS 990s, and

strategic plans during the interviews. During the scheduling of the dates and times of the

directors' interviews, I requested that they make available to me copies of the secondary

data on the day of their interviews. Such data were stored in a locked safe located in my

home and will be accessible only to me. These various sources of data can provide a

method of triangulation, which is reviewing multiple and different sources of data as a

means of cross-checking and validating evidence (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Data Collection Procedures

The executive directors of six CAAs in a southern state was contacted via e-mail

to explain the purpose of the study and the interview. Each CAA were e-mailed a short

but brief invitation to participate in the proposed study, as well as an attached agency

Letter of Cooperation draft. Upon receipt of signed Community Partnership letters, I

followed-up within a week by phone to request permission to interview him or her and

members of their boards for the study, as well as to collect secondary data. Such data

were collected from each site the day of the interview. I also informed all participants

that they were assigned a number for identification purposes without divulging his or her

name or place of employment.

After receiving permission from the executive directors, I sent via mail or e-mail

the letter of invitation to participate to all participants. Interviews were audio recorded to

ensure accuracy in reporting the outcome of the interview. During the interview, I took

notes to ensure understanding and retention of the information and to document body

language and gestures that may be pertinent to the study. Interviews took place during

the regular work day whenever it is appropriate to do so, or took place at other times,

determined for the convenience of the participant. I assigned all participants a number

and that number remained assigned to them throughout the duration of the study. The assigned numbers were used to identify individual participants without divulging their names or places of employment.

Prior to beginning the interviews, I reviewed the interview process with the participants, so they knew what to expect. The process was reviewed with each participant, and the opportunity was given for participants to ask questions, prior to the commencement of the interview questions. I also reviewed the informed consent form (Appendix D). I reminded each participant that they will receive a copy of the transcribed interview via email to review prior to inclusion in the study. All participants had the opportunity to request a copy of the executive summary, during the interview or via e-mail or phone call to me. Each interviewing site, along with the participant, received a thank you letter for participating in the study.

Following the interviews, I hired a professional transcriber to transcribe the audio recordings. During the interviews, I informed participants that I will e-mail a copy of their transcribed interviews, to allow them to check for accuracies prior to inclusion in the study. I requested all interviewees to e-mail or call me with any changes or clarifications to the data that they believed were inaccurate. I used the revised copy of the transcription for analysis purposes. The transcriptions with all accompanying data were stored for a minimum of 5 years, after which all paper and electronic data were destroyed.

Data Analysis Plan

Creswell (2009) suggested that data analysis was a continuous process that involves reflections about the data, questions that analyze the participants' responses, and field documentation throughout the study. I analyzed the audio tape of the interviews, transcripts of the interviews, secondary documents, and field notes to determine the extent to which executive directors and boards of directors of CAAs in a southern state developed and implemented SP. In order to identify all participating organizations, as well as to gain an organizational background of each participating site, research notes included the size of the agency, number of staff members, number of board members, number of people in executive/leadership positions, current annual operating budget, number of years in operation, executive directors' generation classification, and length of service. Secondary documents, including succession plans, annual reports, bylaws, boards' minutes for the last 3 years, and strategic plans, were analyzed, as well.

A file was created for each participant of each CAA containing a copy of the transcribed interview, along with my field notes. I labeled all documents with alphabetical letters for each CAA, along with an assigned number for each of its participants. I used a system of coding for organizing and managing the data. According to Creswell (2009), coding is the process of organizing the material into segments of text in order to develop a general meaning of each segment. Creswell (2009) identified several methods to the coding process. One method may be developed from information that emerges from the participant's responses. Second, coding may be predetermined by identifying anticipated key words and themes. Finally, a combination of codes may be

derived from the participants' responses and the predetermined codes. Some common themes under which I organized my coding scheme were leadership transition, organizational change, baby boomer generation, succession plans, leadership training, lack of funding, time constraints, and political constraints.

I used NVivo11 software to assist with the coding, sorting, organization, and analysis of the interview data collected. A transcription service was hired to transcribe the audiotape and field notes for submission to NVivo11 software. This analysis software program, used for qualitative studies, can recognize keywords that were used often in the interviews and identified areas of importance. NVivo can classify the material, and assign themes, ideas, and relationships that will be used to for analytical purposes. This software can help the researcher make sense of unstructured data (QSR International, 2011). It can also be used to develop graphs and charts (QSR International, 2011).

I used a daily log to describe how the data, including field notes, were captured. Secondary and demographic data were also reviewed, analyzed, and logged. Field notes, as well as, secondary and demographic data were filed according to each individual site. Each of these files were labeled and assigned a false name to protect the privacy of each site. Any data would help determine the extent to which some form of SP was practiced were duly noted and submitted to NVivo for further analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Internal Validity

A careful design of the study, as well as applying well-developed, scientifically accepted standards to the research, with the goal of presenting a holistic account, is what makes a study scientific, rigorous, and trustworthy (Merriam, 2009). Interviews, document analysis, and observations of the research site area were the three types of data collection for a case study (Creswell, 2007). The case study method thus assured triangulation, which is a means of increasing the credibility or validity of the study (Patton, 2002). Member checks were another way of increasing the credibility or validity of this study (Merriam). These checks may be done by taking the final report or specific themes back to participants and determine whether these participants believe they were quoted accurately (Creswell, 2009). For the study, participants received a copy of their transcribed interview via email, along with a request that they make any changes or clarifications to ensure their accuracy and meaning.

A core characteristic of qualitative research was reflectivity. According to Creswell (2009), good qualitative research contained comments about how the researchers' interpretations of the findings were shaped by their background. Creswell (2007) suggested that the researcher take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. Creswell (2007) also suggested that the researcher develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and convey details about the site and the people that lend credibility to the study. I attempted to clarify, as well comment on, any biases that may be encountered during the study. I made it a point to set aside all

preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of the participants in this study.

External Validity

Blum (2009) suggested that external validity involved the extent to which the study results can be generalized from one research sample to a larger population. Quantitative studies tend to produce results that can be generalized to other populations. Qualitative studies, when using case studies, may not be generalized to other populations due to their smaller sample size. According to Creswell (2009), these types of threats arose when the researcher drew incorrect interpretations from the data to other participants, settings, and prior or current situations. These issues were associated with the biases of researchers that included (a) their interactions on the outcome of the research study, such as misinterpreting or miscoding the participants' responses, and (b) their influences of the introduction of researchers into participant' responses and environment (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008). One way to address these anticipates problems, as well as suppress researchers' biases onto study participants were to use some form of bracketing.

Bracketing involved a mental exercise in which the researchers identify and set aside preconceived assumptions used in a social sense (Creswell, 2007). According to Tufford and Newman (2012), researchers used bracketing to mitigate unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research that may result in detrimental outcomes, thereby increasing the rigor of the project. The close relationship of the researcher to the research topic can lead to researcher preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Nevertheless,

bracketing can provide protection for the researcher from the cumulative effects of emotionally charged information, which may lead to skewed results and biased interpretations (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

It is important that the researcher, as well as the participants, take caution to control the way their emotions affect the formation of perceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2012). On the other hand, the authors also stressed that the researcher cannot assure the participants will be compliant in this regard. Hence, the researcher can mitigate the negative effect of bias by writing observational memos and field notes that express the feelings and thoughts of the researcher. Tufford and Newman (2012) suggested that once these biases were bought to the forefront in memos, they were more likely to be held in remission to ensure sensitivity to other perspectives from the participants. This will allow the opportunity for exploration of emerging information from participants that would contradict the researchers' presumptions. I used this method of bracketing during data collections and analysis stages of the research.

Reliability

According to Creswell (2009), "qualitative reliability indicates that a researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. (p. 190)" Given that I collected data through semi structured interviews, the participants can guide the interview and provide insight into whether or not some form of SP was being practiced and the perceived implications of doing or not doing so. The methodology remained consistent across the sample. The documentation of the data collection procedures in a

detailed fashion, along with the consistent use of these procedures throughout this study, helped ensure reliability.

Objectivity

The strategy used to address reliability consisted of audit trails and triangulation. According to Creswell (2007), an audit trail consisted of chronological narrative entries of research activities such as interviews, transcriptions, field notes, analytic activities, and initial coding efforts. An audit trail may be established to verify the rigor of the study's fieldwork and conformability of the data collection in order to minimize bias, maximize accuracy, and report impartially (Patton, 2002). I kept a log and field notes to describe how data were collected, to include dates of interviews, individuals who were interviewed, the length of each interview, participants signed consent forms, recorded and transcribed interviews, and copies of public documents.

Ethical Procedures

During the interviews, I took measures to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality; and to show respect for organizational cultural values. I obtained written participant informed consent to conduct the interviews. It explained the purpose of the study, and assured participants of attempts to protect their privacy and confidentiality, both before and after the study. Further, the informed consent form indicated that participants will incur no penalty, nor will there be ramifications for declining to be interviewed, and that they could withdrew at any time during the interview process. The study was truthful about its objective, with no deception in plans for collecting

information. All CAA documents and participant names were coded, and names were removed.

Given my intimate understanding of CAAs in a southern state, I made every attempt to identify any biases, as well as control any personal biases that I may had, throughout the entire study, in order that the research not be compromised. I employed bracketing to identify and set aside personal biases. I also designated a second person to review my work to ensure study's validity. Because I was employed at one of a southern state's CAAs, it was not a part of the study.

Summary

Chapter 3 examines the qualitative case study research design and approach that was used for the study. It describes the justification for the study, population included, sampling strategy, and sample size. In addition, I explained my role as the researcher, and described the instrumentation, data collection, and analysis procedures used. Chapter 4 will give general information on the study's setting, as well as the demographics of the study participants. The data collection and analysis procedures, trustworthiness evidence, and study results will also be provided.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which CAA executive directors in a southern state practiced SP. Additionally, I sought to illuminate the successes, challenges, and consequences of CAAs implementing or not implementing SP. The research questions were:

RQ1: To what extent do a southern state's CAAs develop and implement SP for their executive directors?

RQ2: What successes, challenges, and consequences were these organizations experiencing from implementing or not implementing SP?

In this chapter, I will provide detailed information on the setting of the study, participant demographics (Appendix B), data collection and analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, and study results.

Setting

The community research partners (the participating sites) included six CAAs from a southern state. Each site that agreed to participate in the study signed letters of cooperation which gave me authorization to conduct interviews with their six executive directors, along with three of each agency's board members (one each from public, private, and community sectors).

Demographics

I used purposeful sampling techniques to recruit prospective participants. This strategy allowed me to use subjective judgment and to select sampling units that appeared

to be representative of the population (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I used

the snowball approach to obtain recommendations from executive directors to select

board members that may agree to be interviewed. Six CAAs and their executive directors

initially agreed to participate in the study. One CAA withdrew due to board members'

unwillingness to participate. Five CAAs in a southern state agreed to participate in my

study, and I assigned the following codes to protect the organizations' identities: CAA1,

CAA2, CAA3, CAA4, and CAA5. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of each site.

