LEADERSHIP OF ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS IN AN ERA OF DIMINISHING RESOURCES

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of adult education and family literacy leaders in navigating organizations through downturns in the economic environment. The Great Recession and ensuing reductions in federal and state funding impeded the ability of organizations to sustain services. Given the fiscal and resource constraints, adult education and family literacy organizations have been challenged to compete for the resources necessary for survival. This study sought to understand how the leadership therein managed to sustain services despite diminished organizational resources and increased competition.

Qualitative research design using the multiple case study method guided this study. The participants were identified through their connection to the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning. The research sites were three Texas-based non-profit adult education and family literacy organizations. Five program coordinators and three executive directors who worked in these organizations participated in this study. Data collection included face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, as well as organizational documents, archival records, memos, researcher notes, and other documents.

The findings suggested there are multiple paths to leadership in adult education, including public education and adult education. Additionally, as participants transitioned into leadership roles, they were either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivations generally concerned one's desire for career

advancement and promotion. Comparatively, extrinsic motivation to serve or be of assistance in a greater capacity resulted from a shared kinship with their students through race, heritage, motherhood, and/or economics.

Finally, leadership's response to constraints in the environment generally served to adapt the organization to environmental demands to sustain operations. The primary strategy was retrenchment – reducing paid work hours, shortening the academic year, implementing hiring freezes, and reducing staff through attrition. Leaders worked to preserve the integrity of their programs, while being conscientious of staffing and resource decisions. The findings provided new insight into the leadership of under-resourced, over-taxed adult education and family literacy organizations and the environments which inform operations and decision-making.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom, Dr. Mary V. Alfred. Thank you for your love and support throughout this long journey. It has made all the difference. I love you!

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First and foremost, I want to express my love and gratitude to my family. We have been on this journey together, and I definitely would not have completed this process without you. Words are too small to express the love I hold in my heart for each of you. This dissertation is not mine – it belongs to all of us. Thank you and I love you all infinitely.

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health and addiction resources on campus available whenever you need help – a light in dark times. And, there is no shame in making use of these services (especially since your fees are paying for them!). Take care of yourself – your health and well-being are paramount to all else.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Professors Elizabeth A. Roumell (chair), Fredrick M. Nafukho, and Christine A. Stanley of the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development; and Professor Idethia S. Harvey of the Department of Health and Kinesiology.

All work conducted for this dissertation was completed independently by the student.

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NOMENCLATURE

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AEFLA	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
ASE	Adult Secondary Education
EL CIVICS	English Literacy and Civics
ESL	English as a Second Language
GED	General Education Development or Diploma
HRD	Human Resource Development
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
RDT	Resource Dependence Theory
TCALL	Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Publicly funded adult education and family literacy organizations in the United States have an inherent legacy of being impacted by major shifts in the economic environment. As evolutions in the global economy have transformed the world of work over the years, the basic literacy and skills necessary for employment that provides family-sustaining wages have proportionately increased. As a result, many low-income working adults and families lack the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to access and participate in the labor market, thereby remaining on the margins of the workforce and society.

Therein lays the critical gap impeding US organizations from effectively competing in the global economy. This gap concerns the limited skills of those in, and seeking access to, the workforce as compared to the skills needed by organizations to be competitive in the world market. Werner and DeSimone (2012) explained this issue has been, and continues to be, a major challenge facing organizations and human resource development professionals in today's economy. A report released by the National Skills Coalition (2013) further conveyed that while the unemployment rate outnumbered the job openings rate by a proportion of four to one, employers struggled to find applicants with the requisite skills:

> Despite an unemployment rate of 7.6 percent, employers say every day that they cannot find the workers with the right skills. Yet, at the same time, we are facing

> the steepest decline in federal investments in our nation's workforce in recent history. Key workforce programs have lost more than $1 billion—more than 30 percent—in federal funding since just 2010. As a result, education and training providers have had to reduce the education and training services they deliver, fewer workers have been able to access those services, and fewer employers have been able to access the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses. (p. 6)

Consequently, organizations charged with providing education and literacy services which facilitate the economic mobility of these adults and families are challenged with an increasing demand for core services in an era of scarce resources. The strategies leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations utilize to provide solutions to this growing problem are critical to the survival of low-income families in the contemporary society.

