

**LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF  
GOVERNANCE DIALECTICS IN TWO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

A Dissertation

by

ANDREI CONSTANTIN DUTA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2008

Major Subject: Communication

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee, Linda Putnam

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**ABSTRACT**

Leadership Succession: A Discourse Analysis of  
Governance Dialectics in Two Nonprofit Organizations. (May 2008)

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Nonprofit organizations across the country are faced with a leadership crisis due to unprecedented demographic changes and challenges. The *en masse* retirement of the baby boomers leaves leadership positions in nonprofit organizations vacant and vulnerable. This study uses discourse analysis and dialectical theory to compare and contrast the leadership succession processes in two Texas-based nonprofit organizations. Both organizations have comparable missions, religious backgrounds, and annual budgets. In addition, the two organizations share similar structures in terms of board of directors, board chair, and executive director (ED) dynamics.

This research is a descriptive comparative case study. The specific purpose of this study is to examine *how* various board members, including the board chair and the incumbent ED, construct the leadership succession process through their discursive interactions and strategies. This study demonstrates that leadership succession in nonprofits is a convoluted process enacted discursively by conflicting or collaborating key organizational actors huddled around various leadership nuclei. These nuclei

include, in various combinations, the EDs, board chairs, vice-chairs, and even spouses of some of these actors. The leadership nuclei morph over time, based on the management of dialectical tensions experienced across four stages in the succession process: pre-succession, during succession A and B, and post-succession.

This research contributes to the larger body of leadership succession knowledge in multiple ways. First, this study reveals that leadership is an amorphous and dynamic concept contested among organizational actors across time. Second, the study highlights the architectonic role of discourse in the leadership succession process. The succession process is enacted through the key organizational actors' discursive exchanges. Third, this research points to three types of dialectical tensions underlying the actors' discursive interactions: individual-centered dialectics ("staying/leaving"), relation-centered dialectics ("blaming/absolving," "freedom/control," and "cooperation/competition"), and organization-centered dialectics ("change/stability"). Next, this study demonstrates that organizational or individual crisis prompts the succession process, and that change, conflict, goals, and deadlines grow out of the succession process and not the other way around. Finally, this study contributes specifically to the research area of small nonprofit organizations. There is a paucity of research examining the succession process in small nonprofits, and this study addresses this need.

## DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to

Nick and Viorica Duta, my loving parents,

and

Dr. Linda Putnam, my mentor, advisor, and committee chair, who reminded me:

“It’s not a matter of ability; it’s a matter of priority!

You can do it!”

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Thank you from the bottom of my heart! May God bless you!

**NOMENCLATURE**

BC	Board Chair
BOD	Board of Directors
ED	Executive Director
NPO	Nonprofit Organization
VC	Vice-Chair



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE AND THEORY

#### Overview

The United States has long been considered “the land of nonprofits” (Glaeser, 2003, p. 143). The U. S. volunteer sector spans a wide array of fields including religion, education, health care, arts, childcare, social services, and more (Table 1.1 in Slesinger & Moyers, 1995; Hall, 1987, 1992; Salamon, 2003). Nonprofits are estimated to produce one-fifth of all American research and development, most of the economy’s human capital, many important cultural products and services, and most health care, education, and social services (Malani, Philipson, & David in Glaeser, 2003, p. 181).

**Table 1.1 National Taxonomy of Tax Exempt Entities**

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Arts, culture, and humanities	11.4%
Education	13.6%
Environmental	2.8%
Health	20.4%
<b>Human services (including child care)</b>	<b>36.6%</b>
International, foreign affairs	1.0%
Public and societal benefit	8.7%
Religion-related	3.3%
Mutual/membership benefit	1.8%
Unknown/unclassified	1.8%

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This dissertation follows the style of *Management Communication Quarterly*.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2004), the U. S. nonprofit landscape includes 850,455 public charities, 104,276 private foundations, 463,714 other types of nonprofit organizations (i.e. chambers of commerce, fraternal organizations, and civic leagues that are also registered with the IRS), and 377,640 congregations. As of 2004, nonprofits accounted for 8.3% of the wages and salaries paid in the United States.

In addition, the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2004) notes that public charities reported nearly \$1.1 trillion in total revenues and about \$1.0 trillion in total expenses. Of the total revenues, 23% came from contributions, gifts and grants; 71% came from program service revenues (i.e. government fees and contracts); and 6% came from dues, rental income, special event income, and gains or losses from goods sold. Public charities reported \$1.9 trillion in total assets in 2004.

About 29% of Americans over the age of 16 volunteered through or for an organization in 2005 (NCCS). Charitable contributions by individuals, foundations and corporations reached \$248.52 billion in 2004 with individuals giving \$187.92 billion.<sup>1</sup> Religious organizations claimed the largest proportion of charitable contributions, 35.5% of total estimated contributions. Educational institutions received the second largest percentage of charitable contributions or 13.6%. Finally, contributions to human service organizations accounted for 7.7% of total estimated contributions in 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Connell (1985) notes that more than 40% of all Americans volunteer their time and resources. Slesinger and Moyers (1995) point out that in 1990 the value of volunteered time in the U.S. totaled over \$110 billion or 2.4% of the GNP.

The U. S. nonprofit sector continues to experience unprecedented growth yearly. The NPOs in America combine assets and resources bigger than many other countries' combined GDPs. In 2005, there were over 1.8 million registered NPOs combining assets of \$2 trillion, generating annual revenues of \$700 billion, and hiring 10% of all Americans (Lewis, 2005). Undoubtedly, NPOs are considered a significant socio-economic sector in America and one of our country's most remarkable social innovations in the last 100 years (Salamon, 1997, 2003).

According to the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies (2003), the nonprofit sector is a major economic influence in Texas, where 1 out of every 25 paid workers is employed by a nonprofit. The 360,272 nonprofit employees in Texas earned over \$8.6 billions in wages as of 2000. While more than half, 52%, of nonprofit employment in the state is in the health services field, 18% is in social services including after school reading programs and foster care homes for children.

This chapter introduces background information on nonprofits, definitions of key concepts, the rationale for this research, the theoretical framework supporting this study, and two research questions.

### **Definitions of Key Nonprofit Concepts**

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are 501(c)3 tax-exempt volunteer-sector agencies chartered for charitable purposes. From a financial standpoint, the mission of a nonprofit is to disburse the revenues and resources to the clients whom the organization aims to help. The NPO's operations are typically run by an executive director (ED). In



most organizations, the ED is held accountable, monitored, and supported by a volunteer board of directors (BOD) that oversees organizational policy and governance. In addition to the ED and BOD, the NPO includes other stakeholders, e.g., legal entities, clients, staff, media, citizens, donors, foundations, the market place, competing NPOs, and the government.

The ED is usually a paid chief executive officer in a nonprofit organization. The ED is a key actor who manages the day-to-day operations of the NPO, interfaces with the board, and spans the boundaries of the organization in search for resources (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). Sometimes the ED is the founder of the nonprofit, but often this person is hired by the board of directors. In addition to running the NPO's operations and raising funds, the two main duties of the ED include being an advisor and a source of information for the BOD (Soltz, 1997). The ED participates in the BOD meetings and provides his/her quarterly or annual reports, offers suggestions, and presents news and updates to the BOD. The ED is expected to interface heavily with the board chair (BC).

The BC is typically a non-paid volunteer who serves as president of the board of directors<sup>2</sup>. The BC is a key actor who interfaces with the ED on a regular basis, represents the board, and is located at the strategic nexus between the NPO's operations and governance. Often the BC is one of the most generous donors and contributors of financial support to the organization. Some of the critical roles of the BC include being the "organizational spokesperson and board executive" (Soltz, 1997, p. 124). Presiding

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes BCs are paid when serving for R&D organizations, science foundations, or hospitals. However, the general rule is that BCs are not paid for their services to the NPO.

over special ceremonies, interfacing with the media, and interacting with the community, staff, and clients are additional duties that the BC performs. However, the BC's "chief responsibility is to provide leadership" (Soltz, 1997, p. 125). The BC is supposed to define objectives, delegate responsibilities, and motivate BOD members to accomplish their goals. The BC oversees the activities of all the committees and spends considerable time communicating with the ED. Ideally, the ED/BC relationship rests on mutual trust and respect. Both the ED and the BC are responsible to the larger board of directors (BOD), the ultimate trustees of the NPO.

The BOD is typically comprised of non-paid volunteers<sup>3</sup> who bear legal responsibility for the success or failure of the nonprofit (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). The BOD members are the key actors who provide governing leadership and policy-setting for the NPO. Also, the BOD monitors, evaluates, and provides accountability for the ED. Often the directors are the biggest financial supporters of the nonprofit. According to Ingram (2003), the three main functions of the BOD include: preserving trust (overseeing the mission and preserving institutional autonomy), setting policy, and supporting (promoting) the organization.

The main duties of the BOD encompass selecting, supporting, evaluating the ED; reviewing and protecting the mission of the NPO; planning and serving as the NPO's fiduciary representative; overseeing the finances; serving as ambassadors for the NPO; evaluating the NPO's programs; communicating the community's perspective to the

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<sup>3</sup> Sometimes board members are paid when serving for R&D organizations, science foundations, or hospitals. However, the general rule is that BOD members are not paid for their services to the NPO.

NPO; serving as final court of appeals in internal conflicts; and engaging in self-assessment of its own effectiveness as a BOD (Ingram, 2003). In the final analysis, the BOD maintains a system of decision-making checks and balances among the staff, the board, and all other NPO stakeholders (Soltz, 1997).

Perhaps one of the most consequential roles of the BOD is to hire the ED as part of the leadership succession process.<sup>4</sup> Leadership succession is the organizational process that seeks to ensure the leadership continuity through the identification, acquisition, development, and retention of talented employees. This study argues that leadership succession, as an organizational phenomenon, involves strategic decisions and discursive exchanges among various actors including the incumbent and incoming executive directors (EDs) and members of the board of directors (BOD), especially the board chair (BC). Leadership succession is shaped by the communicative interactions of key organizational actors. The ways that these actors talk about the antecedents, enact the actual process, explain the consequences, and justify the outcomes of leadership succession is rooted in discourse. Communication is at the heart of leadership succession in all organizations including nonprofit organizations.

In this study I use the terms executive director, chief executive, CEO, and ED interchangeably.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the terms president, board president, chair, chair(wo)man, board chair, and BC have the same meaning. Finally, the terms BOD, board of directors,

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<sup>4</sup> In this study leadership succession points specifically to the process associated with the replacement of the ED.

<sup>5</sup> Various authors might have different preferences. The term “ED” is favored in NPOs since the term “CEO” is often associated with the for-profit sector.

directors, members of the board of directors, and board members are also used interchangeably.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Leadership succession in nonprofits has become a hot topic which is drawing increased scholarly attention. There are four chief reasons for examining leadership succession in nonprofits.

First, from a practical standpoint, leadership in nonprofits is on the brink of a major crisis. Nonprofits usually experience higher rates of executive turnover due to the stress of the job, under-funding, and burnout (Adams, 1998, 2002). In addition, many EDs of nonprofits founded in the 60's and 70's are about to retire, and it is anticipated that their positions will be hard to fill. The baby boomers are aging and planning to retire in great numbers in the next few years, and the vacuum will be only partially filled by insufficient numbers of younger and sometimes inexperienced leaders (Peters & Wolfred, 2001; Survey of Annie E. Casey Foundation Grantees, 2001; Survey of Maryland Executive Directors, 2002).

Whitmell (2005) claims that the next few years will bring about unprecedented demographic changes and challenges for nonprofits. She compares the *en masse* retirement of the baby boomers to a generational exodus that will leave the leadership positions in NPOs vacant and vulnerable. Moreover, most of the EDs that Allison (2002) interviewed state that they would not take another executive position for a nonprofit, even if the opportunity arose.

Hernon, Powell, and Young (2001) echo the same observations in their research findings pertaining to university library directors. Replacing directors is challenging because of the small size of the pool of qualified potential directors. Moreover, some of the people belonging in this limited pool might be qualified but not interested in taking the leadership jobs. In addition, many of these nonprofit organizations are smaller in size, so, finding the internal replacement is challenging. These issues pose major concerns for boards with regard to ED succession. It is evident that there is a shortage of leaders in the nonprofit sector which is only aggravated by the current demographical trends.<sup>6</sup> Even though leadership succession is a major issue in the voluntary sector, the topic is still understudied and not well understood (Allison, 2002; Austin & Gilmore, 1993).

Second, even though the topic of leadership succession has been examined in great detail in for-profit organizations, the differences between the two sectors justify a separate line of research that looks exclusively at the leadership succession process in NPOs. While there are similarities between for-profit and nonprofit entities (i.e. business process design, operations management, organizational design, human resource management, and strategy), there are also key differences that set the nonprofits apart (Phills, 2005).

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada 2001 reports that every occupation and every position will be faced with talent shortage in the coming years. For example, in the world of academia, Canadian universities will be seeking 30,000 new faculty members by 2010. Curran (2005) claims that because of the aging population and the lower fertility rates in N. America, immigrants will have to plug some of the holes in the occupations at risk in order to avoid economic collapse. Leadership of nonprofits is not spared the crisis.

These differences include the need to raise money, the usage of mission accomplishment as evaluation for success, the lower salaries for the managers and staff, the limited availability for resources, and the absence of incentives for increasing productivity. In addition, the nonprofit organizations do not have “owners” as the for-profit companies do. The board members of the nonprofits might be the owners of their own for-profit organizations, but they do not “own” the nonprofit entities on whose boards they sit.

The main difference between for-profit and nonprofit organizations is the mission or the direction of the nonprofit. “For a for-profit organization, performance is typically defined in terms of profitability or economic returns to its owners. For the nonprofit (as well as for some for-profits), performance is defined more broadly, typically in terms of achieving the mission” (Phills, 2005, p. 17).

The mission of a nonprofit is its *raison d’être*, the output, the aspirations, the overarching goals, or its purpose for existence. Mission has a “primacy in the nonprofit sector because it also serves as a source of inspiration by defining the significance and importance of the organization’s work. In this sense mission is the psychological and emotional logic that provides the energy that drives the organization. Thus, it also serves the motivation function by inducing people both inside and outside the organization to invest their resources, their time, their energy, and their passions in the service of the direction embedded in the mission” (Phills, 2005, pp. 15-16).

Third, communication is vital to the effectiveness of the leadership succession process (Oster, 1995). Even though communication is important, most studies do not

explicate *how* communication enacts the leadership succession process; that is, the way the succession process develops over time, the way key individuals interact about it, and the meanings that each attach to it as grounded in communication. By studying how the process evolves, researchers can gain a better understanding of how social actors construct leadership succession. From a leadership standpoint, even though management scholars have conducted a plethora of studies in leadership succession in for-profits, communication has not been properly accounted for in either for-profits or nonprofits.

Most of the management studies fail to account for the role of social interactions in the succession research. It is no wonder that leadership succession studies focus mainly on antecedents and consequences of succession (Pitcher, Chreim, & Kisfalvi, 2000, p. 627). Antecedents and consequences are considered independent variables that do not hinge directly upon the communicative exchanges of internal actors (Giambatista, Rowe, & Riaz, 2005, p. 6). Of course, *antecedents* can be “explained” and *consequences* can be “presented” via communication. Even the *succession event* itself can be “framed” strategically with the aid of discourse. But only a study of the process can demonstrate the integral role that discourse plays in constructing the actual leadership succession in all its complexity. Leadership succession unfolds across time as it encompasses progressions of interrelated events. Discourse becomes a way for individual actors to make sense of these events and then act on these interpretations. The succession process deals directly with the actors’ communicative actions employed during leadership transition and organizational change.

Eisenberg, Murphy, and Andrews (1998) have written one of the few non-prescriptive journal articles that explains the role communication plays in the leadership succession process in a nonprofit organization. Specifically, the authors looked at leadership succession in the academic arena by examining the selection of a new Provost. The authors explored “how meanings of the search process were manufactured socially through the communicative actions of participants” (p. 2). Eisenberg et al. (1998) presented a highly situated, local, social, and historical account of a university Provost search through the analysis of search committee meetings and communicative choices that were “shaped by individual agendas and by legal, organizational, social, and relational constraints” (p. 3).

The provost succession process proved to be a perfect example of sense making and “organizing” as various actors (the committee members) came to the negotiation and decision making table with “vying narratives” (Eisenberg et al., 1998, p. 7). The authors noted that the chaotic succession process allowed rules and order to emerge, be experienced, and negotiated through the communication interactions of individuals. Citing Brown (1978), the authors noted that “rationality, rather than being the guiding rule of organization life, turned out to be an achievement – a symbolic product that [was] constructed through actions that in themselves [were] nonrational. [Thus], the dichotomy between rationality and nonrationality [was] itself ultimately unfounded, emerging mainly from the legitimacy in our culture of ‘rational,’ and the illegitimacy of ‘nonrational,’ conduct” (p. 370).



Eisenberg et al. (1998) concluded their article by implying that communication played an important role in the search process which resulted from colliding or collaborating narratives negotiated in committee meetings. This process became a social construction as various decisions were shaped by the plurality of voices belonging to the search committee members as well as other stakeholders. Internal university players (President, Interim Provost, and administration and faculty members on the search committee), external stakeholders (the reporters and public who were privy to the unfolding of the search process thanks to the Sunshine Laws), and even the researchers (by nature of “constructing the very perspective” they described) proved to be influential in the search process. The search process unfolded as key organizational actors both talked about it and, also, enacted it.

Fourth, and finally, studies have not adequately explained the connection between the ED-BC/BOD interactions and relationships and the succession process. The literature indirectly suggests that the ED and BC/BOD often become the pivotal point around which problems in leadership succession emerge. As Brian O’Connell (1985, p.52) states “the greatest source of friction and breakdown in voluntary organizations of all types, sizes, ages and relative degree of sophistication and excellence relates to misunderstandings and differing opinions between the voluntary [board] president and staff [executive] directors.” The source of this friction is found in the role and task ambiguity that the BC/BOD and the ED deal with.

On the one hand, the BC and BOD act as mentors, nurturers, supporters, and friends of the ED (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). On the other hand, the BC and BOD

function as the tough sources of accountability and control when it comes to monitoring and evaluating the ED's performance (Carver & Carver, 2001). Legally, the BOD is responsible for the success of the NPO. However, in practice, the ED is accountable if the organization does not perform and meet its goals (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). The BC/BOD and ED interactions and relationships become significant and consequential in the leadership succession process in NPOs.

These ambiguous relationships suggest a number of dialectical tensions that must be managed strategically in order for the succession process to unfold effectively. By oscillating between vertical(boss)/horizontal(peer), responsibility/irresponsibility, change/stability, and freedom/control tensions, the BC/BOD-ED relationships and interactions become strategic in the leadership succession process. Past studies, because of their deterministic outlook and prescriptive orientation, have overlooked the role these dialectical tensions play in the leadership succession process. Moreover, there are deficiencies in the way the current literature treats the BC, ED, and BOD relationships as static and stable. Finally, since the prescriptive literature tends to favor the controlling governance's perspective, these past studies have failed to adopt a co-construction outlook that equally privileges multiple voices involved in the succession process.

In conclusion, future studies need to explicate how the leadership succession process becomes many things to many people. It is through the collapsing of meanings, the meshing of voices, and the clashing of dialectical tensions that leadership succession takes place. Thus, leadership succession becomes a co-construction of sorts. By leveraging the board as an outlet, the ED and BC voices collide, converge, and co-author

the succession process itself. Studying leadership succession in nonprofits is of value given the rapidly changing environment, the paramount role of communication, and the strategic relationships shared by the BC/BOD and the ED.

This study looks at the leadership succession process by focusing on the pivotal ED-BC/BOD relationship as reflected in their own interactions, views of the board members, insights of the members of the executive search committee, and the views of senior staff members. This research aims to unpack how the outcome of the leadership succession process is a manifestation of the ED/BC dialectical interactions reflected and channeled through the BOD, search committee, and staff members. This study brings together research from the realms of leadership succession and nonprofit governance.

Discourse analysis and dialectics supply the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. Dialectics provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how tensions experienced by the ED, BC, and other BOD members lead to leadership change. Discourse analysis offers the methodology for analyzing these tensions and unraveling “the mysteries of social construction that produce societies, organizations, and individuals” and processes, including leadership succession (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 87).

The next section presents the theoretical orientation that frames the study and provides two of the four research questions. The study then continues with reviews of the literature on NPO leadership, ED/BC leadership, and leadership succession which prompt the last two research questions. The study then covers the research design, a description of the two nonprofit organizations, information about data collection and

data analysis, and the presentation of a pilot study as part of the methods section.

Finally, the study ends with the presentation of the two case studies, their comparison and analysis, and the summary of the research findings.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

This study assumes that language constructs social reality and organizational processes. This view is supported by many scholars in both nonprofit management and organizational communication research. Applying a social constructionist view to NPOs, Herman and Renz (1997) have argued for “the value of treating nonprofit organizational effectiveness as a social construction” (Herman & Heimovics, 1993, 1994; Herman & Renz, 1997, p. 6). The authors remark that when one assumes a social constructionist stance, concepts like “organizational effectiveness” are not independent but rather dependent on the actors who use these concepts. Scott (1995) eloquently echoes this concept when he observes that “in the social constructionist view, individuals do not discover the world and its ways, but collectively invent them” (p. 50).

### *Discourse Analysis*

Putnam and Pacanowsky (1983) have advocated the use of qualitative studies to understand the social constructionist role of organizational communication. One strategy suggested as a means for researching organizations is *discourse analysis*. Following that call, the last two decades have witnessed a surge in the number of discourse analysis studies covering various areas: leadership (Fairhurst, 2007), conflict

management and negotiations (Putnam, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Putnam, Grant, Mickelson, & Cutcher, 2005), organizational communication (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001), globalization (Spicer, 2004), decision making (Mauws, 2000), organizational change (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), identity management (Phillips & Hardy, 2002), inter-organizational collaboration (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000), organizational collaboration (Lawrence, Phillips, & Hardy, 1999), collaboration and conflict (Phillips & Hardy, 2002); organizational discourse (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Chia, 2000; Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2000), discourse and social change (Fairclough, 1992), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), and organizational storytelling (Boje, 1995, 2001).

As an epistemology, discourse analysis assumes that organizations are social constructions formed at the intersection of discursive interactions among social actors. Phillips and Hardy (2002) claim that the world (i.e. organizations) cannot be known in isolation from discourse. Discourse analysis examines how language constructs phenomena in organizations (i.e. leadership succession). Fairclough (1992) states that “discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct and constitute them” (p. 3). Phillips and Hardy (2002) add that while other methodological approaches “interpret or understand social reality as it is,” discourse analysis exposes the ways in which reality is produced and how it is maintained over time (p. 6).

Discourse analysis provides the strategies necessary to unpack and explain the production of social reality by indicating how language is constitutive rather than

representative or reflecting. Also, discourse analysis is conducive to reflexivity on the part of the researchers who incorporate their own research methods and practices into the study itself. Holland (1999) highlights the benefits of increased reflexivity which enable the researchers to see how their investigation processes shape the outcomes of their own research. Finally, discourse analysis is “subversive” in that it challenges entrenched assumptions about organizations, processes, society, and relations (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

In organizational communication, Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) promote the social constructionist view in their article on organizations as complex discursive constructions. According to these authors, researchers typically adopt three main orientations in the relationship between language and organizations:

- Object – this orientation “casts the organization as an already formed object or entity with discursive features and outcomes” (p.9). Organizations produce discourse. Discourse is an artifact, and the organization is a black box that records these discourses.
- Becoming – this orientation presents the organization in a continuous state of becoming and discourse as being formative. Organizations are presented through *organizing* which takes place in the sharing of power/knowledge systems between various organizational actors. The use of language and the interaction processes lead to organizing practices and the becoming effects.
- Grounded in action – this orientation looks at organizations as being anchored in action and discursive forms. Organizations emerge from the

association between humans and objects who produce and reproduce the social system.

This study adopts the perspective of the “becoming orientation” in that discursive exchanges between key actors constitute the process of organizing. Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) capture the connection between discourse, dialectical tensions, and organizational process as they state that:

Discourse exists prior to organizations because the properties of language and interaction produce organizing. Specifically, organizing emerges through linguistic forms that signal relational differences (such as, requests versus commands), align group members into categories (high status versus low status), legitimate actions (affirm versus reject), enact powerful versus powerless speech forms (for instance, interruption, hesitations, nonfluencies, forms of address), or signal domination (specifically, monopolizing turn taking and controlling topic shifts). This perspective, then, actively rejects the role of language as an artifact and embraces discourse as constituting the micro- and macro-aspects of organizations. (p. 13)

Thus, organizational processes can be understood as the creation of key actors who invoke specific discourses and manage the various dialectical tensions which they experience. Discourse analysis and dialectics form the epistemology and theoretical framework for this study of leadership succession process in nonprofits.

### *Dialectics*

The leadership succession process is socially constructed through individual and organizational enactments expressed in talk and text. These discursive enactments generate and are generated by dialectical tensions. These dialectics are reflected at both micro- and meso-levels of discursive interactions among organizational actors.

In recent years, a number of organization scholars have examined these dialectics at both theoretical (Barge, 1996; Fairhurst, 2001; Putnam, 2004; Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004; Stohl & Cheney, 2001) and methodological levels (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998; Cissna, Cox, & Bochner, 1990; Kellett, 1999; Putnam, 2004; Rawlins, 1983, 1989; Seo et al., 2004).

According to a state-of-the-art literature review, the topic of dialectics in organizational communication studies has received increased attention in the last couple of decades (Putnam & Boys, 2006). Some of the recent studies look at the role dialectical tensions play in organizational conflict, change, control systems, organizational democracy, role ambiguity, and leadership (Putnam, 1986; Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Other studies in the area of corporate downsizing examine the role dialectics of people vs. profits and short-term vs. long-term play in leading to unintended consequences (Fairhurst, Cooren, & Cahill, 2002). Next, studies that examine corporate mergers reveal that dialectics of people vs. profits, empowerment vs. powerlessness, and identification vs. estrangement inhibit change and freeze ideological positions (Howard & Geist, 1995). In addition, research of a Grameen Bank exposes that the dialectic of control vs. emancipation and dependency vs. self-sufficiency instigates social change and leads to empowered entrepreneurs (Papa et al., 1995).

Putnam & Boys (2006) remark that a “postmodern approach to organizational dialectics treats change as evolving from a continual interplay of three types of opposing forces: autonomy vs. connection, stability vs. change, and resistance vs. compliance” (p. 561). First, the dialectical tension between autonomy vs. connectedness is covered in



Jameson's (2004) study about nurses and anesthesiologists wrestling with issues of supervision and educational preparation. Further studies explore the dialectics of autonomy vs. connection occurring in tandem with the dialectic of control vs. yielding in "developing tacit norms during a teacher – administrator negotiation" (Putnam, 2003; Putnam & Boys, 2006, p. 561). Along the same lines, the dialectic of autonomy vs. connection mingles with the dialectic of solidarity vs. division in a symphony company whose stakeholders deal with identity negotiations (Rudd 1995, 2000). Last, the dialectic of independence vs. dependence is introduced as nested within the autonomy vs. connection struggle experienced between a corporation and its Thai subsidiary (Stage, 1999).

Second, the dialectic of stability vs. change emerges from studies done on co-operatives whose workers wrestle with embracing change while not compromising their central ideologies (Harter & Krone, 2001). Also, the dialectic of stability vs. change surfaces in organizations dealing with business process re-engineering and organizational change (Kellett, 1999).

Finally, the compliance vs. resistance dialectic is covered by studies done in the airlines industry. Pierce and Dougherty (2002) look at the friction caused by the merger between Ozark and TWA, and the way it is resolved through the management of the compliance vs. resistance dialectic. Also, Real and Putnam (2005) examine the compliance vs. resistance dialectic in the contract negotiations between a pilot's union and the management. Additional organizational studies that tackle the compliance vs. resistance dialectic include discursive campaigns of union members (Cloud, 2005),

sexual harassment (Townshley & Geist, 2000), and discourses of entrepreneurship (Trethewey, 2001).

Moreover, the intersection of dialectics and discourse is present in a multitude of research studies that cover small groups (Barge, 1994, 1996; Frey & Barge, 1998), change and innovation (Austin & Bartunek, 2003; Barge et al., 2006; Fairhurst et al., 2002; Kellett, 1999; Poole, 2004; Poole & Van de Ven, 2004), interpersonal interactions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1994, 1996, 1998; Goldsmith, 1990; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998; Rawlins, 1983, 1989; Tracy, 2002), gender (Buzzanell & Fine, 2000; Jamieson, 1995), conflict management and negotiations (Donohue, 2001; Jameson, 2004; Kolb & Bartunek, 1992; Kolb & Putnam, 1992; Morrill, 1986), and leadership (Barge, 1994; Fairhurst, 2001, 2007).

Whether dealing with hidden/public conflict between key actors, inside/outside group task tensions, creating a specific theory of change, planning change initiatives, analyzing incongruence in leader roles, or diagnosing performance gaps, dialectical theory operates as a heuristic tool for understanding complex processes in organizations, including leadership succession. Adopting a theoretical framework based on dialectics can illuminate the tensions that lead to change in organizations. Before elaborating further, it is important to define dialectics, discuss its discursive roots, and describe its main tenets.

### *Dialectical Theory*

Dialectical theory has a rich history with deep roots that run back to the Chinese philosophers' concepts of Yin and Yang; the Greek's theories of becoming, Socratic dialogues, and conversations; and the Jewish Talmudic scholarship. In modern times, the German philosopher Hegel resurrects dialectics to a preeminent position with his dialectics of idealism. Hegel separates dialectical processes into thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The starting position, thesis, is inadequate and leads to its own opposite, the antithesis. Progress occurs through a superior relationship, the synthesis, which is brought about by the internal, inherent, and inevitable collision of thesis and antithesis. Hegel uses Heraclitus' theory of becoming to form the Hegelian dialectics which later influenced Karl Marx, one of his students.

The Marxian dialectics move away from the Hegelian philosophical idealism. For Marx, his dialectical orientation was not only different, but opposite from Hegel's. While Hegel (1949) deals with the real world as the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea," Marx (1978) looks at the ideal as being "nothing else than the material world reflected by human mind, and translated into forms of thought" (p. 29). For Hegel (1949), idea comes first and abstract thought process precedes the actualization of the idea. For Marx, human events precede the human ideas and thoughts about events. Marx introduces the dialectical materialism which he explicitly contrasts to the Hegelian dialectics of idealism. The dialectical materialism casts the subjective reality of human thought in opposition to the objective reality of everything outside the human mind, the

material. For Marx, dialectics provides the framework for the development of socio-political contradictions reflected in class struggles.

The dialectical theory that guides this research does not belong to dialectical materialism and does not resemble in either form or substance the Marxist dialectics. The theoretical orientation of this study moves even beyond the Hegelian dialectics of idealism. More specifically, this study builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialectics. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) develops his theory through the conflation of dialectics and discourse as he seeks to explain the nature of our everyday experiences.<sup>7</sup> He understands society as consisting of two distinct, dialectical voices: the forces of unity and the forces of difference.<sup>8</sup> The dialectical tension between unity and difference work in all aspects of life including the conceptualization of self, the adherence to structure, and the relationships with others in the social world. Bakhtin's dialectical perspective is different from other previous scholars, i.e. Hegel. Bakhtin's underlying dialectics have no ultimate resolution as they provide continuous opportunity for interplay.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness, and that's how you get dialectics" states Bakhtin in *Speech Genres* (p. 147).

<sup>8</sup> These are centripetal and centrifugal forces which will be explained later.

<sup>9</sup> There is no finalizability as dialogue is generated by ongoing dialectics of both/and. Honeycutt (1994) points to Bakhtin's reference to an always-present force that gives utterances their dialogic aspect: "the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher superaddressee (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions" (*Speech Genres*, p. 126). This superaddressee force can be viewed as "God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the

One of Bakhtin's key concepts is the idea that "self is dialogic, a relation" (Holquist, 1990, p. 19). The implication is that individuals are not independent of societal processes, and that, conversely, societal processes are dependent on individuals. Also, it can be inferred that organizational actors are not independent of organizational processes, and that, conversely, organizational processes<sup>10</sup> are dependent on organizational actors. Another chief concept in Bakhtin's theory is the claim that all utterances, including those of organizational actors, are "heteroglot" (Holquist, 1990, p. 70). In other words, actors' context-bound utterances are shaped by discourses belonging to a polyphonic organization; some of these discourses are centripetal (i.e. voices that are coming together, converging, and becoming dominant) and others are centrifugal (i.e. voices that are moving apart, diverging, and becoming more muted).<sup>11</sup> The dialectical theory with its Bakhtinian roots sheds light on how organizational processes are co-authored by the actors' discursive interactions of coming together and moving apart.

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people, the court of history, [or] science" (Speech Genres, p. 126). Bakhtin thinks that all discourse is impossible without consciously or unconsciously acknowledging this presence. This force, "mystical or metaphysical," can be understood as a "constitutive aspect of the whole utterance, who, under deeper analysis, can be revealed in it" (p. 127). This "superaddressee" concept comes from the dialogic "nature of the word, which always wants to be heard, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at immediate understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)" (p. 127).

<sup>10</sup> Organizational processes are co-authored by multiple actors just as an utterance is co-authored by both speaker and listener.

<sup>11</sup> Also, Bakhtin writes about the fact that utterances are shaped by past utterances, present utterances, and the expectations associated with future utterances. Time plays a critical role since it is the backdrop against which dialogic interactions take place. It is the same for space. Thus, utterances, or literary expressions, are captured in time-space capsules called chronotopes.

Adopting an organizational dynamics angle, dialectics can be defined as the interplay of opposites (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998) which lead to opportunities for change in organizational processes.<sup>12</sup> According to Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) and Tracy (2002) dialectics is an approach well-suited for organizations because discursive processes constitute and evolve from dialectical tensions, ones “characterized by multivocality and the indeterminacy inherent when those multiple voices interpenetrate” (Baxter, 2004, p. 2). This plurality of colliding and converging voices is rooted in Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of dialectics.

The constant presence of the organizational *dialectical tension* of coming together and moving apart constitutes the first of the four tenets in dialectics: *dialectical tensions, praxis, change, and totality* (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Traditionally, dialectical typologies that emerge from the organizational communication literature include integration/separation, stability/change, open/closed, freedom/control, and certainty/uncertainty (Putnam, 2004a). Baxter (2006) describes these dialectical tensions as the interpenetration of united and opposed discourses which actors negotiate in their discursive interactions.<sup>13</sup> This point is further developed by Baxter’s (2006) claim that dialectics cannot exist separate of communication and action. The dialectical tensions

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<sup>12</sup> I use the term “dialectics” and not “dualism,” “duality,” or “dichotomies” since these other terms do not necessarily point to an existing tension (though there could be one).

In other words, dual elements can co-exist without leading to friction or triggering change. For example, the duality of something where this something is composed of two distinctive parts that are different; these two parts may or may not be in tension. On the other hand, “dialectics” by its very definition implies and assumes the presence of opposites in dynamic tension.

<sup>13</sup> Rawlins defines dialectical tensions as the “coexistence and conflict of interpenetrated opposites (1989, p. 159).

that actors experience in their discursive practices are instrumental in making and sharing meaning. Actors relate to selves and others in terms of the meaning that emerges from managing these dialectical tensions. This active management of *dialectical tensions* leads us to the next tenet, the concept of *praxis*.

*Praxis* is based on the assumption that individuals are choice-making, action-oriented agents in their organizations. As such, individuals are proactive, in control, and enabled by their past actions and discourses. However, organizations and social worlds also act back on these individuals (Tracy, 2002). Thus, individuals can become reactive and limited by their prior actions and discourses. To that end, praxis centers on the idea that actors will oscillate between two experiences: subject (proactive, choice-making, acting on) and object (reactive, choice-constrained, being acted upon). Along this continuum there are choice-points that actors can embrace when managing dialectics.

#### *Management of Dialectical Tensions*

Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) discuss five specific choice points that actors can engage when managing dialectical tensions: *selection*, *separation*, *integration*, *transcendence*, and *connection*.<sup>14</sup> First, *selection* entails denial; actors place the two poles in a “cold war” relationship where they ignore one of the poles and favor the other. Second, *separation* allows for the existence of both opposing poles, but places them in a pendulum-like oscillation movement; both dialectical poles exist but they are separated

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<sup>14</sup> Baxter and Montgomery (1996) present eight patterns of praxis for managing dialectical tensions: denial, disorientation, spiraling inversion, segmentation, balance, integration, recalibration, and reaffirmation.

“through levels of analysis, topical domains, or temporal processes” (Seo et al., 2004).

The third pattern of praxis, *integration*, combines the dialectical tensions in neutralizing or bridging ways. This is reminiscent of the Hegelian synthesis that brings about a new state which contains diluted residues of the two previous antithetical states. Fourth, *transcendence* manages the tensions by abandoning them and reformulating a new whole. The two poles are downplayed or transformed through reframing which shifts the actors’ attention to new meanings. Finally, *connection* seeks to find ways to equally accept the dialectical tensions by giving them “equal voice.” The difference between the opposing poles is maintained while “the two poles are connected to each other in a synergistic manner where they become mutually beneficial” (Barge et al., 2006). Seo et al.’s (2004) article provides a framework and a vocabulary for discussing the discursive strategies that actors embrace when dealing with *change-inducing* dialectical tensions.

Next, *change* constitutes the third tenet of the dialectical theory. *Change* refers to the procedural and patterned difference in a phenomenon over a period of time (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998).<sup>15</sup> Organizational change (i.e. leadership succession) is a complex phenomenon that can be heuristically explained through the analysis of the dialectical tensions present in the discursive interactions of actors. This concept embraces Fairhurst and Putnam’s (2004) *becoming* orientation for organizations.

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<sup>15</sup> Poole and Van de Ven (2004) remark that there are four types of change theories: teleological, life cycle, evolutionary, and dialectical. The authors state that change can be often the response to a dialectical motor that deals with tensions around an organizational unit.



Organizations are in a constant state of change. The complexity of conflicting discourses in an organization shape and re-shape the organization and its processes.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, *totality* refers to the notion that sets of dialectics cannot be fully understood in isolation from each other and in separation from context. Organizations are best viewed as systems of interdependencies and interrelatedness. Sets of dialectics work together and define each other (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Thus, multiple levels of organizations exhibit multiple sets of embedded and co-formative dialectics.

Employing the dialectical theory in this study is strategic. The dialectical theory, coupled with discourse analysis as methodology, provides the tools<sup>17</sup> and vocabulary to conceptualize and unpack the discursive tensions enacted by the key actors in the NPO leadership succession process.

### **Research Questions**

Drawing from the studies in discourse analysis, dialectics in organizational communication, and dialectical theory, two research questions surface at this time:

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<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin (1981, 1986) points to the fact that dialogue is unfinalizable due to the never-ending interaction between the centripetal and centrifugal forces that shape society.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips and Hardy (2002) state that “it is not individual texts that produce social reality, but structured bodies of texts of various kinds – discourse – that constitute social phenomena. By examining the nature of discourse in conjunction with text and context, including the methods of textual production, dissemination, and reception that surround it, we can understand how the concepts that make social reality meaningful are created (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Discourse analysis, therefore, provides the tools to investigate a whole set of processes that underlie individual-, organizational-, and inter-organizational phenomena” (p. 82).

RQ 1: What dialectical tensions do the ED, board chair, and other organizational stakeholders experience during the succession process in nonprofit organizations?

RQ 2: What types of strategies for managing dialectical tensions do the ED, board chair, and other organizational stakeholders employ towards specific outcomes in the succession process?

Chapter I has introduced background information on the US voluntary sector, definitions pertaining to nonprofits, a threefold rationale for this study, the theoretical framework supporting the study, and two research questions. The next chapter reviews the literature on leadership in nonprofits and leadership succession.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This study examines the leadership succession processes in two nonprofit organizations. In order to generate insightful and meaningful research, it is necessary to review the previous studies done in the areas of nonprofit organizations, leadership, and leadership succession. Chapter II merges two specific streams of literature that informed this study: nonprofit (NPO) leadership and leadership succession. First, this study examines the two major schools of thought pertaining to NPO leadership. The two NPO leadership approaches that emerge from the literature review are (1) the traditional, prescriptive, and normative approach that situates the BOD at the apex of the hierarchy and (2) the alternative approach that argues for the ED as being the actual leader in NPOs. This study points to limitations of these two models and proposes a third alternative that foregrounds the dialectical tensions and contradictory roles present in the ED/BC relationship.

Second, this research reviews the major milestones in the leadership succession literature and seeks to connect them with the NPO sector. The paucity of research in NPO leadership succession makes it more challenging to apply the succession work to the NPO context. However, the larger leadership succession topic has generated copious volumes of research in the area of for-profit organizations. Sometimes these findings can be adapted and transferred to the nonprofit realm. There are gaps in the leadership

succession studies that can be filled by examining NPOs, particularly with attention to the role of communication and the investigation of the ED/BC dynamics that influence the succession process.

The majority of traditional studies in leadership succession and NPO leadership are rooted in the positivist camp. The positivist epistemology looks at language as reflective of reality. Under the positivist influence, for example, the ED/BC communicative exchanges reflect leadership succession. Language describes the antecedents that trigger the succession process. Communication simply explains the consequences or outcomes of succession.

This study advances a qualitative epistemology based on discourse analysis and dialectical theory. Language constructs organizations and organizational processes, including leadership succession. The ED/BC communicative actions influence, shape, and determine the succession process. Leadership succession antecedents and consequences are constructed through the discourses of various organizational actors. The varied meanings of these antecedents and consequences emerge at the intersection of multiple discourses. The consequences of leadership succession become direct manifestations of the discourses adopted by organizational actors and their strategic choices in managing dialectical tensions during the succession process.

### **NPO Leadership**

The literature on NPO leadership is divided. Two major schools of thought have emerged in the last three decades. On the one hand, the traditional prescriptive literature

claims that the BOD has the ultimate power while the ED is hired to serve and implement the purposes of the BOD (O'Connell, 1985; Carver, 1997, 2000). On the other hand, the empirical literature presents an emerging model that posits the ED at the top of the leadership hierarchy and the BOD at its periphery (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). These two models have failed to take in account that the relationship between the BOD and the ED are fraught with dialectical tensions which undermine artificial hierarchical positioning. This study posits a third alternative that presents the ED/BC interactions<sup>18</sup> as an NPO leadership nucleus model, one that is not a hierarchical but a relational dynamic. This ED/BC relationship is amorphous as push-pull dialectical tensions operate on it. Before unpacking these three models, it is important to define the concept of "leadership."

The number of leadership studies is voluminous. From major bookstores to airport kiosks and bookstands, the most recent titles in leadership are marketed as the new and the hottest bestsellers. Wave after wave of books and articles drench the leadership literature landscape. Readers and writers seem to never get enough of analyzing and seeking to understand the enticing, yet elusive, concept of leadership. This past century has witnessed several major trends in leadership studies (Bryman, 1992):

- Up to the 40's – the trait approach to leadership – leadership abilities are innate.

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<sup>18</sup> Few studies have tackled the ED/BC leadership dynamic which can be supported by theoretical analysis and empirical evidence (Hiland, 2006; Leduc, 1999; Millesen, 2004).

- 40's to the 60's – the style approach to leadership – leadership effectiveness depends on how leaders behave.
- 60's to 80's – the contingency approach to leadership – everything depends on circumstances – effective leadership is affected by the situation.
- 80's to today – the so-called “new leadership” approach – examples: charisma, visionary, transformational, inspirational, etc.

Leadership means many things to many people. There are over 7,500 references on the topic in Bass' (1990) *Handbook of Leadership*. Leadership is perhaps the most studied and least understood subject in social sciences and organizational theory (Burns, 1978). Phills (2005) reminds the readers that leadership is a “conceptual mess” that has transformed research into “one of the most fragmented and disappointing bodies of research and knowledge in the field of management” (p. 47).

The criticism notwithstanding, the subject of leadership continues to draw attention from scholars and practitioners alike. Perhaps the chaotic fragmentation of the leadership stream of research provides the fertile environment for new leadership theories to develop from varied backgrounds including organizational communication, organizational behavior, organizational theory, nonprofit management, management studies, and discourse analysis. By adopting a social constructionist view that foregrounds discourse and dialectics, the study can generate new understandings of complex concepts and events such as leadership and leadership succession in NPOs.

For the purposes of this study, it is worth mentioning that leadership and management are considered different concepts. Leadership deals with influencing,

guiding, directing, envisioning, inspiring, networking, setting goals, and doing the right things. Management deals with administrating, bringing about, following rules, controlling, complying, and doing things right (Bennis, 1989; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). This leadership-management dichotomy lies at the heart of the debate about BOD versus ED and BC versus ED leadership in NPOs.

This study defines leadership as: “human (symbolic) communication which modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs” (Hackman & Johnson, 1996, p. 14). Also, this definition adds the element of persuasion by which the leader influences followers to pursue the objectives of the organization (Gardner, 1990). Leadership deals with the creation of specific strategic goals and the process of influencing people to embrace those goals. Conversely, management deals with the administration of actions and resources towards the accomplishment of those goals.

The question that emerges with regard to NPOs is how does the leadership succession process become enacted? What types of tensions among stakeholders become manifested during the leadership succession process? Who drives the leadership succession process? Some scholars argue that the BOD sets goals, casts vision, and marshals resources towards completion of these goals, including leadership succession outcomes. This description fits the BOD-dominant or BOD-centered leadership model.

### *BOD-Centered Leadership*

Today, there are more than 1 million nonprofit boards in the United States of America (Axelrod, 1994). The popular demand for developing boards and learning about their leadership and governance roles has led to the creation of the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB) in Washington, D.C. which was established in 1988 to improve the effectiveness of governing boards. Many scholars and practitioners agree that boards play an important leadership role in nonprofit organizations (Carver, 2000; Herman & Heimovics, 1990; Miller-Millesen, 2003). One of the board's main roles is to recruit/hire the ED. As such, boards become an integral part in the actual leadership succession process.

The prescriptive literature on NPO leadership points to the BOD as the sole source of leadership in nonprofits (Carver, 1997, 2000). The BOD leadership constitutes the hierarchical or traditional model of leadership in NPOs (Conrad & Glenn, 1980; O'Connell, 1976, 1985, 1988). This model places the ultimate responsibility on the shoulders of the BOD (Herman, 1989). The legal perspective on NPOs supports this hierarchical, top-down approach. The BOD has ultimate legal power, and the BC can delegate various responsibilities to the ED (Oleck, 1980). The BOD is at the top of the hierarchy, and the ED works under the BOD's jurisdiction.

The traditional model of leadership in NPOs is centered on the assumptions of the "managed system" theory (Elmore, 1978) with its five propositions:

1. Organizations have goals
2. All the parts of the organizations operate as unitary, rational actors



3. Hierarchical control leads to rational unity of action
4. The top of the hierarchy is responsible for managing the operations towards achieving goals
5. Effective management is characterized by effective information gathering, scheduling tasks for optimal goal attainment, and monitoring performance towards goal attainment

This model reflects the more regimented thinking that has led NPO practitioners and consultants like John Carver (2000) to build and adhere to the *Policy Governance Model*. Under Carver's governance model, the BOD provides vision for the NPO, defines the ends (the goals or the human needs that need to be met), defines the means (the limits or boundaries for the ED and staff), clarifies the relationship with the ED (how it delegates authority to the ED and how it evaluates the ED), and determines its own philosophy, accountability, and specifics of the BOD job. The BOD is the leader. The BC and the ED are under the BOD. The BC is an instrument of the BOD. The ED works for the BOD.<sup>19</sup> According to Carver (1997, 2000) the NPOs' problems are rooted in either not embracing or only partially implementing the *Policy Governance Model*.

Along similar lines, O'Connell (1985) delineates the separation of ED and BOD roles when he points out that the BC fills the leadership role in the NPO and the ED supports the BC.<sup>20</sup> The author adds that the role of the BC includes but is not limited to:

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<sup>19</sup> Carver (1997, 2000) suggests that the BOD should engage in more rigorous and formal monitoring of the ED performance. The author recommends a change in the board's attitude that now demands the ED "to prove" his or her information and reports.

<sup>20</sup> Leduc (1999) mentions that the ED/BC relationship is very transient since an ED will experience several BCs during his/her tenure. The conclusion of his study was that it is

orienting the BOD, representing the NPO to the community, holding leadership responsibilities, leading the NPO, recruiting new BOD members, holding the ED accountable, overseeing all the committees, and motivating the NPO. In addition, O'Connell (1985) delineates the duties of the ED: serving as expert and source of information for the BOD, assisting the BC, managing the staff, and fundraising.

The general leadership roles of the BOD are summed up as inspiring, leading, governing, fundraising, reporting, accounting, conducting public relations, monitoring activities, and rewarding/motivating key players in the NPO. According to O'Connell (1985, 1988) and Carver (2000), these are not just the roles but the very duties of the BOD. The BOD/BC leads and the ED manages. This clear separation of duties is outlined in many NPO leadership writings (Axelrod, 1994; Chait & Taylor, 1989; Chait, Ryan, & Taylor, 2005; Dietel & Dietel, 2001; Eadie, 2001; McNamara, 2003; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Millesen, 2004).

Scholars typically agree that the BOD/ED relationship is characterized by tensions between the BOD's role of nurturing and supporting the ED<sup>21</sup> and the BOD's role in monitoring and assessing the ED's performance. The debate arises from deciding which of the two parties has the upper hand or political leverage in the leadership

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the ED's responsibility to adapt to the style of the new BC. This was confirmed by Eadie (2001) who states that proactive leadership on the part of the ED is necessary for dealing with the transient nature of the ED/BC relationship. Also, the author adds that the role of the ED is to support the BC by providing key information and sharing his/her knowledge on the NPO.

<sup>21</sup> Chait et al. (1996) remarked that EDs considered the BCs' nurturance of the EDs the most important contribution of the BCs towards the effectiveness of the NPO.

equation of the NPO. The traditional group of scholars and practitioners claims that the BOD has the ultimate leadership position in the NPOs.

However, this study contends that the prescriptive BOD-centered leadership model is too broad and does not properly account for the multiple actors who socially construct the succession process through the management of dialectical tensions captured in organizational discourses. By prescribing power positions in an artificial manner, the BOD model privileges one organizational position (the collective board) and ignores competing positions (ED, staff, individual board members, board member coalitions, and staff/board partnerships). The dialectical tensions that characterize relational interactions among board members and staff fail to be thoroughly accounted when the BOD is cast as the dominant leadership solution.