Table 2

Organization Demographics

	Year of formation	Current operating budget ($)	Number of counties	# of staff members	# of board of director members
CAA1	1966	7,499,168	3	189	15
CAA2	1967	39,458,011	12	562	22
CAA3	1969	6,955,223	8	101	22
CAA4	1965	8,024,739	3	260	15
CAA5	1966	5,040,096	5	318	19

Note. In accordance with each site's IRS Form 990, the above data were filed for the
year 2015 for CAA5 and year 2014 for sites CAA1 through CAA4.

The study sample consisted of executive directors from five CAAs, and 12

members of the agencies' boards of directors. I replaced participants' names with

pseudonyms to protect their identities. Participants' roles as executive directors and

board member representatives from private, public, and community sectors were denoted

by the following symbols: (a) P for participant; (b) E for executive director; and (c) PR,

PU, and C for private, public, and community respectively, representing each sector of

CAA board members. The demographics of study participants, along with the number of years served in their current roles, are illustrated in Appendix E.

Four individuals participated from CAA1: the executive director and three board members (one from each sector). One participant's interview failed to record, and I decided to not reschedule that interview because this participant acknowledged an inability to answer many of the interview questions. There were four participants from CAA2: three board members, one from each sector, and their executive director. Under the leadership of the executive director, CAA3's participants consisted of four board members, with one from the community, two from the public, and one from the private sectors. Due to their board members' unwillingness to participate in the study, only two participants from CAA4's board agreed to be interviewed.

The executive director requested several times for board members to agree to an interview, however; only one of them agreed. One was the executive director and the other was board member from the private sector. There were originally four participants from CAA5, but the executive director's and one board member's interviews failed to record. The executive director's interview was rescheduled, but the board member would not consider another interview. Another participant withdrew from the study due to interview scheduling issues but was replaced with another. Study participants from CAA5 consisted of the executive director and two board members with one from the community and one from the private sector. Participant demographics are listed in Appendix B.

Data Collection

I e-mailed six executive directors of CAAs in a southern state brief and informal requests to participate in the research study, along with Letters of Cooperation). I received signed commitments from all six of the CAAs, but one of them decided not to participate due to time constraints. I immediately contacted five additional CAA executive directors and received only one signed commitment. Formal Invitations to Participate in Research Study, along with Participant Consent Forms were then e-mailed to these five CAA executive directors.

Using the snowball sampling technique, I also made a request for the executive directors to select knowledgeable members of their board directors (three from each sector) to participate in the study. This method was chosen in order to respect the relationship between executive directors and their board of directors that were unique to CAAs. According to Community Action Program Legal Services (2015),

> The executive director will ensure that the board chair has all the information
> he/she needs to enable board members to fulfill their responsibilities of making
> reasonable, informed decisions on behalf of the organization and acting in the best
> interest of the organization. (p. 26)

If I did not receive a response to the initial e-mail after 2 weeks, I followed up with phone calls.

Although all of the executive directors agreed to be interviewed, the recruitment process for board members was quite challenging and time consuming. It took several months for the executive directors to obtain commitments from their board members to

agree to an interview. A week before interviews were to be scheduled, the sixth CAA that I recruited suddenly withdrew from the study because the executive director could not convince any board members to participate. Ultimately, 14 board members agreed to participate in the study. I sent board members the same Invitation to Participate in Research Study and Participant Consent Form documents via e-mail. At this stage, I was not satisfied with the number of commitments and pursued other CAAs, e-mailing and calling five additional CAAs over a 2-week period that were within 300 miles of my residence; none of these agencies agreed to participate in the study. Due to a lack of time and resources, I decided to stay focused on scheduling and conducting interviews with the five CAAs that had already committed to participate.

Over a period of 5 months, I conducted 17 interviews: five with executive directors, three with board members representing the community sector, four with board members representing the public, and five with board members representing the private sectors. Most of the interviews were conducted at the CAA sites in quiet, enclosed spaces. One board member's interview was conducted in a noisy public restaurant, one board member's interview occurred at their personal residence, and two board members' interviews were conducted at quiet, enclosed spaces in their place of employment. One executive director's interview was conducted over the phone due to medical reasons. I used my personal vehicle to commute to and from each interview. All participating sites were located within 250 miles of my residence at the time of the study.

I used semi structured, open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) and informed all participants that the interviews would last approximately 60-90 minutes.

Prior to beginning the interviews, I reviewed the interview process with all participants so that they knew what to expect. I also reviewed the consent forms and gave participants the opportunity to ask questions. All participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and that copies of their transcribed interviews would be e-mailed to them in order to perform an accuracy check prior to inclusion in the study. They were given 2 weeks to make any changes to the data or provide clarifications. Three participants made minor changes, and I used the revised, transcription copies for analytical purposes. After conducting all 17 interviews, information from participants became repetitive, indicating that a saturation point had been reached.

I recorded all interviews with a professional audio recorder. This device recorded in digital audio formats onto compact flash memory cards. I used separate compact flash memory cards to record and store participants' interviews for each participating site, in order to keep the data organized. These memory cards were downloaded to NVivo's Transcribe Me, a professional transcription service hired to transcribe all interview data. Once transcripts were available, I transferred them to NVivo. I also created individual files in NVivo for each CAA, along with individual subfiles for each one of the CAA participants. All transcripts, along with participants' audio sections of the interview were transferred to these subfiles. In addition to the interviews, I collected secondary data from each of the CAAs, which included succession plans, annual reports, bylaws, boards of directors' minutes from the last 3 years, IRS 990s, and strategic plans. I also took research notes on the CAAs' year of formation, current operating budget, and the number

of counties being served as well as the number of staff members and board members. This information was included in the CAAs' IRS 990s forms.

I created files for each study participant from each CAA. The files contained interview transcriptions, interview protocols, records of communication, participants' contact information, secondary data, and e-mail correspondence. To protect participants' identities, all files were labeled according to the assigned pseudonyms. Two additional files were created to enhance my ability to gather and analyze data in the field; the first was an Interview Protocol Form, which served as an introductory guide to follow with study participants before commencement of the interview. This form included spaces to record a participant's name, date, time, location of the interview, interview setting, and a brief introduction to the study (see Appendix C). Second, a Record of Communication form served to document all instances of contact with the participants, with spaces to record the date, the person and their position, method of contact, and reason for the contact as well as the results of the contact (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), coding is the process of organizing the material into segments of text in order to develop the general meaning of the data. Creswell identified three methods of approaching the coding process: (a) developing information that emerges from the participants' responses, (b) creating predetermined codes by identifying anticipated key word or themes, and (c) a blended method combining emergent themes from the participants' responses with the predetermined codes. I used emergent themes from the participants' responses to code my data. I used NVivo 11

software (an upgrade from NVivo 10) to assist with the coding, sorting, organization, and analysis of the research data.

In the first stage, I coded all participants' responses to 25 open-ended, semi structured interview questions (Appendix A). The second stage consisted of analyzing the last 3 years of board of directors' minutes for the five CAAs. While analyzing those minutes, field notes were created in NVivo to capture information from the board minutes that I considered pertinent in addressing the research questions. Themes emerged and were identified. I used those themes to create codes.

The fourth stage of this process entailed recoding all participants' interview responses to the themes. I categorized those into primary, secondary, and tertiary themes. The secondary and tertiary themes provided details and explanation of the primary themes. The data that resulted from the participants' responses, as well information from the CAAs' board minutes produced 46 themes and subthemes, along with 330 theme references (see Appendix E). These themes were presented in order of frequency of use.

Reflections Upon Themes

Seven central themes emerged from the executive directors' and board members' perceptions of the successes and challenges that they experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. These themes included organizational identity, sustainability, salaries, leadership, governance, and leadership development. Appendix E provides the table of themes and comment frequency for each.

Organizational Identity

There were 57 mentions of organizational identity. These included the secondary themes strengths, weaknesses, politics, and organizational culture; and the tertiary themes multiple job descriptions, staff longevity, loyalty, and accountability. Carmin and Balser (2009) defined organizational identity as a set of features that staff members understand to be central, distinctive, and enduring within their organizations. A political concern to CAAs' organizational identity occurred when CAAs were faced with federal sequesters in recent years. According to one of the CAA's board minutes,

Agency was subjected to sequester cuts of 5% or approximately $85,000 cuts from the CSBG program. Solutions were presented to absorb some of the loss. Two senior leveled positions would not be filled, and the agency would absorb the positions with the current staff.

In terms of organizational culture, when asked the participants to imagine being retired and finding out that their organization was barely surviving with its new executive director. I then asked what about their organization's current plan that could potentially prevent the success of this transition. P9E3 stressed:

We didn't anticipate, and we weren't flexible enough to change. We stayed in a mindset from the status quo from the early days of when these organizations ran certain programs and there were plenty of administrative funds to run those programs. And we ran those until we ran them into the ground. We used up non-programming monies to sustain programs that did not have the sustainability to succeed.

Another organizational culture concern in terms of multiple job positions occurred when addressing the salaries of CAAs' staff members. P12PR13 replied:

> CEOs typically don't come into contact with their clients. In this business, we do, because we're expected to wear tin hats. And so, in essence, we are non-profit managers. We are public administrators and there are several hats that everybody wears.

Sustainability

A second theme that emerged from the participant's responses to the interview questions and from the board of directors' minutes was the sustainability of these CAAs. There were 50 comments on sustainability. These included the secondary themes: funding, limited resources, unrestricted funding, and program guidelines. Tertiary themes consisted of mandates and program integration. Wright (2012) argued that, while these organizations were critical to the lives of their constituents, the sustainability of these organizations was of great concern. P3PU1 stressed: "Without money, without the grants, without the funds, without the volunteers, it would fall apart." P12PR3 argued: "We have got to develop a self-sustainable revenue stream. We can't operate off of grants, and federal and state funding streams. We have to create some type of fee-based model."

Similarly, P11PU3 argued that

> The environment has changed just in the last couple years. Our access to money is less than it's ever been. It's more competitive than it's ever been. So, access to revenue streams is going to be a challenge for long term.

Salaries

When addressing SP, staff salary levels represented one of the most important topics of discussion for the participants. There were 47 comments on salaries. These included the following secondary themes: senior-level and executive director position turnover, compensation, and college graduates. P7PU2's perception of the salary levels of its staff members was: "When you look at these people's salary, and how they reach people, and how important they are to these people; I would say staff members' salary was considered fair." When asked about weaknesses of the CAA that could present problems if the executive director retired or suddenly had to leave, P14E4 stressed that they had lost the knowledge base of their senior-leveled staff members due to turnover. According to this study participant, "It's the pay and you have to do what's best for your family. We're here to serve families, so we can't tell our staff to make their families suffer."