Background of the Study

President Obama (2005), in delivering a speech on literacy and education, stated "literacy is the most basic currency of the knowledge economy we're living in today" (p. 3). As he noted, the literacy levels of years past, which guaranteed employment and a family-sustaining wage, were no longer sufficient in the modern era. This sentiment was echoed in reported results of the *Adult Education Program Survey* (Tamassia et al., 2007), which illustrated those lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills did not hold the requisite human capital necessary to engage and prosper in the global economy. Rather, the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic sufficiency have increased as advancements in communication and technology shaped the economy.

Moreover, the economy has been transformed by "The Great Recession" – the period between December 2007 and June 2009, marked by the collapse of the housing and financial markets and the ensuing loss of the personal and financial security of those in, and seeking access to, the workforce (Mishel et al., 2012). These escalating economic crises greatly altered the landscape of the labor market, further marginalizing those with limited education and skills. Though the recession ended a decade ago, the economy has been transformed by and is still recovering from its enduring effects, proving to be one of the slowest recovery periods in American history (Bivens, 2016).

The National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL, 2008) reported that the education and skills of America's workers have declined and are insufficient in meeting the increased needs of organizations. Based on data from the *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005), there is a widening gap between the basic knowledge and skills organizations need to remain competitive in the global economy and the lack thereof amongst America's adults:

> A staggering 30 million adults scored at 'below basic' – meaning they could perform no more than the most rudimentary literacy tasks. Another 63 million adults could perform only simple, basic everyday literacy activities…Of the approximately 222 million adults aged 16 or older living in households or prisons in the United States, 93 million lack literacy at a level needed to enroll in the postsecondary education or job training that current and future jobs require. (p. 2)

The social and economic ramifications are great for adults in the US who possess marginal literacy skills, as they bear consequences on multiple levels within society.

Particularly concerning are the implications for low-income families, generally characterized by earning less than twice the federal poverty rate, who continue to be marginalized within an ever-changing society (Simms 2009; Roberts & Povich, 2008; Waldron et al., 2004). According to Simms, one out of three American families with children is low-income, which equates to 13.4 million families. These families experience multiple struggles, including: (a) finding and keeping work; (b) increased prevalence of health issues without adequate, if any, health insurance; and (c) difficulties finding decent, affordable housing (Stanczyk, 2009). Moreover, low-income families are subject to "a deleterious effect on the ability of adults to secure and retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency, especially in light of the escalating demands upon workers as an outcome of global competition" (Murphy, 2006, p. 2-1).

Low-income families are three times as likely as higher earning families to not possess the education and skills necessary to obtain employment that provides family-sustaining wages (National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008; Roberts & Povich, 2008; Waldron et al., 2004). Stanczyk (2009) released findings supporting this fact, reporting that 28% of heads of households of low-income families possessed less than a high school education, while 38% earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. Simms (2009) expressed, though most of these families are comprised of at least one employed adult (75%), the family remains vulnerable without the appropriate education and skills to support economic mobility and security. Jenkins (2006) demonstrated the earnings of full-time working adults possessing a high school diploma or less have steadily declined since the 1970s, while the opposite is true for working adults with postsecondary credentials. He indicated:

> As the economy continues to shift from an industrial to a knowledge orientation, individuals with no postsecondary education or training will find it increasingly difficult to move beyond subsistence-level jobs. Research shows that workers with little education and few skills can rarely work their way out of low-wage, dead-end jobs on their own; they generally need at least some job-connected education or training to advance to jobs that pay wages sufficient to support a family. (Jenkins, 2006, p. 1)

Evidently, without targeted interventions, the low-income and low-literacy cycle will likely continue for these families. The education and skill levels of parents have direct implications on their children, that is, the school performance of children improve as the literacy levels of their parents improve (National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008; Peyton, 2007). Adult education and family literacy programs are more important than ever in providing low-income families the education and training necessary to facilitate their self-sufficiency and economic mobility within society. Specifically, family literacy programs, a component of the adult education and family literacy system, provide the appropriate framework for delivering educational services to low-income families on a holistic level. As outlined in Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, federal funding supports programs which: (a) center education and skills programs on the needs of low-literate adults for purposes of their employment and self-sufficiency; (b) facilitate the full engagement of adults who are parents in the educational development of their children; and (c) assist adults in earning secondary education credentials (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 202). As Peyton (2007) explained:

> Family literacy programming aims to address two challenges at the same time: raising the literacy skills of parents and giving those adults the tools they need to support the literacy development of their children. For families that are educationally and economically disadvantaged, family literacy is an efficient and effective approach that, in a single program, provides benefits for both parents and children. (p. 2)

Family literacy holds multiple benefits for the development and advancement of the whole family. However, the parents' involvement is particularly critical to uplifting the family unit both economically and socially. Through participating in family literacy classes, adults are positioned to: (a) persist longer in family-centered literacy programs (as compared to adult-only programs); (b) improve educational achievement; and (c) increase chances of economic self-sufficiency (Peyton, 2007, p. 3). Family literacy provides a holistic approach to addressing the literacy challenges present in American society as laid forth by President Obama (2005), namely the direct correlation between low-literacy and one's ability to earn family-sustaining wages. As low-income adults who are parents participate and persist in family literacy programs, they become increasingly prepared for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, thereby supporting efforts towards their social and economic health and security.

As explained in the National Skills Coalition's (2013) *Training Policy in Brief*, states receive federal dollars for the provision of adult basic education through the Adult

Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (Public Law 105-220). Though the AEFLA's authorization expired in 2003, annual allotments for adult education and family literacy services continued to be appropriated through 2015, when it was superseded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (US Department of Education, 2015; US Department of Labor, n.d.). The authorized budget for state grants and national programs for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014, as well as the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2015, appears in Table 1 below:

Table 1 US Department of Education FY 2015 Budget

Adult Education (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) (BA in millions)			
	2013	2014	2015 Request
Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants	$564.0	$564.0	$564.0
National Leadership Activities	$10.7	$13.7	$13.7
Total	$574.7	$577.7	$597.7

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2015 budget: Summary and background information. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget15/summary/15summary.pdf

Prior to Fiscal Year 2013, federal dollars for adult basic education and literacy programs remained relatively static in recent years, not accounting for inflation or other fiscal measures. However, the Budget Control Act of 2011 (Driessen & Labonte, 2015) implemented measures to reduce the federal deficit, including a mandatory sequester (spending reduction) of defense and non-defense categories. The Fiscal Year 2013 budget appropriation reflects the 5% sequestration mandated by the legislation, which will remain in effect until fiscal year 2021. Similarly, a report released by the Center for

Postsecondary and Economic Success (Foster, 2012) highlighted the impact of federal and state budget cuts on the educational opportunities for low-literate adults and non-English speakers who wanted to further their education. As noted in the report:

- From 2002 to 2012, federal funding for adult education and literacy saw a 17% decrease when adjusted for inflation. The 2012 funding represented "a significant disinvestment compared to the early 2000s" (p. 2).
- State funding, with its history of robust support for adult and literacy education, underwent a steady decline over time. Traditionally, states provided $3.50 for every $1 of federal funding. However, there was a significant decrease (or elimination) in some state budgets, resulting in fee-based programs. This tuition cost for low-income adults hindered participation as in the case of Florida, where enrollment was reported to have declined by 38% with the introduction of tuition and fees.
- With the scarcity of federal and state funding, there was a 27% national decline in participation in adult education and literacy since 2001. As Foster explained, "Adult education is now only able to serve two million adults annually of the estimated 93 million that may be eligible for services" (2012, p. 2). Moreover, it was reported that demand for services was so high in some states that a lottery system was used to determine who was able to access services.

The cumulative effects of these funding cuts impede adult education and family literacy providers from "meeting the demand for services, meeting the needs of employers, or implementing innovative strategies to equip workers with the skills they need to be competitive in the marketplace" (National Skills Coalition, 2013, pp. 6-7).