The BOD-centered leadership model implies that the board's authority over the ED belongs to the collective rather than individual members (Tsui, Cheung, & Gellis, 2004). Thus, the "control over the ED is diffused," and the executive's independence is, paradoxically, enhanced (Tsui et al., 2004, p. 171). Some scholars have proposed an alternative and narrower ED-dominant leadership model. Middleton's (1987) review of the empirical literature revealed three findings: BODs often fail to do their job, the BOD/ED relationship becomes an ambiguous boss/employee interaction, and the ED sometimes surfaces as the official leader.

### *ED-Centered Leadership*

Herman and Heimovics (1991) are some of the most influential scholars who have challenged the BOD-dominant leadership model while proposing an ED-centered leadership alternative:

The traditional view of the NPOs with the board at the top is a reflection of much of contemporary management theory and practice. This theory is based upon a hierarchical logic and certain assumptions about rational action... however, the reality of nonprofit organizational life is that it is much more dynamic than the traditional, hierarchical model. (p. 129)

In the authors' opinion, the empirical evidence points to an alternative, emerging model that situates the ED at the top of the leadership ladder in NPOs.<sup>22</sup> Based on their research and observations, the authors challenge the hierarchical model and conclude that the BOD is highly dependent upon the ED for information. Moreover, the ED has stronger motivations for the success of the organization since his/her job is at stake.

Reporting the results of their empirical study, Herman and Heimovics (1990) remark that the EDs are considered responsible for the success of the NPO and BCs see themselves as of little influence with regard to organizational outcomes. EDs are more powerful and influential than the BOD because they have access to the information and the expertise which sometimes the BOD lacks.<sup>23</sup> Often, the BOD members fail to assume their obligations, and it becomes the duty of the ED to help them meet their

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<sup>22</sup> The authors have led empirical studies in which they asked EDs to recall and describe recent critical events in the life of the organization. The summaries were sent to BCs and senior staff employees to see if they agreed with the ED. The EDs, the BCs, and the senior staff employees agreed with the centrality of ED leadership (Herman & Heimovics, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Herman and Heimovics (1990, 1991) remark that, often, the EDs have better leadership skills than the BOD.

responsibilities (Herman & Heimovics, 1991). The empirical evidence points to the fact that EDs, “not boards, are centrally responsible for the success and failure in nonprofit organizations” (Herman & Heimovics, 1991, p. 112).

Therefore, EDs are “generally assumed to be the principal agent of success or failure in their organizations, even though it is usually much more difficult to assess the connection between leadership action and outcomes in nonprofit organizations than in business” (Herman & Heimovics, 1991, p. 30). They add that “the board has ultimate hierarchical authority and is the executive’s boss, though seldom the center of leadership responsibility” (p. 90). The authors conclude that:

Nonprofit chief executives are centrally responsible for the success and failure of their organizations. The unique position they hold is based on a leadership of responsibilities rather than a leadership of formal authority. This central leadership position does not square with the traditional managed system which places ultimate responsibility and authority with the board. Especially effective chief executives have discovered how to deal with this paradox. They have created and enact an alternative model. (p. 128)

It is clear that many EDs provide the actual leadership in NPOs since a substantial portion of the governance portfolio has been relegated to the executive suite (Chait et al., 2005). Also, Chait and his colleagues argue that the BODs of NPOs have been left behind.<sup>24</sup> The authors would like to see more BOD leadership but they are cautious in delineating relative power between BODs and EDs since other attempts to

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<sup>24</sup> This leads to great opportunities to advance NPO governance through new theories of leadership in the future. Chait et al. (2005) call for renewed intellectual effort to re-conceptualize NPO governance in light of new knowledge about leadership and organizations.

redistribute formal authority between BOD and CEO have led to stalemates (Chait et al., 2005).<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the argument about actual leadership in nonprofits continues as Brian O’Connell (1985) critiques the traditional model which sharply demarcates the board’s governing role from the staff’s managing role:

The worst illusion ever perpetrated in the nonprofit field is that the board of directors makes policy and the staff carries it out. This is just not so. The board, with the help of the staff, makes policy, and the board, with the help of the staff, carries it out. Unless volunteers are committed and involved in the action phase of the organization, the agency cannot develop, and in fact, should not be characterized as a voluntary organization. Also, it is naïve to assume that the staff doesn’t have considerable influence – usually too much – on policy formulation. (p. 44)

O’Connell bridges the gap between Carver’s (1997, 2000) traditional, prescriptive, and normative BOD-leadership model and the emergent, alternative ED-leadership model promoted by Herman and Heimovics (1991). Leadership in NPOs is presented as a complex set of relationships and interactions between staff and board, which Middleton (1987, p. 149) labels as a set of “strange loops and tangled hierarchies.”

Whereas the BOD-dominant leadership model is too broad, this study contends that the ED-dominant model can be too narrow. The ED-centered leadership model does not privilege the multiple voices of influence that infiltrate nonprofit organizations at both staff and governance levels. By focusing too much on the ED position, studies omit that the ED operates within a web of relationships laden with dialectical tensions.

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<sup>25</sup> Chait et al. (2005) acknowledge that a large portion of NPOs seems to operate under the alternative leadership model centered on ED. The prescriptive, hierarchical model proved to be ineffective since complex governing issues cannot be reduced down to simple aphorisms.

Leadership processes become the by-product of multiple actors' dialectical interactions. These processes are not objective realities independent of organizational actors; rather, they are the construction of subjective social interactions between multiple actors, including staff and board members.

Consequently, future research needs to more closely examine the NPO leadership by distilling the complex, tangled web of relationships between the BOD and the ED as representative of the staff. This study builds on the two previous models that favor the BOD and the ED, respectively, as the leadership engines in NPOs. Though incomplete and in need of extension, these previous works are foundational and significant. This study proposes the ED/BC relationship as the leadership focus of the nonprofit organizations. This leadership relationship is found at the intersection of the executive and governance spheres in the NPO. These two actors interface as representatives of the board and the staff. They occupy central positions within the organization, play critical roles in the succession process, and represent the two powerful camps in the nonprofit: the executive staff and the board of directors.

#### *ED/BC-Centered Leadership: The Leadership Nucleus Model*

Scholars agree that the ED/BC dynamic is crucial to the success of NPOs (Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1996; Dietel & Dietel, 2001; Eadie, 2001; Hiland, 2006; Leduc, 1999; Millesen, 2004). The BC is supposed to work with the ED in building the BOD (Chait et al., 1996), and the BC operates as the bridge between the BOD and the ED

(Chait et al., 1996). The importance of the ED/BC dynamic was eloquently captured by Chait et al. (1996) who noted:

[The ED and BC must] learn how to dance together... If board meetings are orchestrated, then the chair might be viewed as the conductor and the CEO or president as the featured soloist. Neither can stray far from each other's gaze nor proceed independently. (p. 123)

Vladeck (1988) echoed and emphasized the leadership centrality of the ED/BC relationship in nonprofits:

The role of the chair is certainly quite pivotal, which is remarkable when one remembers that most nonprofit chairs are part-time, uncompensated volunteers for whom the nonprofit is something quite different from their primary professional or occupational commitment. In many nonprofits, the chair is the board for all practical intents and purposes – other board members are controlled by, or defer to, him or her, or really are not terribly interested.... The relationship between board chair and chief salaried officer (ED) is thus the single most important relationship within a nonprofit. (pp. 73-74)

This study concurs and posits that the dialectical ED/BC relationship constitutes the leadership nucleus in NPOs. This is reminiscent of Mintzberg's (1980, 1989) "strategic apex" which points to the BOD and CEO as the partnership at the top of the organizational chart. The challenge with Mintzberg's terminology is the artificial hierarchical positioning which connotes an element of rigidity. In this study, the ED/BC leadership nucleus is a relational, fluid concept that cannot be easily pinned down on hierarchical charts. This ED/BC relational model builds on the work of scholars like Millesen (2004) and Hiland (2006) who argue that relationship issues are central to nonprofit governance. Thus, this study extends the work on nonprofit leadership into an explanatory process as it applies the relationship models from governance to succession.



This study proposes a nucleus metaphor for characterizing ED, BC, and BOD relationships. The nucleus is not at the top but rather nested in the heart of the organization. Expanding the biology metaphor, the nucleus is a central part around which other parts are grouped. Even though most cells have only one nucleus, it is possible for some cells to have two or more. Likewise, organizations can share two or more conflicting or harmonizing leadership cores: ED/BC, BOD, ED, and/or BC. Thus, this study is not about an ED/BC alliance per se; but rather, it centers on the two ED/BC voices<sup>26</sup>, harmonious or cacophonous,<sup>27</sup> and the way in which they combine or collide during the leadership succession process.

The nucleus contains the cell's genetic material and governs the cell's activities, such as growth, development, metabolism, and reproduction. Likewise, the ED/BC tandem contributes to the fundamental nature of the NPO through policy-setting, vision-casting, leadership succession planning, fundraising, and managing operational processes. The ED represents the operations, staff, and sometimes the organizational clients while the BC represents the board, the moral owners, and other various stakeholders. The ED/BC leadership nucleus bridges the various parts of the NPO system, thus, both reflecting and influencing the "genetic" essence of the organization. The NPO Leadership Nucleus Model reflects the ends and means, or the performing and purposing functions, captured by the ED/BC tandem.

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<sup>26</sup> The ED/BC voices mingle with other NPO stakeholders' voices to socially construct the leadership succession process and determine its outcomes.

<sup>27</sup> Dorsey (1992) reminds the readers that "the National Center for Nonprofit Boards have a significant potential for friction but that effective [BCs and EDs] subjugate their personal needs out of devotion to the organization" (p.3).

Finally, the nucleus has a porous membrane that allows the passage of molecules and particles. The ED/BC combination is a dynamic relationship that is subject to change as new BCs, EDs, and other organizational actors join the organization.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the leadership nucleus model promises to be a fitting metaphor that reflects the subtleties of the ED/BC interactions<sup>29</sup> within the larger board context and captures the dynamic, ever-changing, and amorphous nature of leadership in nonprofits. This study seeks to understand how these two influential organizational actors interact with each other and other board members to contribute discursively to the process of leadership succession.

### **Leadership Succession**

Following this revised model, this study argues that the tensions present in the BC, ED, and BOD relations are likely to peak during the process of leadership succession. The organizational tremors caused by change in leadership will expose the tensions that underline the succession process.

The leadership succession literature has received considerable attention from scholars across many fields. Kesner and Sebra (1994) bemoan the “diffused and often chaotic research stream” that leadership succession has become (p. 327). Organizational behavior, psychology, communication, management, organizational development,

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<sup>28</sup> It is anticipated that various organizational actors could also step in and slip out of these roles of ED and BC even though they may not share the titles formally.

<sup>29</sup> Research indicates that when there is good communication (Dietel & Dietel, 2001; Eadie, 2001; Millesen, 2004), personal connection (Axelrod, 1994; Houle, 1997), high levels of understanding (McNamara, 2003), and trust (Hiland, 2006; Millesen, 2004) between the ED and BC, the ED/BC leadership relationship becomes most effective.

human resources, and finance are some of the disciplines that have contributed to the growth of this literature for the last seven decades.

The succession of leadership has also continued to be an area of interest in the popular literature in which attention is given to the actual leadership position, speculation about successors, analysis of succession planning, and evaluation of post-succession performance (Giambatista et al., 2005, p. 2). The authors note that leadership succession, though fragmented, is a mature field with great future potential. Leadership succession is an extremely important area of study since it indirectly seeks to provide answers for the all-important question of whether leadership matters in the final analysis. The past work is anchored in a positivist and functionalist camp as it fails to capture the interpretive process in which succession occurs. Moreover, this work looks at organizational actors as static individuals serving pre-set functions that do not account well for organizational change. A review of the literature reveals three key areas for examining leadership succession: antecedents, consequences, and the succession event/process.

### *Antecedents*

Many leadership succession studies examine the *antecedents* that trigger the leadership succession event. The literature points out that the antecedent that most often leads to involuntary change of leadership is the organization's failure because of leadership problems (Bass, 1990). A change in management because of poor performance is one way the organization attempts to be adaptive and survive (Helmich

& Brown, 1972). The failure to facilitate leadership succession in the case of poor organizational performance will reduce the organization's adaptivity; hence failing firms have lower rates of actual leader succession than do successful firms (Schwartz & Menon, 1985).

Sometimes the leader is simply viewed as a scapegoat for the organization's shortcomings. When nagging organizational problems remain unchecked and the organization has no plan to deal with critical contingencies, the chief executive loses support and is likely to be replaced (Thompson, 1967). Also, big differences in the ages of the executive and other organizational members bring pressure to accelerate leadership succession (Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984). The main antecedents to leadership succession are poor organizational performance, ineffective leadership, treating leadership as a scapegoat by various stakeholders, symbolic change, need for massive change, loss of support for the leader's position, and the age of the leader.

According to Giambatista et al.'s (2005) research on antecedents of succession reveals board-related antecedents, firm performance, leader characteristics and actions, firm characteristics, industry and other environmental antecedents, and succession planning variables as antecedents. As cited in and adapted from Pitcher et al. (2000), the research on succession antecedents has demonstrated that the greater the influence of the CEO, the less chances there were for his/her dismissal (Boeker, 1992) and the less the rate of succession (Ocasio, 1994; Weisbach, 1988). Leadership succession antecedents fall under three rubrics.

First, organizational contingencies such as the firm's age, size, and industry features can trigger leadership succession (i.e. larger firms experiencing less succession than smaller firms; older firms experiencing more succession than younger firms; stable industries such as manufacturing experiencing less succession than unstable industries such as technology).

Second, leadership succession is affected by organizational prior performance as measured in board expectations versus realized earning per share (Puffer & Weintrop, 1991), return on equity one year prior (Friedman & Singh, 1989), return on equity three years prior (Dalton & Kesner, 1985), return on assets three years prior (Datta & Guthrie, 1994), two-year sales growth (Boeker, 1992), and one-year return on equity and shareholder returns (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993).

Third, leadership succession is influenced by CEO versus Board power as evaluated in CEO duality role (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993; Ocasio, 1994; Zajac & Westphal, 1996), inside versus outside directors and ownership structure (Boeker, 1992; Zajac & Westphal, 1996), allegiances of board members (Fredrickson et al., 1988), independent director stockholdings (Fredrickson et al., 1988), relative CEO/Board tenure (Ocasio, 1994; Zajac & Westphal, 1996), proportion of directors appointed before the incumbent (Boeker, 1992; Zajac & Westphal, 1996), and CEO personal power, ability (Pfeffer, 1992) and "character" (Kesner & Sebor, 1994).

The work on leadership succession antecedents is located in the functionalist camp in the way it treats variables as triggering the process of leadership succession. Dialectics and discourse are absent in these studies. Also, the unpacking of antecedents

is divorced from the understanding of context. These antecedents are static and do not properly account for organizational change. Another significant area of the leadership succession literature that fails to consider these factors is the study of consequences or outcomes in the succession process.

### *Consequences*

The succession literature also examines the *consequences* that follow the succession event/process (Gordon & Rosen, 1981). The change in executives has great significance for the organization's leadership and employees. The literature on succession indicates that change of leadership is characteristic of all organizations that survive over time (House & Singh, 1987). Moreover, House and Singh (1987) note that succession in executive leadership parallels major changes within the respective organizations. The succession in leadership is often accompanied by a change of the political environment that casts the replaced leader in an unfavorable light (Rockman, 1984). Except for major reorganization, the retirement of the chief executive brings about more job changes down the line within the organization than does any other event (Bass, 1990).

According to Giambatista et al.'s (2005) sweeping review of the literature on leadership succession, consequences of succession focus on post-succession performance in terms of accounting-related, market-related, and other performance-related consequences. As adopted from Pitcher et al. (2000), leadership succession consequences can be divided in two rubrics. First, strategic and structural organizational

changes deal with the turnover (Boeker, 1992; Finkelstein, 1992; Keck & Tushman, 1993; Kesner & Dalton, 1994; Virany, Tushman, & Romanelli, 1992; Zajac & Westphal, 1996) and the “going-in mandate” which pertains to the process of the new CEO’s taking charge early in the succession (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Second, post-succession performance deals with stock prices 300 days prior to and after the succession (Beatty & Zajac, 1987), stock prices two days prior to and after the succession (Friedman & Singh, 1989), organizational death (Carroll, 1984), bankruptcy (Davidson, Worrell, & Dutia, 1993), and percentages of games won for sports teams (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979; Brown, 1982; Grusky, 1963).

When examining the consequences of leadership succession, the research reveals mixed results. Ziller (1965) indicates that swift succession of leadership provides opportunities for new ideas and creativity that can enhance the group or organization. Succession of leadership can be a pivotal moment for organizations. Succession is an opportunity for the entire organization to shift directions. A new successor can potentially bring about new values and new strategies. In contrast, Pryer, Flint, and Bass (1962) indicate that changing leadership can usher in organizational disruption that leads to poor performance. Bass (1990) mentions that to avoid the disruptive consequences of leadership succession, an organization can engage in proper planning and create the right expectations for all the parties involved.<sup>30</sup>

In the final analysis, research indicates that succession can have a positive effect on performance (Davidson, Worrell, & Dutia, 1993), a negative effect because of the

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<sup>30</sup> The organization’s search for a chief executive successor is indicative of the organization’s desire to renew itself (Bass, 1990).

organizational disruptive component (Carroll, 1984; Beatty & Zajac, 1987; Haveman, 1993), or a non-consequential effect since succession can simply operate as a symbolic scapegoating event (Boeker, 1992; Brown, 1982). Pitcher et al. (2000) attribute these inconsistencies to methodological problems (Davidson et al., 1993) and the failure to analyze what the new leaders and other influential organizational actors do, decide, and negotiate in terms of strategy and structure (Miller, 1993). As cited in Pitcher et al. (2000), Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996) recommend that scholars interested in post-succession consequences should carefully examine prior performance, conditions surrounding the succession, choice of successor, and the characteristics of both successor and incumbent in order to obtain more consistent results (p. 210). The authors recommend a better analysis of the succession process itself in order to understand the consequences of leadership succession. Because “an examination of processes typically requires access to highly sensitive deliberations and events inside the organization,” very little direct research has been focused on the issue of process<sup>31</sup> (p. 174).

The work on leadership succession consequences fails to account for the role that contextual dialectical tensions play in generating change and bringing about a new leader. Leadership succession outcomes are presented in objective terms when in reality the succession outcomes are mostly subjective and driven by human emotions. Researchers need to conduct studies based on interviews with relevant leadership actors and on participant observations to understand leadership succession as a process. This

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<sup>31</sup> One noted exception is Zald’s (1965) case study.



type of work promises to shed light on the inconsistencies in the findings on succession antecedents and consequences.

### *Succession Process and Event*

In addition to antecedents and consequences, the literature on leadership succession seeks to examine the actual *succession process and event*. Process factors include nature of the process, organizational actors, outcomes, whether the leader is recruited from the inside or the outside of the organization, systematic nature of the process, and voluntary or involuntary nature of the process.

Though some of the research findings are contradictory, Virany and Tushman (1986) indicate that organizations that perform well fare better in recruiting a successor from within the group. However, other research studies indicate that high performance organizations tend to recruit successors from outside the agency. A potential reason is that outsiders are more willing to accept positions in high performing organizations (Lubathkin & Chung, 1985). The advantage that results from locating the successor inside the organization is the continuity of programs, management policies, and stability (House & Singh, 1987).

In contrast, the advantages of recruiting a successor from outside the organization are the infusion of new ideas and the reduction of potential internal conflict over the vacant position (Bass, 1990). Successor characteristics favor an “outsider” if he or she has less than two years of service (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993), was not in the organization during the predecessor’s tenure (Dalton and Kesner, 1985), has fewer than

five years of organizational tenure (Datta & Guthrie, 1994), is younger in age (Datta & Rajagopalan, 1998; Zajac & Westphal, 1996), and has the functional background and education (Datta & Guthrie, 1994; Zajac & Westphal, 1996).

Hollander (1985) recommends that the executive succession process should occur systematically. Formulation of search committees should be a chief aspect of the leadership succession process. The succession research indicates that the quality of the search committee adds legitimacy to the new leader (Hollander, 1985). Search committees play an important role in the succession process since they communicate information about the organization, its culture, mission, goals, and values (Birnbaum, 1988).

Research reveals two major camps in the roles that key actors play in the succession process. On the one hand, practitioners advocate that the CEO should start the succession process the moment he/she takes over the company (Pasternack, Nuys, & Perkins, 1998). On the other hand, the second camp emphasizes the role that the BOD should play in the succession process (Carey & Ogden, 1997). The BOD has ultimate responsibility in deciding who the new CEO is (Mace, 1971; Mintzberg, 1983; 1984). However, the incumbent CEO has great influence over the BOD's decision regarding a successor (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993). Carey and Ogden (1997) state "no responsibility is more important to a board and the CEO than to ensure an uninterrupted flow of capable leadership" (p. 72).

Sometimes the incumbent CEO names a successor, and if the BOD agrees with the nomination, then the incumbent CEO manages the transition of leadership to the next

leader (Vancil, 1987). The famous Harvard author refers to this leadership succession process as the “relay” model. Vancil (1987) calls the incoming leader “heir apparent” to denote the “royalty” aspect of having an incumbent leader select his/her own successor.<sup>32</sup> There are two other models that complement the “relay” model. First, the “horse race” model refers to the struggle between internal candidates who contend for the vacant leadership position. Second, the “marathon” model refers to the prolonged period between the incumbent leader’s departure and his/her permanent successor’s arrival (Intintoli, 2006).<sup>33</sup>

Vancil (1987) claims that leadership succession is “a drama played in three acts” (p. 144). The author describes the stages of the succession process as three neatly unfolding acts:

Act 1 is prologue, serving to introduce the candidates and describe the context of the corporation in which the drama will unfold. Act 2 ends with the selection of an heir apparent to succeed the current CEO, and Act 3, sometimes anticlimactic, ends with the heir apparent becoming CEO and his predecessor stepping down. The star of the show, in each act, is the incumbent CEO. (p. 144)

Along the same lines, Gordon and Rosen (1981) divided leadership succession processes in two stages: pre- and post-arrival stages. The appointment of the successor becomes the dividing milestone in the leadership succession process.

However, succession events do not unfold and proceed as orderly as the relay process implies. Sonnenfeld’s (1991) study reveals intriguing complexities tied to the

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<sup>32</sup> Vancil (1987) argues that effective organizations will select the successor and begin to prepare for the succession process two or three years before the actual turnover announcement takes place.

<sup>33</sup> Usually the vacant position is filled by an internal interim director who usually steps down within the year to make room for the permanent replacement.

role of the incumbent ED in the leadership succession process. The author describes the way a company selects its new chief executive and notes that if the transfer of power is not managed wisely, then negative consequences can follow; consequences that have a significant effect on the incoming CEO, other employees, shareholders, and the community.

Based on interviews with CEOs from fortune 500 companies, Sonnenfeld (1991) identifies four types of leadership departure styles: *monarchs* (who choose not to leave voluntarily but would rather die in the office or be overthrown), *generals* (who leave reluctantly and spend retirement staging a comeback), *ambassadors* (who retain close ties with their former firm and leave the highest post without a fuss), and *governors* (who willingly serve a limited time and leave peacefully to pursue other activities and interests). Sonnenfeld's (1991) study is significant because it provides a typology of incumbent CEOs and the vocabulary to describe their role in the succession process.

Giambatista, Rowe, and Riaz (2005) conclude their review of the succession literature by calling for future scholars to do a better job in explaining the context of successions, perhaps by adopting more qualitative methodologies. Also, the authors call for an increase in theoretically robust studies. Hence, research needs to adopt a qualitative methodology anchored in solid theoretical foundations when studying leadership succession. This study will address these areas by intersecting dialectical theory with discourse analysis as revealed in the interviews of key organizational actors of two nonprofits. The study will stay close to the text while also paying attention to the context of the organizations.

## **Leadership Succession in NPOs**

While the management literature on corporate succession boasts a much richer and longer tradition, the leadership succession in nonprofit organizations is an understudied area lacking rigorous research (Allison, 2002; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). NPO literature has recently begun to attend to leadership succession. This section will define leadership succession in NPOs, describe the problems associated with succession in the voluntary sector, and finish with a comparison of the nonprofit and for-profit spheres.

First, leadership succession in nonprofits is defined as the anticipation of future position requirements in light of changes in the environment and strategy (Bridgland, 1999; Werther, Wachtel, & Veale, 1995). Bridgland (1999) adds that succession is the “deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership in key positions and encourage individual advancement” (p. 96). Benefits of succession planning include continuity of the ED positions, disciplined processes for reviewing leadership talents, increased opportunities for high-potential workers/leaders, and increased talent pool of able-to-be-promoted employees. Problems that arise with leadership succession include potential lack of support from top management, corporate politics regarding internal promoting, and the challenge of being able to predict succession in an era of rapid change (Bridgland, 1999).

Next, the nonprofit sector is ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of the succession process. Bernthal and Wellins (2004) report that 37% of the NPOs did not have a succession plan for their leaders in 2001. Their continued research indicates that

46% of the NPOs did not have a succession plan in place in 2003. The problem associated with the lack of succession planning is aggravated by the swift shifting trends in demographics. Baby boomers are preparing for retirement, and there is a lack of qualified and willing replacements for their leadership positions. Jayne's (2003) research indicates that 75% of the organizations researched are not confident that they have internal capabilities to fill strategic leadership roles over the next five years. Light (2002) predicts that the entire NPO sector will be in "shock" as the entire baby boomer generation retires within the next ten years (p. 82).

Finally, NPO leadership succession has different professional aspects in comparison with succession in the for-profit sector. First, CEOs are highly visible in for-profit corporations. In contrast, EDs in some NPOs are relegated to a less visible position as compared to their counterparts in for-profit organizations. NPOs have traditionally tried to downplay the role of the ED in a spirit of equality and democracy which seems to characterize the voluntary sector (Allison, 2002).

Second, CEOs in for-profit organizations often occupy an official position on the board of directors. Often, the CEO might also share the BC role, which only increases the power and visibility of the CEO in the for-profit organizations. In nonprofit agencies, the ED is rarely a board member, though he/she attends the board meetings and provides constant and valuable input.

Third, for-profit boards of directors own parts of the corporation. The sense of ownership is different for the NPO boards in that a moral ownership or a fiduciary relationship exists between the BOD and the various stakeholders, including donors and

clients of the NPO. Moreover, the BOD members of an NPO are often the largest and most generous donors. They are not usually paid; rather, they pay. In contrast, the for-profit BOD members are paid and reimbursed for their time and travels. Moreover, their wealth and that of the CEO increases with the improved performance of their business. Bonuses and incentives in the form of stock options constitute powerful performance motivators in the for-profit sector.

In contrast, the NPO BOD members do not receive material rewards for good financial performance or mission achievement. Likewise, the ED is not excessively remunerated for improved organizational performance. In the voluntary sector the rewards come in intangible ways defined by mission completion and purposeful living. “In the area of governance, however, the fundamental characteristic of nonprofit organizations – the nondistribution requirement – alters the role of directors of a nonprofit from maximizing shareholder value to something more elusive” like mission fulfillment (Phills, 2005, p. 11). Businesses are driven by profits while the nonprofits are driven by mission.

Finally, a significant difference between the two areas is the unmatched degree of freedom and autonomy that NPO BODs and EDs enjoy in contrast to the more restricted and constrained for-profit BODs and CEOs (Glaeser, 2003). NPO’s are quasi-self-regulating due to the marketplace dynamics of resource scarcity. The constant vigilance of donors or clients keeps the NPOs relatively honest. The for-profit sector is heavily regulated due to the propensity of the CEO and other key organizational actors to cross

the boundaries of ethos. The SEC operates as a monitoring organizational agent for the for-profit sector.

Due to these unique attributes and motivations, the ED/BC dynamic is significant and worthy of investigation as part of the NPO leadership succession process. The oppositional tensions of nurture/manage, boss/peer, vertical accountability/horizontal support, and actual leadership/de facto leadership underlie the ED- BC relationships. These tensions will likely influence the leadership succession process in significant and intriguing ways.

In conclusion, Howe (2004) considers succession to be the true leadership test for the BC and the ED in NPOs. Freeman (2004) recommends that the ED take charge of the succession process since the BOD will not usually step in unless there are performance issues with the ED. The succession of leadership in NPOs is complicated further by the lack of qualified EDs to take over the top leadership job openings. Allison's (2002) study of 28 NPOs revealed that serving as an ED is a one time occurrence. Most EDs do not seem to make a life-long career of NPO leadership due to stress, breakdown, and burnout.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the chance of finding a seasoned and experienced ED replacement becomes difficult for most NPOs.

## **Summary**

The literature review reveals a vast array of valuable studies done in the area of leadership succession. The leadership succession literature looks at several significant

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<sup>34</sup> These are potential antecedents that trigger the succession process.



areas: antecedents<sup>35</sup> (BOD-related, firm performance, CEO characteristics and actions, industry-related, succession planning), consequences<sup>36</sup> (restructuring, accounting-related consequences, market-related consequences, and performance-related consequences), succession event and process (external/internal, voluntary/involuntary), succession metaphors (relay, horse race, and marathon), stages in the process, and incumbent CEO typologies (monarch, general, ambassador, governor).

Notwithstanding these meaningful scholarly contributions, significant gaps still exist in the succession process research stream. Specific action should be taken to close these gaps. First, research needs to focus on the nonprofit sector, especially given the turbulent times that NPOs are experiencing. Most succession studies are based on archival data that focuses on established, for-profit, and fortune 500 companies (Giambatista et al., 2005). Historically, nonprofit organizations have not been examined in terms of leadership succession. Given the differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations and the increased general and scholarly interest in the voluntary sector, it makes sense for scholars to start investigating leadership succession in NPOs.

Second, leadership succession occurs at the intersection of discourses that emanate from various organizational actors. Future work could benefit from moving communication to the foreground of research to gain a better understanding of *how* actors construct the leadership succession process and *why* they arrive at specific

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<sup>35</sup> Examples are age/vitality/energy of the leader, performance of the organization, performance of the leader, need for scapegoat, etc.

<sup>36</sup> The research literature indicates that the firing of a struggling organization's leader is usually followed by an immediate increase in the value of the organization's stock-market shares.

decisions with regard to a successor. Scholars could learn about leadership succession by paying attention to these actors' communicative interactions with each other and about the succession process. In the final analysis, one of the better ways to understand the leadership succession process is to examine the discourses that generate and constitute it. The outcome of the leadership succession process is the result of decisions communicated by and between influential organizational actors. Understanding the communication of these actors promises to illuminate the succession process itself.

Finally, the leadership succession field would benefit from a closer examination of the ED/BC relationship. This study posits that the ED/BC relationship lies at the core of leadership for nonprofit organizations. Most succession studies have dichotomized the leadership succession in board-related or CEO-related antecedents and processes. Fusing these two arenas and examining the combined ED/BC roles in succession are critical for building knowledge in this area. The ED/BC relationship is fraught with tensions, and these tensions are conducive to change, including leadership change. Whether it is the age/health/capacity of the ED, the completion or lack of completion of the organizational mission, the relationship between ED and BC, or the need for symbolic change, NPO leadership succession unfolds at the intersection of discourses between key organizational actors.

By adopting the ED/BC as focal point, examining tensions as the unit of analysis, and foregrounding discourse analysis as methodology, researchers could gain a better understanding of the *hows* and *whys* of the leadership succession process in NPOs. This

study seeks to examine these discourses as part of the leadership succession process in NPOs.

### **Research Questions**

The literature review in the areas of leadership succession and NPO leadership, has elicited the following additional research questions:

RQ 3: What stages characterize the leadership succession process?

RQ 4: What does this study reveal about the ED/BC leadership nucleus model, the way other organizational stakeholders affected the model, and the way the leadership succession process was handled?

Chapter II has reviewed the literature on nonprofit leadership and leadership succession. The next chapter presents the methods employed in researching the leadership succession processes in two Texas-based nonprofit organizations.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Research Design

The last couple of decades have witnessed a surge in the number of qualitative research as more scholars have proposed naturalistic paradigms for examining various phenomena in situ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 2000). Qualitative methodology is rooted in the naturalistic paradigm which assumes that the researcher cannot be separated from the context that he/she studies (Dahlberg et al., 2001). Reality is understood in context, and the research subject needs to be studied in situ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The case study approach helps the researcher understand the context which provides the foundation for data collection, data analysis, and findings of the study (Yin, 2003).

The case study method is preferable and recommended when unpacking “complex social phenomena” (i.e. leadership succession) since case studies “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1994, p. 3). In addition, the case study method is best suited for this research study because it focuses on the contemporary phenomena of leadership succession and it asks questions like *how* does leadership succession unfold in the two nonprofit organizations (Yin, 2003).

This comparative case study of two nonprofit organizations was based on qualitative research methodology. The study compared and contrasted the two nonprofits in order to illuminate the stages, leadership nuclei, dialectical tensions, and management of dialectical tensions experienced and reflected in the discourses of key

organizational actors during the process of leadership succession. By analyzing two organizations side by side, this study generated more meaningful findings than if the study looked at only one organization. Also, by comparing two cases the study became more robust, and the evidence was more compelling. In addition, two cases provided literal replication when the cases predicted similar results and theoretical replication when the cases predicted contrasting results. Finally, the limited number of organizations in the study meant that the project was looking for patterns and theory development and not generalizations. However, the patterns and the theory could be applied to other nonprofit organizations if similar contexts make sense for transferability.

### **Research Sites – Organizational Cases**

This study examined the leadership succession processes in two medium-sized (annual budgets of circa \$300,000), faith-based nonprofit organizations located in the State of Texas (see Table 3.1). First, DY was a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Texas Metropolis One. The organization offered an after-school reading program designed to inspire, equip, and guide urban youth to excel academically, overcome generational poverty, and become contributing members of their community.

**Table 3.1 DY and CC Succession Processes Comparison**

<b>DY</b>	<b>CC</b>
Faith-based nonprofit (founded in 90s) working with urban youth in Texas Metropolis One	Faith-based nonprofit (founded in 60s) helping children from bad homes in Texas Metropolis Two
Circa \$300,000 annual budget Good financial situation in 2005	Circa \$300,000 annual budget Precarious financial situation in 2003
20 to 25 board members Members came from all over Texas	8 to 11 board members Members came from the region
Board meetings quarterly	Board meetings quarterly (met monthly in 2003)
Chair: Don (mid 40's), Jennie (low 30s)	Chair: Bob (mid 50s), Henri (former) (low 70s)
Vice-chair: Laura (high 40s), Charlie (mid 40s)	Vice-chair: Tony (low 70s)
Program Director: Kyle (low 30s)	Office Managers: Jo (low 70s), Sue (high 60s)
ED: Jennie (low 30s), Gayla (low 40s), and Lisa Marie (low 40s)	ED: Tim (low 80s) and Connor (mid 70s)
Succession process timeline: January 2004 through summer 2006	Succession process timeline: January 2002 through summer 2004
Succession initiatives: formal executive search committee and informal board networking	Succession initiatives: informal board networking
ED initiated the succession process by choosing to leave; chair responds/reacts	Chair initiated the succession process by choosing to make the ED leave; ED and board respond/react
Satisfactory ED performance prior to succession	Poor ED performance prior to succession
Jennie resigned ED role despite insistence from chair to stay; Jennie maintained ties with the organization in the new capacity of chair	Tim asked to retire by the chair and board; no formal ties were maintained with the organization after retirement
Gayla served as Interim ED for 6 months	Connor served as Deputy ED for 4 months
Lisa Marie became the new, current ED	Connor became the new, current ED
Permanent successor brought from outside	Permanent successor brought from outside

DY had a program director, a cadre of volunteer tutors, an ED, and a governing board of directors. The board had twenty to twenty-five diverse members who held positions of influence across the State of Texas: university professors, accountants, lawyers, bankers, corporate CEOs, oil business investors, various business owners (car dealerships and restaurants), and ministers.

The first chair, Don, was an oil business investor. He sat on all the committees and worked closely with the ED, Jennie. In 2004, Jennie decided to retire. Don and the majority of the board engaged in a campaign to persuade Jennie to stay. She stayed another year, but eventually left the ED role in September 2005. She was succeeded by Gayla, Don's wife, who worked as a volunteer Interim ED for six months before resigning in March of 2006. Two months later, Lisa Marie was hired as the new and current ED. This case study examined the interplay between the ED, chair, and all other key organizational actors involved in the leadership succession process precipitated by Jennie's resignation.

Second, CC was a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Texas Metropolis Two. The organization was licensed in residential child-care and provided for the needs of children coming from broken homes. CC had a capacity for 28 resident children living in three large homes under the guidance of house parents.

In addition to three sets of house parents, the organization had a licensed social worker, an office manager, a fundraiser, an ED, and a somewhat regional board of directors with eight to eleven members. The board members came from around the area

of Texas Metropolis Two and had various jobs that included: dentists, ministers, educators, accountants, and business owners.

The chair, Bob, worked and communicated closely with the ED, Tim during the succession process. Under Bob's influence, the board decided to oust Tim because of the precarious financial condition of the organization caused by the ED's recent performance. The chair, the incumbent ED, and several other key organizational actors engaged in serious exchanges that culminated with the hiring of a Deputy ED, Connor, in September 2003. Four months later, Connor became the new and current ED after Tim's resignation in December 2003. This case study examined the interplay between the ED, chair, and all other key organizational actors involved in the leadership succession process triggered by Bob's initiatives to oust the incumbent ED.

The two cases shared several similarities and differences (see Table 3.1). The annual budgets were comparable. The structures of the two organizations were similar, although DY had twice the number of board members. The DY board seemed more sophisticated and diverse. The average age at CC was 20 years higher than at DY.

The ED and chair roles seemed central in both organizations. Both ED's tried to be active in running the daily operations, interfacing heavily with donors, raising money, providing expertise in their fields, and interacting with the chair and board on regular basis. Tim at CC was much more authoritarian and controlling than Jennie. The succession process in the two organizations was triggered by Jennie's desire to leave because of emotional burnout at DY and Tim's need to leave because of poor health and declining organizational performance at CC.



Both chairs in the two nonprofits played key roles in the succession process. Both chairs were instrumental in guiding the succession process at least during the early stages. Don at DY stepped down from the chair role during the succession process. Bob stayed as chair until after the new successor was hired at CC. Both Bob and Don interfaced closely with the incumbent EDs and the successors. The new EDs were brought from outside the organizations. At DY, Lisa Marie was hired almost nine months after Jennie resigned. At CC, Connor was hired as Deputy ED while Tim was still ED.

The selection of the two sites for leadership succession research purposes was justified by the likelihood for generating meaningful theoretical findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 1994, 2003). The two organizational sites proved to be conducive to meaningful research since they met Eisenhardt's (1989) criterion for being "transparent." The topic of this research, leadership succession, was visible and evident as a process to the people inside and the observers outside these two organizations.

Finally, the sites presented organizational and structural attributes which promised to produce intriguing results (see Table 3.1). Moreover, the dialectical tensions experienced by the EDs, chairs, and other organizational actors were central in both cases. These tensions made the two sites prime areas for discursive research (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

### **Confidentiality Issues**

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Texas A&M University and met the standards for protection of the research subjects. In addition, the names of the two organizations, the locations, and the participants were changed to respect confidentiality. These names were replaced with pseudonyms throughout the study.

### **The Researcher's Role**

I was familiar with the two organizations prior to conducting the study. I did volunteer work for DY and served on the board of CC during the succession process. Some could argue that my prior knowledge of the organizations and some of the participants could distort the data collection/analysis. I contend that the familiarity that I have with the two organizations and some of the actors involved in the succession process will prove to be an asset since the participants' level of trust and openness will be increased. This promises to lead to richer and more intimate data.

Linstead (1994) noted that when it comes to discourse analysis “researchers interrogate their own worlds as well as that of their subjects and generate new insights by investigating interruptions. Their research is neither self nor subject oriented but concerned with the dialectic of the relationship” (p. 1327). These “interruptions” are deemed to be more evident when the trust level between researcher and research subjects is high.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Several types of data were collected for background information and contextual knowledge of the two cases. However, this study relied on the interviews for the primary data analysis. Most of the data came from in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The author of this study interviewed 25 members (13 at DY and 12 at CC) including the incumbent and former EDs, chairs, former chairs, vice-chairs, future vice-chairs, executive search committee members, regular board members, spouses of key members, and senior staff in both organizations.

The interviewees were picked based on their involvement with the organization, centrality in the succession process, and recommendations of the ED and chair. The interview questions focused on the topics of leadership succession, the actors' specific leadership and organizational roles in the succession process, and the ED-chair relationship as perceived, described, and shaped by the interviewed members.

The interviews ranged from 35 to 150 minutes each and were taped with the permission of the participants. More than 40 hours of taped interviews were generated during the course of two weeks. The study reached saturation (Creswell, 1998) after the first half of the interviews, but all the remaining scheduled interviews were completed in order to increase the validity of the interpretations. The interviews were transcribed, and over 1,200 pages of double-spaced text were generated.

Additional data came from emails, memos, parting letters, board minutes, board agendas, bylaws, newsletters, naturally occurring conversations, board meeting discussions, or executive search committee meeting discussions. The author attended

more than 12 board meetings at CC throughout all the stages of the succession process: pre-succession, during succession II A and B, and post-succession. No actual board meetings were attended for DY. However, one executive search committee meeting at DY was observed and analyzed during stage II B. A couple of executive committee meetings during stages I and II A were attended at CC.

Moreover, field observations allowed for additional data generation. A couple of visits to the organizations as non-participating observer were beneficial as field notes were taken and additional interviews followed. The field notes generated during the observations were translated into memos to self. Some of the critical points captured in the memos were resurrected in subsequent interviews to generate further information. All the data, tapes, documents were stored securely in the author's home office, and they were shared only with parties pertinent to the research (the chair of the doctoral committee and a couple of research assistants).

### **Data Analysis Methods**

This research study was based on social linguistic and interpretive structural analysis which translated into staying close to the text at a micro-level while also paying attention to the larger context (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The leadership succession process was viewed as a social construct that arose at the intersection of the discourses of key organizational actors. Specifically, the study compared and contrasted the discourses and dialectical tensions associated with the leadership succession processes in the two nonprofits.

The unit of analysis was the thought unit that exposed dialectical tensions in the micro-level texts and the organizational context (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The unit of analysis stemmed from the words, phrases, and theme patterns that emerged from the discourses invoked by key organizational actors in relation to the succession process. The dialectical tensions captured in the participants' discourses surfaced from the transcribed interviews. These dialectics were recognized in the push-pull that actors expressed and experienced individually, relationally, or organizationally in terms of opposing thoughts: wanting to *stay* versus wanting to *leave*; choosing to *blame* versus opting to *absolve*; desiring *control* versus giving *freedom*; and fighting for *change* versus defending *stability*.

The transcribed interviews were analyzed qualitatively according to the analytic coding method (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The transcriptions were read and re-read line-by-line to gain familiarity with the data. Next, the texts were manually coded to capture the leadership succession themes and the dialectical tensions experienced and expressed in light of the leadership succession phenomena. Additional copious notes were taken in the margins of the transcripts and on separate blank sheets. Memos to self were also generated in order to grasp ideas that surfaced from constant combing of the data. Finally, the coded data was analyzed in terms of emerging general patterns and relationships. Throughout the analysis the author stayed close to the text and engaged in grounded theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) so that the text informed the development of the theory.

The coding process was inductive as new fragments of data were constantly compared to previous segments of data in terms of similarities and differences. The first step in the coding process was “open coding” which helped identify key concepts and their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A list of almost thirty sets of dialectics was identified based on the first analysis and coding of the transcribed interviews.

The second step in the coding process was “axial coding” which pertained to “relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 124). A condensed list of dialectics was produced. The list of dialectics was shrunk further after collapsing sets of dialectics and clustering them based on their similarities. The condensed list included “staying/leaving,” “blaming/absolving,” “freedom/control,” “cooperation/competition,” and “change/stability.” Also, there were a few sub-dialectics nested within these main sets: “verticality/horizontal,” “public/private,” “honesty/deception,” and “trust/distrust.”

The final step, “selecting coding” dealt with identifying the big-picture themes and providing explanations for what was happening in the nonprofits in light of the leadership succession process. Five themes were identified based on the categorization and clustering of the main dialectics. The themes that emerged from the analysis were: control, strategy, spirituality, accountability, and change.

The coding of data was messy as the steps in the process overlapped often. Sometimes, sub-dialectics were identified before the main dialectics. Sometimes, the themes emerged from the open coding before the sub-dialectics were identified.

To ensure validity for the coding scheme, an additional research assistant was trained and used to code some of the interviews. The two analyses were triangulated through discussions during and at the conclusion of the coding process. The few minor differences that emerged were quickly eliminated after semantic clarifications. The coding and the categories proved to be consistent. Moreover, the validity of the study was guaranteed through “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000). Later informal conversations with board members in both organizations ensured that the emerging themes, concepts, dialectics, and findings resonated with them. Finally, the resonance and the “truthfulness” of the entire study was verified by sharing the final findings with several board members who expressed the desire to read the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Pilot Study**

The impetus for this comparative case analysis came from a small pilot study done a couple of years ago with CC, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that helps children who come from broken homes. The organization experienced a tumultuous leadership succession process which was punctuated by heated correspondence between the ED and the chair/board. The pilot study engaged in a focused, micro-level dialectical deconstruction of the ED’s “parting shots” letter addressed to the chair/board. The typology of dialectics that surfaced in this original pilot study motivated the full and comprehensive investigation of the leadership succession processes in the current research study.

The stream of events that culminated with the penning of the letter was marked by three significant milestones. First, the chair challenged the incumbent ED in a first quarter 2003 board meeting to retire because of poor performance. Second, the board rallied behind the chair and formed an executive search committee in the second quarter of 2003. The third milestone was the executive search committee's nomination of a potential successor and the board's subsequent vote to hire the nominated candidate during the third quarter of 2003. The incumbent ED's response was directed specifically to the chair (and indirectly to the board) through an open "parting shots" letter. The letter is presented in Table 3.2.

For the purpose of the pilot study, the unit of analysis consisted of thought units that revealed contradictions in the micro-level texts (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These units uncovered opposing tensions in the incumbent ED's letter. Dialectics in the form of opposing and co-existing thoughts framed the incumbent ED's response to the board's decision to hire a successor.

The first step in this pilot study was to identify and isolate the micro-level contradictions and create an initial typology of dialectics (Kellett, 1999). As the initial dialectics emerged, the texts that reflected them were marked and coded accordingly. These sets of dialectics were analyzed in light of the concepts of leadership succession and nonprofit governance interactions.



### Table 3.2 Pilot Study (“Parting Shots” Letter)

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Tim Simpson, Executive Director  
P.O. Box Number, City, State, Zip Code

December 7, 2003

Dr. Wayne Childress, President of CITY CHARITY Board of Directors

Dear Sir:

1 I am required by Child Care Licensing to write a letter of closure to the CITY CHARITY Board and  
2 Child Care Licensing for my 15 years of serving CITY CHARITY Executive Director.

3 Jane and I plan to take the last two weeks of December 2003 for our vacation. December 19<sup>th</sup> will  
4 conclude our work with CITY CHARITY. In fifteen years we have had only 6 weeks of vacation time.  
5 We have been on call 24 hours a day for those fifteen years.

6 When Jane and I came to CITY CHARITY in 1989 it was so deep in debt that it could not pay salaries.  
7 We cashed out our 401k and have sold our property, moved to City to help save CITY CHARITY. In  
8 October 1992 all the debt was paid and since that time CITY CHARITY has been debt free. In 1989  
9 CITY CHARITY was licensed as a Foster Home for 8 children. In the fall of 1989 Child Care  
10 Licensing issued CITY CHARITY license for Basic Child Care to care for 18 Children ages 6 to 17.  
11 In 1994 we built Name Cottage and Child Care Licensing issued CITY CHARITY license for 28  
12 children. Since 1989 CITY CHARITY has cared for more than 200 children.

13 Jane and I have many dreams for CITY CHARITY that have not been completed. We’re disappointed  
14 that our work was cut short of our completed dreams for CITY CHARITY.

15 Connor and Sue Lytle are talented dedicated people. They can do a great work if the CITY CHARITY  
16 Board will help them and not be a burden for them. This can be done by giving and helping to raise  
17 money and by knowing the by-laws and going by them.

18 Jane and I have tried to make this transition for the good of CITY CHARITY, the children, staff,  
19 Connor, and Sue and CITY CHARITY Board. I just hope that the Board respects Connor Lytle in the  
20 position they have placed him and allows him to do the job he is required to do by Licensing.  
21 No Children’s Home can survive when the Board tries to micro manage the home. For the past five  
22 years CITY CHARITY Board Leadership has been responsible for great numbers of members leaving  
23 the Board and for causing me much stress that has affected my health. Please give Connor and Sue  
24 better treatment than this.

For the Children, Tim Simpson (CC. Child Care Licensing)

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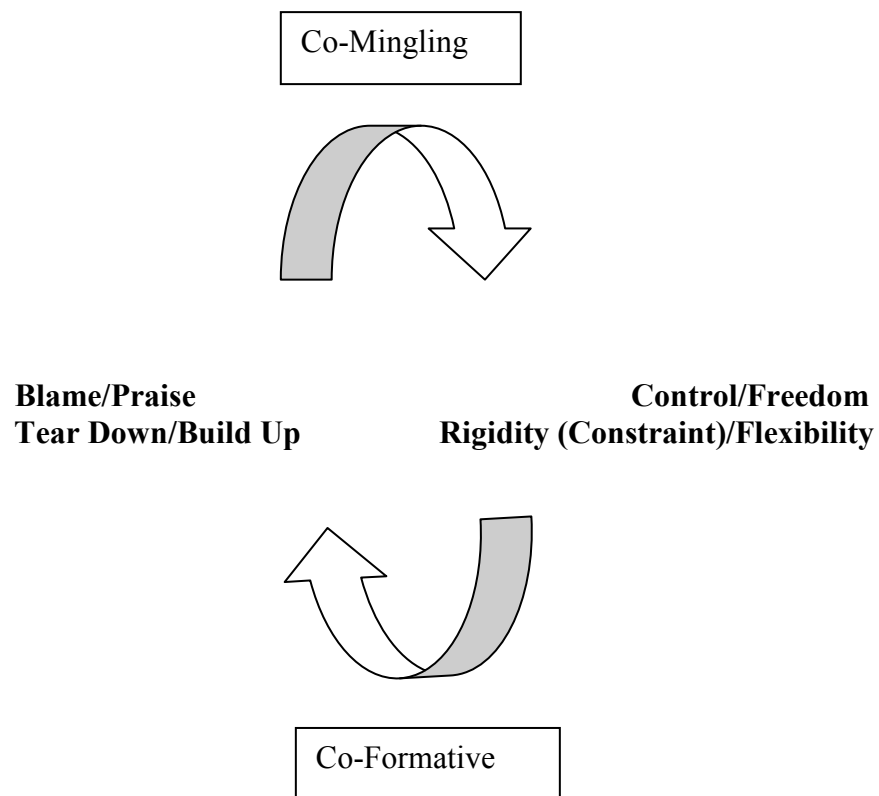
An analysis of the parting letter illuminated two colliding relational spheres of *self* (ED, his wife, CC, and his successor) and *other* (chair and board). The parting letter presented the two *self/other* conflicting spheres as the tensions underlying the leadership

succession process at CC. The tension between *self/other* was reflected in two sets of micro-level textual dialectics: **blame/praise** and **freedom/control**. The **blame/praise** dialectic pertained to *self's* desire of **building-up** *self* while **tearing-down** *other*. The **freedom/control** dialectic pointed to the **flexibility/rigidity** choices that *self* had at his disposal as the succession process came to an end.