Governance

This theme produced 32 comments that included secondary themes: board engagement and board challenges. The participants often brought up board governance when discussing SP development efforts and the factors that make it difficult to implement these plans. The responsibility for the organization's SP rests with the board of directors. When asked about the development of SP, P7PU2 replied, we got our committee together, got us a chair, and we completed the succession plan. It was presented to the board on April 27, 2013. P8PR2 also described the procedures used to develop SP:

The board chair asked me to chair the committee. There were nine of us on the committee. We met after one of our board meetings were everyone agreed to serve. And then I attended the workshops in XXXXX and collected various handouts and reviewed them.

Those handouts were collected while attending the Community Action Partnership's Annual Convention. The participant shared those documents with me; they described the role of the board of director' in SP, executive director job duties, the benefits of SP, and succession plan development. P8PR2 also attended the Community Action Partnership's annual convention. The participant attended a workshop entitled, "Succession Planning for Tomorrow's Leaders," which illustrated leadership competencies and behaviors needed to effectively plan and manage an organization's talent base. The ultimate result was to prepare these leaders for succession. In the end, the participant created a handout from the two training events attended. That handout was presented to the board's SP committee for their review and the succession plan was eventually created and approved by the full board.

The challenges that these CAAs' governing boards encountered were also referenced by the participants. These challenges included: (a) separation of powers between board and staff; (b) their roles as board members; and (c) the decisions being made on behalf of the agency. When asked about the problems that could potentially delay the executive succession process, P12PR3 replied, "All board members must have the vision, the knowledge, the skills, and the abilities to ascertain what risks are calculated and which ones are not."

Leadership

Leadership was another theme that emerged from participants' responses to the interview questions, with 30 comments that included the secondary theme: capabilities and tertiary themes: current and previous leadership, as well as mentorship. The participants referred to the leadership roles portrayed by their executive director and predecessors, as well as their abilities to lead their organizations. According to Galbraith and Smith (2012), an effective succession plan provides opportunities for employees to develop leadership skills that could be used in their current positions and in any future positions. When asked about some of their hopes in terms of hiring the successor, P16E5 replied, "That person should be passionate and sympathetic to the cause; however, he's got to be realistic in terms of finances."

When asked for some of the strengths of the organization that could be helpful in an executive director's succession process, P7PU2 suggested, "We have great program directors with a lot of knowledge. And then they have a great staff." The participant elaborated further when speaking in terms of program directors' engagement at board meetings:

> We see the employees. We see the program directors. We see them, and they report to the board every two months. Whenever we have our board meeting, they're there. And I feel that they are a great staff. They are great people.

Leadership Development

Leadership development was another important theme that emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions with 28 comments, including the

secondary themes: staff and board. When asked what professional development opportunities were provided for those in leadership positions such as executive directors, program directors, and other administrators, study participants stated that the OCS and ACAAA offered professional development opportunities, on a continuous basis, to executive directors, board members, and senior-level, as well front-line staff persons.

When asked how SP fits within leadership development efforts, participants tended to avoid the question. P11PU responded, "If we had a deputy director, then I think the succession plan would work. The way we do it now, there's no guarantee — and, again, remember, we're not training everybody to step into a leadership program." This participant suggested, "I'm not sure that we would always have the talent we needed in house to fill. These are big positions."

P13PU4's perception of leadership development during board retreats' were as follows:

> We have had several leadership programs here through the years, and actually
> we're having—at the end of this week—we're having a board retreat for training.
> And we go over the policy procedures while we're there. So, every year the
> board meets, and the heads of departments of CAA3. And we do have people
> come in for leadership programs."

P7PU2 stated, "We go to legislative conferences and present testimonies to visit the senators and congressmen." Although executive directors and senior-level staff members were exposed to some form of professional or leadership development, other front-line staff members' access to such opportunities were limited. P19PR5 stressed that "within

the constraints of our budget, will be able to improve or increase the amount of training that's made available to the other full-time employees."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Internal Validity

According to Merriam (2009), in order for a study to be scientific, rigorous, and trustworthy, it must be carefully designed, and use scientifically-accepted standards for the research. I used member checking to increase the validity or credibility of the study. During the initial interviews, I asked probing and clarifying questions to ensure SP experiences accurately reflected the interview questions. Research participants received a copy of their transcribed interviews to allow them to make any changes or clarifications to the data that they believed were inaccurate. I used the revised copy for analytical purposes.

External Validity

External validity involves the extent to which the study results can be generalized from one research sample to a larger population (Blum, 2009). Qualitative case studies tend to produce results that may be generalized to other populations, due to their smaller sample size. Threats to external validity arise when the researcher draws incorrect interpretations from the data or extrapolates these interpretations to other participants, settings, and prior or current situations (Creswell, 2009).

To address these anticipated problems, as well as to attempt to suppress any personal biases, I utilized bracketing. Although none were noted that could influence the results of the study, I was conscious of and made an effort to control any form of bias

throughout the interview stages. Participants' quotes and comments were taken into consideration without regard to my feelings and experiences. During data analysis of the CAAs' board minutes, as well as the participant's responses to the interview questions, a reflective journal was used to note any preconceptions that may occur on matters such as SP, leadership, and roles of executive directors and board members. Due to the broad experience that I had with CAAs, every attempt was made to control any personal biases throughout the entire study so as not to compromise the validity of the research.

Reliability

Reliability (or dependability) occurs when the findings of a qualitative study are consistent and can be replicated (Creswell, 2009). Protocols were in place before any interviews were conducted. All interviews consisted of the semi structured and open-ended questions for executive directors and board members. These procedures were consistently practiced throughout the entire study to ensure reliability.

Objectivity

An audit trail was established to validate the consistency of the study's fieldwork and conformability of the data collection in order to minimize bias, maximize accuracy, and report objectively (Patton, 2002). A file for each participant of each CAA was created. Each file included: interview protocols and transcriptions, participants' consent forms and contact information, records of communication, e-mail correspondence, and secondary data.

Results

Research questions for this qualitative case study were:

RQ1 To what extent do a southern state's CAAs develop and implement SP for

their executive directors?

 (RQ2: What successes, challenges, and consequences were these organizations

experiencing from implementing or not implementing SP?

I developed two sets of open-ended semi structured interview questions in order to obtain

rich, in-depth knowledge of the participants' perceptions of and experiences with SP.

The first set of questions pertained to the extent to which CAAs in a southern state

develop and implement succession plans for their executive directors. The purpose of the

main research question was to determine whether or not a succession plan was developed

or being implemented. The second set of interview questions pertained to the successes,

challenges, and consequences that these organizations experienced from implementing or

not implementing SP. Findings were based upon: (a) responses to the semi structured

open-ended interview questions; (b) emerging themes; and (c) secondary data.

Extent to Which SP Was Developed and Implemented

Study findings revealed that three of the CAAs under study had a succession plan

in place, although none of the succession plans had been implemented; two CAAs did not

have an SP. P1E1 seemed to indicate that CAA1 had a succession plan in place;

however, the board members' responses were vaguer when asked whether there was such

a plan in place. P4PR1 response was: "I have no idea. I'm sure there was, but I don't

know that for a fact." During P1E1's interview, the following comment was made about

the SP and board members' perception of such plan: "They know we've got it, but they don't know all of the details of it." P1E1 also commented: "One of the benefits for us participating in this study is there might be some issues in that plan that needs to be improved upon or added to."

SP had been in place for CAA2 for several years and its board members initiated, developed, and approved the succession plan. Although CAA3 does not have SP in place, its board of directors' minutes from April 13, 2015 stressed the significance of having a plan in place with the following assertion: "A written policy is needed on how the board would handle future changes of the executive director's position. There needs to be a written policy approved by the board." CAA4 does not have a SP in place, but development of that plan was in process. One of the main differences between CAA4 and the other organizations was that the SP was not only for the executive director, but for senior level positions, as well.

CAA5 had a succession plan in place but there was no record of board approval, either in the contents of the document or in the board minutes from the last previous years. When asked whether a succession plan in place, P17C4's response was: "Well, in this sense, we don't plan on him being replaced, but we know how to do it." On the other hand, when asked how the successor would be selected once the predecessor retires or suddenly resigned, P16E5 replied,

> We developed a succession plan. It got board approved back in May or June. I
> can't remember. What we will do is, say if I just left, the Operations Director
> would take over. Then we would go through a search committee.

There were several different responses to this question expressed by study participants. Six participants responded that SP would guide them through the selection process and four participants expressed that it was the board of directors' responsibility to select another executive director. The others' responses to this question varied. P12PR3 and P5E2 replied that their goal was to hire a deputy executive director to fulfill the position of the executive director, while P9E3 replied: "We have a process in place, and it's listed in our contingency plan."

According to Santora (2009), some form of SP should be implemented in order to create minimal organizational disruptions. The author also recommended that executive directors and their boards of directors should exhibit diligence and vigilance in implementing such a plan. P4PR1's perceptions of the factors that may make it difficult to implement a predecessor's succession plan were as follows: "If you had people within the agency or people within the board who were against this policy, then you've got a big problem, because they are going to be working against you every step you take." P14E4 argued: "No plan. No communication." The participant further suggested, after reminiscing on the events that occurred upon being selected as the successor:

> It just makes it very difficult if nobody has a buy in. Nobody cares, nobody wants to step up, I mean, and then it's going to be really difficult to implement any kind of succession if nobody wants to take the lead.

The participant also mentioned that the governing board, "wants you to advertise. If I just pick you and I don't advertise, well, then that's not meeting their criteria."

There were similar findings when asked for the factors that were necessary in the development of the SP process in hiring the successor, revealing that communication must exist among the board, executive director, and staff members. P11PU3 stated: "Well, first of all, there would have to be a shared understanding that this is needed." Similarly, P14E4 replied:

> So, I think communication and planning, because if people don't know, how are they going to implement it? So, I think it's really key to have a written plan that delineates timelines and who's going to do it. It should be shared with everybody and the staff should be involved.

P6C2 replied with an episode when the current executive directive had to be away for an extended period of time: "It's like when he got sick, we had several call meetings trying to think of what to do. We decided to call a meeting." This agency had a succession plan already in place. The participant further explained: "The board is prepared to step up in the moment, when something happens. We will move the plan forward to keep the organization going." Likewise, P7PU2 stated: "You got to know what you're supposed to do. So, gather the SP, call the executive committee together, and move on."

When asked for some potential problems that could delay the executive succession process, P17C4 replied:

> The successor not really being qualified, not having enough time to check out where they come from, what they've done, their past experiences, and make sure that they understand what they are coming into, because this is a big job.

When asked for the weaknesses of the agency that could cause problems if the executive director retired or suddenly had to leave, P11PU3 replied: "We don't have a succession plan, so that's a weakness." The participant added:

Within our bylaws or our handbook, there is no formal lead step one, step two, step three, step four, step five that you do every time. And we've proven that, because we've done it differently three different times now, and, as far as I know, and I'm probably the authority on that, since I'm the board president—we don't have a plan to fix that right now.

