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**Leadership in social service non-profit organizations: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of executive leadership high attrition levels and proposals for change**

Stephanie Fredericka Wanza

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL SERVICE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS: AN  
INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP  
HIGH ATTRITION LEVELS AND PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Stephanie Fredericka Wanza

February, 2024

Danielle Espino, EdD. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Stephanie Fredericka Wanza

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father James Willie Wanza Jr., who was my greatest supporter and best father anyone could desire. I also dedicate this work to my mother Diana Sweetwine Wanza who taught me to never give up and to always finish what I start; and to my beautiful daughter Joi B. Wanza who has encouraged me through so many challenges. To my late grandparents Fredericka D. Wanza, James Wanza. Sr., Essiemae Sweetwine-Turner, and John Westley Sweetwine, the wisdom you provided and commitment to excellence you instilled in me are the greatest gifts I have ever received, I am eternally grateful for you.

To all my family, aunts, cousins, uncles, dedicated friends, classmates, and extended church family who have encouraged me and guided me along this eight-year journey to receiving my Ph.D. please know that I appreciate your prayers, lifting me up when I felt down and for pushing me across the finish line. Your support of me and my work will never be forgotten. I have become who I am because of your love and belief in my scholarship, strength, and goals.

Most of all I would like to thank the Lord God Almighty for all He has done while at I matriculated through Pepperdine and throughout my entire life. I am grateful to be able to enter a new season as a Doctor of Philosophy. I am now better equipped to influence others because of the lessons I have learned and more confident in my calling to educate and elevate those who are placed in my life's path.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A special thank you to my dissertation coach Dr. Deatra Neal who has been so helpful and committed to being a sister and friend who can be depended on and Dr. Jeannete Vaughn who held my hand, prayed for me and was there to cheer me on always.

Thank you to my Pepperdine professors and classmates and educational community who reached out and assisted me in any way possible to help me complete this journey. I love you all. I wouldn't take anything for my journey now. I am ready to impact the world, one person and one lesson at a time.

## VITA

Stephanie F. Wanza

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**Ph.D. in Global Leadership and Change at Pepperdine University, 2023**

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*The Creators Caring Heart* Book and Devotional, 2014, Authorhouse Publishers

Miami Dade County Schools and The Black Archives Foundation. *Voices of the Past* Video

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Miami Dade “Impact of Transportation Projects on Overtown” oral history records, 1996-1998 | Black Archives History and Research Foundation of South Florida. “FIU Tell The Story Project.” (1998)

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to address how leaders who are employed at non-profit organizations can utilize change management frameworks, leadership style, strategic planning and organizational best practices to reduce attrition levels at their organizations. The focus of this study is three-fold: a) to understand why high attrition takes place at non-profits; identify what change model/s, types of leadership styles and best practices can be effective in reducing leader attrition, b) explore the development of a leadership framework by understanding how to manage change at nonprofits through the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models which focus on how management transition, sharpening management skills and successfully managing organizational culture and politics can assist nonprofit leaders and boards to implement change required to select and retain leaders, and 3) identify frameworks and policy and organizational culture adjustments and changes nonprofit leaders can utilize to create an environment in which leaders can be successful and be encouraged to remain at the organization. The study results will reveal how servant leadership and strategic leadership is relevant or beneficial as a leadership style, the role moral motivation plays with guiding nonprofit leader's decisions and leader traits most relevant useful for leaders with longevity at social services nonprofits which lead to organizational and non-profit board best practices.

*Keywords:* attrition, nonprofit, leadership, executive, recruitment, social service, management change model, servant leader, strategic leadership, moral motivation, CA Carnall, Shields management change model, organizational politics, organizational culture.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter one will expound on the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, definition of terms, conceptual framework, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, positionality, organization of the study, and chapter summary.

### **Background of the Study**

Non-profit organizations began as individually operated charities in the United States after the Civil War, because of increased industrialization, social ills, poverty, and community breakdown to assist with the “flow of labor, and violence, local organizations (generally headed by community elites) developed to assist widows and children. Early charities attempted to remedy individual poverty as opposed to systemic poverty” (INCITE!, 2007, p. 3). Charitable giving increased in the early 1900s and prior to 1950 charities were mainly unregulated due to the lack of taxes imposed. By 1955, donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations totaled \$ 7.7 billion, according to the American Association of Fundraising Counsel (INCITE!, 2007).

As foundation support increased so did 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations (INCITE!, 2007). According to the IRS, non-profits are “religious, charitable, scientific, or educational” organizations whose receipts are tax-exempt, and whose contributions are tax deductible for the donors. Non-profit tax-exempt status was created by Congress as part of the Revenue Act of 1913, passed after ratification of the 16th Amendment, which instituted the income tax. Non-profit organizations must secure 501(c)(3) status to receive foundation grants and are not allowed to participate in political activities. In 1953 approximately 50,000 organizations received charity

status. By 1978, that number increased to over 300,000. As of 1998, there were 734,000 501(c)(3) organizations in the United States and as of 2017, United States charities exceeded 730,000 according to the IRS. Foundations had assets of \$500 billion and donated approximately \$33.6 billion annually. There are now over 837,027 non-profits in the United States alone, excluding religious organizations (INCITE!, 2007).

Leadership is one of the most influential organizational factors in employees' intention to remain, absenteeism, turnover intention, satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Allen & Mueller, 2013). In the non-profit arena Executive Directors and board members usually operate autonomously and the concept of shared leadership and shared knowledge (knowledge management) is rarely considered in terms of reducing attrition and the promoting retention of newly hired or existing leaders and staff. Shared leadership is an interactive influence process where leadership is shared among leadership rather than focusing on a single individual (Executive Director or board member; Pearce & Conger, 2003) and a "simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterized by 'serial emergence' of official as well as unofficial leaders" (Pearce, 2004, p. 48). Leading as a team can assist non-profits in minimizing attrition rates of employees due to the maximization of ideas, minimizing bottlenecks, and increasing and improving the quality of productivity, production, or processing times (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Organizational turnover has been a central research topic for nearly 90 years (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Tse, 2008, and as most scholars have discovered, can cause non-profits to lose talent, and funding and reduce the scope of their work (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Watrous et al., 2006). According to Abbasi and Hollman (2000) financial costs, stakeholder relations, and reduction of efficiency, reduced morale and performance can emanate as a result of turnover



(Watrous et al., 2006).

Practicing shared leadership at a non-profit can shift leaders' behaviors (Carson et al., 2007) and can be utilized as a system of distributing and executing plans that may result in heightened performance (Morgeson et al., 2010). Shared leadership can also motivate leaders "to lead themselves and share influence with their peers in making decisions, solving problems, and identifying opportunities for the future, widespread creativity and innovation are encouraged" (Pearce & Manz, 2005, p. 136). Shared leadership is a team-based collective phenomenon, and most studies expound on shared leadership at the team level. It occurs when "multiple team members are likely to perform a particular leadership function" (Morgeson et al., 2010, p. 30).

According to Yu et al. (2013) knowledge sharing occurs when "people who possess knowledge are willing to transfer their work experience, techniques, and opinions to others in a concrete manner and expect that others will practically apply such knowledge at work" (Yu et al., 2013, p.148) and can transfer individual and team knowledge into organizational knowledge (Wang & Wang, 2012). Effective knowledge management can improve creativity, innovation, and reputation, and increase organizational funding (Wang & Noe, 2010). Leaders can exchange knowledge and contribute to innovation in team knowledge sharing and board members can share their ideas, suggestions, and information with Executive Directors and one another (Srivastava et al., 2006). van de Ven (1986) defines innovation as the process of generating and implementing fresh ideas. Individual innovative behavior is "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group or organization, to benefit role performance, the group, or organization" (Janssen, 2004, p. 202).

According to Vandavasi et al. (2020) leadership knowledge sharing, and management is essential to informing and influencing other leaders and staff to participate in creating a culture

that is inclusive of idea sharing, emotional intelligence, and open communication. The team approach to reducing attrition can be far more beneficial than the efforts of Executive Directors and board members individually. Transformational leadership is essential for work engagement among nonprofits (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). Every leader can use unique styles of leadership. Non-profit leaders are advised to acknowledge the effectiveness and application of transformational leadership to influence staff and other leaders (Yukl, 2010).

Non-profit organizations have historically and statistically been subjected to losing leaders due to their lack of ability to obtain and or sustain leaders who are the right fit for their organization and who can adjust, adapt, and become adept to the many changes which come with the organizational structure and political culture of the organization in addition to not practicing shared leadership and knowledge sharing (management). Case studies reveal organizations fail at implementing change due to a lack of focus on change management strategy. Change is considered as a single occurrence to be controlled, when change is a natural process that defines an organization's ability to exploit and explore (Graetz & Smith, 2010). Non-profit executives and leaders can respond to the pace and complexity of change by adapting, learning, and acting quickly. Unexperienced or untrained leaders often try to control and master change in the environment. Organizational leaders are advised to learn how to identify and use a framework for transformation that will help their organizations survive and flourish in the next century and beyond (Pryor et al., 2008).

Akingbola (2006) contends change is a constant and leaders who anticipate change react rapidly and responsibly are successful. Organizational leaders who are proactive and create their future experience greater success and are the leaders in their industry. Some organizations follow their lead and adapt to change. Other organizations that are slow to change or reject change may

not survive. According to Akingbola (2006) non-profits usually fall into four categories: defender, prospector, analyzer, and reactors and adjust their organizational strategy in response to changes in their operating environment. Unfortunately, these changes do not often include addressing or resolving attrition levels issues which can cause a reduction in performance and morale and over time can diminish the vision and mission of the organization due to incompetent or untrained leaders. Information derived from Executive Director and leader interviews and surveys will reveal organizational best practices and provide input on how to revise organizational polices and reveal how organizational tradition, beliefs and culture can cause executives and the board to ignore managerial blind spots which can hinder board members and leaders from engaging in new management practices which can reduce attrition levels.

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) identify four research themes or issues common to all change efforts:

1. content issues which focus on the substance of contemporary organizational changes,
2. contextual issues, which primarily deal with forces in an organization's external and internal environments,
3. process issues, which address actions undertaken during the enactment of an intended change, and
4. criterion issues which focus on outcomes commonly assessed in organizational change efforts. (Pryor et al., 2008, p. 8)

The issues which require the use of change models that nonprofits in the social service arena face usually fall under the second and fourth themes. The Carnall (1986) and Shields (1999) change management models focus on addressing contextual issues with forces in an nonprofits internal and external environment and seeks to change the structural, political, human

resources and cultural issues which perpetuate behaviors that are counterproductive to enacting policies and procedures and changing traditions, values, beliefs, and perceptions which could lead to attrition of newly hired leaders at nonprofits. The Cummings & Worley Positive Model (2009) focuses on addressing outcomes that were accessed during evaluation of what the organization “is doing right.” This involves building from successes for the organization and creating a plan which highlights best practices for recruitment methods, hiring practices and board involvement in the human resources process.

Graetz and Smith, (2010) recommend using a multi-philosophical approach because continuity depends on change as much as change depends on continuity. They are both essential for organizational growth and survival. Continuity underpins the search for new meanings and new understandings. As Evans (1992) argued, “most qualities of an organization have a complementary opposite quality, and excessive focus on one pole of a duality ultimately leads an organization into stagnation and decline (undue continuity)” (p. 256–257), while the corrective swing to the opposite pole leads to disruptive and discontinuous crisis (excessive change; Graetz & Smith, 2010).

Adopting an effective leadership style and behavior, practicing shared leadership, knowledge management, and implementing organizational change are all factors that can contribute to lessening leadership attrition at non-profit organizations. This study will focus on how the behavior and managerial practices of executive directors, leaders, and board members can, directly and indirectly, impact attrition levels at non-profit organizations and explore how or if non-profit leaders and their board members can strategically implement change at their organizations by utilizing a combination of change models (Carnall, 1986) or the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models. This

study will be centered around this framework and focus on the topics listed below.

Utilizing the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models might assist non-profits by (a) creating a change management framework that focuses on the structure, culture, politics, and management transition, (b) Utilizing strategic leadership, servant leader leadership, moral motivation, (c) adapt leadership and management styles which are innovative, influential, and motivating, (d) creating change management best practices for leaders, (e) shifting or changing organizational policies and leader perspectives concerning their expectations of newly hired leaders and existing leaders, and (f) influencing new leaders to embrace their non-profit's unique vision and mission and goals.

### **Problem Statement**

Executive/leader turnover at non-profit organizations is prevalent among younger employees as well as baby boomers (Bello-Gomez & Rutherford, 2021). There are now fewer qualified leaders who can replace those in executive-level positions. Currently, there is limited research on identifying what are the causes, outcomes, and processes of turnover at non-profit organizations. Non-profit executive turnover has not been sufficiently examined nor have actual turnover events been chronicled (Holtom et al., 2022). Executive turnover research lacks an overarching framework that connects it to a consistent framework for theory building (Dyck et al., 2002). Little is known about the succession process or successors and incumbent's roles (Stewart, 2016). Non-profits are vulnerable to disruptions in operating environments, and an executive turnover, even in the best-case scenario, creates a period of "organizational instability and uncertainty" (Gibelman & Gelmen, 2002, p. 66). Staff turnover follows executive turnover for 62% of the non-profit organization that participated in an executive turnover survey (Stewart, 2016, p. 51). Prior research among for-profit corporations has found that long tenures of

outgoing executives were associated with declining organizational performance, which may present a turnaround challenge for a new executive (Hughes & Luksetich, 2010).

This research seeks to bring awareness of the urgency of this issue, which has not been fully brought to the attention of organizational development experts, human resource professionals, or even non-profit industry researchers and continues to increase in the non-profit sector, subject experts. The non-profit sector leadership deficit is a complex problem involving social and demographic changes. Non-profit sectors face the challenge of implementing change management in governance, planning, and decision making (Tierney, 2006).

The result of higher attrition among leaders can have a significant impact on the mission, scope, and ability of non-profit organizations to provide services in their communities due to the morale, productivity, and policy issues that constant leader transition can cause. This research may be able to shed light on how management style, employee motivation, and the use of management best practices may be able to identify the causes of attrition among leaders. This research may also provide strategies, organizational plans, policies, and methods that specifically address the attrition dilemmas that non-profit organizations face.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study is to interpret the accounts of non-profit Executive Directors of their own personal lived experience during their employment at non-profit organizations in the United States between the years of 2012 and 2022.

## **Research Questions**

The overarching research question is:

- What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes of executive leader attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?

The sub-questions that emerge from this idea are:

- SQ1: What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations?
- SQ2: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organizations?

The research questions were developed to explore the causes of attrition to non-profits, particularly among newly hired executives within the past three years.

## **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this phenomenological study is to determine through interviews whether servant leadership, strategic leadership and moral motivation complement and assist in effectively implementing the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings & Worley (2009) Positive change models; and provide best practices for service-oriented non-profit executive directors and boards to reduce attrition levels by: adjusting and reframing their perception of incoming leaders and restructuring their structural, political and cultural frameworks to better accommodate the needs of newly hired leaders; and exhibit leadership/management styles which promote a more conducive environment and would disparage leader attrition. This study will advance knowledge by providing non-profit executives and boards with information from which leadership best practices may be examined and reframes their perception of new leader needs and the most effective ways to acclimate them to the politics, structure, and culture of their non-

profit. Non-profit executive directors, boards, and staff can benefit from initiating best practices for leaders and board members and discover how reframing their perception of leadership to align leader/executive director expectations with the expectations of newly hired leadership/staff may reduce leader attrition. Data provided from the executive director and leader interviews and surveys, conceptual frameworks, use of the strategic and leadership styles, and implementation of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models (detailed in Chapter 2) can provide insight into identifying structural, political, cultural, and managerial challenges as well as what social services non-profits are excelling in and to build upon their successes and best practices to reduce leader attrition.

This research specifically addresses how attrition rates can be decreased by utilizing servant and strategic leadership styles to demonstrate behaviors and exhibit traits to assist non-profit leaders/executives in becoming more effective and successful managers; improve interpersonal interactions and exhibit moral motivation with newly hired executives. The researcher will explore how executive non-profit leaders can make significant behavioral adjustments that encourage leadership development and establish executive-employee relationships and behaviors conducive to facilitating diversity, emotional intelligence, acceptance of new management ideas and styles, and enhancing organizational progression toward reducing attrition and developing best practices.

This study will also focus on how non-profits can prepare for a preferred future and succession planning. Progressive non-profit organizations plan their future and stages to expand the mission, anticipate talent required, conduct succession planning to determine how to develop and motivate internal staff before a crisis occurring, and monitor the external environment to discover new financial and in-kind resources to sustain and expand current and future



organizational goals and endeavors (Kaplan, 2001). Nonprofit executives are advised to consider how perceived fit processes will impact all aspects of the human resource system (attracting, recruiting, selecting, retaining, and staff turnover).

This research can provide current and future non-profit executives with information on how to become more forward-thinking and identify skilled and experienced leaders whose skill set, and education which aligns with their new and existing organizational roles. Selecting the leaders and staff who are the “right fit” for the organization can lower attrition levels and assist in sustaining a cadre of leaders who are committed to the vision and mission of the organization (Lee & Sabharwal, 2014). The organizational management change models selected will explore how non-profits can utilize their expertise, creativity, motivational efforts, and leadership style to navigate their organizational culture and structure and most important policies to create recruitment and retention processes and focus on future organizational requirements (Gregory & Howard, 2009).

Leaders may also be able to encourage staff morale and productivity through this study’s exploration of how leader motivation, behavior and leadership style can influence employees to be productive and supportive of the vision of the organization. In a turbulent and unpredictable economy, nonprofit employees can remain motivated for their organizations to succeed, if they avoid the pitfalls of adopting for-profit approaches without first considering their suitability for nonprofits (Beck et al., 2008). Finally, this study will explore if utilizing a combined change management framework that focuses on Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley’s (2009) Positive change models can develop a blueprint of how non-profits can achieve their political, policy, structural, financial, and cultural goals and expectations by developing

new and promoting existing best practices which assist in the recruitment and retention of employees and reduces attrition levels of leaders (Beck et al., 2008).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Best practices:* Best practices are standards, or a set of guidelines known to produce good outcomes if followed. Best practices are related to how to conduct a task or configure something. Strict best practice guidelines may be set by a governing body or may be internal to an organization and defined as “proven frameworks for consistently and effectively achieving a business objective” which are essentially the best ways to execute various situations within a nonprofit organization (Mendel, 2022).

*C.A. Carnall change management model* C.A. Carnall’s change management framework contends that change depends on the level of management skills in managing transitions effectively, dealing with organizational cultures, and managing organizational politics. It also demonstrates how to shift behaviors, motivations, and expectations of managers to address the needs of managers (Carnall, 1986).

*Change management model:* Change management frameworks are concepts, theories, and methodologies that provide an in-depth approach to organizational change. They aim to provide a guide to making changes, navigating the transformation process, and ensuring that changes are accepted and put into practice. Change managers develop a clear and “shared vision of where they are going and link these to implement strategies designed to produce desired results” (Paton & McCalman, p. 4, 2008).

*Contingency philosophy:* The contingency philosophy is based on the proposition that organizational performance is a consequence of the fit between two or more factors, such as an

organization's environment, use of technology, strategy, structure, systems, style, or culture (Hui, 2019).

*Cultural philosophy:* Cultural philosophy is concerned with collective experiences of change, and the shared values that guide them through the long-term, slow, and small-scale (Schein, 1985).

*Leadership:* Leadership is “the ability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across boundaries in service of a higher vision or goal” (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2011, p. 5).

*Non-profit boards:* Non-profit boards exist to perform mission-setting and oversight functions that help to ensure organizational accountability comprised of members who serve non-profits and represent non-profits as volunteers. The main responsibilities are to determine mission and purpose, select, support, and evaluate the executive chief, ensure effective planning, monitor, and strengthen programs and services, ensure adequate financial resources, protect assets, and provide financial insights, build a competent board, ensure legal and ethical integrity and enhance the organization's public standing (Ingram, 2009).

*Non-profit executive director:* An executive director (ED) is the senior operating officer or manager of an organization or corporation. Their duties are like a chief executive officer (CEO) of a for-profit company. Executive Directors are responsible for strategic planning, working with the board of directors, and operating within a budget. Executive Directors of non-profit organizations (NPOs) are usually involved with fundraising efforts, as well as the promotion of the organization to raise public awareness and boost membership (Downey, 2022).

*Non-profit organizations (NPO):* Non-profit organizations are “private, self-governing entities not returning profits to their owners or directors and requiring some degree of voluntary

participation” (Lukeš & Stephan, 2012, p. 42). An NPO is a business that has been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) because it furthers a social cause and provides a public benefit. Donations made to an NPO are typically tax-deductible to individuals and businesses that make them (Downey, 2022).

*Organizational change:* Organizational change is defined as a change in organizational structure, its system/sub-systems, employees, and relation between them in a planned or non-planned way. In addition, this change process can result in good or bad (Lewis, 2019).

*Organizational culture:* Organizational culture “comprises common beliefs, attitudes, and values” (Momeni & Marjani 2012, p. 221)

*Phenomenology:* Phenomenology is a premise is a common underlying structure, or “essence,” for any phenomenon that can be explicated from individual descriptions of those persons experiencing the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl’s concept of essence is operationalized in phenomenological research through the development of a narrative synthesis that captures the common core meaning of the research participants’ experiences.

*Political philosophy:* Political philosophy explains change as the result of clashing ideology or belief systems and assumes the clashing of opposing political forces produces change (Morgan, 1986).

*Positive change management framework:* The positive change management framework assists executives/leadership and board members to understand what does not need to be fixed.

By identifying and acknowledging the positive behaviors and capacities an organization already possesses, leaders can use these qualities to support a future change process. The Positive change model also provides balance since the natural inclination in organizational development efforts is to focus on what is not working. (Cummings &

Worley, 2009, p. 28)

*Psychological philosophy*: Psychological philosophy assumes that the most important dimension of change is found in personal and individual experience. It is concerned with the human side of change (Stuart, 1995),

And has clear links with human relations, human development, and organizational development approaches emerging in response to mechanistic methods of scientific management. Since it assumes that individuals are the most important unit in organizational change, it also has strong links with behavioral science as well. (Graetz & Smith, p. 144)

*Servant leadership*: Servant leadership style emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community and the sharing of power in decision making a long term, transformational approach to life and work a way of being that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society. Servant leaders focus on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong, share power, put the needs of others first, and help people develop and perform as highly as possible (Greenleaf, 2002).

*Shields change management model*: The Shields change model examines strategic change and uses Shields' (1999) framework to build on the idea that when change fails, it is because of insufficient attention to the human and cultural aspects of the business. This framework/system integrates human resources management with (organizational) business process innovations (Shields, 1999).

*Social entrepreneurship*: Social entrepreneurship is defined as “the activities and processes are undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner”

(Farinha et al., 2020, p. 77). Social entrepreneurship can be conceptualized as factors and characteristics that exist both at the organizational (Shier et al., 2019) and practice level (Olinsson & Fouseki, 2019) of human service organizations, and can include innovative, proactive, and market-based (i.e., activities that contribute directly to economic outcomes) activities combined with strategic risk-taking approaches (Shier et al., 2019).

*Social identity theory:* Social identity theory is conceived as a theory of intergroup relations and conflict and cooperation between groups. It later developed into a much broader social psychological theory of the role of self and identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general.

*Moral motivation:* Moral motivation is the “dynamic developmental process of self-organization and self-regulation of cognitive and emotional elements out of which moral judgment and action emerge” (Kaplan, 2017, p. 200).

*Strategic leadership:* Strategic leadership is “the field of strategic leadership which focuses on the way top level leaders (i.e., executives) have an impact on organizational performance through their leadership” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, p.13–14)

*Transformational leaders/leadership:* Transformational leaders/leadership speaks of, ...leaders who form the core of the organization’s culture from the start and are taught to new members and individuals who can transmit embed organizational culture through deliberate teaching, coaching, role frame working, reward allocation, recruitment, selection, promotion, and other mechanisms as well as generate employee commitment to innovation by stressing core values and promoting group loyalty. (Jaskyte, 2004, p. 2)

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research utilizes a qualitative phenomenological design. The proposed research

framework is interviews of participants. Data collected from interviews will be analyzed to identify servant leaders and strategic leader's traits, management style preference and best practices for non-profit leadership.

The researcher takes an "interpretivists worldview which focuses on subjective reality, constructed by how human beings see and interpret the world in their respective context. So, truth is not absolute but relative in interpretivism" (Petersen & Gencel, 2013, p. 1). The interpretivist worldview correlates with the phenomenological research design which seeks to discover the lived experiences of participants.

### **Limitations**

Circumstances beyond the control of the researcher could impact the interpretation of these results. Unforeseeable circumstances which could hinder the study are non-profits' lack of participation and partial participation and completion of the interviews which could limit the amount of data collected. The changes in non-profit trends and practices and statistics could impact the information that changes the perspective of how attrition is viewed and thus interpreted. The researcher may not be able to solicit an expansive cadre of executive directors who possess over five years of leadership or supervisory experience interview to have a significant sample to report results. Phenomenology is not the only research design that could be used for this study. A case study could have also been conducted which may have expanded the amount of data collected and the variety of perspectives on leadership from non-profit leaders. After the completion of the interviews the limitations observed were 1) the study taking longer than expected, 2) the sample size was small and only taken in 9 states which limited the number of perspectives, 3) the study only examined the experiences of social service non-profits, and 4) only leaders at smaller non-profits with 1-100 employees were interviewed. Leaders at larger

non-profits could possibly reveal additional information concerning attrition at non-profits.

### **Delimitations**

This study is limited in its scope and sample size. A total of 10–20 non-profits and 20–30 executives will be asked to participate in the interviews and demographic questionnaire. A larger sample size of both national and global non-profits could provide a broader view and additional data on the reasons for high attrition rates at social services and non-social service non-profit organizations.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher will assume that the information received from participants in this study will be sufficient to conduct this study and the information (data) obtained will be truthful and significant. The researcher will also assume that the individuals who are selected to participate in this study will be knowledgeable about leader attrition at non-profits and will be able to provide a leader's perspective on leadership style and management practices that will contribute to this study.

### **Positionality**

The researcher's 27 years of experience with non-profits has impacted her knowledge of the field and the reasons for attrition to organizations. The researcher has worked at non-profits and served as a board member. The researcher's educational background is in public administration, theology and history which has assisted in shaping her perspective and opinion on the innerworkings (politics, structure, culture, and policies) of non-profit organizations.

The researcher has experience with the innerworkings of a non-profit organization, the



struggles of non-profit leaders and the responsibilities they face. She also is aware of the challenges that come with acclimating newly hired leaders to the organization and effectively demonstrating the vision, mission, and goals of their non-profits. Due to the researcher's in-depth knowledge of non-profits, she will take every scholarly measure to remain non-biased while conducting this study. The researcher will utilize the phenomenological framework of study to approach this research objectively and use the results to develop a roadmap for executives to follow who desire to retain leaders at their organizations, recognize the cause of attrition, develop skills to manage the transition and implement plans and policies to reinforce these actions. The researcher has witnessed numerous non-profits struggle to retain leaders who are committed to the cause of their organizations without success.

The researcher has experience with leader attrition due to a lack of support from the executive staff and the non-profit board. As an employee and leader at a non-profit, the researcher's personal knowledge of the reasons for attrition can range from lack of social, cultural, and intellectual connection between newly hired (1–3 years) leaders the board and organizational executives, internal organizational political issues, poor recruitment planning and practices of board members to properly train and acclimate new staff and leaders to the vision and mission of the organizations. This study seeks to provide non-profit executives with change management strategies, leadership styles and implications for practice which can reduce attrition at their organizations.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters which include an introduction of the topic and description of non-profit attrition issues in Chapter 1; a literature review which outlines information on non-profit practices, change models, leadership behavior, and gaps in the

literature on non-profit leadership attrition in Chapter 2; research methodology which provides information on study participants, data collection and analysis in Chapter 3; presentation of the data collected in Chapter 4; and analysis of results with conclusions and recommendations for future research in Chapter 5.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the purpose statement, problem statement, background of the study research questions, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and positionality of the proposed research on examining non-profit leader attrition. In this section, the researcher expounded on the background of non-profits, the implications of the problem of attrition at non-profit organizations, how leader behavior can impact and influence change, how the emergent leader framework assists with reducing non-profit leader autonomy, and how this study proposes to inform non-profit leaders and scholars on how adopting management change models can promote shared leadership and knowledge, open communication with newly hired leaders and staff which can lead to reduced attrition rates. The next chapter outlines the literature review for this study and will explore in detail the role of the executive director, board members, staff, stakeholders, and newly hired employees.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 describes and synthesizes literature regarding extant research for this IPA study and includes the following subsections: conceptual framework, three major change management frameworks, non-profit organizations, existing proposals for change, gaps and inconsistencies in the literature and chapter summary. In this chapter the researcher seeks to examine the literature pertaining to non-profit leader attrition issues and challenges non-profits face and discover what best practices can be implemented to avoid or decrease attrition within leadership at non-profit organizations. The conceptual framework for this study will be guided by Carnall (1986) Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) model change management models, leadership styles, leader behavior characteristics, best practices for non-profit management, non-profit stakeholders, and non-profit boards. This study will focus on how to create and sustain leadership best practices by utilizing change models to assist with addressing non-profit leadership attrition issues and examine effective leadership styles for non-profit leaders,

Utilization of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models may reveal how organizational and managerial best practices can be identified and implemented by non-profit leaders. These best practices may also assist in developing strategies to identify and address relational, political, structural, and cultural issues which can lead to non-profit attrition. The recommendations will also suggest how to implement organizational change by adopting management styles, strategies, and motivational behaviors to reduce attrition among leaders at their non-profit organizations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study examines how the use of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models in conjunction with servant and strategic leadership styles and moral motivation can provide a blueprint that offers management skills, vision, and plan to identify and address specific structural, political, and cultural issues; and develop best practices and successes to recruit, train and sustain employment of newly hired leaders. Utilizing the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) models may provide non-profit Executive Directors and leaders with management skills, leadership styles and management tools to implement a comprehensive organizational plan that promotes systemic change, supports the management and leadership efforts of new leaders, and develops best practices which can reduce new leader attrition.

The Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models may identify how to shift executives' organizational management style, structure, culture, politics, and the efforts of board members by examining how to integrate strategic leadership, servant leadership and moral motivation into reframing perceptions of the expectations of incoming leaders. The Carnall (1986), Shields (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models demonstrate how shifting executive director behavior can promote an inclusive environment which encourages newly hired leaders to become more easily acclimated to non-profit organizational culture, structure and politics and reduce attrition rates.

The following section expounds on the goals of change management and identifies the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models in detail and demonstrate how these frameworks combined can yield a framework to develop, initiate and promote best practices for non-profit executive leaders. Figure 1 explains the

Conceptual Framework for Change Management Frameworks and Themes.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework for Change Management Frameworks and Themes*



**Three Major Change Management Models**

Change management is defined as the process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers (Moran & Brightman, 2001). Organizational change plays an essential role in improving the performance of non-profit organizations and occurs due to changes in policy strategies, technology, economic pressures, internal and external environments, and policy structure, and, most importantly, the organizational culture and values (Chavan & Bhattacharya, 2022).

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) identify four research themes or issues common to all change efforts:

1. Content issues that focus on the substance of contemporary organizational changes,
2. contextual issues, which primarily deal with forces in an organization's external and internal environments,

3. Process issues, which address actions undertaken during the enactment of an intended change,
4. Criterion issues that focus on outcomes commonly assessed in organizational change efforts. (Pryor et al., 2008, p. 8)

The issues which require the use of change models that non-profits in the social service arena deal with are process and criterion issues. The use of these three models is being presented as a framework to address these issues. The Carnall (1986) and Shields (1999) models focus on addressing contextual issues with forces in a non-profits internal and external environment and seeks to change the structural, political, human resources and cultural issues which perpetuate behaviors that are counterproductive to enacting policies and procedures and changing traditions, values, beliefs, and perceptions which could lead to attrition of newly hired leaders at non-profits (Carnall, 1986; Shields, 1999).

The Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change model focuses on addressing outcomes that were assessed during evaluation of what the organization “is doing right” (Cummings & Worley, 2009). This involves building from successes for the organization and creating a plan which highlights best practices for recruitment methods, hiring practices and board involvement in the human resources process.

Based on the literature reviewed the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change models are best suited to assist non-profit executives and board members to manage organizational change and transition and might assist with reducing attrition rates due to their steps to change leader behavior, leadership style and focus on developing best practices. Other change models that focus on transition but don't directly address leader behavior or leadership style are: Lewin's change management framework (Lewin, 1947), McKinsey 7-S

Framework (Waterman et al., 1980), nudge theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009), The ADKAR change management model (Hiatt, 2006), Kubler-Ross change curve (Kubler-Ross, 1970), Bridges' transition framework (Bridges, 2002), Satir change model (Satir et al., 1991), Kotter's 8-step theory, (Kotter, 1995), the Maurer 3 levels of resistance and change model (Maurer, 1996) and Deming cycle (PDCA; Shewhart & Deming, 1986).

### ***Carnall Change Management Model***

Carnall's (1986) change model can be strategically utilized at the executive level to increase managerial/leader effectiveness and reduce attrition. Carnall's model contends that change depends on the level of management skills in managing transitions effectively, dealing with organizational cultures, and managing organizational politics. It also demonstrates how to shift behaviors, motivations, and expectations of managers to address the needs of employees.

One aim of this study is to examine how Carnall (1986), and Shields (1999) change models related to the lived experiences of non-profit executive director attrition and may be used to assist with lessening leadership attrition at non-profits.

The four components of the Carnall (1986) change management model are:

1. Management skills which involve building coalitions and controlling the agenda through political skills.
2. Management transition which involves assisting employees change and supports a culture of openness and risk taking.
3. Organizational culture involves creating more adaptive cultures.
4. Organizational politics involves managers/leaders understanding recognizing different organizational groups (Board of Directors/Committees) and their political agendas.

Carnall's (1986) change management model provides strategies to support leaders/managers at non-profits to encourage and engage open communication, diverse culture, manage office politics and assisting employees in the process of acclimating to a new non-profit culture. The researcher will also explore how transformational leadership, servant leadership, strategic leadership, and moral motivation (or a combination of styles) is best suited for executives and boards to successfully implement the conceptual framework of Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change models. The combination of these three models will be compared against other popular management change models suggested for non-profit organizational change which focus on how strategic, servant or transformational leadership can lead to leadership reframing, improve skills, and identify what situations can cause newer employees to remain at their non-profit organization or resign.