These sets of dialectical tensions displayed intriguing attributes. Based on *self's* strategic choices, the sets of dialectics co-mingled and co-formed each other throughout the letter as it was presented in the *Blame/Praise* and *Freedom/Control* subsections (see Figure 3.1).

The pilot study defined the *co-mingling* attribute as the intermixing of these dialectical sets. In the ED's letter, *blame/praise* cannot be divorced from *freedom/control*. The two sets were intertwined as the analysis of the parting letter demonstrated. *Freedom/control* was nested in *blame/praise* and vice versa; thus, the two families of dialectics needed to be examined in conjunction. Moreover, these two sets were *co-formative*. The *blame/praise* tandem fueled the *freedom/control* dialectic. *Controlling* the board provided substance for *blaming* the board. Conversely, *blaming* the chair or board became a manifestation of the ED's attempt to *control* the board.

**Figure 3.1 Dialectics in the Pilot Study**



*Blame/Praise*

As mentioned in Chapter I, Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) provided the framework for discussing the discursive strategies that actors might embrace when dealing with dialectics. The authors discussed five strategies that actors might adopt when managing dialectical tensions: *selection*, *separation*, *integration*, *transcendence*, and *connection*. Some of these management strategies surfaced from the letter of the departing ED.

In this pilot study, the incumbent ED **separated** the *blame* in the **blame/praise** dialectical tension when dealing with the *other* topic and **separated** the *praise* when

dealing with the *self* topic. For example, line 2, the ED embraced the *praise* of *self* pole when he wrote about “[his] 15 years of serving CC as Executive Director” but embraced the *blame* of *other* pole when he wrote in line 6 about the poor financial situation that he inherited from the board.

The **separation** strategy allowed for the existence of both opposing poles which were separated “through topical domains” (Seo et al., 2004). The incumbent ED strategically oscillated between the **blame/praise** dialectical poles by switching between the topical domains of *self* and *other*. Lines 4-5 further illustrated the *praise* of *self* when the ED re-emphasized his tenure with CC and the fact that “[i]n fifteen years we have had only 6 weeks of vacation time... [w]e have been on call 24 hours a day for those fifteen years.” The message the ED emphasized centered on the sacrifice and hard work that he and his wife had dedicated in contrast to the board’s shortcomings. The ED seemed strategic in his choices of managing these *blame/praise* dialectics. By framing things in light of his tenure and sacrifice, he set up the board for *blame* later in the letter.

Line 7 continued his separation strategy of the *praise* of *self* dialectic by casting himself as a Messianic figure of sorts who rescued the nonprofit from the brink of financial disaster. The ED and his wife have sacrificed financially, worked without pay, sold their property, and relocated to the new city to “save City Charity.” Once again, this *praise* of *self* is juxtaposed later in the letter with the *blame* of *other*.

Lines 8-12 consolidated the separation of the *praise* dialectic. The ED listed succinctly the accomplishments of the NPO under his leadership; no debt, renewed licenses, new cottages for the kids, and increased number of kids as beneficiaries of his

ministerial efforts. Lines 13-14 developed further the ED's separation strategy. The ED *praised self* about "the many dreams for CC that have not been completed" while *blaming* chair/board for cutting these dreams short. The *blame* at the *other* topical level was juxtaposed with the *praise* at the *self* topical level.

Lines 15-16 continued the *blame/praise* separation strategy but added an interesting twist. The incumbent ED *praised* his successor by stating that he and his wife are "talented dedicated people;" in doing so, the ED *blamed* the board by implying that the board "would be a burden for them." Lines 19-20 strengthened the strategic shift flagged in lines 15-16. The ED *blamed* the chair/board by separating the *praise* for the successor: "I just hope the Board respects Connor Lytle in the position they have placed him."

The end of the letter, lines 21-24, constituted the incumbent ED's barrage of *blaming* the board which was accused of micromanaging, creating friction with board members who have left, and stressing out the ED. *Freedom/control* was embedded within this last round of *blame*.

### *Freedom/Control*

The ED **selected** *control* by telling the board to treat his successor better, thus, implying that the board treated him (the incumbent ED) badly (*blame*) as pointed out in line 24. The *freedom/control* dialectic mingled and shaped the *blame/praise* dialectic. *Control* of the board fueled *blaming* the board and vice versa. Blaming the board

became the manifestation of the ED's attempt to control the board. The two poles were intermixed.

**Selection**, as a dialectical management choice, placed the two dialectical poles in "cold war" opposition and chose one pole over the other (Seo et al., 2004). Throughout the letter, the ED consistently **selected** the *control* over the *freedom* pole. The choice shed light on the *limitation*, *constraint*, and *rigidity* which the ED seemed to experience himself and sought to place on the chair/board during the last phase of the succession process.

The selection of *control* took place from the first lines of the letter. The ED started the letter by pointing to his being *constrained* by the law. Outside forces acted upon the ED who was "required by Child Care Licensing to write a letter of closure to the CC Board." The ED claimed he had to write the closure letter. However, it was the exigency of the situation precipitated by the chair's/board's decision to hire a successor that compelled the incumbent ED to frame the response letter in terms of the *control/freedom* and *blame/praise* dialectics.

The study already noted lines 15-16 in which the *praise* of the successor mingled with the *blame* of the board. The strategic framing of these two lines impinged on the *freedom/control* dialectic; the ED selected the *control* pole when stating "the Board will help them and not be a burden on them." Through his last hour, the ED dictated *controlling* directives to the chair/board: do not burden the successor, support the successor, do not micro-manage, be better educated about the organization's bylaws, be a generous donor, and be an effective fundraiser.

Lines 19-20 contained an ingenious manifestation of the incumbent ED's strategic choice to select *control* over *freedom*. The framing seemed clever. The incumbent ED's last words attempted to *control* the board by asking the board to select *freedom* in dealing with the successor so that the successor can "do the job that he is required [*or controlled*] to do by Licensing." The ED brought a sense of circularity to the letter by adding the *control* dimension that comes with the external agency of Child Care Licensing. Also, the co-mingling of embedded sets of dialectics was evident in the incumbent ED's *controlling* request for *freedom* for the successor which implied past *control* from the board; thus, the incumbent ED ended the letter by subtly *blaming* the board and directly *praising* the successor.

In conclusion, the deconstruction of the ED's "parting shots" letter illuminated sets of dialectical tensions that characterized the leadership succession process and the relationship between the ED and the chair/board. The two main sets of dialectics that emerged from the pilot study were **blame/praise** and **freedom/control**. It was expected that a larger corpus of data and a more robust contextualization of the case would reveal other dialectics pertaining to leadership succession and nonprofit governance.

### **Revision of the Study**

The pilot study examined the incumbent ED's parting letter addressed to the chair. There were several guidelines that emerged from the study. First, for all its limitations, the pilot study provided a prelude to the array of dialectical tensions present in the ED-chair discursive interactions during the leadership succession process.

Also, the study allowed the testing of a qualitative research methodology based on dialectics and discourse analysis. In addition, the study helped to fine-tune the research questions that came out of the comprehensive literature review that followed. The pilot study increased awareness about the complexities and challenges of the succession process; thus, it became easier to look for pertinent and relevant information during the literature review for this research.

Moreover, the pilot study revealed that the initial scope of the study was too narrow. In order to broaden the scope, it was necessary to add rigor to the data collection process, as well as to include data from additional sources: interviews with the incumbent and incoming EDs, new documents (emails, letters, newsletters, bylaws, minutes, agendas), interviews with board members (especially chairs and members sitting on the executive search committees), interviews with staff, and participant observation if possible.

An additional benefit of the pilot study came from uncovering clusters of relevant dialectics. These initial sets of co-mingling and co-formative dialectical tensions were intriguing and promised to generate future theoretical findings. These oppositional pairs were nested within each other at different textual levels, and they were generative of and generated by each other as the pilot study sought to illustrate.

Finally, there were two main things that I did differently in the current study as compared to the pilot study. First, I was too close to the text, too micro, during the pilot study. I have learned since that it is important to pay attention to the context in order to



capture deeper and richer perspectives. In this current study I managed to account for the context through open-ended and semi-structured interview questions.

Second, I have learned that my initial dialectics needed more fine-tuning. For example, the “blaming/praising” dialectic had different meanings which created some confusion during the initial pilot study. Based on the various meanings, “blaming” and “praising” are not always mutually exclusive opposites as in “A” and “non-A.” “Blaming” has several meanings. When “blaming” is unpacked as “criticism,” the dialectic of “blaming/praising” makes sense. When “blaming” is presented as assigning responsibility, then the “blaming/absolving” dialectic is a better fit.

Overall, this pilot study introduced me to discourse analysis as a research method and dialectics as a theoretical framework. The pilot study provided a springboard for the current research, and an official entry point as a researcher into one of the two nonprofit organizations.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DY CASE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter analyzes the leadership succession process at DY, a Texas-based nonprofit organization. DY has already been introduced and presented in terms of location, mission, budget, and structure in the methods chapter of this study.

First, this case study unpacks the four stages that characterize the succession process at DY: pre-succession (January 2004 through September 2005), during succession A (September 2005 through March 2006) and B (March 2006 through May 2006), and post-succession (May 2006 through summer 2006). Next, the stages reveal the evolution of the leadership nuclei, the influences exercised by other parties regarding these nuclei, the dialectical tensions that participants experienced, the strategic choices for managing these tensions, and the influence and role of other parties in these choices across the four stages. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary which weaves together the four stages to provide a complete a picture of the leadership succession process at DY.

#### **Background and Stages in the Leadership Succession Process**

In 2001 Jennie became the ED of DY. She came in at a crucial time in the life of the organization (see Table 4.1). Prior to Jennie's arrival, DY operated as an inner-city ministry outreach of a protestant church in a Texas metropolis.

**Table 4.1 DY Timeline**

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Milestones and Events</u>
2001	Jennie joins DY as Treasurer at the beginning of the year. A few months later DY is on the brink of closure and in need of new leadership.
2002	Jennie is asked by the board to become ED. She accepts at the beginning of the year. A few months later, Jennie brings Don on board as chair to support her in the inner-city work.
2003	Don recruits many of the current board members. He picks Laura as the vice-chair of DY.
<i>Stage I (pre-succession)</i>	
<b>January 2004</b>	<b>Jennie requests to step down as ED. Don persuades her to stay one more year.</b>
Spring 2005	A year later, Jennie reminds Don that she is still willing to resign as ED. Don offers her paid time off (10-week sabbatical) or higher salary to remain on. Jennie considers the offer to stay and goes for the 10-week sabbatical. The entire board (with the exception of Laura) votes for and agrees to pay for Jennie's sabbatical.
June 2005	Jennie goes to Europe on a paid 10-week sabbatical. The board expects her to return and continue as ED at DY.
August 2005	Jennie returns from the Sabbatical and gives 2 week notice.
<i>Stage II A (during succession)</i>	
<b>September 2005</b>	<b>Jennie resigns as ED of DY and becomes CFO of a British oil company.</b>
September 2005	Don recruits Charlie as a new board member. Charlie is an energetic banking investor.  Don calls an emergency board meeting and the board decides to hire Gayla, Don's wife, as the interim ED. Gayla agrees to work without pay as a part-time interim ED for six months.  Don persuades Jennie to become the new chair. The board (with the exception of Laura and a couple of other members) votes in favor of Jennie as the new chair and Gayla as the interim ED.  Don steps down as chair. Laura continues in the vice-chair capacity.
Fall 2005	Gayla blames Jennie for the current problems at DY.

**Table 4.1 (continued)**

<b><u>Dates</u></b>	<b><u>Milestones</u></b>
<i>Stage II B (during succession)</i>	
<b>March 2006</b>	<b>Gayla resigns from the interim ED position at the end of her six-month commitment. DY is without ED for a couple of weeks.</b>
March 2006	Laura is appointed chair of the executive search committee for new ED. Charlie is appointed chair of the strategic committee in charge of deciding future directions for DY.
April 2006	Charlotte is offered the new ED job at the recommendation of the executive search committee.  Charlie challenges the selection decision  Charlie, Don, Jennie, and Patty investigate Laura's activities.  Laura is removed from the board.
<i>Stage III (post-succession)</i>	
<b>May 2006</b>	<b>Lisa Marie is hired as the new permanent ED.</b>
May 2006	Charlie becomes the new vice-chair.  Charlotte is demoted to Business Development Officer and leaves DY.
Summer 2006	Lisa Marie consolidates her new position. She fires Kyle to hire a new Program Director.  Lisa Marie builds strong ties with Don (former chair) and Charlie (new vice-chair).

Jennie brought change as she distanced the organization from the founding church. Under her leadership, DY strengthened its identity as an independent, faith-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization providing after-school reading programs for inner-city children.

In 2002, Jennie invited Don to join the board of directors. Don was a successful business investor and champion supporter of DY since the organization's inception. Don joined the board as chair and worked closely with Jennie in developing the organization. Don's initiatives included assisting and mentoring Jennie and developing DY's board. In the following months and years, Don brought to the board several successful entrepreneurs and business people including Laura, who was appointed vice-chair in 2003. Laura was a strong-willed businesswoman who brought financial resources, business connections, and various initiatives to the board.

As the organization kept growing, so did the number of challenges. It moved from a start-up mode to a maintenance mode. New kinds of bureaucratic responsibilities piled up on the ED's shoulders. Jennie felt it was time for a change:

So, I felt like my leadership contributed to DY's evolution from the start-up to where it arrived today. But then once DY was kind of on the right tracks, I felt that the entrepreneurial stage was over. The **new organizational challenges** were **new and different** than the type of struggles that I enjoyed when I first started with DY. **The bureaucratic struggles did not appeal to me.** You know, at first, when I first came to DY, there were philosophical issues and much learning about racial issues, education, and community development. Now, however, I felt like I was able to see what the components of the organization would be, I was able to put those in place, and, so, you know, the **organism was in a sort of monotonous motion.** (JH 72)

### **Stage I**

In January 2004, three years after becoming ED and successfully expanding DY, Jennie became emotionally burned-out and communicated to the chair her desire to resign.

I told Don that I **can't take this any longer.** **It was stressful** to see the kids with parents on crack day in and day out. I saw horrible things, and I had enough. In

addition, Kyle, our program director, was **getting on my nerves**. He kept taking responsibility for my successes and appropriating my ministry victories as his. It was extremely silly and **annoying**, and it only **compounded my burnout and stress**. (JH 82)

Don, seeking to maintain the status quo, persuaded Jennie to stay one more year by reminding her of the importance of the organization's mission and her indispensability to the fulfillment of that mission. Reluctantly, Jennie agreed to continue as ED for another year.

This ED/chair interaction was a significant milestone in the timeline of DY since it signaled the beginning of the “pre-succession stage” in January 2004 (see Figure 4.1). Jennie's eagerness to resign set in motion the events that led to the subsequent changes in leadership at DY. Prior to this event in 2004, there were no discussions about leadership succession at DY. The board was pleased with Jennie's performance and expected her to continue at the helm of the organization in the future. However, her burnout and desire to resign signaled that something was about to happen.

A year later, in the spring of 2005, Jennie reminded Don again that she was ready to move on. Once again, Don sought to persuade Jennie to stay:

I asked [Jennie] to **reconsider**. I reminded her of **her importance** and her leadership **and her contribution to this fledgling nonprofit**. We needed a visionary and hard-working woman like her. And I offered Jennie increased pay on the one hand or a paid vacation on the other hand. She chose the vacation. (DP 24)

Jennie accepted the board's offer of a paid ten-week sabbatical in Europe designed to rejuvenate her. However, at the end of August 2005, to Don's surprise, Jennie returned from the prolonged vacation and presented her two-week, non-negotiable resignation notice.

I came back from my trip to Europe. **It was a wonderful vacation.** It was rejuvenating, and I was refreshed when I returned. However, the time off helped me realize now more than ever that I was **ready to move on.** So, I was determined to leave. Of course, Don and the board **were shocked** when I got back and told them that I am resigning the ED position. But I made up my mind, and they knew that I meant it. **Two weeks later I stepped down.** (DP 24)

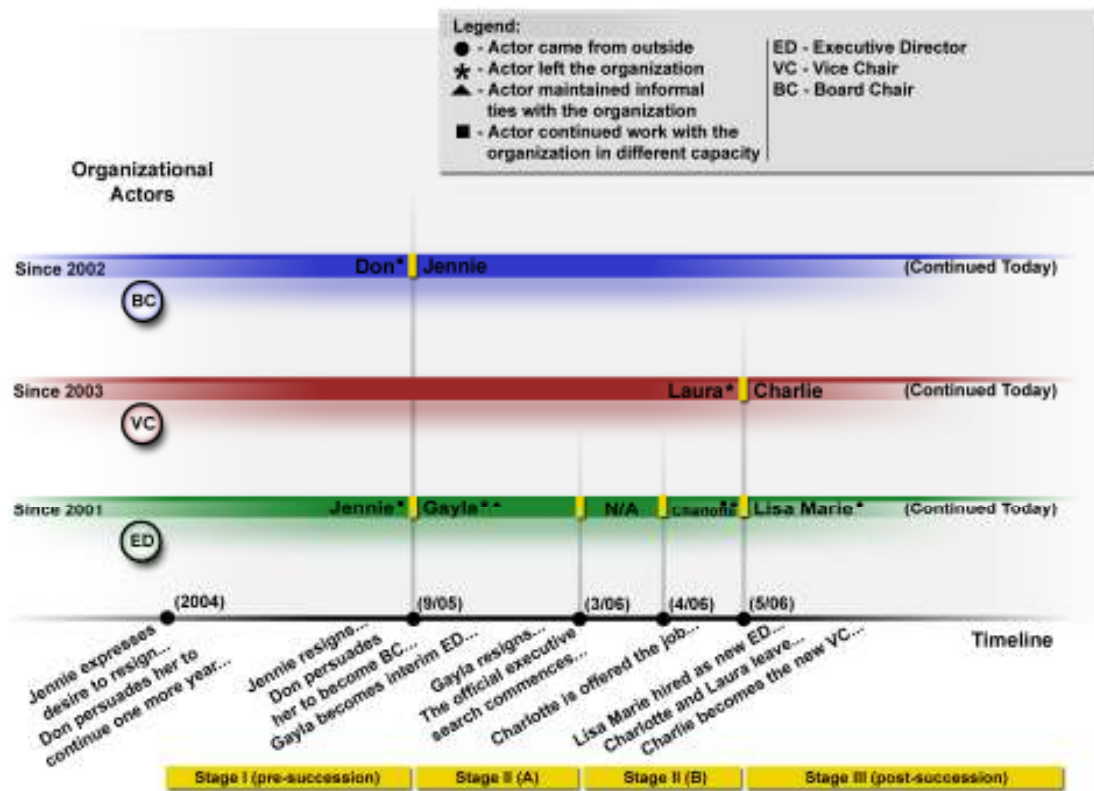
Stage I of the succession process at DY ended with Jennie's official resignation in September 2005.

### **DY Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage I)**

Throughout the entire "pre-succession stage," starting in 2004 with Jennie's initial request and ending in August 2005 with her resignation, Don stood out as a dynamic leader. He came across as an invested and involved chair. Don stated, "I was involved up to my eyeballs in the decision process, and probably was, uh, maybe even to the point of getting too involved there" (DP 28).

However, Jennie shared the leadership process with Don during the first stage. According to Jennie, the DY leadership nucleus was the "collaborative" partnership between Don and Jennie (JH 283). Describing the ED-chair relationship, Jennie stated that she and Don "were DY. We were creating DY" (JH322-327). Moreover, she added that "the Don/Jennie **meshing** was **solid**" (JH 357).

Figure 4.1 DY Leadership Succession



Further underlying the closeness of the ED-chair relationship, Laura, who was vice-chair at the time, referred to the ED/chair team as a living creature:

(Um) but I would say there was a pretty **high trust level** (between the two of them). It was a (pause) this whole thing was **an organism** that basically emanated from Don, and so, I'd say there was a, you know, there was a (high) trust level. OK, the whole board is the organism. **The brain was Don, and the heart was Jennie** (laughter). (LD 420)

Kyle, the Program Director, echoed Laura's comments about the high level of trust between the ED and chair: "The relationship between Don and Jennie was pretty even-steven; their trust level and cooperation were super high, a nine... they ran the program" (I KM 82, 107). Thus, the pre-succession stage of the leadership process cast



Don and Jennie as the protagonists; they were the driving engine. Their calculations and communicative actions were consequential for the organization. Jennie was viewed as a great initiator. Don anticipated and responded well. Together they constituted the leadership nucleus of DY.

In this pre-succession phase, the ED-chair leadership nucleus was not significantly affected by other parties. There was no interference from the board, individual board members, or outside parties. When interviewed and asked about the role of the board in the succession process during these time periods, Don answered passionately:

Let's get one thing out. **The board doesn't do anything without the executive director.** Period. Anybody that wants to claim otherwise is flat wrong. What the board does, the board shows up once a month, once a quarter, or periodically, and they sit around, they plot, they lay a few eggs, and then they go back to their daily lives. **The executive director is there day in and day out.** That's where it all works. The board is committed to the organization the way a chicken is committed to the breakfast table: it lays an egg, and then it goes back to the barnyard. The executive director puts the bacon on the table. That means **the executive director lives, eats, sleeps, breathes, and dies with the organization.** Nothing works unless the executive director works. I tell you that the body of research that says "board, board, board" is a bunch of horse hockey. The ED is the linchpin. **The board is there to support the organization, and the executive director is the organization.** (DP 298)

Concurring, yet softening the comments quoted above, the vice-chair noted that the board had some input. Charlie stated that the chair/ED nucleus was indeed the engine that kept the organization moving forward. "The way I view it is that the [chair] and the ED ought to be driving the car (DY); but the board ought to be sitting there with the road map saying ok, if not this exit then the next one" (CY 64).

Even though Charlie thought that the board “ought” to provide leadership influence in the form of direction, the reality was that the succession process during the first stages was the unequivocal product of the ED/chair nucleus. The process was triggered by and unfolded under the influence of Jennie’s communicative actions and Don’s strategic responses. The way these two actors interfaced and the dialectical tensions they experienced shaped the pre-succession stage.

Two major sets of dialectical tensions stood out as relevant to the leadership nucleus and the succession process during the first stage: “staying/leaving” and “control/freedom.” Also, there was a third subset of dialectics, “horizontal/verticality,” which was nested under the control/freedom set. These tensions underlined the actions and responses of individuals in the leadership nucleus. The way the ED and chair chose to handle these tensions led to the specific unfolding of the pre-succession process, which culminated in September 2005 with Jennie’s leaving the ED position.

### **DY Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage I)**

#### *Staying/Leaving*

One of the main tensions present in the pre-succession stage was the “staying-leaving” tension. Jennie became burned-out and was ready to leave. However, the chair insisted that she would continue to serve as ED. Jennie described the tension which she experienced at the beginning of 2004:

It was sometime in 2003 when I first told Don that I had enough and **was ready for a change**. Working in this type of environment can be rather taxing, **and I**

**was ready to leave.** But Don is a master persuader who **got me to stick around** for little longer. (JH 89)

Jennie vacillated between “staying” and “leaving.” While she was ready to “leave,” the chairman had different plans and managed to persuade Jennie to select “staying.” A year later, Jennie was ready once again to select “leaving:”

**My burnout had started a year earlier.** I told Don that I needed to leave. He said “you can’t leave! You have to stay two more years, or at least one more year.” And then a year later, I said “I have **to leave**, I can’t do this anymore.” And he said “no, you **can’t leave**, you have to stay another year.” And I said “that’s what you said last year!” And he said “I have a bonus of cash in this hand, and I have time off, weeks off, in this other hand.” I said “I need 10 weeks off or, I think I’d like 80,000 dollars in cash.” (Laugh) He said he can’t give me the cash but he can probably get me the time off. **The time off bonus was intended to help rejuvenate me** so that I could or would not leave the organization, **so I could stay longer.** (JH 36)

Jennie continued to oscillate between “staying” and “leaving” at a temporal level. She was ready to “leave;” however, by accepting the 10-week sabbatical bonus, she chose to “stay” longer. The board chair bought extra time and kept Jennie in the ED role for a few more months. In good faith, Jennie accepted the paid sabbatical as a time to recharge and, possibly, to reconsider her decision “to leave.” To the surprise of the chair, after returning from her sabbatical at the end of August 2005, Jennie gave her two-week notice. September 14<sup>th</sup> was her last day as ED. Although not an easy choice because of her attachment to the organization, Jennie finally embraced “leaving.” She was finally ready to let go and move on:

**I was so fragile** before this sabbatical. I went away for ten weeks and truly just lived in the moment for a time. And I found great rejuvenation but **did not find the inspiration I needed to keep going** at DY when I returned. I was still weary in a way, you know. We worked hard to create this organism, and (um) it had plateaued. So, **it was time for me to move on... I chose to leave. I had to go.**

But it was hard for me – it was VERY hard for me to make that decision, because I didn't want to give up on the organization prematurely. (JH 40, 72, 76)

Jennie was able to manage the challenging tension between the two poles of “staying/leaving” by relying on her spirituality. She stated that “through **prayer and contemplation** I knew that I, I felt relief from DY, that **it was the right thing to move on**. And so I stuck with my decision and I said ‘I’m leaving, **I have to leave**, it’s time’” (JH 56).

Realizing that keeping Jennie as ED was no longer an option, Don stepped up his efforts to keep DY stable. First, Don picked Gayla, his wife, as the interim ED. Second, he stepped down from the chair position. And, he managed to persuade Jennie to continue the connection with DY as the new chair:

Don proceeded to develop a strategy for, um, the transition. Well, he came to me and said, he asked “are you **willing to help with the transition?**” And I said “I’m willing to do anything, whatever is needed of me I will do to help during this stage.” And so he said “during the transition **you serve as the chair of the board** so that we can communicate to the funding community that we are not losing leadership and that the leadership is evolving. It’s just a natural change at DY. The leadership is still present, and we’re bringing in a new executive director.” (JH 78-80)

Jennie did not need much convincing. She was excited to continue her ties with an organization that she loved while being relieved from the burden of an ED job as she noted:

So, uh, Don’s offer struck me with two emotions, uh, subsequent, uh, simultaneously; one being excitement, **that I could kind of have my cake and eat it too**, you know. I could kind of go away and be **released from the drudgery of day in and day out of what the job had become**; yet, I **still would then be able to function in a leadership capacity** at the organization that I was very passionate about. At the same time, the other emotion that I had simultaneously with the excitement was kind of a stress, because I knew, I

already had a job I was transitioning into as CFO of BOGO Oil Company, and uh, in an industry I had been away from for a few years, so I anticipated that my learning curve would be steep there, and it would require a lot more attention and time. I didn't want to spread myself too thinly and fail in both capacities. (JH 78 – 80)

In the final analysis, from a management of dialectics perspective, Jennie connected the two poles of “staying” and “leaving.” She was able to accomplish the feat of “having her cake and eating it too” through manipulating her organizational level of leadership. She said “no” to the ED role while saying “yes” to the board chair position. Jennie managed to both “stay” and “leave;” therefore, she sustained an active tension between the two poles. Her communicative actions were consequential. The board's dynamics, subsequent relationships with other organizational actors, and the next stages in the leadership succession process were directly affected by Jennie's choices regarding the “staying/leaving” dialectic. At the same time, Jennie's choices themselves were influenced by the “freedom/control” dialectic.

### *Freedom/Control*

While “staying/leaving” was an individual-centered dialectic pertaining to Jennie, “freedom/control” was a relation-centered dialectic. The tensions of “freedom” versus “control” were present in relation to the ED-chair and ED-board interactions.

In the pre-succession stage, the board adopted a laissez-faire approach to the management of the ED. The board selected “freedom” in relation to the ED. Jennie remembered that she “would have never worked at DY if she did not have **the freedom** to call the shots and implement her projects and initiatives” (JH 49). Jennie wanted

freedom for full expression, and she had the chair's support who "told the entire board that **everyone needed to back off** and give the ED **space to run** the program" (JH 227-229). The board complied and gave Jennie freedom:

And **the board has confidence in her ability to make good choices**, and that confidence was substantiated by her making good choices. She makes good judgment so **she was given pretty good latitude in her work**. (KolM 9-12)

During the pre-succession stage and prior to Jennie's resigning the ED position, the ED-chair relationship was more nuanced than the ED-board relationship in terms of the "freedom/control" dialectic. Jennie and Don juggled the sub-dialectic of "verticality/horizontality" which characterized their relationship in terms of "boss/peer" and "mentor/protégée" tensions. Jennie and Don moved back and forth between the two poles of "freedom" and "control" in relation to each other as dictated by their multi-layered relationship.

Don and Jennie enjoyed a special "horizontal" friendship as ministry partners and fellow church members. At the same time, their relationship had a "vertical" dimension brought about by the board structure that legally placed Don at the top of the organizational hierarchy. Don commented:

My relationship with Jennie was and is more of a, uh, um, **co-worker and friend**. (Pause) To some extent **there was a vertical relationship**, same type of verticality, same type of verticality that exists anytime you have someone that has more experience than someone else and is in a position of authority. (Um) but the **relationship is horizontal mostly** as friends and fellow workers as in ministry partners. (DP 14)

Don exercised a certain degree of control over Jennie because of his seniority, extensive knowledge, prior experience with nonprofits, and his position as chairman of the board.

At the same time, he and Jennie were equals or “fellow workers as in ministry partners.” Thus, Don oscillated between selecting “freedom” and “control” in dealing with Jennie.

However, as “fellow workers,” Jennie exercised relative control over the chair since she co-authored the “verticality/horizontality” dialectic of the ED-chair nucleus by inviting and allowing Don to be her mentor:

So, going back to the beginning, I went and talked to Don, and **courted him to come back to the board as the chair and to mentor me in my role as ED**. I wanted a board chair that would mentor me. **Our relationship was collaborative**. I was never forced to do anything I was not on board with; do you know what I’m saying? We met weekly and spent hours in our meetings discussing. **His job was to mentor me, to make me think**, and it was all collaborative. I asked him to come mentor me. I didn’t do anything I disagreed with. **I know he did a lot through me, but I was the one who initiated the relationship and invited his input and ideas**. I did all that. (JH 227-239, 283)

Jennie, herself, oscillated between the two poles of the “freedom/control” dialectic. On the one hand, she “controlled” Don by getting him to join the board and provide the influence and input that she desired him to produce. On the other hand, she chose to submit and allow Don to mentor her. As an illustration of the “vertical” mentoring relationship that the two of them shared, Jennie remembered:

One day **Don took me** to lunch. And so we were talking, and he said “**my objective today is to make you cry**, so you can grow into a tougher leader for the nonprofit.” **I started coughing up some tears** as soon as he said that. I said “we can get that objective out of the way pretty quickly!” (JH 259-260)

While this discourse fragment demonstrated Don’s selection of “control” over Jennie as an expression of the “verticality” of their relationship, Jennie commented about her critical role in selecting “freedom” in her relationship with Don:

I think some people would view me more as a doormat. And I would strongly disagree, and I would take them to task to defend that... The high-level strategic things, of course, were done **collaboratively** with Don’s strong insightfulness,

absolutely. The day-to-day stuff, however, **he wasn't micro-managing**. Well, I wouldn't have wanted the job if I couldn't cast my vision and **have the freedom to be in charge**. (JH 287, 311)

The “verticality/horizontal” subset of tensions nested within the “control/freedom” dialectic explained the interplay between Don and Jennie. Don was able to “persuade” Jennie to stay around for another year by selecting the “vertical” pole of their relationship. As her trusted mentor and boss, Don was able to tell Jennie to stay longer.

Likewise, Jennie was able to draw the line and leave the ED role by her selecting the “verticality” pole as well. As the co-author of their relationship, Jennie had the “freedom” and capacity to challenge Don and resign when she finally chose to do so. Also, the two of them were able to work collaboratively by selecting the “horizontal” pole during the entire pre-succession stage. As church friends and ministry partners, they often selected the “freedom” pole in their relationship in order to maximize their collaboration. It can be concluded that while the board selected “freedom” for the ED, Don and Jennie vacillated between the “freedom” and “control” poles based on the unique aspects of their “vertical/horizontal” or “boss/peer” relationship. The push-pull between the need to maintain their previous friendship and the requirements associated with the current board chair/ED relation made choices more difficult for Don and Jennie. The two of them managed the dialectic through *oscillation* between the two poles.

Outside parties to the ED-chair relationship (i.e. the board) were silent during the pre-succession stage. They operated as observers who tacitly endorsed the plans drafted at the intersection of the ED/chair exchanges. The resignation of the ED was approved



by the board once it was accepted by Don who scrambled to provide a transition plan which included Jennie's "promotion" to chair, the appointment of his wife, Gayla, as the interim ED, and his own resignation as chair. Don's endorsement of Jennie as the new chair, the acceptance of that endorsement by the large majority of the board, and the "hiring" of Gayla as the new interim ED in September 2005 were the beginning markers of the "during succession" stage.

### **Stage II A**

The "during succession" period was divided in two parts: stage A and stage B (see Figure 4.1). Stage II A started with Jennie's ED resignation effective September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005. This interim stage witnessed no major developments in terms of finding a permanent successor. Generally speaking, this stage was characterized by a time of regrouping and preparation for stage II B.

One of the three noteworthy events during stage II A was the recruitment of Charlie on the board of directors as a result of the invitation from his friend, Don. This proved to be significant since Charlie became vice-chair of the board a few months later.

The two other significant events during stage II A were the "promotion" of Jennie as the new chair and Gayla's appointment to a six-month, volunteer Interim ED position. Don stepped down as chair; however, two of the closest people in his life, Gayla as his wife and Jennie as his former protégée, were now directing the organization. Gayla and Jennie were thrust into top leadership positions as a result of Don's "taking the lead in forming the game plan" (GP 90-97).

### **DY Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage II A)**

While the first stage of the succession process revealed a vibrant ED/chair nucleus that drove the organization, stage II A resembled ambiguous leadership. No obvious ED/chair nucleus per se seemed operative in this stage. There was no real collaboration between Gayla, the Interim ED, and Jennie, the new chair. Gayla and Jennie did not work well together. As Jennie described the relationship:

It is two women who um, **don't mesh** in their styles! **Non existent leadership team!** There was **no meshing**. Oh, what a tragedy. If we would have – ‘cause I was willing to mesh – if she would have been committed or interested in that; but she thought she didn't need to; she thought she would just, you know, she knew all she needed to know about running a non-profit. (JH 352-363)

Kyle, the Program Director, recalled that “the relationship between Jennie and Gayla was strained. The trust level and cooperation between the two of them was extremely low, a three on a scale one to ten” (I KM 42, 86, 111). The Interim ED and the new chair vied independently for organizational influence. Jennie remembered how “Gayla would go into the board meetings with her own agenda put together independently” of the chair (JH 343). Also, Jennie added:

It was infuriating when we covered something before a board meeting and agreed to present it in unison before the board, she would end up **presenting a different thing** or use a different angle to cast **her opinions in contrast to mine**. (JH 346)

Moreover, no other alternative nuclei emerged. The close relationship that Jennie and Don once shared during the first stage became subdued since Don “backed away from our relationship when his wife Gayla came into the picture” (Jennie 114).

Also, the marital relationship between Don and Gayla did not lead to a husband/wife nucleus as one might speculate because:

...they have a **non-normal marriage**. They **have weird communication** styles; they don't tell each other everything; and, they **totally disagree** on stuff. But they love each other. Well, I'm just saying when you try to think about the potential conflicts in their marriage that this whole **triangle between Gayla, her husband, and me** would invoke, I don't think their marriage was actually a factor through the whole process. Because they just operate differently, you know? **Their relationship is very unique**. I mean, they went to the same house every day, but I don't think it really impacted their work at DY emotionally. They worked separately, independently, and, sometimes, in opposite direction from each other. (JH 400-407, 415)

In the final analysis, the leadership nucleus during stage II A became diffused and diluted across the Interim ED, chair, and former chair triangle. During this stage the three protagonists, Gayla, Jennie, and Don, dealt with two specific sets of dialectical tensions – “blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control” – which framed the context for the following stage. The latter set of dialectics contained two subsets: “verticality/horizontality” and “public/private.” The ways that these dialectics were managed explained the leadership ambiguity of stage II A and the succession process that followed in II B.

### **DY Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage II A)**

#### *Blaming/Absolving*

An interesting finding in this case study was the predominance of the “blaming/praising” dialectical tensions that accompanied the succession process. While this tension was absent in the pre-succession stage, stage II A was fraught with examples of pointing fingers, criticism, and holding other parties responsible for various problems

in the organization. The blaming of the previous leadership or other key organizational actors became the modus operandi that characterized the succession process. The transfer of executive leadership from Jennie to Gayla was no exception as the Program Director noted:

When you see a transition in management, a lot of times the new management doesn't always fully understand the different challenges the previous management dealt with. So, there is much **blaming of the previous leadership**. With the transition from Jennie to Gayla you had a management change, but you also had Jennie becoming the new chair. And now Gayla comes in and **is held responsible as ED** for some of the things **she blames on the previous leadership**. But the person who came before her is now chair. It must be harder for the new ED to **point fingers** at the former ED because the former ED is now the chair. **It's a vicious circle of blaming**. (I KM 50-56)

The dialectic of “blaming/absolving” provided a source of tension for the Interim ED. On the one hand, Gayla wanted to select “blaming” Jennie in order to save face by using her as a scapegoat for the problems at DY. On the other hand, Gayla wanted to select “absolving” Jennie because of their friendship. Gayla chose to strategically manage the dialectic through the selection of the “blaming” pole. This strategy helped Gayla create and display the image of a capable leader at the cost of losing her friendship with Jennie who commented:

Gayla went to the next first board meeting and presented a report that was like a laundry list for DY. And, she did not tell me that she was going to do that. And I had told her everything on the list as part of the ED transition in a private conversation meeting! And the fact that she took my private information and **used it in the report to blame me**, that blew my mind. I mean, it was immature on her part, and it reflected her desire **to show off** that she was **a stronger leader**... overlaying the fact that she hadn't spent 10 hours in that building since she took office, and that she was better than the previous leadership because of all these findings and inadequacies which I privately shared with her as opportunities for improvement. (JH 100)

In addition to the need to display an effective leader image, there were two other potential explanations for Gayla's selecting the "blaming" pole in relation to Jennie. First, things were not going well during Gayla's six-month tenure, and she needed somebody to blame for the "unraveling of things at DY when [she] got there" (JH 189). It made sense to point fingers to the previous leadership; hence, Jennie became her scapegoat.

Second, Gayla might have wanted to exercise control over Jennie who was in a position of greater authority now as the new chair. Jennie and Gayla "were friends outside DY as [they've] known each other for several years through the local church" (GP 121). Charlie mentioned that there was an element of "awkwardness" when the young Jennie became chair overseeing the senior, more seasoned organizational actors, including Gayla. It was possible that Gayla needed to select the "blaming" pole in order to reclaim her eldership or authority over Jennie.

Surprisingly, Jennie chose not to retaliate or respond to Gayla's "blaming" barrage. Instead Jennie "just stood there and watched Gayla's Power Point presentations ripping [her] to pieces **without reacting** and trying to exact revenge or **pointing fingers**" (JH 499). The absence of "blaming" indicated Jennie's selecting the "absolving" pole in her relationship with Gayla. There were two potential explanations for Jennie's strategic selection of the "absolving" pole. First, it was possible that Jennie privileged her friendship with Gayla and realized that retaliating or blaming would have only exacerbated the situation. Second, it was possible that Jennie needed more time to

properly assess Gayla's performance from her new position as chair before formulating final conclusions about Gayla.

In conclusion, "blaming/absolving" emerged as a relational and strategic dialectic. It was relational because it involved tensions experienced and managed by parties in the same system, Gayla and Jennie in this case. When selecting "absolving," the actors managed to privilege the relationship over other organizational issues.

The dialectic was also strategic because by engaging in "blaming," the actors managed to "absolve" selves from responsibility for various organizational problems due to ineffective leadership succession during stage II A. As a strategy, it also strengthened "control" over others by the party that selected "blaming" while it constrained the "freedom" of the party being "blamed."

### *Freedom/Control*

Similar to the first stage, "freedom/control" was a consistent dialectical tension in the second stage. It was also a relation-centered dialectic since the tensions of "freedom" versus "control" emerged in the Interim ED/chair and chair/former chair relationships. In both cases, as illustrated below, the Interim ED and the former chair tried to exercise "control" over the chair. The sub-dialectics of "verticality/horizontality" for the Interim ED and "public/private" for the former chair showed up in conjunction with the "freedom/control" dialectic.

First, Gayla selected “control” over Jennie even though the organizational structure called for Jennie as chair to “control” the ED in stage II A. An illustration of the desire to “control” the chair showed up in the interview with Gayla:

So when I want to get something done, then I talked to Jennifer and say what do you think about this idea. And how do you think the other board members will perceive this idea? What kind of idea do you have here? Is this a bad idea? What is your input? Because **what I need from her** on those decisions is to present to the board that **she is in line with my thinking**. (GP 136-139, 147)

The subtle line “**I need from her**... to present to the board that **she is in line with my thinking**” suggested that the Interim ED’s expected to “control” the chair. This was interesting given the fact that Gayla was the ED who was supposed to be held accountable by the chair. Gayla pointed to the “verticality/horizontality” sub-dialectic that characterized and explained the “freedom/control” tension in relationship to Jennie. Gayla noted:

A strange thing about the friction in our relationship is the **friendship/professional tension** that has a push/pull effect. You see, **we’ve been friends**. And now, someone that has just served as ED and then moved into (um) **the role of chair will monitor the next person** that comes in after them. And there are always changes and always disagreements about how to go about things, and there can be feelings involved in this as well. I know there were times **when my feelings were hurt**. And I know **Jennie bore the brunt of a lot of criticism** (i.e. from Gayla and Laura). (GP 74, 159, 163)

Their “horizontal” friendship from church was being tested now by the “vertical” chair-ED relationship in the nonprofit organization. The problem was compounded because Jennie was fifteen years younger than both Gayla and Don. Given the age difference, the move to have Jennie become chair introduced an element of “awkwardness” to the organizational dynamics. As Charlie remembered:

**It was just awkward.** I mean, when **you report to a board, and then all of a sudden you are in charge of the board**, that in effect can be awkward. Let's think through this. That's like going to **work for your little brother**. You have the little brother taking over, and how do you deal with the older brother? The father leaves the business to the younger brother... So there was a little bit of **awkwardness from the point of view of having Jennie become chair.** (CY 42)

Second, Don selected "control" over Jennie starting at the beginning of stage II

A. He credited himself with getting Jennie to be in the new leadership role:

Certainly Jennie was influential in that she was the one who set it all in motion. She was very influential in the whole process of succession. My guess is, and this may be a case of me being guilty of thinking that I played a role, of thinking that **I played a bigger role in this than I actually did. Putting her into the chair role is probably my idea.** (DP 252-262)

The key words "probably" and "thinking that I played a role" implied the guised "control" that the former chair exercised over the current chair. This observation led to the "public/private" tension nested within the "freedom/control" dialectic. As Jennie revealed during her interview:

Once the roles were re-positioned during the second stage, Don backed off a lot. Absolutely. Now he's kind of floating out there in the background, trying to be quiet, but he can't, because he's still got too key of a role and he's too **strong of an influencer**... you know, the way I see it, we are dealing with the public and the **behind-the-scenes realms**. Don's **tactics changed**. In terms of how he changed his interaction with me, instead of meeting with me regularly as during the first stage, he would just occasionally send me a nonchalant e-mail reading "hey, have you thought about A, B, and C?" Absolutely, **his tactics changed during the process.** (JH 114, 181-185, 367)

Don continued to be influential. However, unlike the pre-succession stage when the interactions, negotiations, and collaborations between Don and Jennie were more public, the "control/freedom" tensions manifested at a "private" level during stage II A.

Another covertness illustration was Don's selection of Gayla as interim ED, a strategic



maneuver he “**totally denied**” though “**it was very obvious that he planned it**” (JH 347). Laura further confirmed the shift from the “public” to the “private” in stage II A:

Jennie was heavily pressured to take the chairman position because it was becoming, I think, incredibly obvious that **Don was pulling all the strings**, and **he wanted to not have that perception**, so he wanted to just back away and he **figured he could do his puppet manipulation from, from a regular board position**. (LD 420)

An explanation for the consistent selection of “control” (both public and private) over the chair was the fact that Gayla and Don were “heavily invested in the nonprofit” through their generous charitable donations sustained throughout the years (MR 29). Being the larger contributors for the organization gave Gayla and Don, perhaps, a sense of ownership, entitlement, and responsibility to call the shots. Also, members of the board, including Don and Gayla, might have felt the need to “control” Jennie given the fact that she was the youngest board member. The fact that Jennie was their friend exacerbated the friction between the “freedom/control” poles and made the “control” choice more difficult for the actors.

In conclusion stage II A did not have a clear leadership nucleus, and there were no direct actions taken in finding a successor. The nebulous leadership triad constituted by Jennie, Gayla, and Don did not accomplish much in terms of assisting with the succession process. Stage II A can be best described as a time of re-grouping and recalibrating relationships.

The dialectical tensions that key actors experienced during this stage were “blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control” with “public/private” and “horizontal/verticality” subsets. Gayla selected “blaming” in relationship with Jennie.

In contrast, Jennie chose “absolving” Gayla through the absence of “blaming.” Don seemed to select “control” over the new chair by invoking the “private” over the “public” relationship. Also, Gayla swung towards the “control” pole of the dialectic by selecting “blaming” and trying to manage the awkwardness of the re-configured relationship which cast Jennie as her boss and her friend.

Similar to stage I, stage II A was also absent of board involvement. The board, as isolated members or outside parties, did not interfere with the vague leadership triangle Gayla, Don, and Jennie. In fact, this stage contained little overt activity on the succession process itself. The energy was spent on “blaming” the other parties and on learning how to deal with the “awkwardness” of having a former ED become the current chair. Perhaps, Gayla never learned how to handle the re-formulation of relationships that turned Jennie into the new chair. This stage ended abruptly with Gayla’s ultimatum that she was leaving the Interim ED position in six months, as she had promised in September.

### **Stage II B**

Stage II B started in March 2006 with Gayla’s resignation at the end of her six-month term. This milestone was significant for it triggered the organization’s efforts to orchestrate a search, find, and hire a permanent ED. Stage II B revealed increased board activity, conflicts between various board members, and the identification and processing of two ED candidates who represented two different directions for DY: maintenance of the status quo (after-school reading program) and turning DY into a charter school.

During this stage Laura became chair of the executive search committee, and Charlie became chair of the strategic planning committee as noted in Table 4.1. Laura's efforts led to recruiting Charlotte as a potential ED. At the same time, working quasi-independently, Charlie recruited Lisa Marie, another viable candidate. Charlie (72) described Lisa Marie as a gifted and talented leader "who could walk on water." Or as Don mentioned, "Lisa Marie is so good that she could become the next Secretary of Education for the United States of America" (CY 134). Lisa Marie had an excellent track record, and the board recognized her skills and knowledge.

Lisa Marie gained her work experience from managing a charter school in a different Texas City. Her vision was to duplicate the previous success and turn DY into a charter school as well. Charlie was Lisa Marie's main promoter since he desired to see DY become a charter school.

In contrast, Laura favored maintaining the status quo of DY as an after-school reading program. Thus, Laura wanted to hire Charlotte whose vision and goals were similar to hers. Charlotte simply wanted to continue the legacy of DY as a successful inner-city after-school reading program. Charlotte's experience and skills were impressive, and the board was confident that she would have done a good job in fulfilling that vision. Laura was Charlotte's main advocate since they both desired to maintain the status quo of an after-school reading program.

However, Lisa Marie stood out in terms of talents and passion for her vision. Charlie presented Lisa Marie to the executive search committee for their consideration.

Members of the committee (with the exception of Laura) were ready to offer Lisa Marie the job. Don noted:

When Lisa Marie suggested that she is open to coming to work for us, we wanted to **get her at DY right away**. We were **afraid** that she might **change her mind** when she sees what a small operation we were in comparison to the charter school she led in D city. (DP 98)

Laura, who represented a small, yet strong, board faction interested in maintaining the status quo of DY, opposed the hiring of Lisa Marie. Laura engaged in strategic maneuvering and convinced the board that Lisa Marie was not ready to relocate to Texas and work for DY.

Laura was the chair of the search committee and interfaced with Lisa Marie on a regular basis during the negotiations. **The information** that the board would receive from Lisa Marie was **filtered through Laura**. We found out later that when the board acted ready to hire Lisa Marie, Laura **shared out of context information about the situation to dissuade the board from hiring her**. (CY 297)

One of Laura's hesitations pertained to Lisa Marie's \$100,000 annual salary which DY was not able to pay. Eager to have a new ED, the board acted on Laura's information and voted to offer Charlotte the position of ED.

Charlie counter-attacked. He challenged the ED selection and accused Laura of misrepresenting Lisa Marie and manipulating the board. Charlie, Don, and Patty, another board member, agreed to donate \$100,000 annually to cover Lisa Marie's salary. The main argument against Lisa Marie's hiring was now gone. Charlie noted:

But you know, **three board members** stepped up and said hey, **we'll pay Laura's salary**, done. That wasn't an issue anymore. So I don't understand what the issue could be beyond that, just given that, I mean, Lisa Marie is that impressive. I guess the only other argument I would have bought was look, she is so overly qualified that if she comes down and gets involved in a Mickey Mouse organization like us, she is going to be gone in a year, and we're going to

be doing this again in a year, you know what I mean? I would have bought that argument. (CY 148-150)

Charlie informed the board that Lisa Marie was ready to come and work for DY as the new permanent ED. The board re-voted and decided in favor of Lisa Marie as the new permanent ED. Laura was removed from the board for unethical behavior.