Over the past several years, CAA3, CAA4, and CAA5 experienced high turnover rates in executive directors. When asked about these transitions, study participants instantly shared some of the challenges that they faced with transitioning to their current executive directors. In P10C3's 10-year tenure as board member for CAA3, the agency had gone through four executive directors. When asked whether the current executive director was in place when their tenure as board members commenced, P10C3 immediately replied: "We've gone through several executive directors." P11PU3 replied: "Three and an interim." He added:

There weren't good boundaries set up between what's a staff function, what's a board function, and how they mixed amongst each other. If you look at the organizational structure, I would say that this one had fallen into the factional.

CAA4 had not only experienced a high leadership turnover in executive directors, but in senior-leveled leaders, as well. Although P14E4 was later promoted to executive director, they were employed at CAA4 for several years; during this time, this participant

had witnessed two executive directors' departures. According to P14E4: "There have

been two since I've been here. The executive director immediately before me had talked

about retirement, but she hadn't quite set a date and suddenly had to go on sick leave."

That executive director decided that the time off represented the transition period for the

interim director, and she never returned to the organization to assist with the transition.

P16E5 had only served as executive director for 3 years; no form of SP was in place

when he began to serve as executive director for CAA5. Findings revealed that no form

of SP was in place or being practiced before these three leaders took on the roles of

executive directors.

When asked what kind of transition would be offered to the successor before the

predecessor departs, none of the CAAs offered any form of transition for the predecessor

but some realized that they may need to consider this in the future. P7PU2 initially

suggested that this process was documented in their SP; however, after reviewing that

plan, the participant noticed that it was not mentioned. The participant then stated:

"Personally, I think P5E2 will do that upon request." This participant also acknowledged

that having a transition period should be mentioned in the succession plan. P11PU3

argued: "If we created that deputy executive director position, there is less need for that."

The participant later commented that if there was no transition period in place, the current

executive director would be requested to stay on as a consultant. P17C4 simply

responded, "I don't really know."

Participants openly shared their views on the challenges that their CAAs may

experience from implementing SP. One board member, P4PR1, stated:

You're going to depend on those people within the agency that understand this

process and what happens. We are not there day to day, and we shouldn't have to

be there day to day. It should function on its own without or daily exerting

ourselves. So yes, if you don't have that SP, it could result in real chaos very

quickly, and the agency may fall apart.

Successes, Challenges, and Consequences Experienced

Study results proved that there were substantial successes, challenges, and

consequences that these CAAs experienced from implementing or not implementing SP.

These findings were based on the six primary themes which were described and

identified earlier in this chapter. Findings were also based on the participants' responses

to the semi structured, open-ended interview questions.

Organizational identity. Findings suggested that some of the successes,

challenges, and consequences experienced from implementing or not implementing SP

related to the CAAs' organizational identities and cultures. The organizational identity

was based on two categories: strengths of the organizations and weaknesses of the

organizations.

Strengths of organization. When asked about the strengths of these organizations

that may be helpful if the current executive directors retired or suddenly resigned,

participants cited longevity of their staff members, access to strong leadership, as well as

the "wealth of knowledge" from those in leadership. P19PR5 stated: "Other strengths are

the tenure of our full-time staff. You got some people that have been at this agency for a

long time." In terms of strong leadership, P5E2 stated, "I've got a pretty strong Head

Start director and Transportation director. And so, if I suddenly had to leave and if it was sudden, we have a succession plan set up by the board as to who would take over." Similarly, P10C3 replied, "I would say the executive director does that. But the program directors are very good." There was full consensus from all participants on leadership and guidance from ACAAA as one of the strengths of community action. The P10C3 suggested, "We have good support from ACAAA, along with their advice. When I first came on board, we had to talk to the person in charge of ACAAA, an awful lot."

In terms of the wealth of knowledge, P7PU2 offered her perception on the abundance of knowledge that senior level personnel possessed: "We have great program directors with lots of knowledge." This participant further suggested: "We, as board members, see the audits. We see the employees. We see the program directors. They report to the board every three months. Whenever we have our board meetings, they are there." P7PU2's finally comments were

> You see that's the blood, the foundation of CAA, because that's who we are. And
> even in our agency, so many of the program directors offer a wealth of
> knowledge. That was discussed at our last board meeting while we were working
> on the strategic plan. It was discussed that there's no way we can replace that
> knowledge. They been there for years. I interviewed the executive director from
> CAA1. He's been there for 56 years. Now, what's going to happen, all that
> knowledge? You got to make sure you get the right person in there to fill that
> chair.

The diversity of CAAs' board members and their principles of being service- and mission-oriented were other strengths. In terms of board diversity, P19PR5 commented on the expertise of its board,

Again, having the people that we have, the CPA that we have, for one; to be able to see that the budgets means that we're filling our goals, that we're not going to fall flat or fail in some areas. We've got oversight there, and I would put the expertise that we have in that area, probably the best that I've seen across any spectrum.

P14E4 candidly expressed what it meant to part of the community action network and its culture:

The main strength of CAA4 and the other community action agencies, is our service. So, that's a huge strength. We're providing services that help people become more self-sufficient and it's needed. I think no matter what, the management team will definitely help us find more funding opportunities and help us better implement programs. But the need is there. As long as we have good leaders in place, it should carry on.

Weaknesses of organization. When asked about the weaknesses of a CAA that could present problems if the executive director retired or suddenly resigned, participants cited the staff workload and the lack of program integration or lack of identifying all programs within CAAs in a holistic manner. These weaknesses were shared characteristics of CAAs' organizational culture, which may be defined as the way

employees think and behave toward each other, as well as towards the people outside the organization, due to shared beliefs, norms, and values (Yukl, 2010).

In terms of the work-load that staff members carried, P11PU3 explained that, while annual audits were being conducted, the auditors argued that CAAs did not have sufficient personnel in management, because of the multiple job duties and roles that each senior-level staff member performed. The participant further explained:

There is usually one write-up during annual audits that declares the organization do not have enough people in management, because everybody has multiple hats. That's every audit, because that is the nature of not-for-profits. So, to add one more hat to an existing person would be counter-productive, counter-intuitive.

Similarly, P12PR3 stressed:

CEOs typically do not come into contact with their clients. In this business, we do, because we are expected to wear multiple hats. And so, in essence, we are non-profit managers. We are public administrators. Therefore, there are several hats that everybody wears.

One interview question asked for factors that would discourage an applicant from applying for executive director or other leadership positions; responses to this question overlapped with responses to the question about the weaknesses of a CAA that could present problems if the director retired or suddenly resigned. This repetition indicated that a saturation point had been reached. P6C2 stressed, "We wear several hats, and we are steady with the demand that's been placed on us by the federal government and

funding sources. We are doing more with the same pay." P7PU2 response was: "You can't pay people enough that carry the load that they carry."

Program integration was an on-going issue for these CAAs under study. When asked of the factors that made it difficult to implement a SP for the successor, P1E1 responded: "I got a set of completely different programs. So that is part of the nature of the beast. You have got to deal with the different regulations for different departments." According to P10E3: "There have been some personality clashes, because staff members are fighting for their own program." The participant further suggested: "Staff views their program as the most important."

Sustainability. Study findings revealed that funding, political climate changes and the inability to leverage revenue-based funding were the main sustainability challenges to these CAAs over the long term. When asked for some of the challenges that may affect the sustainability of these organizations over the long term, 11 out of 17 (or 65%) of study participants responded "funding." According to P8PR2, "I think it's that constant funding—that's federal—it starts at the top. And if we don't have that funding, and if the state and its representatives do not take a genuinely interest in this organization, then we're lost." P10C3 emphasized:

> You got politics. And so, the biggest challenge is something that's beyond our control. Then there's the economy, because the economy's bad. The poor never have been a priority, except for Lyndon B. Johnson, and he was terrible in Vietnam. We never funded the war on poverty. And people complained that it failed. It didn't fail. We didn't fund it.

Likewise, P11PU3 stated: "The political climate and funding streams, those would be the

biggest challenges over the long-term. We've been doing this since the Johnson

Amendment of 1964."

The political climate represented another sustainability challenge being faced by

these CAAs over the long term. According to P4PR1:

There are also a lot of misconceptions with people in general about federal

money, and how it's spent, and what it does, and how it's wasted. And I know

there are lots of people out there that think it's all wasted. So, you have a little bit

of politics.

The participant continued:

You have to sell a little bit of what CAA1 does. Even though, yes, they're

spending all this money, but look what's it's doing to the community, look what

it's doing for the citizens of these three counties. I think that's our biggest thing.

P19PR5 argued, "We are running at such a tight budget. It was almost like a surgery.

Having to apply a tourniquet there, hoping that this would survive." P17C4 stated, "It's

all political. And, I mean you can't go down there and make them do anything. You just

have to try to convince them."

Other participants' perceptions of sustainability challenges were phrased as

concerns about revenue-based or unrestricted funding. P11PU3 argued: "The

environment's changed, just in this last couple of years. Our access to money is less than

it's ever been. So, access to revenue streams is going to be a challenge in the long term."

This participant further advised: "There was a time where you had 16 CAAs in a southern

state, and everybody just assumed there was a place for all 16. It's not like that anymore,

we're not all entitled to our pieces." P12PR3 added: "It's not just more money. It's

about having access to unrestricted funding, so that we can make flexible decisions on

hiring and salaries."

When asked for the factors that would make it difficult to implement SP for the

predecessor, P12PR3 replied:

> We have an $8 million budget, but it's restricted to certain activities and projects.
>
> So, we absolutely have to be creative and flexible. We don't want to mission
>
> creep, we don't want to chase money, but we absolutely have to take calculated
>
> risk, and expand services and opportunities, where they make sense, where they
>
> fit our mission.

This participant also stated: "We got to develop a self-sustainable revenue stream. We

can't operate from just grants and state funding sources. We have to create some type of

fee-based model."

P9E3 also responded on the factors that would make it difficult to implement SP

with the following remarks:

> I don't know that they would make it impossible, but the difficulty, of course, is
>
> going back to funding. I mean you just have to find a way in which to fund that
>
> and the admin that I keep—it's a broken record, but the admin—these agencies
>
> live off of administrative monies from various grants. And when the admin grant
>
> dollars have dropped below 10%, now it's 6 to 7%, is all you get off of any
>
> program. You may have the best laid plans in the world, but you don't have the

support for them. And so then, where do you go to get that money? Unless you've developed a philanthropic fundraising private source of support, you don't have it.

Salaries. Salaries were also affected by the lack of funding that existed within these CAAs. P16E5 stressed, "Some staff members have not had an increase in the last 2 to 3 years, because the funding is just not there. We are constantly subject to funding cuts and/or uncertainties in funding." P5E2 commented,

In a southern state, right now we're going through change as a result of a new governor. There's several departments that have had new heads and so forth, which has affected our receipt of funding. So, those are things that are going to have to be addressed at some point in the future.