**Management Skills.** Carnall (1986) focuses on the development of non-profit Executive Directors' management skills that will engage employees in a deeper connection with them which includes elements of emotional intelligence (EI), diversity, an open-door policy, employee input, and exemplifying servant leadership and strategic leadership skills. Sharpening skills will greatly assist executive directors in being able to decipher and discern the signs and triggers which can lead to leadership attrition. The development of these skills is essential to creating a cohesive workplace relationship with employees and a work environment and culture that is conducive to implementing change and transition to adjust to newly hired leader's roles and expectations.

**Managing Transition and Readiness for Change.** Organizational leaders often introduce purposeful, systemwide changes to realize specified goals termed teleological change



(van de Ven & Poole, 1995). These changes can address differences and conflicts between the organizational leaders and members. For change to take place it is necessary to align employees' and leaders' beliefs and cognitions termed dialectical change (van de Ven & Poole, 1995) and create a state of readiness (Holt et al., 2007). Holt's study examined over 900 organizational managers and used a five-step model to determine how to prepare and identify organizational readiness.

The steps are:

1. Item development.
2. Questionnaire administration.
3. Item reduction.
4. Scale evaluation.
5. Replication with an independent sample.

As a result of their research, Holt created a questionnaire and a factor analysis that focused on four main factors:

1. Appropriateness (determining whether change is necessary).
2. Managerial support (support from organizational staff).
3. Change efficacy (confidence in change success).
4. Personal valence (personal benefit).

**Executive Participation.** The results of the Holt et al., 2007 analysis pertaining to manager participation was that attitudes toward change were positively related to each of the readiness factors and negative affect and rebelliousness were negatively related to each of the readiness factors. Perceptions of the communications climate and managements' ability were both positively related to the readiness for-change factors. Participation increases acceptance of

proposed changes. Executives who plan and implement change can influence the change, commit, and support change initiatives (Bonawitz et al., 2020).

Leaders and executives are privileged to have information and strategic planning related to implementing the change which can provide staff with the reasons for purpose, goals, and objectives of the recommended change. Executives instrumental in the development of the change must be ready for it. The literature and published readiness-for-change instruments were coupled with qualitatively analyzed interviews and open-ended questionnaires from public- and private-sector managers.

This analysis indicated that the most influential readiness factors, isolated empirically, were:

1. Discrepancy (change is necessary).
2. Efficacy (probability change can be implemented).
3. Organizational valence (change can be beneficial).
4. Management support (leaders were committed to the change).
5. Personal valence (change could be personally beneficial).

Holt et al.'s (2007) study developed a survey to evaluate an implemented organizational change and enables change agents to understand employee's perceptions about proposed changes. Understanding the timing and appropriateness of change; having support for the change, encouraging the success of the change, and comprehending the advantages of change can alert leaders to pay attention to efforts concerning the change. Executives whose assessment may provide the necessary information to take whatever actions may be needed to make the change.

**Organizational Culture and Politics.** The political perspective is concerned with the dynamic interplay of the organization with forces in its external environment and focuses on policy development and formation (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). According to Carnall (1986), the politics of non-profits are often unpredictable due to the nature of their financing and changing leadership or board members. Policies can change depending on who is in control or how the organization will provide its services, at what level and capacity, and depending upon other stakeholders. Non-profit executives are often caught in the middle of political conflict and seek to develop sustainably policies which will positively impact staff, promote progressiveness and behaviors, succession, mentorship, and reduce attrition levels. Carnall (1986) focuses on politics as one of the four areas for change at non-profits because of the unstable nature or the political process at many non-profits.

**Organizational and Cultural Change.** The culture of an organization often dictates its direction and can determine the success of non-profits in terms of the shared values, beliefs, and common vision that leaders, staff board members, and other stakeholders share. According to SHRM organizational culture is defined by behavior, influenced by leaders, and exemplified through methods that have a bearing on an employee's perceptions, behavior, and understanding. Each organization has a unique culture that is created from its origin and throughout its existence.

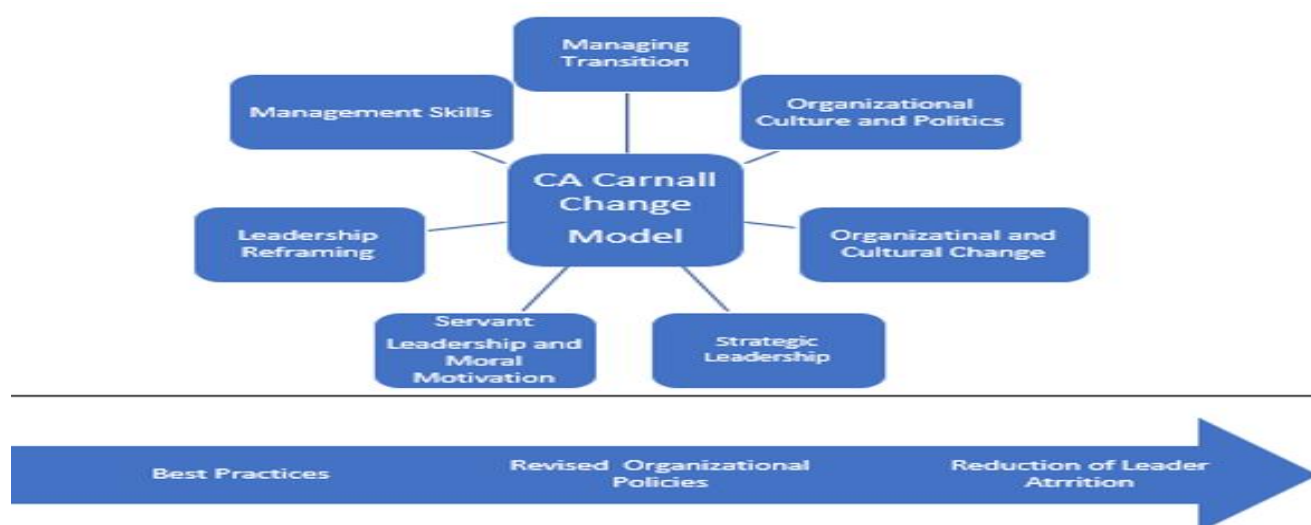
In terms of non-profit attrition, culture can either promote the embracing of newly hired leaders or it can stymie the process of organizational progressiveness and create an environment executively that does not welcome or embrace the ideas or beliefs, or experiences of new employees who can bring new insight and/or perspective to a non-profit (Miller & Monge, 1985).

The Carnall (1986) change management model addresses culture and exposes how non-profit executives can unconsciously develop behaviors, perceptions and expectations that can create a communication wedge between them and newly hired or appointed leaders. According to Sergiovanni and Corbally (1986) the cultural perspective is one of four perspectives in administration and organizational behavior. Organizational culture and change are associated with phenomenology and critical theory. They state that the object of leadership in a non-profit culture is to stir human consciousness, interpret the meaning of their culture and articulate what their culture is by communicating the values and beliefs that the organization was founded upon and still upholds as collectively across the organization.

Utilizing the Carnall (1986) change management model as the basis of non-profit organizational change may assist executive leaders with developing management skills, managing transition, cultural, structural, and political issues and changes that can lead to greater productivity, communication, and lower attrition leader attrition. Figure 2 outlines the C.A. Carnall Change Management Model which highlights the process to attrition reduction.

## Figure 2

*C.A. Carnall (1986) Change Management Model*



### *Shields Change Management Model*

Shields (1999) model of change specifically examines strategic change and builds on the idea that when change fails, it is because of insufficient attention to the human and cultural aspects of a business. Shields' model emphasizes the critical components necessary for leaders to change an organization. If a change occurs in one component and does not align with other components can lead to inefficient work processes. This system integrates human resources management with (organizational) process innovations. Organizational leaders considering a change can identify and thoroughly comprehend the strategies desired for change; and define critical success factors to determine the extent to which the desired change is possible (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

Shields (1999) suggests five steps to accomplish change:

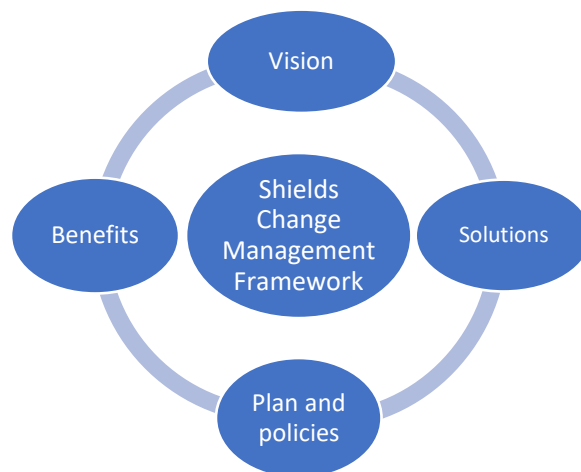
1. Define the desired (organizational) results (vision) and change plans.
2. Create capability as well as capability to change.
3. Design innovative solutions.
4. Develop and deploy solutions.
5. Reinforce and sustain (organizational) benefits.

The purpose of integrating the Shields' and Carnall's models (1986) is to create a system of change which ensures every component of the organization has a plan for change and aligns human resources management with (organizational) process innovations. The five steps of the Positive change management model are initiated after the steps for Carnall (1986), and Shields (1999) have been completed. Utilizing the Positive change model assist in defining a shared vision, creating capacity designing solutions for management issues which lead to attrition and reinforcing polices which will assure that procedures and protocols will be followed moving

forward that promote management and leadership best practices for non-profit executives and board members (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Figure 3 outlines the Shields Change Management Model.

### **Figure 3**

#### *Shields Change Management Model*



#### *Positive Change Management Model*

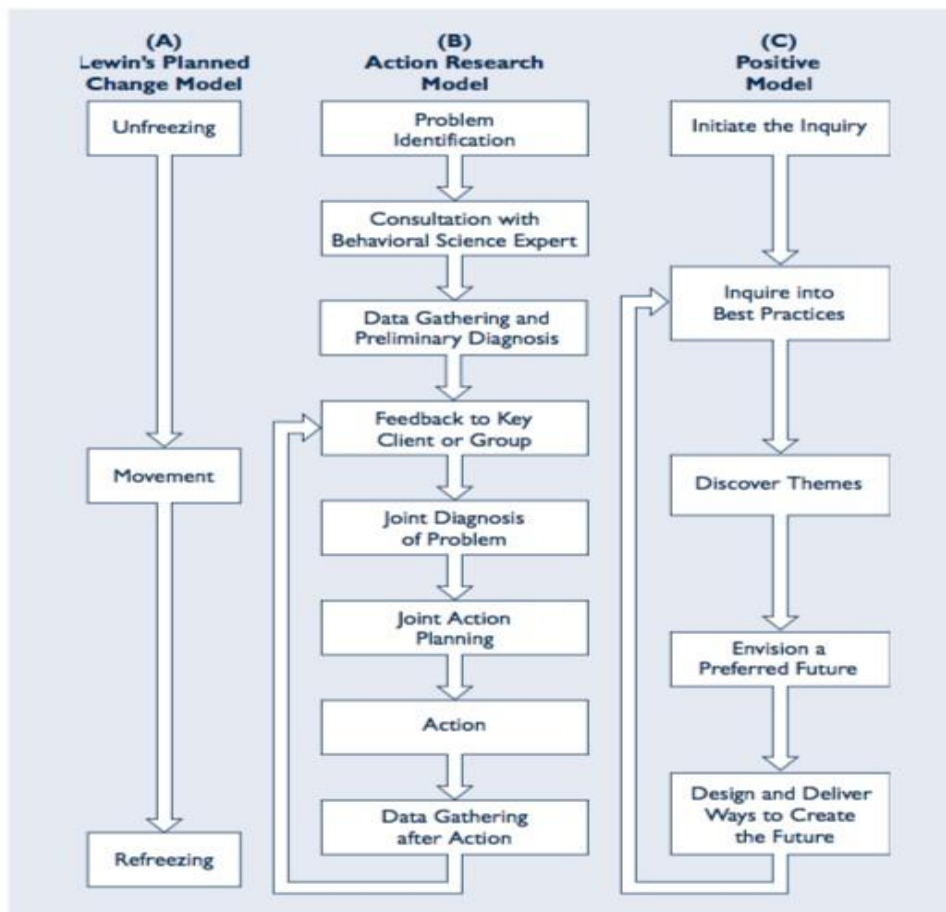
The third component of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models is the Positive change management model. The Positive change model is utilized to assist non-profit executives in reframing how newly hired leadership is perceived as the Positive change model which “focuses on what the organization is doing right. This framework can assist executives/leadership and board members to understand what doesn’t need to be fixed” (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 28). The Cummings and Worley (2009) model is one of three planned change management models that Cummings and Worley (2009) introduced to executives and managers. By identifying and acknowledging the positive behaviors and capacities an organization already possesses, leaders can use these qualities to support a future change process.

Positive change models also provide balance since the natural inclination in organizational development efforts is to focus on what is not working. Experts observe that while questions that focus on challenges and deficiencies (“What needs to be fixed?”) are valid, an excessive focus on dysfunctions can cause organizations to become worse or fail to improve (Seligman, 2002).

The five steps of the Cummings and Worley (2009) model are listed in Figure 4.

1. The first phase involves initiating inquiry which allows leaders to identify the issues.
2. The second phase advises leaders to inquire into best practices and allows leaders to gather the best of practices of an organization.
3. The next phase allows leaders to discover similar themes to determine what issues or concerns are similar.
4. The fourth phase involves envisioning a preferred future after examining the themes and developing “possibility propositions”.
5. The last phase involves designing delivering ways to create a future which involves action and design and delivery of ways to create the future.

Figure 4 highlights the five stages of Positive Change Management Model and compares it to the Lewins Planned Change Model and the Action Research Model.

**Figure 4***Positive Model Change Management Model*

Source: Cummings and Worley (2008)

*Note.* This model was adapted from *Organization Development and Change*, by T.G Cummings & C.G Worley 2009. South-Western Cengage Learning, p. 23. Copyright 2009 by South-Western Cengage Learning. Adapted with permission.

Of the three planned change models, the Cummings and Worley (2009) model focuses on using and developing best practices that can address managerial behavior and create best practices for non-profits that can reduce attrition and identify how organizations can design a future that can implement changes that may be able to shift the cultural, structural, political and managerial components of their organizations toward becoming a more progressive, proactive



and inclusive which anticipate and prepare for transition and change in its workforce. Applying the Cummings and Worley (2009) change management model to data gathered in the interviews assisted in gaining a greater understanding of the culture of the organization, what can change, and what can remain the same. Organizational leaders described a process of appreciative inquiry to identify needed changes and the positive qualities that support successful change. “Those qualities include strong cultures of learning and self-assessment, a healthy reserve of trust between staff and the board, or a culture of adaptation because it was the nature of the industry or profession they were in” (Gazley & Kissman, 2015, p. 10).

The Positive change model coined by Cummings and Worley (2009) can be utilized in creating and implementing best practices that will develop and/or positively influence organizational culture and create workspaces and environments which promote and support new leadership ideas and styles. Executives and boards who are adaptive and fluid in thought and action as it relates to connecting to and working with new leadership may be able to provide new leaders with more reasons to remain at an organization instead of resigning.

According to Cummings and Worley (2009) non-profit executives who intentionally engage in the five steps of the Positive change management framework: initiating the inquiry, inquiring into best practices, discovering themes, envisioning a preferred future, and designing and delivering ways to create the future can assist in answering the second research questions which is: “How can Executive Directors of non-profits make strategic decisions in a changing and diverse work environment which will allow them to remain inclusive, be fair, progressive and promote leadership longevity at non-profit organizations?”

**Themes.** The themes that have emerged from non-profit attrition research are how to manage power, developing relationships, continuing to learn yourself and others, leader

influence, communication, and collaboration. Executive Directors focus on how to manage power. They learn to be more calculated with their words and actions to minimize being misinterpreted by staff, as well as to create an environment where they are not being told what staff thinks (Sherlock & Nathan, 2007).

**Preferred Future.** According to Cummings and Worley (2009) the Shields change management framework (1999) focuses on assisting non-profits to create and envision their preferred future which involves building a stable workforce with little to no leader attrition. Most NPO's based their future plans and explorations on their vision and mission statement usually changes to an extent with the trends of the non-profit industry, however as technology, available resources, and hiring needs change, non-profits are advised to adjust how they would like to proceed and develop a plan which will guide organizations on how to strategically approach HR, cultural and political issues as they arise and implement protocols to thwart behaviors and practices which contribute to attrition.

**Action Plan.** Utilizing the Carnall, Shields and Positive change management frameworks may provide executives tools to develop a plan of action to increase employee productivity, improve communication skills, create, and sustain trust and engage in emotional intelligence, and promotes inclusion, openness, and accountability among newly hired leaders and existing staff of NPO's.

### ***Relevance of Utilizing Carnall, Shields and Positive Change Management Framework***

Combining the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change models to form an integrative framework for change management within non-profits can assist with identifying, addressing and alleviating, process, managerial, relational, structural, political, and cultural issues which can lead to high attrition.

The steps of the Shields (1999) model can be implemented to change management styles and leaders' attitudes toward attrition and how it impacts the morale and effectiveness of the organization. Utilizing Shields' (1999) and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change model combined with the Carnall's (1986) model allows executives directors, non-profit leaders, and board members to determine which leadership style is most influential in changing/adjusting the political, structural, and human resources and cultural aspects of social service non-profits and then utilize the Shields model components to identify an organization's future direction, solutions, and benefits for current and newly hired leaders that can be both written into policy and supported by upper-level executives/management and board members.

Understanding which leadership styles (strategic, servant, or moral motivation) assist with best implementing the four components of the Carnall (1986) framework which seeks to improve management skills, management transition, organizational politics, and organizational culture; and completing the five steps of the Shields (1999) model will provide insight into answering the research sub-question 1 (SQ1): "What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations?" Shields' model provides executive directors with a blueprint to define their vision, create the opportunity for capability, develop and deploy solutions and reinforce and sustain benefits. The Positive change management model (Cummings & Worley, 2009) may provide executives with managerial tools and strategies to create a comprehensive and detailed plan for change that endorses and commits to diversity, inclusiveness fairness, and progression through written policy and actions that can place non-profits on a path to transition and shift in their organizations away from practices that can influence newly hired executives and leaders to resign.

Based on the reviewed literature on servant and strategic leadership and Leader Emergence, utilizing the combination of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models as a framework may result in a culmination of creative ideas, innovation, trust, shared vision, planning, motivation, and adjusting leader behavior in a way that can reinforce and sustain best practices for non-profit leaders, Utilizing the combination of these three change management models as a framework may also possibly identify blind spots in non-profit leaders perspective of newly hired leaders performance and leadership style; and provide an opportunity to sustain change through policy, succession planning and which may solidify changes in non-profits approach concerning leadership transition, attrition, and sustainment.

The next section will examine the literature to garner how these issues and challenges can be addressed using change management models which highlight utilizing management style to empower and change employee/employer relationships, create organizational plans, and offer best practices to reframe the perception of leadership, inspiration, moral motivation, and stewardship. Non-profit Executive Directors may be able to utilize management change models to influence politics, culture, structure, and relationships in ways that promote positive interaction with leaders and staff, enhance communication, and lead to best practices. These management change models can possibly reframe the perception of leaders and encourage behaviors and actions that lead to leader attrition at non-profits.

These theories and methods will be explored as viable solutions to reducing leadership attrition. The C.A. Carnall change management model focuses on changing the skills, leadership acumen and influence of the individual executive or leader which can impact leader behavior and leadership reframing (Carnall, 1986). Shields' (1999) models provide executives with

information on how to form a vision and plan to create solutions for the organization (Shields, 1999). Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management model assist executives with highlighting what they have been successful in and builds upon the best practices non-profits have already established (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The collaboration of these three models creates a framework for executives and boards to be able to focus on individual behavior and actions, group behavior, and planning and implementing best practices which may reduce the level of attrition at non-profits.

This research will examine how executive directors at non-profits have engaged non-profit boards in utilizing and creating best practices to reduce attrition levels of current and newly hired leaders. This literature review seeks to identify how non-profits may have created new ways to help their organizational culture to adapt and acclimate newly hired leaders or assist in recognizing the gaps in non-profit practices and processes that elaborate on leadership attrition concerns. This study will focus on the following themes: Non-profit leadership attrition issues and challenges, management change models which address attrition issues, shared leadership, effective leadership styles for non-profit leaders and creating best practices for executive leaders, board members, and their stakeholders to reduce attrition.

The Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models may prompt non-profit leaders to evaluate current management best practices and spark creative initiative to develop new practices based on the needs of the organization and the success that they have previously had with the way management addresses attrition issues. These practices will suggest strategies to identify and address relational, political, structural, and cultural issues which can lead to non-profit attrition. The recommendations will also suggest how to implement organizational change by adopting management styles, strategies,

and motivational behaviors to reduce attrition among leaders at their non-profit organizations.

This study was conducted due to the leadership deficit outpacing the number of available leaders in the non-profit sector Tierney (2006), which has systemically failed at grooming successors for executive office positions (Landles-Cobb et al., 2015). The 1992–1995 multi-city study of urban inequality employer survey found employees at non-profits are less likely to receive promotions and incentives for increased performance than at for-profit organizations (Geib & Boenigk, 2022). Recently, the role of non-profit Executive leaders has shifted to that of a power broker and the one individual the board and staff depend on to make decisions on behalf of the organization. If executive leaders are not focused on shared leadership, leader behavior, and team building their leadership can quickly become a one-man or one-woman show and not consider their peers who can offer assistance with reframing how leadership can be perceived. This study aims to suggest how non-profit leaders can become more team-focused and solicit the managerial expertise and experience from their peers and board members that encourages shared responsibility, decision-making, and the thoughtful recruitment and selection of new leaders which can lead to a reduction in attrition.

### **Leader Emergence Framework**

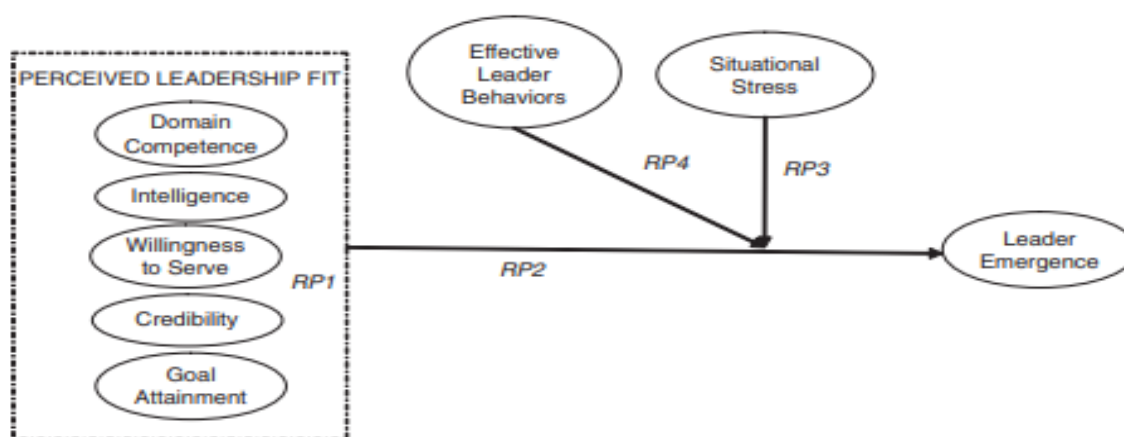
Another framework for this study is Leader Emergence developed by Norton et al. (2014). This framework explains leader emergence in teams that lack hierarchical structure and is rooted in the Cognitive Resource Theory (CRT) which suggests team effectiveness may be enhanced if a selection process yields a leader who possesses expertise and experience, group support is high, and interpersonal stress is low (Vecchio, 1990). Emergent leaders are defined as individual leaders who are considered a part of a team and who have considerable influence over other peers and leaders (Schneider & Goktepe, 1983). This theory can be used to assist newly

hired leaders to become better leaders and for Executive Directors to become more collaborative and influential in group settings with board members and other stakeholders. According to the Leader Emergence framework effective leaders can aspire to be high on task and high on relational behaviors. Fleishman (1953) and Halpin and Winer (1957) empirical studies revealed effective, leader behaviors involve initiating structure (task behaviors) and consideration of staff (relational behaviors).

The Leader Emergence framework suggests that a leader's emergence is predicted by team members' perceptions of leadership fit, which is made up of five key dimensions—domain competence, intelligence, willingness to serve, credibility, and goal attainment. The emergent leader framework also supports the relationship between perceived leadership fit and leader emergence is moderated by situational stress and effective leader behaviors. Figure 5 highlights how leadership fit leads to Leader Emergence.

**Figure 5**

*Theoretical Framework of Leader Emergence*



*Note.* Adapted from Leader Emergence: The Development of a Theoretical Framework by W.I. Norton, Murfield, M. L., and M. S. Baucus, 2014. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 35(6), p. 517. (<https://doi.org/10.1108/loj-08-2012-0109>). Adapted with permission.

The researcher will also examine how the behavior of executives and board members impacts the actions of newly hired staff who have been in a leadership position for less than three years. The researcher will also examine how the concepts of moral motivation, social identity theory (sit), contingency, philosophy, psychological philosophy, political philosophy, and cultural philosophy can be utilized to implement change in leadership behavior when addressing issues in staff management and transition, organizational, culture, and politics unique to non-profit organizations.

Non-profit leadership attrition may be decreased by using specific leadership styles that have been proven or have evidence of being effective in changing: (a) workplace inclusiveness and politics, (b) management practices, (c) board reluctance to change policies, and (d) the culture of the non-profit. According to Booth et al. (2003) conducting and documenting research is a social activity with ethical implication and benefits those who report it and others academically and practically. This research seeks to assist non-profits in retaining and sustaining leaders at their organizations to manifest their vision and mission more effectively in society. This dissertation is organized as a phenomenological qualitative study. The researcher will examine leadership attrition trends by collecting data through interviews of non-profit leaders on the causes of leader attrition at their organizations.

This study seeks to provide practical knowledge to non-profit executive leaders and the field or organizational management on the importance of recognizing how attrition impacts their organizations and suggest best practices which can shift the culture and perception of leadership. Additional research in the area of organizational development may shed more light on how non-profit strategic leadership can be used in combination with other leadership styles in tandem with management change models to provide non-profits with a plan to change what is wrong with



their organization and build on the success of what they are doing right to reduce attrition levels.

Non-profit organizations are advised to approach change management strategically and focus on their mission, vision, values, goals, and scope (Oliveira et al., 2021). Smaller non-profits with a staff of 50–300 employees or less may lack the funding and management capacity of larger non-profit that is required during a leadership role transition which can assist in orientating a new executive (Bowen, 1994; Froelich et al., 2011).

Executive director and leadership role turnover was more prevalent among the non-profits employing an interim executive, signaling a possible indirect effect of the duration of an executive transition or an interim mandate to clean house (Stewart, 2016). Other reasons for attrition include a lack of a succession plan for retiring and outgoing leaders, directors and executives and a lack of a clarified united vision and long-term and short-term goals which are communicated to all employees from the offset of their employment.

### ***Non-Profit Leader Attrition Issues and Challenges***

The issues with leadership style, qualifications, and training, the lack of planning, lack of cohesiveness between leaders and staff, lack of mentorship, and unbalanced workplace culture all affect the morale and commitment of staff and leaders to the mission of non-profits (Renz, 2016). Challenges include the creation of for-profit social service organizations which offer the same services as non-profits can greatly impact attrition rates and can entice qualified leaders and staff to join the ranks of a more stable organization that may offer a more solidified opportunity in terms of compensation and future and long-term planning.

Non-profit challenges range from competition among non-profits for time, talent, and sustained success. Non-profits and for-profits are in competition for qualified and committed employees and the opportunity to provide services in an increasingly ambivalent marketplace

(Renz, 2016). Non-profit executives and boards face new hiring and employee training challenges which have become more complex and demanding. Proactive management requires executives to implement strategic planning and management skills which can be used to identify, hire, and acclimate qualified leaders who are prepared to meet and overcome these challenges. Previous research on non-profit management has documented that effective leaders and managers will need to be both enthusiastic and committed and to lead strategically to remain successful (Renz, 2016).

The 21st century has brought organizational changes and challenges for non-profit executives and leaders. Attrition levels at non-profits have been impacted by the inconsistency of the expectations of newly hired leaders and the more demanding and increasing responsibilities of executive directors. Changes in technology, the increase of social media presence, and the influx of social entrepreneurs who provide an innovative approach to what social services non-profits do have all encroached on how non-profits operate, and changes required to recruit and retain the leaders they need to help their organization fulfil its mission and vision (Pryor et al., 2008).

Change requires planning and strategy. Short term planning requires immediate responses and planning for contingencies. Non-profits can stagnate if they neglect to, delay, or refuse to change (Pryor et al., 2008). One of the major challenges in addressing the need for change is selecting inspirational and most importantly influential organizational leaders. Leaders as well as employees are naturally resistant to change and usually will not change unless they believe there is a relevant and valid reason for adjustment or shift in their organization. Leadership style and decision-making preference can impact behavior and reactions from staff which can directly or indirectly affect and initiate the attrition process among leaders if the tasks are not viewed as

relevant and lines of communication are not open (Behrendt et al., 2017). If executive directors and other leaders are advised to develop skills to recognize staff's engagement and buy into the vision of the organization and work toward the goals set forth by their nonprofit. Utilizing an integrative framework of leadership and developing relationships that motivate both the individual and the team can encourage newly hired leaders to remain at their non-profits (Behrendt et al., 2017).

The non-profit that desires to hire a qualified workforce which has executive directors/leaders who devalue employee opinions, hire unexperienced candidates who are not aligned with the vision and mission of the organization or its culture, and do not encourage and promote employee training and education often does not have the support of their employees. (Simonson, 2005). Non-profit executives are advised to develop and utilize their communication and management skills along with emotional intelligence (EI) to influence and serve as servant strategic leaders or leadership frameworks' staff as non-profits move through phases of change.

Progressive transformational organizations are aware of the aversion to organizational change and have developed an awareness of the need to design strategies and processes to empower employees to overcome their fear of and resistance to change (Kohles et al., 1995). According to Haase-Herrick (2005), leaders who engage in organizational stewardship can more effectively facilitate the transformational process that implements organizational solutions which address the cultural, organizational, and political blind spots of non-profits that can perpetuate behaviors that ignores the signs of the causes of attrition among newly hired leaders. Non-profit executive directors are also advised to embrace the reframing of their perception of leadership, develop realistic employee expectations and understand the need for inclusiveness in their organizational culture that will promote leadership stability at non-profits. Reducing attrition can

also require non-profit leaders to encourage the creation of healthy work environments which are motivational, culturally, politically, structurally progressive, inclusive, and successful.

Scholarly research will expound on how change management frameworks can be used to create change in the perceptions, motivation, and inspiration of employees. Leader behavior, moral motivation, strategic leadership, servant leadership, leadership styles, theories, concepts, structural, cultural, political environments and change model best practices will be reviewed and research to identify proven and successful strategies to reduce leader attrition at non-profits.

### ***Non-Profit Leader Attrition Issues***

According to Mellahi and Wilkinson (2010) three key issues impacting attrition levels at non-profit organizations are: (a) determining leader qualification, (b) developing management leadership style, and (c) the lack of specified training, this often contributes to the demise of the organization's capacity to serve. The failure and success of non-profits depend on their leadership, resources and commitment to the vision, mission, and goals of the organization. Mellahi and Wilkinson (2010) contend that failure occurs when a non-profit organization's ability to compete deteriorates its viability. There are currently very few studies (6.8% of the articles) which focus on leadership being a determinant of Non-profit organization success and failure.

The non-profit industry has been riddled with increasingly soaring leader turnover rates and attrition issues over the past 30 years (Santora & Sarros, 2001). Research suggests CEOs/executive directors of non-profit community-based organizations have brief tenures in office (Clark & Clark, 1994). Wolfred's 1999 study revealed 137 non-profit executive directors in the San Francisco Bay area average a tenure rate of 5.59 years. The Management Center of San Francisco 1998 survey found that CEOs/executive directors had a tenure rate of 7.79 years.

Adams (1998) recorded tenure rates of 4.3 years in 1990 and 5.7 years in 1995 among 177 affiliate non-profit organizations of NeighborWorks' Network (Adams, 1998).

Over the past 20 years, non-profit attrition problems have been greatly exasperated by competing for social entrepreneurship organizations providing the same services for profit (Santora & Sarros, 2001). Hager et al. (1996) found that declining demand for Non-profit organization services contributed to organizational mortality. This study also suggests that the attrition issues can cause problems with the productivity of the organization as well as the overall morale. The structure, politics, and culture of a non-profit can also hinder the progressiveness of the leaders in terms of their perception of what newly hired leaders need to know and how their knowledge and leadership style can be used to add value to their organization (Carnall, 1986).

### ***Non-Profit Leader Attrition Challenges***

Studies suggest that social service non-profits face financial, cultural, and leadership development and mentorship challenges that can lead to high attrition levels. When considering social service Non-profit organizations, it is important to keep in mind that the social environment of organizations can potentially influence Non-profit organizations success and failure (Helmig et al., 2014). Cummings and Worley (2009) offer that the lack of planning and specific description of the skills and experience sought from leaders contributes to newly hired leaders' decision to resign. Interim leaders who replace leaders who are not fully committed to becoming permanent employees who have different leadership styles and perception of the organizational vision and mission than the board and tenured executives often become frustrated with the political climate and misunderstood leader expectations and resign. The cycle of leader vacancy continues when the newly hired leaders leave the organization.

Secondly, continuous attrition can cause a lack of cohesiveness and a false state of reality between leaders, staff, and the communities they serve due to the lack of staff available to assist in fully achieving the organization's mission. According to Schein (1992) non-profit leaders often do not value interconnectedness between individual interests (of employees, board members, clients, and individual organizations) and the common good (the well-being of an entire community). Non-profit executives are advised to find balance between individual interests and the common good; become conscious of tension between self-interest and their desire to solve societies problems and create sustainable action and change (Clerkin et al., 2022).

### ***Social Service Non-Profits***

Social service non-profits now compete with social entrepreneurial organizations or SEO's. These organizations have a for-profit business framework that strives to make a positive impact on social issues or the environment. Non-profits on the other hand seek to have an impact on society as well but must depend upon grants and fundraising efforts to achieve and goals, deliver services and develop organizational capacity by acquiring programmatic capabilities that include human and physical resources and accomplish their mission.

Non-profits operate under four production processes or stages:

1. Income.
2. Organizational capacity creation.
3. Service delivery.
4. Effectiveness (outcome achievement) or change-generating activities (Medina-Borja & Triantis, 2011).