Charlotte, understandably, resigned when the board chose Lisa Marie as the new ED in April/May 2006. Lisa Marie commented:

Imagine what Charlotte must have felt. You're offered a job, as an ED, and then someone comes back and goes "wait, we really should not have done that. You're not going to be the Executive Director." **It's not fair. I understand her leaving.** (I Lisa Marie 335)

### **DY Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage II B)**

Similar to the previous stage, this stage did not have an ED/chair leadership nucleus per se. More specifically, no ED operated during this stage since Gayla resigned in March. When asked about the leadership at DY during stage II B, the Program

Director remarked:

First, **Laura was involved** since she led the faction that **opposed the charter school**. Second, **Charlie was instrumental** since **he brought Lisa Marie** on board and stood up against Laura. Also, Jennie had a crucial role in the succession. She kept the board together and kept things from spiraling out of control. Don had an important role in exposing people who were not truthful. These were some of the most influential members during this transition time. (II KM 44)

The organizational leadership was spread across two independent nuclei: Laura and Charlie. First, Laura stood out as a powerful player. She played a subdued role in the previous stages, but when Gayla left she emerged as a strong voice of influence. She acted as a one-woman leadership nucleus at DY. Gayla remembered:

**Laura took her job very seriously as vice-chair and chair of the executive search committee.** And she was all about **solving problems**. And, however, I can remember, I had to make several calls and Jennie did as well. We told Laura that we valued her input but also told her to settle down because **her approach was way too offensive**. Laura was offensive and direct with everybody as a whole. And she had a **very strong personality**, made lots of money, had lots of success and, definitely, has incredible strengths. The problem was **she was almost too strong for the rest of the board members**. And, it's not one person's decisions; it's a collective decision process. (GP 273-279)

Don recalled that Laura was like a “sleeping giant in terms of potential benefits for the organization (276). She simply came across too strong and her leadership style backfired because she was too controlling and overpowering. Charlie stated:

I mean, Laura probably **wanted the board to approve what kind of toilet paper** went into the bathroom! **Every detail she got in, she'd want to get into it in detail**, she'd want to talk about for hours, you know. (CY 52-56)

Paradoxically, Laura's commanding style instigated dissenting board members to stand up as opposing voices. The board became polarized. Charlie was one of several members who disagreed with Laura's approach and direction. Charlie, Laura's antithesis and nemesis, became a leader who almost single handedly opposed Laura and brought Lisa Marie in as the ED. Charlie explained:

In terms of, you know, in terms of talking to Lisa Marie and developing a relationship with her, and telling her she needs to come to Texas Metropolis and all that, **that was all me**. You know, **it was me e-mailing** Lisa Marie, **me talking** to Lisa Marie on the phone, **me taking the trip** to meet with her, **me courting her to** come and interview with us, and all that stuff. (CY 164 – 166)

Laura disliked Charlie, a new board member, who stood up against her initiatives and plans. Laura considered Charlie “an opportunist” who was motivated to join the board “for selfish networking purposes. As an investment banker, Charlie could now rub shoulders with rich and successful entrepreneurs” according to Laura (II LD 324-7). She

also considered Charlie to be an “idiot who [was] not very smart” (CY 68). Charlie explained the schism between the two of them:

I don't know if just, you know, **Laura resented the fact that** her committee put ads in the paper and did all this, and you know, **swashbuckling Charlie, just went up to Dallas and grabbed somebody?** I don't know? I can see how she felt I acted independently from her committee but I didn't. (CY 138)

Charlie and Laura and their views about DY's future direction became irreconcilable as it was already presented earlier in the description of the two ED candidates that they supported. The leadership at DY fell into two opposing factions, as Gayla observed from the sidelines:

It became a battle between Charlie, the future vice-chair, and Laura, the vice-chair. **Charlie had decided Lisa Marie was prime candidate** and needed to be interviewed at all costs. So, he submitted her name to the search committee, and **Lisa Marie agreed to come for an interview.** However, from the personnel committee's standpoint, they were already in the final interviews of the other people and had already made some cuts **and that put a kink in it for Laura.** But the interview did occur with the full committee, and we ended up with two outstanding candidates: **Lisa Marie, Charlie's nomination and Charlotte, Laura's nomination.** (GP 330-355, 369)

Charlie and Laura, as leaders of two factions, were closely connected with the succession process. They galvanized the other board members and created a bifurcation for DY: charter or non-charter school. Of course, other board members' voices were heard during the process. Jennie and Don clustered around Charlie. Also, Patty, a successful lawyer, became one of the three board members who chipped in to cover Lisa Marie's annual salary. It was Patty who worked with Don in pressing the ethical issues that eventually pushed Laura off the board. On the other side of the battlefield, Danny, Laura's husband, and a couple of other board members flocked around Laura as supporters of the status quo – keeping DY a non-charter school.

These two opposing camps and their supporters managed two sets of dialectical tensions during stage II B: “change/stability” and “cooperation/competition.” Also, the latter set of dialectics was nested within “trust/distrust” and “honesty/deception.” The way the future vice-chair, the vice-chair, and other organizational actors handled these tensions affected the unfolding of the succession process and determined its outcome – hiring Lisa Marie as the new ED, making plans to morph DY into a charter school, and, ultimately, embracing “change.”

### **DY Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage II B)**

#### *Change/Stability*

While “staying/leaving” was individual-centered and while “blaming/absolving” and “control/freedom” were relation-centered, “change/stability” was a dialectic that pertained to the organization as a whole. The “change/stability” dialectic mobilized organizational actors at different levels in the organization – practically, the entire board and staff. The management of this essential tension reverberated throughout the entire organization and had lasting consequences. This dialectic was thrust to the forefront of the organization’s attention when Gayla left DY. Subsequently, there was no ED in the office, and the organization was in a state of disequilibrium and survival.

Jennie explained how the “change/stability” tension played out and how it culminated in 2006 when DY was ranked the best after-school program in Texas Metropolis:

We’ve always had a macro-plan – take our **after school program and morph it into an independent school.** The plan was developed during the three years



while I was the ED. We created the after-school program. And it was successful. And we said this in every single recent board meeting, “now is the time to launch the school! **Now is the time to evolve!** We have the top literacy program in the city, **now is the time to morph into a school!**” That was our plan. It was shouted from the hilltop, and we never deviated from it. The conflict was how can we strategically morph the after-school program into a school? So, **you had two views. One was that you have to have a master educator who knows how to run a school. The other perspective was fear: we don’t have enough money and we just need to take our time and keep being an after-school program.** There were a few vocal voices contrary to the plan I was hired to do. (JH 509-535)

According to Jennie, 2006 was the opportune time to embrace “change;” DY was recently ranked the best after-school program in the city, and, equally important, the ED office was vacant. Simply put, hiring the next person became the strategic choice for managing the “change/stability” dialectic. The next ED was going to be both a champion of “change” and a promoter of the charter school or a defender of “stability” and a maintainer of the after-school program. The battle lines had been drawn across the ED hiring, as Charlie observed:

We sort of **had a couple of important issues** in front of us: one, **getting a new executive director** and then, two, figuring out **what we were going to do for the future – charter school** or continue with the **same after-school reading program?** So, we’ve decided to open a school and that ought to influence whom we would choose as executive director. (CY 68)

Given the bifurcation, the “change/stability” dialectic turned into an issue of contention for the opposing factions. As Lisa Marie related, two nominees were identified, and they became symbols of the two conflicting board ideals:

So, two candidates were available in the end: **Lisa Marie** and **Charlotte**. For some board members these candidates represented different approaches. For some **Lisa Marie represents the charter school** while for the others **Charlotte represents the “status-quo”** of the after-school reading program. When they asked me to come on board, it was with the understanding that we would open a school and stop the after-school reading program. They asked me “what do you

want to do?” I told them “I think there needs to be a school that serves underprivileged children.” (II Lisa Marie 29-32)

The issue of organizational change became embedded directly into the two candidates by nature of the recruiting initiatives spurred by the diverging board camps. DY experienced a “change” versus “stability” organizational tug-of-war between the two leadership visions and their camps. The future vice-chair camp selected “change” while the vice-chair camp chose “stability” or status quo. The management of this dialectic turned into “a battle” between Charlie’s and Laura’s camps (GP 122). The “change/stability” organizational tension concerned the nature and future of DY. The “change/stability” tension was resolved through the voting on a candidate. The management of this dialectic became confounded with the politics of board maneuvers, leadership struggle, and ethical issues. The board chose “change,” but indirectly:

Laura, her husband Danny, and a couple of other members wanted to just keep the after-school program and did not want a charter school. Hiring Charlotte would have been a commitment on the part of DY to maintain the status quo. However, there was a really large group on the board, and they were **the majority that voted they wanted to pursue a charter school** under Lisa Marie’s leadership. (GP 370-375)

The management of the “change/stability” dialectics in stage II B was influenced by the interaction with “cooperation/competition” dialectics among the key organizational players. By casting their relationships in “competitive” terms, the various board factions grappled with the “change/stability” tension within the succession outcome.

### *Cooperation/Competition*

The “cooperation/competition” dialectic was relation-centered because it arose at the intersection among people working together. In this case, the board members experienced the friction that came with the balance between “cooperation” and “competition” when they dealt with the “change/stability” concerns. Nested within and feeding the “cooperation/competition” dialectic, the board interactions led to “trust/distrust” and “honesty/deception” sub-dialectics that shaped “cooperation/competition” tensions.

Jennie recalled how the “trust” level deteriorated in the organization during stage II B. She remembered how a specific incident forced several board members to embrace the “distrust” pole when dealing with the vice-chair and her camp:

We got the emails between Laura and Lisa Marie, **and it catches Laura red-handed**, honestly. **Laura read Lisa Marie’s e-mails out of context** at a board meeting. **She misrepresented** that Lisa Marie was not comfortable working for DY with its current budget or something like that. And so the board was like, “what?” Then, because we thought Lisa Marie was not willing to come to DY in the summer when we needed an ED, the board agreed to hire Charlotte, who was a very strong candidate as well. I went home thinking “this isn’t right!” I could see that **Laura misrepresented Lisa Marie’s intentions**, and therefore changed the votes for ED in Charlotte’s favor. Because Laura would not talk to me on the phone when I called her on those points, I sent her a private e-mail the next morning. I outlined the way I was seeing the situation. Laura replied, cc-ed the whole board, and ignited a war. I called Don, and I said “Don, blah, blah, blah,” and read to him the e-mail I sent to Laura. He answered “bless your heart, I’m taking your position also.” I attacked Laura because it was my fiduciary responsibility to know if **someone’s intentions had been misrepresented. I had to confront her because this became a major trust issue!** (JH 620-622)

Laura emerged as a determined organizational player who would resort to any means to see her agenda fulfilled; in this case, maintaining the status quo by thwarting Charlie’s plans of hiring Lisa Marie. As Lisa Marie expressed:

I believe there were ulterior motives for Laura. Sometimes people would want something to happen, so they work to make that thing happen. That's what happened at DY. **Laura wanted Charlotte to be the ED, and she tried hard to make that happen.** Charlotte would have maintained the status quo for DY. And Laura and her faction group wanted to keep the after-school reading program. (I Lisa Marie 343)

Laura selected "deception" in order to obfuscate the opposing camp, as Charlie observed:

**Laura played some dirty pool;** she sent a letter from Lisa Marie around to the board two minutes before we were supposed to vote on who we wanted as ED. Reading that letter, uh, you know, Laura interpreted it one way, and it was nothing of the sort. You get suspicious about that when you say **she didn't share the letter to the other members of her committee.** She sat on it for 48 hours, and she didn't even call Lisa Marie for clarifications. Ten minutes after the board meeting I called Lisa Marie and asked "why did you say this?" She responded "I didn't say that! Here is what my letter said." So we re-convened the board and gave them the new information about Lisa Marie. (CY 80)

According to the Program Director, "there was some deception and information manipulation and a lot of **the trust was lost** at that point" (II KM 18). Another board member was surprised to observe the "trust/distrust" tension that clutched the board, as he commented:

You would think, generally speaking, that a 501(c)3, especially a Christian 501(c)3, would want to seek wisdom from above. **Not cunning and maneuvering and politicking and not leading those backdoor meetings and fueling board divisions.** (KolM 29)

At the end of stage II B, the succession process culminated with the decision to hire Lisa Marie over Charlotte. Gayla referred to it as the board's selection of "honesty" over "deception:"

Charlotte got hired. But a week or two later, Charlie resurrected the issue and contacted Lisa Marie to find out that Laura misrepresented Lisa Marie. So, Lisa Marie was hired and Charlotte was demoted to fundraising. Subsequently, and understandably so, Charlotte resigned. And **Lamar left too at the pressure of**

**some board members** who were not pleased with the way she handled and presented information. **There was distrust.** People could not trust Laura anymore. Laura could not continue to serve her role effectively, so she left. **At the end of the day, what people chose was, I hate to say this, honesty over dishonesty.** (GP 330-355, 369)

The choice to embrace “change” was challenging since it led to the alienation of a board segment. The board majority was able to opt for “change” by sorting the “trust/distrust” and “honesty/deception” dialectics. The board’s selection of “honesty” fed into the selection of “distrust” of the other faction who was perceived as “dishonest.” By casting the relationship between these two board factions in terms of “trust/distrust,” the board embraced “competition.” This choice point led to one side winning, and the other side losing. The voting numbers tipped the scale in favor “change,” as an outgrowth of hiring Lisa Marie as ED.

### **Stage III**

The third stage (post-succession) started with Lisa Marie’s arrival as the new permanent ED in May 2006 (see Figure 4.1). Shortly following Laura’s resignation, Charlie became the new vice-chair. Since it was not possible to have two ED’s, the board apologetically demoted Charlotte to Business Development Officer. Charlotte was not pleased with this turn of events, so she resigned during the same month (see Table 4.1).

The post-succession stage was marked by Lisa Marie’s power consolidation through the firing of the Program Director, hiring a new Program Director of her choice, and consolidating communication ties with Charlie and Don, two of the more powerful

DY actors. The post-succession stage ended in the summer of 2006 after the organization re-gained a sense of balance and Lisa Marie emerged as the uncontested leader.

### **DY Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage III)**

The post-succession stage did not have a traditional ED/chair nucleus the way stage I did. Lisa Marie and Jennie did not work together the way Jennie and Don did during the pre-succession stage. Jennie as chair was more laissez-faire. Jennie described her relationship with Lisa Marie:

**Roles are redefined during this stage.** My role with Lisa Marie is, uh, I'm an ear when things are going bad as she calls and complains – **and I'm happy to listen.** I provide a historical reference for her, and she listens when that is needed or helpful. **I give her total space.** (JH 637-661)

It looks as if the chair was there to serve the ED during this stage. Lisa Marie elaborated that Jennie as chair “was not extremely involved in her coming to DY.” Lisa Marie pointed to Charlie and Don as the two DY actors who were closely connected with her and who were responsible for getting her at DY:

**The relationship that I had with Charlie and Don is probably the closest relationship** of any that I have with people on the board. **Charlie and Don are very much in touch with me.** They were closely involved in getting me here in the first place. (I Lisa Marie 53, 65-69)

Jennie added:

**The people who communicate with her most frequently are Charlie, maybe Don.** Um, but, **their influence on policy and so forth is less** than their influence on those things in the past. Lisa Marie is the key nucleus at this point. She has the background that requires the relationship to be redefined because she's a strong leader, well-seasoned in all of the issues that we're addressing at this stage in our organization. **Despite her relationship with Don and Charlie,**

**I don't think they are close enough to consider them a nucleus.** There are always multiple organizational movers and shakers, and they all are, but she **is the most important one during this time.** (JH 667, 689-705)

Lisa Marie stood out as a powerful ED. The ED's role, centrality, and influence varied with the knowledge and experience of the ED, the structure of the organization, the larger context, the make-up of the board, and the milestones in the timeline of the organization. Stage III, the post-succession stage, was conducive to having Lisa Marie emerge as the uncontested leader. DY survived the turbulent stage II B, and the organization seemed ready for a time of peace. The small, entrepreneurial-like organizational structure and the laissez-faire board encouraged a strong ED. Lisa Marie's vast experience and expertise provided her with a high degree of organizational influence.

There were few organizational actors who interfaced and influenced Lisa Marie's leadership nucleus. Jennie in her capacity as chair provided support in the form of a "listening ear." Charlie and Don were in close communication with Lisa Marie. Since they paid for most of her salary, it was no surprise that Lisa Marie felt obliged to communicate with them "most frequently." The board as a whole was hands-off; the board was there "to approve what Lisa Marie does" (JH 689-705).

Similar to the pre-succession stage, the key organizational actors in the post-succession stage juggled the "staying/leaving" and "control/freedom" dialectics. The main difference was in the sub-dialectical tensions nested within the "control/freedom" dialectic. While stage I dealt with "horizontal/verticality," the post-succession stage dealt with "trust/distrust." The actors' strategic choices in managing these dialectics

influenced the nature of the succession outcome. By embracing “freedom,” the board empowered the new ED to explore and lead DY into new territories. Also, by selecting “trust” and providing unlimited support, the board increased the likelihood that the valuable, highly qualified ED would stay.

### **DY Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage III)**

#### *Staying/Leaving*

Similar to Jennie during the first stage, Lisa Marie had to manage the “staying/leaving” dialectic during the post-succession stage. This was an individual-centered dialectic since it pertained to the status of the actor in relation to the organization.

Lisa Marie managed the “staying/leaving” dialectic from the beginning of her association with the organization. She dealt with the push/pull between wanting “to leave” when faced with unexpected work challenges and wanting “to stay” since she felt spiritually called to do this work. Lisa Marie selected “staying,” but the presence of the friction with the “leaving” pole continued to manifest itself. Lisa Marie explained how she coped with the challenges of her new position:

You know it’s been incredibly difficult during the first six months. Every day **I thought I would quit** – every day! Something challenging would happen every week. You know, just literally every week. I’m like, “how does this happen; how can this nonprofit organization have so many problems?” **For me, being here and staying here it really was and is a spiritual decision. For me it is about God’s will and His desire for my life. What is His purpose for my life?** (ILM 206, 260)



Even though she was close to quitting many a time, Lisa Marie tapped into her spirituality to find the necessary strength and inspiration to persevere and “stay.” Even when board members doubted whether Lisa Marie was going to continue at the helm of the organization, Lisa Marie selected to “stay,” as she noted:

I was asked by the board “if you come in and it’s not becoming a charter school, then **are you still going to stay?**” And I said to them “I think you don’t understand... I think you don’t understand why I’m here. You need to hear me say it again that this is where **God has called me to be in this time and this place**, and it has nothing to do with it being a charter school or a private school or an after-school reading program. It has to do with healing the people in this neighborhood.” We’ve submitted our charter applications, and we don’t know if we will get it or not. I’ve told the board to this day, “I don’t care. No matter if we’re going to have to raise the funds to support the school, you can understand that we are going to educate kids, regardless. Whether it is private or charter, there will be education provided for inner-city children. **I am staying.**” (IILM 56-60)

While Lisa Marie explained her selection of “staying” through the lenses of her spirituality and belief in God, Jennie painted a different picture:

Just uh, one time I said something like “oh, Lisa Marie, it had been a little difficult to be in touch with, some of the board members had vocalized their, you know, that it’s hard to get a hold of you!” So, she got upset. And she said “you **know Jennie, maybe this isn’t a fit.**” **If she feels threatened, she tears up and talks about the possibility of a misfit with DY.** (JH 637-661, 676-677)

Lisa Marie came across as strategic in the way she juggled the strain of the “staying/leaving” tensions. When she felt threatened or cornered by Jennie’s accountability, she went on the offense and attacked by threatening with “leaving.” This approach was an effective weapon in Lisa Marie’s arsenal since her departure would be costly for the organization in light of the sacrifices that three board members made to pay her salary. It would be a major organizational disruption, if not a devastating event, if Lisa Marie were to leave after the trauma experienced during stage II B. The board

would be hard pressed to find a suitable successor since Charlotte was the closest possibility, and she had lost the position in a battle between board factions.

Also, Lisa Marie's reaction to Jennie was reminiscent of Jennie's emotional responses during her "tough love" mentoring sessions with Don. Jennie was the new chair, and even though she walked on egg shells to protect the new ED's ego, Jennie still came across as "threatening" at times. Lisa Marie acquired a prima donna status and proved that selecting "leaving" at a temporal level (i.e. when feeling "threatened" by the ED) was strategic in consolidating her own "freedom" from the board's "control" and ultimately vacillating back to "staying." Jennie noted:

Ok, so **I strategically need to get her safe**, only, fundamentally because of my previous role. If I was functioning like Don functioned with me, I mean, that makes no sense. So that's redefined appropriately. (JH 681)

### *Blaming/Absolving*

Similar to stage II A, the ED had to manage the "blaming/absolving" dialectic during the post-succession stage as well. In contrast to Gayla's selecting the "blaming" pole in relation to her predecessor (Jennie), Lisa Marie integrated the two poles as she struggled with the push-pull between "absolving" and "blaming" her own predecessor (Gayla). On the one hand, Lisa Marie selected "blaming" Gayla for the "fragmented" state of the nonprofit; on the other hand, she selected "absolving" her through the qualifier about Gayla's former work being "voluntary." Lisa Marie noted:

I could have never imagined or believed that the organization this small would be in this state of **chaos and fragmentation** after Gayla's leadership. But I guess **we can't fully blame** her since she'd told everyone that she wanted to work on purely voluntary basis... **it is hard to blame** [Gayla] who worked for free for six-months no matter **how chaotic the state** of the organization was. (III LM 27)

By integrating the two poles of the dialectic, Lisa Marie managed to dilute the intensity of her criticism. Her motivation for integrating the poles of the dialectic was twofold. First, she needed to find a scapegoat to explain the chaos at DY, hence the selection of “blaming.” Second, she needed to maintain an amicable relationship with her predecessor, Gayla, since her husband covered 1/3 of Lisa Marie’s salary, thus the selection of “absolving.”

Whereas Lisa Marie integrated the two poles of “blaming/absolving,” Jennie oscillated between them at a temporal level. Jennie selected “absolving” Gayla in stage II A, and then switched to “blaming” her in the post-succession stage. Jennie recalled post hoc:

Now that I look back, I can see that things weren’t going well after she [Gayla] stepped into the Interim ED role. Instead of holding it together, **things were unraveling**. So, to protect her reputation as an ED, she tried to put the blame on the previous leadership rather than taking responsibility for what had happened since she took office. If she would have been fully at DY it would have been a totally different thing because we did not place her in a bad position. So, **I do blame her** for taking a responsibility and not fully doing it. **She was proud** for thinking she could do it with her little finger by being there only a few hours a week. (JH 115-142)

Also, Jennie added:

**Gayla had the key role as the new ED and the balls were dropped. Gayla does not count** in the succession process. She showed up less than half the time she was supposed to be there. She was not a real executive director. (JH 154, 679)

A potential explanation for Jennie’s temporal oscillation in managing the dialectical tensions of “blaming/absolving” could be due to the fact that Jennie needed an adequate

amount of time to assess Gayla's six-month stint at the helm of the nonprofit. Jennie noted that Gayla did not help the succession process:

**Gayla in the ED role was not a good transition for the organization...** She came in, you know, and, she only wanted to meet for like an hour for me to pass the baton, basically, to download all the information to her. **She didn't even want to listen.** You know, after an hour she was "I am ready, fine, that's enough!" I mean, that's stage two – you know, stage one was "I resign" – and stage II was Gayla as Interim ED. Gayle would be the type of person who just comes in and doesn't really listen to the exiting person, but will rely on existing policies and procedures, um, to just be kind of functioning when she arrives – and she'll just totally put her own personal spin on the deal. **It was not a good stage in the transition at DY.** JH 86-92

Previous examples indicated that "blaming" functioned as a "control" strategy. The party that "blamed" others sought to increase "control" over the parties that were being "blamed."

### *Freedom/Control*

Paralleling stages I and II A, the "control/freedom" dialectic played out at the intersection of the ED and board interactions. From the very beginning of Lisa Marie's tenure, the board selected the "freedom" pole in relating and working with her. Charlie noted that "we brought Lisa Marie in, and, you know, we turned the ship over to **her as the captain**" (CY 200). Jennie echoed Charlie's comments when describing Lisa Marie's relationship with the board:

Yeah, the board has a different perspective... **Lisa Marie prepared the 5 year plan** in the fall, not the board. **Lisa Marie prepared the budget for it**, and the board just approved it. **Lisa Marie prepared the 5 year plan**, and again the board just approved it. The board scrambles to keep money in the bank. **Lisa Marie was doing what Lisa Marie wants to do.** She shapes policy too, completely. If the board disagreed, they would disapprove. But the point is **Lisa Marie is the strong voice with complete freedom of expression.** (JH 689-705)

Even the two organizational players with substantial clout in relation to Lisa Marie stayed out of her way. Charlie and Don set the new ED on a pedestal that empowered Lisa Marie to run the show unlike any previous ED.

Charlie's view on Lisa Marie is **to give her space. Give her anything she needs and get out of her way.** So he's not – and I haven't seen Don and Charlie come in to board meetings talking about what needs to be going on. So, it's just totally different than what it used to be a year ago. (JH 689-705)

In the final analysis, Lisa Marie enjoyed unprecedented power as ED. The board invested much in getting her on the team, and expected her to perform well. As such, the board selected “trust” in relating to Lisa Marie. This choice further consolidated the ED's “freedom,” even though the ED felt slightly uncomfortable with the flattering high degree of “trust” received:

I think **the trust factor is high**, you know, **probably almost too high** on their part for me... because, (pause), you know in an organization this small there aren't really many controls. And **the board doesn't question me. I appreciate the trust** but there, **there need to be more controls in place.** I think that **DY board trust factor is extremely high.** At the same time, I don't think that level of trust should be given to any one single person in a nonprofit organization. (ILM 114-210)

The “freedom/control” dialectical tension was amplified by the board's need to “control” or hold the ED accountable, on the one hand, and the board's strategy to provide “freedom” or keep the ED at all cost, on the other hand. The previous sacrifices of money, time, and energy to hire Lisa Marie helped the board select “freedom” in its relationship with the new ED at DY.

## Summary

This case study indicated that the leadership succession process at DY followed four stages stretching across two years, 2004 through 2006. As Figure 4.1 clearly presented, the four stages were pre-succession (January 2004 – September 2005), during succession A (September 2005 – March 2006), during succession B (March 2006 – May 2006), and post-succession (May 2006 – summer 2006). These stages were not linear and sequential per se, even though the study used them as such. The stages provided a framework to handle the data and unpack a complex process like leadership succession. These stages were used heuristically to provide beginning points and milestones to follow shifts in the leadership nuclei and the dialectical tensions.

Moreover, as captured in Table 4.2, the study revealed that leadership succession was a dynamic and turbulent process which involved multiple actors with different agendas and conflicting motivations. The ED/chair leadership nucleus formed, morphed, dissolved, and re-crystallized across the four stages (See Table 4.2). The dialectical tensions also altered across stages and interplayed differently. Thus, succession was a messy process as leadership was contested among several organizational actors across time.

As illustrated in Table 4.2, the pattern of leadership nuclei shaped the management of the dialectical tensions in the respective stages, and the choices for managing dialectics influenced the succession process and resultant leadership pattern. For example, during stage I, Jennie was the one dealing with the individual-centered “staying/leaving” dialectic. Also, she and Don were the ones who juggled the

“verticality/horizontality” tension of their relationship. “Control/freedom” became a dialectic affecting the relationship between Jennie and Don or Jennie and the rest of the board. At the end of stage I, as a result of the management of these dialectics, the ED/chair nucleus dissolved and was replaced by an ambiguous and vague triangle of influence: Gayla, Don, and Jennie.

**Table 4.2 DY Dialectics and Leadership Nuclei**

<u>Stage I</u>	<u>Stage II A</u>	<u>Stage II B</u>	<u>Stage III</u>
<i>ED/Chair</i>	<i>Ambiguous Interim ED/Chair/ Former Chair</i>	<i>Vice-chair &amp; Future Vice-chair</i>	<i>ED</i>
Staying/Leaving	Blaming/Absolving	Change/Stability	Staying/Leaving
Freedom/Control (Verticality/ Horizontality)	Freedom/Control (Verticality/ Horizontality) (Public/Private)	Cooperation/Competition (Trust/Distrust) (Honesty/Deception)	Blaming/Absolving  Freedom/Control (Trust/Distrust)

In stage II A, Gayla and Jennie were locked in the push/pull of “blaming/absolving.” While Gayla selected the “blaming” pole of the tension, Jennie opted for “absolving.” Pointing fingers enabled the actors to save face, cast themselves in a positive light, and solidify their own organizational control. The “control/freedom” dialectic was managed by Gayla and Don in relation to the new chair, Jennie. Similar to the previous stage, the “verticality/horizontality” tension was nested within the “control/freedom” dialectic. The management of this dialectic sought to normalize the shift and reverse hierarchical roles with Jennie being a “boss” in relation to her senior

“peer,” Gayla. Another sub-dialectic present during stage II A was “public/private.” Don assumed the back stage and operated from behind the curtain. He selected “private” over “public” in his dealings with Jennie and the rest of the board because his wife, Gayla, now reported to his protégée, Jennie.

Stage II B introduced new players and new sets of tensions. This stage was the most dramatic in terms of friction and conflict. The two new actors that emerged as leaders of two factions were Laura and Charlie. Also, for the first time, the organization-centered “change/stability” dialectic emerged from the leadership succession process. As expected, the two independent and conflicting nuclei stood for the opposite poles of the “change/stability” dialectic. This overarching dialectic affected the “cooperation/competition,” “trust/distrust,” and “honesty/deception” dialectics. According to the board, Laura selected the “deception” pole of the dialectic which forced the opposing board faction to select “distrust.” Consequently, both board factions chose “competition” to deal with the “change/stability” tensions. The party that was perceived as “dishonest” was pushed off the board; thus, Laura left and Charlie’s vision of a charter school was upheld through the hiring of Lisa Marie.

Stage III mirrored the first stage and gave the whole process a circular appearance. The main difference was that the chair assumed a backseat role while the ED stood out as the influential leader. Also, in contrast to the first stage, other board members did not influence and interface closely with the ED. Charlie and the Don communicated with the ED on a regular basis; however, they did not exercise much “control” over the ED. Lisa Marie operated as a one-woman show calling the shots and



driving DY. Reminiscent of stage I, Lisa Marie juggled the “staying/leaving” dialectic. In contrast to Jennie, Lisa Marie selected the “leaving” pole to solidify her “control” over the organization. Also, the “control/freedom” dialectic played out differently than it did in stages I and II A. During the post-succession stage, the “trust/distrust” dialectic was nested with “control/freedom.” The board selected “trust” in their relationship with the ED, and this selection further solidified the “freedom” the ED enjoyed. As expected, the “blaming/absolving” dialectic was present during the third stage. Lisa Marie invoked guarded criticism by managing to integrate “blaming” and “absolving.” She stated:

This has been extremely frustrating. But when we want interims for just that, and Gayla made it clear to them, at least from what she said to me, **“I’m just here to hold all the pieces together, until you find someone.”** She wasn’t 110% into, DY. Because of that some issues were unattended, unaddressed, and what happens is what happens. It never crossed my mind in a million years that an organization this small could be this distorted, fragmented, unorganized, just a lack of foundation. But Gayla was not fully responsible since she was an unpaid, volunteer Interim ED. (I Lisa Marie 160)

In contrast to Lisa Marie, Jennie oscillated at temporal levels and shifted from “absolving” Gayla in stage II A to “blaming” her in stage III.

Subsequently, this study revealed that the management strategy employed by the actors during stages II A and B was *selection*. Conversely, the management strategies employed by the actors during stages I and III were *selection, oscillation, connection, and integration*. The explanation for the difference between the intermediate stages and the front/back-end stages might be due to the fact that the middle stages experienced increased agitation with changes in leaders, structural transformations, and conflict.

These crisis situations might have prompted actors to opt for the more direct method for resolving dialectical tensions – *selection* of one pole and rejection of the opposite.

In addition, the study indicated that there were three types of interconnected dialectics present at DY during the succession process: individual-centered (“staying/leaving”), relation-centered (“blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control”), and organization-centered (“change/stability”). These dialectics were interwoven as the management of one influenced the management of the others. For example, during stage II B, some actors selected “deception” which forced other parties to favor “distrust.” These choices redefined the relationship between the actors in terms of “competition.” Finally, selection of “competition” led to one side winning and the other side losing in the struggle to maintain “stability” over “change.”

In the final analysis, practitioners and scholars alike would benefit from viewing leadership succession as a process that is discursively enacted and sustained by individual-, relation-, and organization-centered dialectics managed by key actors across time. The nucleus model captured the changing and amorphous nature of leadership succession as a process. The leadership nuclei morphed over time based on the management of dialectical tensions as they interfaced within the board context. As a result, different combinations of actors led to different organizational consequences and succession outcomes, as this case study revealed.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CC CASE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter analyzes the leadership succession process at CC, a Texas-based nonprofit organization. CC has already been introduced and presented in terms of location, mission, budget, and structure in the methods chapter of this research study.

First, this case study unpacks the four stages that characterize the succession process at CC: pre-succession (January 2002 through March 2003), during succession A (March 2003 through September 2003), during succession B (September 2003 through December 2003), and post-succession (December 2003 through summer 2004). Next, the stages reveal the evolution of the leadership nuclei, the influences exercised by other parties regarding these nuclei, the dialectical tensions experienced by the leadership nuclei during the succession process, and the strategic choices for managing these tensions towards the outcome of the succession process. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary which weaves together the findings in the four stages in order to provide a complete picture of the succession process at CC.

#### **Background and Stages in the Leadership Succession Process**

Tim Sims joined CC in 1989 when the organization was struggling financially. Tim had the reputation of being an effective fundraiser, and the board hired him precisely for his skills (see Table 5.1). True to his reputation, Tim paid off the CC debt

in a couple of years. His wife, Jo Sims, worked closely with him. Emerging as a savior-like figure, Tim received huge latitude from the board to run CC however he saw fit:

Tim used to have good people skills; **he was terrific with raising money**; and he had the ability to communicate to people how much he (um) he cared for them. He listened to people and he was very attentive to older people, of course, he is old now, but at the time when he was younger, he was very attentive to older people. He spent a lot of time with them, and as a result they ended up, you know, contributing a good bit of money, enough to pay off about a \$400,000 debt that the home had when he came. The board respected that, stepped back, and **allowed Tim to be the main decision maker** at CC. (BCa 98)

Tim consolidated his power by hiring his daughter and son and by pushing away dissenting board members. Colt (709) recalled that “Tim’s capacity to raise money endeared him with the board who gave him free range to run CC. Tim took advantage of that and **hired his own family members** as staff, picked board members who complied, and scared away the ones who didn’t.”

However, a decade later, Tim’s health declined, and he became unable to raise the same amounts of money he used to. Moreover, Tim made certain decisions regarding a construction project which led to the financial collapse of CC:

Tim’s **abuse of funds by giving himself and his family high salaries**, hiring his daughter as a part-time employee, and getting in over his head with the MEP Activity Center led to CC’s financial troubles. **The MEP Activity Center was a fiasco** that pushed CC in debt. Unfortunately, the aging Tim is **not capable of raising the same amount of cash** that he brought in years earlier. (NM 36)

The board expressed its concern for the state of CC; Tim felt pressured to act and ameliorate the situation by bringing in more help. He called on his long-time friend Bob who used to be a past board member:

To his credit, Tim had the wisdom to recruit in January 2002 a chairman like Dr. Bob Carter who is a strong, visionary, and hard working leader and could step in to reverse things from going downhill. (NM 36)

**Table 5.1 CC Timeline**

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Milestones and Events</u>
1989	CC is in a dire financial situation. Twenty-four years after its inception in 1965, the organization is on the brink of collapse. Tim is brought in by the board as a highly praised ED with fine fundraising capabilities. His wife Jo is hired as Office Manager, OM.
1990's	<p>Tim emerges as uncontested leader. In less than two years, he raises the money to pay off the debt (over 400,000 dollars). CC enjoys years of prosperity and expansion. New cottage for foster-care children is built.</p> <p>Tim hires his daughter as Office Manager Assistant. Also, he hires his son on a contractual basis to manage the IT.</p>
2000-01	<p>Tim's health declines. Tim is unable to raise the same amounts of money as in the past.</p> <p>Tim closes a special deal with a wealthy, philanthropic family to donate money to build a multi-purpose center that will bear the name of the donor's wife – the MEP Center.</p>
<i>Stage I (pre-succession)</i>	
<b>January 2002</b>	<p>Tim demotes his friend Henri, the chairman, to a regular board member position. Tim uses Henri as scapegoat regarding the MEP construction deal which proved to be financially costing.</p> <p><b>Tim pleads with his old friend, Bob, to join the board as the new chair. Bob is a hard working doctor who has been a past board member. Tim promises to resign a year later if Bob accepts the offer. Bob accepts the proposal.</b></p>
Fall 2002	Under Bob's leadership as chair, the organization regains relative balance. Things are still financially tight. The MEP deal is slowly improving as Bob contracted out the job to new builders after recent new funds were secured.
January 2003	Board meeting. Bob challenges Tim to keep his end of the bargain and resign as ED. Tim resists.
February 2003	<p>Some old-guard board members leave. Bob brings in new board members: Colt and Nana.</p> <p>Tensions between Tim and the board continue to escalate.</p>

Table 5.1 (Continued)

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Milestones and Events</u>
<i>Stage II A (during succession)</i>	
March 2003	<b>Emergency board meeting, closed-doors session. Bob and Tony recommend search for a new ED; the board votes in favor. The board closes Tim' satellite office.</b>
August 2003	Tony, the vice-chair, identifies Connor as a potential ED candidate. Board meets with Connor and subsequently votes unanimously in favor of his hiring.
<i>Stage II B (during succession)</i>	
September 2003	<b>Connor hired as Deputy ED. The strategy is for Connor to shadow Tim to learn the ropes, get familiar with the system, and build rapport with old donors.</b>
Fall 2003	Tim seeks to push Connor out. Connor resists. The chair and vice-chair become a buffer for Connor.  Bob brings in new board members: Jim and Cassie.
December 2003	Board offers Tim and Jo a 2-week paid vacation, a company car, an honoring plaque, and a tabled proposal to name one of the children's cottages in their honor. Tim and Jo decide to retire and leave after the vacation.
<i>Stage III (post-succession)</i>	
Dec. 2003/Jan. 2004	<b>Connor is hired as permanent ED. Tim's daughter is fired. The contract with Tim's son is canceled. Tim's daughter files for unemployment. CC re-groups under the new ED. Connor's wife, Sue, is hired as office manager to replace Jo.</b>
Summer 2004	Tony resigns as vice-chair and leaves the organization. Jim becomes the new vice-chair. Bob resigns as chair but continues to be a member of the board for another year. Connor brings Dan on the board; Dan becomes the new chair.

### Stage I

Tim's strategy for recruiting Bob as board chair was based on his promise to resign the ED position a year later. Tim's pledge that he would soon leave marked the beginning of the pre-succession stage (see Figure 5.1). Bob's acceptance of the chair

position was conditional and contingent upon Tim's verbal guarantee to leave the organization at the end of 2002. This is the beginning of the pre-succession process because Tim's promise to resign triggered the subsequent events that led to change in leadership a year later.

Bob worked to reverse the "downhill" trend at CC. Under his leadership, board members jumped in to help with the construction project, brought in new donors, and made financial donations. The board Secretary (NM 439) stated that "Bob was an exceptional leader who galvanized the board to get active and become better stewards of the organization through donations, recruitment, and personal investments of time and energy." A year later CC regained its balance, the MEP Activity Center status improved, and the organization was no longer threatened by having to close its doors.

At the first board meeting in January 2003, Bob reminded Tim of his pledge to resign at the end of 2002. Tim refused to acknowledge that he ever made that promise.

Tim brought Dr. Carter on the board as a chairman to run the board for one term and Tim was going to give CC one more year. There was a verbal contract. "Join the board for a term as the chairman of the board, and I will give CC one more year as the executive director." There was an **oral agreement** between Bill and Tim that Tim would leave CC. Yet, I know and remember vividly when **Tim changed his mind in a board meeting** at the beginning of 2003. (CD 355)

Now that the financial situation at CC had slightly improved, Tim decided he did not want to leave after all. He resisted Bob's request. Bob responded with the strategic recruitment of new board members during the first quarter of 2003. The pre-succession segment ended with the escalation of tensions between the board and Tim in March 2003.

### **CC Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage I)**

During the first part of stage I, Tim, as the ED, stood out as the main leader while the board did not play a critical role. As soon as Bob became chairman and helped to solve the crisis associated with the MEP Activity Center, Tim continued his ways of “controlling” the board. As one of the board members recalled, Tim was a “control person who could not handle the board being in charge” (JT 384, 561). According to the former board chair, the board was a “go along group with no good ideas” (HL 256-8). In contrast, Tim “was a decisive, strong man of action with his finger on everything” (HL 213).

Tim was the voice of influence at CC. The board listened and obeyed when Tim spoke. Sue Little, the current Office Manager, recalled looking back and reflecting on the way Tim ruled over the board:

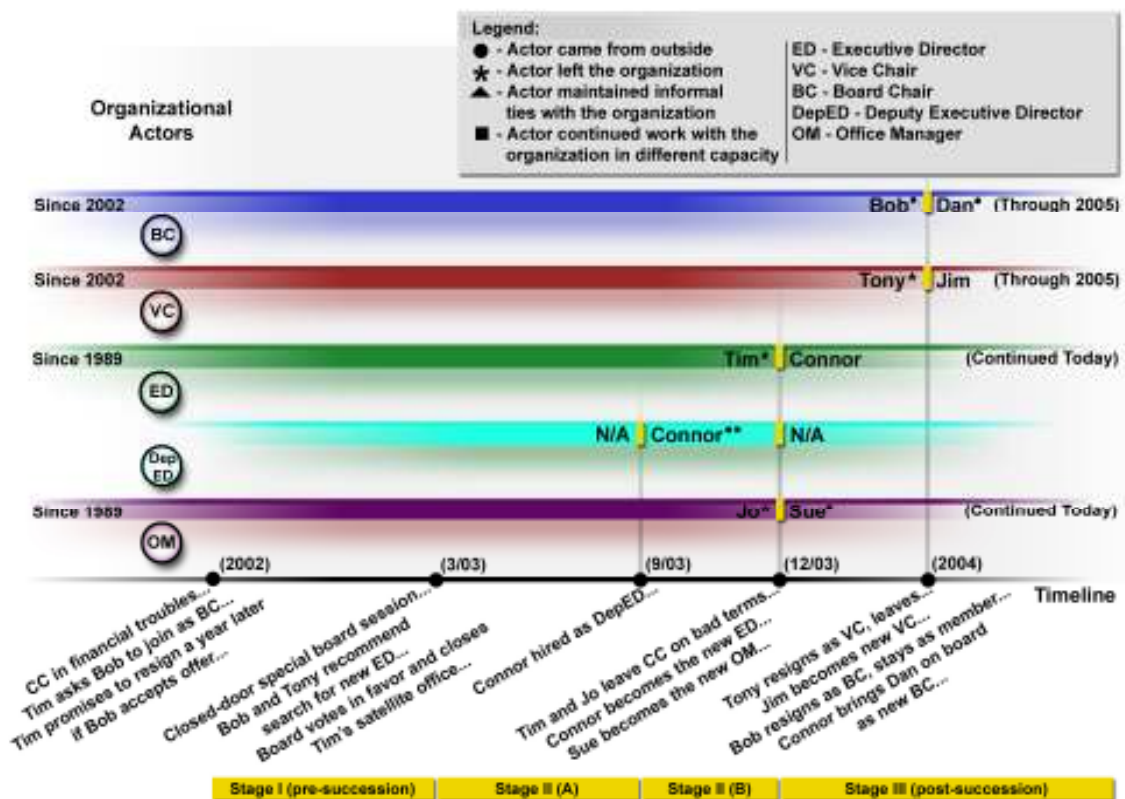
It kind of flabbergasted us in hindsight that the board allowed Tim to do all he did. I mean, the board allowed Tim to have the pay he wanted; it **allowed Tim to just to rule over the board**, and that was kind of shocking, really, to see an ED with his high degree of influence dictating and bossing the board. It is beyond all doubt that **Tim was the leader in charge**. (SL 52)

However, during the latter part of the pre-succession period, specifically between January and March 2003, Bob emerged as an independent and a contending leader who “brought in new board members, inspired them to help with the construction project, and funneled in new donations” (CD 214). When Tim refused to honor or even acknowledge the promise of resigning at the end of 2002, Bob decided to step up his efforts to balance the leadership equation at CC:



Bob did a good job in creating a diverse board that soon helped offset the overbearing leadership of Tim. Thank goodness that **Bob came back as a strong and involved chairman**. Thank goodness. (JT 569, 224)

Figure 5.1 CC Leadership Succession



During 2002, as during all previous years, Tim came across as the unequivocal and undisputed leader of CC. However, when he refused to honor his promise to leave at the beginning of 2003, Bob stood out as an independent and challenging leader vying for control starting at the beginning of 2003 and continuing through the end of the first stage in March of the same year. CC witnessed two independent leaders during the latter part of stage I: Tim and Bob.

## CC Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage I)

During stage I, the dynamic between the ED and the chair was characterized by several dialectical tensions which included “staying/leaving,” “blaming/absolving,” and “freedom/control.”

### *Staying/Leaving*

The dialectical tension of “staying/leaving” left a major mark on the CC organizational climate affecting both board of director members and staff. In fact, it was this dialectic that triggered the pre-succession period of the leadership succession process at CC.

Even before stage I started at the beginning of 2002, various organizational actors dealt with the push-pull friction of the individual-centered “staying/leaving” dialectic. The board member turnover rate at CC seemed to be unusually high. Cassie Toms, one of the newer members, explained why many of the old board members kept resigning at a fast clip. Tim was not performing well, and CC was on the brink of financial disaster. Old board members were dealing with the friction between “staying” and firing the man who brought them on board or “leaving” and avoiding responsibility for the organizational disaster associated with the lack of funds.

Many of Tim’s handpicked members of the old board **had left** because, number one, they didn’t want to terminate the whole thing and kick out the man who brought them on board, and, I think, number two, nobody likes to admit they failed. Yeah, I think it’s very much a part of human nature. If Rome was burning during my tenure guarding Rome, then **I am going to go to Sicily** on vacation. **I don’t want to be around** during the fireworks. For some folks it is easier to cut and run. (CT 164)

Most of the board members opted for the selection of the “leaving” pole. They chose “leaving” over “staying” in order to preserve the relationship with Tim who invited them on the board, and, perhaps, to avoid the responsibility for the seemingly imminent collapse of CC. Even Bob, the current board chair, was once a regular board member who decided to “leave” the board a few years prior when he witnessed an exodus of board members departing because of Tim’s leadership style:

Board members were **coming and going lickety-split**. It just couldn’t be right. And, so I finally began to realize something wasn’t right with Tim’s **scaring away** dissenting board members. I decided **just to get off**, because, you know, I wasn’t happy with how things were going at CC, yet **I wanted to continue the friendship with Tim**; so, I figured out that the best thing for me was to **get off the board** and save the friendship with Tim. So, I had been on the board for 15-16 years at that point, and then I was off for 2-3 years till he asked me to come back as chairman. (BCa 134)

In contrast to most board members who selected “leaving” over “staying,” Bob separated the two dialectical poles at a temporal level. He “left” the board in the late 90’s but chose to “stay” by returning in 2002 following Tim’s invitation. Bob’s decision to “stay” became contingent upon and intertwined with Tim’s promise to “leave:”

Tim promised me that he would resign after one more year as ED. However, a year later, he refused to acknowledge that he even made that commitment. He called me before I got Levi and Colt on the board. He called me in October and said, “Hey, I really need your help at CC. I tell you what, if you give me one year as chair, I will give CC one more year as ED and then leave.” One more year, you know. So, **I came since he wanted to leave**. But when the time came, **he was not ready because it was this ownership thing**. He wasn’t going to **turn loose of CC**. If I remember correctly, when the time came, and I reminded him of his promise, he said “this is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard.” He used strong language. He said “you do not know what you are talking about. Bob, are you stupid or what? When did I say I’d resign?” Yeah. He was acting as if he did not remember or did not say it. I did not make it up because, frankly, I was shocked when **he said that he was going to quit after the year was up**. And that was the only reason I got back on board. I knew **he is ready to get out**.

And I thought to myself that **it probably is time he left**. So I will **help him leave**. But now, he changed his mind and **wants to stay**. (BCa II 248-258)

While the departing board members selected “leaving” over “staying” and Bob separated “staying” and “leaving” at temporal levels, Tim seemed to oscillate between the two poles at a strategic level. Tim separated “leaving” and “staying” based on his strategic initiatives. When he wanted to get Bob back on the board, Tim strategically promised to “leave.” Later, however, when the organization regained a sense of normalcy, Tim opted to “stay” and denied the prior agreement he had with the new board chair.

Bob, who had a long-standing relationship with Tim from serving on the board during earlier years, elaborated on Tim’s stratagem of oscillating between the two poles of the dialectic when threatening dissenting board members in the past:

There was a time in the recent past when if anybody had any objections to something that Tim wanted to do, **he would threaten to resign**. He would simply tell us that **he was going to leave**. That was his strategy because he had total control of every situation and nobody knew anything else that was going on in terms of passwords, donors, and other important documents. You had to have someone who was a licensed childcare provider, and he was the only one. If he were to quit, we’d be left, you know, according to him, **we’d be left without anything** and we’d have to shut CC down since we’d be out of compliance. He threatened us that **if he were to leave** then the state was going to shut us down and sue us. He tried to **scare us** into obedience by **pretending he would leave**. (BCa 324)

Tim’s oscillation between the “staying/leaving” dialectical poles was intentional. By threatening to “leave,” Tim gained “control” over the board during the earlier days at CC. Also, more recently, by promising to “leave” during the first stage, Tim “influenced” Bob into returning and helping CC through the crisis. However, after the organization regained its balance and when Tim was asked to “leave,” he switched back

to “staying;” thus, further displaying the “freedom” to map out his own course and set his own timeline independent of the board:

As far as the ED goes, he knew the handwriting was on the wall too. Tim saw that too. And the paradoxical thing here is that he knew **he was going to be kicked out**, at the same time, **he wanted to stay, he wanted to go, he wanted to leave, but he wanted to stay**. Ultimately, **he wanted to leave on his terms** or be able to say “the board pushed me out, I didn’t leave willingly. I didn’t resign. I was terminated through the actions of new aggressive board members.” (CT 174-182)

The dialectic of “staying/leaving” was connected to the dialectic of “freedom/control.” “Leaving” on his own terms and timetable demonstrated the degree of “freedom” Tim had in dealing with the board. It became evident that during the first stage, the board was “controlled” by the ED. The connection between the two sets of dialectics was made through the management of a third dialectic, “blaming/absolving.” By selecting “blaming,” actors were able to increase their “control” over other parties. “Freedom” was increased through the selection of “absolving.”