Study findings revealed that 53% of participants agreed that the compensation levels for the CAAs were fair. P9E3's response to the salary level was:

I think that it would be fair, because there are a few staff members with some level of longevity. Just because of that, among other things, they are at a relatively good rate of pay. But, bless their hearts, it's because they have worked their hearts out for so many years to get to that level."

Likewise, P10C3 responded:

We can't pay people very much. And there are a few people who get pretty good salaries. P9E3 gets a pretty good salary. And one or two others, but for others, unfortunately, we don't offer good salaries. The board has worked to have some

good health benefits for people, because at least, if we can't give money one way, we can help in another.

Study participants continued to voice their opinions on the salaries offered by CAAs. According to P11PU3: "I have actually researched that quite a bit over the last few years. We are absolutely all over the place when you look at our structure. We have some of the most poorly paid folks in their positions." I commented: "It depends on what department they work in." P11PU3 agreed: "That's correct." The participant further stressed that recently one of the senior-level staff members was making more than the executive director. P8PR2 stated:

> It's an embarrassment to me what they pay Head Start teachers. They want them to have education, and until we raise those salaries, we're going to still have that stigma. And teachers nearly work for nothing. And I mean in all the areas, the pay is less than perfect.

When asked for some of the weaknesses of the five CAAs under study, P14E4 suggested: "It's the pay and you have to do what's best for your family. We're here to serve families, so we can't tell staff to make their families suffer." P10C3 offered: "Because of the pay scale, we can't always keep some of the people. And I would encourage a person who is at a lower level, to move on, if they can." When speaking on some of the hopes, in terms of hiring a new executive director, P12PR3 stressed: "salary increases across the board. And again, it should be commensurate. People should get paid, they're worthy of their compensation."

Recruitment of college graduates. The recruitment of recent college graduates presented issues for these CAAs; many participants suggested that this was due to the lack of competitive salaries. According to P14E4,

> We have really good people. And you have all these kids out here with degrees. And we're in a town of three colleges, so we have a wide variety, but they come out of college starting higher that what we pay. We're not going to compete with that, we can't. And we need someone who's not right out of college; we need someone who understands fund accounting.

The participant further argued: "I'll take 10 years' experience over a master's degree, because I need someone who can pick up and know, and not need all the hand-holding. And it's very hard to find that, at what we pay."

When asked the factors that would make it difficult to implement SP for the next executive director, P16E5 candidly expressed: "We're not in a thriving position—it's hard to recruit high-level type of people here in a southern state." Speaking of salary, P16E5 made the following comment:

> If you got a heart, you've got some passion, a better way by helping someone. If you've got that in you, that means a whole lot, that you could help somebody else. I think in our business, people come to us seeking that help. In a lot of other agencies that may be similar to us, 'pay' is always going to be problem.

Staff turnover. Due to the low rate of pay endured by CAAs' staff members, this along with other factors, may be a direct cause of staff turnover. Study findings revealed that 41% of the study participants expressed a concern for staff turnover within their

organizations--mostly due to the low pay scale being offered. According to P10C3, "We've gone through several executive directors." Since this participant's ten-year tenure as a board member, four executive directors had resigned or been terminated. According to P14E4, "Currently, when you have a lot of staff turnover, it's very hard to have anyone with the knowledge and leadership developed. We have to work on the training of staff that comes in." P14E4 also stated,

> We've had four fiscal officers since I've been here. And what I think is, with that position, like right now, I think if our fiscal officer could run out the door, he probably would. That poor man is so tired, but because he lost his key staff under him; he has worked wonders.

CAA3 had a turnover of three executive directors and one interim in the last 5 years. When asked how many executive directors had CAA3 employed in his 6 years of service as a board member, P11PU3 replied: "Three and an interim," while P10C3 initially replied: "Four, and a temporary, five, and this would be the sixth." After further discussion on this matter, participant P10C3 recalled, "It's really been four."

Loss of knowledge. While many study participants acknowledged the "wealth of knowledge" among those in leadership positions, others expressed their concern for the "loss of knowledge" due to high rates of turnover in the leadership. P14E4 continued to candidly voice her concerns on challenges that had occurred as a result of low wages being offered:

> We have lost the knowledge base. We have lost three fiscal officers in the past three years. This has caused a complete flip in the accounting department. That's

a weakness, because we do not have the depth that we need in certain departments.

Governance. Study findings revealed that CAAs' boards of directors played a crucial role in the governing decisions of their organizations. One of the most important characteristics of governance was board engagement. According to participant P5E2,

> In my tenure, as executive director, we had one board meeting that I did not have a quorum. And we meet every other month. We scheduled a board meeting on the same day as what XXXXX for the Cure was. And there were two or three other events that were going on the same day. Our board members were stretched too thin. They came to our planning sessions, whatever town meetings that we have, and we have them to attend at least 10 external trainings. They are really engaged in trying to do all that, and I think that they're very active.

Board compensation. CAAs' board members do not receive any form of compensation for their service and they volunteer their time and allegiance in preserving their role as a governing body, while not engaging in the operational activities of the organization. According to P11PU3, "even though this is a non-paid voluntary position that I was probably doing 15 hours or more a week; and I mean every week and sometimes even more. It required a significant amount of time."

The responsibility of the organization's SP rests with the board of directors. When asked for some factors that would make it difficult to implement a succession plan, P6C2 made the following argument:

It shouldn't be any interference from any inside staff, because this is our policy

that we have in place, and all of them know this. If something happens to the

executive director that we have, we are prepared to meet at that point.

Separation of power. Several of the participants spoke to their roles as board

members in terms of separation of power between board and agency. P7PU2

emphasized,

A board chair is not the one to drive the ship. You're not telling them what

they're going to do. You of all people do not need to tell them that, because what

you say usually carries a stake, and you don't want that.

Similarly, P13PU4 stated,

We look at the numbers, and we see what's going on. They tell us about the

funding and we approve the funding. We approve for them to apply for this grant

or whatever else. But other than that, the organization runs itself, and the board

hires the executive director to make sure it runs.

Board diversity. CAAs' board members comprised a diverse group of individuals

with representation from three sectors: public, private, and community. When discussing

the diversity of CAAs' board members, study participants offered several different

perspectives. P10C3 stated: "We have a diverse board. It is racially diverse. It tends to

be a breakdown in males and females. The judges are all male and that's why they're

voted in." P11PU3 responded with the following:

According to our bylaws, there are three groups of members. One group of

members is elected officials, like the eight county judges that we have. Because

they are county judges and we can't really decide their tenure, those guys can stay

for as long as they're judges.

Board adversity. With diversity came adversity; boards of directors will be

subjected to governance challenges whether the organizations are nonprofit or for-profit.

When asked for some potential problems that may delay the executive succession

process, P8PR2 responded,

> There's some new ones coming on board that just want to argue and not look at
>
> the total picture and take a narrow view. You cannot take the narrow view. You
>
> have got to look for what's best for the entire agency.

On the other hand, according to P12PR3,

> We must take calculated risks. That's really a decision that the entire board must
>
> make. So, all the board members must have the vision, knowledge, skills, and the
>
> abilities to ascertain what risks are calculated and which one is not.

This participant further stressed,

> The entire board has to see vision and understand the importance of not
>
> continuing to do business as usual. We really need to expand, and in order to
>
> expand and serve more people; we have to generate alternative funding streams.
>
> This will require us to take some calculated risk.

> When asked about the weaknesses of the organization that could present problems

if the executive director retired or suddenly had to leave, P19PR5 replied,

> I believe P16E5 was a good candidate, and I trust our chairman's decision in that.
>
> But I believe given the quality of the board at that time, it wasn't just the best

choice. I think that was micro-managed a little bit, like the choice had to be voted

on. In other words, I'm just saying that we did not have an entirely, unbiased

selection process in place.

P17C4 made comments about the board meeting minutes and pre-package information

that were required to be forwarded to each board member at least 2 weeks in advance:

"We don't have enough information ahead of time. It's just given to us." When asked

who fulfills the executive director's duties while away from the office for an extended

period, this participant replied: "the chairman of the board."

When asked about some of the fears in terms in hiring a new executive director

for this organization, P19PR5's candidly made the following response:

Someone that would be more in tune to (and I've seen this in both policy council

and it's in CAA5) of having inexperienced and often uneducated board members.

It's more or less putting something out there for them to approve without

recognizing that need for training, the need for everyone to be considered equal,

and having someone that want to make decisions without hidden behind closed

doors, and that we find out about something that happened after the fact. It's

more or less allowing that board to be more or less existing, simply because its

mandated.

Leadership. Study findings revealed that executive directors' leadership

characteristics represented another major theme articulated by study participants. P9E3's

position on leadership was: "I am developing a philanthropic culture here. I want people

that are philanthropists to understand the importance of community action." P11PU3, a

board member under P9E3's leadership stressed: "He's doing those things that we've asked him to do. There's more notification. He does a great job training the board. We have probably met every one of the agencies that funds us, and that we receive support from." Another board member, P12PR3 commented: "He's friendly and outgoing. Very knowledgeable. Very skillful. Has a positive attitude. He is not afraid to ask for funding. Super sharp. Great communication skills. Just knows how to get the job done."

When asked for the strengths of the organization that could be helpful if the executive director retired or suddenly left, P10C3 replied: "If I had spoken to you, say, two years ago before P9E3 came aboard, I think there were some morale problems and some leadership problems. But now, I think we've got good leadership." On the other hand, when asked for some of the factors that may discourage an applicant from being interested in working as executive director, P12PR3 replied: "I think prior to P9E3's being here, I think there was more instability and turmoil. But he's been here over a year now, and that's pretty much nipped. The morale is much higher that it was 18 months ago."

P16E5 reminisced on the new direction that CAA5 has encountered since he took leadership with the following comments:

> I'm trying to forget about a lot of that. But right now, we're on much better, solid financial ground. We've got a good handle on what programs are profit- and loss-wise. We're able to stay on top of that now, whereas before, everything was just in a big old bucket, and we just had to pour out a little bit here and there, trying to figure it all out. But with our accounting system now, and the way we've got

everything set up, I can pretty well tell you where we're at on any type of

program that we have. I think from that level, I think we've done well. I always

hesitate to say this—but I hope that I have earned the trust from our people that

the things that we're doing, that we're changing, and it's for the best. They may

not always agree on how we do something, but I've told them my only goal is to

make this place a whole lot better than it was when I came. And that's really my

only goal. If I could walk away today, I can honestly say that I know I've done

some things that has made it better. And if someone else comes in, they're not

going to have to face what I had to face, because I took care of those problems.