The creation of for-profit social services-oriented organizations are now vying for the same funds as non-profits at each stage. Social entrepreneurships provide similar services has

presented a challenge to a significant percentage of social service non-profits who do not have the funding to advertise and promote the services that for profits may have. Non-profits dependence on volunteers and board members who provide in-kind services to meet their goals are often outweighed by SEO's well-staffed and funded projects (Medina-Borja & Triantis, 2011). The competition from social entrepreneurships has created an additional concern for attrition issues for non-profits in terms of hiring and retaining qualified staff. Potential non-profit employees may feel more inclined to be employed at a more financially secure for-profit organization which can provide the same services with less risk and more benefits (Medina-Borja & Triantis, 2011).

## **Leadership Frameworks**

### ***Leadership Research and History***

The study of leadership is characterized by a profusion of theories, frameworks, and approaches (Bass, 1985; van Wart, 2003; Yukl, 2010). The earliest generation of leadership researchers endeavored to identify personal attributes and traits of successful leaders. Discouraged by weak and inconsistent empirical results, organizational development researchers during the 1950s shifted the focus of their work to the behavior of leaders. This shift was largely the result of pioneering studies undertaken at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan that served to identify two categories or types of effective leadership behavior: task-oriented and relations-oriented behavior (Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957). Since that time, leadership research has branched off in several directions, including research on power and influence (Yukl & Falbe, 1990), leader-member exchange theory and dyadic leader-member relations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Yukl, 2010), and charismatic and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990; House, 1977).

The focus on leadership behavior, however, has remained a common theme in literature. Moreover, interest in task-oriented and relations-oriented behavior has endured. In the 1990s, scholars from Scandinavia borrowed from the earlier Ohio State University leadership surveys to develop new instruments with which to measure leadership behavior. Their empirical analyses identified development- or change-oriented behavior as a third type of behavior associated with effective leadership (Lindell & Rosenqvist, 1992).

### ***Leadership Styles for Non-profit Leaders***

Kotter (1995) contends that management is complex and requires leaders to set goals design strategic plans organize change, manage staffing transition resolve organizational problems and monitor results. Leadership entails developing organizational change by influencing and motivating others to embrace a shared vision and strategy for change and encourage employees and other leaders to make the vision their reality. His observation and definitions of leadership and management highlight the difference between task-oriented and development-oriented leadership behavior. According to Fernandez (2008), the role of manager and leader can become mingled in an organizational setting. Managers can often take on the role of leader as well and according to Mintzberg's (1973) and fulfill the role of community representative/leader, executive director, financial officer, be strategic in their actions and often are the primary decision makers at their organizations. The Ohio State University and University of Michigan leadership studies suggest managerial leaders are goal and task oriented and are the organizational gate keepers and decision makers.

Leadership style offers a greater level of organizational effectiveness, particularly involving leadership in global segments. Non-profit organizations require a conceptual framework that puts forward an approach for an additional study about the relationship between



leadership styles and performance engagement (Blomme et al., 2015). This section will focus on how transformational leadership, servant leadership, strategic leadership, and moral motivation can impact non-profit leader's actions, decisions, and management style. The literature will also highlight how training, mentorship, and planning can be used as methods to promote the reduction of attrition; intercept the external and internal influences, policies, and cultural norms which can become causes for attrition; and advise leaders on how to take notice of the indicators that can point to potential attrition that are often unrecognized or ignored by leaders.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

The transformational leadership theory developed by Burns (2012) posits that transformational leaders are selfless and set expectations for their followers. Maslow's self-actualization theory (1991) states leaders are conscious, considerate collaborators and inspire others to engage in communication and promote organizational benefits in ways that promote their organizations. According to Bilimoria and Godwin (2005) transformational leaders involve their followers through motivation and moral values. Characteristics non-profit leaders can embrace to create a transformative atmosphere are creating a positive vision of the organization, inspiring core values, emotional intelligence, courage, and an engaging and inclusive leadership style. According to Thach and Thompson (2007) theories of charismatic (House, 1977), transformational (Bass, 1985), and visionary leadership (Sashkin, 1988) have inspired volumes of research and numerous training programs for leaders. The transfer of these transformative approaches to non-profits has been limited. The literature on non-profits is now embracing these theories and recommending them as a way to transform the organization (Santora et al., 1999). More recent literature on leadership in non-profit and public organizations focuses on participative management as an avenue for non-profit leaders to enhance organizational

performance and staff satisfaction (Kim, 2002).

The five-factor framework of transformational leadership suggested by Rafferty and Griffin consists of (a) vision, (b) inspirational communication, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) supportive leadership, and (e) personal recognition (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Transformational leadership style can be described as an ideal influence, exalting motivation, rational stimulation, and personalized concern. Transformational leaders are more effective than transactional leaders in impacting employees' perception at service organizations (Yee et al., 2013). Transformational style influences ideas, creativity, rationality instead of emotionalism, and inspiration that which is meaningful for leader performance during transitional periods (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). Strategic and servant leadership can lead to the transformed non-profits.

Transformational leaders whose beliefs, values, and assumptions form the core of the organization's culture can engage new leaders in learning how to embrace the organizations culture by teaching, coaching, role frame working, rewarding, recruitment, selection, promotion, and garnering employee commitment to inclusiveness, open dialogue, and increased productivity by utilizing group dynamics for communication and future learning experiences. (Jaskyte, 2004, p. 2) Newcomb (2005) reports that transformational leaders challenge the status quo and drive change in an organization.

Successful leaders are advised to (a) assess the environment on a continuous basis, (b) know what their visions are and be able to gain support for them, and (c) execute the plan to achieve the vision that they have established. Organizational change requires transformation in structure, politics, culture, management, behavior, and human resources. As the Shields (1999), Carnall (1986), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change models are implemented, it is imperative for executives to engage in transformative behavior and leadership styles which are

influential and can be replicated by other leaders and staff. Stewart (2016) also indicates that transformational leaders can motivate their followers to be moral. According to Pieterse et al. (2010) transformational leadership can influence supporters to become more selfless by elevation their moral standards, ethics, and inspire greater performance over time. Odumeru, and Ifeanyi, (2013) argue transformational leaders are preemptive and promote the supporter's mindfulness as well as assisting them to attain astonishing goals. Iscan et al. (2014) describe transformational leadership as a style which can visualize positive outcomes and believe a leader's engagement with employees can improve self-confidence and assist in professional and personal development.

Gilbert et al. (2016) observed transformational leaders can inspire employees through intrinsic motivation. Chaudhry et al. (2012) discovered that intrinsic motivation and its components have a positive and significant association with Transformational leadership style (Hossan, 2021). Servant and strategic leadership are used to motivate and encourage leadership by example. Leaders who are transformational can assist in cultivating and creating a workplace environment that can offer employees reasons to remain committed to the vision and mission of their non-profit through shared values and beliefs and promote the commonality of commitment to accomplishing the goals of the organization.

### ***Strategic Leadership***

Strategy is the process of taking an organization from its current position to a desired state (Burack et al., 1997). The strategy reflects a non-profit character, success, effectiveness, and efficiency (Porter, 1996) and can direct organizational behavior. The strategy consists of the vision a non-profit has espoused internally and to the communities they serve (Moore, 2000): is essential to conducting the mission of non-profit organizations and a framework to manifest an

NPO's mission (Akingbola, 2006).

**Challenges.** Developing an effective strategy is complex and involves challenges, opportunities, and capabilities. "Non-profits derive from a social system which is a product of a complex set of historical forces" (Salamon & Anheier, 1998, p. 245) and differ according to their financing and external stakeholders (other funders, clients, volunteers, community groups, and citizens) and leadership (Moore, 2000). There is currently no universal instrument that measures non-profit organizational performance (Herman & Renz, 2004). Non-profit goals can be overarching, are often developed based on the needs of society, and are usually socially driven (Weisbrod, 1998) and strategy tailored and dependent on unstable political and social factors that can be considered when planning and implementing policies and actions which can change behavior and productivity.

**Strategic Leader Influence and Impact.** Strategic leadership focuses on how executives impact organizational performance. Literature on strategic leadership emphasizes the importance of how recognizing organizations mirrors their leaders (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) and is connected to successful organizational outcomes. Industry experts and organizational leadership researchers have not produced a plethora of studies on the topic of strategic leadership as it relates to being implemented at non-profits (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000) and strategic leadership development has been left up to the for-profit sector to explore (Phipps & Burbach, 2010).

Hosmer (1982) contends contingency theories of leadership do not consider an organization's competitive position in the non-profit industry and the roles of leaders and managers were distinct. Developing an organizational strategy is essential for non-profit leaders to relate to the external environment and influence employees to adhere to the strategy. The upper echelon theory which was the precursor of the strategic leadership theory posits leaders

can naturally strategize, and non-profits mirror the thoughts and values of their executive staff. Executive directors and board members' knowledge, experience, values, vision, and preferences dictate their perspective of the external environment and choices concerning organizational strategy (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Strategic leadership focuses on vision, interpretation of information, values, perceptions, and a leader's individual traits (Cannella & Monroe, 1997). Executive leaders also influence organizational performance, and the developmental capacity of a strategic leader can coincide with their ability to manage the complexity of the work (Lewis & Jacobs, 1992).

Taliento and Silverman (2005) suggest non-profit strategic leaders focus on:

1. A smaller scope of authority.
2. A wider range of stakeholders.
3. Creativity.
4. Communication.
5. Resourcefulness.

**Strategic Leaders and Change.** Jansen et al. (2009) found strategic leaders' engagement in transformational and transactional leadership styles impacts organizational learning. Transformational behaviors encourage organizational members to challenge traditional organizational concepts and perceptions and to develop critical thinking. Dargie's (1998) case study of non-profit leaders determined that their roles call for them to be more informational and communicate with staff and stakeholders on a greater level than for profit leaders. Similarly, Taliento and Silverman (2005) observed that non-profit CEOs must pay more attention to communications than their for-profit counterparts and are challenged with ensuring organizational success with limited resources and training. Strategic leaders can prepare for

change by communicating the need and the strategies for implementing change.

According to Ritchie (2012) individuals belonging to different hierarchical groups often avoid each other which perpetuates stereotypes and label leaders and executive directors and leaders as unapproachable and lacking emotional intelligence. Lower ranking staff displayed a lack of commitment and were unconcerned about organizational goals. The barriers created by these stereotypes left low-status employees little if any opportunity to influence organizational decisions or policies that affected working conditions. Non-profit leaders and board member behavior can “profoundly affect their staff’s morale and motivation and can create a climate of negativity throughout the entire organization” (Ritchie, 2012, p. 104). It is also reasonable to suggest that these problems contributed greatly to productivity and the rise of employee turnover and leader attrition rates at their organizations. Understanding the strategy of navigating the non-profit structure, culture and politics can lead to a shift in leaders’ perspectives and managerial skills. Focusing on developing a strategic plan can result in leaders becoming more balanced in their leadership style and more comfortable with the uneasiness that can accompany the process of implementing organizational change (Musteen et al., 2006). Waller et al. (1995) research revealed work experience influenced executives’ understanding of changes in organizational effectiveness. These results suggest building capacity for change in non-profits requires strategic leadership.

**Managerial Wisdom and Non-Profit Boards.** Managerial wisdom is essential for complex decision making and applying knowledge and describes an executive’s ability to utilize their critical thinking skills even when provided with contradictory information and scenarios. Using wisdom allows leaders to be more flexible with middle management and subordinates (Hoskisson & Hitt, 1994). Successful leadership can depend on knowledge of a non-profit’s

programs; strategic structure; and open communication with staff, stakeholders, and board members (Maitlis, 2004). Managerial knowledge is required to maintain management-board relationships. Contextual variables influence non-profit strategic leadership and are expressed in ways different than for-profit organizations. Overall, non-profit practitioners and academics are cognizant that strategy reflects the operating environment of the sector (Akingbola, 2006).

**Strategic Leader Types.** Miles and Snow (1978) typology has been operationalized and extended in other studies (Brown & Iverson, 2004; Miles & Snow, 1978; Zajac & Shortell, 1989). Miles and Snow (1978) proposed four strategic types:

1. Defender organizations provide a product or service strategy with an emphasis on efficiency have not explored opportunities arising from the changing needs of the community.
2. Analyzers are advocates for the creation of services and have many sources of funding and combine features of defenders and prospectors by operating in two-market domains. They are more likely to experiment with ‘potential responses to emerging community trends. They will tend to follow prospectors to adopt new ideas that appear to be most promising.
3. Prospectors explore market opportunities emanating from the changing community needs, and experiment with different responses to change in the operating environment.
4. Reactor non-profit organizations would have ‘strategy—environment inconsistency’. In the changing environment, reactor non-profit organizations will therefore be less able to achieve the mission and mandate of the organization and rarely able to respond to change in their organizational environment.

According to Fernandez (2008) the difference between leadership and management is further convoluted when leadership and public management literatures are compared, especially public management literature on performance. Boyne et al. (2003) highlighted how executive directors or upper-level managers' behavior can impact and motivate employees to achieve goals at the individual, group, and organizational level. Employees' perceptions of their supervisors' behavior in the public sector had a small impact on organizational performance however leadership behavior could improve performance indirectly by encouraging a culture promoting higher performance (Boyne et al., 2003).

**Strategic Typology.** According to Akingbola (2006) change and strategic types are not independent and change occurs in patterns where non-profit organizations change their strategies based on their needs and finances and services provided. Defender and prospector non-profit organizations strategize change more often than analyzers and more non-profits change their strategy from and to defender and prospector than analyzer strategy (Akingbola, 2006). Andrews et al. (2009), building on the work of Miles and Snow (1978), concluded a prospector strategy could improve public sector performance. A prospector strategy, like development-oriented leadership behavior, entails searching for innovations that allow organizations to achieve a better fit with their environment. Importantly, the impact of different strategies on performance appears to be contingent on the organization's setting, so that when there is a stable focus.

Non-profits change strategy because of an unstable operating environment (Zajac & Shortell, 1989). Similar to Zajac and Shortell (1989), a shift in strategy occurs systematically across the four strategic types with analyzer and prospector being the most popular strategies. Non-profit organizations embrace strategies that enable them to leverage a challenging environment through mastering the financial and innovation aspects of services that assist with



completing their mission. Non-profits which utilize the analyzer the use of multiple service domains whether they have adequate resources to support it; and instability of funding of domains (Miles & Snow, 1978). Not addressing these issues can lead to mission, resource, funding, and ineffectiveness issues (Alexander, 2000). Akingbola's study demonstrated non-profits adopted a prospector strategy and sought funding, advocated for changing community needs and experimented with services in communities (Miles & Snow, 1978).

**Strategic Fit.** Strategic fit implies a match at a single point in time and can align with strategic change (Akhmedova et al., 2022). Previous studies have focused on static approaches to specifying and testing fit. Strategic fit is rooted in the contingency perspectives in strategy and organizational literature. The issue with organizational fit is that it can be ambiguous, multidimensional, and unpredictable even when a SWOT analysis or framework is used. Zajac et al. (2000) suggest that organizations define organizational a strategic factor that defines strategic fit; variations in factors imply variations in strategic change; and the comparison of actual and necessary strategic change will determine strategic fit and the influence of change on strategic performance. A successful strategic fit takes place when change is necessary and not excessive and when all other dimensions of the organization are considered.

Proper strategic fit also depends on if there is dynamic coalignment with organizational and environmental contingencies and if a non-profit changes, when necessary, too often or not enough. It is important for strategic leaders to realize that strategic fit is necessary for change to be effectively implemented and it only takes place when change is advantageous for a non-profit. Leaders can also be able to align all the factors involve with the organization change of a non-profit and determine how every component and dimension (political, social, economic and culture of a non-profit can be aligned to positively impact the performance of the organization

(Zajac et al., 2000). Perceived fit is perfected through the recruitment process.

### ***Servant Leadership***

Servant leadership is believed to be the “best fit” leadership style (Allen et al., 2018).

General management literature reveals that servant leadership inspires positive behaviors among employees. Liden et al. (2008) defines servant leadership as:

1. Other-oriented approach to leadership.
2. Manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of employee’s individual needs and interests.
3. Outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community.

A servant leader works toward serving employees, helping them, listening to them, caring for them with a focus on developing their personal growth, and fulfilling their personal interests (Liden et al., 2014). Research on servant leadership in NPOs remains limited (Palumbo, 2016). The rise in interest in servant leadership in NPOs has prompted researchers to further explore how servant leaders and their employees interact (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership focuses on not directing but serving to serve and supports the interests of others and emphasizes values, admiration and humility (De Clercq et al., 2019). Research on servant leadership is mainly focused on for-profit organizations and is limited to the NPOs arena (Palumbo., 2016). There is currently an increased interest in servant leadership research at NPOs, however very little information is available which documents how implementing the servant leadership style impacts leader attrition levels at non-profit organizations.

Servant leaders engage their employees in a positive way which allows their personality to inspire staff to become intellectually and socially connected to their position. Engagement

brings enthusiasm and commitment to the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Empirical studies have determined leadership advances employee engagement in the general management literature (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020; De Clercq et al., 2019). Engaged employees are inspired to deliver their time, knowledge and experience to their organizations and are influenced by their leaders to demonstrate the servant behaviors and value the work they do for others and community (Aboramadan et al., 2022).

Servant leaders display moral responsibility and respect and encourage staff to excel professionally and personally. Servant leaders also exhibit a work ethic and commitment that promotes greater job satisfaction among staff by stressing the importance of building relationships and improving skills and abilities (Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014). Staff are encouraged to utilize their talents to benefit their organization (Elche et al., 2020; Hu & Liden, 2011; Panaccio et al., 2015). Servant leaders also assist in promoting organizational citizenship (Sendjaya et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2010). When staff is influenced by servant leadership job satisfaction and organizational citizenship (Ngah et al., 2021).

Servant leaders exhibit a sense of high moral responsibility and respect for their followers and motivate them to grow and succeed personally, professionally, and ethically, surpassing their personal interests (van Dierendonck et al., 2017). Servant leaders provide the conditions for the followers to attain greater satisfaction with their jobs; this is done by emphasizing the importance of quality time and building mutual relationships through the provision of opportunities for advancement, development, and the improvement of skills and abilities (Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014). Servant leaders encourage followers to perform tasks based on their skills and talent to make the most of those abilities, thereby contributing toward greater organizational success (Elche et al., 2020; Hu & Liden, 2011; Panaccio et al., 2015). When followers observe

their leaders upholding positive organizational citizenship behavior, they eventually will come to adopt such behavior as it is displayed by their role framework (Sendjaya et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2010).

As evidenced in the information and literature on servant leadership, the essence of this leadership style lies in the leader's desire to serve and mentor employees in their non-profit organization. Servant leaders possess the traits of authenticity, humility, the ability to empower and develop people, interpersonal skills, and stewardship. The servant leader framework below outlines how this leadership style can be used to motivate, activate, encourage, and generate change within a non-profit organization which can be used to reduce attrition among leaders.

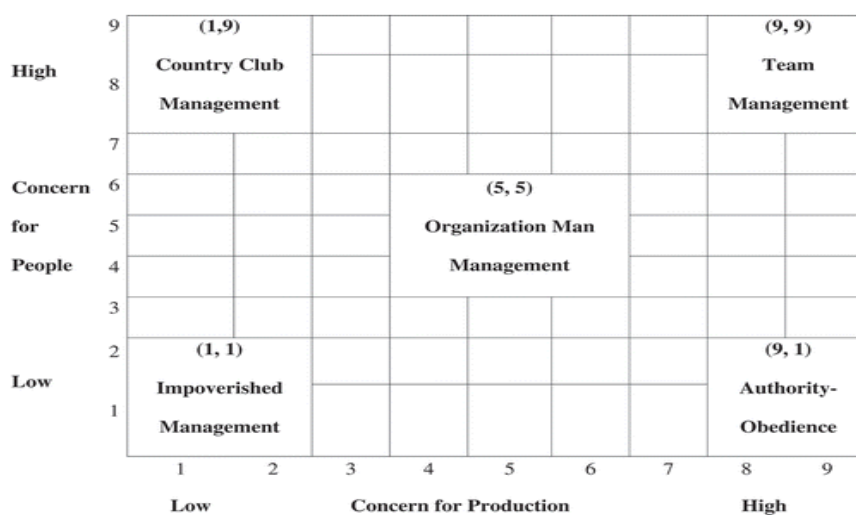
Moral motivation and ethical leadership are a normative and affective commitment with trust in colleagues and management. The outcomes of ethical leadership also include increased work effort, the perception of a leader's effectiveness, and reporting problems to supervisors. Ethical leadership is also found to be associated with increased citizenship behaviors and reduced organizational deviance (van Dierendonck et al., 2017). Leadership behavior research conducted by Blake and Mouton (1985), Ohio State and Michigan State Universities in the 1960's revealed executive directors and other leaders engage in leadership behavior that can positively or negatively impact relationships with staff and other leaders. Blake and Mouton discovered that organizations were two dimensional and neither concerned with people or production.

Task-related behaviors are critical to goal accomplishment, while relationship is critical to motivation (van Wart, 2003). Combining the needs of people and production through the use of the managerial grid significantly impacted how executive directors and leaders perceived and managed conflict among staff and upper-level leadership or management Weider-Hatfield, D., & Hatfield, J. D. (1998). The managerial grid has been revised to the leadership grid and is now a

universal leadership approach (van Wart, 2003) that provides a framework for leadership which includes employees and productivity (Blake & Mouton, 1964; van Dierendonck et al., 2017). Leaders who display consideration behavior are interested in staff, desire empathy, strive for trust, and listen to staff. Leaders who employ initiating structure behavior create tasks and provide expectations of staff and are task oriented. Job-oriented leaders spend time on tasks and set targets based on performance while employee-oriented leaders support and prioritize their staff needs. The leadership grid is outlined in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*The Managerial Grid*



*Note.* Adapted from R. R., Blake, & J. S. Mouton, (1985). *The managerial grid III*. Gulf Publishing Company, p. 10. Copyright 1964 Gulf Publishing Company. Adapted with permission.

Leadership styles include:

1. Impoverished leadership.
2. Country club leadership.
3. Authority-obedience leadership.

4. Middle of the road/organizational leadership.
5. Team leadership.

According to Cho et al. (2018) impactful and efficient leadership is required to accomplish organizational goals and leadership type can influence management and efficiency (Yoon & Choi, 2008). Non-profit Executive Directors and organizational leaders are often challenged to incorporate individual and group behaviors in teams to circumvent miscommunication and accomplish goals (Yoon & Choi, 2008). Leaders are advised to take their staff's motivations under consideration and promote their productivity. Cho et al. (2018) recommend leaders focus on interpersonal relationships, trust, and inclusiveness with staff as well as productivity to ensure the vision and goals of the organization are met and performance is increased. As the grid indicates, team management is the optimal choice of management style. Team management aligns with the framework of leader emergence which emphasizes leaders achieving more as a team. Leadership style and decision-making preference can impact behavior and reactions from staff which can directly or indirectly affect and initiate the attrition process among leaders if the tasks are not viewed as relevant and lines of communication are not open. If executive directors and other leaders are leaders are advised to develop skills to recognize staff's engagement and buy into the vision of the organization and working toward the goals set forth by their non-profit. Utilizing an integrative framework of leadership and developing relationships which motivate both the individual and the team can encourage newly hired leaders to remain at their non-profits.

### ***Executive Behavior and Moral Motivation***

The behavior of executives and board members can impact the actions of newly hired staff who have been in leadership position for less than three years. The concepts of moral

motivation, Social Identity Theory (SIT), contingency philosophy, psychological philosophy, political philosophy, and cultural philosophy can be utilized to implement change in leadership behavior when addressing issues in staff management transition, organizational, cultural, and political unique to non-profit organizations. These philosophies relate to the four components of Carnall's (1986) change model (cultural, structural, HR, and political) and the five steps of Shields' Positive change models and expand upon how these models can be used as a catalyst for change in decision-making, work experiences, conflict and entrenched sets of values and beliefs management at non-profits. The researcher will relate these philosophies to how executives can adjust their mindset concerning interpersonal relationships, communication with staff (especially leaders), understanding the impact and influence of organizational politics and culture and the importance of having emotional intelligence, promoting moral motivation, and how practicing strategic or servant leadership styles can enhance how executives can positively influence and motivate newly hired leaders.

**Contingency Philosophy.** The contingency philosophy is based on the proposition that organizational performance is a consequence of the fit between two or more factors an organization's environment, use of technology, strategy, structure, systems, style, or culture (Hui, 2019). It explains organizational change from a behavioral viewpoint where managers can make decisions: that account for specific circumstances; focus on relevancy and intervene with appropriate actions. This philosophy is fundamentally situational, flexible, and matched to the needs of the circumstances.

“Change can be fast or slow, small, or large, loosely, or tightly controlled, driven by internal or external stimuli, and deal with varying levels of certainty” (Graetz & Smith, p. 143).

“Organizational expedience is a recent term that examines how non-productive behaviors impact

employee perspective of their job roles and responsibilities Workplace norms and culture whether positive or negative impact employee behavior and productivity” (Parks et al., 2010, p. 715). This philosophy can be utilized by executives who are managing transition and dealing with organizational politics that will shape the culture at the office. Focusing on specifics and relevancy allows executives to concentrate on addressing the issues which can attribute to attrition such as poor morale, lack of vision, poor productivity, and lack of cohesiveness between staff and executives/upper-level management (Carnall, 1986).

**Psychological Philosophy.** Psychological philosophy assumes the most important dimension of change is found in personal and individual experience. Lewin (1947) and focuses on experiences individuals have within organizations and is concerned with the human side of change (Stuart, 1995). “This philosophy assumes individuals are the most important unit in organizational change and is linked to human relations, behavioral science, human development, and organizational development approaches, emerging in response to mechanistic methods of scientific management” (Graetz & Smith, p. 144).

The nature of non-profits makes them ideally suited to maximize their outcomes through the people of the organizations. This focus on people results in additional organizational capacity, effective succession planning, engaged and motivated staff, and improved client service delivery. These effective outcomes are also the keys to the time, money, and information organizations need to survive and thrive. (Watson & Abzug, 2016, p. 598)

Utilizing the philosophical philosophy allows leaders/executives to focus on addressing the needs of individuals to build a cohesive and productive organization. Executives who demonstrate servant, strategic and transformational leadership styles may be more effective in successfully engaging in human relations and development and organizational development



which can positively impact human behavior.

**Political Philosophy.** Political philosophy explains change as the result of clashing ideology or belief systems (Morgan, 1986). Political philosophers posit conflict is seen as an inherent attribute of human interaction and the most important one driving change and assumes the clashing of opposing political forces that produce change. When one group with a political agenda gradually gains power, they challenge the status quo in the hope of shifting the organization toward their own interests (Morgan, 1986). This conflict approach means that change processes inevitably revolve around activities such as bargaining, consciousness-raising, persuasion, influence and power, and social movements (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Utilizing the political philosophy assists non-profit executives in successfully managing politics and to look at the last component of Carnall's (1986) framework which is to focus on the importance of political culture and understanding and recognize different organizational groups (board of directors/committees) and their political agendas.

**Cultural Philosophy.** In cultural philosophy, change is a response to changes in the human environment (Morgan, 1986). Change is a natural process leading to the construction of firm ways of thinking about how things can be done. Imposing change means fighting entrenched sets of values and beliefs shared by organizational members. Culture is fragmented and subject to controversy and inconsistency. Schein (1979, 1984, 1993, 1997), from a psychodynamic viewpoint culture is an unconscious phenomenon and the source of human assumptions and beliefs shared by organization members where behaviors and spoken attitudes are artifacts and symbolic representations of deeper unconscious assumptions. The cultural perspective is exclusively concerned with collective experiences of change, and the shared values that guide them and assumes that the change process will be long-term, slow, and small-scale (Schein,

1985). Cultural change is an ongoing reflection of incremental adjustments to the environment and imposed cultural change is internally driven and can be created through radical environmental change (Graetz & Smith, 2010).

The third component of the Carnall (1986) framework is concerned with creating more adaptive cultures. Understanding the difference between natural and cultural change can assist executives/leaders to create long-term and short-term plans to incrementally institute cultural change. The steps of the Shields and Positive change models focus on desired outputs, capability, solutions, best practices, and former successes to encourage engagement in a more open and in workplace climate and culture that promotes shared beliefs and values, the vision and mission of the organization.

**Social Identity Theory.** Social identify theory (SIT) is “conceived as a theory of intergroup relations, conflict, and cooperation between groups. It later developed into a much broader social psychological theory of the role of self and identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general (McKeown et al., 2016). Social Identify Theory examines how servant leaders’ perception of their own identity and the identity of others impacts the decision they make for their organization or cause (Griffith, 2007). Understanding the dynamics of the SIT will assist executives in understanding how their relationship with staff/leaders impacts their self-identity and therefore, their behavior and decision-making skills. Rethinking and reframing intergroup relations between newly hired staff and executives and board members will be beneficial in developing stronger and more in-depth communications skills, idea sharing, and collaboration pertaining to the politics and culture of the organization and expectations of staff and upper-level management//leadership.

**Social Exchange Theory.** Social Exchange Theory (SET) is an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between servant leadership and employees' extra-role behaviors. Social Exchange Theory states a relationship is based on mutual reciprocity and trust (Mitchell & Clark, 2021). Leaders and employee interactions and are characterized by mutual benefits. When leaders are perceived positively a social exchange is developed, and the leader is trusted. Employees in turn reciprocate the servant leader's behavior with positive work-related outcomes. Employee leader Interactions become mutual exchanges based on the norms of reciprocity and trust. It is therefore assumed that by serving others, a servant leader generates a feeling among employees that they need to reciprocate in the long term, and the target of this reciprocation is either the leader or the organization.

### ***Non-Profit Organizations***

The next section will explore another aspect of non-profit executive and board behavior. Best practices identified and suggested for non-profit executives and boards will be examined to determine how non-profits can create an organizational structure and culture, political climate that promotes behavior that engages and encourages newly hired leaders to remain at non-profits. The Positive change management model highlights best practices as one of the steps toward and focuses on what non-profit organizations are doing right or doing well.

**Non-Profit Best Practices.** The researcher will explore how the best practices mentioned in this section can be implemented into policies, decision-making/actions, behavior, leadership styles, and organizational cultures that will create and improve transparency, communication, and managing transition and are intentionally designed to reduce non-profit leader attrition rates. Best practices for non-profit boards include sound practices for board development, succession planning, legal responsibilities, liabilities, and handling conflicts of interest. Following best

practices for governance ensures that non-profit organizations are being run according to their stated purposes and are operating in accordance with their tax-exempt status. Non-profit boards that hold true to best practices will achieve their goals of long-term sustainability and will maintain the trust of their donors and stakeholders (Getto & Flanagan, 2022).

To identify specific best practices, it is important to understand what makes a non-profit organization thrive or perform at its optimal level. Research on essential skills of effective non-profit executives has documented those relational skills, such as board leadership and navigating the political dimension of the non-profit executive office, are necessary in addition to an executive's mission expertise and business acumen (Heimovics et al., 1995). It is imperative that non-profits focus on engagement, diversity, recruitment, motivation, non-profit stakeholders, and the role of board members to exhibit management behaviors and leadership styles that can develop and implement both individual and organizational best practices which promote and sustain organizational cohesiveness, a positive identity in the community and reduce attrition levels. Studies on successful non-profits identified four types/strategies of high-performing non-profits. Type I- Specialization and leader-centered, Type II- horizontal integration and a functional structure, Type III- vertical integration and a divisional structure, and Type IV- is a combination of diversification and strategy with a matrix structure. Seventy percent of high-performing organizations followed a sequence of types I to IV and can base their thesis on logical evaluation (Ogliastri et al., 2016).

The first component of Carnall's (1986) framework deals with improving management skills which include communication and supervision as well as shaping beliefs, traditions, norms, and influencing culture. For the sake of this research on leader behavior, the researcher will focus on the Type I strategy of high-performing non-profits which is specialized, and leader-

centered. When executives/leaders are the primary influencers of behavior, values, and performance at a non-profit, it is imperative to ensure that they focus on communication, relationship development, capacity building, and open dialog to guide and sustain a healthy political and cultural climate at their organizations. Leaders who have a positive and/or motivational influence on the culture and ethos of an organization can more fluidly incorporate successful practices and procedures which benefit the organization structurally, politically, culturally, and financially and solidify these successes by implementing practices into policy and action. Exhibiting strategic and servant leadership traits will also assist in the process of implementing best practices. Executives/leaders and board members are also responsible for the sustainment of these practices and encourage other staff and leaders to embrace and support the organization's best practices as well. Other leaders/staff in creating, engaging in and sustaining best practices as well.

Haveman and Khaire (2004) and Tashakori (1980) suggest management transition may be difficult due to the new management styles and strategic orientations incoming executives may present to non-profit organizations and may be reflected negatively in their performance, even contributing to firm demise. Understanding expectations and being open to newly hired leaders' ideas, management style and suggestions can assist executives with managing transition as Carnall (1986) advises executives to pay close attention to.

**Engagement, Diversity, Recruitment, and Motivation.** Successful non-profit organizations recognize that organizational success lies in the creative engagement of the human resources of the organization. They regard human resources not as a staff function outside the organization's operation, but as the central conduit through which organizations succeed (Watson & Abzug, 2016). Non-profits capitalize on the power of mission to attract and motivate

staff. They recognize the critical nature of staff synergies in selecting inexperienced staff members and leverage technology to reduce recruitment costs and administer standardized human resource functions (Watson & Abzug, 2016). Non-profits encourage diversity in several dimensions, and they enact cultures that are constituted by diverse groups working well together.

One method non-profit executive can utilize to document their success and develop best practices is the use of a Scorecard. Scorecards list and measure whether the mission, goals, strategy, and day-to-day operational procedures are being properly and effectively conducted. A scorecard development study results revealed the implementation of the scorecard bridged the gap between vague mission and strategy statements and day-to-day operations and facilitated a process that allows non-profits to achieve strategic focus and alignment. The failures at two of the non-profits were the result of leaders not seeing the value in continuing to use the card as a new strategy to align to achieve strategic outcomes (Kaplan, 2001). The scorecard can be used as a motivating evaluator which provides an accurate account of the organization's accomplishments, practices, failures, and successes and provides a vision and blueprint for non-profits to attain their desired vision and mission.

Future-oriented non-profits design motivation and retention systems that recognize both the intrinsic motivators that brought staff to the organization (such as mission focus or client focus) as well as the extrinsic motivators (such as pay, health care, or retirement) that are necessary for staff financial and physical health (Kaplan, 2001). Non-profits retain and develop talented staff whenever possible, and they manage terminations in humane and positive ways when layoffs are unavoidable while imagining the end state of an effective non-profit human resource system: fit and embeddedness (Kaplan, 2001). Utilizing the Carnall model for management transition can assist with recruitment, retirement, resignation, and termination by

developing strategies to manage human resources issues that can arise from a lack of staff development, staff, and board expectations, and increased attrition rates among leaders (Kaplan, 2001).