### *Blaming/Absolving*

The second set of dialectics that was present in the relational dynamics at CC was the push-pull between the “blaming” and “absolving” poles. This relation-centered dialectic surfaced towards the latter part of the first stage. The “blaming/absolving” tensions made choices hard for the actors who vacillated between the demand to save face and “blame” the other party and the demand to adhere to the spiritual heritage of the organization and “absolve” others.

However, for some of the actors at CC, the “blaming” pole was consistently privileged over “absolving.” It was at a board meeting in January 2003 that Bob reminded Tim to resign according to the agreement they made a year earlier when Bob became chairman. Tim responded by unleashing a barrage of criticism directed at Bob as well as other organizational actors:

Tim became bitter against me when I challenged him and asked him when he was going to leave the ED position. At that point **I became the enemy**, and he started **to accuse me** for the problems at CC. He expected me to be a “yes-man” and comply with his directives. And here I was asking him to leave. **He also blamed the former board chair**, Henri, for the mess with the MEP center. **It was everybody’s fault. We were all wrong and he was right** in all his board rumblings. (BCa 160)

One of the main events that triggered the succession process at CC was the financial fiasco associated with the MEP Activity Center. Tim managed the project, but he was unable to keep up with its details. CC soon found itself in a tough financial position, “unable to pay house parents’ salaries and other overhead costs” (JS 120). When the nonprofit was about to close its doors, Tim called on Bob for help. When presenting the situation to Bob and the rest of the new board members, Tim and his wife made sure to “blame” other organizational actors (i.e. the board chairman that preceded Bob) for the MEP financial problems:

MEP Activity Center was a disaster, and we didn’t want to leave without finishing it. The MEP family gave us \$100,000 to start the project. But the **crooked contractor, selected by Henri** who was the chairman at the time, **cheated us**. At one time I think we had **two \$50,000 piles of dirt** out there, just made me sick to my stomach I mean, you know. MEP was a miscalculation that hurt CC. It was the fault of the contractor and Henri for picking him. (JS 150-90)

According to Bob, the ED was strategic in choosing the “blaming” pole of the dialectical tension during his interaction with other board members and the board:

Tim was strategic. He liked to control the board. If you’d disagree with him, **he would attack and blame and run you off the board**. That was his strategy. He picked on everybody who did not agree with him. (BCa 512, 698)

By “blaming” others, Tim “absolved” himself from responsibility for the organizationally inadequate status quo at CC. Tim passed responsibility on to others by casting himself as the martyr and casting other organizational actors as the irresponsible aggressors.

With Tim it’s obviously a manipulation game. But it’s also a “**don’t blame me**” game. In other words, “I have done my best, but now you’re attacking me and asking questions and calling into question my decisions and what I’ve done, and so, if you will divert attention, or redirect your attention, I’m going to show you this.” And then Tim will **create smoke and mirrors through blaming** others as culprits and distracting the board from the issue of leadership succession pertaining to his position at CC. (CT 412, CD 346)

Tim pushed away board members through his “blaming” game. Ironically, in doing so he created the space for new members to come in. It seemed that his strategy backfired. He got rid of dissenting, yet malleable, board members, and that allowed Bob during the first quarter of 2003 to bring in new “forward thinking” members who were not easily influenced by Tim. In March of 2003, the new voices decided in unison to get rid of Tim and hire a new ED starting in September 2003. These dissenting voices chose to select “control” over the ED.

*Freedom/Control*

The “freedom/control” dialectic was relation-centered since it pertained to the interactions between the board chair or the board and the ED. Since the board in the past approached Tim with a laissez-faire attitude, the ED stood out as a “controlling tyrant who ran the show” (CD 127):

The board was a rubber-stamp board. Whatever Tim wanted, the board would approve and stamp accordingly. Tim **controlled the board**. Tim **ran the organization**. Tim was the boss. Tim picked most of the board members in the past, so **the board members did what Tim wanted them to do**. Tim pretty much ran CC as an **undisputed dictator**. (BCa 100-116, 216; CT 252-4)

Another board member put it this way:

The old board never, as best as I can tell, gave, if you will, much guidance to Tim. (Um) Tim, more or less, **ran the show** including the board; **he decided what was on the agenda**, (um) and those to me are all warning signs (uh) that **the ED controls the board**. Tim was kind of a “my way or the highway” type of guy. He possessed a sense of ownership of CC... a sort of “this is my baby” type of thing. He owned CC. He owned the board. (CT 70-150, 214)

Nested within the “freedom/control” dialectic was the sub-dialectical tension of “ownership/stewardship.” The sense of “ownership” that Tim developed about CC contributed to the explanation of why he was consistent in selecting the “control” pole:

I think over the years he developed an attitude about this place that he sort of claimed it. He sort of became **attached to different things**: the buildings, the décor, every thing, the ancient letterhead logo, and most of the furnishings, you know. He was the one who, you know, ran the whole shebang. And I think from him doing all that, he just **felt like it was his; yeah, ownership**. Tim **felt he owned it all**. (LS 190-91)

Tim might have joined as a “steward” of the organization; however, after many years of calling the shots, the ED became a quasi “owner” of CC. Tim resurrected CC from its



ashes back in 1989, and now, a decade later, his personal identity was tied to a perceived “ownership” sense of the organization.

I believe that for Tim CC was **more or less his baby**, something he considered his own since he saved its life many years ago. There is **an ownership sense** as if he would say “CC is my baby. I’ve adopted it. I’ve run it, you know, for ‘x’ number of years. Where were you when I started working on this organization?” (CT 70-80)

When Tim’s sense of “ownership” became threatened and “controlled” by the board chair and the new board members, the ED resorted to manipulation of information and board members. The second set of sub-dialectical tensions encased within the “freedom/control” dialectic was “honesty/deception.” Because of his strategic choices in the interaction with the board, Tim was presented as a modern-day Machiavelli who would take necessary actions to retain “control” over the board and “ownership” of CC:

I don’t want to put Machiavelli behind Tim, but it’s probably just how he interfaced and worked with the board. He managed to (pause) **bully some, sweet talk others** and, yeah, he basically, as I said, directed the nonprofit, and the board rubber stamped. Somebody should have asked “why are we eating up our reserves so fast?” Tim was very good, from the few times that I saw, at **talking back to board members**. All you heard was the good news. You never hear the bad news. Through **deception and information withholding he was manipulating the board; he was hiding information**, not being forthright, or revealing only glimpses of it. (CT 250-320)

Another board member, a lawyer named Cassie, echoed the remarks pertaining to Tim’s strategic manipulation of information as methods for selecting the “control” pole. By choosing “deception” and by “controlling” the information he communicated to the board, Tim managed to continue “owning” the organization.

Tim was Machiavellian-like with information for the board. Tim **was the gatekeeper of information**; as such, he was able to control the board. He was a **black hole** for information. Things would happen and the board would be left in the dark. If you control the information flow, then you can control the direction

of the entity. In his controlling ways, Tim **was a thief for he stole the sense of reality of the board** by pushing his “emergency” items on the board agenda for the longest time. Tim threw sand in the air and **made the situation foggy** during the board meetings. (CT 270, 448-455; CD 570)

The same board member elaborated on the communication tactics that Tim employed when dealing with the board during board meetings. These methods included “rabbit trailing,” “red herring,” “ink tossing,” and “sentiment manipulating:”

Tim’ strategy, of course, was to make the board lose its focus. Spiritual entity boards, like CC’s board, you know, tend to be rabbit trailed much more easily than for profit boards. When Tim was cornered about his performance and need for a successor, **he pulled the trap off**, and a rabbit jumped up. He mentions that rabbit, and everyone goes chasing on after that rabbit, and we’ve now lost where we were going in the first place because we’re chasing his artificial rabbit. Or he would try a red herring strategy to get us off chasing our rabbits. Or he would toss the ink in the air **to simply block our view** and see no rabbits. He was masterful at this. So, **he manipulated the information that came in and ended up on the agenda**. And he also did a manipulation of motives, you know. It’s kind of like “how dare you question my motives and why are you’re picking on me, oh poor me?” (CT 250-320)

Tim stood out as a “controlling” ED who privileged the selection of “deception” over “honesty” and “ownership” over “stewardship” in the organization. Tim was consistent in the management strategies of the choice points available when dealing with the “freedom/control” dialectic. Tim favored the “deception” and “ownership” poles so that he could select “control.” For Tim there was no subtle strategic oscillation or separation at topical or temporal levels when transacting with the board. By managing the sub-dialectical frictions in terms of selecting only one pole of the “**ownership/stewardship**” and “**honesty/deception**” dialectics, the ED selected “control” over the board and the organization.

In contrast, the board and the board chair separated the “freedom/control” poles at temporal levels when dealing with the ED. During the earlier days of the organization, the board selected “freedom” in its interaction with the ED. This strategy made sense when CC was in debt and the leadership vacuum allowed for the emergence of a powerful ED. The board gave Tim free latitude in running the organization the way he saw fit.

However, a decade later when CC went bankrupt and the ED was not capable of raising the funds he used to bring in, the board chose “control” in its relationship with Tim. The board demanded more accountability though it was not easy to change course and challenge the man who ruled the organization freely for many years. The catalyst that led to the board’s fluctuation from the “freedom” to the “control” pole was the board chair, Bob. Tim expected Bob to be a “yes-man” and comply with his requests. Bob came back with a different agenda, and Tim did not appreciate it. Bob became Tim’s target of finger-pointing and “blaming.” Bob surfaced as the antithetical leader who challenged Tim’s position of dominance and control.

### **Stage II A**

The intermediate stage of the succession process was divided in two parts, A and B (see Figure 5.1). Stage II A started with a closed-door, emergency board session in March 2003 and ended in September 2003 with the hiring of Connor Little as the Deputy Executive Director. In contrast to the pre-succession phase, stage II A dealt with an increased number of board activities and the implementation of organizational changes.

For the first time ever, Tim and other staff members were not invited or allowed to attend the special board session in March which proved to be a major milestone in light of the historical dictatorial rule of Tim. At this meeting, the board of directors decided unanimously that a new ED needed to be hired before Tim was fired or pushed out of the nonprofit. Specific goals and deadlines were suggested and unanimously approved: hiring a Deputy Executive Director by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003; having the Deputy ED shadow Tim for three months; firing or asking Tim to leave at the end of 2003; and having the new Deputy ED transition into the ED position during January 2004.

Some of the significant milestones of Stage II A included monthly board meetings, the identification of a potential candidate by the vice-chair in August, and strategic moves on the part of the board to introduce organizational change as a means to weaken the “control” of the ED.

Because of the pressure to have a new ED by the end of the year, the board of directors met monthly in three hour sessions. The main topic of discussion was finding a new ED who would be willing to work with Tim during a three to four month transition stage. In August 2003, Tony, the vice-chairman, identified Connor Little as a potential candidate.

Tony was on the advisory board of CK {another nonprofit similar to CC}, and he knew of Connor and thought an awful lot of Connor, and he still does. And he made the suggestion that we contact Connor about the ED position. **Tony made the contact with Connor.** So, he was **instrumental** in the **succession process**. Connor responded well and was willing to interview and consider the opportunity. (BCa 255-60)

The board voted unanimously in favor of hiring Connor based on the recommendations from Tony and Bob. Tim accepted the idea of having a Deputy ED assist him in the work, hoping that he would still continue as ED for the next few years.

CC experienced four major changes that weakened the power of the ED. First, Bob brought in three new independent board members during the first and second quarters of 2003: Colt, Levi, and Nana. These organizational actors clustered around and behind the chairman in support of his initiatives.

Second, the board voted unanimously to close down the expensive satellite office that Tim maintained close to his personal home to get the mail for the nonprofit organization. The organization was able to free up several thousands of dollars on a monthly basis.

Third, the board voted in favor of changing the fifteen year old organizational logo. Though seemingly a minor thing, the change of the logo became a major psychological blow for the old ED who resisted not just leadership change but any type of change.

Finally, the ED lost his Texas State child care license due to the fact that the organization was in critical shape and unable to provide adequately for children. In fact, there were no children on campus during this transition stage. Stage II A ended up with the hiring of Connor Little as Deputy ED on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003.

### CC Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage II A)

While the first stage boasted two distinct and clearly defined leaders, the ED and the board chair, stage II A revealed ambiguous leadership shared by five organizational actors – the board chair, the vice-chair, the ED, the office manager, and the former board chair – divided in two triads that centered on the ED and the chair. First, Bob continued to play a critical role as catalyst for change which started with his recruiting of new board members during the first half of the year.

As far as the succession process is concerned, **Bob played a chief role**. He was the chairman and was the **one who pressed Tim to resign**. He also is the one **who built the board** and brought in several new members who were not puppets of Tim. Also, Tony who is the vice-chair played an important role since he is the one who brought Connor to CC. (CD 365)

The former board chair described Bob as “probably a good [chairman] who wanted things (i.e. leadership succession) to happen too fast because he was impatient” (HL 228-30). Bob was “a diplomatic, compromising mediator; he was also a visionary man” (NM 200-4; SL 131-5). Bob saw the need to shift the power from the ED to the board and worked towards that end.

Tim felt that the power was slipping away from him. Things were changing, and he was not in charge anymore. Bob was calling the shots now. And Tony was the chairman’s sidekick. Tony was a big pain in Tim’s side. I mean in the board meetings, and now we started to meet every single month, **Tony would turn the back of his chair to Tim. He would not even look at Tim when he spoke to him**. Total cold shoulder approach for the vice-chair. There was major friction between these two fellows. Tony said he was sick with Tim’s pride, arrogance, bossiness, and lack of performance. Bob was more diplomatic in dealing with Tim. (CD 255)

Second, Bob confirmed the essential leadership role that Tony, the vice-chair, played during the succession process:

The leadership of CC was, I guess, **it was pretty much Tony** and me. You know, in some ways I kind of hand picked the rest of the board myself. And you guys supported me. You all supported me, but I knew y'all and your hearts, and you had your own minds and opinions, and I wanted you to express them. That's the way I wanted it to be. I wanted an independent board; certainly independent from Tim. (BCa 250-80)

The vice-chair provided a voice of authority at CC during the second stage. Tony challenged Tim's leadership and supported Bob's initiative to find a new ED replacement.

**Tony was a burr under the saddle for Tim.** Tony had courage and pressured and persevered till he threw the ED off the horse. (CT 480)

Tony was described by the former board chair as "impatient and intolerant" of Tim (HL 244-46). Another board member saw Tony as being "disappointed with Tim and not as compromising as Bob seemed to be" (NM 213-5). Tony credited his role in finding the new successor, Connor Little, to divine intervention:

I mentioned to my friends the fact that we were looking for an ED, and a friend (who later became a house parent) said, "Well, why don't you get Connor to work for you?" He gave me his number, I informed Bob, and Bob and I called Connor to set up an interview. **This was my role in the leadership transition at CC.** I don't take any credit; at my age, I have learned early, "don't take any credit Tony because none of it is yours." I can look back and say "wow!" You look back and see how the Lord maneuvered and used me as an instrument in this transition as in a divine set of appointments. (TH 335-50)

Next, while the chair and the vice-chair assumed influencing positions at CC, Tim continued to exercise a certain degree of control. He worked closely with his wife, the Office Manager, who helped him as he was aging and as his position of leadership was contested by other organizational actors.

**Jo exercised a lot of influence**, a whole lot more than any Office Manager would normally do. As Tim got older, she assumed a **more aggressive leading role**. This is what I believe since she camouflaged herself with her husband's

position. A lot of it I sensed. Some I observed. She operated from behind the scenes. She sat in the board meetings. Tim sat at the head of the table. Jo's chair was right behind his. Just like in movies with the Counselor's or Wizard's chair positioned behind the King's throne. **She presented all the financials. She corrected him if he missed a detail. She answered in his place if he got stuck when questioned by the board members.** She oversaw various details of the succession process. She did a lot with and for him. (CD 345)

The vice-chair confirmed and added:

When it comes to influence, pretty well **his wife often ran things**. Tim and Jo were hand and glove, and I am not sure who had the most control of CC, the board, and even the leadership transition. She sat in and she attended every meeting when we met at XYZ church to discuss the succession. Bob, Henri, me, and the two of them met to discuss the transition. **She was always present processing and quietly directing from behind the scenes.** (TH 150-160)

Finally, the last organizational actor whose voice of influence surfaced during the second stage was the former board chair. Henri was “determined, patient, and loyal to the ED since he would do whatever Tim asked him to do” (HL 276-9; CD 112; JT 533). The ED kept his hand in the succession process vicariously through the former board chair.

I suspect that Henri tagged along Bob and Tony to provide inside information for Tim. You see, Henri used to be [chairman] before Bob took over in 2002. Henri went to the same church with Tim, and they knew each other for many years. Henri was Tim's man. Henri was a lightning rod for Tim's anger and frustration. **Henri was a scapegoat for when things went bad at CC. Henri was a patiently enduring friend for Tim.** Often, Tim treated Henri horribly. And Henri did not complain. He faithfully absorbed Tim's emotional outbursts. Tim got really ticked off when the entire board voted unanimously in favor of a new ED. At the same time, Tim was no fool. He realized that Henri is still very much under his influence. I believe, and this is my speculation, Henri was commissioned by Tim to be involved in the new ED search process. **I think it gave Tim a subconscious sense of control**, a sense of power that in reality was slipping away from him fast. Henri straddled the fence. One the one hand he respected Tim, and on the other hand he voted with the rest of the board to oust Tim and hire a new ED. (CD 15)



In the final analysis, during stage II A, the leadership nucleus at CC was convoluted and divided among five organizational actors separated in two nebulous triads: on the one hand, ED/office manager/former board chair and, on the other hand, former board chair/board chair/vice-chair. Even though the vice-chair and the chair combined forces to usurp the ED, Tim maintained his sphere of influence through two of his closest allies: his wife, the office manager, and his friend from church, the former chairman, Henri. The former chairman found himself at the nexus of the two camps since he both supported the ED and his wife but also voted in favor of the changes instigated by the chairman and supported by the vice-chair with regard to hiring Connor as the next ED:

**Bob, Tony, and Henri called and asked** me {Connor} to come and meet with them and interview with them to see if I would be willing to come and to work at CC. At that time Tim was still there as director. He was up in years, eighty-one years, of age and his health was failing and as a result of that he wasn't able to do the kind of work he needed to do to go into congregations and do the traveling that he needed to do to raise money for CC. **The three of them** worked together and negotiated with me to come to CC. (CL 45-51)

### **CC Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage II A)**

During stage II A, the discursive interplay between the two triadic leadership nuclei and among their members was characterized by four sets of dialectical tensions which included “staying/leaving,” “blaming/absolving,” “freedom/control,” and “change/stability.”

### *Staying/Leaving*

The “staying/leaving” dialectic continued to be one of the chief tensions experienced at CC during stage II A. The ED was the main actor who grappled with the push-pull between the “staying” and “leaving” poles of the dialectic during this stage.

In contrast to the previous stage during which Tim oscillated between the two poles of the tension, stage II A revealed Tim’s selection of “staying.” Even though Tim saw “the writing on the wall” and knew that “his days at CC are numbered,” the incumbent ED favored the “staying” pole and changed his mind about “leaving.” (CD 67). Also, although Tim knew that his age and health were not allowing him to continue as he once did, the incumbent ED told Bob that he was not ready to retire; thus he switched to “staying.”

In the beginning Tim kept saying “I am ready to retire, and I am getting too old for this. I want to get out.” But later when Connor came, **Tim changed his mind** and said “the board is wronging me here, and I am being railroaded out of here.” The only mistake Bob did was not getting Tim’s wishes up front in writing when he kept promising us orally over and over again that he was going to retire in a few months since he was aging. Now he kept saying, **“I am staying, I am staying.”** (JT 222)

The board and the chair had to manage their own stress in dealing with “the aging and ailing ED.” The board’s dilemma pertained to “holding on” versus “letting go” of the incumbent ED. The entire board voted unanimously in favor of Tim’s “leaving.” However, the board realized that the transition should not happen abruptly for several reasons, including respect for Tim’s past legacy and the strategic consideration for the cadre of donors who were loyal to the ED. Levi commented that

“Bob did not want to fire Tim because he respected the aging and ailing ED for what he had done in the past for CC” (LS 29). Also, Nana added:

The board sought to be strategic about the way it handled Tim’s departure. The board wanted the **departure to be smooth** since we did not want to turn contributors against CC. (NM 98)

The board decided that Tim was not fit to stay at the helm of the organization. Moreover, the board chose the “leaving” pole for the incumbent ED. By pressuring Tim to select “leaving,” the board was indirectly “blaming” Tim for the problems the organization was facing. The contempt the board had for the incumbent ED was captured by one of the board members’ comments:

Tim came to CC as a Savior-like figure and left as a destroyer. When he came, CC was in debt. Now when he was asked to leave, CC was once again in debt. CC was in a comparable dire situation when **he was asked to leave** as it was when he was asked to come. Bob rescued CC from Tim’s fiasco. To Tim’s credit, he did ask Bob to join the board as board chair. But the good that Tim did in the beginning was washed off by **the wrong he did in the end for CC**. He did not finish strong. He did not have impeccable character. Race horses are known for their character which is tested during the last seconds of the race. Tim did not seem to have character stamina. He did not finish the race well. He did not keep the faith. He did not fight the good fight in the end. Perhaps there is still a crown for him, I am not the judge. But he did not run the race well. And I cannot say whether he will get the crown or not. (CD 542)

The “staying/leaving” dialectic became intertwined with the “blaming/absolving” dialectic during stage II A.

### *Blaming/Absolving*

Whereas Tim was the only one juggling the “blaming/absolving” tensions during the pre-succession stage, during stage II A, the board and the chair united their voices

and selected the “blaming” pole to explain the cause of problems at CC and pressure the ED to “leave.”

The entire board was in agreement that the main factor that led to the leadership transition was **the decline of CC under Tim’s leadership**. Something had to change as it was decided in the March board meeting. We needed a new leader. **Tim had to leave**. I mean if you had to point a finger, where can you point it? There was no where you can **point the finger, except to Tim. (BCa II 281)**

As during stage I, Tim’s modus operandi was the selection of the “blaming” pole in relationship to everyone opposing him in the organization during stage II A. Tim selected “blaming” the board for the situation at CC and for additional things, including his health:

Tim was quick to point fingers and blame others but **he would never take responsibility for anything**. He would get so entrenched and so defensive and would **say such horrible things** about people, especially as things started to heat up prior to our getting the new Deputy ED on board. **He would blame us for everything**. He even claimed that the board was responsible for his health deterioration. (BCa 200-202)

Tim’s selection of the “blaming” pole was tactical. The incumbent ED hoped to prolong his “staying” at the top of CC and delay the appointment of a successor. Also, by rejecting “absolving” while selecting the “blaming” pole in relationship with others, Tim sought to gain leverage over them, and, therefore, maintain his “control” over the organization.

### *Freedom/Control*

The relation-centered dialectic of “freedom/control” was present throughout the second stage as well. The tug-of-war between the chairman and/or the board and the ED could be cast in terms of a conflict for organizational “control.” The friction between

having to submit to the legal power of the board and the desire to control the organization made choices more difficult and stressful for the ED. In the final analysis, Tim wanted to maintain his influence over the board by rejecting the potential successor and opposing the board's plans for a succession process.

Tim did not want to give anybody else any authority. And he felt that the more he was able to keep the board in the dark, the better off he would be... because the more others would have to depend on him and on what little information he would give them to make their decision. Really, he just wanted a "yes board." He would just say I want to do this and this, and he expected us to follow in line. The board before us, they just let him do his own thing. And now **Tim wants us to reject Connor or anybody else**. He wants to continue to be the man in charge. And he **does not want to pass on his authority** to any future leader. (LS II 325)

In contrast to his oscillation between the "freedom" and "control" poles during stage I, Bob selected "control" in relationship to the ED during stage II A. Constraining the ED who ruled the organization for many years made it more demanding for the board chair to opt for "control." Bob recalled how Tim responded when he chose to act independently from the ED's influence:

Tim became disillusioned with me {Bob} since he expected me to just kind of be, you know, just a perfect "yes man" which I ended up not being. I was an outcast in his eyes because **I was not controlled by him** and because **I wanted him to leave**. And I've always had some power in our relationship since I've always done all the dental work for him and Jo for free. So, he could not dismiss me totally. (BCa 242-244)

Similarly, the board changed from the oscillation strategy of stage I to the strategy of selection of "control" in its relationship with Tim during stage II A:

**The board started to posture and flex its muscles.** One of the things the board did was to close down a satellite office that Tim kept close to his private residence. It did not make any sense to spend thousands of dollars to keep that office. CC was 20 miles south from that office. But Tim wanted to have a short commute so he kept his office close to his home. Shortly after we decided to find

a new ED, **we started to show Tim who is in charge**. We shot down the office and re-directed all the mail to the CC campus. Tim did not like it even though we saved thousands of dollars monthly. But the board voted unanimously in favor to close down the office. (CD 80)

During stage II A, the dialectic of “freedom/control” proved to be nested under the dialectic of “change/stability.” In a symbolic move that turned into a psychological blow to Tim, the board embraced change. The board selected “change” at an organizational level which translated into the vote to close the satellite office. By choosing “change” and shutting down the convenient but unnecessary office for Tim, the board chose to limit Tim’s “freedom” and to remind him that he needed to “leave.”

### *Change/Stability*

Unlike any other stages in the succession process at CC, stage II A witnessed the presence of the “change/stability” organization-centered dialectic. The board’s support of a new successor indicated the board’s readiness to embrace the “change.” The tension between the “change/stability” poles was exacerbated by the fact that by embracing “change,” the board risked alienating the donors loyal to Tim. Conversely, by embracing “stability,” the board risked bankrupting the organization due to Tim’s lack of performance. In the final analysis, the board decided to embrace “change” and get a new ED. Bob remembered warning Tim on behalf of the board:

I just flat out told Tim “I believe that **we were going to have to find a new ED**, you know. You told me you were going to retire and I took your word. **We’ve got to change things** since CC is not doing well, and we simply need a new ED.” Tim did not like it. He wanted to maintain the structural status quo of CC with him in charge. (BCa, 206)

In order to accomplish his “change of leadership” agenda, Bob selected the “changing” pole with regard to the makeup of the board. The vacuum created by Tim’s pushing away dissenting board members in the past provided the necessary space for new, independent board members to come.

I {Bob} was the architect of the board. I realized that in order to bring about change of leadership, **we needed new board members**. We needed young blood, new blood. So, I brought in Colt and Nana during the first quarter. And, also, I recruited Levi and Jim. We needed the **critical mass point** to tip things in the right direction if we were **to see changes** take place at CC. (BCa, 275)

A final example that illustrated the push-pull strain between the board and the ED in terms of the “change/stability” dialectic was the decision to “change” the company image on the letterheads, newsletters, envelopes, t-shirts, website, and banners. The board voted to change the organizational logo. As expected, the aging ED resisted “change” and favored the status quo by selecting the “stability” pole of the dialectic.

I remember **Tim got really upset** when we tried to change the company logo. The old logo was antiquated. **We needed to change it**. Bob commissioned me to spearhead that initiative. I contracted the job to a graphic designer who came up with a modern-looking, slick logo that was true to the legacy of CC yet it portrayed a current feel. Everybody on the board loved it and voted in favor of embracing the new logo. Tim was furious. He was red in the face and boiling. **He could not stand change**, and fought teeth and nails to resist it and maintain the status quo. I saw nasty fireworks at those board meetings during the second and third quarters of 2003. (CD 245)

The winds of leadership “change” were finally blowing loud and clear. Tim tried to resist the office closing and the logo change because these were signs pointing to the inevitability of getting a new ED. The board’s selection of “change” became a symbolic action that communicated the imminence of a successor.

## Stage II B

The hiring of Connor Little as Deputy Executive Director in September 2003 marked the beginning of stage II B. Creating the Deputy ED position was yet another symbolic move on the part of the board to communicate to the incumbent ED that it was time to leave.

In contrast to stages I and II which simply grew out of the actions and reactions of the organizational actors, stage II B stood out as an a priori, strategically engineered transition stage that provided the opportunities for Connor to learn the system, borrow from Tim's institutional memory (i.e. getting the names of and building rapport with old donors), and help Tim save face. By not firing Tim, the board hoped for a more amicable exit for the already belligerent ED. Also, the board wanted to ensure that the organizational image was not affected negatively by the succession process. Bob stated:

We decided in the March board meeting that we wanted **Tim to be part of the transition**. So, we let him continue as ED for a bit longer while we hired CL as Deputy ED. **We were strategic about this**. We were all doing everything we could to make Tim feel part of the transition. We wanted to maintain a good image for the donors. **We did not want to lose any of the support**. Also, **we wanted to secure all the critical information from Tim** and his wife as they were departing. (BCa 502, 600; CD 65)

Stage II B ended in December 2003 when Tim and Jo left the nonprofit. The board "honored" them with a plaque, a two-week paid vacation, and the company car. This generous "good-bye" packet was intended to function as a golden parachute to help them leave CC expediently and on good terms. Bob recollected:

I did not want to humiliate Tim given his past legacy and how he rescued CC in the early 90's. So, I really tried **to soften his landing out of the organization**. Let him save face. (BCa 340-90)



Unfortunately, and seemingly ungratefully, Tim and Jo left on bad terms despite the efforts of the board to the contrary.

Tim had a heart full of pride, selfishness, **resentment**, and hatred towards the board since he felt betrayed by us. Tim **was resentful**, demanding, and left feeling like we owed him something. There were sharp words exchanged towards the end of the transition even when we gave him the honorary plaque and recognized his past legacy. **Tim didn't acknowledge the nice things we had done for him.** All he had were sharp words that were unnecessary. I wanted to say to him, "Tim, let me tell you something, with the way you are acting and talking in front of the board who hired you, people would have fired you a long time ago." But we had a patient board that put up with Tim's self-centeredness. (TH 232; JJ 315-415; SL 50-140)

### **CC Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage II B)**

In contrast to the clear leadership during stage I, yet similar to the previous stage II A, the leadership nuclei during stage II B were rather convoluted and ambiguous. The leadership nuclei during stage II B were divided into three dyads: ED/Deputy ED, chair/ED, and vice-chair/Deputy ED. Bob remembered the complexity of the leadership equation at CC during this stage:

The leadership was intertwined. I was caught in the middle. It was a **delicate triangle** between **me, Tim, Connor, and Tony**. I was caught in a **balancing act**. On the one hand, I wanted to make sure that Connor does not get discouraged and leave. On the other hand, I tried to manage Tim and make sure he did not go ballistic and scare Connor away. And then there was the vice-chair. I'm trying to keep Tony and Tim in some sort of balance since their relationship was strained, to say the least. (BCa 530-60)

First, Tim continued to provide a voice of influence. His past legacy, his clout with some of the old donors, and his still intimidating approach continued to make him a significant organizational player during stage II B.

Tim became **bitter and vengeful**. The board meetings were not fun at all. Tim saw the writing on the wall. He knew his days were numbered. Also, I believe

there was another hidden burden, a pressure related to his personal finances. He was sick and old, and this was his steady source of income which was dwindling down rapidly. Moreover, his wife's income, his daughter's, and even his son's were tied to CC. So, the prospect of no steady income for the Sims family became a cloud hanging over his head. He screamed louder and kicked harder during the latter part of his tenure. We still had to pay attention and **interact with him regularly**. (CD 250; BCa 386-88)

Tim sought to be the main leader at CC even during the last quarter of 2003.

One of the strategies he employed to accomplish this was “to control, obstruct, and undermine Connor's work” (BCa 310). However, there were a few weeks during stage II B when Tim had to set aside his resentment and work with Connor. The ED and Deputy ED combined forces during the short period of time when Tim lost his State of Texas child care license. Tim and Connor, as ED/Deputy ED nucleus, concentrated their energy against the outside enemy, the bureaucratic State agency. Connor stated:

CC was in dire straits when I came. People, congregations, elders had stopped their support; seventeen congregations had dropped out during that time. CC was losing money fast; we were \$10,000 in the hole every month. There were no kids on campus. We could not have any. Tim had surrendered his license because the State did a monitoring visit and CC failed inspection: there were holes, windows were missing, there were strings scattered on campus, there were lights not put up, exit lights not in, and just a lot of things that led to the surrendering of his childcare license. As a result of my coming and since I had my license (I was an LCCA already), I took over at that time until he got his license back. In three weeks we had everything in tip-top shape. **We worked together these few weeks to get his license back** to make sure we did not close the home. (CL 50-70)

Second, Connor remembered that Bob worked closely with Tim during this phase of the succession process as well. The Deputy ED described the ED/chair nucleus:

**Bob was trying very hard to work with Tim** (uh) and tried to get the other board members to work with Tim. Tony could not work with Tim. Actually, no board member could work with Tim, but **Bob was the only one that would and**

**could.** Bob had to tiptoe around Tim many, many times even while I was there for the three months interim. But somehow **they managed to communicate** and move things forward with the transition. (CL 174)

Finally, the leadership equation was completed by a third nucleus, Deputy ED/vice-chair. Connor and Tony partnered to mitigate the damage caused by Tim during the last couple of years. Tim alienated many churches because of his lack of visibility, decreased fundraising and travel activities, and his ever increasing belligerent attitude towards those with different views.

So, it was a pretty bad situation. **Congregations dropped their support.** People thought that Tim died **since they did not get recent reports from him.** Tony and I would go into the congregations and I would tell them, “hey, I am the new director and Tim is no longer going to be here within a couple of months and we would love to have your support.” And others told me that as long as Tim is there then they will not support the home because of **the way he treated some of their elders in the past.** Tony and I worked together and worked hard to restore CC’s image with several groups of people and churches. (CL 50-70)

The leadership equation at CC during stage II B was contested among three interacting and dyadic nuclei: ED/Deputy ED, chair/ED, and Deputy ED/vice-chair. These people came together and pulled apart as they juggled “control” within the wider context of the larger board.

### **CC Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage II B)**

The discursive interplay between the three dyadic leadership nuclei and among their members was characterized by three sets of dialectical tensions which follow in the order of their saliency during stage II B: “freedom/control,” “blaming/absolving,” and “staying/leaving.”

*Freedom/Control*

Not unlike the previous two stages, the interactions between the chair/board and the ED continued to be fraught with the “freedom/control” dialectic. Tim’s expectations of a laissez-faire board chair represented his default choice for selecting “freedom” in relationship to the board. When Bob and the board responded by selecting the “control” pole in their relationship with the ED, Tim complained:

Tim had become so **paranoid about his situation that every single person that he knew, like me {Bob}, he just basically would say that I or others had never helped him out** with any situation. What ever had happened at CC was done by him alone and nobody else, which in some twisted way is kind of true because he never would let anybody else make any decisions if you recall. He interfaced with the board with the idea that he knew how things should run and how things should be. So when he said “you never gave me any help,” well, he is right because the only help that he ever wanted from anybody was rubber stamping. He wanted a rubber stamping chairman that gave him a green light to do whatever he wanted to do. (BCa 216)

Bob and the board chose to ignore Tim’s complaints and continued to be steadfast in selecting “control” over the ED.

The board was methodical in gaining control from Tim. **Bob asked me to take over some aspects of the IT which was an important component of CC.** We had all these passwords, website information, databases with donors, digital versions of our bylaws, and all that good stuff. So, I had to interface with **Tim’s son who was contracted by his father** to manage some of these things in the past. It was an ordeal trying to get those things from him. He clutched to them just like his father. Tim attacked me for trying to get access to these things. The son and the father orchestrated their attack against Bob, me, and the board. **You wouldn’t believe the defensive emails they wrote. The umbilical cord in that family was tight.** Father, mother, son, and daughter were connected by it. Try to yank the cord at one end, and a barrage of hatred emails and calls would befall Bob from the other end. They could not let go of power. The last few months at CC were cloudy as the Sims clan tried to maintain control of CC. But the board moved on and took over. (CD 305)

In contrast to stages I and II A during which Tim managed the “freedom/control” dialectic in relation to the board (or the chair); stage II B presented Tim’s efforts to select “control” in relationship to the staff (i.e. house parents, Deputy ED):

Some of **the house parents** that I hired had bought flowers for the front of the office. They paid for the flowers themselves. **Tim went wild when he found out that somebody had bought flowers for the front of the office without his permission.** He wanted me to fire them. I said, “Why would I fire them since they are trying to help us beautify the campus, why would I fire them Tim?” And he said “Well because they didn't ask me and they should not ask you because you're not the director.” Same thing happened later when they bought (with their own money) tickets for the circus. **He was mad because they did not ask him first.** It was a control issue. **He did not want to relinquish power.** (CL 50-80)

Connor described how his relationship with the veteran ED was strained due to the “freedom/control” tug-of-war between the two of them. Tim tried to “constrain” Connor since the first day he arrived on Campus in September 2003:

On several occasions Tim would say to me, **“Connor, you are not the director.”** I would make a decision and **the decision was always wrong because he wasn't consulted** and because I wasn't the director. My decisions had to be controlled and pre-approved by him. **Tim did not give me room to operate.** For example, the board gave me a place on campus to live until Sue got there. And, Tim said, “No, you can't live on campus because **you didn't ask for my permission** first.” Of course the board overruled, and I ended up living there temporarily. (CL 50-70)

Tim got caught in a vicious cycle. The more “control” he chose over the chair, board, and staff, the less “freedom” he ended up with. The abrasive, commandeering, and “controlling” style that worked well for Tim during the pre-succession stage proved to be a liability during the latter part of the succession process. The opposite effect was accomplished. Tim lost his “freedom” as the board opted for tighter “control” over the ED.

### *Blaming/Absolving*

Similar to the previous two stages, selecting “blaming” continued to be a strategic choice for the incumbent ED. However, during stage II B, in contrast to the previous stages, the focus of Tim’s “blaming” strategies shifted from the whole board and the chair to the staff. By selecting “blaming” over “freedom” in relation to Connor, Tim tried to “undermine” Connor’s work, thus, limiting Connor’s “freedom” and increasing his own sphere of “control” over CC. During this latter part of the succession process, getting rid of Connor became the only realistic option that Tim had for continuing as ED now that he had been re-licensed.

After Connor came as Deputy ED, there were a couple of times he called me and tried to pull his **blaming trick on Connor**. You know, “Connor can’t handle it, Connor did me wrong sort of thing, Connor is doing this, and Connor is doing that.” I didn’t pay any attention to it. **He tried to undermine Connor**, you know. In reality Tim wouldn’t let him do anything. Now that Tim got his child care license back, he simply wanted Connor to leave. (BCa 300-10; CD 34-7)

Having the support of the board, Connor became bolder and responded to Tim’s criticism in kind. Connor, too, selected “blaming” over “absolving” in his relationship with Tim during stage II B. However, the choice was not easy given the fact that Connor was the rookie having to challenge Tim, the veteran at CC.

The board said before I came, “Connor, he {Tim} cannot fire you.” And that was another reason I came when I saw that **they were going to back me up**. Bob was the chairman, and he reminded me that Tim cannot fire me. So, I became bolder when he was derogatory to me. I became that same way to him and **would blame him back**: “Tim, you are **wrong** and you know that, and we need to discuss it.” But he would not discuss things with me, he was always right, he would never say, I never heard him say he was wrong. He would always blame others but never himself. (CL 120)

*Staying/Leaving*

Similar to stages I and II A, “staying/leaving” was an integral part of the succession process during stage II B as well. However, this time, Tim’s choice of selecting the “staying” pole had a different and more subtle interpretation. Cassie, a board member, thought that Tim was strategic and manipulative in the way he juggled the individual-centered “staying/leaving” dialectical tension. Tim did not really want to stay. Perhaps in a wishful way he wanted to stay, but he knew he could not since his health and age were no longer conducive to being in the top leadership position.

Subsequently, the two options for Tim were either to leave in style or to leave with the most rewards. Finances were a big concern for Tim; so, in order to secure the best severance package, he played his “staying” at all costs wisely. The board kept piling things in his wallet to help him “leave” quietly and expediently. Of course, there was a price to pay for this “bribed” departure: his work legacy lost the patina that it once had. “Leaving” on peaceful terms would have conserved his name’s luster but would have translated, undoubtedly, into less cash.

The leadership succession from Tim leads to me to two strains of thought. **If I make the board fire me, they are going to feel bad and give me a severance package.** Or they are going to do something to appease me so I don’t sue. Or I will make life here so miserable that they will have to ask me to leave and during my going out the door, I will load up an extra bag of gold. Tim’s strategy of **pretending he wanted to stay allowed him to get the paid vacation and the company car on his way out.** (CT 148)

Tim and Jo left CC with a golden parachute, but their departure was far from amicable. They departed with a feeling of resentment directed towards the board.

**Tim was ambivalent about his position at CC.** He wanted to leave because **his health** was weak. At the same time, ironically, because **his health was weak,**

**he wanted to stay since stepping down would have meant a stop to the steady source of income** his family got from working with CC. Being older that was an issue for him in terms of money and health insurance. So, he was bitter and **angry about having to leave**. He was very bitter and complained even about the gift of the corporate car saying “this car has too many miles on it.” (NM 90-100)

Henri, the former board chair, adds:

**Tim had resentment**, well, against me {Henri}, and Tony, and I guess Bob and Connor. But he was especially ticked off at Tony and me. You see, we were his church-mates, and he was shocked that the vote to kick him off the board was unanimous. He felt betrayed by Tony and me. I told him that this was not to be taken personally. It was not a vote against him, but it was a vote for the future of CC. It took him a while to finally warm up back to me. He was hurt and resentful for the longest time after he left in December 2003. (HL 165-75)

### Stage III

The third and final stage in the succession process started in December 2003 with the promoting of Connor to the ED position following the “rocky” departure of the former ED.

One of the many mistakes that Tim did was to write a bitter, **accusatory letter in the end right before Connor became the new executive**. The board gave him a two week paid vacation, the company car, and an honoring plaque as a goodwill sign. Instead of saying thank you, Tim wrote the bitter letter blaming the board for his poor health and for kicking him out. He even commented about the car having too many miles. It was disappointing to the board. (CD 114)

Levi added:

**Tim could not leave on his own**, so, consequently, **he forced the board to make him leave**. I wished we could have departed in more amicable ways, but it was not to be, because he was so closed minded about everything; so, the transition was a bit rocky. (LS II 358)

Bob too expressed his disappointment since he worked hard to engineer a graceful exit for Tim:



So, what I tried to do during this period of time, during the transition, I wanted the transition to be very smooth. **My desire was for Tim to very graciously move out of the ED position and for us to have a wonderful going away party for him**, you know, to allow his legacy if you want to use that word, to be realized and appreciated and the nonprofit to move to a new directorship and have very good memories and relationships with Tim. But Tim did not exit graciously. And Tony had no desire to honor Tim whatsoever. Tony wanted everybody to know that Tim was a dictator whose memory needed to be eradicated. (BCa 328)

Getting rid of Tim proved to be a great relief for the nonprofit. In contrast to the bitter separation from Tim, the board welcomed Connor with open arms. Reminiscent of the welcome that Tim and Jo received fifteen years earlier, Connor and Sue were hailed as timely “blessings” for CC (CD 19). However, unlike the carte blanche that Tim had in the past, this time the board exercised an increased influence over the ED and the organization. Even Bob wrote in his personal resignation letter a year later, “the board was stronger now than it has ever been before” (BCa 204).

Some of the milestones during the post-succession stage included the promotion of Connor as ED and the hiring of his wife Sue as the new Office Manager to replace Jo. During this fourth stage, Tony resigned as vice-chair and, subsequently, left the board during the first few months of 2004. Likewise, the former board chair, Henri, left the board during the same time.

Finally, Bob resigned as chairman in the summer of 2004 and continued as a regular board member for a few more months. The final stage of the succession process ended with Connor’s recruitment of Dan Watson, a fellow church member, to replace Bob on the board.

### CC Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei (Stage III)

Similar to the more clearly defined and unequivocal leadership nuclei in stage I, the leadership of CC during the post-succession stage was represented by the board of directors.

I believe now, for the first time, **CC is actually run by the board**. It has never been under the control of the board the whole time I have been on the board prior to this. I think the board is very active and there are occasional disagreements but there is love, you know. That's the way a board should be like. There should be freedom to disagree and express divergent ideas without fear of bullying by the ED or other board members, including the board chair. (BCa 275)

As soon as Tim “resigned,” Connor was promoted to the ED role. During that transition **“Bob’s voice became more silent** as the board as whole moved closer into the foreground” (CD 181). Bob spoke proudly about the succession outcomes that revealed a strong board which took control of the organization.

This succession process has exceeded my expectations. I mean it started as an executive search. But in the process CC has improved so much. I expected to get a new ED; that was the main thing I was there for as chair since I knew that it had to happen. But in addition to that, the method I used, of getting **more forward thinking board members**, has benefited CC far beyond just getting a new ED. We have people on the board from all types of backgrounds, ages, experiences, and that brings fresh dynamics in running CC and helping the children. We ended up with a **stronger and more sophisticated board** than ever before. (BCa 610-40; CD 239)

### CC Dialectics and Management Strategies (Stage III)

“Blaming/absolving” was the only salient set of dialectical tensions present during stage III. Now that Tim was gone, the dialectics of “freedom/control” and “staying/leaving” lost the preeminence they enjoyed during the previous stages.

### *Blaming/Absolving*

“Blaming/absolving” consistently showed up throughout the first three stages of the succession process. However, in contrast to the previous stages, new management strategies emerged during the post-succession stage. There were two particular management strategies that were worth noting. First, Bob looked back during stage III and sought to “absolve” Tim from the responsibilities piled on his back during the previous stages:

Tim used to be a fantastic people’s person. He changed as he got older and sick. His attitude about people and things changed. His level of patience decreased. I really think that **his age and illness are to be blamed for many of his recent shortcomings. He is a good man**, and he and his wife **did a great deal of good for CC** in the early days. I would like to see **the “Esperanza” cottage renamed after them** (Tim and Jo Sims) in order **to honor their past legacy**. (BCa 712)

The explanation for Bob’s oscillation between “blaming” during the previous stages and “absolving” during the post-succession stage might be due to the fact that Tim and Bob used to be friends. It is possible that Bob wanted to restore the old friendship, and it was necessary to first forgive and absolve Tim from all the past shortcomings. Now that the new successor had been identified and appointed to the ED position, Bob could finally afford to reject “blaming” while embracing “absolving” the former ED.

Second, Connor continued his criticism of Tim by selecting “blaming” during the post-succession stage.

Tim has a lot of friends in the brotherhood and if Connor was smarter he would do what he needed to do to use Tim’s name wisely. We have been called several times and were told **that Connor has not used Tim’s name in, in (uh) good light. Connor blames Tim for current problems at CC. Connor has left the indication that we left the home in bad shape**. Connor could learn, and he

could make a lot of money on Tim's name **if he stopped the criticism**. A lot of friends in the brotherhood know us. Tim knows people just from being at X University for four years; he knows people from all over the US. If Connor continues to blame us, it's a bad deal for his reputation, and it's not helping Connor and it's not helping CC either. (JS 195-210)

At the same time, the new ED selected "absolving" Tim as well. Looking back, Connor recalled how hard it was for Tim to work given his physical ailments:

Tim would sit curled up in his chair at the desk. And I would bring him compresses soaked in hot water because he would complain about his migraines, and I would put them at the base of his neck. I really think that as he got older **his arteries hardened** and the pain was unbearable for him. **His old age slowed him down and made it hard for him to perform** in the demanding ED capacity. It was a pity that the ailments accumulated and slowed this man down. (CL 426)

By shifting the focus from the man to the ailment, Connor managed to shift the responsibility away from Tim. It can be safely concluded that during stage III, Connor integrated the two poles of the "blaming/absolving" dialectic. The result was a less sharp round of criticism directed at the former ED.

The potential explanation for the adoption of the *integration* strategy for managing the "blaming/absolving" dialectic during the post-succession stage was two fold. First, Connor as the new ED still needed a scapegoat to explain current organizational deficiencies. "Blaming" the previous leadership "absolved" Connor himself in the eyes of the various donors and church partners. Second, now that Tim was ousted, Connor could afford to also "absolve" the former ED. By selecting "absolving," Connor was able to extend goodwill and forgiveness to the former colleague.

## Summary

There were five important conclusions that emerged from this study. First, this case study revealed four time-event stages each with unique leadership nucleic combinations and characteristics of the succession process. Figure 5.1 lists the four stages as the following: pre-succession (January 2002 – March 2003), during succession A (March 2003 – September 2003), during succession B (September 2003 – December 2003), and post-succession (December 2003 – summer 2004). As it was pointed out in Chapter IV, these stages were not linear and sequential per se, even though the study used them as such. The stages provided a framework to handle the data and help unpack a complex process like leadership succession. These stages were used heuristically to provide beginning points and milestones to follow shifts in the leadership nuclei and the dialectical tensions.

Stage I pointed to two independent leadership nuclei, the ED and the board chair, contending for organizational control. The ED and board chair nuclei morphed and re-crystallized across the other three stages as they bound with or detached from other organizational actors at various times.

Stage II A had two triadic ambiguous leadership nuclei: board chair/vice-chair/former board chair and ED/office manager/former board chair. These groups interfaced with one another as they managed the unfolding of the leadership succession process and the introduction of organizational change.

In comparison, stage II B witnessed the fragmentation of the two triads into three dyadic leadership nuclei – board chair/ED, ED/Deputy ED, and Deputy ED/vice-chair –

whose individual members shifted in and out of the leadership spotlight throughout the third stage of the process. While the previous two stages emerged from the actual succession process, stage II B was the only pre-planned stage of the succession process. The board members under Bob's leadership planned the hiring of and working with a Deputy ED during the last four months of 2003, stage II B.