P14E4's leadership role was clear with the following comments:

That's not the environment that I want to create here. I want to reward people to

be healthy. I don't want this to be the toxic environment that you come to, that

you're overworked and over-stressed and not paid enough.

While P19PR5's perception of a leader was as follows:

To have someone that has one, the ambition and drive to help people. I mean,

that's what we are, people helping people. And you got to be completely

unselfish with your time and be motivated. You got to have the drive to constantly

seek to improve both the ability to offer services that the agency does, but also try

to find ways to compensate and take care of your employees that come in every

day, dealing with the day-to-day operations of trying to help people, while they

got their own lives.

According to P19PR5, in describing the current executive director's leadership characteristics:

When he was first hired, the auditor was saying that the agency was bleeding badly. Our senior citizens' program was the problem, and they didn't know what it was going to cost. It could cause complete failure, if we didn't cut it loose. There were lots of emotions involved. Our executive director stepped up and stated that he took a look at his salary and didn't need that much. The board voted, and that leader agreed to take a tremendous cut in his salary.

When asked for some of their hopes in terms of hiring a new executive director for the organization, P9E3 stated:

I want the next director to be someone that can unleash an even greater vision, enthusiasm, but, at the same time, that can be tempered with someone who has a real compassion for human beings. You may find someone who has a great sense of passion but does not have a sense of the political world around them or doesn't have business acumen. And so, the next executive director needs to be someone that encompasses all of those skill sets.

Similarly, P16E5 stressed: "I think the person should be passionate and he has to be—and as my operations directors, you got to be sympathetic to the cause, but yet again, you've got to be realistic in terms of financially." The participant also stressed: "I think you always got to be that person that is not only taking care of the community, you need to make sure that you are taking care of your employees. That's your biggest asset."

P5E2 offered a definition of agency success by stating,

> How well the employees know what is out there and whether the board
>
> actually understands the financial position of the agency? Those are the
>
> key elements. Looking at our reports and other reports that are given to
>
> the board, do they actually understand what is being given to them, where
>
> they can make an informed decision as to what to do.

Similarly, P12PR3 suggested,

> Board members should have a good overall knowledge of where the agency
>
> stands at any given time financially, because I think if you've got the strength and
>
> ability to implement your program without going in the red, then any agency can
>
> survive, even with mediocre leadership.

Leadership development. Any CAA that received funding at the federal, state,
or local levels, as well as from other funding sources, required those in leadership
positions to attend and participate in capacity-building and leadership development
opportunities. Leadership positions included executive directors, but also board members
and other senior-level positions. Study findings revealed that leadership development
opportunities for CAAs' these staff members were offered to participants in this study.
According to P11PU3,

> We don't grow our own money. It's given to us by agencies and many of those
>
> agencies require professional development. Whether it's Community Service
>
> Block Grant (CSBG), Home Energy Assistance Program, or Weatherization –
>
> those different funding streams require professional development.

When asked for the kinds of leadership development opportunities that were

provided for those in leadership positions, P1E1 replied:

Each of the major departments in the agency has an opportunity to attend

trainings, according to the type of program. For instance, the XXXXX

Association, ACAAA, OCS, and CAP are just some of the resources that we use.

P5E2 stated: "We have all of that is available. We also sponsor leadership meetings for

our clients-- a low-income leadership initiative, offered every year in September. We

also send staff and others to various leadership developments training sessions."

Although all the CAAs offered some form of leadership development, findings

revealed that only one CAA required all of their staff members to create a professional

development plan (PDP). According to P14E4: "Each of our staff will develop a PDP.

Different trainings come not just from PDP; we have different things like our self-

assessment, community assessment, and monitoring visits that may have some sort of a

finding." When asked whether that PDP was a written document, P14E4 said, "Staff

members will do a written PDP, every year. It's a requirement for Head Start's teaching

staff, but we also made it a requirement for all staff."

When asked for some of the weaknesses of the agencies that may present

problems if the executive director retired or suddenly had to leave, P12PR3 stressed: "I

would say the lack of professionalism and professional training, professional education.

Not necessarily academic training, because I don't think that's necessary in all situations,

but we do need more leadership development." On the other hand, when asked for some

of the factors that may discourage an applicant from being interested in working as executive of the local CAA, P12PR3 responded:

Our expectations of department heads are quite high in terms of being available, being professional, being knowledgeable, having the skill-set needed to communicate with all people from all walks of life. You may have to go to a leadership conference for continued education, and you would be communicating with peers. You may need to go to a private foundation and ask for funding, and you might have to sit in front of CEOs and other executives on that board. And then of course, we know that we serve people facing hard times, and have to be able to communicate with this population as well.

CAAs' board members were also offered leadership development opportunities. When asked of the kinds of leadership development opportunities being offered to the board members, P14E4 replied: "We do have leadership development for our board. We have an ongoing training plan that delineates throughout the year." P6C2 suggested:

We go through the orientation process detailing what our responsibilities are and what we're supposed to do. For a while, I didn't realize why we were bonded. There are certain things that we can't say and certain things that we can't do.

P7PU2 simply replied: "We go every year to the annual training conference." This participant also explained that at least 10 of their board members attended and participated in CAP's annual conference.

Several of the board members from this CAA also took the opportunity to visit legislative conferences to demonstrate the importance of—and serve as advocates for—

community action. According to P7PU2: "We go to the legislative conference to visit all of the senators and congressmen to explain that community action is not brick and mortar, its people, faces, and lives here." When asked whether any form of SP training was a part of a CAA's leadership development agenda, only one CAA received some form of SP training. P8PR2 spoke of her efforts in obtaining SP training while attending leadership development conferences such as the CAP Annual Conference. Several of the conference's sessions included SP training. P8PR2 attended these workshops and shared that information with her peers.

Although study findings showed that board members of CAAs were engaged in leadership development opportunities, one study participant continuously stressed that additional training was needed for board members. P19PR5 stated that, "although our board members come from different representative backgrounds, there needs to be additional training, specifically on what their functions are." The participant further stressed: "We adhere to the budget from the grants that we receive. And some of the board members don't understand fully what they're looking at when they see an Excel spreadsheet." P19PR5 continued:

> That specific training in different areas needs to be made available to the board as they grow into understanding what their position is and to include even the grant process. A lot of them don't understand what's involved in grant-writing and how we receive the funds that the agency operates off of.

Summary

This chapter revealed the results that were obtained through qualitative analysis of the collected data. I described and revealed several findings relating to the first research question: To what extent do a southern state's CAAs develop and implement SP for their executive directors? Six primary themes emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions about the successes, challenges, and consequences that these CAAs experienced from implementing or not implementing SP. The six primary themes were: (a) organizational identity' (b) sustainability, (c) salary, (d) governance, (e) leadership, and (f) leadership development. These themes were described and expanded on with quotations from the participants in the study. The themes will be interpreted in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

SP is vital to the livelihood and vitality of NPOs such as CAAs. According to Shekshnia and De Vries (2008), "Effective succession can spur creativity and new resolve, while poorly handled succession, a major contributing factor to business failure, often causes plummeting financial results and organizational turmoil" (p. 266). Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) suggested that a succession plan serves as an aide to executive directors to increase the organization's capacity to sustain itself through the transition process and to be prepared for new leadership. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the extent to which CAAs in a southern state practiced SP for their executive directors as well as the successes, challenges, and consequences they experienced from implementing or not implementing such practices.

Study Overview

The qualitative research approach is meant to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). The exploratory case study evidence for this study came from personal interviews with 17 participants and secondary data that consisted of succession plans, annual reports, bylaws, IRS 990s, strategic plans, and boards of directors' minutes from the last 3 years. My goal with these data was to reconstruct and analyze a case from a sociological perspective. The research questions I developed to guide this study were:

RQ1: To what extent do a southern state's CAAs develop and implement SP for their executive directors?

RQ2: What successes, challenges, and consequences were these organizations experiencing from implementing or not implementing SP?

I used the purposeful sampling technique and snowball sampling approach to recruit all study participants. I conducted interviews with five executive directors, along with 12 board members, representing private, public, and community sectors. Using semi structured, open-ended interview questions allowed the study participants to tell their story unencumbered by what I expected to find or read in the research literature. Secondary data from the organizations were also reviewed and analyzed. All interviews were audio- recorded, and a professional transcription service was used to transcribe the interviews. NVivo software was used to collect, capture, store, manage, and assist in the analysis of the data.

I conducted this research due to the impending loss of organizational knowledge from executive directors who were near the age of retirement without some form of succession plan in place. The health and well-being of these organizations, and of their services and clients, are at stake. The results of this study address a significant gap in the social science literature on SP efforts among CAAs. I hope that the study results may serve as a catalyst in providing awareness to CAAs' executive directors, boards of directors, stakeholders, and staff about the value of preparing leaders for succession through an SP and its activities. The findings from this study also illustrate to this audience the successes and challenges that CAAs experience when implementing or not implementing such practices.

Summary of Findings

The findings in response to the first research question revealed that, although

none of the succession plans had been implemented, three of the CAAs under study had a

succession plan in place, while two did not. There had been no form of SP for executive

directors in place or being practiced prior to these leaders launching their roles as

executive directors. When asked how the successor would be selected, participants'

responses varied as well. Six participants stated that a succession plan would guide them

through the selection process, while four responded that it was the board of directors'

responsibility to replace the predecessor. The others' responses to this question varied.

With the high turnover rate of executive directors for three of the CAAs under study, the

study findings also revealed that no form of transition for the successor was offered. The

findings in response to the second research question resulted in five primary themes:

organizational identity, sustainability, salaries, governance, and leadership development.

Interpretation of the Findings

My review of the literature helped to shape an understanding of the research

questions. In Chapter 2, I discussed the findings of the literature review relative to the

research questions and supported by the evidence collected and analyzed. This study was

guided by a thematic account of the detailed review through the theoretical lens of

organizational change which reinforced a strong link between SP and the five primary

themes of organizational identity, sustainability, salaries, governance, and leadership

development. According to Butler (2010), SP is a plan to fill an organization's critical

professional and leadership positions. The objectives of SP are to: (a) recruit and select

qualified candidates for leadership positions, (b) ensure effective leadership development, and (c) preserve knowledge and intellectual capital within organizations (Butler).

Extent to Which SP is Being Implemented

The study findings revealed that 3 of the 5 participating CAAs had a written succession plan and two did not. Of those three in place, none had been implemented, because these plans were adopted during the current executive directors' tenure. While I found no research literature on the degree to which some form of SP was in place among CAAs, my review of the literature resulted in similar findings for private, nonprofit, and public organizations. Carman et al.'s (2010) found that fewer than 23% of the 110 nonprofit organizations with 501 (c) (3) statuses had a succession plan in place. In terms of public organizations, Schmalzried and Fallon (2007) reported that 24 of 87 or 28% of survey respondents from Ohio's local health departments had a succession plan in place for its top executives, while 63 or 72% did not have a succession plan in place. Although written succession plans were in place, study findings revealed that there was no evidence that these participating CAAs were developing their senior level staff members for leadership succession.