**Non-Profit Stakeholders.** On-profits are increasingly becoming more volunteer oriented and socially conscious. Non-profit executives are encouraged to engage community stakeholders in the process of embracing a culture that is open to change and recognizes stakeholders. Stakeholders are essential contributors to non-profit success and can assist in the development and promotion of a thriving organization. Stakeholders also support programs and services which have a positive, visible, and consequential impact on their communities (Medina-Borja & Triantis, 2011). Exhibiting the traits of a servant or strategic leader can assist in displaying selflessness and genuine concern and appreciation for volunteers, donors, partners, and supporters of the organization. Exhibiting these management styles can promote moral motivation in the community; and at the organization level and positively influence staff and newly hired leaders to commit to the mission of the organization by supporting the community. The display of moral motivation coupled with the two transformative management styles (servant and strategic) can become a best practice for executives and become a motivating factor for newly hired executives/leaders to remain at a non-profit.

Utilizing the stakeholder approach can be an avenue for executives to implement this best practice. A stakeholder approach admonishes organizations to be cognizant of stakeholders to achieve optimal performance (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). The theory was an alternative to the stockholder alternative to stockholder-based theories of organizations (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). The authors of Hannan and Freeman's literature review article recommended implementing the stakeholder theory for ethical reasons and to encourage organizations to

become more socially responsible. With a non-profit executive serving as a public representative to stakeholders, including donors, external executives may come with networks and relations, but also may be unfamiliar with a non-profit's existing relations (Heimovics et al., 1995). Non-profit leaders exemplify both servant and strategic leadership traits when they acknowledge stakeholders as vested participants in the process of the growth, mission, vision, and future of the organization. Their management skills and behaviors can translate to areas of mentorship, training, and development of new leaders and reduce leader attrition.

**Non-Profit Boards.** Lastly, the researcher will expound on the role of board members at non-profits as they relate to being stakeholders. Boards have been historically ineffective in creating solutions to decrease and avoid attrition, conversely board members unknowingly attribute to increased attrition levels due to reluctance to shift their mindset concerning expectations of newly hired leaders and how those leaders view the vision and mission of the organization (Stewart, 2016). This leader/executive communication mismatch often discourages new leaders from sharing ideas or displaying leadership styles that are different from previous employees who occupied their positions. Boards, constrained by their own capacity or failure to view turnover as an organizational change, may be pressured, even hasty, in their recruitment, rather than conducting a comprehensive search or retaining an executive recruiter (Stewart, 2016). Survey research results revealed that strategic contributions from the board are more robust in organizations with higher financial performance.

Organizations that are judged to be higher performing also reported having high-performing boards across all dimensions. In particular, the interpersonal dimension provided a unique explanation of judgments of organizational performance (Chait et al., 2011). Traditionally, board-centered frameworks of governance highlight the fiduciary and strategic



roles of the board and how it works with management to ensure organizational effectiveness (Chait et al., 2011). The board-centered framework stresses the supremacy of board values and prescribes few roles for the executive in governance activities, and the executive-centered framework stresses the importance of executives providing leadership to their boards (Herman & Heimovics, 1994).

According to Iecovich and Bar-Mor (2007) outgoing executives holding a long tenure may also be overly relied upon by the board, making for a “CEO-dominant” power dynamic in the shared board–executive leadership structure. Non-profits may not be equipped with a succession plan; survey research found that while leaders understand the importance of succession planning, few have undertaken any initiative-taking steps toward developing one (Froelich et al., 2011). Boards (can) also have an unrealistic expectation that the new person is going to solve it—the mythology and the mistake (Stewart, 2016). Board members are the most important stakeholders at a non-profit organization because they hold the key to power which can implement change.

**Executive Director’s Relationships With Board Members.** The unique physical and social situation in which learning occurs, such as is created when serving in a particular organizational position, has been found to be integral to the learning process (Brown, 2005). Learning to understand individual board members’ needs and desires and their individual power within the group, as well as learning how to influence both the people and the process to achieve desired outcomes. This learning occurs primarily through trial and error and reflecting on those experiences.

Executive leaders prefer lower levels of board involvement in tasks related to day-to-day administration and management. There is a closer alignment between board behavior and

Executive leaders' preferences for these activities. As non-profits become professional, specialized, and larger, the less likely there is to be a mismatch between board involvement and Executive leaders' expectations for administrative and management functions. Executive leaders often desire increased involvement from boards on administrative and management tasks when they lack adequate staff to assist with pressing managerial tasks (LeRoux & Langer, 2016).

**Revised Organizational Policies.** Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models focus on revising organizational policies to reduce attrition and combat behaviors which lead to attrition. Studies advise leaders to avoid applying private sector concepts to non-profit organizations (Beck et al., 2008) and consider strategic leadership in the non-profit sector and contextual variables. The literature suggests that one of the primary functions of the board of directors is to promote organizational strategic thinking and actively engage in other strategic management functions. Non-profit organizations can become more adept at aligning their strategies with changes in their operating environment (Beck et al., 2008). Strategic leadership which is highlighted above may assist non-profit leaders with developing policies that home in on changing or adjusting behaviors, financing, and recruitment practices that may be increasing attrition, especially among newly hired leaders.

**Reduction of Leader Attrition.** Understanding the unique process of non-profit recruitment efforts is essential in attracting qualified leaders (Swider et al., 2015). Retiring tenured executives are often too relied upon by the board, which can cause a "CEO-dominated" power dynamic between board members and executive leaders (Iecovich & Bar-Mor, 2007). Board members and executive directors are often tempted and led to terminate employees when "the leadership skill set required to advance organizational strategy after an executive departure are either not available within current employee ranks, or an external candidate is desired by the

board or hiring officer” (Sechrest, 2020, p. 26). Newly hired leaders who serve as interims or were selected out of a desperate need to have a position filled may not feel connected to the organization or obligated to fulfill the duties of the position. This gap in communication and expectations and lack of internal training can lead to higher attrition levels.

## **Existing Proposals for Change**

### ***Planned Change***

Planned change theories which include the Lewin framework, action framework, and positive change model consist of four sets of activities; entering and contracting, diagnosing, planning and implementing, and evaluating and institutionalizing which are used to explain how change is achieved at non-profit organizations (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Critics of organizational development (OD) have pointed out problems with how planned change has been conducted and addressed specific areas where planned change can be improved. To mitigate issues with implementing non-profit organizational change which addresses reducing attrition the researcher will utilize the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models which streamlines the change process from initiation to fruition. The proposal for change in this study involves implementing The Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive change management models combined with the strategic leadership and moral motivation which can assist with changing leader behavior, strategic leadership development, improving communication and workplace relationships among staff and creating a momentum and desire to create and sustain change that can improve leader attrition rates.

According to Cummings and Worley (2009) effective change at non-profit organizations depends on the diagnosis of how well an organization is functioning. A diagnosis also can

identify the underlying causes of structural, cultural, political, and managerial problems which may lead to low morale, poor productivity, employee dissatisfaction, communication issues poor leadership frameworks and high attrition levels. Organizational diagnosis can also assist executive directors and board members discover the best practices that can assist with implementing change.

Planned change according to Cummings and Worley (2009) can address complex organizational issues and is a long-term process that involves initiative, creativity, and inclusiveness with a combination of strategic leadership and influence. Institutionalizing change requires time, commitment, and willingness to adjust and adapt behaviors that promote change management throughout the transitions of a non-profit organization. Planned change calls for adjustments in all departments of the organization to maintain organizational alignment and achieve strategic fit. Short-term change programs may only focus on one aspect of the organization; seek to resolve specific problems; and may not lead to complex organizational change or increase leaders or staff's ability or capacity to implement change.

### ***Change Management Models***

There are numerous change management models that can be used for successful organizational change such as the Burke-Litwin, ADKAR, Kotter, and Schein models which are based on steps and focus on managing change from a managerial level. For this study, the researcher will employ a combination of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models focuses on managerial behavior, organizational culture, political cultural, structure, and shared leadership between executive directors, board of directors, and other non-profit leaders and stakeholders. Strategies or proposals for change which resulted from the research of attrition at non-profits by Santora and Sarros (2001) were to:

1. Pass the torch (develop a succession plan).
2. Face issues head on.
3. Understand the issues.
4. Transform your people.
5. Look elsewhere for leadership.

Santora and Sarros (2001) concluded that NPOs can be bold and decisive in their thought processes and decision-making. Essentially, “non-profit boards of directors and EDs (executive directors) must acknowledge and confront the issue of succession head-on rather than bury their heads in the sand” (Santora & Bozer, 2015, p. 246). They can decide to either build up internal candidates or look for external ones, and “must commit to a leadership development planning strategy” (p. 246). This process can involve multiple stakeholders within the NPO who have prepared for this moment far in advance.

Utilizing the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management framework will allow non-profits to implement the strategies listed above by streamlining the political, structural, and cultural processes to align with developing strategic plans and initiatives that will address how executive directors and boards can discuss and implement a blueprint of how to reduce rising attrition rates at their organizations. Beer et al. (1990) advises leaders to be strategic about how to implement change after the issues have been identified which impact non-profit challenges and issues, leader behavior, and leadership style that contribute to leader attrition. These authors outline six steps to assure that the change movement sustains momentum and support from other leaders and staff. The following process of change is proposed for non-profits which correlates and culminates with all the steps and processes of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive

change management frameworks. Beer et al. (1990) recommends executive directors and board members:

1. Mobilize commitment to change through joint diagnosis of managerial, structural, and cultural problems that impact attrition and productivity. As the term task alignment suggests, the starting point of any effective change effort is a clearly defined organizational problem. This first step entails assisting leaders and staff develop a shared diagnosis of the ongoing issues that lead to mistrust and lack of productivity due to leadership behavior and leadership style. Identifying what can and must be improved and mobilizing the initial commitment that is necessary to begin the change process.
2. Develop a shared vision of how to organize and manage transition and attrition. This step involves ensuring the core group of people remains committed to upholding the analysis of organizational issues. In this phase, leaders can influence employees to embrace a “task-aligned” vision of the organization which identifies and defines new roles and responsibilities of leaders and staff who can contribute to ensuring the organization is more inclusive and supportive of staff and leaders.
3. Foster consensus for the new vision, competence to enact it, and cohesion to move it along. In this step, leaders are advised to look deeper than espousing a new vision, expecting complete buy-in, and experiencing immediate change. Executive directors and board members are encouraged to develop the skills, behaviors, and competencies required to ensure the new vision is put into action. Once new roles and responsibilities are defined leaders and staff can make every effort to ensure what they visualize will become an obtainable reality for the organization. The creation of

- teams that develop new goals and accountabilities can reinforce the learning and development process. Changes in roles, responsibilities, and relationships can foster new skills, increase morale, spur motivation and change attitudes toward the organization and living out its mission. Changing the pattern of coordination may also increase leader emergence, staff participation, collaboration, and information sharing.
4. Spread revitalization to all departments with leaders pushing it from the top. After leaders and leadership teams and staff have begun to initiate steps toward enacting change, they can begin to interact with other departments within the organization which impact the structural, cultural, political, and cultural aspects of the non-profit. These departments include but are not limited to human resources or personnel, compliance, finance, communications and outreach. Involving these departments in the grassroots change effort supports their roles as vested participants in team decisions. These departments are encouraged to contemplate how they can contribute to the change movement by examining how their role and responsibilities can be adjusted to become more aligned with the new vision of the organization.
  5. Institutionalize revitalization through formal policies, systems, and structures. Beer et al. (1990) contend that forcing a newly created vision and plan may only short-circuit change. Leaders can consider how to strategically and effectively institutionalize change to ensure that the change movement and vision continue in their absence. This step involves ensuring that the timing is right to institute the change and ensuring that strategic fit is present for formal structures and systems to be institutionalized because instituting changes in structures and systems too early can be counterproductive. Patience and influencing leaders are key to solidifying change at a non-profit

organization. When the new vision and plan is in motion, strategic and motivated leaders are in place, and the team organization is up and running, the momentum to change formal structures is created and the change can become a permanent part of the organization.

6. Monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems in the revitalization process.

The goal of encouraging change and adhering to a change management framework is to create a new system that can adjust and shift behaviors, culture, structures, and policies. Leaders at non-profits who can adapt to change, and transition can assist in creating a multifaceted vision that can shift the trajectory of the organization.

Executive directors, and board members are advised to learn how to continually monitor behavior, motivation, leadership style, and issues that impact employee morale, productivity, and attrition. Some might say that this is the general manager's responsibility. Monitoring the change process identifying issues and consensus on the analysis for viable solutions can be shared among leaders to balance power, input, and influence.

According to Beer et al. (1990) this six-step process allows leaders to implement renewal without forcing it on their co-workers and staff. Employees in this process become stakeholders who can become committed to a vision and accept a new pattern of management. The authors contend that change will only become effective and take place if the vision aligns with the core task. There is always resistance to change, however, this process provides leaders with advice that can improve coordination between staff, and departments and solve relevant problems concerning motivation, development of skills, and encourage collaboration and improvement in team behavior. This process also results in greater effectiveness when reducing leader attrition



and results in a stronger commitment to change. Beer et al. (1990) six-step framework of change mutually reinforces a cycle of improvements in commitment, coordination, and competence that can develop efficacy and accountability. This process may prove more advantageous if non-profit leaders adopt strategic leadership practices that can continually improve the structure, policies, and processes of their non-profit organization.

### **Gaps and Inconsistencies in Literature**

According to Fernandez (2008) for the past half century leadership research has been dominated by organization theorists and management scholars who have not acknowledged the difference between public and private organizations and examine leadership primarily in for-profit firms. Consequently, this has led to a generalization of leadership theories and concepts which were not developed or assessed in the public context. Leadership research is minimal in public administration literature (van Wart, 2003) although studies have linked leadership behavior to outcomes in public organizations (Fernandez, 2005). The lack of public administration research on leadership is disconcerting based on the amount of federal funding and resources the government, public agencies and non-profit organizations commit to engaging their leaders and staff in leadership development and the emphasis placed on strategic management, performance management and improvement and planned change management.

According to Fernandez (2008) due to increased emphasis on improved productivity leaders are often asked to perform the work of managers especially at non-profits which are smaller or struggling financially. The definition and responsibilities of leadership and management have been redefined and changed due to the demands of the non-profit industry. This situation creates a convoluted view of leaders and managers roles. The lack of continuity of the roles for leaders at non-profits is evident in scholarly literature on leadership and public

management particularly the public management literature on performance.

There is a gap in the research which specifically addresses the topic of the impact of attrition levels on non-profit organizations among leaders. There is a scarcity of scholarly literature that addresses how implementing change management processes, strategic management, and best practices can reduce attrition levels at non-profits. The literature on strategic management is abundant, however, extensive research on performance measurements and/or how to integrate the tenets of strategic management into the outputs and outcomes for the organization is not prevalent. According to Kaplan (2001) executive turnover has implications for how we understand the uneven board capacity of the sector and the role of governance in managing organizational change, and particularly if turnover is a challenge that tests the limits of volunteer leadership (Stewart, 2016). There has also been a greater focus on researching strategic leadership at for-profits compared to non-profits (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000). Theory development in strategic leadership assumes for-profit and non-profit organizations share the experiences yet evidence suggests that strategic leadership in non-profits may be different (Thach & Thompson, 2007).

The lack of literature, managerial blind spots such as lack of communication and motivational behavior, and limited research are reasons why rising attrition levels are not necessarily on the radar of academic scholars. There is also a major gap in literature on non-profit attrition that documents best practices to reduce leader attrition, reframe how EDs can lead strategically and the perception of management behavior, organizational politics, and culture. As a body of research, non-profit executive attrition reduction and succession has been neglected due to time and finance constraints, lack of administration and coordination abilities, and interests on the part of EDs and boards of directors (Santora et al., 2010).

In terms of leadership behavior and style, there is limited scholarly research on incorporating strategic leadership theory into the non-profit sector by examining the causal link between the leader's actions and organizational performance. Macy (2006) discovered value orientations like employee worth are connected to successful organizational outcomes. The influence of values on organizational outcomes was the same for employee values and executive values. This supports the notion that non-profits reflect their leaders' values.

Hannah and Lester (2009) propose that strategic leaders affect organizational learning at the developmental, network, and systems levels.

1. Strategic leaders increase the development of readiness followers through their messages and actions.
2. Strategic leaders influence knowledge within and across social networks at the network level.
3. Strategic leaders disseminate knowledge across networks to the larger organization at the systems level.

Scholars, industry experts, and leaders thus far have been unable to develop a universal style of non-profit human resource management due to the complexity of contexts, structures, and conditions in which social sector organizations operate” (Watson & Abzug, 2016, p. 598). Non-profit literature is devoid of empirically informed discussions of the formal auspices under which education for non-profit managers ought to occur. The literature reviewed emphasizes the possibility that various kinds of non-profit organizations might require various kinds of education for their managers. Managers/leaders are usually hired based on agency size, field of service, amount of government aid received, affiliation with larger organizations, and the educational background of non-profit CEOs. Heimovics and Herman (1989) contend that “non-

profit education ought to be based on the important activities of the non-profit manager/leader, which in turn can be anchored in the roles of the non-profit” (Haas & Robinson, 1998 p. 350–351). There is currently little consensus on how managers/leaders can be educated. Hiring a candidate who lacks specialized education or training specific to the needs of a non-profit can lead to recruitment and sustainment issues for newly hired leaders at non-profit organizations.

Existing literature presents a comprehensive picture of who is currently working in NPO executive positions. Norris-Tirrell et al. (2017) thoroughly discussed this topic in their study. However, there are conflicting data on whether NPOs prefer insiders or outsiders as executives. Recent articles show a preference for internal candidates for the head position (Froelich et al., 2011), whereas others show a preference for outsiders (Bozer & Kuna, 2013). Remarkably, the article written by Santora et al. (1999) was on both sides of the fence. The literature provides multiple explanations for this turnover. Retirement is one reason for this change, as well as burnout, remote working, and job transitions as reasons for turnover (Rendón, 2022). Johnson, (2022) identified job changes as the biggest reason for executive turnover in their article, with most executives leaving one NPO to go to a different NPO. This somewhat never-ending cycle was accurately deemed the “turnover treadmill” (Johnson, 2022).

### **Chapter Summary**

Hannan and Freeman (1984) agree that organizations with high reliability, a low variance in performance, high accountability, and the ability to account rationally for organizational actions, are less likely to die. Twenty percent of non-profits have lost employees and reported turnover as the most or second most crucial factor leading to closure. Non-profits can carefully observe how boards operate and the amount of power and influence they can wield over non-profit organizations. The non-profit sector must think broadly about executive recruitment by

considering volunteers, board members, and even executives from other sectors (Johnson, 2007).

A change in the board's structure and role can be examined further by non-profits to determine how to best integrate them as stakeholders and decision-makers who can assist in changing/adjusting the politics, culture, structure, and human resources at non-profits.

The next chapter will focus on the methodology which includes data collection, data management, instrumentation, and proposed data analysis which will provide information on participants, interview questions and protocols that will focus on causes of attrition and leader perception of attrition at non-profit organizations.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of research methodology used in this qualitative study. The components of this chapter include the introduction, research purpose and restatement of research questions; followed by a detailed description of the research design and methods used in this phenomenological study. A description of the participants, number of nonprofits, and human subjects' considerations as well as an overview of the survey instruments utilized. The framework for data collection and analysis and a summary of the chapter will be provided.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analytical (IPA) study is to interpret the accounts of social service non-profit executive directors/leaders of their own personal lived experience during their employment at non-profit organizations in the United States between the years of 2012 and 2022. The overarching research question is: What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?

The sub-questions that emerge from this idea are:

- SQ1: What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations?
- SQ2: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organizations?

The research questions were developed to explore the causes of attrition to non-profits, particularly among newly hired executives within the past three years and to determine how executive directors can develop best practices which will be able to sustain non-profits structurally, politically, and culturally.

## **Philosophical Approach**

A qualitative methodology and an IPA research design will be employed that moves toward understanding reality as an expression for, or a sign of, deeper-lying processes (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018). Different paradigms necessitate different approaches to studying reality and constructing knowledge. Qualitative methods are simply a reflection of the expanding ways of knowing.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), standards of goodness in qualitative interpretivist research have been offered for judging the quality, such as traditional parallel criteria that reflect trustworthiness, frameworks centered on authenticity and other alternative frameworks that consider standards for quality, rigor, or validity. According to Duffy et al. (2020), truth is only relevant for researchers or participants depending on the circumstances impacting them at the time of data collection. What the participant perceives as real is interpreted by the researcher.

## **Methodology and Research Design**

This section details the research framework and approach taken by the researcher. This research is qualitative phenomenological design utilizing a combination of demographic questionnaires and interviews which will provide data on servant leaders and strategic leaders' traits, management style preference and change management best practices. The framework of reflexivity is described as a methodological practice of critically reflecting and critiquing one's own biases and subjectivities throughout the research process, including in the writing of the text (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018).

## **Phenomenology**

Phenomenologists are interested in our "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9); "which requires researchers to examine the things themselves and to recognize phenomena

blocked from sight by the theoretical patterns in front of them” (Spiegelberg, 1965, p. 658).

Phenomenology is the study of people’s conscious experience of their lifeworld, which encompasses “everyday life and social action” (Schram, 2003, p. 71) and assumes that there is an essence or essences to shared experience which is a core meaning mutually understood through a phenomenon often experienced. The experiences of participants are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Phenomenologists interpret and explain the essence or basic structure of the experience can be examined. The essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience can be derived from a phenomenological interview as a primary framework of data collection.

Moustakas (1994) suggest researchers engage in a process called epoche or to “refrain from judgment” and to cast off prior understanding of phenomena. This is done to ensure non-bias as the researcher explores their experiences to examine dimensions of the experience and become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions prior to interviewing participants who had direct experience with the phenomenon. These prejudices and assumptions are then bracketed or temporarily set aside so that we can examine consciousness itself. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Other phenomenological strategies include phenomenological reduction which is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself. We isolate the phenomenon to understand its essence.

### ***Horizontalization***

Horizontalization is the process of gathering data for the examination which will hold equal value at the initial data analysis stage and then organizing the data into clusters or themes. Moustakas (1994) explained that in horizontalization:



There is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived. (p. 96)

An imaginative variation involves viewing the data from various perspectives, as if one were walking around a modern sculpture, seeing different things from different angles.

The product of a phenomenological study is a “composite description that presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence)” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 62). This description represents the structure of the experience being studied.

Individuals who read phenomenological studies can be able to understand others experiences in a more intimate way (Cresswell, 2007). A phenomenological approach is well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences such as employee’s interaction with the impact of leadership behavior, attrition and leader motivation phenomenological psychology relies on experiential accounts and the framework logical principle of bracketing as a reflexive research approach. Bracketing captures the principles and procedures that are elsewhere referred to as reflexivity. Phenomenological research is reflective in that it “seeks to bend back upon, or to accept again what we have experienced, lived through or acted upon pre-reflectively” (Giorgi, 1983, p. 142–143). Giorgi’s states phenomenological reflection “elaborates what is given in pre-reflective experience. It seeks to clarify lived experiences by revealing hidden assumptions and implicit perspectives of experiential acts. Reflexivity builds upon the phenomenological highlights the importance of equivalent reflection on the pre-reflection by researchers and subjects in human science. Phenomenological reflexivity assists researchers in ensuring they carefully examine participants experiences and understand the context, culture, disposition,

position and belonging that shapes the legitimacy, quality, and potential impact of research (May & Perry, 2017).

### *Holistic Reflexivity*

Holistic reflexivity allows the interpretive researcher to deeply examine their understanding of what we believe, our embedded beliefs and biases, and values. According to Duffy et al. (2020), utilizing this methodology allows scholars to consider how political, social, and economic forces have shaped the truths. Carrington (2008) and Spracklen (2008) and allow scholars to develop a new perspective concerning prior research results based on the work of others and provides them the opportunity to challenge or counteract previous research results. Duffy et al. (2020) contend reflexivity embodies research and allows researchers to comprehend the emotions and reactions of participants which may influence the research process. The dimensions of the holistic reflexive framework are representation, unconscious(ness), positionality and political ideological awareness each needs to be acknowledged to raise awareness to the deeper structures of unquestioned biases that influence our research to strengthen claims to any knowledge we produce within our work. Utilizing the holistic process allows for the practice of embodied reflexivity which examines the influence of social and cultural discourses and the space shared with our research participants on the knowledge produced (Sharma et al., 2009).

The researcher utilized “transdisciplinary reflexivity” which focuses on individual research projects and the concrete practices therein” (Walsh, 2003, p. 55). According to Duffy et al. (2020) reflexivity is meant to be:

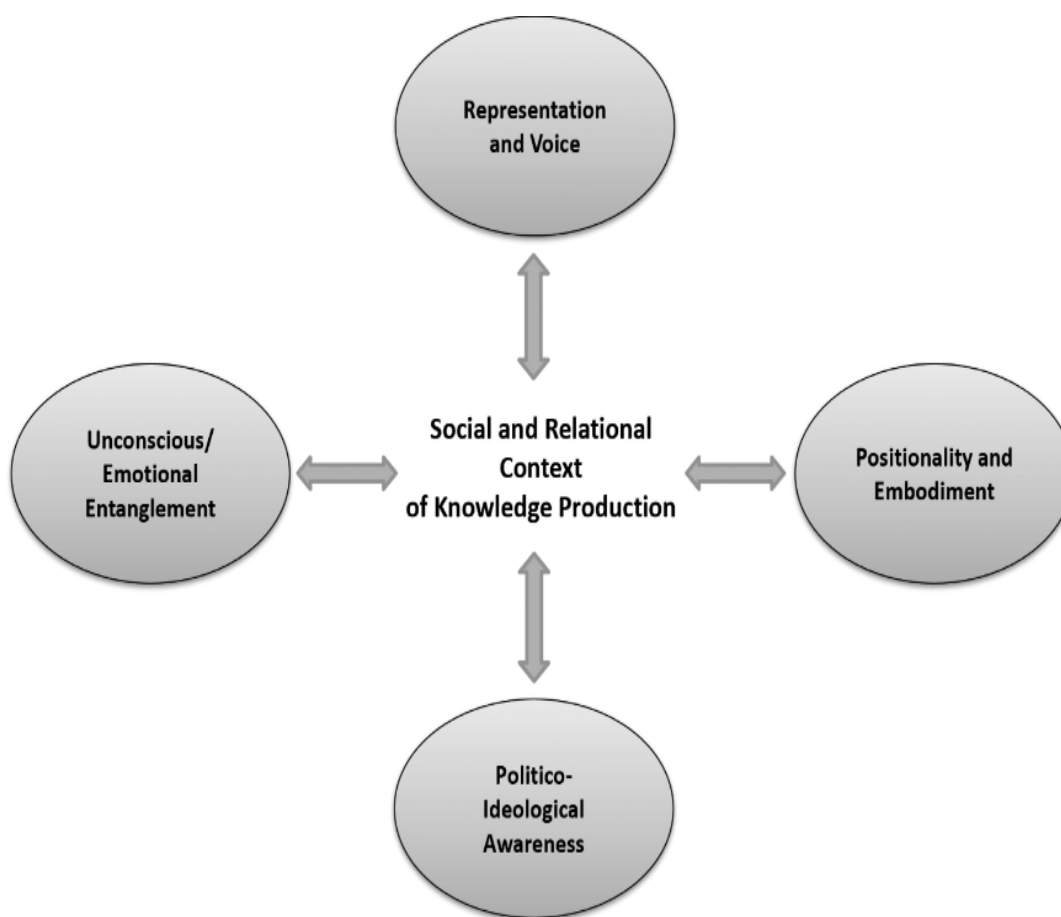
“Fluid, dynamic, and compatible to the various forms of criteria for quality so long as a researcher expands and applies it in a way that meets their understanding of standard of

goodness and criteria for quality and assist in improving the practice of good science” (p. 449).

Embodied reflexivity interrogates the influence of social and cultural discourses and the space shared with our research participants on the knowledge produced (Sharma et al., 2009). The framework for a holistic reflexive practice is displayed in Figure 7.

### Figure 7

#### *Framework For Holistic Reflexive Practice*



*Note.* This framework was produced by Duffy et al. in 2020, summarizing the framework for holistic reflexive practice. From “Digging deeper: Engaging in reflexivity in interpretivist-constructivist and critical leisure research,” by L. N. Duffy et al., 2020, *Leisure Sciences*, 43(3–4), p. 1–19. Copyright 2023 by Informa UK Limited. Adapted with permission.

## Setting and Sample

The setting for the interviews was via conference call or on the Zoom.com platform. All interviews were scheduled in advance and recorded with the consent of the participant. The social service non-profits were in various regions throughout the United States. The sample was drawn from the researchers pre-existing network of social service non-profit executive leaders to recruit participants for this study. In order to ensure a robust study, the recruitment process commenced with the researcher selecting 11 social service non-profit organizations which have been in operation for at least five years, have a staff of at least 30 employees and have executive leaders of varying ages, genders and ethnicities to participate in the study. The researcher contacted the selected non-profits Human Resources (HR) and outreach departments, emailed the recruitment letter which explains the purpose of the study and requested permission to contact their executive leaders to participate in the study. Once consent was obtained from the HR and outreach departments the researcher forwarded the recruitment letter and demographic questionnaire to potential participants to ask for their participation. Participants who responded to the invitation to participate received an informed consent letter and were scheduled for an interview through calendly.com. The interviews were completed via the Zoom.com platform.

In addition to recruitment at HR departments, the researcher recruited executive leaders through the LinkedIn.com website to participate in the study. The researcher utilized her database of existing networks of social service executive non-profit leaders on LinkedIn.com. The recruitment began with sending a message which contained a recruitment letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting the participation of individuals who have executive roles or positions at social service non-profit organizations. Once interested participants responded, they were emailed an informed consent form along with the demographic questionnaire and

scheduled for an interview through calendly.com. An announcement with information concerning the study and the researchers' contact information was sent from the researchers' LinkedIn.com page inviting executive leaders to participate. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher sent a final email thanking the participants. All data collected from the interviews was transcribed and analyzed using the IPA method.

The target population was emailed a message introducing the study and invitation to participate from the researcher's school email address. The message included the purpose of the study and invited them to participate in 30-minute interviews which would take place via Zoom conference call with an individual passcode. A brief demographic questionnaire was included in the invitation letter which provided the researcher with information to determine if the participant is qualified to participate in the study.

The informed consent letter accompanied the initial email as well as confirmation emails that were sent to participants upon their voluntary agreement to participate in this study. The sample population was 11 participants. Participants who confirmed their participation and returned the signed and completed informed consent form were sent a secure Zoom link and passcode along with the date and time of the interview. The interviews were scheduled on the researcher's calendly.com calendar, which provided participants with reminders prior to the interviews. After completion of the interviews the data was reviewed and presented. The criteria for participation in the study is participants must have worked for a non-profit organization for over five years and been in a leadership or managerial position for over two years. Variety was ensured by selecting participants of different genders, age, and length in the field on the job.

## **Human Subject Considerations**

Participation in this study posed no potential harm to any human subjects. No physical, psychological, social, or legal risks are anticipated to occur. All participants were advised of the study's purpose and voluntarily participated in the study. All participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix G) with written disclosures of the study's purpose and provided with participant forms which were approved by the Pepperdine University IRB. All information collected was kept confidential and is securely stored electronically. Participants and organizations were provided with pseudo names to protect their identity. Withdrawal from the study could be requested at any time and participants were informed of the scope and purpose of the study.

## **Instrumentation**

Data collected for this study utilized two instruments:

1. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) to characterize the sample.
2. An interview protocol with seven semi-structured interview questions (Appendix F) with opportunities to ask follow-up questions based on responses.

Non-profit executives were solicited via email to complete the questionnaire. Eleven non-profit organizations in the U.S. non-profits were identified and contacted to participate in the study. Participants were asked seven semi-structured interview questions which focused on the perception of leadership best practices to reduce attrition, leadership commitment, mentorship, trust, training, and relationships.

Participants were scheduled for interviews utilizing calendly.com and interviews were conducted via the Zoom.com platform. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis of the impact of leadership style, leader behavior, and the perspective of non-profit leaders

concerning the recruitment and sustainment of leaders at their organizations.

### **Validity**

Validity in phenomenological research is the degree to which the results are interpreted in a correct way (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). To ensure validity through credibility by establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. The results derived from the data in this study were made credible based on previous research on the topic of non-profit attrition as well as empirical evidence of trends in the non-profit sector which are based on leadership theories and concepts which will be discussed in the introduction and methods section of the dissertation (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings.

The information received in this study can be easily transferred to be utilized in any other academic study or research on the topic of leadership, organizational development, and human resources development (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). Giorgi (1988) concludes that validity, in a phenomenological sense, has been achieved if the essential description of a phenomenon truly captures the intuited essence. Reduction is the reason that no additional empirical judges are required. No real claims are being made. Instead, every reader of a phenomenological research study becomes a critical evaluator of the investigator's essential intuition.

### **Reliability**

In qualitative research reliability is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is conducted and the degree to which the results are independent of accidental circumstances of the research. According to Giorgi (1988), reliability is observed when one can ensure every reader of a phenomenological research study becomes a

critical evaluator of the investigator's essential intuition. A strong knowledge claim is based on a researcher having taken all the precautions in attempting to arrive at an accurate description, such as reduction and imaginative variation (Kirk et al., 1986). Riggs (2002) contends that if one wants to account for the full value of knowledge over and above the value of mere true belief, one's theory of knowledge must contain a reliability component value coming to hold a true belief in a (sufficiently) non-accidental way because we get more epistemic credit for the true belief than we would have had we gotten it right accidentally. Furthermore, producing a good end by a reliable process is one way to produce that end non-accidentally. Given my account of what it takes for a person to be causally efficacious, it follows that any time an outcome is sufficiently determined by one's skills, abilities, etc. In other words, anytime one produces the outcome via a reliable process-it will also be non-accidental to that degree.

Phenomenological theory offers two solutions for the problems of validity and reliability: (a) the use of the reduction and the effort after essences, and (b) the part of Husserl's theory of meaning wherein he distinguishes among signifying, fulfilling and identifying acts. Both these strategies lead to a sense of validity and reliability, but a sense that is different from logical empiricism. Both viewpoints have in common the goal of proper evidence for knowledge claims (Giorgi, 1988).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was divided into two phases. Phase one entailed the distribution of the demographic questionnaire through SurveyMonkey.com to non-profit leaders to determine participants' eligibility for the study. Phase two involved conducting interviews of the selected participants and collecting data from those interviews to analyze. The demographic questionnaire and the interview protocol was approved by Pepperdine IRB and provided to participants



electronically via email.