Finally, stage III pointed to a single, collective leadership nucleus – the board of directors (see Table 5.2). This stage proved to be less eventful than the previous three stages. The board fused together to provide governance for the new ED. It is worth noting that the collective board leadership started to break down within a few months following Connor's recruitment of Dan to the board; subsequently, Dan became the new chair in the summer of 2004.

Second, this study demonstrated that the leadership in this organization was neither static nor clearly defined, but, rather, it was amorphous and dynamic as it changed across the four stages. It was noteworthy that the pre- and post-succession stages boasted clearly demarcated leadership nuclei (ED versus chair during stage I and ED versus board of directors during stage III). In contrast, stages A and B dealt with more nebulous and vague leadership nucleic combinations. The two triads of stage II A (Former chair/ED/office manager and Former board chair/chair/vice-chair) were not as clearly delineated as the leadership nuclei of the previous stage. Similarly, stage II B with its three dyads (ED/Deputy ED, Deputy ED/vice-chair, and ED/Chair) lacked the sharpness of stages I or III leadership combinations.

A potential explanation for this is that the tumultuous and conflicting intermediate states of the succession process encouraged and allowed more actors to step up and exercise their spheres of influence. The state of change and conflict that accompanied the intermediate stages allowed for more voices to be heard and noted. For example, the transition from stage I to stage II A witnessed the shift from two nuclei (ED and chair) to two triads (see Figure 5.2). This was characteristic of conflict escalation which entailed an increase in the number of actors involved (i.e. from two individuals to two triads), an increase in the number of issues discussed (the “change/stability” dialectic took place during stage II A and brought with it several new issues pertaining to organizational change), and an increase in the intensity of emotions displayed and fueled in the “blaming” volleys exchanged between actors during stages II A and B.

Third, and along the same lines, this study showed that organizational change grew out of the leadership succession process and not the other way around. Most people think that organizational vision and goals for change come before recruiting the new leader; however, as this study demonstrated, the reverse came into play. The initiative to find an ED successor during the pre-succession stage preceded the initiatives for organizational change that were covered in stage II A.

Weick (1969) wrote that goals and objectives often arise retrospectively out of group processes. This study confirmed this finding. The goals to close down the satellite office, change the company logo, and bring in new forward-thinking board members followed the interactions and deliberations about finding a successor for Tim. The exigency for a new ED created the motivation for organizational change.

**Table 5.2 CC Dialectics and Leadership Nuclei**

<u>Stage I</u>	<u>Stage II A</u>	<u>Stage II B</u>	<u>Stage III</u>
<i>ED and BC</i>	<i>Ambiguous Chair/Vice-chair/ Former Chair; ED/Office Manager /Former Chair</i>	<i>Ambiguous Chair//ED; ED/Deputy ED; Deputy ED/Vice-chair</i>	<i>BOD</i>
Staying/Leaving	Staying/Leaving	Freedom/Control	Blaming/Absolving
Blaming/Absolving	Blaming/Absolving	Blaming/Absolving	
Freedom/Control (Ownership/Stewardship) (Honesty/Deception)	Freedom/Control  Change/Stability	Staying/Leaving	

Fourth, this study pointed to a specific set of patterns in the management of dialectical tensions across the four stages. It was noted that during the pre- and post-succession stages, the organizational actors resorted to *oscillation* and *integration* in addition to *selection* when managing various dialectical tensions. For example in the pre-succession stage, Bob vacillated between “staying” and “leaving” at CC. The separation between the two poles happened at a temporal level. Bob left a few years prior only to return when CC was in dire circumstances and Tim asked him to come and help as chair. Likewise, Tim opted for the oscillation method in handling the “staying/leaving” dialectic during stage I. Not unlike Bob, Tim’s vacillation took place at a temporal level with a strategic spin on it. Tim selected “leaving” long enough to lure Bob to accept the chair position. As soon as Bob accepted and things improved, Tim regressed back to selecting “staying.”



During the post-succession stage, the actors adopted *oscillation* and also *integration* as part of their management strategy repertoire. Bob switched from selecting “blaming” to selecting “absolving” in response to Tim. The oscillation took place at a temporal level. Earlier in the process, Bob selected “blaming” the ED without reservation. Now at the onset of the process, Bob switched to “absolving” Tim. Along the same lines, Connor integrated the two poles of the “blaming/absolving” dialectic in relationship to Tim during the post-succession stage. Connor sought to save face while selecting “blaming” and explaining the circumstances at CC in light of the previous leader’s poor performance. Also, Connor sought to adhere to the organization’s moral and spiritual principles which called for forgiveness, patience, and goodwill by selecting “absolving” and attributing the ED’s past mistakes to Tim’s decline in physical health. In the final analysis, Connor managed to *integrate* the two poles of “blaming” and “absolving.”

In contrast to the *integration* and *oscillation* strategies adopted during stages I and III, all organizational actors favored *selection* as their strategy for managing the dialectical tensions present in stages II A and B. A potential explanation might be due to the fact that these stages were characterized by an increase in leadership nuclei vying for “control.” Perhaps more contending parties felt pressured to rigidly adopt the more popular and less equivocal management strategy of *selection*.

Fifth, there were three types of interconnected dialectics present at CC during the succession process: individual-centered (“staying/leaving”), relation-centered (“blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control”), and organization-centered

(“change/stability”). These dialectics were interwoven and the management of one affected the management of the others.

For example, as it was illustrated during stage I, the management of the “staying/leaving” dialectic influenced the management of the “freedom/control” dialectic. Tim oscillated between “staying” and “leaving” in order to increase his “control” over the board. Also, it was evident during stages II A and B that the selection of the “blaming” pole was directly related to the selection of “control” over the other party. The party doing the “blaming” sought to increase his/her “control” over the “blamed” parties or to increase his/her “freedom” in relationship with the “blamed” parties. Finally, the management of “freedom/control” cannot be divorced from the management of the “change/stability” dialectic. The selection of the “change” pole by the board translated into the selection of “controlling” the ED. Initiating changes became threatening to the incumbent ED who selected “stability” in order to maintain his “control” over the board. Specifically, individual-based dialectics had major implications for organization-centered tensions.

In conclusion, this study indicated that leadership succession was a dynamic process that brought together multiple conflicting actors with incongruent agendas. In addition, leadership succession proved to be a messy process as leadership was disputed among several unstable organizational nuclei. Finally, the dialectical tensions experienced by these actors fueled the succession process itself. The strategic management of these dialectics led to the specific outcome of the succession process.

## CHAPTER VI

### CASE STUDY COMPARISON

#### **Introduction**

This chapter brings together the findings from the previous two chapters through the comparison and contrast of the DY and CC cases. This case comparison examines the leadership nuclei that drove the succession process at DY and CC, the dialectical tensions experienced by and among the members of these leadership nuclei, and the strategic management of dialectical tensions across the stages that characterized the succession process in the two nonprofits. The chapter ends with a summary section that includes findings which grew out of the study. The juxtaposition of DY and CC allows for these findings to emerge at the intersection of the two case studies.

This comparative analysis supplies a useful set of tools for understanding leadership succession. The framework built in Chapters IV and V provides the structure for unpacking the discursive data pertaining to leadership succession in the two nonprofits. The dialectics of staying/leaving, blaming/absolving, freedom/control, change/stability, and cooperation/competition may seem obvious and intuitive. However, it is their interplay, their combinations, and their strategic management within and across the various stages that illuminate unique characteristics and critical findings pertaining to the respective organizations and their leadership succession as driven by various leadership nuclei.

### **Leadership Nucleus/Nuclei**

The leadership succession process stretched over four distinct stages in the two nonprofits. Chapters IV and V explained the rationale for picking the various chronological milestones and for dividing the two succession processes into four stages. One of the fascinating things pertaining to the succession process in the two nonprofits was the morphing of the leadership nuclei across the four stages. The leadership nuclei were not static; they changed, divided, grouped, dissolved, and re-grouped under different combinations.

#### *DY – Leadership Nucleus*

During stage I, the leadership nucleus at DY was constituted by Don and Jennie (see Table 6.1). The ED and the chair worked as one harmonious unit as the analysis in Chapter IV demonstrated. The ED/chair “meshing was solid” as one organizational actor confessed.

Later in the succession process, during stage II A, the initial unified ED/chair leadership nucleus morphed into a more ambiguous leadership triad constituted by Gayla, Don, and Jennie. Don was the chief architect of the transition from stage I to stage II A, and he operated at the link between the two women. After Jennie and Gayla became chair and ED, respectively, Don continued to play an influential role as part of a somewhat hazy “ED/chair/former chair” triad.

**Table 6.1 Leadership Nucleus Comparison**

<u>NPO/Stage</u>	<u>Stage I</u>	<u>Stage II A</u>	<u>Stage II B</u>	<u>Stage III</u>
<b>DY</b>	<p><b>2004 – 9/2005</b> <i>(21 months)</i></p> <p>Jenny ready to leave ED position within the year</p> <p>BOD tries to keep Jennie with golden handcuffs</p> <p><b>ED/BC nucleus</b></p>	<p><b>9/2005 – 3/2006</b> <i>(6 months)</i></p> <p>Jennie leaves ED position and becomes new BC</p> <p>Gayla becomes Interim ED</p> <p>No BOD or ED initiatives to find permanent ED</p> <p><b>Ambiguous nucleus triad: Interim ED/BC/Former BC</b></p>	<p><b>3/2006 – 5/2006</b> <i>(2 months)</i></p> <p>Gayla leaves Interim ED position</p> <p>Vacuum of leadership</p> <p>BOD scrambles to find permanent ED</p> <p><b>VC and Future VC nuclei</b></p>	<p><b>5/2006 – 7/2006</b> <i>(2 months)</i></p> <p>Lisa Marie hired as permanent ED</p> <p>New relationships and nuclei reconfigured</p> <p><b>ED nucleus</b></p>
<b>CC</b>	<p><b>2002 – 3/2003</b> <i>(15 months)</i></p> <p>Tim promises to leave within a year</p> <p><b>ED and BC nuclei</b></p>	<p><b>3/2003 – 9/2003</b> <i>(6 months)</i></p> <p>Tim changes his mind and wants to stay</p> <p>BOD initiatives to find ED</p> <p><b>Two ambiguous nucleic triads: BC/VC/Former BC and Former BC/OM/ED</b></p>	<p><b>9/2003 – 12/2003</b> <i>(3 months)</i></p> <p>Connor hired as Deputy ED</p> <p>BOD pushes Tim out with golden parachute</p> <p><b>Three nucleic dyads: ED/BC, VC/Deputy ED, and Deputy ED/ED</b></p>	<p><b>12/2003 – 7/2004</b> <i>(7 months)</i></p> <p>Connor becomes the new ED</p> <p>Tim leaves</p> <p>New relationships and nuclei reconfigured</p> <p><b>BOD nucleus</b></p>

The next stage in the succession process, stage II B, witnessed the dissolving of the nebulous triad and replacing it with two distinct and antagonistic leadership nuclei,

Laura and Charlie. Laura was the vice-chair; Charlie was the organizational player who replaced Laura's position following her resignation at the end of stage II B. The vice-chair and the future vice-chair nuclei collided during the intense drama associated with the decision to change the after-school reading program into a charter school.

Finally, the post-succession stage revealed Lisa Marie who stood out as an uncontested leader at DY during the final phase of the transition process. Lisa Marie exercised a great degree of influence across various organizational levels. Since the board gave her free latitude, she ran the organization as the boss. The new vice-chair, Charlie, the current chair, Jennie, and the former board chair, Don, gave Lisa Marie the space and freedom to run the show and turn DY into a charter school. Lisa Marie, as authoritarian leader at the helm of DY, was similar to the early stages of CC.

#### *CC – Leadership Nucleus*

The leadership at CC was shared by two distinct nuclei during the latter part of stage I. At the beginning of this pre-succession stage, Tim came across as a dictatorial figure who reigned the nonprofit with an iron fist; the board accorded Tim unlimited organizational control since the time he joined the organization in the late 80's. In a way, this controlling leadership situation was similar to DY's post-succession stage when Lisa Marie stood out as the uncontested organizational czar. However, unlike DY, during the latter part of pre-succession stage, Bob emerged as a contender to Tim. The chairman and the ED stood out as two distinct leadership nuclei. This polarized leadership situation at CC was reminiscent of DY's stage II B leadership combination.

However, unlike DY's board dividing in two factions and rallying behind Charlie and Laura, respectively, the CC board banded behind Bob during stage I.

During stage II A, the organization witnessed the development of two ambiguous nucleic triads. On the one hand, the vice-chair emerged as a stout ally for Bob. Also, the former board chair, Henri, gravitated towards this newly formed chair/vice-chair nucleus. On the other hand, Tim's wife, Jo, assumed a more central role when her husband's position was challenged by an ever dissenting and unruly chairman and board. Also, operating as a linchpin between the two leadership triads, Henri worked closely with Tim and Jo during stage II A.

The leadership dynamics of this stage paralleled the dynamics at DY during the same time. The only difference was that CC had two vague triads versus one at DY. Similar in both organizations, the former board chair played a key role in connecting various organizational actors. Don connected Gayla with Jennie at DY. Henri bridged Bob and Tony with Tim and Jo. Also, the spouses served an important function during this stage. Tim's wife, the office manager, was behind her husband during the trying times of the succession process. At DY, Don's wife, Gayla, the Interim ED, helped the organization by filling the leadership vacuum left in the wake of Jennie's resignation.

The next stage, stage II B, witnessed the arrival of Connor as Deputy ED; his presence in the leadership equation led to the morphing of the two triads into three nucleic dyads. The voice of the former board chair, Henri, became less influential during this time, similar to the dissipation of Don's influence at DY during the same stage. Connor joined as Deputy ED, and his presence changed the leadership dynamics

throughout the organization. Surprisingly, even though Connor and Tim did not share an intimate relationship, they managed to cooperate during this stage since the nonprofit was threatened with closure by the State. Also, unexpectedly, Bob was able to combine forces with Tim in order to smoothen out the exit for the ousted ED. Finally, the vice-chair worked closely with the Deputy ED in restoring the public image of the nonprofit through PR appearances at local churches. This stage witnessed increased activity, similar to stage II B at DY. The main difference was in the number of leadership nuclei: three dyads at CC versus two single-individual nuclei at DY.

Stage III, the post-succession stage, presented the board as the driving leadership nucleus at CC. This collective leadership stood out in stark contrast to DY's ED-centered leadership nucleus. The noteworthy thing that happened in these two organizations during stage III was the magnification of the effects from the pre-succession stages. DY's more ED-centric leadership with Jennie as ED during the first stage became accented during the fourth stage with Lisa Marie emerging as a powerful ED. At CC, the ever increasing influence provided by the board during the first stage became dominant during the final stage. The front-end and the back-end segments of the succession processes in both nonprofits revealed clearly defined leadership nuclei as opposed to the ambiguity and leadership struggles of the middle stages.

#### *Summary – Leadership Nuclei*

It can be noted that the middle stages of the two succession processes witnessed ambiguous and messy leadership nucleus transformations. While the leadership nuclei



in the post and the pre-succession stages were clearly defined, the heart of the succession process revealed tumultuous changes. These middle stages of disequilibrium were shaped by the dialectical tensions that actors experienced in light of the organization-centered “change” versus “stability” dilemma. Before comparing how the two nonprofits handled the organization-centered dialectic of “change/stability,” the next segment in this chapter examines the individual-centered “staying/leaving” dialectic and the relation-centered “blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control” dialectics.

### **Dialectics and Management Strategies**

The key organizational actors in the two nonprofits juggled a handful of dialectical tensions. One of these tensions showed up in only one of the two organizations (i.e. cooperation/competition at DY), but all the rest characterized both nonprofits (see Table 6.2 and Appendix A).

### **Staying/Leaving**

For example, the “staying/leaving” individual-centered dialectic was central in both nonprofits. The reason for having leadership succession in the two nonprofits was due to the simple fact that the incumbent ED dealt with the friction between the two poles of the “staying/leaving” dialectic during various stages of the succession process. The way the incumbent ED and other nucleic actors handled this dialectic influenced the outcome and the way the succession process unfolded in the two organizations.

**Table 6.2 Dialectics Comparison**

	DY	CC
Stage I	Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control	Staying/Leaving Blaming/Absolving Freedom/Control
Stage II A	Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving	Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving Staying/Leaving Change/Stability
Stage II B	Change/Stability Cooperation/Competition	Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving
Stage III	Blaming/Absolving Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control	Blaming/Absolving

### *DY – Staying/Leaving*

During the pre-succession stage, Jennie oscillated between the two poles of the “staying/leaving” dialectic at DY. She was ready to leave but the chair kept persuading her to stay. The DY board, also, tried to select the “staying” pole for Jennie during stage I. The chair and the board wanted the incumbent ED to continue at the helm of the organization. In their attempt to keep Jennie, the board and the chairman provided golden handcuffs in the form of paid vacation and increased pay (see Table 6.1). The board seemed hesitant in letting go of the old ED even though Jennie was ready to leave.

When Jennie offered her resignation ultimatum by embracing the “leaving” pole, the board under Don’s leadership designed the front-end transition phase that allowed an Interim ED to fill the leadership vacuum while Jennie shifted out of the ED role into the

chair position. In the end, Jennie managed to tactically connect the two poles of the dialectic by both “leaving” as ED and “staying” as board chair. The board was supportive of Jennie’s *connecting* strategy since it allowed her to “stay” with DY albeit in a new capacity.

DY as an entity was not ready to let go of the old management; the organization seemed reluctant about moving towards the new leadership which later culminated with Lisa Marie’s selection between stages II B and III. The DY collective organizational hesitancy was assuaged by Gayla’s acceptance to serve as Interim ED and Jennie’s decision to “stay” with DY as the new chair. The fact that Gayla was Don’s wife helped the board embrace her more readily. Also, the fact that Jennie was still a part of the leadership mix was beneficial in terms of the progressive transition.

The leadership nucleic actors’ strategic management of the “staying/leaving” dialectic determined the way the succession process unfolded at DY. A retrospective glance and discursive analysis of the “staying/leaving” dialectic in Chapter IV revealed the organization’s incremental (6 months) easing out of Jennie’s leadership and cautious stepping forward into something new, Lisa Marie, during stages II B and III (see Table 6.1).

#### *CC – Staying/Leaving*

In contrast to Jennie at DY, Tim’s vacillation between “leaving” and “staying” seemed more strategic. When it served his purposes during stage I, Tim selected “leaving” to lure Bob back on the board to ameliorate CC’s financial crisis. When the

organization re-gained a sense of balance at the end of stage I, Tim reverted to “staying,” and he consistently selected “staying” throughout the following two stages of the process. While Tim oscillated between the two poles of the dialectic during stage I, the board was unswerving in selecting “leaving” for Tim throughout the first three stages of the succession process.

In comparison to Jenny, Tim, as an authoritarian ED, did not enjoy much organizational support at CC. While DY enjoyed a balanced status quo and well performing incumbent ED, CC found itself heavily in debt, without clients, with an aging incumbent ED, and with the State of Texas taking away his childcare license and threatening the organization with closure. The contextual pressure that CC experienced explained the board’s rejection of the “staying” and selection of the “leaving” poles for the incumbent ED. The change in leadership seemed to be the only hope for organizational survival. The board tried to force the incumbent ED to select “leaving.”

The board worked assiduously to get rid of the old ED by offering him and his wife a golden parachute package which encompassed paid vacation, honoring plaque, and company car (see Table 6.1). CC was eager to close the door on the incumbent ED and usher in the new ED, Connor. The board under the chairman’s influence strategically planned a transition stage at the back end-of the succession process when Connor shadowed Tim as Deputy ED. By planning for the transitional stage II B, the board purposefully channeled its energy in transitioning into something new.

The leadership nucleic actors’ strategic management of the “staying/leaving” dialectic influenced the way the succession process occurred at CC. In contrast to DY’s

hesitation, CC was drawn towards new leadership. The discursive analysis of the “staying/leaving” dialectic in Chapter V revealed the organization’s resolute and rapid (3 months) transition into new leadership. The board let go of Tim, and it readily embraced Connor (see Table 6.1).

### *Summary – Staying/Leaving*

The push-pull tension between the poles of the “staying/leaving” dialectic made choices difficult for the actors. At DY, the incumbent ED wanted to “leave” yet the board wanted her to “stay.” In contrast, at CC, the incumbent ED knew that he had to leave, but he chose to “stay” notwithstanding the vehement board opposition.

This study shed light on the relationship between the incumbent ED’s and the board’s management of the “staying/leaving” dialectic, the incumbent ED’s organizational support (or lack thereof), and the way the succession process unfolded in the two nonprofits. This study revealed two contrasting methods for leadership succession in light of the “staying/leaving” dialectic: Interim ED at the front-end versus Deputy ED at the back-end of the succession processes at DY and CC, respectively.

### **Blaming/Absolving**

An interesting finding that relates to the political drama of leadership succession was the presence of the “blaming/absolving” as a relation-centered dialectic. The “blaming/absolving” dialectic was intimately interwoven within the succession processes at both DY and CC.

On the one hand, “blaming” emerged from the two case studies as a strategic discursive alternative designed to solidify “freedom” for the blaming party, save face for the blaming party, weaken or hurt the party that is being blamed, provide an emotionally therapeutic outlet for the person doing the blaming, shift the responsibility to the blamed party, and/or provide a scapegoat as a means of rationalizing a specific situation.

On the other hand, “absolving” stood out as a discursive option that enabled the organizational actors to adhere to their Christian mission during the succession process. Being forgiving, patient, and non-critical were underlying assumptions for the organizational actors in the two faith-based nonprofits. The expectation to forgive and “absolve” interplayed with the tendency and desire to criticize and “blame.”

#### *DY – Blaming/Absolving*

There were three significant instances of the interplay between the dialectical poles of “blaming” and “absolving” at DY. The management strategies of the “blaming” and “absolving” choice points were different between the Interim ED, the current board chair, and new permanent ED.

First of all, Gayla, the Interim ED selected “blaming” Jennie, the current board chair and former ED, for the problems DY was dealing with during stage II A. After Jennie resigned and became chair, Gayla walked in confidently thinking that she could manage the organization with part-time contribution and commitment. When “she saw that things started to slip away from her,” she resorted to “blaming” her predecessor for the current problems in the organization (JH 412). A careful examination of the

discourse captured in Chapter IV revealed Gayla's push-pull between her former friendship with Jennie which called for "absolving" and the need to save face which required "blaming" Jennie as the scapegoat. In the end, it became clear that the need to save face took precedence for Gayla who was consistent in choosing "blaming" and criticizing Jennie during stage II A.

Second, while Gayla was unambiguous in her management strategy of selecting "blaming" over "absolving" throughout stage II A, Jennifer vacillated between the two poles of the dialectic at a temporal level. Jennie chose not to retaliate and not select "blaming" during stage II A when Gayla blamed her openly in board meetings. Jeannie "just stood there and watched Gayla's Power Point presentations ripping [her] to pieces without reacting and trying to exact revenge or pointing fingers" (JH 499). The absence of "blaming" during stage II A points to Jennie's selection of "absolving" Gayla who was her friend and wife of her mentor and the ministry partner, Don.

However, Jennie fluctuated and switched to the dialectical pole of "blaming" Gayla during stage III. Potential explanations for Jennie's oscillation in managing the dialectical tensions of "blaming/absolving" include: sensibly, Jennie needed the time to grow comfortable in the work relationship with her older friend, Gayla; strategically, Jennie was a peacemaker and her selecting "blaming" Gayla during the succession process would have only exacerbated the already volatile climate; and, perhaps, justly, Jeannie needed the time to observe, monitor, and accurately evaluate Gayla's six month tenure at the helm of DY before advancing a firm opinion. Looking retrospectively, Jennie was able to see, perhaps, that Gayla did not contribute significantly to the

organizational wellbeing and the effectiveness of the succession process at DY. This post hoc evaluation allowed Jennie to change her prior choice from “absolving” to “blaming” Gayla for the ineffective and delayed leadership succession process.

Finally, during the post-succession stage, the new permanent ED, Lisa Marie, struggled with the push-pull between the “absolving” and “blaming” poles in relationship to her predecessor Gayla. Lisa Marie managed the tension through the strategic integration of the two poles. The new permanent ED selected “blaming” Gayla for the “fragmented” state of DY while blunting the sting of her criticism with the qualifier about Gayla’s former work being “on a purely voluntary base.” Lisa Marie recalled:

I could have never imagined or believed that the organization this small would be in this state of **chaos and fragmentation** after Gayla’s leadership. But I guess **we can’t fully blame** her since she’d told everyone that she wanted to work on purely voluntary basis... **it is hard to blame** [Gayla] who worked for free for six-months no matter **how chaotic the state** of the organization was. (III LM 27)

It is safe to assume that Lisa Marie actually appreciated the contribution of the voluntary ED and respected her because of that. Moreover, Lisa Marie was indebted to Gayla’s husband, Don who supplied one third of her salary. At the same time, Lisa Marie needed to justify or explain the condition of the organization during the first part of the post-succession stage without assuming responsibility herself. She was able to meet her seemingly diverging goals in relation to Gayla through the integration of the two opposing “blaming” and “absolving” poles. The result of the integration strategy was the selection of a softened, diluted form of “blaming.”



*CC – Blaming/Absolving*

In a similar fashion to DY, “blaming” dealt with assigning responsibility to various people for the problems and suggesting how to get out of these problems at CC. Also, “absolving” pertained to the forgiving and not holding others responsible because of the faith-based dimension of the organization which encouraged the actors to remain faithful to a standard that privileged patience and forgiveness. Moreover, not unlike DY, there were three pertinent and distinct examples of strategies for coping with the opposite poles of the “blaming/absolving” tension. The incumbent ED, the board chair, and the new ED opted for different strategies in handling this dialectic.

First, comparable to Gayla at DY, Tim was the only actor who consistently selected “blaming” of other actors. In contrast to Gayla, however, Tim’s blaming stretched over all the four stages of the succession process. Moreover, while Gayla simply picked “blaming” only in relation to her predecessor, Jennie, Tim was indiscriminate, yet strategic, in whom he chose to “blame.”

During stage I Tim selected “blaming” of the board, the board chair, and the former board chair. During stages II A and B, Tim continued to opt for “blaming” the board. In stage II B, Tim started to “blame” the Deputy ED, and this continued throughout stage III. The former ED was consistent and strategic in his selection of the “blaming” pole in his relation with various parties. Tim sought to increase his organizational control by unswervingly “blaming” the parties that tried to limit his sphere of influence at CC.

Moreover, “blaming” these parties allowed Tim to evade responsibility. During the latter stages of the succession process when Tim was forced to “leave,” he did so resentfully by continuing to “blame” all the other parties (board, board chair, and the new ED). It can be concluded that Tim’s strategy was centered on shifting between the targets of his “blaming” across the four stages of the succession process at CC.

Second, analogous to Jennie at DY, Bob oscillates between “blaming” and “absolving” Tim at temporal levels during stages II A and III. This presented an internal struggle for the board chair as a former close friend of Tim’s. Bob wanted to opt for “blaming” and “finger pointing” in order to explain or justify the crisis; at the same time he was constrained by the need to adhere to certain spiritual standards in addition to upholding his loyalty for Tim whom “he [still] considered a friend” (BCa 430).

During stage II A, Bob selected “blaming” in order to link the deplorable situation at CC to the underperforming incumbent ED. Later, however, during the post-succession stage, after Tim left and Connor stepped in as the new ED, Bob embraced “absolving” Tim as a potential sign of goodwill and forgiveness on Bob’s part.

Finally, comparable to Lisa Marie at DY, Connor integrated the two poles of “blaming” and “absolving” in relation to Tim. During the post-succession stage Connor opted for “blaming” the old ED when he stated that “Tim made **many mistakes**. He was hard on the house parents and scared many of them away. And the worst thing, Tim would burn bridges with donor churches because of **his authoritarian ways**” (CL 311).

However, in the same breath, Connor would select “absolving” Tim through a subtle responsibility shift from Tim, as an individual, to Tim’s age or health as the actual culprit. Connor recalled with a spirit of compassion the times when:

Tim would sit curled up in his chair at the desk. And I would bring him compresses soaked in hot water because he would complain about his migraines, and I would put them at the base of his neck. I really think that as he got older **his arteries hardened** and the pain was unbearable for him. **His old age slowed him down and made it hard for him to perform** in the demanding ED capacity. It was a pity that the ailments accumulated and slowed this man down. (CL 426)

The result led to the dilution of the “blaming” pole. Tim was never 100% held responsible, yet he was not absolved either. The new permanent ED managed the two divergent poles strategically through *integration* which was similar to Lisa Marie’s strategy at DY during the same stage in the succession process.

#### *Summary – Blaming/Absolving*

The comparative analysis revealed four valuable lessons. First, “blaming” and “absolving” proved to be ubiquitous choice points throughout the succession process in both nonprofits. Selecting “blaming” of the previous leadership proved to be the modus operandi for EDs and board chairs in the two organizations dealing with the succession process.

Second, this cross-analysis revealed that both chairs engaged the “blaming” and “absolving” choice points through unsynchronized temporal oscillations. When Jennie selected “absolving” Gayla during the front-end of the succession process, Bob selected “blaming” Tim during the same stage II A. And when Bob selected “absolving” Tim during the back-end of the succession process, Jennie selected “blaming” Gayla during

the same stage III. This contrasting, yet interesting, timing of the chairs' choice point seemed connected to the two models for succession (front-end and back-end) mentioned in conjunction with the "staying/leaving" dialectic.

Next, the ED who simply, directly, and consistently selected the "blaming" pole in his/her management strategy ended up "leaving" the organization (i.e. Gayla and Tim at DY and CC, respectively). In contrast, the actors who displayed more creativity in their management strategies by adopting "integration" or "oscillation" when juggling the push-pull between "blaming" and "absolving" ended up "staying" (i.e. Jennie and Lisa Marie at DY and Connor and Bob at CC).

Finally, spirituality played a vital role in causing a small cadre of nucleic actors to either switch from "blaming" to "absolving" or at least to integrate the two opposing poles of the dialectic in a spirit of restrained criticism. Some of the actors at CC voiced their opinion that the organizational spiritual component made it harder for the board to select "blaming" or to abruptly get rid of the incumbent ED. According to Cassie (569) and Colt (788) the board felt collectively the need to give Tim "a fair shake, a second chance so he can prove himself again. Also, the board was compelled **to forgive** Tim for his abrasiveness and ask **what Jesus would do** in this situation." Cassie (601) added that "a for-profit business would have been blatant about crossing the tees, pointing its finger to the underperforming ED, and firing Tim many years ago."

## **Freedom/Control**

The “freedom/control” dialectic occupied a central position in the succession process at DY and CC. The choice points pertaining to “freedom” and “control” showed up during most of the stages of the succession process in both nonprofits. The “freedom” pole represented the actors’ choice to either increase their autonomy or other actors’ spheres of influence. In opposition, the “control” pole pertained to constraining other organizational actors’ influence and ability for action.

The friction between having to submit to the legal power of the board and the desire to control the organization made “freedom/control” choices more difficult for the EDs in the two organizations. The problem was compounded when actors had to negotiate prior friendships that spanned across organizational boundaries as in the case of Jennie and Don/Gayla at DY and Tim and Bob at CC.

### *DY – Freedom/Control*

The “freedom/control” dialectic showed up during stages I, II A, and III at DY. First, during stage I, Jennie and Don vacillated between the poles of the “freedom/control” dialectic with regard to the dynamics of their relationship. On the one hand, as ministry partners, Jennie and Don were friends and colleagues. On the other hand, as ED and chairman, they were subordinate and boss. The two of them grappled with the tensions that surfaced from the choice points associated with their layered relationship. They oscillated between selecting “freedom” as friends in a horizontal association and selecting “control” as boss/subordinate in a vertical relationship.

In a paradoxical sort of way, Jennie gave Don the “freedom” to “control” her by bringing him back on the board. Jennie wanted Don to lead the board, provide guidance, and be involved in the organizational affairs. Also, Don made sure to encourage the board to select “freedom” in its relationship with Jennie. While Jennie wanted a hands-on chairman, she did “enjoy having **a laissez-faire board,**” as she mentioned in a previous interview (JH 785). The board selected “freedom” in its relationship with the ED during stage I.

Second, during stage II A, Jennie and Gayla struggled with the relation-centered dialectic of “freedom/control.” Not unlike the association that Don and Jennie enjoyed, Gayla and Jennie had a similar friendship. However, unlike Don, Gayla did not oscillate between “freedom” and “control” based on the common friendship that she shared with Jennie. Gayla selected “control” in her relationship with the younger and less experienced new board chair. Jennie responded in kind by selecting “control” over the Interim ED. Jennie’s formal position as chairwoman at DY placed her, organizationally speaking, above Gayla.

Finally, DY experienced a sort of organizational inertia associated with the “freedom/control” dialectic in stage III. The “freedom” that Jennie selected at DY during the pre-succession stage rippled through the post-succession stage. The board continued to select “freedom” and be laissez-faire in its management approach with the new ED, Lisa Marie. If anything, the organizational tendencies of stage I became more heightened during stage III. Don, who provided significant guidance for Jennie during the pre-succession stage, was now more reserved in his exchanges with the new ED.

Lisa Marie reaped the effects of the dynamics triggered by Jennie's a priori interactions with the former chair and the board of directors. Lisa Marie ended up as a powerful ED favoring the "control" (over the board) pole in her relationship with the board.

### *CC – Freedom/Control*

Similar to DY, the "freedom/control" dialectic showed up throughout stages I, II A, and II B at CC. First, the board and the chair oscillated between the "freedom/control" poles in their relationship with the ED during stage I. In the beginning, by selecting "freedom" for Tim, the board followed the old patterns in the organizational structures and relationships at CC. However, in the latter part of the first stage, both Bob and the board switched to "control" when it became apparent that Tim intended to continue at the helm of the organization, despite poor performance and empty promises of retirement.

Also, the sub-dialectics related to "control" and "freedom" differed between the two organizations. Whereas DY dealt with the "control/freedom" sub-dialectic of "verticality/horizontality" during stage I, CC managed the "ownership/stewardship" and "honesty/deception" sub-dialectics. Tim selected the "ownership" and "deception" poles in order to increase his "control" over the board. His strategy misfired. The board, under Bob's leadership, became more adamant in selecting "control" over the ED when it began to see Tim's strategies as attempting to manipulate the board and the staff.

While Jennie wanted and allowed Don to be an involved chair, Tim required Bob to help but not to interfere. Tim wanted a laissez-faire chairman and board. Whereas

Jennie's influence at DY increased when she relinquished "control" in her relationship with Don, Tim's dictatorial style brought about the opposite effect. Bob selected "control" in order to limit Tim's "freedom" at CC.

Second, stages II A and B revealed the consistent selection of "control" by all parties involved in the tug-of-war of "freedom/control." Tim selected "control" over the board, and the board responded by further selecting "control" over the ED. When the board became bolder during stage II B, Tim resorted to finding new targets to exercise his sphere of influence. The Deputy ED and the house parents became such targets. When these parties selected "freedom" from Tim and "control" over him during stage II B, Tim lost his ability to select "freedom" and was subsequently cast out of the organization.

Finally, similar to the other nonprofit, CC witnessed organizational inertia associated with the "freedom/control" dialectic in the latter stages. The board's shift in choice points from "freedom" to "control" (over the ED) experienced during the pre-succession stage reverberated throughout the concluding stages of the succession process. The "control" over the ED instigated by the board chair during stage I became the modus operandi for the entire board during stages II B and III. The board selected "control" over Tim during stage II A. Also, during stage III, Connor was given limited "freedom" while the board continued to exercise an increasing degree of "control" over all other parties.



### *Summary – Freedom/Control*

There were two main points that surfaced from the juxtaposing of the two nonprofit organizations. First, the management strategy most often employed when juggling the antithetical poles of “freedom” and “control” was *selection*. Most actors embraced *selection* consistently throughout the succession process. The only other method used was *oscillation* which occurred once, during stage I, in both organizations. It was evident that after the first stage, most actors got locked in one position, *selection*, which continued till the final appointment of the new, permanent ED.

Second, it was apparent in both organizations that the selection of the “control” (over a party) pole by an actor or a clique often triggered the opposite response in the other party. “Control” seemed to be accompanied by resistance from the opposing parties. Take CC for example. When Tim selected “control” over the board, the board responded by selecting “freedom” for itself or “control” over Tim. Conversely, when the board selected “control” (over Tim), the incumbent ED reacted by embracing “freedom” for himself or “control” over the board.

### **Change/Stability**

The last major dialectical tension present at both CC and DY was “change” versus “stability.” The two organizations dealt with the push-pull between the two antithetical poles of “change/stability” as they pertained to the status of the organizations themselves. “Change” referred to significant shifts in the image, identity, and structure

of the organization while “stability” referred to the maintenance of the organizational status quo.

The reflexive demands associated with the “change/stability” dialectic made choices difficult for the DY and CC actors. By selecting “change,” the board risked alienating various board factions and donors loyal to the party defending the status quo. In contrast, by selecting “stability,” the organizations risked potential bankruptcy (i.e. CC) or stagnation (i.e. DY). In both nonprofits, the actors who favored “change” managed to advance their agendas.

#### *DY – Change/Stability*

At DY, two leadership nuclei with conflicting organizational goals emerged during stage II B. These two nuclei managed to dichotomize the entire organization into two camps. One of the factions was led by Charlie, the future vice-chair who sought to transform DY into a charter school. In order to accomplish this organizational metamorphosis, Charlie’s faction wanted to hire Lisa Marie whose prior work experience, vision, and goals were congruent with their own. By choosing Lisa Marie, Charlie selected the “change” pole of the “change/stability” dialectic.

The opposing camp was led by the current vice-chair, Laura, who rejected the “change” pole while embracing “stability.” In order to maintain the stable and safe status quo, Laura and her faction wanted to hire Charlotte who espoused similar goals. Fiscal conservative organizational actors like Laura understood the risks associated with switching to a charter school; hence, their selection of the “stability” choice point.

All the actors belonging to the two camps, including Charlie, dealt with the tension triggered between the dialectical poles of “change” and “stability.” The move to turn DY into a charter school was “an **act of faith** that required a great deal of **risk** for DY in terms of capital and energy expenditure” (JH 233; LD 329). Because most board members at DY got caught in the adversarial tug-of-war caused by the “change/stability” dialectic, the relationship between these two disagreeing camps was recast in terms of the “competition/cooperation” dialectic.

#### *DY – Cooperation/Competition*

One of the dialectical tensions present at DY, yet absent at CC, was “cooperation/competition.” This dialectic showed up at DY during stage II B (see Table 6.2) and proved to be the engine that drove the conflict between Charlie and Laura and their two cliques fighting over the organization-centered “change” issue. The entire board polarized into two fighting camps clustered around these two actors.

The board rift across the “change/stability” lines forced the members to choose between “cooperation,” which was motivated by the need to work harmoniously as expected in a faith-based nonprofit, and “competition,” which was motivated by the desire to fulfill exclusive organizational goals (i.e. charter school). In the final analysis, the board factions selected “competition” which further fueled the schism between “change” (Charlie’s camp) and “status quo” (Laura’s camp).

*CC – Change/Stability*

Similar to DY, the “change/stability” dialectic was central in the succession process at CC. The pull caused by this tension was manifested in two distinct ways. First, the board was torn between wanting to maintain “status quo” for the sake of not aggravating the relationship the board shared with the incumbent ED and wanting to select “change” in order to salvage CC from the brink of financial disaster. The discourse analysis of Chapter V demonstrated that the board chose to embrace the “change” pole at the risk of alienating the incumbent ED.

Second, Tim struggled with the tensions between wanting to select “change” (i.e. leadership, organizational, structural) for the sake of rescuing CC which was precipitously degenerating versus wanting to maintain “stability” since the organizational status quo provided a steady source of income for his family. It was evident that Tim ended up favoring and selecting “stability” in order to secure comfort for his family.

In contrast to DY, CC wrestled with the “change/stability” dialectic earlier in the succession process; specifically, during stage II A. Also, the ED and the board did not deal with the tensions between “cooperation/competition” as triggered by the “change/stability” dialectic as it was evident at DY. Even though there was friction between the ED and the board, Tim chose to “cooperate” with the board’s decisions regardless of how much he disagreed with them. The issue of “competition” did not seem to factor in at CC in the same way that it did at DY. The tension between the dialectical poles of “change” and “stability” played out differently at CC.

In contrast to Laura who had several board members on her side at DY, the incumbent ED at CC became isolated when he selected “stability.” The entire board rallied behind the chairman’s selection of “change” over “stability.” Since Tim felt compelled to “cooperate” with the chair’s and board’s mandate for the organization, no further “competition” emerged at CC. The “change” pole was embraced at an organizational level, and CC witnessed various transformations that culminated with the selection of Connor as the permanent ED in the wake of Tim’s departure.

*Summary – Change/Stability*

Three major points emerged from the comparison of the two organizations. First, “change/stability” operated as a meta-dialectic in both organizations. The actual leadership succession processes unfolded in conjunction with the organizations’ selection of the “change” pole.

Second, all the nucleic actors resorted to “selection” as the preferred method for strategically managing the “change/stability” dialectic. Leadership nuclei privileged and selected one pole of the tension while consistently rejecting the opposite. There was no middle of the road compromise, integration, connection, vacillation, or transcendence. The actors were consistent in embracing “selection” of either “change” or “stability.”

Finally, the fact that “change/stability” showed up during stages II B at DY and II A at CC suggested a potential connection with the succession models identified earlier in relation to the “staying/leaving” dialectic. The front-end model at DY exposed the organizational actors to the “change/stability” tension later in the succession process.

In contrast, the back-end model at CC offered an opportunity for the organizational actors to wrestle with the tension between “change” and “stability” earlier than at DY.

### **Summary and Additional Findings**

A useful lesson that emerged from this comparative case study analysis pertained to the interrelationship of different types of dialectics and the importance of adopting a systemic perspective when studying succession of leadership. There were three categories of dialectics that accompanied the succession process: individual (“staying/leaving”), relational (“blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control”), and organizational (“change/stability”) dialectics. These three types of dialectics interfaced with and affected each other during the different stages of the succession process.

First, the co-mingling of dialectical tensions took place between the relation-centered dialectics themselves. “Blaming/absolving” was closely connected with the dialectic of “freedom/control.” The party engaging in “blaming” often sought to solidify his or her “control” over the party being “blamed.” At the same time, the party who selected “absolving” seemed to have also selected “freedom” for the recently absolved party.

At DY, Gayla selected “blaming” Jennie to increase her own sphere of influence at the helm of the nonprofit during stage II A. By selecting “blame,” Gayla also selected “control” over Jennie. Looking at the other side of the coin, Jennie’s selection of “absolving” Gayla during stage II A translated into Jennie’s selection of “freedom” for the Interim ED. Moreover, DY dealt with the co-mingling of the

“cooperation/competition” and “freedom/control” relation-centered dialectics as well. Specific choice points pertaining to “competition” led the hostile board factions to select “control” over their opposition.

In comparison, CC witnessed similar interlacing between the “blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control” dialectics. Tim “blamed” the board, the chair, the former board chair, the Deputy ED, and even the current ED during the post-succession phase, as Tim tried to regain “control” over the organization. Tim’s strategy misfired. As illustrated in the discourse analysis of Chapter V, it is evident that sometimes this strategy worked, and sometimes it did not work. The more consistent Tim was in selecting the “blaming” pole, the more motivated the board became in selecting the “control” (over the incumbent ED) pole of the “freedom/control” dialectic.

Second, both DY and CC experienced the connection between the relation-centered “freedom/control” and the organization-centered “change/stability” dialectics. The party that restricted the “freedom” of others was successful in getting “change” or “status quo” selected as the dominant pole. At DY, the board faction headed by Charlie managed to select “distrust” of Laura and her posse. As a result, Charlie’s group managed to gain the upper hand and “control” Laura to the point of pushing her off the board. Consequently, the streamlined, lighter, and more like-minded board selected “change” for the organization through the hiring of a new ED. At CC, the board restricted Tim’s “freedom;” thus, the board was able to select “change” which culminated with the hiring of the permanent ED. The choice point of selecting

organizational “change” grew out of the relational friction between “freedom/control” in the two nonprofits.

Finally, the relational dialectics operated at the center between the individual and organizational dialectics. The “staying/leaving” individual-centered dialectic was leveraged strategically by the EDs in order to gain “control” and instigate “change” or maintain “status quo” in the nonprofits. For example, Lisa Marie managed the individual “staying/leaving” dialectic strategically in order to consolidate her relational “control” at DY and promote organizational “change.” Whenever Lisa Marie felt cornered by the chairwoman or other actors, “she talked about being ready to leave” (JH 466). Of course, the ED’s departure would have been rather costly for DY since the organization paid a heavy price to get Lisa Marie in the first place. In response to Lisa Marie’s strategic selection of “leaving,” the board and the chairwoman stepped back and supplied the ED with increased “freedom” and influence. As a result, Lisa Marie was able to pursue her agenda and goals to implement organizational “change” at DY.

Similarly at CC, Tim used to “threaten the board that he would leave if [the board] did not satisfy the [ED’s] demands” (CT 320). For a long time, the possibility of the ED’s departure was a concern for CC since there were no substitute candidates in the horizon and there were children with immediate needs that could have not been left without a leader’s supervision. The pain of being without an ED was greater than the pain of having a dictatorial ED.

For many years, Tim was successful in oscillating between the individual-centered “staying” and “leaving” poles in order to privilege the relation-centered



“control” (over the board) pole and maintain status quo through the selection of the organization-centered “stability” pole. Of course when Connor was identified as a potential replacement and when there were no children in CC’s care, as happened during 2002-2003, the board selected “change” and let go of Tim. The right alignment of circumstances allowed the board to break loose from the ED’s controlling grip and implement further organizational “changes” manifested through the hiring of Connor.

It can be concluded that the dialectical tensions experienced during the succession processes in the two nonprofits were interwoven. These dialectics were nested within each other, and the strategic management of choice points in one of the dialectics directly influenced the choices made regarding the others. The individual, relational, and organizational dialectics proved to be related to each other as they stretched and intermingled across the four stages of the leadership succession process.

Therefore, it is important to adopt a systemic perspective when analyzing leadership succession in light of the underlying dialectal tensions. The dialectics that drive the succession process need to be scaled against each other to generate a better description, understanding, and explanation of what takes place within the nonprofit organizations.

In summary, this chapter demonstrated that there are important things that can be learned when comparing two organizations side by side. The differences and similarities between the two nonprofits highlighted the development of the leadership nucleus model, the variations in dialectical tensions, and the shifts in the management strategies of these dialectics across the four stages of the succession process. The key

organizational actors at DY and CC managed dialectical tensions strategically in order to advance their own goals and agendas pertaining to the succession process. Leadership succession was forged at the intersection of the key actors' discourses centered on the dialectical tensions pertaining to these goals and agendas.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY

#### **Introduction**

Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in that they meet the needs of millions of people across the country. The leadership of nonprofits becomes essential given the significant function that these organizations serve within the larger national economy. The subject of leadership succession is of critical importance in terms of these organizations' sustainability and endurance across time.

Recent demographic trends in North America indicate that nonprofit organizations will experience major leadership challenges associated with the *en masse* retirement of the baby boomers and the low numbers of available talent to replace them. Unfortunately, despite this critical situation, the research area of leadership succession in nonprofits is understudied and in need of much attention. This study seeks to fill the existent research gap by shedding light on the intricacies of leadership in nonprofits and by answering four research questions pertaining to the leadership succession process.

This final chapter summarizes the responses to the four research questions. The third and fourth research questions identifying the stages of the succession process and the leadership nuclei are addressed first. Next, the first and second research questions pertaining to the dialectical tensions and their management strategies are presented. In addition, this chapter offers limitations to the study and provides implications for theory,

research, and practice. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future studies of leadership succession in small faith-based or secular nonprofit organizations.

### **Research Questions and Theoretical Implications**

This research study examined and answered questions pertaining to the stages of the succession process, the leadership nuclei that emerged during and morphed across these stages, and the dialectical tensions experienced and managed by the leadership nuclei towards the realization of specific leadership succession outcomes.

#### *Stages of Leadership Succession*

The third research question of the study looked at the stages of leadership succession. The question examined the specific stages that characterized the succession process. This study revealed four stages in the leadership succession processes in both nonprofits. This finding was different from the results advanced by early work in the area of leadership succession in for-profits.

Gordon and Rosen (1981) divided leadership succession processes in two stages: pre- and post-arrival stages. Vancil (1987) discussed three stages in his seminal work on leadership succession in for-profits, which he called “acts:” act 1 is the introduction of the successor, act 2 is the selection of the successor, and act 3 is the successor becoming the new CEO during the exit of the incumbent. An examination of these early scholars’ work indicates that they may have imposed a stage model upon the leadership succession process as opposed to allowing the model to grow out of the research.

Not unlike these early scholars, the author of this study adopted the stage model heuristically to handle the massive amounts of data. This research study made no assumptions of hidden functions taking place within these stages. The study simply adopted a single, linear, time/event model that allowed the author to handle the colossal amounts of data. In reality, these stages are not discreet, and neither are they linear. However, the model was helpful as a chronological marker to understand a complex process such as succession.

The comparative case study with CC and DY revealed four stages: pre-succession, during succession A, during succession B, and post-succession. The study observed different patterns in each of the four stages. First, there were different and distinct leadership nuclei present in each stage, as the answer to RQ 4 reveals. Second, there were shifts in the communicative actions of the actors as captured in the management of the dialectics experienced by the leadership nuclei. Each stage had distinct dialectics or different management of identical dialectics from one stage to another, as RQ 1 and RQ 2 indicate. Next, there were clear behavioral changes and organizational role calibrations taking place during each stage, as evidenced by the disequilibrium states experienced between the intermediate stages.

This study defined disequilibrium as the lack of balance or the presence of variations in organizational roles and positions during the stages of the succession process. This study revealed that the pre- and post-succession stages witnessed relatively stable organizational equilibrium, as evidenced by the lack of change or variations in organizational roles and positions. It was the middle part (stages II A and

B) that witnessed a state of agitation and change in terms of old and new actors' resigning or assuming various organizational roles and positions.

The process of hiring a new ED caused organizational disruption. There were board reconfigurations taking place in the wake of the major ED shifts. For example, Jennie stepped down from the ED position during stage I, and her move proved to be the domino that led to organizational disruption during stages II A and B. In the aftermath of Jennie's resignation, Don stepped down as chairman and persuaded Jennie to accept the role of board chair. Also, Gayla stepped in as the Interim ED during the same stage II A. Moreover, during stage II B, Laura left and Charlie replaced her as the new vice-chair. Finally, organizational balance was reached a few weeks later when Lisa Marie was hired as the new permanent ED.