SP is critical to ensuring the viability of all CAAs in the event of an executive director's planned or sudden departure. If an organization is large enough to develop a deep talent pool of leaders, it can continue to sustain services with minimum interruption due to the temporary or permanent loss of those leaders. On a long-term basis, an organization that gives ongoing attention to executive directors, as well as to individuals

in senior positions, will be invigorated with the skills and capacity to meet whatever challenges may arise (Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005).

Although the study findings revealed that 3 of the 5 CAAs under study experienced a high turnover in executive directors and no SP was in place, I also found that no form of transition was offered to these directors or their successors. The transition of the successor to the executive director position is a critical episode in the life of any organization. The study results on CAAs were consistent with Chapman and Vogelsang's (2005) findings that many NPOs do not have a plan in place to transition the successor and the board members do not understand their responsibilities for leadership transitioning. Ultimately, the responsibility of the succession plan rests with the boards of directors. Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) argued that board members tend to rush in hiring the successor, which may present the following issues: (a) loss of funding, (b) loss of key staff and board members, (c) decline in morale and organizational inertia, (d) loss of key relationships, (e) interruption of services to constituents, (f) damaged public image, and lastly, (g) having to do the whole process over again.

Successes, Challenges, and Consequences Experienced

The study findings also revealed that the successes, challenges, and consequences that these CAAs experienced from implementing or not implementing SP practices resulted from the organizations' identities, sustainability issues, low salaries, governance roles, and lack of leadership development strategies. These themes were direct links to SP, and I will describe each in the following subsections. These subsections included organizational identity, sustainability, salaries, governance, and leadership development.

Organizational identity. The study findings revealed the following features of organizational identity were understood to be central, distinctive, and enduring within these CAAs: (a) the wealth of knowledge sustained from those in leadership; (b) longevity of their staff members; (c) access to strong leadership; (d) training and technical supports from ACAAA and OCS; and (e) the diversity of its board members, along with their principles of being service and mission oriented. The organizational identity and culture weaknesses of a CAA that could present problems if an executive director retired or resigned suddenly are a heavy workload for the staff, the inability to identify agency programs in a holistic manner, and the requirement that staff members perform multiple job duties and responsibilities at the same pay with no pay increase.

The participant CAAs were not a homogeneous group of organizations; although they shared a common origin, they varied in size, programmatic structure, and strategic direction. The CAAs' organizational identity and culture were unique, including their individual interpretations of how the board members and executive directors perceived their organizations. The ways these study participants understood and responded to the succession plan process and what they thought SP meant to the organizations were also different from others' perspectives. These CAAs were dependent on governmental funding that required different administrative guidelines and oversight for each program. This alone makes incorporation of the numerous programs being offered in a holistic manner challenging.

The extended knowledge of these findings was supported by other research literature. According to Nemon (2007), "The multiple, and sometimes duplicate, public

programs are viewed by CAAs as separate 'silos' that complicate and obstruct their efforts at the local level to create more integrated services" (p. 9). These CAAs consumed a major part of their budgets, time, and efforts in creating organizations with a focus on grant management and dependency upon the priorities of public officials. Hence, although CAAs benefit from a certain level of stability, the organizational identity they created was based on reliance on government funding, which limited their autonomy and creativity.

Sustainability. The study findings revealed that the main challenges that affected the sustainability of these CAAs over the long term consisted of funding, political climate changes, and the inability to leverage revenue-based funding. These sustainability challenges were the direct result of the CAAs' organizational identity and culture. Eleven of the 17 study participants agreed that their main challenge to sustainability was funding. The study participants expressed the public stigma attached to CAAs as well the political constraints placed upon CAAs. I also found that the participants were quite concerned about their inability to leverage revenue-based or unrestricted funding.

While the literature review from Chapter 2 disconfirmed study findings among CAAs, as well as for NPOs, new literature extended the knowledge of such findings. Nemon's (2007) study confirmed that CAAs dependency on public funding presented obvious risks. Reliance on public money invariably left these organizations vulnerable to shifting political and funding realities. Changes in appropriation levels or program regulations had dramatic impacts on CAAs and this network of organizations must constantly be vigilant every time its CSBG come up for appropriation.

In terms of inability to generate revenue, Arik, Clark, and Raffo's (2016) study revealed that NPOs that were dependent on government funding to deliver services, may no longer rely on that steady stream of revenue. With such reliance on these funding resources, CAAs were also restricted on how those funds were to be spent, leaving them the inability to gain operating revenue. The tension between nonprofits and government due to political and regulatory issues was widespread in the nonprofit world, and CAAs were particularly vulnerable to it.

Salaries. Study findings shown that 11 out of the 19 participants agreed that the compensation levels for CAAs were fair. These findings were due to CAAs' funding sustainability challenges, as well as their organizational identities. CAAs' operating budget consisted primarily of federal and state funding with limited means to generate any source of revenue for staff raises. As a result of such dependence, CAAs' staff continued to be subjective to low salaries resulting in staff turnover, loss of knowledge, and ineffective in their ability to recruit college graduates. These factors made it problematic to implement SP practices.

Recruitment of college graduates. The reasonings for the lack of recruitment of college graduates' concerns were confirmed with what was found in the literature review. College graduates do not express a desire to begin or even establish a long-term career with CAAs, because of the low salaries. According to Linscott (2011), these graduates' perception of entry-level salaries in NPOs were too low and the potential for substantial raises were slim. Although such opportunities would prove socially and personally

advantageous, they would consider working for NPOs after they were financially solvent, student debt paid off, and a comfortable amount of savings was built.

Staff turnover and loss of knowledge. Study findings revealed that several of the CAAs had lost several executive directors and senior level staff members that were typically motivated by the low salaries. Due to the high rates in leadership turnover, study findings also revealed the study participants were concerned for the "loss of knowledge" from senior level staff members. General knowledge and education cannot replace the institutional knowledge and experience that will be lost as predecessors and senior level staff members retire or resign.

Study findings confirmed with the research from the literature review. Bishop (2004) identified the following themes that emerged with respect to the effects of devolution and fiscal retrenchment on NPOs: (a) loss of public service character, (b) loss of knowledgeable staff, (c) bifurcation of the sector, (d) an epidemic of need, and (e) preservation of service quality with diminishing reimbursements. The loss of knowledgeable staff members, specifically predecessors and senior leaders, may affect the SP process.

Governance. The board of directors played a crucial role in the governing decisions of CAAs. According to Bozer, Kuna, and Santora (2015), they have a fiduciary responsibility and duty to ensure that the executive director maintain leadership continuity by means of SP. The challenges that these boards faced in implementing or not implementing SP efforts resulted around the roles of board governance. These challenges consisted of separation of power, board adversity, and board diversity. In

terms of separation of power, these board members proved helpful, but they must continue to not interfere in the daily operations of these organizations. CAAs' board members and the executive directors' relations were highly complex and fragile. They were particularly susceptible to tensions among the board members, because of the diversity of members selected from various sectors of the community. A few of these board members may be uncertain of their roles and those of their executive directors.

While the literature review disconfirmed this information, extended research literature supported the findings. According to Wathan (2014),

> The director not only runs the organization, but also sets the agenda for board meetings. The board, although very focused on fund-raising issues as a topic in its meetings, rarely discusses program evaluation or development in its meetings. When programs are mentioned, it is in the context of a brief director's summary of what programs are running and the number of clients served. In addition, the board looks to the director for guidance (p. 480).

Board adversities proved common among CAAs and these adversities involved personality clashes, the need to take calculated risk, not being micro managed in making decisions, possessing the skills to understand financial reports or other information, and a need for additional training to be more proficient in meeting their roles as board members. Although study findings disconfirmed what was presented in the literature review, extended knowledge supported these findings. According to CAP (2015), difficult board members were not unusual. There will be those who very seldom attend the meetings, those who (without regard to others' input) aggressively promote their own

views, or those who create divisive parties on the board. In terms of additional training, Considine, O'Sullivan, and Nguyen (2014) commented that NPOs must first define a skill set required of their board based on the needs of the organization and then address whatever skills shortfall with either additional board training or recruit new board members with the desired skills.

Leadership development. Although the executive directors and senior level staff members were given the opportunity to participate in leadership development programs, study findings revealed that no form of leadership succession was practiced within these CAAs: Study participants did not see the connection between leadership development and SP. This is a missed opportunity because "this connection could provide critical opportunities for NPOs to develop and expand leadership potential for employees and to ensure smooth leadership continuity and transition" (Bozer, et al.,2015, p. 496). CAAs' executive directors and board members should integrate leadership development and SP processes and encourage a supportive organizational culture (Appendix F). See Appendix G for the publishers' permission to use Groves' figure.

Theoretical Framework Findings

Study findings aligned with Lewin's (1951, 1958) three-stage model of organizational change. This model of change was used to interpret the continuous process of preparation for SP efforts, as well as to ensure the success of this new system. Study findings suggested that these CAAs needed a period of reflection to become ready for such change. Stage 1, the unfreezing stage, involved replacing old behavior patterns with new ones. Before these CAAs were required to have written successions plans for

the executive director, such practices were extinct. Over the next decade, these NPOs were required to have a board-approved written succession plan for the executive director. Stage 2, the moving stage, involved the development of new behaviors, values, and attitudes through organization change. This included the challenges that the CAAs experienced from either implementing or not implementing SP practices. Stage 3, the refreezing stage, occurs when the desired behavior has been achieved, fully integrated, and accepted. Study findings revealed that the five participating CAAs were still at the stage of unfreezing. Although three CAAs had written succession plans in place, none of these plans had been implemented. Until these CAAs take the time to prepare their leaders for succession, and to offer a transition period for the successor to the executive director, they will remain at the unfreezing stage of Lewin's model of organizational change.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of the study were limited. I made every effort to enhance the study's rigor and trustworthiness, but reliability and validity issues were difficult to establish due to inquiry subjectivity. The study participants were told that the aim of this study was to determine the extent to which SPs were in place and being implemented, as well as the challenges experienced from such practices. I presumed that participants would provide truthful information or what they perceived to be truthful in conveying their experiences of SP practices. Although participating CAAs had similar organizational identities, their cultures, these organizations differ in size and resources. This study was also based on the perspectives of a small sample of executive directors and board members in one type

of agency and in one state. The generalizability of the findings is, therefore, limited and is not be representative of other CAAs in a southern state or other CAAs located throughout the United States.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Recommendations for Future Studies</h2>

The results of this study are based on a smaller number of participants than was initially envisioned. I recommend that this study be replicated with a larger number of CAAs throughout the United States to learn about state or regional similarities and differences. Also, future research should include CAAs' other senior leaders, in addition to the board and executive directors, for a more in-depth understanding of problems faced by CAAs during leadership transitions.