Eleven nonprofits were identified and asked to participate in the study and sign non-disclosure agreements and informed consent forms. The non-profits were contacted and asked to participate. Emails were sent to potential participants inviting them to participate in this study.

The study's participant inclusion criteria will be based on two factors:

1. The participant must have at least 5 years of experience as a non-profit leader; and
2. The participant must have managed at least three employees over a 5-year span.

Participants who were eligible for the study and agreed to participate were forwarded an informed consent form; scheduled for a Zoom interview; and asked to return the consent forms to the researchers' school email address. Thirty minute interviews were scheduled on Monday-Friday weekly scheduled utilizing candently.com. After the interviews were completed, participants were sent an email thanking them for their participation. The data was collected from the interviews utilizing the IPA inductive method and Six-phase analysis. The data was then coded to obtain information concerning leadership best practices to reduce attrition, non-profit leadership behavior, leadership style, and leadership perspective concerning causes of attrition. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and demographic questionnaires of non-profit executive directors, CEO's, CFO's, COO's, presidents and vice presidents of non-profits. Additional data sources included academic and peer reviewed journals, books, and cases studies.

### ***Interviews***

Interviews were conducted via conference call or Zoom. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and demographic questionnaires of nonprofit Executive Directors as seen in Appendix E and F. Eleven non-profits were identified and asked to participate in the

study. To ensure a robust sample of participants a minimum of 10 social service non-profit organizations in the U.S. which have been in operation for at least five years, have a staff of at least 30 employees and have leaders of varying ages and genders was taken. Variety was ensured by selecting participants of different gender, age, and length in the field on the job. Executive directors (ED), executive leader's CEO's, CFO's, COO's presidents and vice presidents who have over five years of experience will be targeted to participate in the interviews. The names of these organizations were kept confidential and de-identified through the collection tool/s used and participants provided pseudonyms.

### **Interview Questions**

Below are the seven interview questions that participants answered, also seen in Appendix F. The questions focused on leadership style, motivation, team engagement, mentorship and transition, reasons for leader turnover, organizational change and sustainment and best practices for leaders and organizations. The interview questions were designed to the research questions and examine leadership style, employee engagement, reasons for executive turnover, workplace culture implementing and sustaining organizational change, and best practices for leaders and organizations to reduce attrition.

Each executive leader was asked the same set of seven questions:

- IQ1. What is your leadership style?
  - a. How would you implement change at your organization?
  - b. Describe your organizational culture?
- IQ2. What motivates you as a non-profit executive leader?
- IQ3. How do you encourage team engagement?
  - c. When assigning tasks, how do you consider employees' experience, skills,

and interests?

- d. How do you plan for senior management transition and how is mentorship offered to existing leaders?
- IQ4. What do you believe are the reasons for leader turnover at your non-profit?
    - a. Do politics, organizational structure, or leadership behavior affect management attrition?
  - IQ5. How do you believe organizational change can be sustained and internalized at your organization?
  - IQ6. As an executive leader what are the best ways you believe executive leader attrition can be reduced?
  - IQ7. What do you think your organization can do to reduce executive leader attrition?

The interview questions were designed to explore non-profit leaders' perception of challenges, transition management, organizational culture, leader behavior, their organization's structure and employee support and engagement. All protocol items provided essential information for the research main question. Questions 1-3 addressed SQ1 What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations? Questions 4-6 address SQ2 which is: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organizations? This alignment of interview questions to research questions can also be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1***Research Questions and Related Interview Questions*

Research Question	Related Items
What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes of executive leader attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?	<p>IQ4. What do you believe are the reasons for leader turnover at your non-profit?</p> <p>a. Do politics, organizational structure, or leadership behavior affect management attrition?</p>
SQ1: What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations?	<p>IQ1. What is your leadership style?</p> <p>a. How would you implement change at your organization?</p> <p>b. Describe your organizational culture?</p> <p>IQ2. What motivates you as a non-profit executive leader?</p> <p>IQ3. How do you encourage team engagement?</p> <p>a. When assigning tasks, how do you consider employees' experience, skills, and interests?</p> <p>b. How do you plan for senior management transition and how is mentorship offered to existing leaders?</p> <p>IQ5. How do you believe organizational change can be sustained and internalized at your organization?</p>

Research Question	Related Items
SQ2: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organizations?	<p>IQ6. As an executive leader what are the best ways you believe executive leader attrition can be reduced?</p> <p>IQ7. What do you think your organization can do to reduce executive leader attrition?</p>

The interview questions were designed to explore non-profit leaders' perception of motivation, challenges, transition management, organizational culture, leader behavior, their organization's structure and employee support and engagement. Additional IRB documents relating to the recruitment of participants, data management, participant email invitation and participant email confirmation are in Appendixes A-I. Figure 8 outlines the timeline for the process of completing this study.

### Figure 8

#### *Timeline for Leadership Attrition Study*



### Data Management

The names of the selected non-profit organizations and participants were kept confidential and de-identified through the collection tool/s used. All Zoom interview links were sent with individual passcodes to participants. All interview information collected was stored in a

password-protected zip file to protect and secure the data shared by participants. Secure coding standards of implementation was utilized to minimize risk and protect data input, including the destruction of all original data collected, including interviews Zoom files and recordings, after three years poststudy. Password access was used on all computers being utilized for this study. A detailed description of the data management plan is included in Appendix B.

### **Data Analysis**

Collected data was analyzed and used to address the research question and sub-questions for the study. The researcher employed the interpretive phenomenological analysis approach (IPA) coined by Smith (1996) and has been used in social and educational psychology.

According to Smith et al. (2009) the key constituency for IPA is what can broadly be described as applied psychology, or psychology in the real world. IPA research approach which is a more detailed version of inductive analysis approach which:

1. Condenses raw textual data (interviews) into a brief, summary format.
2. Establishes clear links between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary results are derived from the raw data.
3. Develops a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data.

According to Smith et al., the IPA approach is psychological, its core concerns are psychological, and psychology needs space for approaches concerned with the systematic examination of the experiential. According to Alase (2017), the overall aim is to demonstrate the developmental process of doing experiential qualitative psychology and states IPA is as an interpretative and navigating research approach. By utilizing IPA researchers can produce more consistent, sophisticated, and nuanced analyses. Smith et al. (2009) state the IPA approach seeks

to examine and interpret the ‘lived experiences’ of research participants and described phenomenological research as systematically and attentively reflecting on everything lived experience. IPA is concerned with examining subjective experience and it is a tradition that is participant-oriented, concerned with the “human lived experience, and posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 34). Smith et al. (2009) stated when this approach is applied the researcher can decipher spoken or written information provided by participants and it enhances close interpretative engagement on the part of the listener or reader.

Researcher’s preconceptions are considered and mitigated through reflective practices and bracketing. IPA researchers play a dual position. Smith et al. (2009) state the IPA interprets the experiences of participants who will provide their thoughts on non-profit leadership, attrition, structure, and change. The data analysis will be based on conversational data, observations, and unstructured, semi-structured, interviews. Analysis will focus on how strategic and servant leadership traits are linked to or associated with lessening leadership attrition at non-profits. Data collected in the interviews was coded utilizing the following process:

1. Read through the interview responses to identify common themes; search for words or phrases that are repeated in the participants’ responses; this can help the researcher narrow down (condense) the words or sentences in a transcript.
2. Examine each transcript and listen to recordings for clarity.
3. Discover themes and categorizations in the pattern of responses by the research participants.

In addition to completing the IPA process the researcher also utilized the six-phase analysis to further interpret the data collected for this study. The analysis included six phases of

analysis.

In phase 1 the researcher organized and prepared the data for analysis, including reviewing the interview notes and listening to the recordings to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. Each interview was coded for similar terms for the following interview questions. The codes identified similarities in workplace culture, organizational change, leadership style, attrition causes and ways to reduce attrition and best practices for non-profit leaders and organizations to reduce attrition. According to the IPA guidelines, the codes were searched for words, phrases, and paragraphs for each interviewee. In phase 2, the researcher reviewed the recordings and transcripts and categorized the data presented in the interviews. In phase 3 the researcher combined words, feelings and actions and developed a deeper understanding of the content and its connection to the study research questions.

In phase 4 the researcher identified new connections and discovered underlying meaning by examining the frequency of how many times a word, idea or concept was provided by the participants. During this step after forming the codes the researcher invited an additional reviewer to help review the codes through the investigative triangulation process. The reviewer received a copy of the transcript as well as the codes that had been identified and a listing of codes that had been previously identified. The researcher further reviewed the codes to determine if additional codes could be identified and if the information and codes represented the data that was presented. The reviewer then suggested that the observations of each participant be reviewed across categories (question topics) in addition to the codes to determine the similarities and differences of the participants responses. The researcher and reviewer met to review observations and ideas and developed an updated comparison coding and observation sheet for all categories and participants. Through the analysis process, the researcher identified 193 codes.



Phase 5 involved crafting specific answers to questions, isolated mutually exclusive responses which prepared the data for the final phase which involved reporting the results and systematically defining, describing, and coding direct evidence from data.

The last phase involved supporting the data, ideas, and concepts observed and experienced. In this phase themes were developed and supported by the responses, codes, definition, and emerging themes that have developed based on the experiences of the participants. Information for phase 6 is expressed in the seven themes that emerged from the code descriptions and category definitions displayed in Appendix N.

### **Qualitative Process**

Data was collected from April 2023 to June 2023 utilizing the interview protocol (refer to Appendix A). Prior to the interviews participants completed a demographic questionnaire which provided information on the leader's experience, their organization, leadership style, education, gender, age, title and supervisory experience. The researcher utilized the questionnaire to determine if the leaders met the selection criteria and to gather information concerning their leadership style and experience. The virtual interviews were conducted via the Zoom online conferencing platform and recorded and transcribed utilizing the Otter.ai platform. All participants provided a signed IRB consent form and a non-disclosure form to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the information which will be shared. An icebreaker question concerning the leader's experience was asked to initiate the discussion followed by seven questions concerning leadership, organizational change and causes of attrition. At the interview participants were provided an opportunity to add any additional information which would assist with reducing attrition and support executive leaders. The duration of the interviews was 30 to 60

minutes and the transcripts ranging from 7 to 25 pages were generated utilizing the Otter.ai platform.

The preliminary demographic questionnaire assisted the researcher with becoming familiar with the participants' experience. A total of 11 participants completed the demographic questionnaire as well as an informed consent and non-disclosure form to protect their privacy. The study included organizations from 9 states in the Northeastern, Southern, Midwest and Western regions of the United States. The non-profits appeared to face similar issues in each region, however further research with a larger sample may be able to record the differences in trends for attrition issues in different regions and states. The study focused on social service non-profits which provided educational, counseling, financial and business development assistance for the populations they served. Four national, one international and six state and local non-profits were represented.

### ***Detailed Analysis***

After the data was collected, the researcher began the analysis process. The researcher applied phenomenological research methodology which is an interpretive process and is "concerned with exploring human lived experience and the meanings which people attribute to their experiences". (Shinebourne 2011, p 18) while completing the interviews.

Phenomenology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized and involves focusing on taking a non-biased approach to obtaining the authentic experiences of these leaders as it relates to reducing attrition at non-profit organizations and best practices for organizational change and sustaining it as well as creating or developing a culture which embraces reducing attrition.

The analysis specifically focused on:

- Reading through the interview responses to identify common themes; search for words or phrases that are repeated in the participants' responses which assist the researcher condense the words or sentences in the transcript.
- Examine each transcript and listen to recordings for clarity.
- Discover themes and categorizations in the pattern of responses by the research participants.

### ***Investigative Triangulation***

The overarching purpose of triangulation is to augment the accuracy and credibility of qualitative results (Patton, 1999) and dividing qualitative inquiry into binary categories strengthens research credibility from an exploratory form to both exploratory and verification forms. Denzin (2012) According to Patton (2014) Investigative Triangulation utilizes techniques to establish valid and reliable results for this study. The process involves two or more individuals triangulating their summaries of a topic or result to support or refute each other before arriving at a mutual result. Triangulation identifies inconsistencies in data and provides the reasons for the differences. There may be reasonable explanations for divergent source variances, which can only enhance credibility. Striving for such credibility should arguably be a top priority for investigators (Shea, 2022).

The researcher used triangulation to further review the interview transcription data to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the codes, categories and the seven themes which evolved from the analysis process. Feedback was provided from the other researcher concerning inclusion and diversity in the workplace culture which was added to the information in Theme 4 which is provided in the Themes section.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the methodology which will be used for the phenomenological study which will examine how nonprofit executives and leaders view leadership and how that perspective impacts attrition levels at their organizations. The information from the results of the interviews were utilized to discuss the themes discovered and how executives can use best practices, adjust leader behavior, and adopt leadership styles to reduce leader attrition levels at nonprofit organizations.

The results of this research and conclusion will be provided in the Results section of this study. The long-term goal is to use this research to assist non-profits in reducing attrition and ineffective hiring in leadership roles. This study explored how non-profit Executive Directors can utilize, implement and sustain managerial and organizational best practices to reduce leader attrition levels; present methods on measuring the effectiveness of strategic planning and leadership styles; examine the impact of utilizing the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models as a framework approach to streamline strategic planning and promote leadership styles which may benefit non-profit organizations; and determine whether existing literature on strategic management and leadership development is relevant to, and beneficial for non-profit executive leadership and development.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation of Results**

### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter will present the results of interviews conducted by the researcher which relate to the research question and sub-questions. The results of coding, themes, the cause of attrition, implementing change, sustaining change, engaging employees, politics, infrastructure and leader behavior and best practices.

### **Context**

The purpose of this study was to collect information provided by participants which reflects the experiences of leaders who currently hold executive level positions at social service non-profit organizations from the viewpoint of phenomenology. The study data collected will be utilized to determine the causes and impact of attrition among non-profit leaders. The research question and sub-questions which were used to design the interview questions which guided the discussion during the interviews with 11 non-profit leaders, as seen in Table 1 in Chapter 3. An interview guide of the seven semi-structured questions created to facilitate the interviews is seen in Appendix F.

### **Study Participants**

The recruitment for the interviews of participants began after the approval of IRB. As previously stated in Chapter 3, participants were recruited utilizing the LinkedIn.com platform and by contacting the Human Resources departments of non-profit organizations to solicit participation of non-profit executives.

Participants were identified and selected using the following criteria:

- They held a title of an executive leader as a COO, CFO CEO, Executive Director (ED) president, vice president or other title.

- They possessed at least five years of experience as a non-profit leader.
- They supervise at least 3–10 employees.

A recruitment email was sent to 25 leaders and the human resources department. In addition to the emails over 70 recruitment letters were sent to executive leaders via the LinkedIn.com platform. A total of 11 executive directors, CEO's, CFO's, COO's and president and vice presidents were ultimately recruited to participate in the study. Three males and eight females participated from cities across the United States. All participants completed a demographic questionnaire which served as a prerequisite for participation in the study. The data retrieved from the questionnaire assisted the researcher with information pertaining to their leadership experience, gender, age, education, title frequency of attrition at their organization, and size of their non-profit. This data assisted with determining if the participants meet the criteria for the study, their leadership style, as well as their years in the industry, numbers of years as a supervisor and the number of staff they have supervised. The questions included in the demographic questionnaire and combined question responses from participants can be reviewed in Appendix E.

All participants were assigned pseudonyms for both their name and organization to ensure confidentiality. Each non-profit included was a social service or educational organization and was considered a small organization with 1–100 employees. All included organizations were in the United States serving as local, regional, and national non-profits. Table 2 displays participants' individual responses to a demographic questionnaire including their leadership style, non-profit industry and supervisory experience. Table 3 presents the participants' professional backgrounds and leadership experience as expressed during their interviews.

**Table 2***Demographic Questionnaire Responses*

Participant	Years at Non-Profit	Leadership Style	Non-Profit Size	Age	Gender	Education	Attrition Rate	Title	Staff Supervised	Number of Years Supervising
Mary Stone	Over 15	Womanist	Over 500	55-64	F	Masters	4-5 Years	Executive Director	10-20	13
Helen Ayers	Over 15	Blend of Styles	101-500	55-64	F	Masters	Once a Year	Vice President	10-20	10
Andrew Richardson	10-15	Blend of Styles	1-100	45-54	M	Masters	1-2 Years	ED	6-10	6
John Watson	10-15	Blend of Styles	1-100	55-64	M	Masters	4-5 years	COO	5-10	6
Alice Warren	15-20	Servant	1-100	45-54	F	Masters	4-5 years	President	5-10	7
Ann Jones	Over 15	Blend of Styles	1-100	45-54	F	Masters	4-5 Years	COO	10-20	19
Lucy Taylor	5-10	Strategic	1-100	55-64	F	Bachelors	2-3 Years	CFO	10-20	3
Tom Andrews	Over 15	Blend of Styles	1-100	55-64	M	Masters	4-5 Years	CEO	More than 10	36
Sondra Jones	Over 15	Strategic	1-100	33-44	F	Masters	4-5 Years	Executive Director	More than 10	5
June Thumon	5-10	Strategic	1-100	25-34	F	Masters	2-3 Years	Executive Director	More than 10	5
Sam Tyler	5-10	Blend of Styles	1-100	55-64	M	Masters	4-5 Years	CEO	More than 10	15

**Table 3***Leader Backgrounds From Interviews*

Interviewee Participant and Organization	Interviewee Background and Experience
P1 Mary Stone- The Vision Foundation	Twenty years of educational fundraising, and grant writing who advocates for youth.

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<b>Interviewee Participant and Organization</b>	<b>Interviewee Background and Experience</b>
P2 Andrew Richardson- Tribute Foundation	Counseling background five years with one Non-profit. He is new to his position at his current organization.
P3 John Watson- East Park Foundation	Over 15 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector. And prior to that he worked in support of the nonprofit sector as a financial professional, doing audits of nonprofit organizations and served on nonprofit board nonprofits in addition to working in them.
P4 June Thurmon-The Lighthouse Foundation	Public accountant and private industry experience. She has three years of non-profit experience.
P5 Lucy Taylor- The Helping Center	Non-profit career started in 2005. She has experience in marketing, a director and managed teams and became and non-profit leader in 2017.
P6 Ann Jones-The Butterfly Foundation	Has over 15 years of experience and began her career as Deputy for Finance Administration and then became a CFO. Has experience in communication, development, and fundraising at an international non-profit.

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<b>Interviewee Participant and Organization</b>	<b>Interviewee Background and Experience</b>
P7 Helen Ayers-The Pen Foundation	Began her career as a classroom teacher and I earned to engage in professional learning and professional development. She has more than years with this organization, but more than 20 years in the educational space.
P8 Sam Tyler- The Planters Foundation	Full time non-profit 6 years ago after a 25-year career with corporate companies where he was a consultant and entrepreneur.
P9 Alice Warren-Covenant Center	Established her own social service non-profit ten years ago after a career in social services and counseling and providing resources to her community.
P10 Tom Andrews-The Seeder Foundation	Served for 36 years as a non-profit leader for a youth and mentorship organization and has served as a board member and advisor for several other non-profits and social service organizations.
P11 Sondra Jones-The North Gate Foundation	Served at one social services non-profit for over 15 years and focuses on implementing strategic leadership and focusing on organizational culture to lead her staff and serve her community.

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Demographic information about the participants assisted the researcher with gathering information to complete the IPA process. The responses helped the researcher to gain a more intimate understanding of the background of the participants, their approach to leadership, how long they have been in the industry and their perceptions of how attrition can impact their organizations. The data from the demographic questionnaires revealed that leaders were well educated and had prior experience in leadership and their specific position or area work. Leaders who had a combination of leadership styles along with longevity at non-profits later provided valuable advice specifically relating to employee engagement and best practices which has assisted with reducing attrition in their experiences as leaders.

### ***Interview Data and Results***

The data from interviews was coded utilizing IPA and horizontalization. The observations, and experiences were extracted from the data in the interviews. The data was ordered into categories which represent the interview questions outlined in the *Interview Questions* section and Appendix F. These categories include leadership style, implementing and sustaining change, motivation, culture, attrition reduction suggestions, employee engagement, political structure and behavior, attrition causes and (leader and organizational) best practices. The responses from the participants were coded and their “lived experiences” were considered as the data from the codes was combined, and experiences and observations were listed. The data was further described, defined, summarized, and supported. Seven themes were discovered after completing the six-phase analysis process which allowed the researcher to provide a culmination of the deeper meaning of the data collected based on the shared experiences of the participants.

### ***Codes, Observations, and Experiences***

To identify the codes, observations, and themes from the data the researcher employed

the Six-phase process to conceptualize the underlying messages, themes and mantras of the participants' experiences. 193 codes were identified by grouping the similar responses, experiences and sentiments of interviewees. These codes were placed in order by interview question topic or (category).

Additional information on *Leader Perception* and *Non-Profit Leader Topics of Interest* are in Appendixes J-N provides information on coding results, combined codes, definitions, and categories.

### **Themes**

The development of the seven themes derived from the IPA process. Themes were designed to provide in-depth answers to research sub-questions 1 and 2. The themes represented the researcher's interpretivists worldview which was subjective and based on how the study participants perceived and interpreted their experiences and observations.

The themes focused on reporting leaders' experiences and perspectives on the impact of workplace culture, organizational infrastructure, transition and managerial skills, strategic planning, solutions, taking action and creating sustaining best practices on attrition and how attrition reduction can be achieved. All of these topics are addressed in the three models of the conceptual framework. The results from the participant interviews revealed that leaders utilized some of the components of Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change models but not utilized the tenants from all three models simultaneously. They also did not have a consensus on a framework that they use or could be used to address change management or directly addresses how to combat attrition of staff at their organizations.

### ***Results Related to Research Sub-Questions 1 and 2.***

The seven themes developed are based on the main research question and the two sub-questions. The detailed themes were derived through completing the six phases of analysis and identifying the information which resonated with participants the most that related to the causes of executive leader non-profit attrition.

### ***Research Questions***

The main research question is: What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes of executive leader attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?

The sub-questions that emerge from this idea are:

- SQ1: What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations?
- SQ2: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organization?

### ***Results Related to Sub-Question 1***

The following results were based on sub-question 1 which is: What are non-profit leaders' perceptions of their implemented leadership styles and retention strategies for their organizations? The responses of the participants to this question relate back to leaders being decision makers and influencers of their organization. Transformational leadership style can be described as an ideal influence, exalting motivation, rational stimulation, and personalized concern. Themes 1 and 2 specifically point to how the participants leadership style, motivation and perception impacted communication and relationships at their organization.

**Theme 1: Leaders Are Motivated by the Mission and Desire to Serve Their Community and Meet Organizational Goals.** Theme one was based on four codes: helping, work, mission, community and one combined code which was purpose and related to IQ2. Leaders who viewed themselves as transformational or transactional also displayed both strategic and servant leadership styles promoted the mission of their organizations to other leaders and staff, they supervised to emphasize their purpose for being a part of the organization and to also engage other staff in understanding and embracing the vision of the organization. Vision is related to alignment and support of the work that is being done in the community which makes a significant difference. Non-profit leaders were inspired by the mission of their organizations by carrying out the work of the organization and determined to fulfill the overarching purpose of why the non-profit exist and its mission and their representation in it.

The mission served as an inspiration for leaders who were committed to conducting the goals and objectives of their non-profit to meet and expand the populations they served. Expounding on the mission and ingraining it in the culture of the organization assisted with reducing the causes for attrition among new and tenured leaders and staff. Leaders are motivated by the mission and desire to serve their community and meet organizational goals.

Mary Stone stated that representing the people in her service area motivated.

What motivates me is making sure that we're represented in this particular area."

Helen Ayers shared that the purpose of her non-profit was motivation for her, and she sought to empower others in her role.

Purpose motivates me, I want to do something that I think is meaningful. And that really feeds my desire to make change, and to empower others. So, for me, it's the idea of doing meaningful work.

Tom Andrews shared that his organizations history was rich, and he was committed: The mission is the primary motivator. Our mission is to deliver innovative leadership development programs, and creative solutions that identify, accelerate and elevate underrepresented and marginalized talent throughout their career.

Alice Warren shared that she found gratification in working in her role and that was a source of motivation for her:

I find gratification in helping others. That's just a part of who I am. I get gratification when I see somebody's life that I've been able to impact our children when they just light up when they see visiting and spending time. The result is seeing the output of what I'm able to do, and the gratification that it brings, that motivates me.

Leaders represented offered services in education, counseling, assisting with domestic violence and business creation and sustainment. Leaders who are committed to the mission of their organization expressed satisfaction in the fact that they can assist others and make a substantial impact and contribution to the individuals and communities they serve. Leaders found satisfaction in providing services through their organization which assists people who may otherwise not receive this assistance. Making a change in the lives of children and families was especially gratifying and important to leaders who related to the community and were willing to be committed to using their skills, understanding strategic fit, experience, managerial wisdom and concern for the well-being of the people they serve.

**Theme 2: Leadership Style Can Impact Attrition if Relationships With Employees Are not Authentic, Relevant and Encourage Personal and Professional Development.** The participants' leadership styles were reflective in utilizing employee engagement to reduce attrition by focusing on creating and cultivating relationships, providing leaders'

mentorship/coaching motivation, understanding the importance of recognition and gauging the skill set and qualifications of employees. Leadership style and level of communication with staff significantly impacts employee engagement relationships. Most leaders stated they utilized a combination of strategic and servant leadership or other forms of transformational leadership style which can dictate how leaders communicate, motivate, and engage with staff. Leadership style was used as an avenue that leaders could use to influence others, initiate, and sustain team engagement, promote workplace culture, and specifically address situations and organization problems.

Mary Stone stated the importance of teams working together and the engagement that comes as a result of connecting people throughout the organization.

If you allow teams to kind of work in intersect with each other, you enhance their skills, you enhance their knowledge, you can see their experiences that they have your hand is what they're exposed to. And to me, that makes an organization stronger.

Helen Ayers spoke about how affirming employees and assisting employees to develop in areas strengthens their engagement tremendously.

Focusing on strengths, acknowledging them and affirming and acknowledging what they are, and providing opportunity to grow. We're not all strong all the time. When we see areas where we need to grow, if they need reading materials or identifying who they should contact. I help them get the resources they need to do that. I am empowering people with information.

Sondra Jones shared that her leadership style was one of open and candid conversation with employees to ensure that everyone remains aligned with the goals of the organization.

I keep communication open. My leadership style is more of not letting things fester. If

something's not working, I identify it right away, and get it head on. If somebody's doing something that's not right have a conversation with that person right away. So, we have a good very close-knit team. We're all moving in the same direction, having the same goal. Tom Andrews stated his situational leadership style assists him with supporting his staff. My leadership style is I am a leader that focuses on situational leadership. I apply my leadership, management leadership support, or leadership direction, depending on the situation. Those situations can go in a lot of directions and the need for much direction. It all depends on the actual area of work.

The participants' leadership style and behavior seemed to impact attrition due to their influence on staff and other leaders. Leadership style was essential to communicating with employees and being open, flexible, and observant of the needs of staff and utilizing skills for training and providing resources for professional and personal development. Leaders were open to addressing issues and to ensuring that authentic relationships were being developed and sustained. Leaders used leadership style to motivate and encourage staff to perform at their optimal best and to keep the mission and focus of the organization in the forefront of their priorities.

**Theme 3: Leaders Agreed That Non-Profit Size, Status, Funding and Board Involvement Impacts Attrition.** The types of organizations represented were all social service organizations which provided social, counseling, educational and business services, in-kind donations, monetary assistance or counseling or mentorship and scholarship opportunities. Three of the organizations were funding organizations and the remaining seven organizations were being funded. The smaller organizations had more issues with accessing funding and more stress with managing the organization due to uncertainty of funding and the competition of obtaining



funding and stressful schedules or work environments.

Eight out of eleven leaders interviewed had a staff of 1–100 employees, which can be considered a smaller non-profit organization. Compensation benefits and competing offers from other organizations were also mentioned by at least 60% of participants. Attrition can be impacted by the relationship between leaders and the Board of Directors Lucy Taylor stated:

Engaged board members have knowledge. People that are working for you because they love it, and they want to help you and to see (the organization) get to the next level. So, unless there's people like that, then there's always going to be a burden of oh, we hired this staff. Okay, this is not a good leader. Let's get another leader. Oh, that leader was good, but she left when we got another leader. Every year, I feel like they've been turning over for those reasons. It's because the board and the person are not working in synchrony.

Lucy goes on to mention how financial availability issues impact organizations.

There are tons of local small popular organizations in (City)...So, we compete a lot for the money.

Andrew Richardson also stated that board support is needed instead of board supervision.

The board can't really supervise me because you don't know what I do, and the board is not there with me doing it. It's hard when you're trying to be involved in stuff that you don't really know much about. If I'm bringing the board ideas, they can scrutinize it, ask questions about it. But if I bring you a well-developed plan, I need you to support that.

They have to really support those initiatives. The board has to create this space form where I feel comfortable coming to them.

Burnout and work-related stress were also reported as two main causes of attrition.

Andrew Richardson gave his perspective on how work-related roles and responsibilities for leaders can cause attrition and burnout.

You try to balance. The work is so tough and demanding, creating a self-care plan and making sure that the organization is structured in a way where people can do that can take some time off would be beneficial.

Lucy Taylor mentioned how compensation and offers from other organizations can also impact attrition at non-profits.

There's just an Influx of money. A lot of people, if they're good at their job might be getting offers. People sometimes find my profile attractive; they'll reach out to me and ask do you want to talk about this or hear about this opportunity? We're still in competition in terms of availability and people are looking for talented leaders.

Organizational funding, status, size and board involvement were all factors which impacted the perception of leaders concerning attrition. Less established non-profits with a smaller staff appeared to be more concerned with funding and burnout than the older financially stable organizations. Leaders agreed that the board should have a clear role when interacting with executive leaders and boundaries should be established. Support from the board was mentioned as being needed at smaller organizations as well.

### ***Results Related to Sub-Question 2***

The four themes based on the combined codes, observations and experiences are related to Sub-Question 2: How do non-profit executive leaders manage change and suggest best practices to reduce executive leader attrition at their organizations? Leaders responded that they managed to change strategically and situationally. Organizational change management efforts were in most cases planned after an issue arose. Leaders stated that if planned change took place

the transition into the change and sustainment of it required organizational agreement and participation. This process usually involves executive leaders, board members, human resources departments and other staff who are familiar with and prepared to contribute to the recruitment and hiring process and personal development of leaders.

In themes 4-7 leaders expressed their experiences and thoughts about how organizational culture, coaching and mentoring, organizational change and implementing best practices impacted attrition. Development of leaders, policies and processes are discussed in-depth. Theme 6 specifically speaks about developing a leadership plan or strategy which can enhance the professional and communication skills of leaders.

**Theme 4: Leaders Sought to Build an Organizational Culture Which Promotes Connections, Faces Challenges Engages Communication, Sets Expectations, and Promotes a Productive Workplace Contribute to Reducing Attrition Causes.** Workplace culture was a defining factor of whether leader attrition took place. Organizational cultures which were positive and embraced diversity, connection and communication appeared to be preferred by leaders and recommended to promote staff and organizational cohesiveness. Workplace culture is developed and cultivated by the actions and management of leaders and the best practices developed by leaders. Leaders are often the gatekeepers of organizational culture and their actions or inaction concerning influencing culture can impact the image and ethos of the organization and thus impact leadership attrition. Ann Jones and Sam Tyler expressed how essential workplace culture is to ensuring cohesiveness and connection among employees which could assist in fostering relationships and reducing attrition.

Ann Jones shared how her diverse culture shared ideas and had a number of ways to fulfill their roles.

Our organization is a fully remote organization which is a relatively smaller organization. We're about 20 people, and it's a group of high performers. But we're also international. We have a lot of different cultures, a lot of different ways of doing things. And the way people look at hierarchy International.

Helen Ayers describes her culture as being collaborative and team based. Our organizational culture is collaborative and lateral.

We do a lot of team-based decision making. We have an organizational structure where there is a president and a leader. We have agreed as an organization to really listen to each other across the board, what strengths and opinions do you have? Acknowledging we are strong in many ways and leaning on each other's strengths.

Sam Tyler also shared how they value their employees and are appreciative of what they do:

It's an extremely humanistic environment. We value both the people who collaborate with us in the organization, as well as the people who benefit from our work. It is a service-oriented culture. One that is very collaborative, better word kind, and generous and empathetic. We've made a conscious decision to primarily hire people who work at non-profits and have empathy for what our clients and what our partners are going through.

**Theme 5: Leaders Perceived Implementing Organizational Change as a Process That Requires Input From Staff, a Shared Vision, Planning, Identifying, Addressing Issues and Defining the Purpose of the Change.** This theme is reflective of IQ5. "How would you implement and sustain change at your organization?" Participants mentioned how strategic planning and supporting staff throughout their career can assist with reducing and eliminating

leader “burnout” and dissatisfaction with their role and responsibilities. In terms of implementing and sustaining organizational change, leaders summarized that implementing organizational change is a process that requires input from staff, a shared vision, planning, identifying, and addressing issues and defining the purpose of the change. Changes which promote actions and policies which reduce attrition.

Tom Andrews stated that involvement in the change process can prompt employees to see their own worth and contribution in the process.

I ask the question what are you motivated by in your own role? And how do you align that motivation with the organization’s mission? And once you align with it, then it becomes simple to be a team member, and not a solo member. And when I motivate people by stating that we can get more done together than we can alone. That’s simply put, sometimes they’re early adopters, sometimes they’re late adopters. But the goal is to get the late adopters to see the power of teamwork versus individual work.

In terms of planning for hiring and vetting employees Tom stated:

The key is to ensure we’re hiring people that align with the mission and their personal goals aligned with the mission of the organization. When there’s a misalignment, that’s when we see turnover. Our goal is to make sure we do our due diligence in the hiring phase, to make sure that their personal goals and alignment are aligned with the mission of the organization.

Sam Tyler also mentioned planning for change at the organization and how communication and relationships are key to implementing planned change.

The best way of getting input and buy-in is communication. People need to know, well, in advance of a major change, or any kind of change effort. They need to know what’s

coming down the pike, why it's important to make a change, and that their input is being listened to in the course of moving along that path.