CC experienced similar organizational shifts across the four stages. During stage II A, the board made a concerted effort to push Tim out from the ED position. Even though Tim was not ousted until later in the process, "the initial actions of the dissenting board became earth-shattering" since traditionally the board at CC complied with the ED (CD 878). During stage II B, Connor became the Deputy ED and changed the internal dynamics. At the transition between stages II B and III, Bob decided to resign the chair position; yet, he continued to serve as a regular board member. Also, Tony resigned the vice-chair role and left the board altogether after Connor became the permanent ED. Jim, who was brought on the board by Bob during the fourth quarter of 2003, became the new vice-chair. A state of relative calm and equilibrium was finally restored shortly

after Connor became the new permanent ED and his wife was hired as the new Office Manager after the departure of the incumbent ED and his wife.

As noted in Chapter II, Sonnenfeld (1991) posited a typology of four styles for incumbents' departure: *monarchs*, *ambassadors*, *generals*, and *governors*. This typology matched only one of the four departure styles of the EDs at CC and DY during the transition between stages II B and III. Tim at CC fit the model for a *monarch* who chose not to leave voluntarily but “rather die in the office or be overthrown” (p. 19). There was no category that perfectly fit Jennie who left the ED position willingly (*ambassador*) yet ended up coming back as board chair (*general*). Perhaps, a fifth category should be added to augment Sonnenfeld's typology. This fifth departure style should be a hybrid between an *ambassador* and a *general* which could be called the *diplomatic strategist* – a leader who knew how to let go while also having a place and plan for returning.

#### *ED/BC Leadership Nucleus*

The fourth research question examined the ED/BC leadership nucleus model as the engine driving the leadership succession process. This study discovered that the actual leadership nucleus model was broader than the proposed ED/BC nucleus since it encompassed additional organizational actors (see Table 7.1).

This study provided fresh insight into the debate about the driving force behind leadership succession in nonprofits. The conversation started with scholars like Zald (1967, 1969, 1970) and continued with Herman and Heimovics (1990, 1991) and Carver

and Carver (2001). The prescriptive and normative studies pointed to the board as the actual leadership of nonprofit organizations (Conrad and Glenn, 1980; O'Connell, 1985; Carver, 2000). In contrast, the descriptive and empirical studies pointed to the ED as the principal leader who runs the organization (Zald, 1967, 1969; Herman and Heimovics, 1990, 1991; Leduc, 1999).

**Table 7.1 Leadership Nucleus Comparison**

	DY	CC
Stage I	One nucleus partnership <b>ED and BC</b>	Two independent nuclei <b>ED and BC</b>
Stage II A	An ambiguous nucleic triad <b>BC, Former BC, and Interim ED</b>	Two ambiguous nucleic triads <b>BC, VC, and Former BC</b> <b>ED, OM, and Former BC</b>
Stage II B	Two independent nuclei <b>VC and Future VC</b>	Three nucleic dyads <b>BC and ED</b> <b>ED and Deputy ED</b> <b>Deputy ED and VC</b>
Stage III	A concentrated nucleus <b>ED</b>	A diffused nucleus <b>Board</b>

It was argued in Chapter II that neither the board nor the ED is the main driver of the nonprofit. The board cannot effectively lead as a whole for long periods of time due to the diffusion of power among organizational actors (Herman and Heimovics, 1990; Tsui et al, 2004). At the same time, the ED cannot consistently be the most effective player because, in the final analysis, legal constraints place the ED under the governing accountability of the board (Carver & Carver, 2001). Chapter II proposed that



leadership in nonprofits was found at the intersection of the governing and the executive spheres; in other words, the ED/BC relationship constituted the leadership nucleus. This assertion resonated with a few scholars (Vladeck, 1988; Millesen, 2004; Hiland, 2006).

However, the empirical evidence from this study indicated that the model proposed in Chapter II still missed the mark. The actual leadership nucleus model encompassed a number of additional organizational actors (i.e. vice-chairs, future vice-chairs, staff, former board chairs, and spouses) who sometimes shared the leadership spotlight with the ED and the board chair (see Table 7.1). In fact, every stage had its own unique leadership nucleus combination. At times, the ED and the board chair did not work well together, and sometimes they converged in their goals for the organization. Also, at other times, the ED and the board chair were not even center-stage because other actors vied for control over the succession process.

Undoubtedly, overall, the EDs and the board chairs played central roles in driving the succession process. In a way, the process started and ended with these influential and powerful actors. At DY, it was Jennie's decision to leave the ED post which set the succession process in motion. The board chair stepped in, teamed up with Jennie in an ED/BC leadership nucleus, and provided a strategy for managing the leadership transition phase. During the post-succession stage, Lisa Marie emerged as a powerful actor constituting an ED-centered leadership nucleus.

At CC, it was Tim's poor performance (Bass, 1990), the board's need to identify a scapegoat in the ED's office (Thompson, 1967), and the uncertainty regarding Tim's leadership capacity due to old age (Wagner et al., 1984) that triggered the succession

process. The board chair stood up and challenged Tim to cooperate with the leadership transition progression. Bob and Tim constituted two antagonistic leadership nuclei, BC-centered and ED-centered, respectively. Following the post-succession stage, the new ED and the new board chair coalesced to form an influential ED/BC leadership nucleus.

At the same time, it was evident that there were additional actors who influenced the succession process and stood out as integral elements of the various leadership nuclei. This updated and expanded nucleus model that emerged from the way the succession process unfolded across the four stages included several combinations of influential voices in the two nonprofits.

First of all, the boards of the two nonprofits acted distinctly during the leadership transition. At CC, the board of ten members held monthly meetings that lasted up to four hours during stages II A, II B, and III. Historically, as during stage I, the board met quarterly and the meetings did not go past two hours. However, the exigency of the current situation associated with the succession of leadership motivated the CC board to meet often and for longer periods of time.

In contrast, the DY board of 25 members met quarterly in two-hour meetings. However, key information was exchanged on a regular basis via email and phone conversations. The DY strategy was to rely on the executive search committee headed by the vice-chair, Laura. Despite the existence of the executive search committee, one board member, Charlie, found Lisa Marie, and submitted her name to the executive search committee for consideration.

In comparison, CC did not employ the assistance of an executive search committee. Tony, the vice-chair, found Connor through his own initiatives and networks of friends. Tony knew of Connor's previous work experience in the childcare industry. Just as Charlie wooed Lisa Marie at DY, Tony was instrumental in persuading Connor to leave retirement and join CC.

In addition to vice-chairs (or future vice-chairs in the case of Charlie), board chairs played a critical role. Bob at CC and Jennie at DY were extremely influential. Even, the former board chairs were at times central in the succession process. Don at DY exercised a continued degree of influence with both Jennie and Charlie. Also, at CC, Henri played a key role as he bridged the gap between the incumbent ED and the board chair during stage II A.

Moreover, the incumbent EDs were crucial to the succession process in both organizations. The EDs (Jennie, Gayla, and Lisa Marie at DY; Tim and Connor at CC) were involved in the management of dialectical tensions present during all the pertinent stages of the succession process. The only exception was stage II B at DY when there was no ED during the two-month period.

Finally, spouses shared significant responsibilities as well. At DY, Don's wife, Gayla, operated as Interim ED during stage II A. Even after she stepped down from her position, Gayla continued to stay in touch with various organizational actors. During stage II B, Laura, the vice-chair, had her husband's full support since he was a board member as well. At CC, Tim's wife, Jo, was valuable to the succession process. Jo worked as Office Manager and provided considerable counsel to her husband during

stages II A and B. Also, Connor's wife, Sue, was hired as the new Office Manager following Tim's departure.

Carver (1997, 2000) stated that the board of directors should run the nonprofit organization. This study concurred with the prescriptive, normative approach for a few months during the post-succession phase at CC. After Tim left the organization and Connor was hired as the new ED, the board of directors managed to put forth a unified, homogenous, and democratic front. The board governed as a whole, and there were no singular actors to steal the spotlight as it had happened during the previous stages. However, this did not last for more than a few months. Shortly after Bob's resignation as board chair, Connor recruited and brought Dan on the board as the new chairman. The two of them developed a strong alliance that translated into a new leadership nucleus dyad. Thus, the BOD-centered leadership model advocated by Carver emerged only briefly during the post-succession stage at CC.

Herman and Heimovics (1990, 1991) favored the ED-centered model of leadership in nonprofits. This comparative case study paralleled the descriptive, exploratory research of the two authors for a few months during the post-succession stage at DY. Lisa Marie was given great latitude to run the organization upon her hiring as the new ED. The board and other singular, influential actors stepped back and allowed Lisa Marie to take over the reigns of the organization. She became the heart and soul of DY. However, a few months later, after the post-succession stage, new actors (including the current vice-chair) returned to the leadership spotlight by sharing

organizational influence with the ED; hence, the ED-centered leadership model depicted only the beginning of a post-succession process at DY.

Carver, Herman, Heimovics, and several other nonprofit management scholars might have examined nonprofits during their post-succession stages. This could explain the authors' positions which pointed to more clearly defined leadership models that stood out in relative contrast to the turbulent leadership dynamics evident in this research (especially during the interim stages).

This study concluded that the leadership nucleus model of the two nonprofits was constituted by different combinations of interrelated actors across different stages in the succession process (see Table 7.1). Moreover, the strength of the nucleus model was that it exposed the amorphous and unstable nature of leadership which Fairhurst (2007) described as the “maddening protean tendencies of leadership” (p. ix). The leadership nuclei in the two nonprofits changed and morphed based on the dialectical tensions managed according to the roles, experiences, skills, political agendas, and motivations that various actors shared across the four stages of the succession process.

### *Dialectical Tensions*

The first research question of the study explored the dialectical tensions present throughout the succession process. Specifically, the question examined the dialectical tensions experienced by the ED, board chair, and other organizational stakeholders involved in the succession process. This study found three types of interrelated dialectics: the individual-centered dialectics of “staying/leaving;” the relation-centered

dialectics of “blaming/absolving,” “freedom/control,” and “cooperation/competition;” and the organization-centered dialectic of “change/stability” (see Table 7.2 and Appendix A). In addition, there were a few sub-dialectics that clustered around the relational dialectics: “trust/distrust,” “honesty/deception,” “ownership/stewardship,” “verticality/horizontality,” and “public/private.”

Two sets of dialectics that stood out as essential to the succession process were the individual-centered dialectic of “staying/leaving” and the relation-centered dialectic of “blaming/absolving.” All the actors involved in the succession processes in the two nonprofits juggled directly or indirectly these tensions throughout the four stages. If a key actor did not have to “leave” or “stay,” he or she was instrumental in either pushing somebody out or bringing/keeping somebody in. Also, if an influential actor did not engage in “blaming” or “absolving” somebody, then the actor was either being “blamed” or “absolved” by other key actors.

Another remarkable dialectic was the “change/stability” tension which operated at a macro-level and encompassed the entire organization. Harter and Krone (2001) studied cooperatives and discovered that the workers struggled with embracing change in a manner that did not threaten or compromise their core ideologies. The same thing seemed to have happened at DY and CC. The two nonprofit organizations embraced “change” while the board members sought to preserve the mission of the organization – more so at CC than at DY – in private ways.

**Table 7.2 Dialectics Comparison**

	DY	CC
<b>Stage I</b>	Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control	Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving
<b>Stage II A</b>	Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving	Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving Staying/Leaving Change/Stability
<b>Stage II B</b>	Change/Stability Cooperation/Competition	Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control Blaming/Absolving
<b>Stage III</b>	Blaming/Absolving Staying/Leaving Freedom/Control	Blaming/Absolving

Researchers have stated that mission is central, the very *raison d'être*, the overarching goal, or the purpose of existence for the nonprofits (Phills, 2005); therefore, the study expected to see mission center stage. However, the two case studies revealed that mission was relegated to the background rather than to the foreground. Mission was embedded in the dialectical tensions about leadership succession, especially in the dialectic of “change/stability.” The push-pull between hiring Lisa Marie to spearhead the charter school program and hiring Charlotte to continue the after-school reading program concealed the shift in DY’s mission paradigm. DY stayed true to its general mission of helping the inner-city children; however, the organization sought to reinvent itself as a charter school. The surface arguments revolved around finances (will there be enough resources to pay for Lisa Marie’s relocation and high salary) and faith matters

(will the organization be able to maintain its faith component after switching to a government-funded charter school).

At CC, the friction caused by the “change/stability” dialectic dealt with closing the off-site office, changing the company logo, raising money since the organization was on the brink of bankruptcy, and “helping” Tim to retire. The tug-of-war between status quo and change hid, underneath its surface, concerns pertaining to the fulfillment of CC’s mission – to provide a home for foster care children. When the CC campus ended up without any children, the organization defaulted on its mission, and the board intervened through its chairman and a couple of other influential voices.

However, similar to DY, the key actors dealt with CC mission issues in a tangential manner. While DY toyed with the idea of re-purposing its mission to help inner-city children through the vehicle of a charter school (as opposed to an after-school reading program), CC dealt with strategies for reclaiming its old mission through hiring a new, younger ED since the incumbent ED was faltering.

The covert approach in dealing with mission issues seemed to be an overarching concern that underlay both organizations. Perhaps, the peripheral issue of mission was due to the need to manage appearances, to maintain donor relations, to avoid internal conflict escalation, and to uphold the spiritual heritage shared by both nonprofit organizations. Therefore, the organizations may have wanted to manage their mission controversies in a covert and “private” way.

Another possible explanation was the fact that the board of directors was composed of successful businessmen and women who run banks, investment firms, law



firms, and other businesses that are driven by an economic motivator. For these for-profit entities, mission is not central since the for-profit sector is driven by the concept of profitability which helps businesses gauge their performance (Phills, 2005). In contrast to for-profit entities, nonprofit organizations measure their performance through several ways, including the chief nonfinancial measurement of mission accomplishment.

The DY and CC boards were run by successful businesspeople trained and educated to evaluate organizations in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and financial profitability. These people interfaced with the EDs who focused on organizational mission accomplishment. The EDs and the key board members struggled together with the push-pull of the “change/stability” dialectic which pertained directly to issues of organizational profitability and, more subtly, to issues of mission.

### *Management of Dialectics*

The second research question investigated the management of the dialectical tensions present during the succession process. The question examined the types of strategies employed by the EDs, board chairs, and other organizational stakeholders in managing dialectics towards specific outcomes. This study discovered that the actors adopted a number of specific strategies for managing the dialectics across the four stages of the succession processes in both nonprofits.

As noted in Chapter I, Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) proposed five different strategies for the management of dialectics in organizations. This study revealed that four out of the five management strategies were employed by the organizational actors

throughout the succession process at DY and CC: *selection*, *oscillation*, *integration*, and *connection*. The one management strategy missing was *transcendence*. It is possible that *transcendence* may have occurred subtly when actors left the organization; thus, going away might have functioned as a strategy to move beyond the choice points present within the various dialectical tensions.

For example, at DY, Laura was caught in the middle of a fierce “cooperation/competition” tug-of-war with Charlie and the rest of the board. When the conflict escalated and lawyers were ushered in as a potential means for resolving the conflict, Laura and her clique resigned and left the board. Perhaps, Laura’s *selection* of “leaving” the organization signaled her strategy to manage the dialectic of “cooperation/competition” through the *transcendence* of both opposing poles – she neither cooperated in the hiring of Lisa Marie nor continued the competing over hiring Charlotte.

The party that *selected* “deception” over “honesty” as a privileged choice point was eventually nudged off the board. The DY vice-chair, Laura, was thought to have *selected* “deception” over “honesty” as part of the “cooperation/competition” dialectic when communicating with the board regarding the potential candidate, Lisa Marie. As a result, Laura left DY right before Lisa Marie’s hiring. Likewise, Tim was labeled “Machiavellian” because of his tendencies to obfuscate information and choose “deception” over “honesty” during his interactions with the board. Tim, also, was forced out of the organization right before Connor became the new permanent ED.

Next, it was worth noting that while actors might have adopted a specific management strategy during one stage, the longitudinal perspective across the four stages revealed a different picture. For example, at CC, Bob *selected* “blaming” Tim during stage II A and *selected* “absolving” Tim during stage III. Within a stage level, Bob employed *selection* as his favorite method of managing the dialectical poles of “blaming/absolving.” However, when seen across the four stages of the leadership succession process, Bob used *oscillation* since he swung between the two poles (“blaming/absolving”) at temporal levels.

Finally, it was evident that the actors adopted *selection* as their favorite management strategy in dealing with the dialectical tensions during stages II A and B at both DY and CC. There were a couple of potential explanations for this. First, the timeframes for stages II A and B were much shorter than the pre-succession stage (less than half). As such, it was possible that the actors did not have the time to develop different management strategies that might have required increased cognitive functions, language/communication subtleties, and political maneuvering.

Second, some of the dialectics were more antithetical than others, and the actors were forced to select one pole over the other. For example “honesty/deception” illustrated a dialectical tension that could not be managed through *integration* or *connection*. Integrating “honesty” and “deception” would still lead to dishonesty since even a small amount of deception could be labeled as dishonest. This was best illustrated by Tim who resorted to obfuscating the facts in order to increase his sense of ownership of CC and his control over the board. Tim’s communication was fraught with

mingled facts that sometimes were true but often were fabricated or imagined. In the board's perspective, Tim *selected* "deception."

Moreover, some poles could not be strategically *connected* since the respective actor would be considered morally ambiguous at best, if not downright dishonest at worst. This was illustrated by Laura who seemed to be selective in the way she managed information and the communication flow between Lisa Marie and the rest of the board. Laura might have viewed herself as being strategic in *connecting* the two poles of "honesty/deception" when she interfaced with Lisa Marie and the executive search committee. However, in the eyes of the board, Laura *selected* "deception" as part of the "cooperation/competition" dialectic with Charlie and the rest of the board. As such, the board felt compelled to select "distrust" in dealing with her.

#### *Links between Leadership Nucleus Model and Dialectical Tensions*

Another potential explanation as to why the actors tended to opt for *selection* during stages II A and B pertained to the fact that the interim stages were characterized by nebulous leadership coalitions, increased friction and conflict on the board, increased level of ambiguity, and heated contests over influence in the organization. It was possible that when pressed for time and when dealing with multiple stressors, actors opted for *selection* as their favorite strategy when managing dialectical tensions.

In comparison to the interim stages, during stages I and III, the leadership nuclei adopted more sophisticated forms of management of the dialectical tensions including: *connection*, *integration*, and *oscillation*. These more complex forms of managing

dialectics, which demand communicative and cognitive dexterity, arose in contrast to stages II A and B during which the leadership nuclei adopted *selection*. Perhaps the disequilibrium that arose during stages II A and B constrained the actors' resourcefulness in managing the tensions and tackling the choice points creatively. The chaos and the conflict that characterized these interim succession phases might have contributed to the persistent *selection* strategy adopted by the majority of the actors during interim stages.

The pre-succession and post-succession stages boasted simpler and clearer nuclei combinations: ED, ED/BC, BC, and the board (only for a few months during the post-succession stage at CC). These actors dealt with the same combinations of tensions at both DY and CC: "staying/leaving," "freedom/control," and "blaming/absolving." The dialectics missing during stages I and III were "change/stability" and "cooperation/competition." As soon as the leadership nuclei shifted to contain more actors in less defined coalitions as stages II A and B demonstrated, the dialectics included issues pertaining to organizational and mission *change*.

This observation was important since the heart of the succession process was found during the interim stages. It is during the stages II A and B that the organization identified a successor for the ED position; in other words, the organization actually *changed* its leader during the few months of the interim phases. It was safe to conclude that a shift in the nuclei from the clearly defined ED/BC combinations (as during stages I and III) to the more convoluted and highly contested ED/BC/Former BC, BC/VC/Former BC, Former BC/OM/ED triads and VC and Future VC, ED/BC,

VC/Deputy ED, and Deputy ED/ED dyads (as during stages II A and B) led to the introduction of new dialectical tensions that centered on “change/stability” and “cooperation/competition.”

The ED’s lack of centrality in the power equation, as seen during stages II A and B, introduced the element of *change*. At DY, the topic of *change* pertained to creating a new medium to fulfill the mission of the organization – the charter school versus the after-school reading program – to help inner-city children. At CC, the topic of *change* dealt with more structural and symbolic issues pertaining to the company logo, office location, and the need to hire a new ED who could reclaim the mission of the organization to provide homes for foster care children.

In both organizations, the change in leadership was foreground and central. It was the leadership nuclei changes that triggered the “change/stability” meta-dialectic. Also, it was the time constraints and pressures of stages II A and B that coaxed the actors to resort to *selection* when dealing with this macro-level, organization-centered dialectic.

Reflexively, the dialectic of “change/stability” acted on the combinations of leadership nucleus. By consistently *selecting* “change” versus “status quo” or vice versa, the actors bound and committed themselves and their organizations to specific, hard-to-reverse directions that translated into the actors’ acquisition of increased power, as evident in the rising of Charlie, the future vice-chair at DY (during stage II B), and Connor, the future ED at CC (during stage II B), or in the loss of influence as evident

with Don's blending into the background at DY (during stage II B) and Tim's loss of organizational control at CC (during stages II A and B).

Finally, the individual-centered dialectic of "staying/leaving" during the pre-succession stage played a key role in affecting the subsequent dialectics and leadership nucleus combinations of stages II A, B, and III. In both organizations, the issue pertaining to the ED's "staying" versus "leaving" surfaced during the pre-succession stage. Jennie's decision to "leave" DY caused the board chair to intervene and launch a campaign to keep her as the new chairwoman. As soon as Jennie stepped down as ED and moved up as board chair, new actors entered the mix. Gayla became the interim ED, and the dialectic of "blaming/absolving" became central during stage II A at DY. Later, following Gayla's departure, the future vice-chair and the current vice-chair assumed a central role while managing the "change/stability" and "cooperation/competition" dialectics.

The same phenomenon was mirrored at CC. The individual-centered dialectic of "staying/leaving" during stage I led to ambiguous leadership triads and dyads dealing with "blaming/absolving" and "change/stability" during stages II A and B. Tim's decision to "stay" during the pre-succession stage conflicted with the board decision to have him "leave" the organization. Based on the previous analyses throughout this chapter, it can be concluded that the subsequent leadership combinations and their accompanying sets of dialectics arose from the way the ED/BC nucleus managed the "staying/leaving" dialectic during stage I.

In closing, this study responded to the call of Giambatista, Rowe, and Riaz (2005) to adopt a qualitative methodology that provides an understanding of the organizational context of the leadership succession process. Moreover, the study relied on qualitative methodology to reveal how leadership succession was socially constructed through the discursive interactions of organizational actors (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). Finally, this analytic investigation addressed the lack of research in the area of service organizations (Allison, 2002) by elucidating how leadership succession takes place within nonprofits:

The management literature was largely devoid of work in this area. When looking for resources in 1997, we could find many articles about executive leadership in the private sector, but we could find little that gave any guidance relevant to nonprofit organizations managing the process of executive transition. (p. 342)

To contribute to the literature on this topic, this study examined four main questions about the stage development, the leadership nucleus model, the dialectical tensions, and the management of dialectics by various actors in leadership roles throughout the succession process in two nonprofits. Finally, this study adopted Fairhurst and Putnam's (2004) *becoming* orientation which looked at succession as an evolving process defined at the intersection of discursive interactions among various organizational actors.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has two limitations which qualify the research findings. First, the research sample is small and narrow. Two medium-size nonprofits do not provide



enough evidence for generalizing the results of the study. Moreover, the organizations are located in the same geographical area and share similar faith-based characteristics. Again, this limitation may be a handicap in transferring the findings to other organizations in different locales, especially ones with a secular orientation.

The second limitation relates to methodology. This study relies on transcribed interviews and a few text-based documents (emails, bylaws, board minutes, etc). The challenge with interview data is that that the interviewees have to recall events that happened a year or so ago. Thus, memory lapses might affect the findings.

In addition, as scholars have previously noted, the interview process can become a co-production of sorts between the interviewer and the interviewee (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). As such, the interviewing method opens the door to increased subjectivity on the part of the researcher. But this process also provides valuable insights into the way actors make sense of the leadership succession; thus, meaning becomes an important source of data.

### **Further Implications for Theory and Research**

In addition to responses to the research questions, several critical insights grew out of this study. These insights pertained to crisis development, conflict escalation, change, succession process and outcomes, implicit goals and deadlines, and organizational commitment to spirituality. These observations emerged in comparing the two case studies. They have implications for theory and research and deserve further attention.

*Crisis Development and Conflict Escalation*

The two nonprofit organizations experienced certain crisis moments during the succession process. CC dealt with its own predicament related to four factors: an aging incumbent ED who did not let go of power, a precarious financial situation caused by the MEP construction fiasco, the State threatening to close down CC because of sub-standard conditions that failed to be addressed in recent times, and the lack of children on the premises (which countered the very organizational *raison d'être* for CC).

Similarly, DY was faced with its own emergency situation. The crisis at DY was caused by Jennie's sudden resignation. The organization was faced with a leadership vacuum which threatened the sustainability of the nonprofit. The problem was compounded by the Interim ED who did not contribute to finding a successor during her short-lived tenure. Things got worse when Gayla left abruptly after six months of serving as interim. For the first time, DY was without actual ED leadership during the two months of stage II B. Finally, the crisis at DY was intensified by the presence of strong factional resistance to transforming the organization into a charter school.

These crises provided the exigency for leadership succession in the two nonprofits. The predicament that these organizations found themselves in instigated the changes in leadership nuclei and accelerated the process of succession. Also, these crises brought about increased friction among members of the leadership nuclei involved in the succession process.

The presence of conflict in the leadership succession processes of both organizations proved to be an intriguing finding. Conflict emerged out of the succession process rather than creating succession exigency. The need for a successor triggered organizational squabbles at CC and major controversies at DY due to various influential actors' incongruent goals.

Bartunek, Kolb, and Lewicki (1992), in their article on the selection of a university president, reported on political overtones that were similar to the leadership succession at DY. The authors argued that hidden conflict and conflict avoidance make it difficult to handle genuine mission issues on the table. The conflict about incongruent goals seemed hidden and relegated to the backroom at both DY and CC. By not having it explicit, it was more difficult to address the different opinions about mission and future directions for the two organizations (Kolb & Putnam, 1992; Bartunek et al., 1992).

The conflict experienced at CC pertained to the divergence between the aging ED's personal goals and the board's goals. Tim wanted to maintain his health insurance and steady salary in addition to a sense of control over the organization. In contrast, Bob and the board envisioned a healthy organization that was free from debt and Tim's iron-fist control. The conflict at DY pertained to the incongruent organizational goals regarding the transition to a charter school which was symbolized by the hiring of Lisa Marie. The intensity of the conflict at DY was evident in the "cooperation/competition" dialectic that the actors experienced during stage II B while grappling with concealed

and incongruent goals. Hidden conflict can sometimes precipitate conflict escalation (Putnam, 2004c), as the two case studies seemed to indicate.

The manner in which the relation-centered dialectics (“blaming/absolving” and “freedom/control”) were managed fueled the conflict escalation in the two nonprofits. CC experienced organizational conflict as it was reflected in the power games and political maneuvering that took place between the ED, chair, vice-chair, and the board during stages I, II A, and II B. However, the CC conflict never reached the proportions that DY experienced during stage II B.

The conflict escalation at DY was marked by three milestones. First, there was an increase in the number of actors involved in the succession process. The ED/chair nucleus of the first phase morphed into a triad that included the Interim ED during stage II A. The following stage saw the three actors fade back while new ones stepped forward. Charlie and Laura polarized the board with their antithetical positions. Also, Charlotte was accidentally offered the ED job based on Laura’s maneuvers. Charlotte’s presence added to the turmoil when the board found out that Lisa Marie, the favorite candidate, wanted to accept the job.

Second, there was a boost in the number of issues on the table: charter school versus after-school reading program, need for a new successor, actors repositioning themselves in the organizational hierarchy, and containment of the vice-chair whom some actors perceived as unethical.

Finally, DY witnessed a swell in the level of emotionality which various actors felt during the succession process. The climax was reached during stage II B when the

faction led by Charlie was ready to press a lawsuit against Laura and her party for obstructing communication between Lisa Marie and the executive search committee. As one board member recalled, the “blazing emails” and the “blistering phone conversations” captured the intensity of emotions at DY during stage II B (PM 132).

CC experienced similar conflict escalation markers, although on a smaller scale. The ED and BC nuclei of stage I attracted the former board chair, the office manager, and the vice-chair during the second stage. The two triads later dissolved into three dyads that included the Deputy ED in stage II B. The number of issues increased from the need for a successor to revamping priorities (i.e. closing office, moving HQ to CC campus, re-designing company logo, getting younger board members). Finally, the emotions puffed up when the aging incumbent ED complained and blamed the board for his health, his loss of income, and the injustice of being “discarded” after years of service. Some board members took offense and felt the need to retaliate verbally.

Thus, the shift in leadership nuclei contributed to the escalation of conflict during the succession process in both organizations. By bringing new actors into the leadership spotlight, the two organizations created the space for more contentious issues to emerge and for personal emotions to flare up. Conflict escalation was present during the interim stages of the succession process in the two nonprofits. The degree of intensity varied between the two organizations given the specific issues that the key actors negotiated among themselves in selecting the appropriate successor. The conflict in the two nonprofits grew out of personal and/or organizational crises and assumed a more private and hidden dimension which took time to bubble to the surface of the organizational

actors' discourses. According to Kolb and Bartunek (1992), "it is necessary that private and informal dimensions of conflict management be brought out into open, to be on stage, to be viewed and understood," if conflict is to bring about change (p. 226).

### *Change*

This study revealed another counter-intuitive finding. Similar to conflict escalation, change grew out of the succession process rather than driving the need for new leadership. In effect, the succession process brought about organizational change versus change bringing about leadership succession.

Granted, leadership succession is change; but this study showed that the need to change leadership was followed by the opportunity of organizational actors to implement changes at various levels in the organization. Leadership literature implies that the desire for change calls for a particular successor; and this assumption is partially true. However, both nonprofits showed that the decision to bring in a new successor was in and of itself a catalyst for organizational change.

For example, DY's board tried to maintain status quo since there was a universal sense of satisfaction with the performance of the organization and its ED. However, Jennie wanted to leave, and she finally left the ED position. The board chair responded and sought to maintain a sense of leadership balance in the wake of Jennie's departure. Other individual actors and the board of directors stepped in to find a successor. In the process, organizational actors decided to pursue specific agendas which entailed various organizational changes: selecting new board officers (Charlie became the new vice-chair

following Laura's resignation) and transforming the after-school reading program into a charter school. Thus, the leadership succession process at DY ended up with significant organizational change initiatives. DY moved in the direction of changing its mission. In the concluding stages of the succession process, the board hired Lisa Marie who symbolized the mission change of implementing a charter school.

To summarize, Jennie decided to leave for personal reasons, and her departure triggered the need to find a successor. The organizational balance was disrupted during this transition, and organizational actors pushed forward various change initiatives. Finally, coming back full circle, the proposed organizational changes informed the very selection of a particular successor, Lisa Marie.

The same change process applied to CC. This time it was the ED who wanted to maintain the organizational status quo. Since the organization was struggling financially, Tim called upon Bob to return to the board as chairman. Tim promised to resign a year later. The need for a new successor gave CC the opportunity to implement organizational changes. The board unanimously challenged the old ED by changing the appearance of the organization. The 65-year-old organization experienced a face-lift in a matter of months. The company logo was revamped and modernized. The satellite office was closed, and the headquarters were relocated to the actual CC campus. Finally, the MEP Activity Center was completed. All these changes took place during the succession process.

In summary, the dialectical tensions triggered by the need to find a successor led to changes in both nonprofits. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) wrote about dialectics

functioning as a motor for organizational change. According to the authors, change results from the friction between opposites. The two case studies confirmed this by showing how struggling with the tensions among “staying/leaving,” “blaming/absolving,” “freedom/control,” and “change/stability” provided fuel for organizational change which emerged from the succession process itself.

### *Leadership Succession and Ironic Outcomes*

This study focused chiefly on leadership succession as a process. This process, in turn, produced ironic outcomes, ones that demonstrated how the succession process in the two nonprofits was messy. Ironic outcomes were the unintended consequences or the incongruity between the results of the process and the desired outcomes. These organizational ironies resulted from the reflexivity of the dialectical poles on one another. By selecting one pole of the dialectical tension, the other parties might have felt compelled to select the opposing pole; thus, the potential for ironic outcomes was introduced.

First, the EDs in the two nonprofits ended up with the opposite of what they wanted to accomplish. On the one hand, Jennie at DY gave up the ED position even though she enjoyed wide organizational support. She was emotionally burned-out and was ready to move on. However, when Jennie selected the “leaving” pole, the board reacted by selecting the “staying” pole through increased “freedom” for the ED. The harder Jennie struggled to leave, the more strongly the board responded to keep her at the helm of DY as ED. In the end Jennie ended up staying at DY in the new capacity of



board chair which proved to be ironic in light of her attempts to leave the organization during the pre-succession stage. By letting go, Jennie was able to hold on to her influence at the helm of DY, but in a new and different capacity.

On the other hand, Tim clung to power and refused to let go of CC. Tim selected the “staying” pole which triggered the board’s actions to oust him. The board chose the “leaving” pole for Tim by increasing board “control” over the ED. Also, the more intense was Tim’s effort to “stay,” the more determined the board was to “blame” Tim for CC’s performance problems. Ironically, by selecting “staying,” Tim forced the board to push him out through increased “control” over the ED and through placing responsibility upon the ED’s shoulders for the current deplorable organizational status quo. In addition, by trying to avoid responsibility and by “blaming” others, Tim ended up becoming the target of concerted “blaming” from additional board members. Ultimately, Tim became a scapegoat for all the organizational woes at CC. In conclusion, both EDs reaped outcomes that were opposite of what they initially desired and expected.

Second, the boards’ tactical efforts with regard to the succession process led to unintended consequences. At both DY and CC, paid vacations **preceded** the official departure of the EDs. For example, Jennie at DY left after enjoying a ten-week paid sabbatical that aimed at persuading her to continue as ED. The golden handcuffs offered by the board to keep Jennie at the helm of DY did not work as intended. Jennie resigned her ED role, despite the generous offers from the board.

In a similar way, Tim left the ED role at CC after a two-week paid vacation that was supposed to alleviate the pain caused by “firing” him. Unexpectedly, the generous vacation package, which included resort spa trips, brought about unexpected results. Tim left with an unmitigated sense of resentment toward the board. Tim’s anger was expressed in blistering public and private comments that followed the two week vacation. The golden parachute offered by the board did not restore goodwill as was intended.

Finally, DY experienced unintended consequences at a macro-level. Specifically, major opposing goals collided during the succession process at DY. Ironically, the goal of the losing faction was fulfilled. The former vice-chair and her clique were booted off the board, yet their agenda continued to be upheld a year later. A recent interview with the board chair at DY revealed that a year and half later, the organization was still an after-school reading program “since the State declined the application and request to become a charter school” (JH 801). Thus, DY’s core identity and mission had not changed despite the board’s efforts to the contrary during the succession process.

These three examples of ironic outcomes or unintended consequences support the argument that the leadership succession process was unpredictable. Moreover, these examples of unintended consequences are closely related to the implicit goals of the two organizations. The specific goals that organizational actors shared called for definite action which inevitably led to unintended outcomes.

*Implicit Goals and Emerging Deadlines*

These ironic outcomes also related to the critical role of implicit goals and deadlines in the succession process. This study defines implicit goals as organizational objectives that are unexpressed yet generally understood by the organizational actors. For example, at the beginning of the process, DY did not have clearly communicated goals pertaining to the successor. These goals emerged from and with the succession process itself.

At DY, during stages II A and B, the first three candidates drawn in by the local newspaper ads had to be rejected because they were white. The board chair and the board made the decision to hire an African American ED. Their rationale was based on the concept of requisite variety; DY needed to match the diversity of the inner-city environment it worked within. Evidently, this objective was not communicated well among members of the executive search committee since the first three white candidates had to be turned down even before a formal interview took place. Jennie recalled:

We had three white candidates. It was a waste of our time and theirs. Finally, we concluded and **communicated** to the executive search committee that we need **an African American ED**. We need somebody who can connect with the kids. A white ED can't discipline the kids in the same way that a black candidate can. The kids will look up and ask "who the [heck] is this white woman telling us what do to?" We had to go back to the drawing board and tell Laura who chaired the executive search committee **that the first candidates were totally unacceptable.** (JH 242)

The fact that the first candidates did not match the implicit racial requirement points to the challenges of recruiting particular types of candidates. This example demonstrated that sometimes goals to select specific types of people for the ED role could be seen as

discriminatory; thus, these goals had to be implicit. Moreover, these goals grew out of the succession process, as the discursive interactions at DY demonstrated.

Similarly, CC juggled its own implicit goals. Even though not explicitly stated in the board minutes or interviews, the goals pertaining to the ED successor were understood by the entire board, but not openly discussed. Given the organization's more "archaic" views and traditional approaches, CC's goal was to hire a white male who was a member of the X Church. The goals were not overtly stated but the board had a singular picture in its mind with regard to the succession outcome. As one board member confessed "CC has been historically associated with the conservative X Churches. The leadership is represented by older white males. It is a simple cultural reality for this nonprofit nested deep within the heart of Texas" (CD 578). The general donor circles, the supporting churches, and the historical patterns at CC supported the same implicit goals with regard to the succession outcomes.

Finally, the study proved that the implicit organizational goals were accomplished and functioned to motivate the two nonprofit organizations to recruit the appropriate successors. Lisa Marie, who is African American, was appointed as ED at DY within two months of Gayla's resignation. Connor, who is a white male in his early 70s, was hired as ED at CC following the deliberations from the March 2003 board meeting. These unexpressed yet understood goals rose from and provided motivation for the purposeful unfolding of the succession process itself.

In a similar way, deadlines grew out of the succession process and functioned as stimuli for action in the two organizations. For example, the deadlines at DY emerged

as a result of individual actors' decisions to resign. The lack of an ED created the immediate deadline for finding the successor. Jennie's resignation forced the chairman to act and recruit Gayla as Interim ED. The significant deliberations and negotiations towards the final succession outcome took place when Gayla stepped down from the interim ED position six months later. Her resignation triggered the frantic executive search for a permanent replacement. The search process culminated with the hiring of Lisa Marie two months later. It became evident that the deadlines at DY accelerated the succession process.

In comparison, the deadlines at CC emerged at the transition from stage I to stage II A. Similar to the role of the ED at DY, the deadline for finding a successor at CC was determined by the incumbent's decision not to resign. The turning point was the closed-door special board session in March 2003 when the deadlines for finding a successor were collectively negotiated in response to Tim's decisions. The CC board reacted to the incumbent's position and decided to find and hire the successor as a Deputy by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Moreover, CC was determined to have its permanent ED in place before January 1<sup>st</sup>. The specific deadlines functioned to motivate action. As a result of various actors' initiatives, Connor was identified in July-August, hired on September 1<sup>st</sup> as Deputy ED, and acclimated under the incumbent ED's umbrella for four months before taking over as the permanent ED on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus, deadlines emerged from the succession process itself.

Also, the study confirmed the intuitive speculation that frantic activity takes place in the proximity of deadlines. The two case studies demonstrated that the board

members increased their interactions pertaining to the succession process in the proximity of their specific deadlines. Therefore, similar to implicit goals, deadlines grew out of and provided incentives for accelerating the unfolding of the succession process. Also, these organizational deadlines were affected by the nonprofits' commitments to spirituality. As faith-based organizations, the board members had certain expectations for behavior and interaction among themselves. Thus, the impetus for immediate action was scaled against the need to adhere to a spiritual heritage.

### *Commitment to Spirituality*

The spirituality topic infused the organizations and the findings pertaining to dialectics. The commitment to spirituality was manifested through specific strategies for managing some of the dialectics including “blaming/absolving,” “honesty/deception,” and “change/stability.” First, the organizational actors seemed to be hesitant to “blame” other parties. Some of the actors *oscillated* at a temporal level between the “blaming” and “absolving” poles. If they *selected* “blaming” in the early stages of the succession process, they tended to “absolve” in the post-succession stages. Perhaps this can be explained by the desire to forgive and mend broken relationships. Also, other actors opted for *integration* of the two poles. In other words, the “blaming” of the other party was softened by concomitant “absolving” or by adopting potential explanations as to why the other party acted the way he or she did.

Second, the members of the two nonprofit organizations displayed little tolerance for “dishonesty,” which they translated as a violation of divine spiritual standards. They

gave the benefit of doubt and tried to explain the other party's dishonest behavior; however, ultimately, the party perceived as having *selected* "deception" was nudged off the board, as it occurred with Laura at DY and Tim at CC. One board member at DY referred to dishonest behavior and deceptive communication as a reflection of the push-pull between the "flesh/spirit" and the "light/darkness" tensions, terms that have strong spiritual undertones (II KolM 54).

Finally, the management of "change/stability" dialectic was also affected by the spiritual component which characterized the two nonprofits. The *favoring* of one pole over the other was justified by divine callings. Jennie and Charlie sensed a spiritual mandate to spearhead the shift in the vehicle for mission accomplishment at DY from an after-school reading program to a charter school, thus, they *selected* "change." Likewise, Lisa Marie answered the divine call to relocate and start working for DY because of her desire to direct a charter school. In contrast, Laura felt the need to defend the "status quo" and *select* "stability" since relying on government funding to support a charter school would have threatened the faith-based aspect of DY.

Similarly, Tim resisted "change" and *selected* "stability" when the CC board explored getting a new logo, closing the old office, and hiring a new ED. Tim invoked the will of God to uphold the old bylaws and maintain the status quo. In contrast, the CC board of directors *selected* "change" precisely because it was its spiritual responsibility to get rid of the incumbent ED who was not fulfilling the mission of the nonprofit.

Both organizations point to spirituality as an integral component of the succession process. In addition to affecting the management of specific dialectics, spirituality influenced the deadlines for accomplishing specific succession goals, the actual process of succession, and the outcomes of succession. First, the faith background of the two nonprofits altered the leadership succession timelines. For example, the CC board was described as being “compassionate, **patient**, and forgiving because [they] were **Christians**” (CL 365). It was hard for the board to fire Tim abruptly because of the expectation that Christians should be patient. Cassie (569) commented that the board felt compelled to “forgive” the incumbent ED, even though a “for-profit business would have fired Tim a long time ago.” Similarly, at DY, Jennie was persuaded to stay for another whole year prior to the succession process. Jennie’s faith duty delayed her decision to resign a year earlier. Jennie (243) remembered the conversation with the chairman:

I told Don that I was ready to leave, and he said ‘you can’t leave. **You have to stay another year.** DY needs you. You are too vital to the fulfillment of the **Christian** mission of this organization.’ And I told him, ‘well this is what you told me last year. I am even more burned-out now than a year ago. I am leaving.’

Likewise, Gayla continued at DY as Interim ED for six months. Her sense of obligation gave her the strength to work for half a year without pay which in effect delayed the deadline for finding a suitable successor. These three examples suggest that the timelines in the two nonprofits stretched over longer periods of time because of faith-based commitments. The succession process moved more slowly because of the actors’ adherence to Christianity which privileged forgiveness, patience, endurance, and faithful obligation.



Second, spirituality influenced the actual unfolding of the succession process through the actors' faith-based expectations. For example, Bob recalled that "the succession process at CC could have been disastrous if not for the Christian love that we share for one another. There were a lot of arguments but things could have gotten out of hand if not for the **principle of love** which CC promotes in its very motto" (BCa 433).

Similarly, one of the organizational actors at DY shared his disappointment with the politics of leadership succession. He went on to explain that "because there are different types of expectations of **higher standards** for a **Christian** organization" like DY, he expected to see less politicking and behind-the-scene maneuvering (KolM 29). Even though DY was fraught with bitter arguments, it is worthy to note that the conflict never escalated beyond a point of no return. It is safe to assume that because of the spiritual dimension, Charlie and his group did not sue Laura even though "a couple of lawyers were paraded" as part of the group's intimidating posturing. In effect, conflicts in the succession processes of the two nonprofits seemed more subdued because of the faith component that actors collectively shared.

Finally, the outcomes of the succession process were affected, or claimed to have been affected, by spirituality. Organizational actors credited divine intervention for finding leadership successors. At CC, Tony referred to finding Connor as a divine appointment. The vice-chair "claim[ed] no credit for himself, because it was **a divine plan** to find Connor at the perfect time" (TH 335). Likewise, at DY, Charlie gave "credit to **God** for helping [him] find Lisa Marie" (CY 311). In addition, Lisa Marie justified leaving her old job and moving to DY by stating that she "heard in [her] heart **a**

**spiritual calling** to work with the inner-city children of Texas Metropolis” (III LM 488). Also, during the post-succession stage, Lisa Marie explained that she “often felt the impulse to leave when faced with the many challenges of DY but chose to stay because **this is where God wants [her] to be**” (III LM 278).

Thus, faith and spirituality in organizations might be both a liability and an asset as they affect the deadlines, the process, and the outcomes of the leadership succession process. Delaying the succession deadline could constitute a liability for an organization like CC which was struggling financially and was in need of immediate change. At the same time, the faith component could be an asset when avoiding organizational meltdowns. It is safe to assume that the potential DY lawsuit was diverted precisely because of the board members’ spiritual commitments.

As the study revealed, several additional findings grew out of the leadership succession process in nonprofits. These findings ranged from crisis and conflict patterns to commitment to spirituality. These findings also show that leadership succession is neither orderly nor predictable, but rather, messy, emergent, and non-routine. The leadership nucleus as a concept was neither frozen nor fixed within static organizational positions, but rather was amorphous and contested as it was discursively enacted by influential voices throughout various levels of the organization.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study provides several additional lessons for practitioners. These practical applications refer to the ways in which actors could attend to emerging aspects of the

succession process and could improve relational outcomes that become defined in the process. These practical implications surface in three lessons.

*Patience and Flexibility: Stages and Leadership Nuclei*

Participants in leadership succession need to pay attention to the stages in the process and the accompanying leadership nucleic combinations. Different combinations of actors exercise different levels of influence over the succession process. The nucleic dyads and triads of the interim stages seem to be the most influential in terms of organizational outcomes.

At the end of her interview, Jennie commented on the importance of being sensitive to the leadership nucleus model because it affected different relational structures and organizational outcomes (JH 745-753):

I don't think we were as cognizant of the leadership nucleus as we should have been... and we did not pay attention to the implications of what different **nucleus structures** would imply... (Um) maybe I would have been more aggressive regarding my exit (uh) and with the transition of information. And if I thought there was any chance that the **successor would have failed me** – especially if I stay in a leadership role in the organization as chairwoman, and the successor failed me – then I would **have paid more attention** to these dynamics. So, if you start with that foundation, when you stumble and flounder, it's only because of **poor communication** and poor coordination between the top people.

Jennie concluded that communication between incumbent ED and successor played a critical role in the way the leadership succession process unfolded at DY. Lack of communication or poor coordination between the elements of the leadership nucleus was credited for the negative effect on the leadership succession process during the later stages.

In addition, leadership succession is a complex process stretching across time and not an isolated event that can be distilled in simple formulas. Leadership succession is a long process that can be divided into four distinct stages: pre-succession, during succession A, during succession B, and post-succession. The pre-succession stage is the longest of the four stages, accounting for more than half of the time of the entire succession process. The leadership nucleus seems to morph across the four stages of the process. The beginning and ending stages demonstrate clear leadership roles. In contrast, the interim stages are characterized by convoluted leadership dynamics.

By attending to the timeline underlying the succession process, practitioners can be patient while enduring the prolonged pre-succession stage and be prepared to deal with increased ambiguity and potential conflict during the more tumultuous interim phases. Leadership is not individual-based but rather relational and contested among several actors, especially during stages II A and II B. Practitioners should develop a flexible mindset to cope with uncertainty and friction during the succession process.

Being flexible, patient, and ready to deal with unpredictable elements, unintended consequences, escalating conflict, and ambiguous relationships will lead to more options for practitioners in handling the complexities of succession. By understanding that leadership succession can be a dramatic process that elicits conflict and drags over longer periods of time, participants can be inoculated against potential disappointments. Finally, by embracing a stage/leadership nucleus framework, practitioners can develop the vocabulary to communicate with each other about the actual process.

*Discourse and Dialectical Tensions: A Game of Strategy*

Practitioners should focus on the role of communication in the way that dialectical tensions are managed. This study demonstrates that the leadership succession process was enacted by the discursive interactions of influential organizational actors. Practitioners need to listen attentively to the collaborating and competing discourses huddled around the leadership nuclei since these are the consequential voices that drive the organization. Members of the nonprofit organization will benefit from processing the succession process openly and participating strategically in the communicative exchanges among key organizational actors. Specifically, the actors can talk about the leadership succession process itself and the way it unfolds in time.

Also, organizational actors need to be mindful of the dialectics embedded in the discursive interactions among the key organizational members. The management of these dialectical tensions determines how the succession process unfolds and how it leads to potential organizational change. Knowing what the individual-, relation-, and organization-centered dialectics are and how they relate to each other can empower the participants to define and manage tensions in strategic ways to improve the succession process and its outcomes.

For example, by opting for *connection* and favoring both poles of the individual-centered “staying/leaving” dialectic, the practitioners might be able to leverage ambiguity reminiscent of Jennie’s strategy at DY. She seemed to be the only actor who managed to fulfill her agenda of both “staying” in and “leaving” the organization through her communicative choices expressed during the pre-succession stage. Perhaps,

*connecting* and embracing both “change” and “stability” rather than *selecting* either/or might have worked better for the actors involved in the two nonprofits. Many of the arguments and controversies that burdened the succession processes in the two organizations might have been avoided if the actors were less passionate about selecting “change” over “stability” and vice versa. Had the DY board members strategically connected “change” and “stability,” the dramatic disputes experienced during the interim part of the succession process might have been avoided and Laura might have continued as vice-chair.

Finally, this study suggests that the whole succession process is a strategy game. By embracing the game metaphor, organizational actors might understand the other actors’ political maneuvers manifested in the discursive interactions and the strategic management of dialectics. In addition, organizational members should understand that the succession process involves issues of pride and the need to save face. To promote face-saving and to avoid political maneuvering, actors should assume responsibility and admit when they make mistakes. Also, actors should try not to humiliate the other party who might be at fault. By adopting a humble stance, an actor can ameliorate a volatile situation and encourage other parties to evade conflict-ridden politicking.