Further, leadership succession affects not only senior leaders and the executive directors' successor, but also the entire organization. For example, the leadership transition may be perceived as a threat to the core features of organizational identity, as well as disrupting the daily routines of an organization (Balser & Carmin, 2009). Although all the participating CAAs had some knowledge of SP, neither the executive directors nor their board members were preparing their key senior staff members for leadership succession. This underscores the need for this study and the importance of disseminating results and recommendations among CAA boards, executive directors, and other senior leaders, in order that leadership development be "married" to SP processes for optimal identification, development, and placement of leadership talent (Groves, 2007). Study results should also be disseminated to other stakeholders, including federal policymakers and funding agencies. An executive summary will be written for

dissemination to study participants, as well as stakeholders from OCS and ACAAA, and I plan to present the research in poster session at an ACAAA annual conference. That poster will also be photographed and displayed in ACAAA monthly online newsletter.

Implications for Social Change

Through an extensive literature review, as well the participants' responses to the research questions, the researcher found that CAAs, as well as it stakeholders, have not collectively analyzed the impact of not practicing leadership development and executive transitions efforts. SP is more than just having a written plan in place. Although study findings revealed that three CAAs under study had a succession plan in place, two were making some progress in fulfilling the requirement set forth within CSBG's organizational standards. Standard 4.5 of the CSBG Organizational Standards specifically required "nonprofit CAAs to have in place a written succession plan, approved by board, for the executive directors' position" no later than fiscal year 2016" (CAP, 2017, p. 19). In spite of this standard, there were no repercussions outlined in the organizational standards for not having a succession plan in place.

The implications for social change include informing CAAs' leaders, stakeholders, and funders of the importance of not only have a written succession in place. They also include the importance of integrating SP with leadership development and executive transitioning practices. The results of this study could broaden the readers' understanding of the myriad challenges that CAAs experience for not implementing effective SP practices. The study may serve as a road map to all CAAs' executive directors, board members, senior executives, and other stakeholders, as well as federal

legislators, of the significance of having a written succession plan in place. It may also alert them to the disadvantages of not preparing their senior staff members for leadership succession, and the resulting failure to transition the successor to the executive director.

Reflections of the Researcher

After working for a local CAA under the leadership of strong executive director for over 20 years and witnessing the wealth of experience and knowledge exhibited by this leader, I have wondered who would be able succeed him upon his retirement or sudden departure. That's when I knew my study would involve SP practices for CAAs' executive directors. The entire process of my research was an educational experience beyond my imagination. As a researcher, this whole concept of academic writing did not come easy for me. I am grateful for the opportunity to grow professionally and personally with the pursuit of this doctoral degree. My experiences surfaced preconceived ideas that I was able to place aside easily. It was evident from the literature and during my first discussions with the participants that there was no single answer in their perceptions and experiences with SP.

My position did not appear to affect the participants' responses. I believed the participants were honest and thoughtful with their answers and it was a pleasure to visit with each of them. I hope this research will provide some evidence that SP is more than just having a written document in place, but also that SP must be connected to leadership succession and successor transition in order to minimize disruption within these organizations, during the time of organizational change.

Conclusions

Failing to plan for a successor can create organizational chaos. Those who do not plan for succession put their organizations at considerable risk for turbulent transitions. Poor SP may have a negative impact on the sustainability of CAAs, whereas organizations with solid SP practices may help to augment and preserve the successful aspects of the culture and character of these organizations into the next and subsequent generations of executive directors. As a result, it is in the best interests of CAAs to build a culture of robust and sustainable succession practices at the earliest opportunity, for upcoming transitions to successors.

While SP is a critical part of the role of the board, it would be beneficial to CAAs if their executive directors offered training, support, and guidance to the boards with regard to their SP process. Executive directors can engage the board by facilitating exposure to internal leaders with a high-level of talent, and to guide them in identifying the ideal competencies for a successor related to the organizations' future direction and goals (Gothard & Austin ,2013).

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Executive Directors and Board Members

Researcher Notes:

- Name and location of CAA

- Name of interviewee

- Interviewee job title

- Length of service

- Year CAA began operating

- Current annual operating budget

- Number of people in executive/leadership positions

- Number of staff members

- Number of board members

1. How long have you been in your current executive director/board position?

2. Are you the organization's founding executive director/charter member of the board?

3. How will the next executive director be selected when you retire or suddenly have to leave?

4. What are your plans to develop or implement a succession plan in the organization?

5. Was there a succession plan in place when you took this position? Has it been implemented? How well is the system working?

6. What resources and/or supports have been beneficial in the succession planning process?

7. Who fulfills your job responsibilities/duties when you are away from the organization for an extended period?

8. Do you, the executive director, train other staff members to perform your assigned duties in case you are away from the office for an extended period of time? How about your senior leveled positions? Do they train other staff members to perform their assigned duties while away from the office?

9. What professional development opportunities are provided for those in leadership positions such as executive directors, program directors, and other administrators?

10. How does succession planning fit within these professional or leadership development efforts?

11. What do you see as the strengths of your organization that could be helpful in an executive director succession process?

12. What do you see as weaknesses of this agency that could cause problems if you retire or suddenly had to leave?

13. What are some of the factors that may discourage applicants from being interested in working as executive director of this agency?

14. What are some of the factors that may discourage applicants of other senior leveled positions to work here at this agency?

15. How would you rate the employee compensation levels at your agency? Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, Don't know

16. What are some of your hopes in terms of hiring a new executive director for this agency?

17. What are some of your fears in terms of hiring a new executive director for this agency?

18. What kind of transition would be offered to the new executive director before your departure?

19. What factors are necessary in the development or implementation of the succession planning process in hiring the next executive director?

20. What factors would make it difficult or impossible to develop or implement a succession plan for the next executive director?

21. What do you see as potential barriers that could delay the executive succession process?

22. What do you see as the main challenge or challenges to the sustainability of your organization over the long term?

23. Imagine being retired and on a beach or a mountaintop. Your organization is successful with a new executive director. What did you or the organization do to make that transition a success?

24. Imagine being retired. Your organization is barely surviving with the new executive director. What did you or the organization not do to make that transition a success?

25. Do you have any questions that I haven't asked that could be helpful for me

and my research?

Appendix B: Participant Demographics

Participant	Role	Years of Service
P1E1	Executive Director	49
P3PU1	Public	5
P4PR1	Private	10
P5E2	Executive Director	14
P6C2	Community	9
P7PU2	Public	12
P8PR2	Private	6
P9E3	Executive Director	1
P10C3	Community	10
P11PU3	Public	6
P12PR3	Private	1
P13PU4	Public	6
P14E4	Executive Director	5
P15PR4	Private	1
P16E5	Executive Director	3
P17C4	Community	4
P19PR5	Private	2

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Name of Participant: _____

Date/Time: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Setting/Demeanor/Other: _____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research. As you know, this research project is about determining to what extent CAAs in a southern state develop and implement SP for their executive directors. What does succession planning mean: "*the process that an organization uses to identify and prepare candidates for high-level management positions that become vacant due to retirement, resignation, death, or new business opportunities*".

I will be asking questions about XXXXXXXX's plan to develop or implement a succession plan and the factors that make it difficult or impossible to develop or implement a succession plan for XXXXXXXX's executive director. I hope my research will provide you, XXXXXXXX, as well as other CAAs in a southern state and around the U.S. some helpful advice and information.

I will tape record this interview and you will have chance to review the transcript of this interview at a later date to verify its accuracy.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Appendix D: Record of Communications

Date: _____

Person/Position: _____

Method: Telephone

Reason: _____

_____

Result: _____

Recording Method/Location: _____

_____

Date: _____

Person/Position: _____

Method: _____

Reason: _____

Result: _____

Appendix E: Table of Themes and Comment Frequency

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Organizational Identity (57)	Strengths (26)	
	Weakness (7)	
	Political (2)	
	Organizational Culture (22)	Multiple Job Positions (12)
		Staff Longevity (5)
		Loyalty (3)
		Accountability (2)
Sustainability (50)	Funding (23)	
	Limited Resources (12)	
	Unrestricted Funding (12)	
	Program(s) Guidelines (3)	Mandates (2)
		Program Integration (1)
Salaries (47)	Senior Position Turnover (22)	
	Compensation (17)	
	Executive Director Turnover (6)	
	College Graduates (2)	
Governance (32)	Board Engagement (21)	
	Board Challenges (11)	

Primary	**Secondary**	**Tertiary**
Leadership (30)	Capabilities (30)	Current Leadership (23)
		Previous Leadership (6)
		Mentorship (1)
Leadership Dev. (28)	Staff (15)	
	Board (13)	
Discouragements (26)	Exec. Director Applicants (26)	Salary (10)
		Workload (7)
		Stress- Related (5)
		Skills (4)
Predecessor (19)	Flourishing (11)	
	Barely Surviving (8)	
Hiring (15)	Internal versus External (15)	Hopes versus Fears (15)
Transition Period (14)		
Comments (12)		

Appendix F: Leadership Development and SP Process

Develop Pervasive Mentoring Relationships

- Contribute to the Mentor Network
  o Mentor direct reports *and* high potentials from other work units
- Career Planning
- Strengths/Areas of Improvement
- Leadership Competency Development

Identify & Codify Leadership Talent

- Multiple Methods to Identify High Potential Managers
  o Committee
  o Survey Tool
  o Coding System
- Assess Managerial Bench Strength
- Avoid Heir Apparent Designation

Assign Developmental Activities

- Internal Courses & Workshops Taught by Managers
- Action Learning Projects Facilitated by Managers
- Stretch Assignments
- 360 Degree Assessments
- Executive Coaching

Enhance High Potentials' Visibility

- Expose Leadership Talent through Organization-wide Forums
- Leadership Academy

Succession Decision

- Consider a Diverse Pool of Candidates; *Not* Only Direct Reports
- Consider Opportunities to Enhance Diversity
- Board Engagement

Reinforce an Organizational Culture of Leadership Development

- Strong CEO Commitment to Leadership Development Programs
  o Active participation in teaching courses and facilitating action learning projects
- Managerial Performance Appraisal and Reward Process
  o Identify/Develop High Potentials
  o Succession Planning Progress as Performance Criterion

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Appendix G: Permission to Use Figure

FW: Permission to Use Figure

Tue 4/3/2018 9:57 AM

To Johnnie F. Campbell

📎 1 attachments

permission_request.doc;

Dear Johnnie Campbell,

Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is _____ ` and I am the _____ .

Subject to full referencing, Emerald is happy for you to use this content within your dissertation. Please note, however, that if in the future you wish to publish your dissertation commercially, you will need to clear permission again.

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I hope this helps, please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further assistance.

Kind Regards,

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Please consider the environment before printing this email

From: Johnnie F. Campbell ·
Sent: 29 March 2018 19:50
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Subject: Permission to Use Figure

To whom it may concern.