Leaders expressed that aligning change to the mission of their organization was very important and identifying the why and details of the change was pivotal in gaining support and buy in from other leaders and staff. How change is implemented is also important. The three types of change which were identified from the participant responses were: 1) situational change which was based on a particular situation or issue that presents itself that was not foreseen and necessary for the successful continuation of a program or process, 2) planned change is change which takes place due to a situation which is observed as potentially becoming an issue which can significantly impact a program or process if not addressed and resolved through a strategic plan which can be implemented over time; and 3) proactive change which can take place as a result of recognizing past and current trends, observations and experiences and involved placing procedures, policies and processes in place which are designed to combat future issues from taking place. The success of the implemented change hinged on Leaders managerial and planning skills as well as the ability to understand how the change may impact their staff and how to engage all staff and gain allies to assist with the successful implementation of change throughout the organization and how each department or sector can contribute toward and internalize the program, process, procedures or policies which ensure that the change will be ingrained into the culture of the organization.

Andrew Richardson added the same sentiments concerning allowing staff time to adjust to change and stated:

It's just about trying to get as much buy in as possible. Having that vision, trying to buy into the vision as much as possible, giving people enough time to wrap their heads around

what you're trying to do.

John Watson shared that change is not always comfortable but if it is presented in a way that makes sense to staff and they are allowed to work through it with leadership, change could be implemented with less resistance if staff receives ample notification of the change and if employees are inclined to understand that in the non-profit environment change can take place at any time.

We work together to find the right realignment or adjustment which most people can be on board with. As a leader, it's your responsibility to prepare people for the inevitability of change. You don't just wait till the change is necessary, you start preparing people's minds, from the day they're hired, to the possibility that things are going to change because in change, there's opportunity.

**Theme 6: Providing Leaders Mentorship/Coaching and Motivation Promotes the Importance of Recognition and Gauging the Skill Set and Qualifications of Employees.**

According to the collected data, attrition reduction at non-profits involves developing positive relationships and creating a progressive workplace culture, relevant training, vetting qualified employees and acquiring essential professional skills which can advance the mission of the organization. In terms of coaching and training leaders stated that they had coaches to assist them with managing the responsibilities of leadership and to assist and guide them with their decision-making process and to gain from the coach's expertise and experience in the non-profit sector

Andrew Richardson stated:

I have an executive coach, who I hired because I'm taking this job and given the circumstances that the agency was needed can be tough, and he couldn't just be me, trying to work from on box, I have to be able to work with somebody else and ask what

do you think about this?

Lucy Taylor also recommended that non-profit leaders seek out a coach or mentor:

If you don't have somebody else who's who has already been on that level, or somebody you meet personally, talking to a CEO, and experienced CEO or not nonprofit executive director, who has the kind of experience that you want and need to apply to what you're doing. Somebody who is in leadership needs coaching. You need one on one experience from other people who are doing it.

Helen Ayers mentioned the importance of training and mentorship with her staff:

They're part of the entire cycle of learning and so they get a true sense of what the work is. They can ask their own specific questions. And then we can follow up with them. And eventually, when your staff grows, we could hire that person because they would have a sense of what is expected.

Alice Warren mentioned her organizations mentorship program and how it assisted with senior management:

Our senior management has a mentorship program, where we've worked with the (organization), and their board on mentorship and senior leadership succession. By partnering with the (organization) they're able to help out with that senior management succession, and then also to provide resources and tools that help to cultivate us on a higher level. That helps because it gives our senior leadership an opportunity to gain experience. That makes them want to stay because there's more buy in, there's more ownership, and they have an opportunity to expand their thoughts and views and what they've learned, and be able to branch that, you know, with our non-profit it help it to grow.



Mentorship, coaching, and training are all areas that leaders can enhance in to assist with reducing attrition at non-profit organizations. Personal and professional development for both leaders and staff seem to assist with creating relationships and bonds with other individuals who could provide insight and fresh perspectives as well as practical advice and experience to assist leaders and staff with guidance and direction, new skills, and information on how to perform at a greater level in their position and to possibly cultivate, embrace and contribute to their workplace culture.

**Theme 7: Executive Leaders Provided Insights on How Non-Profit Organizations and the Board of Directors Can Implement Best Practices Which Involve Supporting Leaders Through Providing a Distinct Plan to Implement and Sustain the Vision and Mission of the Organization.** The final theme specifically identifies managerial practices individual executive leaders, COO's CFO's. CEO's executive directors, presidents, vice presidents, and other executives and non-profit organizations as entities can implement to combat, avoid, and eliminate high attrition rates. Leaders recommended best practices to reduce non-profit attrition in the areas of communication, connection, relationships, managerial skills, compensation, organizational vision and mission and strategic planning. Best practices that were recommended would be instituted by individual leaders, the organization, and the board of directors. Practices included: support for leaders and staff, providing clear roles, recognition of employees, vision alignment, transparency and supporting leaders through providing a distinct plan to implement and sustain the vision and mission of the organization. Best practices recommended for individual leaders as well as for organizations were similar.

In terms of relationships between board members and leaders, Lucy Taylor stated that the board of directors can assist executive leaders by supporting the vision that they are advocating:

The first (best practice) I believe is making sure that that leader can properly execute whatever vision they have. If you hire them, they have at least enough wherewithal to lead the organization and provide a strategic plan. This is how I want to enhance what's already working. to have the ability to do that, and then have the resources they need to be able to do and be competitive in compensating leaders.

Andrew Harper spoke about the hiring process and fostering relationships with staff. All leaders should spend time on the hiring process. Ensure you're creating a culture where everyone believes that their total value is being tapped into. There must be a culture of value. Using that value, as the culture, I fundamentally believe creates sustainability. You got to check in on people.

Mary Stone stated that communication and relationships are key to sustaining staff on a long-term basis.

I think communication is big. That's important so that you know what the big picture is, and you know where the direction of the organization is. I think that organizations that have pride problems with executive attrition part of that is because of communication and people not being acknowledged or appreciated. We get paid well, and our benefits are well, and we're treated well. It is important for keeping people long term.... We acknowledge the good work that people do,

Sam Tyler also spoke about how individual leaders and organizations can foster relationships, cultivate the workplace culture and provide adequate compensation.

What must be there for people is the feeling of doing good work, being valued, and making sure that the organization is doing everything it can from a cultural and compensation standpoint, to make it worthwhile for people to stay and understanding the

real human component of what makes a good job for somebody, is what the organization can do to retain its good staff.

Alice Warren provides insight on processes and creating relationships with other non-profit leaders to share best practices.

Never lose sight of your why. I think as a part of that nonprofit leaders working together or networking with one another and finding out what works for you know, your organization, what did you have, that was a success, that maybe it's something else that another organization can benefit from. So, I think the networking aspect of nonprofit leaders networking, to get an idea of what has worked for them.

Sondra Jones recommendation to listen and consider the ideas of others also resonates around developing trust and relationships with staff.

You need to consider what people feel and what people will ultimately respond to, but I think that if you're empathetic that makes us successful leaders. You must make hard decisions. But you're not a dictator. You must consider and listen to what your people are saying, have meetings with people under you. That doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to implement everything that they want, but at least listen to them and make them feel heard.

June Thurmon added that motivating employees can assist with them aligning with the vision and goals of the organization and possibly reduce attrition.

Leaders need to understand what motivates us and our people in our organization. If I understand what motivates people, I can adjust some of my leadership style to make sure that that we address or that we give those people the opportunities that they want. You're there for the mission, and you're aligned to the strategy. Make sure that your strategy is

aligned, people understand it, people know it, people believe it, and then cascade those responsibilities and goals and objectives down to each member of your staff.

Helen Ayers reiterates that relationships, building a culture, compensation, listening to and caring about people are essential leader practices to assist in reducing attrition.

There are three specific things that lead to this culture building a culture. 1) Listening and caring about what people say, in your organization. 2) Learning meaning provides opportunities for people to be challenged intellectually, 3) respect relationships and have a well thought out tested and proven structures and systems. When those are in place, no one's confused. When people feel good, and they're heard and listened to, they get paid on time, they work harder, and they stay.

Theme seven focuses on best practices which impact relationships, process and planning that are based on management skills and change management. Best practices for both individual leaders and organizations focused on creating productive and progressive workplace cultures, hiring qualified candidates, connecting people to the vision and mission of the organization, listening to and respecting employees, ensuring that employees are properly compensated, feel valued, acknowledged, recognized and rewarded for their work and assuring that staff is aligned with the mission, vision, plan, and goals of the organization. Recommendations were made to ensure that proven structures were in place and there is a strategic plan being utilized to ensure that the organizational goals are met, and the mission is understood and supported.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the results of the data from interviews of 11 participants which focused on how non-profit leaders can reduce leader attrition at their organizations. The context, participants, qualitative process, and themes have been reviewed. A summary of the participants,

demographic questions, interview questions and responses, codes, experiences, observations and themes have been highlighted. The next chapter will include recommendations and conclusions based on the data, descriptions and definitions utilizing the phenomenological process to reveal the lived experiences of the participants. The researcher will also explore how these themes relate to the CSPM framework and if the recommendations from that framework can assist leaders with reducing attrition at their organizations.

## Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

### Chapter Overview

This chapter will provide a discussion of the non-profit executive leadership study results and the connection to the theoretical framework and literature. The researcher will also discuss the implications of the results, suggest needs for further research and provide closing remarks.

### Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the causes of leadership attrition at non-profit organizations and how leadership style, motivation, management skills and employee engagement impacted the attrition process and rate of attrition utilizing phenomenology which highlights the lived experiences of participants. The study examined this concept by proposing the following research question: What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes of executive leader attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?

The main question led to the following two sub questions:

1. How does non-profit leaders' perception concerning the importance, usefulness, and effectiveness of leadership styles impact attrition levels at their organizations.
2. How do non-profit executive leaders utilize change management models to develop best practices which may reduce attrition at their organizations?

The study's conceptual framework poses that the use of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) organizational change management framework in conjunction with servant and strategic leadership styles and moral motivation can provide a framework that offers improved management skills, sharper organizational vision, and a defined plan to identify and address specific structural, political, and cultural issues; and develop best practices and successes to recruit, train and sustain employment of newly hired leaders.

Based on the research questions a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted utilizing a demographic questionnaire and seven semi-structured interview questions. The study collected data from 11 interviews of executive non-profit leaders from 11 different organizations across the United States. The study's participant inclusion criteria were based on two factors:

1. The participant must have at least 5 years of experience as a non-profit leader, and
2. The participant must have managed at least three employees over a 5-year span.

All non-profits were service oriented, and participants held the position of executive directors, CEO's, CFO's, COO's and presidents or vice presidents. Three participants also held positions as Board members at other organizations.

The results of this study include 193 codes that were grouped into six themes that were based on: (a) promoting the mission of the organization is a factor in reducing attrition, employee engagement and motivation support reducing attrition rates, (b) non-profit size status, (c) funding and board involvement impacts attrition, (d) emphasizing the importance of workplace culture assist with reducing attrition, planning, (e) mentorship, coaching and training supports reducing attrition rates, and (f) recommendations for best practices to reduce non-profit attrition for executive leaders and organizations focused on relationships, process and planning.

In addition to coding and analyzing the results of the study the researcher also based the seven themes on the ideologies of the contingency philosophy, psychological philosophy and cultural philosophy of organizational development which are highlighted in the *Executive Behavior and Moral Motivation* section in chapter 2. The Emergent Leader Framework was used to determine if leaders were influential at their organizations and if leadership style impacted their influence on employees and attrition.

As stated in the *Leadership styles for Non-profit Leaders* section in chapter 2, Mintzberg (1973) posits leaders fulfill the role of community representative/leader, executive director, financial officer, are strategic in their actions and often are the primary decision makers at their organizations. Leaders displayed strategic and servant leadership styles were visionary, provided inspirational, and supportive of their staff (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). As leaders shared the evolution of responsibilities at non-profits, they emphasized the need to transition and pivot their leadership style or sharpen their strategic planning skills to meet the needs of their staff and targeted populations they serve. Utilizing the ideology of the contingency philosophy the researcher was able to ascertain that executives who are managing transition and dealing with organizational issues can assist in shaping their workplace culture.

Leaders shared their individual and organizational experiences during the interviews. The subjective experiences were sincere, and sometimes filled with emotion or deep concern when discussing change or attrition at their organizations. The researcher employed the tenants of the psychological philosophy to focus on individual experiences and relationships and to understand the viewpoint of employees is crucial to advancing organizational development. Leaders emphasized that focusing on results, organizational capacity, succession, communication, motivation, personal development, mentorship, and coaching can improve productivity, change efforts and engagement, and promote a shared vision for the mission of the organization. Leaders were person oriented and saw communication and developing relationships as avenues to learn the needs and perspectives of others and use that information to adjust their leadership style and managerial skills.

Study participants stated the influence of culture and leadership style was pivotal in influencing others to support the mission and vision of the organization. Considering a person's



cultural perspective provides insight on their collective experiences of change, and the shared values that guide them. Leaders shared that change implementation and sustained change was incremental and at times uncomfortable but is eventually accepted and supported by others if implemented correctly.

Leaders interviewed appeared to exhibit the traits of transformational, influential, and committed executive professionals who were able to strategically garner the support of their staff and peers. This result correlates with transitional leadership traits that are also displayed by emergent leaders. The Leader Emergence framework is explained in detail in Chapter 2. The framework defines emergent leaders as individuals who can impact team effectiveness, who have expertise and experience and are successful in initiating and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Employee perceptions of a leader's competence, intelligence, willingness to serve, credibility, and goal attainment determined their willingness to connect with leaders and commit to serving the organization. Leaders suggested that coaching and mentorship can assist new and existing leaders in becoming more acclimated to the organization, developing their skills, and adjusting their leadership style to encourage a shared vision, collaboration, and commitment to fulfilling the mission of their non-profit. The seven themes which emerged from the researcher's interpretivist view of transition management, the impact of culture, leadership style, influence and relationships were utilized to develop eight implications.

### **Interpretation of Themes as Implications**

The eight implications below are based on the reported observations and experiences that were derived from reviewing a culmination of the themes and experiences described by the participants as presented in chapter 4. The implications involve practices for relationship development, team building, creating an inclusive and diverse culture, planning, initiating and

sustaining change management, hiring practices and compensation, coaching, mentorship, training and development, improving strategic focus and organizational infrastructure and solidifying policies and procedures.

***1. Non-Profit Executive Leaders Desire a Supportive and Cooperative Partnership With Their Board of Directors***

The study results revealed that non-profit executives expressed that the board should understand their role as an entity which is to support leaders and not oversee executive leaders. Leaders stated they desired to work autonomously and be afforded the opportunity to plan, implement and collaborate with other leaders and staff.

This implication is related to Theme 3: *Leaders Agreed That Non-Profit Size, Status, Funding and Board Involvement Impacts Attrition*. Leaders were concerned with being able to connect with the board of directions and work in tandem with them to accomplish their goals as administrators and executive officers. According to Stewart (2016) boards are not proficient in decreasing or avoiding attrition, and unknowingly attribute to increased attrition levels due to an unwillingness to collaborate with executives and human resources staff on recruitment, hiring practices or the vetting of new candidates. Board members rarely voice their expectations which can cause a misalignment of personal and organizational goals and expectations for newly hired leaders and staff.

Leaders also expressed that Board members should be chosen based on not only their ability to raise funds for the organization but, also their desire to serve, experience in the area of service the non-profit provides and commitment to the vision the population identified to receive services. Staff turnover occurred with executive leaders because the Board did not allow them the opportunity to present their plan or to implement any change effort without questioning or

interfering with what they had been hired to do. The leaders in turn became frustrated with the lack of acceptance and resigned. Non-profit executives expressed that the board should understand their role as an entity which is to support leaders and not oversee executive leaders. Non-profit executives expressed that the board should understand their role as an entity which is to support leaders and not oversee executive leaders.

To improve board members relations leaders are advised to consider how to develop relationships with board members and find new ways to communicate their concerns, ideas and plans for hiring and reducing attrition. Board members in turn are advised to be open to communication and more involvement in supporting executive leaders plans and programs concerning staff, funding, and promoting the mission. According to Brown (2005) understanding board members' needs and desires and influence is pivotal to navigating how to collaborate and engage with board members to collectively change recruitment and hiring processes to achieve desired outcomes for the organization.

## ***2. Executives Leadership Style and Behavior Influences the Workplace Culture and Employee Engagement***

The second practical implication relates to Theme 2: *Leadership Style Can Impact Attrition If Relationships With Employees Are Not Authentic, Relevant and Encourage Personal and Professional Development* and Theme 1: *Leaders Are Motivated by the Mission And Desire To Serve Their Community and Meet Organizational Goals*. Bilimoria and Godwin (2005) contend that transformational leaders are motivational, value driven and can create a transformative atmosphere and promote a positive vision, core values, emotional intelligence and embrace an inclusive leadership style. In this study eight of the eleven executives reported that they had a combined style of leadership which evolved around strategic and servant leadership.

They also stated that they were able to pivot when required to correspond to issues or dilemmas they may face as leaders and were able to adjust their leadership style to accommodate whatever circumstance or situation that arose in terms of management, employee engagement, mentoring, coaching, training, and implementing change. These responses correlate with Ghasabeh et al., 2015 who stated that transformational style influences creativity, rationality and inspiration which can improve leader performance during transitional periods.

Leaders who identified as being strategic were able to plan and navigate the financial and process challenges they may face. They served as emergent leaders who were able to influence groups of others while promoting productivity.

Leaders demonstrated the use of the *Social Exchange Theory* (SET) which is highlighted in chapter 2 posits that employee and leader interactions are mutually beneficial and employees began to trust leaders once social interaction takes place. Employees are then able to reciprocate servant leader's behavior with greater work productivity. Employee leader interactions eventually develop into mutual exchanges based on reciprocity and trust. Leaders were able to demonstrate behaviors and practices which influenced others and engaged them in emulating that behavior. Their role as a servant leader allowed executive leaders to display their commitment to the mission of the organization and demonstrate their desire and determination in the areas of sacrifice, humility, and drive to live out the mission of the organization to serve their populations and communities. Iscan et al. (2014) agree that transformational leadership allows employees to visualize successful outcomes, develop employee trust and skills and improve self-confidence. Transformational leaders who utilize strategic and servant leadership styles can engage new and existing employees in embracing the organizations culture, influence staff to be committed and inclusive, promote open communication and increase productiveness by being team oriented and

using their motivational influence, experience, and managerial expertise (Jaskyte, 2004).

### ***3. Executive Leaders Agree That Competitive Compensation, Benefits, and Opportunity for Work-Life Balance Are Essential to Ensuring Leaders Remain at Non-Profits***

The third implication relates to Theme 3: *Leaders Agreed That Non-Profit Size, Status, Funding and Board Involvement Impacts Attrition*. The data for this study revealed that over 50% of leaders mentioned compensation as a driving factor for attrition, early resignation, or retirement. Leaders stated that the competition that corporate industries or other non-profits can be detrimental for smaller or newer non-profits which cannot afford to pay their leaders as much as established ones which have greater funding. A competitive salary along with benefits comparable to other stable and well-known organizations was pivotal in sustaining qualified and experienced leaders. Leaders expressed that other organizations offer them higher salaries and recruit them from social media and other sources.

Work-life balance and assistance with duties to avoid workplace burn-out was also another factor to consider when reviewing the reasons for attrition. Leaders expressed that when non-profits are short on staff and the leader has a myriad of responsibilities it is difficult to be able to take vacations or sabbaticals without the organization suffering or lacking because of the lack of staff. Leaders suggested that cross-training and building established vacation days into an executive leader's contract can assist with ensuring that a proper work-life balance is implemented into the role of executive leaders. Funding issues for smaller non-profits is also referenced by Bowen (1994) and Froelich et al. (2011) in Chapter 2. They reported that smaller non-profits with a staff of 50–300 employees or less may lack the funding and management capacity of larger non-profit that is required during a leadership role transition.

***4. The Causes of Attrition Among Executive Leaders Stemmed From a Lack of Strategic Focus, Weak Organizational Infrastructure, and Board of Directors' Engagement***

The fourth implication is related to Theme 4: *Leaders Sought to Build an Organizational Culture Which Promotes Connections, Faces Challenges Engages Communication, Sets Expectations, And Promotes A Productive Workplace Contribute to Reducing Attrition Causes.*

According to Mellahi and Wilkinson (2010), hiring unqualified candidates, not developing leadership style and choosing candidates with a misaligned professional skill set can significantly impact a non-profit's capacity to serve. Leaders expressed that the idea of attrition builds up over time and is exasperated by a lack of focus for the organizational entailed focusing on programming and goals which the organization received funding for but did not exactly align with the mission of the organization and be inundated with addition responsibilities that require longer hours and more planning for processes to ensure that the programs are successful. Continuous attrition may cause leaders and staff to become disconnected and impact the scope of and level of services offered to the communities due to a lack of staff available. According to Schein (1992) non-profit leaders seldom value interconnectedness between the staff and the board members and the communities they serve and are advised to balance individual interests and the common good.

Leaders were encouraged to learn innovative ways to recruit, hire and vet new staff which will promote practices which reduce attrition and to hire a diverse staff which represents the demographic of the communities they are serving. Non-profits were advised to ensure that the mission remains the same and the organization continues to serve the demographic of people. Leaders were advised to provide a realistic expectation of staff's role and responsibilities from the inception of the leader being hired to avoid future misunderstanding of what is expected of

them and misalignment of personal and organizational goals.

Other reasons for attrition were the perspective of the board of directors and a weak infrastructure. The board played a pivotal role in selecting executive leadership and the attitude of the board toward attrition made a significant impact on the responsibilities and role of the incoming leaders. Newly hired leaders expressed frustration with the board and the fact that they had to perform additional duties to complete what past leaders left undone. This expectation was not communicated by the board, and many felt blindsided by the additional duties they were not expecting to fulfill in addition to acclimating to a new role and becoming proficient and effective as a leader at a new organization.

Two cases involving the board of directors caused the organization to remain in a cycle of attrition of executive leaders.

Andrew Richardson stated:

I think the reason there's been so much turnover here specifically has been the lack of a strong infrastructure. That kind of leads to necessarily being able to step up the way the organization had functioned or has in a manner that's you just do a whole bunch of different things. And when things crumble, like a worldwide pandemic, it reveals those cracks in your organization, your infrastructure, and now you are forced to make changes that you didn't want to make or address circumstances that you didn't want to before. Now you find some that's probably what led to over here.

Lucy Taylor shared:

Engaged board members work for you because they love it, want to help you, and see you get the organization to the next level. So, unless there's people like that, then there's always going to be a burden of oh, we hired this staff. What did they do? They didn't win. Okay,

this is not a good leader. Let's get another leader. Oh, that leader was good, but she left when we get another leader. Every year and a half I feel like they've been turning over for the for those reasons. It's because the board and the person are not working in synchrony.

Another observation was made which revealed that major cause of attrition appeared to be a lack of commitment from the executive leader, and this can be identified during the hiring process, or it can develop over time as a leader's goals and direction is no longer aligned with the mission of the organization. This can be caused by lack of support, realizing that the leader had different personal goals and expectations and leaders may feel that their skills and efforts would be better utilized and appreciated at another organization. The future of non-profits depends on hiring qualified leadership, accessibility to resources and leaders exemplifying commitment to the vision, mission, and goals of the organization.

### ***5. Hiring Practices Impact the Rate of Attrition at Non-Profits***

The fifth implication is related to Theme 3: *Leaders Agreed That Non-Profit Size, Status, Funding and Board Involvement Impacts Attrition*. Because of the influx of Social Entrepreneurial Organizations (SEO's), the impact of COVID and non-profits and for-profits competing for the same qualified and committed candidates' attrition rates have soared (Renz, 2016). New hiring and employee training challenges warrant new solutions for hiring qualified staff whose values and goals align with the mission of the organization.

Of experienced leaders who were employed at more established non-profits, 50% mentioned that taking time to oversee and engage in hiring practices was essential to bringing the right person aboard and to reducing the possibility of having to hire someone else within a short timeframe because the newly hired person was not properly vetted to join the company. Hiring practices which include ensuring that the person is qualified, has the experience and has the



interest and capacity to manage the stress and responsibilities that may come with the position were mentioned. Also asking the candidate what their goals and aspirations are and how do they see those goals aligning with that of the organization is key to understanding if the candidate is a good fit for the organization and workplace culture not only the position that they are applying for.

According to Watson and Abzug (2016) Millennials desire positions at non-profit organizations with a purposeful mission that substantially contributes to society and flexible work arrangements. Forward-thinking nonprofit organizations hire staff whose talent set, and education align with organizational roles, thus recruiting and keeping staff satisfied. Yet designing these recruitment and retention processes requires experience, planning, and the ability to project future organizational needs. Achieving this goal can be difficult for nonprofit leaders due to the pressures of the immediacy of running a nonprofit.

Tom Andrews stated:

The key is to ensure we're hiring people that align with the mission and their personal goals aligned with the mission of the organization. When there's a misalignment, that's when we see turnover. Our goal is to make sure we're hiring do more work or due diligence in the hiring phase, to make sure that their personal goals and alignment are aligned with the mission of the organization.

Other leaders shared these sentiments and alluded to the fact that designing a "hiring plan" did not seem to be their priority. They relied on best practices to hire candidates. The attrition rates at established non-profits were significantly lower than the newer non-profits. The newer or understaffed non-profits appeared to have greater issues with recruiting and retaining staff partly due to the lack of a hiring plan or process. Executive leaders should plan strategically

to recruit, hire, train and mentor new leaders who are an organizational fit and whose goals align with the vision and mission of the organization to avoid leader attrition and its causes.

***6. The Success of Change Management Efforts Depends on Planning and Support of Other Leaders and Staff***

Implication six related to Theme 5: *Leaders Perceived Implementing Organizational Change as a Process That Requires Input From Staff, a Shared Vision, Planning, Identifying, Addressing Issues and Defining the Purpose of the Change*. According to Cummings and Worley (2009) a diagnosis of an organization is required to identify causes of a weak infrastructure, cultural, political, and managerial issues. Once the issues have been detected and defined, it is incumbent upon leaders to implement a change strategy which specifically addresses and mitigate the issue and involves the participation, input and buy-in of others. Unsuccessful change efforts or unresolved organizational issues may lead to a decrease in morale, productivity, employee engagement, communication, ineffective leadership frameworks and increased attrition. When leaders were asked how they implement and sustain change they all mentioned that the buy-in and support of the staff for the change was necessary. Change is naturally rejected by most staff but if the need for it is identified and if the purpose of the change and the benefits from the change are communicated staff will be informed. Participants shared that change is a process that must take place at an organization to ensure that the organization is able to successfully progress and grow and must take place due to the changing world around us. Leaders expressed that staff should also be a part of the design and implementation of the change, especially if they are on the front line and are being impacted by the change the most. Staff who can ask questions, provide ideas, and be heard and seen are most likely to consider and support change. The study has presented results relating to organizational mission, employee

engagement, non-profit size, status, funding, and board involvement, embracing workplace culture, planning, mentorship, training, coaching, relationships process and planning, managing power, leader influence and communication at non-profit organizations yet, only two leaders stated they had a specific policy or plan in place to address change management, attrition or the issues which may cause it. The best practices which have been mentioned by leaders are a culmination of ideas which have to an extent been beneficial to non-profits but not internalized or implemented into policy and practice at over 75% of the non-profits represented.

***7. Leaders and Staff Who Feel Respected, Valued, and Recognized for Their Skills, Experience, and Contributions Are More Likely to Remain in Their Positions***

Implication 7 relates to Theme 6: *Providing Leaders Mentorship/Coaching and Motivation Promotes the Importance of Recognition and Gauging the Skill Set and Qualifications of Employees*. According to Renz (2016) a lack of mentorship, inadequate qualifications, and training, strained or non-existent connection and engagement between leaders and employees, and a unbalanced workplace culture can impact staff and leaders morale and desire to continue employment at a non-profit. Servant leader's offer to serve and mentor employees are authentic, humble and have the ability to develop communication skills, stewardship, motivate and spark change at non-profit's to reduce attrition among leaders. Experienced executives who identify as servant leaders can influence staff can utilize their management skills to mentor, train, and develop new hires professional skill set to reduce leader attrition.

Leaders expressed that respect, recognition, concern for their well-being or value was important for them to feel as if they are a part of organization and can contribute to it. Leaders expressed that when leaders no longer feel as if their efforts, ideas, skills, or contributions are

needed or recognized they disengage from their position and the organization and are at greater risk of resigning, transferring to another position in which they may feel that their time and talent may be better utilized at another organization. Mentorship, shadowing, and coaching were recommended for leaders and staff to ensure that they receive the training, recognition and engagement required to develop their communication and professional skills and to create an environment of trust and inclusion which promotes and aligns the mission and vision of the organization. Employees who receive mentorship, recognition, training, coaching and affirmation from leaders can be engaged and inspired to develop new skills, to learn and share new ideas, dedicate their time and experience and bring value to the organization and communities they serve. (Aboramadan et al., 2022).

***8. Executive Leaders Felt That Proven Processes and Procedures and Strategic Planning Was Required to Ensure That the Organization Can Live Out Its Mission***

The last implication relates to Theme 7: *Executive Leaders Provided Insights on How Non-Profit Organizations and the Board of Directors Can Implement Best Practices Which Involve Supporting Leaders Through Providing a Distinct Plan to Implement and Sustain the Vision and Mission of the Organization*. As stated in the *Change Management Models* section in chapter 2 According to Beer et al. (1990) institutionalizing change through formal policies and procedures, systems, and infrastructures requires leaders to strategically plan how to institutionalize change and develop policies that can solidify the change movement and vision continues. Appropriate timing and strategic fit are required for formal structures and systems to be institutionalized. Patience and the ability to influence leaders and staff is essential to implementing change at non-profits. When asked how the organization can implement best practices, leaders expressed that organizations could assist by ensuring that the leaders are

aligned to the vision and mission of the organization. Leaders also stated that staff gain trust in the organization when proven processes and procedures ensure that the organization is run properly, staff is compensated, and all departments are synced with the mission of the organization. Most leaders felt that strategic leadership assisted with planning and being able to gauge what the present and future needs of the organization are and how they can assist with meeting those needs. As stated in the *Change Management Models* section Santora and Sarros (2001) *suggested* strategies or proposals for change that included: (a) developing a succession plan, (b) facing issues head on, (c) understanding issues, (d) transforming people and (e) looking elsewhere for leadership. Non-profits can be confident and strategic when making decisions and both non-profit boards and executives should recognize and address the issues of succession (and attrition) proactively and not ignore the signs of attrition. (Santora & Bozer, 2015, p. 246). Executive Leaders have the option of either developing internal candidates or recruiting external ones and must commit to a leadership development planning strategy.

Sustaining change according to Beer et al. (1990) involves monitoring and adjusting strategies when addressing challenges in the change process. Leaders are advised to encourage and adhere to the change management framework to ensure a new collective system can address and adjust behaviors workplace culture, organizational infrastructures, policies, practices, and procedures. Leaders who adapt to change and transition can influence others to do the same and, in the process, develop a new shared vision that can take their non-profit to the next level of evolution. Executive leaders and board members are advised to appraise employee and leader behavior, level of motivation, development of leadership style, and issues that can influence employee engagement, productivity, and attrition to ascertain if the change movement is positively impacting the organization and measure how the changes impact the scope and level

of services rendered.

### **Carnall, Shields, Positive Approach**

Results of the study revealed that leaders did not have a universal framework to address the issues which cause attrition as it relates to transition, culture, politics, organizational infrastructure, implementing and sustaining change, motivation, employee engagement and best practices. The results of this study also correlate with the results of Beer et al. (1990) outlined in chapter 2. Beer et al agreed that following a systematic change management process allows leaders to implement renewal without forcing it on their co-workers and staff. Employees become stakeholders who are committed to a vision and willing to accept a new pattern of management. They conferred that change will only become effective and take place if the vision aligns with the core task. The Carnall (1986) change model components support implementing change through skill building and navigating organizational culture and leader reframing aligns with the of Santora and Sorros (2001) strategy for change. The Cummings and Worley (2009) change model focuses on identifying related issues and themes and putting a plan into action to implement best practices. Throughout each theme leaders expressed their feelings on how change can take place through connectedness, communication, shared vision, collaboration, planning and capacity building.

To assist leaders with organizational leadership, developing managerial skills and initiating best practices, the researcher looked at the conceptual framework which focuses on addressing the causes of attrition and implementing best practices and combines the benefits of Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change management models was incorporated into the development of the themes. Utilizing the literature, professional experiences, and study results the researcher developed the Carnall, Shields, Positive Change

Approach (CSP Approach) which combines three separate change management models Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) into an integrative framework that addresses changing or adjusting the components of management for executive leaders which are essential to reducing attrition at a managerial and organizational level.