In the final analysis, leadership succession is a strategic game of colliding and/or converging agendas manifested in the management of dialectical tensions underlying the discursive interactions of key organizational actors. When dealing with dialectical tensions, people can get emotionally invested in various positions, and it becomes hard for them to divest, even when it seems the right thing to do. People can suffer mentally

and physically by getting their identities and lives intertwined with the political concerns of the nonprofit organization. By adopting the game metaphor, practitioners can rise above the irrational, raw emotions that accompany the succession process. The recognition of this fact can help organizational members understand other parties' motivations, goals, and actions, and it can help everybody withstand better the emotionally charged leadership succession process.

*Mission Shifts: Implicit Goals and Emerging Deadlines*

Practitioners ought to pay attention to shifts or re-calibrations of the mission of the organization. The DY case study illustrates how a key aspect of the mission of the organization shifted throughout the succession process. DY moved from being an after-school reading program for inner-city children to seeking to become a charter school. The formation of new leadership nuclei during stages II A and B created the opportunity for a new direction to be formulated, articulated, and pushed to the foreground.

The mission of CC did not shift dramatically as in the case of DY. However, at CC, the leadership succession process paralleled the reclaiming of the original mission of the organization to foster homeless children. The recent sub-standard performance of the incumbent ED relegated the mission of the organization to the background as there were no children on the campus. The board of directors intervened and spearheaded the succession process in an attempt to reclaim the mission of CC and re-populate the campus with children. Phills (2005) stated:

For a for-profit organization, performance is typically defined in terms of profitability as economic returns to its owners. For the nonprofit (as well as for

some for-profits), performance is defined more broadly, typically in terms of achieving the mission. (p. 17)

As such, leadership succession provides an opportune time to either change the direction of the organization as DY illustrates or to reclaim the old mission that might have become neglected due to the incumbent ED's poor performance as in the case of CC. It is recommended that the organizations' mission statements are brought to the front stage and confronted prior to selecting leadership candidates as opposed to during the selection process.

Similar to organizational mission, the members of the nonprofit might grapple with conflicting goals and pressing deadlines. Nonprofit members need to realize that organizations have implicit goals that emerge with the succession process. Reading between the lines and paying attention to past patterns can unveil some of the unspoken and sometimes, misunderstood goals. Also, practitioners need to understand that these goals act as stimuli for action. If a different direction for the organization is desired, new goals will have to be brought forth as the shift in the DY mission demonstrated.

Finally, these emergent goals are accompanied by deadlines which grow out of the succession process. Specific deadlines can act as powerful factors that accelerate the level and intensity of organizational action as the pressing need to select a new ED in the two nonprofits demonstrated. Organizations should avoid letting deadlines override open discussion about mission differences, implicit goals, and creativity in managing dialectical tensions.



## **Future Directions**

According to Bies (2008), there are very few studies in the area of small nonprofit organizations; moreover, there is no research in terms of leadership succession in small nonprofits. This study provides a modest, yet much needed, initiative in the research on leadership succession in small nonprofit organizations. Future studies need to continue to examine the stages of the succession process, the leadership nucleus model, the dialectics, and the strategies for managing the dialectical tensions in small, local, faith-based or secular nonprofits.

First, it is important to engage in longitudinal studies with the current two nonprofits and examine how the next round of succession will be handled. Recent conversations with the chairs, vice-chairs, and EDs at DY and CC suggest that both nonprofit organizations will experience new leadership succession within the next couple of years. It will be interesting to analyze the new processes in relation to the findings of the current study. These future studies will see if patterns from the past succession processes affect future successions.

Second, this comparative analysis should be replicated with different organizations including secular nonprofits or other small faith-based groups that do not adhere to a Christian ideology per se. Such future studies could use a similar framework of stages, leadership nuclei, and dialectical tensions while looking at organizations that are different from CC and DY. Researchers might address the following queries: How do the stages hold in different studies? How does the leadership nucleus apply to other organization types? Also, what dialectical tensions emerge in different settings?

Third, future studies should engage in research triangulation by blending quantitative and qualitative data. These studies should incorporate data that goes beyond interviews. Written documents, such as letters, memos, bylaws, and minutes, can provide a significant amount of the future research data. Also, surveys and questionnaires will provide additional data to increase the generalizability of the findings. Threats to the reliability and validity of the study can be eliminated by adding the quantitative methodological component.

Next, ethnographic studies are recommended. Although this might be hard to accomplish, it is not impossible. Board members might allow the researcher to sit in the board meetings as a silent observer. Nonprofits are known for being relatively transparent, so in situ studies become a viable option. This methodology can be applied to both future longitudinal and one-shot research studies. In situ studies might reveal different findings than post hoc research. Questions that might guide this work include: Will the stages look the same from the perspective of real-time observers? Will different actors (i.e. staff) stand out as principal influencers? Will the same dialectics emerge as the succession process unfolds in synchronized fashion with the actual research?

In addition, future studies on nonprofits and dialectics might incorporate the overarching tension of “public/private” and its effect on the succession process in the nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits are different than for-profit organizations due to their “public” ownership associated with “the legal requirement that precludes nonprofits from distributing surplus profits to managers and investors” (Phills, 2005, p. 8). On

paper, nonprofit organizations are supposed to be transparent, “community-centered,” and more “public” than private.

However, as this study demonstrated, the succession process and the accompanying conflicts had a strong “private” and “hidden” dimension that did not include outside stakeholders such as donors, government agencies, and/or clients. The internal actors who hold key organizational positions (i.e. EDs, board chairs, vice-chairs, and/or their spouses) emerged as the most consequential forces in the succession process. Their strong “private” involvement stood out in contrast to the “public” ownership or the notion of “our” organization that characterizes nonprofits. These tensions of “community” versus “private” may spread to other aspects of the organization – not just leadership succession. Future studies should explore the organizational ramifications of the “public/private” dialectical tensions.

In conclusion, this study recommends new lines of research pertaining to leadership succession in small nonprofits. Questions for these potential studies include the following:

- What is the role of spirituality in the leadership succession process in nonprofits?
- How is the succession process different in secular nonprofits?
- How do actors leverage or change implicit goals during the leadership succession process?
- What is the role of deadlines in motivating or hindering the flow of the succession process?

- How does the literature on conflict management inform the leadership succession process and vice versa?
- What are cultural implications for the leadership succession process in multinational organizations?
- How does the leadership succession process unfold in small nonprofits based in foreign countries?
- How can the leadership nucleus model be applied to leadership succession in churches, government institutions, military, and smaller, private universities?
- Are there more than two (front-end and back-end centered) models for succession? What do they look like? How are they different time-wise, concerning outcomes, and regarding the process itself?
- How do the tensions of “private/public” play out in nonprofits? What are the effects of this dialectic on other aspects of the organization, including leadership succession?

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the development of the leadership nucleus model across four stages of the leadership succession process in two nonprofit organizations. This comparative study demonstrated that leadership succession is a complex process enacted discursively through conflicting and collaborating actors huddled around various leadership nuclei. These nuclei included various combinations of the EDs, board chairs, vice-chairs, and even spouses of some of these actors. In addition, this study revealed

that the succession process was laden with dialectics, and the ways that the actors managed these tensions influenced the leadership nucleus combinations and the succession outcomes.

Moreover, this study demonstrated that crisis prompted succession, and that change, conflict, goals, and deadlines grew out of the succession process. It is the hope of the author that the dialectical analysis of the influential actors' discursive interactions yielded valuable insight into the complex patterns of the leadership nuclei throughout the four stages of the leadership succession process.

In closing, the author hopes that this study proves useful to nonprofit organizations facing the prospect of leadership succession. Organizational actors will benefit from viewing leadership as a relational dynamic and leadership succession as a process that stretches over many months and is enacted through a discursive construction sustained by an array of individual-, relation-, and organization-centered dialectics managed strategically towards specific outcomes.

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## APPENDIX A

## DIALECTICS AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES COMPARISON

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<b>DY</b>	<b>Dialectic</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Management</b>
<b>Stage I</b>	Staying/Leaving	Jennie	Oscillation (at temporal level) Connection (strategic) <b>(staying/leaving)</b>
		Don/board	Selection ( <b>staying</b> for Jennie)
	Freedom/Control	Board Don	Selection ( <b>freedom</b> for Jennie) Oscillation (in relation to Jennie) <b>(verticality/horizontality)</b>
		Jennie	Oscillation (in relation to Don) <b>(verticality/horizontality)</b>
<b>Stage II A</b>	Freedom/Control	Don	Selection (in relation to Jennie) <b>(public/private)</b>
		Gayla	Selection (in relation to Jennie) <b>(verticality/horizontality)</b>
	Blaming/Absolving	Gayla Jennie	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Jennie) Selection ( <b>absolving</b> Gayla) (implicitly)
<b>Stage II B</b>	Change/Stability	Charlie Laura	Selection ( <b>change</b> to charter) Selection ( <b>status quo</b> )
		Laura Board	Selection ( <b>competition</b> vs. board) <b>(honesty/deception)</b> Selection ( <b>competition</b> vs. Laura) <b>(trust/distrust)</b>
	Cooperation/ Competition		
<b>Stage III</b>	Blaming/Absolving	Jennie	Oscillation ( <b>absolving</b> Gayla in II A and <b>blaming</b> Gayla in III)
		Lisa Marie	Integration ( <b>blaming/absolving</b> Gayla)
	Staying/Leaving	Lisa Marie	Oscillation ( <b>staying/leaving</b> )
	Freedom/Control	Board	Selection ( <b>freedom</b> for Lisa Marie)

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<b>CC</b>	<b>Dialectic</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Management</b>
<b>Stage I</b>	Staying/Leaving	Bob	Oscillation (at temporal level) <b>(staying/leaving)</b>
		Tim	Oscillation (at temporal level) <b>(staying/leaving)</b> (strategic)
		Board	Selection ( <b>leaving</b> for Tim)
	Freedom/Control	Board/Bob	Oscillation (at temporal level) <b>(freedom/control)</b> (regarding Tim)
		Tim	Selection ( <b>control</b> board) <b>(ownership/stewardship)</b> <b>(honesty/deception)</b>
	Blaming/Absolving	Tim	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Bob, Henri, board) (strategic)
		Tim	Selection ( <b>absolving</b> himself)
<b>Stage II A</b>	Freedom/Control	Tim	Selection ( <b>control</b> over board)
		Board/Bob	Selection ( <b>control</b> over Tim)
	Blaming/Absolving	Board	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Tim)
		Bob Tim	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Tim) Selection ( <b>blaming</b> board) (strategic)
Staying/Leaving	Tim	Selection ( <b>staying</b> )	
Change/Stability	Tim Board	Selection ( <b>status quo</b> ) Selection ( <b>change</b> of image)	
<b>Stage II B</b>	Staying/Leaving	Tim	Selection ( <b>leaving</b> )
		Connor	Selection ( <b>staying</b> )
	Freedom/Control	Tim Bob/board	Selection ( <b>control</b> over Connor and staff) Selection ( <b>control</b> over Tim)
Blaming/Absolving	Tim	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Connor and board) (strategic)	
	Connor	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Tim)	
<b>Stage III</b>	Blaming/Absolving	Tim Connor Bob	Selection ( <b>blaming</b> Connor) Integration ( <b>blaming/absolving</b> Tim) Oscillation (switching from <b>blaming</b> to <b>absolving</b> Tim)

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**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Board Chairs**

- I. Questions pertaining to their role with the NPO (5 to 10 minutes)*
  - a. Could you please explain your position, role, tenure, and experience with the NPO? What other roles did you have with the NPO in the past?
  - b. Are you currently serving on other boards? What positions?
  - c. Similar past experience for comparison purposes with other NPOs?
  - d. What is your job when not serving as BC?
  
- II. Questions pertaining to their relationship with the ED (10-15 minutes)*
  - a. How long have you worked with this ED? How do you describe the relationship? Strengths? Challenges?
  - b. Who is more influential in policy decisions? BC or ED or BOD? How about organizational decisions?
  - c. How does the ED help you fulfill your role? How do you help the ED fulfill his or her role?
  - d. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between the two of you and their effect on the organization?
  
- III. Questions pertaining to the succession of leadership process (45-75 minutes)*

*(NOTE – questions pertaining to ED will ask about both incumbent and successor when appropriate.)*

- a. Please describe the leadership succession process at your NPO. What triggered it? What was the timeline? What was the process like? What was the outcome?
- b. Who were the individuals and groups that emerged as key players during the succession process?
- c. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups played during the succession process? I.e., the ED's role, yours, and the BOD's.
- d. How would you describe the relationship that you shared with the ED during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- e. What was the desired outcome regarding the succession process? I.e., your desired outcome, the ED's, and the BOD's. Was it accomplished?
- f. How did various parties (you, ED, BOD) manage diverging goals?
- g. How was the agenda for this process worked out? Who or which group had input on this agenda? How would you describe your own input?
- h. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups had on the outcome of the succession process? I.e., the ED's influence, yours, and the BOD's.

IV. *Other Questions (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Who were the most influential organizational players in the leadership succession process? ED? BC? Selected BOD members?

- b. Were there other outside organizational players involved in the leadership succession process? Outside agencies? Donors? Clients? Government Officials?
- c. Any other comments that you have about your relationship with the BC and ED? Or the relationship that the ED and BC shared? Any tensions? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- d. (For YD) Were there tensions between the ED-BC-Interim ED triangle during fall 2005 and summer 2006?
- e. Was there (and is there) a succession plan in place?
- f. Do you want to describe the candidate EDs?
- g. Any closing comments, insights, observations?

**Executive Director (Incumbent and Successor)**

*I. Questions pertaining to their role with the NPO (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Could you please explain your position, role, tenure, and experience with the NPO? What other roles did you have with the NPO in the past?
- b. Are you currently serving on other boards? What positions?
- c. Similar past experience for comparison purposes with other NPOs?
- d. What was your job when not serving as ED?

*II. Questions pertaining to their relationship with the BC (10-15 minutes)*

- a. How long have you worked with this BC? How do you describe the relationship? Strengths? Challenges?

- b. Who is more influential in policy decisions? BC or ED or BOD? How about organizational decisions?
- c. How does the BC help you fulfill your role? How do you help the BC fulfill his or her role?
- d. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between the two of you and their effect on the organization?

*III. Questions pertaining to the succession of leadership process (45-75 minutes)*

*(NOTE – questions pertaining to ED will ask about both incumbent and successor when appropriate.)*

- a. Please describe the leadership succession process at your NPO. What triggered it? What was the timeline? What was the process like? What was the outcome?
- b. Who were the individuals and groups that emerged as key players during the succession process?
- c. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups played during the succession process? I.e., the BC's role, yours, and the BOD's.
- d. How would you describe the relationship that you shared with the BC during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- e. What was the desired outcome regarding the succession process? I.e., your desired outcome, the BC's, and the BOD's. Was it accomplished?

- f. How did various parties (you, BC, BOD) manage diverging goals?
- g. How was the agenda for this process worked out? Who or which group had input on this agenda? How would you describe your own input?
- h. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups had on the outcome of the succession process? I.e., the BC's influence, yours, and the BOD's.

IV. *Other Questions (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Who were the most influential organizational players in the leadership succession process? ED? BC? Selected BOD members?
- b. Were there other outside organizational players involved in the leadership succession process? Outside agencies? Donors? Clients? Government Officials?
- c. Any other comments that you have about your relationship with the BC and ED? Or the relationship that the ED and BC shared? Any tensions? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- d. (For YD) Were there tensions between the ED-BC-Interim ED triangle during fall 2005 and summer 2006?
- e. Was there (and is there) a succession plan in place?
- f. Do you want to describe the candidate EDs?
- g. Any closing comments, insights, observations?

**BOD Members**

I. *Questions pertaining to their role with the NPO (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Could you please explain your position, role, tenure, and experience with the NPO? What other roles did you have with the NPO in the past?
- b. Are you currently serving on other boards? What positions?
- c. Similar past experience for comparison purposes with other NPOs?
- d. What is your job when not serving as BOD member?

*II. Questions pertaining to their relationship with the ED/BC and questions pertaining to their impression of the ED/BC relationship (10-15 minutes)*

- a. How long have you worked with this ED/BC? How do you describe the relationship you have with each? Strengths? Challenges?
- b. Who is more influential in policy decisions? BC, ED, or BOD? How are decisions of policy made? Who is more influential in organizational decisions? BC, ED, or BOD? How are organizational decisions made?
- c. How does the ED/BC help fulfill the BOD's role? How does the BOD help the ED/BC fulfill his or her role?
- d. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between the BOD and the ED/BC and their effect on the organization?
- e. How does the ED and BC help each other in fulfilling their roles?
- f. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between ED and BC and their effect on the organization?

*III. Questions pertaining to the succession of leadership process (45-75 minutes)*

*(NOTE – questions pertaining to ED will ask about both incumbent and successor when appropriate.)*

- a. Please describe the leadership succession process at your NPO. What triggered it? What was the timeline? What was the process like? What was the outcome?
- b. Who were the individuals and groups that emerged as key players during the succession process?
- c. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups played during the succession process? I.e., the ED's role, BC's, yours, and the BOD's.
- d. How would you describe the relationship that the BOD shared with the ED/BC during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- e. How would you describe the relationship that the ED and BC shared with each other during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- f. What was the desired outcome regarding the succession process? I.e., your desired outcome, the ED's, the BC's, and the BOD's. Was it accomplished?
- g. How did various parties (ED, BC, BOD) manage diverging goals?
- h. How was the agenda for this process worked out? Who or which group had input on this agenda? How would you describe your own input? The BOD's input? The ED/BC input?

- i. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups had on the outcome of the succession process? I.e., the ED's influence, the BC's, yours, and the BOD's.

IV. *Other Questions (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Who were the most influential organizational players in the leadership succession process? ED? BC? Selected BOD members?
- b. Were there other outside organizational players involved in the leadership succession process? Outside agencies? Donors? Clients? Government Officials?
- c. Any other comments that you have about your relationship with the BC and ED? Or the relationship that the ED and BC shared? Any tensions? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- d. (For YD) Were there tensions between the ED-BC-Interim ED triangle during fall 2005 and summer 2006?
- e. Was there (and is there) a succession plan in place?
- f. Do you want to describe the candidate EDs?
- g. Any closing comments, insights, observations?

**Senior Staff**

I. *Questions pertaining to their role with the NPO (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Could you please explain your position, role, tenure, and experience with the NPO?
- b. What other roles did you have with this NPO in the past?



- c. Similar past experience for comparison purposes with other NPOs?
- d. What was your job before joining this NPO?

*II. Questions pertaining to their relationship with the ED/BC and questions pertaining to their impression of the ED/BC relationship (10-15 minutes)*

- a. How long have you worked with this ED/BC? How do you describe the relationship you have with each? Strengths? Challenges?
- b. Who is more influential in policy decisions? BC, ED, or BOD? How are decisions of policy made? Who is more influential in organizational decisions? BC, ED, or BOD? How are organizational decisions made?
- c. How does the ED/BC help fulfill the BOD's role? How does the BOD help the ED/BC fulfill his or her role?
- d. How does the ED/BC/BOD help you fulfill your role? How do you help the ED/BC/BOD fulfill his, her, or their role?
- e. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between the BOD and the ED/BC and their effect on the organization?
- f. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between you and the ED/BC/BOD and their effect on the organization?
- g. How does the ED and BC help each other in fulfilling their roles?
- h. How do you describe the trust levels and communication between ED and BC and their effect on the organization?

*III. Questions pertaining to the succession of leadership process (45-75 minutes)*

*(NOTE – questions pertaining to ED will ask about both incumbent and successor when appropriate.)*

- a. Please describe the leadership succession process at your NPO. What triggered it? What was the timeline? What was the process like? What was the outcome?
- b. Who were the individuals and groups that emerged as key players during the succession process?
- c. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups played during the succession process? I.e., the ED's role, BC's, yours, and the BOD's.
- d. How would you describe the relationship that the BOD shared with the ED/BC during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- e. How would you describe the relationship that the ED and BC shared with each other during the succession process? What was the influence of this relationship on the succession process?
- f. What was the desired outcome regarding the succession process? I.e., your desired outcome, the ED's, the BC's, and the BOD's. Was it accomplished?
- g. How did various parties (you, ED, BC, BOD) manage diverging goals?

- h. How was the agenda for this process worked out? Who or which group had input on this agenda? How would you describe your own input? The BOD's input? The ED/BC input?
- i. How would you compare the roles that various individuals and groups had on the outcome of the succession process? I.e., the ED's influence, the BC's, yours, and the BOD's.

IV. *Other Questions (5 to 10 minutes)*

- a. Who were the most influential organizational players in the leadership succession process? ED? BC? Selected BOD members?
- b. Were there other outside organizational players involved in the leadership succession process? Outside agencies? Donors? Clients? Government Officials?
- c. Any other comments that you have about your relationship with the BC and ED? Or the relationship that the ED and BC shared? Any tensions? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- d. (For YD) Were there tensions between the ED/BC/Interim ED triangle during fall 2005 and summer 2006?
- e. Was there (and is there) a succession plan in place?
- f. Do you want to describe the candidate EDs?
- g. Any closing comments, insights, observations?

**APPENDIX C**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

You will be one of approximately 20 individuals who will participate in a study that examines dialectics and leadership in organizational communication. This research may involve your participation in an interview of approximately 30 to 90 minutes in length.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you may decline to answer any question without penalty. At anytime during the interview or other recorded meetings, you can request that the tape recorder be turned off. Also, you can freely withdraw from the study at any time you choose. There are no associated risks associated with this study. In addition, there are no benefits for participation. The benefit for the entire organization is the benefit in the form of scholarly knowledge and insight.

The records of this study will be confidential. Your responses to the interview questions will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and the faculty supervisor. To ensure your privacy, the responses to the interview discussions will be locked in a file cabinet in Mr. Andrei Duta's office and will be destroyed within ten years. You will not be identified by name or identifiable characteristics in any written reports associated with this study.

The name and contact information of the graduate student doing this study and this person's faculty supervisor: Andrei Duta, 008 Bolton Hall, andrei@tamu.edu, 512-743-7431 and Dr. Linda Putnam, 202F Bolton Hall, lputnam@tamu.edu, 979-845-5514. At any point, you can contact them about the study.

This research study has been reviewed for approved by the Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Support Services, and Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067.

At any time you can ask questions for further explanation of the study. Your voluntary participation in this study is appreciated. You may have a copy of this consent form.

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

Signature of Principal Investigator  
or Authorized Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**

**ACTORS' NAMES AND ROLES**

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<b><u>DY</u></b>		<b><u>CC</u></b>	
<b>Names</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Names</b>	<b>Roles</b>
Jenny Hendricks	ED, board chair	Tim Sims	ED
Gayla Pitt	Interim ED (6 months)	Connor Little	Deputy ED, ED
Lisa Marie	ED	Bob Carter	Board chair, member
Charlotte Jones	ED (2 weeks)	Henri Logan	Former board chair
Don Pitt	Board chair, member	Tony Hall	Vice-chair
Laura Davis	Vice-chair	Dan Walter	Future board chair
Charlie Young	Future vice-chair	Jim Jones	Future vice-chair
Danny Davis	Member	Cassie Toms	Member
Patty McCoy	Member	Colt Dunn	Member
Kol Martini	Member	Nana Mars	Member
Mariana Roe	Member	Levi Star	Member
Kyle Martini	Office Manager	Jo Sims	Office Manager
		Sue Little	Office Manager

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## APPENDIX E

### SAMPLE FORMATS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

**Change** is defined as transformation, alterations, or exchange. For purpose of the study, change will broadly cover leadership succession, transitions, and role played by the leadership nucleus in the succession process.

I define **strategy** as the ways and means employed by various actors to achieve specific goals. Broadly defined, and for purposes of the study, strategy entails planning, political maneuvering, manipulation, power games, politics, strategic communication, and behaviors employed in the direction towards specific ends/goals. The Webster defines “strategy” as a careful plan or method towards the completion of certain goals.

**Spirituality** deals with matters of the spirit, non-planning, divine interventions, explanations outside the physical realm, and expectations for behavior and communication dictated by the Christian heritage of the nonprofit. The Webster defines spirituality as pertaining to religious values or sacred matters.

**Control** is defined as to rule, conduct, have power over, regulate, and exercise influence over something. For purpose of the study, control will broadly cover power, manipulation, authority, and dominion.

**Accountability** is defined as holding someone responsible. To give an account means to give satisfactory reasons or explanations for something as in “can he account for his actions?” The Webster defines accountability as “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.” Accountability punishes illegitimate behavior or deviation from expected standard while rewarding good legitimate behavior.

**Leadership Nucleus** builds on the ED/BC relationship in the NPO organizations.

NOTE: I use the initials of the actors’ names.

### DY Thematic Analysis

<i>Themes/ Names and Roles</i>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Leadership Nucleus</b>
GP – former interim ED and wife of DP who was former BC	81, 83, 180, 185, 188, 221, 229, 299, 303-305, 311, 315, 323,	126-130, 144, 158-159, 162-163, 180, 191, 198, 257, 275,	2, 372, 407, 408, 445	85, 91, 180, 275, 278-279, 333, 337, 351	64, 68, 78, 85, 95, 135, 151, 153, 168-171, 175, 205, 209, 213-215, 229, 239, 257, 273, 275, 278-279, 313, 317,	126-130, 158-159, 390-391

	343, 357-361, 441, 449	278-279, 290, 337, 351, 360-363, 371-372, 375, 377, 386, 390-391, 393, 445			337, 353, 355, 369-370, 393-395, 403, 411, 433	
JH – former ED who became and still is the BC (at the suggestion and recommendation of DP, former BC)	40, 56-58, 72, 78, 80, 81-84, 86, 88-90, 91-92, 107, 113-115, 119-128, 170-171, 175, 181, 183-184, 190-191, 271, 227, 229, 273, 283, 308, 310-311, 322, 325-327, 329, 336, 337, 348, 352, 355, 357-364, 365, 398-399, 412-415, 424, 426, 452, 454, 456, 490, 500, 511, 564-581, 586, 632, 634-635, 637, 661, 667, 670, 672-673, 690-697, 753	40, 42, 78, 100, 113, 116, 135, 136, 160, 162, 178-180, 182-185, 188, 191, 201, 229, 237-244, 247-249, 259, 274, 281, 313, 329, 339-341, 347, 351, 372, 386, 388-390, 420, 440, 459-475, 490, 509, 519, 521, 557, 561-563, 570, 600-602, 609, 613, 621, 681, 689-690, 710, 711, 712, 714	56, 143, 507, 534-535, 661, 736-738, 757	36, 40, 44, 72, 76, 80, 100, 113, 114, 115, 130, 132, 160-163, 237-244, 259, 274-281, 303, 309-320, 322-327, 347, 367, 420, 459-475, 476, 561-563, 588-590, 600, 613, 621, 681, 697, 704	70, 72, 86, 92, 96, 100, 104, 105-106, 124-125, 130, 136-137, 140, 149-154, 201, 257-259, 287, 343-344, 363, 379, 383, 420, 525-526, 529, 533, 535, 588-590, 619, 621, 649, 717	119-128, 114-116, 283, 308, 348, 352, 357-359, 400-407, 697-704
CJ – former new ED – she was hired by the former VP but was let go after 2 weeks on job when the rest of the BOD chose LM as the new ED	I. 26, 52-59, 74, 76-77 II. 2, 17, 42, 70, 76, 218-219, 226-227	I. 26, 83, 86, 94 II. 82, 141, 143, 232		I. 52 II. 120, 123, 141	I. 48, 80, 82, 120, 123	
LD – former VP of the	68, 88-92, 102, 138,	38, 68, 84, 121-123,	82, 221, 253, 257, 268, 269,	74, 96, 98, 100, 106-	62, 68, 74, 82, 136, 166, 170, 176, 178,	88-92, 158, 429, 447, 876

BOD – at the heart of the contention over the ED selection process. She favored CJ but was supported by only a small fraction of the BOD; consequently, she lost, the BOD selected LM as the new ED, and LD was kicked off the board.	158, 241, 290, 423-424, 500-505, 508-509, 527, 549-550, 576, 611, 614, 652-656, 657, 666, 754, 805-806, 808, 811, 819, 826, 837, 839, 849, 876	182, 184, 186-188, 192, 200, 208, 307, 314, 320, 344-356, 339-341, 395, 397, 401, 412, 447, 496-498, 514-516, 519, 529, 597, 598, 602, 604, 606, 611, 612, 614, 621-622, 625, 629-637, 683, 714, 721, 730, 762, 765, 777	429, 572-575, 652, 683, 777-780	108, 122-123, 126, 148-158, 180, 182, 184, 186, 192, 200, 241, 243, 249, 253, 307, 314, 320, 326, 336-338, 346-356, 358-364, 390, 420, 438, 496-498, 512-515, 516, 542, 641-642, 644-645, 683, 686, 692, 698-706, 714, 754, 756-757, 759, 772, 776, 782-783, 797, 872, 873, 879	206, 214-220, 253, 262, 296, 334, 382-386, 402, 420, 444, 491, 496-498, 511-512, 534, 536, 542, 546, 572, 650-652, 670, 676, 679, 683, 768, 731-735, 746, 776, 844, 857, 863, 869	
KoLM – board member	I. 13-14, 16-18, 21 II. 2-6, 7, 11-20, 22	16, 18, 21	I. 13, 14, 16-18, 25-28, 29-31, 32, 36 II. 10, 14, 23	18	I. 5, 9, 10, 12, 22, 24, 38 II. 11, 13	
MR – board member	21, 24, 36, 42, 112, 114, 125, 137, 216, 245	137, 141, 165, 167, 169, 173, 175, 205-207	69-70, 76, 79-81, 176, 230	98, 100, 102, 106, 112, 129, 165	12, 22, 26-28, 30, 36, 48, 50-56, 58, 64, 92, 94, 122, 123, 141, 161	125
LM – new ED; favored by DP, CY, etc. – she was at the heart of the contention between LD (former VP) and DP (former BC).	I. 25, 29-34, 101-105, 126-136, 149, 151, 160, 162, 262, 264, 290, 293, 295, 297, 299-301, 305, 310, 325, 327-340 II. 34-54, 55-57, 102-113, 125, 167, 174, 179, 244, 246 III. 4, 8, 34, 118, 150,	I. 25, 37, 53, 63, 65, 295-299, 305 II. 24, 71, 198, 210, 267, 273, 275, 279, 294-295, 297, 301, 303, 307, 317, 323, 359, 369, 371, 374, 375, 379, 381, 403 III. 62, 64-82, 282, 285	I. 206, 208, 212, 214, 258, 260, 262, 264, 284-285, 287-288 II. 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 21, 51-54, 57, 121, 267, 345, 371, 381, 393, 396, 399, 400, 405 III. 292, 294-295, 298, 300, 302, 307, 312, 318	I. 37, 53, 65, 79, 81, 296-299 II. 24, 199, 369	I. 98, 114-120, 343 II. 279, 301, 303-307, 323, 345, 369	I. 101-105, 126-136 II. 34-57



	167, 169, 171-173, 174, 185, 189, 194, 211, 213, 220, 222, 228, 229, 238, 239, 245					
DP – former BC of the BOD, husband of GP (former interim ED), benefactor of JH (former ED and current BC), and still influential board member (the other BOD members defer to him for advice and questions).	14, 52-53, 56, 64, 66, 68-78, 82, 99-100, 104-106, 110, 118, 122, 124, 134, 139, 153, 154, 168-182, 188, 196, 200, 208, 214, 222, 225-226, 232, 238, 244, 250, 251-256, 262-263, 264-268, 270-274, 278, 280, 282, 290, 292, 294, 297, 298, 304, 306, 310, 312, 324, 342-351, 352, 364, 366, 368, 372, 382	26, 42, 44, 48-49, 56, 64, 66, 80, 110, 124, 152, 154, 158, 168, 202, 208, 220, 248, 250, 266, 268, 272, 274, 276, 352	14, 17, 18, 40, 48, 56, 126, 143, 145-146, 168, 170, 172-174, 180, 188, 196, 220, 374, 382, 288, 295	26, 28, 42, 44, 248	18, 26, 40, 44, 48, 56, 58, 64, 72, 74, 108, 112, 116, 124, 125, 146-158, 196, 202, 208, 218, 220, 222, 246, 258, 262, 276, 350	14, 52-53, 56, 58, 252-256, 382-397
KM	I. 11, 15, 17, 21, 27, 29, 32, 37, 42, 47, 51, 56, 68, 82, 85-87, 92-94, 103, 111, 119, 125, 127, 133, 139, 147 II. 1, 2, 8, 11, 15-16, 18, 24, 32, 41, 43-46, 50, 57, 60, 64	I. 68, 76 II. 32, 44, 57	I. 143-145 II. 44		I. 51, 56, 103, 107, 111, 119 II. 18, 44, 46	
CY – current	42, 47-48,	34, 53, 74,	72, 74, 78,	25-32, 52,	34, 38, 42, 68, 72,	

VC and influential BOD member, big donor and supporter of the salary of the new ED, LM. CY is the one who first interviewed and recommended LM to the BOD.	61-64, 68, 70, 74, 78, 81, 91, 96, 108, 119, 120, 126, 138, 144-150, 158-160, 193, 196, 198-200	78, 80, 158	127, 128	54, 80, 96-97	78, 80, 84, 86, 134, 136, 144, 148, 156, 164, 166, 170, 172, 180, 208	
CM – board member	37-38, 45-47, 51, 61-62				16-17, 19	
TW – board member	16, 26, 34, 42, 43, 45, 51, 61	34		18, 22	14, 30	
SB – board member	11, 17-18, 20-21, 23, 29, 30		32		35	

## DY Dialectics Analysis

### Pre-succession – Stage I (Prior to September 2005)

<i>Dialectics/Macro-Dialectics</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Texts (Data and Source)</i>	<i>Actors, Choice Points</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<b>Horizontal – Vertical</b> Boss – Friend	Accountability & Control	My relationship with her was and is more of a, uh, um, co-worker and friend. (Pause) To some extent there was a vertical relationship, same type of verticality, same type of verticality that exists anytime you have someone that has more experience than someone	DP – BC JH – ED DP and JH deal with the vertical – horizontal dialectic of boss/friend. The tension is managed by integration and oscillation strategies.	DP describes the relationship he and JH shared in terms of a dynamic vertical-horizontal tension of boss-peer. The verticality of their ED/BC relationship due to his seniority and professional experience is balanced by the horizontal friendship/partnership they had prior to DY becoming a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

		else. (Um) but it is mostly as a friend and fellow worker. (DP 14)		
<p><b>Horizontal – Vertical</b> Mentor – Mentoree</p> <p><b>Control – Freedom</b> Autonomy – Dependence/ Interdependence</p>	Accountability & Control	<p>I felt like it was collaborative. I was never forced to do anything I was not on board with; do you know what I'm saying? Whether it's the board chair in his isolated world creating policy, or if it's me as the ED in my isolated world creating policy – no. We met weekly and spent hours in our meetings discussing. His job was the mentor me, to make me think, and it was all collaborative. I asked him to come mentor me. I didn't do anything I disagreed with. (JH 283)</p> <p>I thought, you know, DP Pratt will do the job. Maybe he'll come back to the board now. So I</p>	<p>DP – BC JH – ED JH willingly invites DP to be her mentor and BC of DY.</p> <p><b>Paradoxically, even though JH casts herself in the “subordinate” role of the mentoree, she accomplishes that through the exercise and selection of control over DP by dictating the terms of their relationship.</b></p> <p>JH oscillates between autonomy and dependence in her relationship with DP. On the one hand, she invites and asks DP to join the BOD. On the other hand, she becomes DP's protégé.</p>	<p>JH seems to concur as she positions herself and DP in a similar vertical-horizontal relationship of mentor-mentored. DP coaches and guides JH, but it is JH who initiated the mentoring relationship in the first place.</p> <p>The dialectics of <b>autonomy-dependence</b> are present. Some of the actors think that JH was dependent on DP for making decisions and functioning. JH thinks that she was autonomous and chose to work collaboratively with DP. Her position is substantiated by the fact that she is the one who approached DP and asked him to be her mentor.</p> <p>Ironically, JH operates <b>autonomously</b> in picking and asking DP to be her mentor. But, by so doing, she becomes <b>dependent</b> on him in terms of decision making in the process of leadership succession</p>

		<p>went and talked to DP, and courted him to come back to the board as the chair and mentor me in my role as ED. I wanted a board chair who would mentor me, because I – uh, DP, when I became the ED, he told the board that everyone needed to back off and give me space to run the program. (JH 227-229)</p> <p><b>I know he did a lot through me, but I did that! (JH 239)</b></p>		
<p><b>Horizontal – Vertical</b> Mind - Heart Control – Freedom</p>	<p>Control &amp; Accountability</p>	<p>(Um) but I would say there was a pretty high trust level. It was a (pause) this whole thing was an organism that basically emanated from DP Pitt, and so, I'd say there was a, you know, there was a trust level. OK, the whole board is the organism. The brain was DP, and the heart was JH. (Laughter)</p>	<p>LD – VC DP – BC JH – ED DP and JH selecting the mind and the heart, respectively, poles.</p>	<p>The picture of the leadership nucleus at DY acquires intriguing nuances when Lana, the VC, presents the whole board and the ED/BC relationship through the lenses of an organism metaphor. The leadership nucleus is presented in terms of a mind versus heart set of relationship. DP is cast as the master architect while JH provides the organizational pathos (LD 420-438).</p>

		(LD 420)		
<b>Responsibility – Irresponsibility</b> Criticism – Praise	Accountability & Spirituality	Well, her strength was belief in God. Period. I'm not sure that * have a single; well let me state it differently. I am sure she did not have a single qualification otherwise for the job. Her faith... that's her strength, period. (DP 18)	DP connects his praises and criticism for JH. Through out the entire interview, DP keeps the two poles in an active tension.	Strengthening the vertical – horizontal dialectic of boss/mentor – peer, DP connects the praise – criticism poles. DP keeps the two poles in an active tension. Almost strategic about it, DP defines the accountability relationship he shares with JH in terms of both praise and criticism.
<b>Control – Freedom</b> Autonomy – Dependence/ Interdependence	Control	She became executive director in the intervening period and then <b>she invited me</b> to come back to the board of directors after she had been serving for some period of time, a year, maybe, or a little longer. (DP 14)	DP – BC JH – ED JH selects control when she initiates the invitation. DP responds by selecting interdependence.	JH spearheaded the transition from the initial church-based organization to an independent, autonomous nonprofit. As proof of the ED's preeminence in the governance process, DP credits JH for selecting him to join the DY board. DP's joining the board of the new entity is a direct result of JH's decision and initiatives.
<b>Control – Freedom</b> Criticism – Praise	Accountability & Control	Once I joined the board, uh, I was, this is going to be, uh, an indictment of me, but the condition for me joining the board was that I would be made president of the board because I thought that it needed, uh, I	DP – BC BOD DP selects criticism of the BOD during phase I. DP selects control of the BOD. DP selects self-criticism.	DP is strategic in his approach to working with the BOD. He considers the BOD dysfunctional, and the only way he accepts to join the BOD is by becoming BC. His comments are guarded as he criticizes himself of his direct approach.

		didn't think it was functioning very well based upon what I was hearing. (DP 26)		
Control – Freedom Laissez-faire – Micro-managing	Control	I was involved up to my eyeballs in how I see the decisions in probably was, uh, maybe even to the point of getting too involved there. (DP 28)	DP – BC DP selects micro-management in dealing with the BOD and DY.	
<b>Control – Freedom</b> Autonomy – Dependence/ Interdependence	Control Accountability  Leadership Nucleus	Let's get one thing out. The board doesn't do anything without the executive director. Period. Anybody that wants to claim otherwise is flat wrong. What the board does, the board shows up once a month, once a quarter, or periodically, and they sit around, they plot, they lay a few eggs, and then they go back to their daily lives. The executive director is there day in and day out. That's where	JH as the ED has a lot of power and influence.  JH selects control and autonomy by nature of the role of the ED.	DP credits the ED position with a chief role in the leadership equation of the NPO (DP 324): "the executive director is uh, very, very, very important. I want to say the only important thing in this interview... very, very, very important." According to DP's comments it seems that JH was anything but a puppet (DP 298-320). JH was a bona fide leader.

		<p>it all works. The board is committed to the organization the way a chicken is committed to the breakfast table: it lays an egg, and then it goes back to the barnyard. The executive director puts the bacon on the table. That means the executive director lives, eats, sleeps, breathes, and dies with the organization. Nothing works unless the executive director works. I tell you that the body of research that says “board, board, board” is a bunch of horse hockey. The ED is the lynch pin. The board is there to support the organization, and the executive director is the organization. (DP 298)</p>		
<p><b>Control – Freedom</b> Autonomy – Dependence/ Interdependence</p>	<p>Control Accountability</p>	<p>And I have confidence in her ability to make good choices, and that confidence was substantiated</p>	<p>The BOD selects freedom. The BOD empowers the ED to exercise her autonomy.</p>	<p>One of the board members, KolM, explains the process of empowerment of the ED as contingent upon the ED’s wisdom. Because of JH’s solid track record of good decision, she is</p>

		by her making good choices. She makes good judgment so she was given pretty good latitude in her work. (KolM 9-12)		afforded by the BOD “good latitude” in her work. Paradoxically, the strength and autonomy of the ED rests on the BOD’s willingness to empower the ED.
Autonomy – Dependence/ Interdependence	Accountability Control Leadership Nucleus	Somebody take charge, and run... The way I view it is that the president and the executive director ought to be driving the car. But the board ought to be sitting there with the road map saying ok, if not this exit then the next one. (CY 64)	The ED and BC share the power and select “control.”  The BOD steps back and selects “freedom.”	CY is true to his “laissez-faire” approach to management. He considers the BOD to be a supportive co-pilot as opposed to a driver. The leadership nucleus of ED/BC emerges clearly in CY’s metaphor of the NPO as car zipping down the highway.
Authoritarian – Diplomatic	Control  Leadership Nucleus	Let me just say our styles clashed. Part of one element in there is him misjudging me. There were many times in our relationship when he would get preachy, and I would be completely on board with him, but yet he felt like he needed to preach on a subject, and that showed me that he did not see that I was already on board with	JH adopts the diplomatic leadership style.  DP adopts the authoritarian style.	The ED/BC dynamic reveals an interesting aspect of leadership style differences that somehow mesh: authoritarian and diplomatic.  <b>“The DP/JH meshing was solid.” (JH 357)</b>  <b>Perhaps the answer rests in the fact that JH was the one who willingly and proactively had DP join the BOD as the BC so that he can mentor her and “toughen” her up.</b>  <b>We had a very close relationship, and that meant a lot. But it was just, at times he would cross the line, and that would be</b>



		<p>that concept. So, uh, and, the style of clash is that when I come into a situation or context, my style – there are different leadership styles – one leadership style is more like dictatorial, authoritative, my way or the highway, blah. A different leadership style is, uh, team-based, is working underneath and bringing up, I mean grassroots.</p> <p>DP was having an <b>authoritarian style</b>, and he – and Gayle was the same, and I felt like they both, <b>Gayle more</b> but anyway, DP too, cause that's the type of you know – if they don't see that authoritarian style in a leader, they don't think the leader is leading.</p> <p>5 years down the road, working as the CFO of a corporation, I am</p>	<p><b>difficult. But overall, I enjoyed and appreciated our relationship. JH 281</b></p>
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		<p>maintaining my grassroots leadership style. Obviously I am learning and I have long road to go - And you know, I need to know when to be assertive and when to be collaborative.</p> <p>There's a time for everything, and – there is a time for everything. There is a time to be collaborative when you are – and it is possible to get your way, to have your way across, to make your way be the way, to carve the highway according to your way <b>without being authoritarian! I am diplomatic.</b> And my style is, and so therefore, my perspective, is that he did not think that I was getting the job done, when in fact, while he was thinking that, I was getting the job done, but in a different style! That was my</p>		
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		<p>perspective. (JH 247 – 257)</p> <p><b>But then in his style, one day he took me to lunch, and so we were talking, and in that lunch he said, my objective today is to make you cry. I started coughing up some tears as soon as he said that – I can said we can get that objective out of the way pretty quickly! (JH 259-260)</b></p> <p><b>“The DP/JH meshing was solid.” (JH 357)</b></p>		
<p><b>Cooperation – Competition</b> Unity – Disunity</p>	<p>Leadership Nucleus</p> <p>Accountability</p>	<p>We (DP as BC and JH as ED) were YDC. We were creating it (YDC).” (JH322-327)</p> <p>“The DP/JH meshing was solid.” (JH 357)</p>	<p>JH and DP select cooperation in their work.</p>	<p>The high level of trust between JH and DP allows for a strong working relationship. DP is older and also the BC of YDC. JH looks up to DP with great respect. They share a strong bond that translates into a strong ED/BC leadership nucleus.</p>
<p><b>Cooperation – Competition</b> Control - Freedom</p>	<p>Control &amp; Accountability</p>	<p>The high-level strategic things, of course, were done collaboratively, and with DP’s strong insightfulness, absolutely. The day-to-day stuff – he</p>	<p>JH selects freedom for execution of DY functioning jobs.</p> <p>JH and DP select cooperation for the purposing activities at DY.</p>	<p>JH defends her position strongly. She is aware that some people might view her as a “doormat” because of softer style leadership, but she is clear about the fact that she ran a big a part of the show at DY.</p>

		<p>wasn't micro-managing. Well I wouldn't have wanted the job if I couldn't cast my vision. (JH 311)</p> <p>It's important to know, because I think other people would view me more as a doormat. And I would strongly disagree, and I would take them to task to defend that. (JH 287)</p>		
<b>Trust – distrust</b>	Accountability Nucleus	The relationship between DP and JH was pretty even-stein. Their trust level and cooperation were super high, a nine... they ran the program. (I KM 82, 107)	JH and DP select trust and cooperation.	KM points to the strength of the nucleus during phase I.
<b>Change – Stability</b> Staying – Leaving	Spirituality Control Strategy	<p>“Through prayer and contemplation I knew that I, I felt relief from YDC, that it was the right thing to move on. And so I stuck with my decision and I said no, I'm leaving, I have to leave, it's time.” (JH 56)</p> <p>My burnout</p>	<p>JH selects “leaving” over “staying.”</p> <p>DP tries to bribe JH and keep her with more money or more time off. DP selects “control.”</p>	JH is burned-out and needs to leave YDC as ED. She resists the persistent attempts from DP, BC, to stay. She feels fragile and worn out. She decides to move on and let go. The ten-week sabbatical she takes brings about unexpected outcome for DP and the BOD of YDC. JH is divinely revealed the need to leave.

		<p>had started a year earlier. I told him I needed to leave. He said you can't leave, you have to stay 2 more years, or at least one more year. And then a year later, I said I have to leave, I can't do this anymore. And he said no, you can't leave, you have to stay another year. And I said, that's what you said last year! And he said I have a bonus in this – I have cash in this hand and I have time off, weeks off, in this hand. What are the amounts that balance each other out? I said I need 10 weeks off or, I think I said like 80,000 dollars in cash. (Laugh) He said he can't give me the cash but he can probably get me the time off. As a bonus, for compensation for work already done, you know, was kind of my perspective</p>		
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		<p>on that. But it was intended to help rejuvenate me so that I could – would not leave the organization, so I could stay longer. (JH 36)</p>		
<p><b>Staying – Leaving</b> Control – Freedom Letting go – Holding on</p>	Change	<p>“I was weary, you know, we worked hard to create this organism, and (um), it had plateaued, and so it was time for me to move on... I chose to leave.” (JH 72)</p> <p>I was so fragile before this sabbatical, I went away for 10 weeks and truly just lived in the moment for a time, and found great rejuvenation, but did not find the inspiration I need to keep going at YDC when I returned. (JH 40)</p> <p>I had to go. But it was hard for me – it was VERY hard for me to make that decision, because I didn’t want to give up on the organization</p>	JH selects “leaving” over “staying.”	<p>In 2004 after four years of hard work as ED of DY, JH becomes worn out and starts the resignation and succession process.</p> <p>Further demonstrating the ED’s influence, JH emerges as the chief and sole player who set the entire leadership succession process in motion. She is the one who decides to resign despite the board’s desire for JH to continue as ED. The board tried to “bribe” JH with more pay and time off. She even took a three month paid sabbatical as a time to re-charge and re-consider. To the surprise of the board, after returning from her sabbatical at the end of August 2005, JH gives her two-week notice. September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005 is her last day as ED of DY.</p>

		prematurely. (JH 76)		
Continuity – Discontinuity Letting go – Holding on Staying – Leaving	Strategy  Change  Leadership Nucleus	So I did, I say goodbye, and DP proceeded to develop a strategy for, um, the transition. Well, he came to me and he said, he said what are you willing to do to help with the transition; and I said I'm willing to do anything, whatever is needed of me I will do.  I'll be happy to be available for a smooth as a transition as possible for the next executive director, so that there are no balls dropped. And so, he said, well how, what if, how about, uh, we put you, we find an interim executive director, or you know, whatever, or during the transition you serve as the chair of the board, so that we can communicate to the funding community that we are	JH "leaves" yet "stays." DP allows JH to resign yet he persuades her to stay as the new BC.  JH and DP select "continuity" of leadership over "discontinuity."	DP emerges as a master strategist. As JH steps down, DP increases his influence. JH and DP shared the leadership nucleus of YDC. Now that JH decides to leave, DP is forced to step up and assume a more aggressive role.  He picks Gayle, his wife, as the interim ED and masterfully manages to persuade JH to continue the connection with YD in new BC capacity.

		<p>not losing leadership, but the leadership is evolving. It's just a natural change, the leadership is still present in a leadership capacity, and we're bringing in a new executive director.</p> <p>So, uh, that struck me with 2 emotions, uh, subsequent, uh, simultaneously, one being excitement, that I could kind of have my cake and eat it too, you know, I could kind of go away and be released from the drudgery of day in and day out of what had become the job, that I still would then be able to function in a leadership capacity at the organization that I was very passionate about.</p> <p>So uh, so, but at the same time, the other emotion that I had simultaneously with the</p>		
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		<p>excitement was kind of a stress, because I knew, I already had a job I was transitioning into as CFO at BOGO Oil Company, and uh, in an industry I had been away from for a few years; so I anticipated that my learning curve would be steep there, and it would require a lot more attention, and I didn't want to be spread too thinly and fail in both capacities, and um... So then somehow the concept of Gayle being the executive director... I guess that concept came up before he suggested to place me as the new BC, or after, I can't remember the order. But I felt better at the time knowing that GP was going to be around. Later I proved myself wrong. (JH 78 – 80)</p>		
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