The CSP Approach stems from Carnall (1986) who focuses on transition, politics, and culture, building skills and streamlining leadership style to create a workplace environment which is both productive and progressive and focuses on being proactive when working through the transition process which includes resignations, retirements, promotions, leave of absence and other situations in which leaders will no longer be in place. The second component of this approach is the Shields (1999) model that focuses on creating a vision, solutions, policy and plans and how that plan will benefit the organization. Leaders can align staff with the mission by creating a vision and solutions, implementing policies, and ensuring the strategic plan designed will benefit all stakeholders. The final component of the approach is the Cummings and Worley (2009) Positive Change model that reviews inquiry and themes, creates a future, develops an action plan and promotes best practices. After the steps from each model have been completed the result can be development, implementation, and sustainment of organizational best practices to reduce attrition. The best practices can be internalized through written policy and practice and implemented into the workplace culture. The CSP Approach is recommended as a framework for non-profits who seek to mitigate attrition causes and reduce turnover at every level of their organization. The participant interview responses also pointed to the usefulness of the conceptual framework of the Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and Cummings and Worley (2009) change models in planning change and managing transition. Components of Carnall Model focuses on moral motivation and transition and the Shields (1999) model which highlights strategic planning

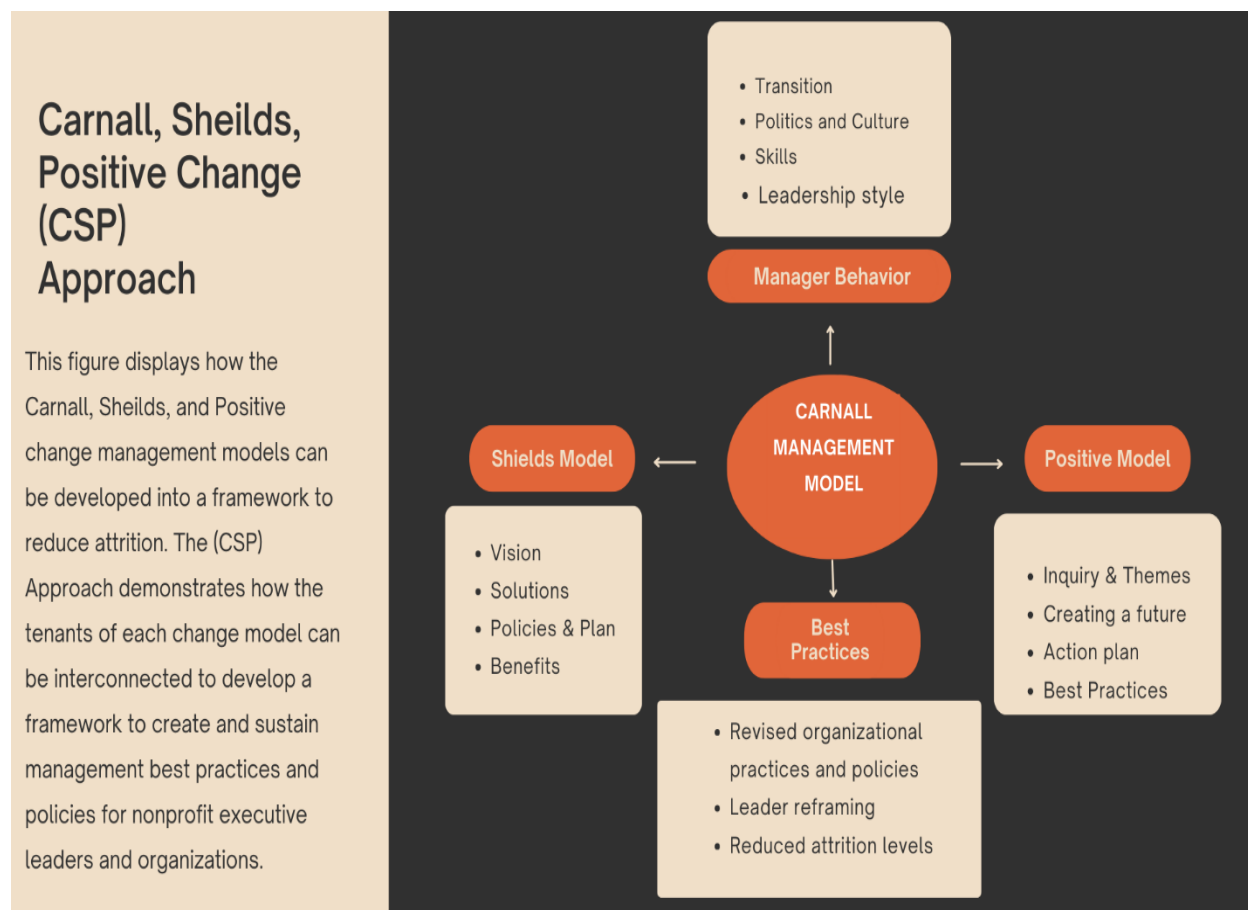
and solutions were implemented to their decisions making, behavior and engagement with staff and peers.

### **Leader Reframing**

The CSP approach may lead to leader reframing which can be beneficial in leaders taking an introspective look at how their leadership style, communication methods and managerial skills impact the staff they supervise and their organization. The CSP Approach can assist leaders in evaluating themselves in terms of their impact and influence as a leader. Leaders are challenged to reconsider how they can adjust their leadership style and develop management skills to implement concepts, ideas, initiatives and policies which lead to best practices to reduce leader attrition for leaders individually and organizations.

Figure 9 demonstrates how the components of Carnall, Shields and Positive models can be integrated into a holistic framework which addresses how executive leaders can effectively manage transition, financial, cultural, planning to develop and sustain best practices.



**Figure 9***The CSP Approach***Conclusions**

The following conclusions have been derived from the study analysis:

- C1: Non-profit organizations are evolving and leadership style, management skills and change management frameworks should align with the progress of the organization to retain qualified and committed employees.
- C2: Non-profit leaders are aware of best practices to reduce attrition but have not solidified and implemented a specific plan or process which systemically addresses and identifies how to combat attrition at their non-profit organizations.
- C3: Non-profit leaders and their board members are aware of the impact of attrition

but have not seriously considered how executive leader attrition affects their mission or the scope of the programming or services they offer on a long-term basis.

The study's results regarding the impact of best practices revealed that executive leaders were aware of how employees should be treated and the importance of an inclusive, positive, and productive workplace culture. However, the need to design and implement a written plan or policy and processes for hiring and transition, organizational change, and especially mentoring and coaching did not exist for most organizations. Executive leaders knew how to influence and motivate employees but did not appear to have a short- or long-term plan in place to address how to implement change, how to mentor leaders and how to hire the most qualified staff. Only three out of eleven organizations had a mentoring program in place. Two out of the three organizations had a legitimate program which was not a part of a partnership with another organization and was a regular practice for preparing leaders for success. Leaders expressed that they wanted to create hiring, mentorship, and organizational change effort processes to assist leaders but only three organizations viewed these processes as being a priority for them or the organization.

### **Study Impact for Scholarship and Application**

The results of this study can provide impact in academia, in the field of organizational leadership and practically among non-profit organizations.

This research represents a starting point for other researchers to further explore how attrition impacts non-profits specifically focusing on culture, relationship and how individual and collective organizational leadership efforts can impact the non-profit workforce. This research can assist in helping to close the gap in research which does not directly address how attrition in non-profits differ from attrition at for-profit corporations and the differences in the causes of attrition and the solutions which would be applicable for both sectors of employment.

In terms of practicality the results of the study can assist social services and other non-profits with gaining a greater understanding of attrition, its causes, the impact of attrition on staff, the organization and services rendered by the organizations. The themes which evolved from the research all pointed to improving leaderships awareness of the seriousness of attrition in terms of the funds utilized to obtain leaders, the impact on the workplace culture as well as the reputation of the organization. The results in this research demonstrate how the CSP Approach can be utilized by upper and middle management to develop leaders who are influential, transformative, and able to lead their staff into being productive, innovative and collaborative to live out a shared vision. According to Gillett (2015), the attraction, selection, and retention of staff is important for managers in organizations in today's dynamic workforce conditions. The next generation of leaders will be employed at multiple companies during their career journey, and effective organizations are advised to align opportunities with dynamic career paths. Non-profit work is evolving and requires additional innovation, design, and data skills.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations for leaders include fostering improved relationships with the board of directors, creating policies and procedures from best practices to reduce attrition and provide leaders space to rejuvenated, create, implement, and design processes which promote connectedness and cooperation with their staff.

The first recommendation is to develop a connected work culture by fostering stronger relationships with board members. Focusing on understanding roles and working in conjunction to solidify policies and develop practices to recognize the behaviors and actions which may cause leaders to resign or transition to another position, connecting to their board of directors and to ensure that expectations for leaders who are replacing a leader who may have retired or left

abruptly.

Leaders who receive board support and can work collectively with members and other leaders are more likely to develop trust and comradery with all stakeholders who are a part of the hiring and change management process.

The second recommendation is for non-profit organizations to create and codify written policies and procedures to solidify their best practices. Leaders are advised to spend time developing a written policy which highlights what is to be considered when hiring candidates, the steps to be taken when change is needed and who should be involved in the process and how to have established and new leaders participate in mentoring and coaching programs which develop their skills and prepares them for possible new opportunities in the future.

The final recommendation is for non-profits to create spaces and opportunities for executive leaders to express their ideas, develop programming they feel will be beneficial to the organization and to cascade some managerial responsibilities to other staff to allow time to focus on how to ensure that program facilitation and development is optimized; and to develop more meaningful relationships with staff and other non-profit leaders who may be able to offer information or assistance with a particular program, process or initiative that the organization has undertaken.

### **Closing Comments**

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to explore the reasons for attrition at non-profits and to provide information about the ramifications and impact of attrition on non-profits individually and corporately throughout the non-profit industry. Through the 11 interviews with participants from across the United States from different organizations, the study identified six themes and extrapolated the nuances of non-profit leadership which include having to balance

challenges and victories while attempting to be proactive and forward-thinking to make decisions for the good and growth of the organization.

Leadership attrition is a topic that is often overlooked especially by non-profits and not prioritized by human resource departments, board of directors, or executive leaders especially over the past three years in which COVID changed how staff had to adjust to virtual communication and how services were provided, and programs facilitated. This study shed light on the importance of planning for attrition and how high attrition rates can impact the infrastructure, scope of services and the ability of the organization to continue to pursue their mission. Leadership style and behavior were determinants of the level of employee engagement, alignment with the organizational vision and ultimately also a determining factor of whether a leader perceives themselves as being valued, respected, and acknowledged at their organization and by their supervisors. Leaders appeared to be willing to put measures in place to ensure that attrition could be lessened, their workplace cultures were conducive to implementing needed change and have a shared vision and goals and training and mentoring is provided to leaders to advocate opportunities for professional and personal development.

The researcher presented the CSP Approach that incorporates the change models of Carnall (1986), Shields (1999), and the Cummings and Worley (2009) models as a framework to assist leaders with creating and promoting a more productive and inclusive workplace culture, avoiding organizational politics, enhancing managerial skills, and creating a vision and action plan, leader reframing and transition. The expected result of utilizing the CSP Approach is to create collaboration at all managerial levels and develop best practices which become policy for leaders to utilize collectively as opposed to individually.

The question lies in whether funding, planning and effort will be extended to make these goals a reality to experience a shift in not only attrition but also with employee productivity and perspective on the importance of uniting to live out the vision of the organization. With the influx of competition for leadership positions, the changing trends in the non-profit industry and the rise of social entrepreneurship organizations which can provide the same services or worst apply for limited funding or resources, it is incumbent upon leaders and organizations to take a second look at how attrition can impact their bottom line now and in the future.

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## APPENDIX A

## Sample Recruitment Letter



Dear HR Representative,

My name is Stephanie Wanza, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study which explores attrition rates of leaders at non-profit organizations, and I need your help! I am seeking volunteer study participants for interviews who are Executive Directors, Board members or managers. Participation in the study will be video recorded and/or audio recorded and is anticipated to take no more than 30 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. During and after the study. The recordings will be password protected and filed electronically.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your participation,

Stephanie Wanza

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Psychology and Education

Doctoral Student

## APPENDIX B

## GPS IRB Data Management/Protection Plan



## GPS IRB Data Management/Protection Plan

**Data Description** A description of the information to be gathered; the nature and scale of the data that will be generated or collected. The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analytical (IPA) study is to interpret the accounts of non-profit Executive Directors/leaders of their own personal lived experience during their employment at non-profit organizations in the United States between the years of 2012 and 2022. This research will examine the lived experiences of leadership attrition of non-profit Executive Directors/leaders during their employment at non-profit organizations in the United States.

This research is qualitative phenomenological design utilizing a combination of leadership questionnaires and interviews which will provide data on servant leaders and strategic leaders traits, management style preference and change management best practices.

**Existing Data** (if applicable) A survey of existing data relevant to the project and a discussion of whether and how these data will be integrated.

Data relevant to this study is covered in the literature review. There is no existing data. All data gathered will be conducted after the approval of IRB.

**Format** Formats in which the data will be generated, maintained, and made available, including a justification for the procedural and archival appropriateness of those formats.

Participants will be scheduled for interviews utilizing calendly.com and interviews will be conducted via the Zoom.com platform. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for

analysis of the impact of leadership style, leader behavior, and the perspective of non-profit leaders concerning the recruitment and sustainment of leaders at their organizations.

**Metadata** (if applicable) A description of the metadata to be provided along with the generated data, and a discussion of the metadata standards used.

N/A No metadata will be collected or used.

**Storage and backup** Storage methods and backup procedures for the data, including the physical and cyber resources and facilities that will be used for the effective preservation and storage of the research data.

The names of the selected non-profit organizations will be kept confidential and de-identified through the collection tool/s used. All Zoom interview links will be sent with individual passcodes to participants. All interview information collected will be stored in a password protected zip file to protect and secure the data shared by participants.

**Security** A description of technical and procedural protections for information, including confidential information, and how permissions and restrictions will be enforced.

Secure coding standards of implementation will be utilized to minimize risk and protect data input, including the destruction of all original data collected, including interviews Zoom files and recordings, after 3 years poststudy. Password access was used on all computers being utilized for this study.

**Responsibility** What are the Names of the individuals responsible for data management in the research project?

The Researcher Stephanie Wanza will be solely responsible for data management for this research project.

**Intellectual property rights** Entities or persons who will hold the intellectual property rights to

the data, and how intellectual property rights will be protected if necessary. Any copyright constraints (e.g., copyrighted data collection instruments) can be noted. Updated 12/2018

All participants will have a right to access the recording of their interview. The intellectual property rights to the data collection will belong to the researcher Stephanie Wanza. The researcher does not plan to copyright the collected data. The informed consent form will provide participants with all information concerning intellectual property rights.

**Access and sharing** A description of how data will be shared, including access procedures, technical mechanisms for dissemination and whether access will be open or granted only to specific user groups. A timeframe for data sharing and publishing can also be provided.

Collected data will be analyzed and used to compare against the theory/s employed in the study. The researcher will employ the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Approach (IPA) was coined by Jonathan Smith (1996) and has been used in social and educational psychology. The researcher will be the only individual who will have access to the collective data gathered from this study. Access to the data will not be provided to any individuals or groups in its raw form. The analyzed data will be placed in the completed dissertation which will be published and accessible to non-profit organizations and staff, other researchers and all others in the academic community.

**Audience** Who are the potential secondary users of the data?

The potential secondary users of the data may be employees of HR and Personnel departments at Non-profits of Executive Directors, Board members and managers, researchers and practitioners of Organizational Development, leadership development, leader behavior, trainers and consultants of non-profit leaders and staff.

**Selection and retention periods** A description of how data will be selected for archiving, how

long the data will be held, and plans for eventual transition or termination of the data collection in the future. Interviews Zoom files and recordings will be deleted after 3 years poststudy.

Password access was used on all computers being utilized for this study.

**Archiving and preservation** the procedures in place or envisioned for long-term archiving and preservation of the data, including succession plans for the data, can the expected archiving entity go out of existence.

**Ethics and privacy** A discussion of how informed consent will be managed and how privacy will be protected, including any exceptional arrangements that might be needed to protect participant confidentiality, and other ethical issues that may arise.

Participation in this study poses no potential harm to any human subjects. No physical, psychological, social or legal risks occurred. All participants will be advised of the study's purpose and will voluntarily participate in the study. All participants will be provided with written disclosures of the study's purpose and provided with participant informed consent forms which will be approved by the Pepperdine University IRB. All information collected will remain confidential and securely stored electronically.

**Budget** (if applicable) The costs of preparing data and documentation for archiving and how these costs will be paid. Requests for funding may be included.

There is no cost for preparing data or archiving data. The researcher will transcribe the data and the data will be achieved utilizing the saved audio and MP3 files that are saved on the Zoom platform.

**Data organization** How the data will be managed during the project, with information about version control, naming conventions, etc.

The names of the selected non-profit organizations and participants will be kept confidential and

de-identified through the collection tool/s used. All Zoom interview links will be sent with individual passcodes to participants. All interview information collected will be stored in a password protected zip file in order to protect and secure the data shared by participants.

**Quality Assurance** What are the procedures for ensuring data quality during the project. The researcher will ensure validity through credibility by establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. The information will be made credible based on previous information as well as empirical evidence of trends in the non-profit section which are based on leadership theories and concepts which will be discussed in the introduction and methods section of the dissertation. The researcher will also ensure reliability in this study by assuring of the furthest extent possible to engage in measurement procedures which will yield the same answer however and whenever it is conducted and the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research. Reliability will be utilized to ensure all the precautions in attempting to arrive at an accurate description.

**Legal Requirements** (if applicable) A listing of all relevant federal or funder requirements for data management and data sharing.



## APPENDIX C

## Participant Invitation Email



This email serves as an invitation to participate in a study on Leadership Attrition which is being conducted by Stephanie Wanza, a PhD. Candidate at Pepperdine University. Participants will be asked to complete a 20-30 minute interview which will be held via Zoom conference call. We are seeking Executive Directors, Board Members and managers who have at least three years of non-profit leadership experience. This study is being conducted to examine the causes of leadership attrition, explore leadership styles and obtain non-profit leaders' perspective on organizational culture, structure, policies and management practices. The results of this study will be published in the completed dissertation. A requirement to participate in this study is to sign the Informed Consent form which is attached to this email.

To schedule a date and time to participate please click on the calendly.com link below and select a time that is convenient for you. <https://calendly.com/stephanie-wanza> If you are interested in participating, please email [stephanie.wanza@pepperdine.edu](mailto:stephanie.wanza@pepperdine.edu) to schedule a date and time for an interview.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Stephanie Wanza

## APPENDIX D

## Confirmation Email



Thank you for responding to the request to participate in the Leadership Attrition study through Pepperdine University. If you have already scheduled your interview date and time, please confirm by responding to this email with your scheduled date and time and attach the signed Informed Consent Form which was sent in the invitation email.

Confirmed participants will receive a confirmation email with the interview information and Zoom link for the interview. If you have any questions or concerns respond to this email and you will be contacted.

Thank you for your participation and we look forward to your interview.

Cordially,

Stephanie Wanza

## APPENDIX E

## Demographic Questionnaire and Responses



Please complete the following demographic questions:

DQ1. How long have you been a non-profit leader? \_\_\_\_\_ Years

DQ2. Is your leadership style strategic, or servant, or a blend? \_\_\_\_\_

DQ3. How many years have you been in the non-profit industry? \_\_\_\_\_ Years

DQ4. Size of Non-profit

1 to 100 \_\_\_\_\_

101 to 500 \_\_\_\_\_

and 500+

DQ5. Age \_\_\_\_\_

DQ6. Gender: male \_\_\_\_, female \_\_\_\_, other \_\_\_\_.

DQ7. Highest educational attainment

High School or equivalent \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor's degree \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate degree \_\_\_\_\_

Non-profit Certifications \_\_\_\_\_

DQ8. How many non-profit organizations have you worked for? \_\_\_\_\_

DQ9. How often does your non-profit experience executive/leader turnover?

DQ10. What's your title? \_\_\_\_\_

DQ11. How many people do you supervise at your non-profit? \_

DQ12. How long have you been a supervisor at your non-profit?

DQ Responses:

- DQ1 Overall years of experience at a non-profit industry

Over half (50%) of interviewees stated that they had over 15 years of non-profit industry experience and (20%) stated that they had over ten years of experience

- DQ2 Leadership style

Over 50% of the leaders interviewed stated they utilized a combination of both servant and strategic leadership styles which was followed by a strategic leadership style.

- DQ3 Size of non-profit

Eight out of ten leaders interviewed had a staff of 1–100 employees, which can be considered a smaller non-profit organization.

- DQ4 Age of interviewees

The questionnaire results revealed that over half of the Executive leaders were ages 55–64. The majority of these individuals also had 15 years or more of non-profit leader experience.

- DQ5 Interviewees gender

A total of eight or 72% were female leaders and three or 28% of male leaders participated in the interviewee questionnaire and interviews.

- DQ6 Educational attainment

Most executive leaders (72%) had a graduate degree.

- DQ7 Rate of executive leader attrition

The results for the level of attrition revealed that smaller funded non-profits had a higher rate of attrition than larger funding non-profits.

- DQ8 Current title of non-profit leaders

The titles of the interviewees were diverse. Three of the interviewees were executive directors, three were CFO's, two were COO's, one was a CEO, one interviewee held the title of president and one was a vice president.

- DQ9 Number of employees supervised

Over half of the interviewees directly supervised 6–10 employees and three oversaw 3–5 employees. This correlates with the fact that most executives (72%) were employed at smaller non-profits.

- DQ10 Types of non-profit organizations represented

The types of organizations represented were all social service organizations which provided social, counseling, educational and business services, in-kind donations, monetary assistance or counseling or mentorship and scholarship opportunities. Three of the organizations were funding organizations and the remaining seven organizations were being funded.

## APPENDIX F

## Interview Guide



**Participants Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations

**Formal Study Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of High Attrition Levels and Proposals for Change

**IRB#:** 23-02-2100

### **Part 1—Interviewer Instructions**

#### Prior to the interview

- Introduce myself, my name is Stephanie Fredericka Wanza, and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University, in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, in Los Angeles, California, USA. In support of my Ph.D. in non-profit leadership and change, I am conducting a study on leadership in the Asia region.
- Remind the expert that the interview will last 30 minutes, ensure they have the time.
- Gain verbal consent for audio and/or video recording for the interview.
- Explain to the participant that the interview guide is semi-structured in nature and meant to serve as the basis for the discussion but is not a closed survey to be adhered to. The respondent can feel free to add to the questions asked in any way they see fit and build on the information to best explain their thoughts.

#### During to the interview

- Actively listen.
- Take note of both verbal, and nonverbal communication (e.g., pauses, any discomfort, hesitation, facial expressions, head motion, gestures, nodding, pointing, etc.)
- Probe to clarify answers.
- Query the specific language and word used.

## Part 2—Introduction

- Verify the written informed consent form is signed and complete.
- Verify the expert is comfortable proceeding with the interview for 60 minutes.

## Part 3—Interview

- Goal of the interview guide is to get insights on the **central research question**:

**RQ1:** What are non-profit leadership perceptions about the causes of executive leader attrition and what are the best practices to combat them?

The sub-questions that emerge from this idea are:

SQ1: How does non-profit leader perception concerning the importance, usefulness, and effectiveness of leadership styles impact attrition levels at their organizations.

SQ2: How do non-profit executive leaders utilize change management frameworks to develop best practices which may reduce attrition at their organizations?

The semi-structured interview guide will be based on the above research questions and address the systematic procedures from Strauss and Corbin (1990) were employed to: examine:

- the causal conditions underlying the phenomenon
- the phenomenon resulting from those causal conditions
- the context that influences strategy development
- the intervening conditions
- the coping strategies
- the consequences of those strategies

**Background question:** Tell me about your non-profit leadership experience.

**Now let's talk about you.**

2. What is your leadership style?
  - a. How would you implement change at your organization?
  - b. Describe your organizational culture?
3. What motivates you as a non-profit executive leader?

4. How do you encourage team engagement?

**I'd like to hear your personal reflections on the future of leadership.**

5. What do you believe are the reasons for leader turnover at your non-profit?
  - b. Do politics, organizational structure, or leadership behavior affect management attrition?
6. How do you believe organizational change can be sustained and internalized at your organization?

**I'd like to close the discussion by hearing your thoughts on leadership best practices which may reduce attrition.**

7. As an executive leader what are the best ways you believe executive leader attrition can be reduced?
8. What do you think your organization can do to reduce executive leader attrition?
  - a. When assigning tasks, how do you consider employees' experience, skills, and interests?
  - b. How do you plan for senior management transition and how is mentorship offered to existing leaders?

**After to the interview**

- Thank the participant for their time.
- Write down overall impressions from the interview immediately.
- Use memos for key highlights of the interview.



## APPENDIX G

## Participant Consent Form Letter



IRB # 23-02-2100

**Study Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of High Attrition Levels and Proposals for Change

Dear Non-profit Executive Leader,

My name is Stephanie Wanza. I am conducting a study on the causes of leadership attrition at non-profit organizations. If you are 19 years of age or older, an executive leader (Executive Director, (ED), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operations Officer (COO) or President or Vice President of a non-profit; been employed by a non-profit for at least five years as an executive leader and; supervised at least three employees over a five year span you may participate in this research.

Participation in this study will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. You will be asked to answer seven questions relating to your leadership style, management of employees and your perspective on the best ways executive leader attrition can be decreased at non-profits. Interviews will take place virtually via the Zoom.com platform.

The results of this study will be used to assist non-profits with identifying, developing and sustaining managerial and organizational best practices and assist non-profit researchers and those who study organizational development to gain a more in depth understanding of the causes of executive leader attrition. Your responses to this interview will be kept anonymous/confidential. All Zoom interview links will be sent with individual passcodes to participants. All interview information collected will be stored in a password-protected zip file to protect and secure the data shared by participants. Secure standards for protection of data will be utilized to minimize risk and protect data input, including the destruction of all original data collected,

including interviews Zoom files and recordings after transcription of data. Password access will be used on all computers being utilized for this study.

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable). You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled. There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By completing and submitting your interview responses, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator Stephanie Wanza via email at [stephanie.wanza@pepperdine.edu](mailto:stephanie.wanza@pepperdine.edu).

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310) 568-2305 Email: [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu)

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Stephanie Wanza

## APPENDIX H

## Consent Form



IRB #: 23-02-2100

**Participant Study Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations

**Formal Study Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of High Attrition Levels and Proposals for Change

**Authorized Study Personnel:** Stephanie Wanza

**Principal Investigator:** Stephanie Wanza

**Key Information:**

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Males and Females between the ages of 25-65
- Procedures will include completing a demographic Questionnaire, and Consent form and participating in an interview.
- One (1) (interview) visit is required.
- This visit (interview) will take 30 minutes.
- There are/are no risks associated with this study.
- You will be paid \$0 amount for your participation.
- You will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

**Invitation**

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a non-profit Executive Directors, CEO's, CFO's, COO's and President and Vice President you have at least five years of experience as a non-profit leader and managed at least three employees over a five-year span. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?**

The purpose of this study is to interpret the accounts of non-profit Executive Directors of their own personal lived experience during their employment at non-profit organizations. The goal of this study is to determine through interviews whether leadership style and change management frameworks can assist with creating managerial and organizational best practices for non-profit organizations.

**What will be done during this research study?**

You will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and one interview using the Zoom.com platform. Each interview will take 30 minutes to complete.

**How will my [data/samples/images] be used?**

Your interview responses will be sent to transcribers and researchers outside of Pepperdine University to be transcribed and for interpretative analysis. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed before the interview is shared.

**What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

This research does not present risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview does not involve sensitive questions but ask general information concerning attrition.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

This study will advance knowledge by providing non-profit executives and boards with information from which leadership best practices may be examined and reframes their perception of new leader needs and the most effective ways to acclimate them to the politics, structure, and culture of their non-profit.

However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

Non-profit Executive Directors, boards, and staff can benefit from initiating best practices for

leaders and board members and discover how reframing their perception of leadership to align leader/Executive Director expectations with the expectations of newly hired leadership/staff may reduce leader attrition.

**What are the alternatives to being in this research study?**

Instead of being in this research study you can research scholarly articles or books pertaining to how to reduce attrition at non-profit organizations.

**What will being in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of the investigator. If you have a problem or experience harm as a direct result of being in this study as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact Stephanie Wanza whose name is at the beginning of this consent form. If needed, seek immediate emergency care for this problem. Please note, it is the policy of Pepperdine University not to pay for any required care. Agreeing to this does not mean you have given up any of your legal rights.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The names of the selected non-profit organizations and participants will be kept confidential and de-identified through the collection tool/s used. All Zoom interview links will be sent with individual passcodes to participants. All interview information collected will be stored in a password-protected zip file to protect and secure the data shared by participants. Secure coding standards of implementation will be utilized to minimize risk and protect data input, including the destruction of all original data collected, including interviews Zoom files and recordings, after 3 years poststudy. Password access was used on all computers being utilized for this study. The only people who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**What are your rights as a research subject?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB): Phone: 1(310)568-2305 Email: [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu)

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable). You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Documentation of informed consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participant Feedback Survey**

To meet Pepperdine University’s ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:

<https://forms.gle/nmRgRwLgajYzBq5t7>

**Participant Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant Please Print

**Participant Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Investigator certification**

*My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.*

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

## APPENDIX I

## Non-Disclosure Agreement



IRB #: 23-02-2100

**Participant Study Title:** Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations

**NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT (NDA)**

This Nondisclosure Agreement or (“Agreement”) has been entered into on the date of

\_\_\_\_\_ and is by and between:

**Party Disclosing Information:** \_\_\_\_\_ with an email address of \_\_\_\_\_ (**“Disclosing Party-Participant”**).

**Party Receiving Information:** \_\_\_\_\_ with an email address of \_\_\_\_\_ (**“Receiving Party-Researcher “**).

For the purpose of preventing the unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information as defined below. The parties agree to enter into a confidential relationship concerning the disclosure of certain confidential information pertaining to their role as an executive leader at a non-profit organization (“Confidential Information”) for the purposes of contributing to the Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations study.

**1. Definition of Confidential Information.** For purposes of this Agreement, “Confidential Information” shall include all information is personally identifiable or disclosure of personal experiences as an executive non-profit leader. If Confidential Information is provided via an interview the receiving party will ensure the interview is password protected and will not share participants personal identifiable information.

**2. Obligations of the Researcher.** The Researcher shall hold and maintain the Confidential Information in strictest confidence for the purposes of the Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations study. The Researcher shall carefully restrict access to the Participants Confidential Information by ensuring that information shared is password protected and stored in



a secured and locked area.

3. **Agreement.** The Researcher shall not, without the prior written approval of the Participant, disclose personal and confidential information to others, or permit the use by others for their benefit or to the detriment of the Participant. Participants and the organizations they represent will be assigned Pseudo names and addressed by those names during the interview and in the published dissertation for the Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations study.

4. **Time Periods.** The nondisclosure provisions of this Agreement shall survive the termination of this Agreement and Researcher's duty to hold Confidential Information in confidence shall remain in effect after the completion of the Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations study.

5. **Integration.** This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties with respect to the subject matter of non-profit attrition. This Agreement may not be amended except in writing signed by both parties.

6. **Waiver.** The failure to exercise any right provided in this Agreement or the Informed Consent shall not be a waiver of prior or subsequent rights.

7. **Notice of Immunity.** The Participant is provided notice that the Researcher shall not be held criminally or civilly liable under any federal or state law for the disclosure of information that the Participant shares during the interview for the completion of the Leadership in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations study with Pepperdine University.

This Agreement and each party's obligations shall be binding on the representatives, assigns and successors of such party. Each party has signed this Agreement through its authorized representative.

### **Study Participant**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Typed or Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Researcher**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Typed or Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J

### **Topics of Interest for Non-Profit Leaders**

Participants provided more detailed information for certain topics based on the interview questions which piqued their interest. Responses from interview questions IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, IQ6 and IQ7 provide information on authentic experiences and observations that helped to shape the leader's perception on relationships, engagement, motivation, and personal and organizational best practices that leaders believe can reduce cause of attrition. Leaders were more engaged while answering questions pertaining to organizational mission, workplace culture, employee engagement, mentorship, coaching, training and support, non-profit size, status, funding and board involvement, employee involvement in organizational change. The researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and their advice and opinions.

Organizational mission. The participants saw their organization's mission being the focal point of why they were in their role and the main purpose of being at their organization. All other experiences appeared to emanate from completing the mission they were hired for. Leaders saw their organizational missions as the motivation for their service to the organization. They also use their experience and expertise to promote the mission and vision of the organization to staff as well as the community. Leaders expressed that their main mission is to help the demographic of people that their organization services.

Sondra Jones confided that she enjoyed assisting her clients as well as staff.

I think I'm most motivated by just the knowledge of knowing that what I'm doing is making a difference. And that the end of the day that the goal is to help people who are in need, and help people get ahead and that I'm making a difference in my role as a leader.

What our organization does at the end of the day is great. We strive to change lives and

empower people. I try to do that with my staff as a leader.

The mission also served as a mantra for the organization and leaders ensured that all staff was aligned with the mission and were willing to contribute to ensuring that the organization had the resources and qualified staff who can make their mission a reality for the communities they serve. The mission is specific and multifaceted but streamlined enough for leaders to provide services to the segments of the population who need their services.

**Workplace Culture.** Leaders described their workplace culture as traditional, close-knit, and family-like. Employees appeared to form bonds over the years, especially at offices which had less than 100 employees who had been employed there for five years or more. Workplace culture was very important to leaders because they served as the gatekeepers of the culture and helped to form and influence the culture as leaders.

Shared values and goals of the organization were all part of the culture which was welcoming according to most leaders' account. Understanding non-profit culture versus corporate culture is different. Factors such as dress, accountability, and organizational goals are different for non-profits than for corporate organizations. Non-profits move more toward meeting the goals of the non-profit rather than revenue.

**Cultural Retention Challenges.** Long term employees who have worked for the same agency for long periods of time had a more difficult time with changes within the organization because they were used to things as evolving because many who hated change left the organization. All non-profits eventually will see senior management leaving. Executives who come to a non-profit to see how it functions and if it is too much difference they return to corporate America. Employees who returned to the office after virtual work after COVID found returning in person difficult. Community based objectives was the primary focus for many

organizations whose mission was centered around social justice or financial need based.

The collaborative culture of the non-profits provided support for programming and offering services. Employees engaged in decision making and ultimately assisted in determining how the organization was represented and the work it produced. As gatekeepers of the culture leaders assured that they influenced staff and other leaders to collaborate on achieving goals for the organization. This discovery allowed the researcher to understand the importance that culture played in reducing attrition and that staff who feel that they “fit into” and support the organizational culture are more likely to be satisfied with their role at the organization and have a cohesive relationship with their supervisors and peers.

**Employee Engagement.** Understanding employee engagement was very important in determining how relationships were developed and solidified. When leaders promote alignment with the vision and mission of the organization, provide motivation, tap into the skills and experience, and achievements of staff as well as assist with challenges and provide lessons for staff it can assist with improving relationships.

**Building Engagement.** Leaders emphasized that they strived to engage with employees to build trust, show they are valued and appreciated and influence them to become more productive, encourage personal and professional development. Leaders agreed that mentoring was a great way to communicate the vision, responsibilities, and opportunities the organization has to offer. Leaders shared that employee engagement changed due to COVID and more remote work is now being implemented to connect staff and supervisors. Engagement between departments and cross-training can benefit the advancement of the organization. Leaders spending time with staff to relax and refuel was also recommended to assist with relieving the pressure of taxing work. Recreational employee engagement assisted leaders connect at a more

personal level with staff.

**Leader Behavior.** Leader behaviors programs which enforce the norms expected from leadership staff which help to ensure leader behavior remains intact and they can go through any kind of transformation. To promote employee engagement leaders should have goals, be embracing, and not have an ego. Leaders should check in with their staff, assign tasks which pique their interest, skills, involvement, strategy and ensure there is an organizational for candidates.

June Thurman shared that COVID restructured how and when her staff met and encouraged more in-person interaction:

Employee meetings are both remote staff as well as in person. Everybody has team meetings. We just implemented a new P O that is offering us an application portal that helps us connect both employee and supervisor. Having collaboration and interaction is important, along with bringing people back to the office three days a week. I think over this past year we have really seen the benefits of the hybrid work environment. Coming in the office to (helps staff) interact with peers.

For Mary Stone team engagement involved teams collaborating with each other to gain more knowledge and to cross train. She stated:

A team (should) not only meet with their own personal teams but also do cross work. When you don't allow teams to engage with other teams, and other aspects of the organization, you create silos, which inadvertently does not lead into a positive type of culture because everybody has their own little kingdoms. If you allow teams to intersect with each other, you enhance their skills, you enhance their knowledge, you can see their experiences that they have your hand is what they're exposed to. That makes an

organization stronger.

Alice Warren stated that breaking away from the monotony of everyday can promote employee engagement:

I think doing things outside of what we do all day like getting together, going bowling or out to dinner helps to promote a sense of a greater culture for what we do every day. I also think it just gives people an opportunity to just relax and become centered not only with themselves. You (can) take a step back to get a refresher of your purpose.

Leaders shared the creative and innovative ways they engaged with staff at non-profits.

They were concerned with not only the connection but with the quality of the relationships that were being developed. They sought a connectedness with staff to display their concern for them as an individual and an employee. Engagement was more than a simple hello and goodbye each day and this deeper engagement seemed to be promoted across the workplace culture as well.

**Leadership Style.** Leadership style related back to IQ 1 and was important in determining how leaders related to staff and if they were able to motivate employees in their roles or serve as mentors or be viewed as servant or strategic leaders. Eight of the eleven leaders considered their leadership style to be a combination of strategic and servant leader or a combination of other styles such as transformational, situational and womanist styles. Half of the leaders (5) or 50% identified that they use a combination of both servant and strategic leadership. Leaders stated that they embrace openness and transparency, development, mentorship, permission, capabilities, strategies, development leaders who used a combination of styles also stated they also think strategically. Leaders shared they sought to be inclusive receive feedback, suggestions, recognize contributions, and encourage input, satisfaction, building skills and

relationships, Leaders also are transformational, transformative, understanding, empathic, desire to make employee engagement meaningful, relevant and offer tools to succeed.

Leaders stated they adjust their style according to the situation they are addressing. Strategic leadership was also mentioned as a style in which leaders could use to streamline planning and managerial responsibilities. Leadership style was also an indicator of how effective leaders were in influencing employees. Leaders who utilize servant leadership to motivate and influence others seemed to be more apt to follow the leader's behavior as well as their example of their work ethic and commitment to the vision and mission of the organization.

Sam Tyler stated that leaders should focus on building up their employees and encourages staff to contribute to the decision-making process:

I am a strategic leader and consider myself a servant leader. I'm a hybrid. I think the biggest mission of a leader and supervisor is to ensure the satisfaction and the building of the people that that you work with. I'm an inclusive leader. I take feedback and suggestions and input from everybody. I encourage contributions and input from everybody to make the best decisions. I try to create consensus on directions and decisions based on receiving input, processing, and feeding it back to the team in a way that gets complete buy in, hopefully bringing consensus, and cooperation.

Leaders who engaged in utilizing both strategic and servant leader styles and other styles (such as situational and inclusive) which complemented their personalities and managerial experience appeared to be more proficient in eliciting employee support and participation in decision making and change management efforts compared to leaders who only practiced one single leadership style. Utilizing a combination of styles also assisted leaders with being able to exhibit appropriate behaviors and managerial skill sets based on the situation at hand and were

able to address specific issues and problems by identifying a method or framework which could bring a solution to the problem.

**Mentorship, Coaching, Training and Support.** This topic related back to IQ3b. Training and coaching were mentioned to be essential to developing leaders. Executive leaders revealed that mentoring and coaching acclimates the employee to the organization and emphasizes how decisions are made, who participates in the leadership process and how processes and procedures are completed. When leaders focus on mentoring and allow shadowing, affirm, provide opportunities for growth, connect, and engage with staff it can improve communication, workplace environments and relationships. Having a keen understanding of the innerworkings of the organization and knowing the expectations and responsibilities can assist new and established leaders with embracing and owning their role and understanding how they “fit” into the organizational hierarchy. Within the mentorship experience was also training, personal development coaching and support. The support provided by leaders assisted staff with understanding workplace culture, organizational goals, regulations, procedures and policies.

Mentorship was manifested in several different ways according to the interviewees. Over half of the leaders mentored employees individually and others served as a coach or mentor to assist with organizational change management efforts. Mentorship was also conducted as a team effort for new and potential employees. Mentorship through career and succession planning was mentioned for one organization. Other non-profits who did not mention planned mentoring programs or opportunities either partnered with other organizations to provide mentorship or acknowledged that mentorship was important, but their organization did not have a mentorship, coaching or succession policy in place.



Mary Stone stated she felt compelled to mentor and share her professional experience with individuals.

I like to think of myself as a leader who gives permission for others, to look at their leadership, capabilities, and strategies, but also take mentoring very seriously. I think that's also a part of leadership is being able to mentor others. That includes mentoring those that I work with, as well as mentoring those that just may be in some of the circles that I am in.

Sam Tyler shared that he offered his mentorship and consulting services because he saw a need to provide his expertise and experience to a declining organization.

I reached out to the local affiliate of the (Organization) looking for a way to be helpful. I foresaw a difficult time ahead for black people, or brown people, for minorities, LGBTQ folks of all walks of life. I reached out to the (Organization) to see if I could be helpful, maybe using my expertise as a business consultant to help small businesses or be a mentor. It became clear that the organization could use somebody like me to help with the turnaround. I ended up joining the organization full time and assisted with reshaping the organization from a programmatic standpoint.

Helen Ayers explains how a team effort was used for their mentorship program.

We do (mentoring) through a shadowing process. If someone is new to the organization, or they're interested in the work, we have a summer institute every year (they can participate in). We'll have that person shadow with an existing mentor. We call our employees mentors. They become a mentor to this person who's interested, and that person can see the work in context.

Tom Andrews shared that his organization had a career development and succession plan for

leaders to assist employees with their career path.

If someone wants to become a manager, we build out a plan for career development to get to that goal based on what that person wants. We have a succession planning framework. I'm required as a leader to ensure the secession plan and continuity plan of leadership for the organization. That's the focus of what I do in my team.

**Impact of Mentorship.** Eight of the eleven leaders interviewed stated they had no formal program for mentorship established at their organizations. Ann Jones suggested that mentorship and/or coaching should be incentivized by the organization to increase participation because the benefits of mentorship can be experienced individually and corporately. Employee participation in mentorship and coaching programs can assist leaders with not only developing their managerial skills but also can provide them with a sense of self and a sense of place which develops a bond and connection to the organization which can reduce attrition. Black female non-profit executives revealed that they represented a small percent of the executives at non-profits offered mentorship opportunities to younger women who were either on their team, in their department or were new to the organization and felt the need to extend themselves to teach train and mentor others.

**Leader Transition.** Leaders should have their values and alignment with the mission and an understanding of the mission and lived experience. They should also possess technical skills, relevant experience, and the ability to do the job so they may be able to advance in their career according to participant Sam Tyler. Leaders also suggested that the board of directors should be involved with succession planning.

Leaders overall stressed the importance of training, mentorship and coaching as avenues to assist with engaging employees, showing authentic concern for them and forming a

connection which could enrich relationships, facilitate dialogue, build trust and confidence in leadership and the organization.

**Non-Profit Size, Status, Funding and Board Involvement.** Participants discussed the issues of funding and Board involvement at their organizations. The lack of funding, status (new or established) of the organization and size (small, medium, or large) all had an impact on the rate of leader's resignation, transition to another department or departure to a position outside of the non-profit area. Compensation, benefits and offers from competing organizations also were mentioned as a reason for attrition for executive level positions and non-profits.

According to the data shared non-profit size and status was relevant in understanding attrition rates. Smaller non-profits (1–100 people) appeared to have more attrition than larger more established organizations due to staff shortages and leaders who are already multi-tasking being required to ensure the organization can deliver services. Larger non-profits did not seem to experience the stress and pressure associated with leaders at smaller organizations. Funding status also impacted the strength and reach of organizations. Smaller non-profits who depended on grants, donations and other funding sources experienced more instability and more work-related responsibilities than larger organizations which were established and provided funding to smaller non-profits. Job security, competitive compensation, benefits and work satisfaction were also prevalent among leaders at larger organizations.

**Board of Directors and Executive Leader Relations.** Leaders of smaller non-profits reported that they have experienced a disconnect with the board of directors pertaining to their role and the vision of the organization. To rectify this situation and improve board relations leaders were advised to provide a clarification of the vision, align the vision to the mission of the organization and then solicit directors' support to ensure they are focusing on the same goals and

moving in the same direction. Leaders were also advised to build a board who have the expertise to deliver funding and results and who are willing to work and assist organizations in ways they need and develop a mutual respect and understanding for each other's roles.

Due to the lack of communication and clarification of roles leaders mentioned that the board of directors can overstepped their bounds and became directly involved in overseeing the executive leader's day to day tasks instead of providing the support or resources required to ensure that the mission and programming of the organization takes place. Leaders desired more autonomy to hire and manage staff, oversee, and develop programming and also to establish clearly defined roles for executive leaders and board members. Two of the leaders resented board members behavior and simply wanted to connect with them in a way that brought them to an understanding of what the boards' purpose is and how managerial interference can cause undue frustration, stress, or anxiety for executive leaders.

Sam Tyler shared that the composition of the board, board member expertise and willingness to work was essential in finding balance between executive leaders and board members.

The composition of your board is the first big step. Having board members who are there because their corporation can get a bunch of money may not be beneficial. Find board members who are willing to roll up their sleeves and help the organization out in whatever way the organization needs. Make sure (the board) is delivering expertise and doing it in a way that is respectful of the management and leadership of the organization.

Sam also shares that in terms of roles and responsibilities board members and leaders should know their roles and support each other in performing the duties for the non-profit.

Sometimes, organization leaders and board members don't have a good understanding of

what their respective roles are relative to each other. I've seen board members, who sometimes can overreach and start telling staff what to do without regard for what the leadership of an organization thinks is important or the kind of protocol that they want or how they want to run the organization.

Tom Andrews expressed that the board should offer financial support and allow the executive leader the freedom to run the organization.

The governing board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure leaders have the resources to execute the mission and sustain it. To have a leader in nonprofits, go out with unrealistic expectations with unrealistic resources will cause greater attrition. (Boards) should make it their mission and focus to ensure resources are plentiful. The board should also check with the leader to ensure they have the autonomy to build a staff who is qualified, effective, and cares about the mission.

Board members who can work in tandem with executive leaders can assist in creating a more productive team-based environment which promotes communication and productivity. Transparency, honesty, and inclusiveness are attributes that can provide open conversations which lead to support and achievement of goals and initiatives for the organization.

**Employee Involvement in the Organizational Change Management Process.** Leaders concurred that the organizational change process should be strategically planned and was viewed it as an opportunity for employees to share their ideas, opinions, and vision for the organization. Their involvement also demonstrated their commitment to the organization and desire to participate and engage in conversations that require their input, experience, expertise, and dedication to the mission. Leaders desired for staff to share how they feel about the change effort and used the opportunity to influence them to make necessary changes in their roles, duties, and

responsibilities; and adjust to the changes in programming or serving clients which will take place. Leaders also wanted to involve staff to inform them of why the change was taking place and how they will be impacted by this change. Leaders understood the natural push back to change. Leader preparation in implementing planned change efforts allowed staff enough time to calibrate to a new normal at their offices.

**Change Implementation.** Eighty percent of the interviewees stated that they utilized strategic methods to implement change. Twenty percent or two of the leaders that a need or problem should be identified to institute change and all stakeholders involved should be able to utilize resources and tools, engage and listen to each other to determine outcomes and bring about sustained change. Leaders stated that change should not start from the top but with front line staff who will be impacted, managers and additional leadership should be able to support and communicate the impact of that change on their department or division. Thirty percent or three leaders stated that it was imperative that employees have an understanding and knowledge for the change before they can buy into it.

**Adjusting to Change.** Over half (50%) of leaders interviewed stated that when a vision is created and shared people are more apt to support the vision. When people are given time to adjust to changes it can be sustained and internalized more effectively. Leaders advised to create allies with key staff when presenting change and agreed when staff presents ideas and there is two-way communication organizational change can be more effective and stated that all stakeholders should be invited to identify problems and a need and engage in listening.

**COVID Impact.** Over half of the participants acknowledged that COVID forced their organizations to rethink how business would be run and determine what schedule, resources and direction the organization should chose to remain impactful and effective during and after the

pandemic. Every leader stated that there was a change in becoming a remote or hybrid organization during and after COVID.

Leaders stated that it was important to express their opinions to understand expectations before and during their time at an organization and that hiring practices should include vetting qualified candidates. Tom Andrews stated that a plan or “road map” has to be provided before people will be willing to accept change and shows how the change will take place, when and who all the stakeholders in the change will be.

There needs to be a roadmap that everybody can see and align with. We’ve got to make sure that we showed them a roadmap of why we believe (change is necessary). We must be open to change when something is not working. And that’s what I believe builds trust. And trust drives sustainability. We need to ensure that we’re respecting whatever decisions are made by showing them the roadmap.

Categories of lesser interest for study participants were organizational politics and structure which related back to IQ4 a. “Do politics, organizational structure, or leadership behavior affect management attrition?” Leaders stated that at their smaller organization’s politics, titles and leadership behavior was not a pressing issue. Leaders shared their experiences with navigating around politics and problems with organizational structure at other larger corporate or for-profit companies. Leaders stated that larger non-profits are more apt to encounter organizational politics due to the nature of its size, structure and the intents and motives of the individual involved in leadership and decision making.

In terms of leadership behavior, having an impact on employees, Helen Ayers shared that having an organizational structure with open communication where employees felt respected and needed was also mentioned. A closed organizational structure was said to be detrimental to

developing relationships, building trust, and sharing important information. Office politics and misalignment of the vision and mission can be distracting for leaders who must make strategic decisions for the organization and staff. Sonda Jones stated that having the same goals and purpose or alignment can reduce attrition and alleviate the challenges associated with organizational politics and leader behavior.

Mary Stone shared that politics had no impact on her organization because of their transparency and open communication.

We're a small organization with 60 employees. Our culture is very transparent, and people feel free and comfortable to ask questions of leadership. We have the openness to be able to ask those questions that I think alleviate some of that tension that can create politics or viciousness, division or that type of behavior. I've worked in organizations where staff did not feel like they were being told the truth. And that brings a lot of that type of energy that you're talking about.

Helen Ayers shared organization structure should allow for open communication, ideas, creativity, and synergy.

If an organizational structure is very top down, one voice carries all the power and people feel powerless. Everyone wants to feel like they work somewhere when they have purpose. When you feel like you're just being dictated to, especially in a place like in the education space, then that's a problem. Because we're all creative and innovative.

Jane Thurmon shared that politics can be a hindrance to leaders and advised leaders to set aside politics when making decisions that are best for the organization.

Politics is just distracting and inefficient. When you're trying to make a decision, push aside politics and make the decision that's in the best interest of your organization,



people or mission. I think politics distracts a leader from paying attention to the right things. If you have people in your senior leadership team or your organization not on board with the strategy or aligned with the mission, you're working against that tide.

Sondra Jones also shared that alignment of goals and mission can reduce attrition and encourage communication and employees contributing to the work it takes to sustain the organizational mission.

If everybody's has the same goals and purpose, I think you're probably not going to have the turnover. There is a chance to keep the team together. I think he's going to be is going to be better, you're not going to have turnover.

Politics, organizational structure, and leader behavior could impact attrition according to the responses of the leaders. Attrition caused by structural, political, or financial challenges, or a lack of alignment with organizational goals seemed to be directly impacted by the leader's perception of the organization, feelings of insignificance, compensation issues and the stress of work-related responsibilities. Other causes for attrition were misalignment of personal goals, individual reasons, organizational goals, mission; lack of strong infrastructure, behavioral or emotional issues emanating from relationships with other leaders and supervisors, structural issues, political issues, financial insufficiencies, challenges, stress and pressure from managerial work-related responsibilities.

Most leaders had not encountered the impact of these challenges at their current non-profits. Leaders did acknowledge that both internal and external politics can impact non-profits and if leaders are not strategic in navigating around issues which could cause division, confusion, and favoritism the organization can suffer. Ann Jones summed up how leaders can avoid pressing issues stemming from politics, organizational structure and leadership behavior which

can challenge an individual's integrity, commitment and values. "People want to feel like they are effective in the organization. How leadership shows up and shows appreciation and how people's ideas are heard makes a big impact on how employees see leadership and if someone's successful in leadership."

The review of the topics of most interest provided the researcher with insight into the importance of motivation, employee relationships, leadership style, mentoring, training and support, non-profit status, and board involvement. From the information shared about these observations seven themes were created which captured the essence of the leaders "lived experiences" as they relate to the categories reviewed that contributed to causes of attrition. In the next section these themes will be explored in detail.

## APPENDIX K

### Non-Profit Leader Perceptions

The responses to the interview questions provided insight into executive leader's perceptions about attrition, retention of employees, engagement and organizational change. The leaders represented also appeared to be emergent leaders. The framework for this study detailed in Chapter 2 is leader emergence developed by Norton et al. (2014) which explains leader emergence rooted in the cognitive resource theory (CRT) and suggests team effectiveness may be enhanced if a selection process yields a leader who possesses expertise and experience, group support is high, and interpersonal stress is low (Vecchio, 1990). The emergent leader theory suggests that effective leaders can aspire to be high on task and high on relational behaviors. Fleishman (1953) and Halpin and Winer (1957) empirical studies revealed effective, leader behaviors involve initiating structure (task behaviors) and consideration of staff (relational behaviors). Participants' experiences resembled those of vetted and developing emergent leaders in the non-profit industry. The results of this study revealed leaders were aware of how attrition can be caused by structural, political, or financial challenges, a lack of alignment with organizational goals, feelings of insignificance, compensation issues and the stress of work-related responsibilities. Participants were able to influence their staff and peers and provided sound advice on best practices to embrace a managerial style and work ethic which mirrored servant and strategic leaders.

Leaders shared their experiences at their non-profit as a supervisor and observer of the phenomenon around them. They eagerly addressed how they dealt with relational, managerial, financial and attrition challenges and provided insight into the inner workings of non-profits and their daily operations.

Although the leaders shared what was status quo at their offices, only two leaders seemed to feel that attrition was a significant predictor of productivity outcomes or impacted how the organization was viewed by others. Attrition seemed to be a natural process and the causes of it did not appear to be on the radar of individual leaders or human resources departments. The more established organizations did not seem to be concerned with attrition rates because they did not report experiencing attrition as often as the smaller organizations.

Most of the leaders' focus was on ensuring that the mission of the organization was understood, creating an engaging and inclusive workspace, fostering relationships and providing competitive compensation and benefits for newly hired leaders. Mentorship and coaching for leaders were also mentioned, however only three organizations had mentorship opportunities available for their employees. Leaders recommended soliciting or hiring a coach who has experience and expertise in the field they are working in and who has longevity in being a successful leader and supervisor in the non-profit industry. Further explanation of the leaders' experiences by category provides additional information on how the themes were developed. Leaders shared their Topics of Interest and were more engaged while answering questions pertaining to organizational mission, workplace culture, employee engagement, mentorship, coaching, training and support, non-profit size, status, funding and board involvement, employee involvement in organizational change. This section is listed in Appendix J.

The information shared was beneficial in assisting executive leaders to understand the challenges and responsibilities that leaders face which include but are not limited to locating funding, recruiting committed and qualified staff in a now more competitive industry, implemented change, and planning for succession and transition of staff and ensuring mentorship and coaching opportunities are available for newly hired and established leaders at their

organizations.

The study participants were open and candid about their experiences as non-profit leaders. They were willing to share their best practices as well as the challenges and decisions they must make each day as a leader which could impact their staff's perception of the direction the organization is headed in. Participants showed interest in learning what the results were and the overall results of the study. The experiences shared also assisted the researcher with gaining a more in depth understanding of executive leaders' commitment to the mission of their organizations and the tenacity required to weather the storms of uncertainty and braving the uncharted waters of change. The researcher gained a greater respect for the commitment the leaders displayed and the affinity for their organization they were willing to share with not only staff, but all stakeholders involved with the continued operation and success of the organization.

## APPENDIX L

*Codes by Category*

LeadershipStyle	Implement Change	SustainChang	Motivation	Culture	Attrition Reduction Suggestions	Employee Engagement	Politics Structure and Behavior	Attrition Causes	BestPractices
Servant	Create	Align	Helping	Accountability	Self-Care	Strengths	Funding	Burnout/Stress	Goals
Strategic	Building	Plan	Workand mission	Organizational Goals	Worklife Balance	Engage	Toxic Slow Demise	OtherOffers	Thinline BetweenBoard andExecutives
CombinedStyle	Identifying	Mission	Community	Diversity	Support	Support/ Mentor	Destructive	Executive Behaviors	Management
Situational	Lead	Cohesive		Change	Challenging	Ensure			HiringPractices
Inclusive	Question	Culture		Virtualwork	Respected	Experience		Distractions	Mentorship
Transformational	Input	Input		Evolving	Realistic	Team		Weak	Coaching
1								Infrastructure	
Transformative	Strategic Decision	Outreach		LongTerm Employees	Valued	Motivates			Boards supervision
Communication		United			OfferSalary			Issues	
	Opportunity			Non-		Give			Boardrole
Feedback		Knowing		Traditional	Intentional			Transition	
	Coddling					Team			Autonomyto
Consider		Implement		Traditional	Thoughtful	alignment		Administrative	buildstaff.
	Buyin							Duties	
Learning		Shared		Transition	Innovation	Teach/Train			Communication
styles	Choices	vision						Compensation	
		Tools		COVID	CheckIn	SpecificSkill		Benefits	Boardsupport
Encourage	Unity					set			
		Strategic		Ethnicity	Respondto			Mental	Visionand
Training	Policyand	process		Understanding	leadership.	Clearroles		Capacityto	Alignment

	Procedures						stay.
Employee	access	Trust		Connect	Retain	Time	Indefinitely
engagement		Building			employees.	situational	
	Stakeholders						Managerial
Meaningful					Emphasize	Prioritizing	Responsibilities
	Vision						
Helping	sharing				Collaboration		Pride
community							
					Environment		

Leadership Style	Implement Change	Sustain Change	Motivation	Culture	Attrition Reduction Suggestions	Employee Engagement	Politics Structure and Behavior	Attrition Causes	Best Practices		
Relevancy	Restructure Business	Culture focused	Motivation	Culture	Strategic Planning	Respect	Politics Structure/ Behavior	Fundraising challenges	Leader behavior		
	Framework	Cohesive									
Openness		Input				Board Involvement		Transparency		Taxing	Norms
	Having allies										
Transparency		United				Refresh/				Organization redesign	Welcoming Culture
	Be like minded					Rejuvenate		Honoring Skills			
Encourage Input		Trust								Unrealistic	Feeling
	Mission	Building				Mentorship		Recognition		expectations	Valued
Recognize contributions											
Leadership Style	Implement Change	Sustain Change				Attrition Reduction Suggestions		Employee Engagement		Attrition Causes	Best Practices
Building skills											Check In
	Best Interest	Engagement				Transition plan		Ensure		Money	
Relevancy								everyone has a part			
	Utilize Tools and skills					Review Qualifications				Title	
Flexibility					Affirm						

Communication									
	Right Attitude				Competitive Salary	Strengthen			
	Building Culture				Be positive	Engage			
	Mission				Enhance	Support			
					Opportunities	Give responsibilities.			
					Executive	Life Experience			
					Coach				
						Planning			
					Acknowledge				
						Succession			
					Appreciate				
					Sabbatical				
					Address				
					Challenges				
					Organization Fit				



## APPENDIX M

*Combined Codes for Attrition Causes and Reduction*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Combined Codes</b>	<b>Experiences and Observations</b>
Leadership Style	<p>Combined Leadership styles:</p> <p>Servant, Strategic, Transformational, Transformative, Situational</p> <p>Relationship: Openness and Transparency, Encourage Input, Feedback, Recognize contributions, meaningful engagement.</p> <p>Training: Encourage training, consider learning styles, building skills</p> <p>Goals: Helping their community, (personal) satisfaction</p> <p>Skills: Relevancy. Flexibility.</p> <p>Communication</p>	<p>50% identified that they use a combination of both servant and strategic leadership. They also transformational, transformative and situational</p> <p>Make employee engagement meaningful, relevant and offer tools to succeed.</p> <p>Inclusive receive feedback, suggestions, recognize contributions, and encourage input, satisfaction, building skills and relationships.</p>
Culture	<p>Types: Traditional and Non-Traditional</p>	<p>Understanding non-profit culture vs corporate culture is different. Many</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Culture	<p>Connections: Close Knit and Family like</p> <p>Employment: Long term employees, COVID and Virtual Work, Expectations: Accountability, Organizational Goals, Diversity</p> <p>Challenges: Change/Transition</p> <p>Development: Evolving</p>	<p>factors such as dress, accountability, and organizational goals are different for nonprofits than for corporate organizations.</p>
Implement Organizational Change	<p>Process: Strategic process, policies and procedures, business framework, create, build, lead.</p> <p>Requirements from staff: Trust, Input, Communication, Buy In, Shared vision, Unity vision sharing, Right Attitude/Engagement, Like minded.</p>	<p>Twenty percent or two of the leaders stated that a need or problem should be identified in order to institute change</p> <p>Leaders suggested that staff engage in making choices which impact change and have an opportunity to join the decision process, Leaders should make decisions which are in the best interest of all involved to assist in implementing change.</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Implement Organizational Change	<p>Participants: Stakeholders, staff, and all levels of management, board, community, allies</p> <p>Planning: Utilize tools and resources, identify issues, considering everyone's best interest, question, inclusive decision-making process, choices, invite input, provide opportunities for suggestions, avoid employee coddling.</p> <p>Purpose: Building Culture, Mission</p>	<p>When implementing organizational change, the problem should be identified, who engages in decision making, who is affected by the decision and their point of view.</p> <p>Leaders suggested that stakeholders and those in the community be invited to share different perspectives to assist in implementing change.</p>
Employee Engagement	<p>Relationships Transparency</p> <p>Respect, Ethnicity, Understanding, Culture, Connect</p> <p>Motivation: Team Alignment, Motivates, Honoring Skills, Recognition, Team building, Ensure, everyone has a part, affirm</p>	<p>Forty percent or four Leaders suggest providing staff with opportunities for staff to perform new or additional duties.</p> <p>When leaders focus on, mentor and allow shadowing, affirm, provide opportunities for growth, connect, and engage with staff it can improve communication and workplace</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Employee Engagement	<p>Training and Support: Shadowing, Teach/train, Prioritize.</p> <p>Mentoring/Coaching: Mentorship, Strengthen, Engage, Support Mentor, Give responsibilities, Life Experience, Planning, Succession</p> <p>Skill Building: Specific skill set</p> <p>Time Situational, Clear roles, Provide Opportunities, build on and use prior Experience.</p>	<p>environments and relationships.</p> <p>When leaders promote alignment with the vision and mission of the organization, provide motivation, tap into the skills and experience, and achievements of staff as well as assist with challenges and provide.</p> <p>Experiences and Observations lessons for staff it can assist with improving relationships</p>
Sustain Change	<p>Relationships/Support: Culture focused, Cohesive.</p> <p>Input, United, Trust Building, Knowing engagement.</p> <p>Planning: Align, Plan, Shared Vision, Outreach, Resources, tools</p> <p>Process: Implement, Strategic Process, Mission</p>	<p>Openly expressing opinions was key in implementing and sustaining organizational change.</p> <p>All stakeholders involved should be able to utilize resources and tools, engage and listen to each other to determine outcomes and bring about sustained change.</p> <p>Over half of the participants acknowledged that COVID forced their organizations to rethink how business would be run and determine what schedule, resources and direction the organization should</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Motivation	Purpose: Helping, work and mission, community	chose to remain impactful and effective during and after the pandemic.
Attrition Reduction	Relationship: Be Thoughtful, Intentional. Display Respect, Realistic, communication, meaningful, relevant	<p>Leaders suggested that becoming involved on a “personal level, studying, learning, understanding your cultural frame of reference, trust, building culture, and encouraging a culture of respect” assist in instituting and sustaining organizational change. (Helen Ayers, The Pen Foundation)</p> <p>Being thoughtful, intentional, hire, engaging, talents, previous successes, making hard decisions, feelings, responding to leadership</p> <p>Give Respect, value employees, retain good employees, stock options, encourage staff to remain by endorsing the organization from a cultural and compensation standpoint.</p> <p>Embrace positivity, positive environment Showing sensitivity and</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Attrition Reduction	<p>Support: Check-In, Support Self</p> <p>Care and Work life Balance,</p> <p>Sabbatical, Positivity, Refresh,</p> <p>Rejuvenate, Empathize,</p> <p>collaboration, environment</p> <p>Recognition: Acknowledge</p> <p>Appreciate, Valued</p> <p>Training/Coaching: Enhance</p> <p>skills, knowledge and training, be</p> <p>or recommend an Executive Coach</p> <p>Plan, cross training, provide</p> <p>resources, provide tools to</p> <p>succeed. interest, skills,</p> <p>involvement</p> <p>Managerial Skill/requirements:</p> <p>Respond to leadership, retain</p> <p>employees, Provide Opportunity</p> <p>Address Challenging situations,</p> <p>Review qualifications, Offer/</p> <p>competitive salary and benefits,</p> <p>encourage Board Involvement,</p> <p>Strategic Planning,</p> <p>transformational, transformative,</p>	<p>concern, benefits for employees.</p> <p>Acknowledge employees and have</p> <p>open communication.</p> <p>(Restructure, Business Framework,</p> <p>opportunity)</p> <p>Appreciate them and acknowledge the</p> <p>good work that people do,</p> <p>Review Qualifications, vision,</p> <p>strategy. Enhance, resources, be</p> <p>competitive with salaries.</p> <p>Provide them with the tools they need</p> <p>to succeed. Transformational,</p> <p>transformative, understand,</p> <p>empathize, meaningful, relevant, tools</p> <p>to succeed.</p>

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
	organizational fit, strategy.	Provide Standards, understanding roles and encourage collaboration.
		Structured positions for vacations and sabbaticals for leadership to refresh, rejuvenate, take some time away.
		There's there' a big need for executive coaching opportunities, sabbatical as well as an opportunity.
Politics Structure/Behavior	Process: Funding Toxic Slow Demise Destructive	Leader behavior represents norms are expect from everybody, with the leader behavior intact the staff can go through any kind of transformation.
Public Structure/Behavior		Leadership can be very top down one voice carries all the power, okay, very top heavy, then people feel like they have no power.
		In terms of structure, resist the temptation just to throw everything away and start from scratch and, you know, build on what's good while replacing.
Best Practices	Individual Leaders: Leader behavior norms, Hiring Practices,	Participants advised that as an - Individual Leaders, listen to, care for,

Category	Combined Codes	Experiences and Observations
Best Practices	<p>Motivation, Feeling valued.</p> <p>Employee Check-in, Management Coaching, Mentorship, Autonomy to build staff, Communication, Recognition, listen, care, collaborate, check-in, sustain a welcoming culture, learn, motivation, alignment, strategy and mission alignment.</p>	<p>provide opportunities for, address challenges, foster group collaboration, utilize proven structures and systems, ensure staff feel good, and are heard.</p> <p>Managers and supervisors state that encourage Connection, check in on people/work life balance, promote a culture of value, be welcoming provide sustainability, invest in hiring and interviews. Learn from other</p>
	<p>Organization: Provide clear roles and responsibilities, recognition, honor skills, provide transparency, respect, and recognize employee uniqueness. Vision and Alignment</p>	<p>leaders, putting myself in those groups, or groups to avoid isolation.</p> <p>Providing motivation, opportunities, strategy and mission alignment and giving responsibilities is also helpful are some recommended best practices.</p>
	<p>Board of Directors: Advisement against Board Supervision</p>	
	<p>Board Role</p>	<p>As an organization, non-profits can focus on the Effectiveness of structures, bring in expert Center for</p>
	<p>Board Support</p>	<p>Non-profit Management, obstacles and learn new things, provide clear</p>
	<p>Thin line Between Board and Executives</p>	<p>roles and responsibilities, recognition, honor skills, provide transparency, respect, and recognize the uniqueness of each employee.</p>



## APPENDIX N

*Code and Category Descriptions and Definitions*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Combined Codes</b>	<b>Code Description</b>	<b>Category Definition</b>
Leadership Style	Combined Leadership styles: Strategic/Servant Leader Relationship Training Goals Skills	Executive leaders combined styles can lead to better employee relationships, effective training, assisting employees with organizational and personal goals and improving their skill set.	Leadership Style can impact attrition if relationships with employees are not authentic, relevant and encourage personal and professional development.
Culture	Types Connections Employment Expectations Challenges Development	Cultivating a progressive Organizational culture involves connecting diverse individuals, developing and an organization,	Leaders who sought to build an organizational culture which promotes connections, faces challenges engages communication, sets

Category	Combined Codes	Code Description	Category Definition
		understanding challenges and setting expectations for the organization.	expectations, and promotes a productive workplace contribute to reducing Attrition causes Category Definition
Sustain Change	Relationships/Support: Planning Process	Sustained change involves developing and sustaining relationships, connections and support as well as ongoing planning and developing a process which is supported and sustained by policy and procedures, support and behavior/actions.	Leaders Perceived Implementing Organizational Change as A Process That Requires Input From Staff, A Shared Vision, Planning, Identifying, Addressing Issues and Defining the Purpose Of the Change.
Employee	Relationships	Employee	Employee
Engagement	Motivation	engagement is	engagement can

Category	Combined Codes	Code Description	Category Definition
	Training and Support Mentoring/Coaching Skill Building	solidified by developing relationships, providing motivation, training, and support, advocating mentoring and coaching and professional skill building.	reduce attrition by focusing on creating and cultivating relationships, providing leaders mentorship/coaching motivation, understanding the importance of recognition, and gauging the skill set and qualifications of employees.
Motivation	Purpose	Leaders are motivated by the mission and purpose of their organization and see satisfaction in assisting others in their community.	Leaders are motivated by the mission and desire to serve their community and meet organizational goals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Combined Codes</b>	<b>Code Description</b>	<b>Category Definition</b>
Politics/Structure and Behavior	Process	Attrition which is caused due to politics, structural issues and leader behavior was described as a slow process which emanates from a weak or challenged organizational structure, poor communication, lack of support and lack of focus for the mission and goals of the organization.	Politics. Organizational Structure and Leader behavior can impact attrition by exposing the challenges with infrastructure, leaders' behavior, communicating how leaders can align with the vision and mission of the organization
Best Practices	Individual Leaders Organization Board of Directors	Best practices which are instituted by individual leaders, the organization and the board of directors	Individual executive leaders, non-profit organizations and the board of directors can implement best

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<b>Category</b>	<b>Combined Codes</b>	<b>Code Description</b>	<b>Category Definition</b>
		included, support for leaders and staff, providing clear roles, recognition of employees, vision and alignment, and transparency.	practices which involve supporting leaders through providing a distinct plan to implement and sustain the vision and mission of the organization.

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