While providers vie to survive this economically unstable operating environment, a growing number of adults consequentially experience obstacles in their efforts to access adult education and literacy programs. As Foster (2012) conveyed, despite the demonstrated need for services, "Funding for these services is stagnating at the federal level and being slashed in statehouses and state agencies across the country" (p. 1). In a survey of 1,000 member programs, ProLiteracy (2015) reported only 36% of respondents received any federal or state funding, down 10% in six years and the lowest reported percentage in its 9 years of conducting the survey. Due to limited funding and resources, adults are increasingly placed on waiting lists, where they may wait for months or even years to receive essential literacy and skills training. Sixty seven percent of surveyed programs reported having a waiting list, an occurrence found in nearly every state (ProLiteracy; Foster). These facts illuminate the current issues which adult education and family literacy providers increasingly must address – operating with diminishing resources in an era of growing demand for services.

Problem Statement

Access to and participation in adult education and family literacy programs plays a critical role in mitigating the experiences of low-income, low-literate families, especially concerning their social and economic advancement. Furthermore, the education and skills of this segment of the population strongly affect economic recovery efforts, competitive stance, and federal initiatives at local, state and national levels

(National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, 2010). However, as a result of economic constraints from the external environment, adult education and family literacy organizations are challenged to compete for resources necessary for the survival of the organization, while simultaneously striving to meet the increased need to deliver services to low-income, low-literate adults and families.

While much research has been conducted pertaining to the challenging circumstances impacting literacy organizations, little research exists exploring how these organizations traverse this contentious environment. This lack of empirical evidence illuminates gaps in the research literature concerning leadership, resource dependence, and organizational performance within a nonprofit context. To ascertain a clearer picture of the adult education, family literacy, and human resource development landscape, this research is warranted to understand how organizations are impacted by, as well as how the leadership therein strategically navigates, challenges within the operational climate and economic environment.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating an economic downturn. Reductions in federal and state funding have greatly affected the ability of organizations to meet low-income, low-literate adults' increasing need for the delivery of services. While several white papers and reports have been published on the economic factors impacting these organizations, there has been little empirical research investigating how leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations manage the rising call for services despite declining organizational resources and increased competition. This research study provided a significant opportunity to understand the experiences of these leaders, as well as to contribute to the field's scholarship and practice.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do adult education and family literacy leaders describe their journey to their current leadership positions?
2. From an organizational leadership perspective, how are adult education and family literacy organizations impacted by the downturn of the economic environment?
3. How do adult education and family literacy leaders leverage resources to sustain organizations in an era of economic downturn?

Theoretical Framework

The underlying theory of this research study was Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978, 2003) resource dependence theory (RDT), which concerned the relationship between an organization and its external and social environment. The theorists posited the context within which an organization resides – its ecology – influenced the behavior and actions of an organization. As open systems, organizations are subjected to, and affected by, outside conditions (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Consequently, the actions, decisions and structure of organizations are informed by the organization-environment relationship. Resource dependence theory posits ultimate survival is based on an organization's ability to: (1) satisfy the varying demands of vested interest groups; and (2) obtain and maintain critical resources. The more effectively these efforts are accomplished, the more likely the organization will survive the constraints of the environment. However, as changes in the environment occur, organizations' ability to meet demands and acquire resources becomes increasingly challenging. As Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) noted, no organization is wholly self-contained or self-sustaining; rather, organizations are dependent upon the external environment for resources in some manner. According to the authors:

> Problems arise not merely because organizations are dependent on their environment, but because this environment is not dependable. Environments can change, new organizations enter and exit, and the supply of resources becomes scarce. When environments change, organizations face the prospect of not surviving or of changing their activities in response to these environmental factors. (p. 3)

According to RDT, organizations compete with peers and competitors for the same pool of resources. Furthermore, the constraints that confront these organizations must be managed, as they impact organizational decision-making, creativity, and adaptability (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Accordingly, the authors proposed two action roles leaders may perform to address these constraints – advocator and processor. The advocator attempts to change the organization's constraints and social context to better the situation for the organization. The processor adjusts the organization's actions to meet the various demands imposed upon by constraints in the social setting. Pfeffer and Salancik stated, "Both images of the role of management imply a sensitivity to the social context in which the organization is embedded and an understanding of the relationship between the organization and its environment" (p. 19). The authors noted that ideally both roles are performed, and both are equally difficult.

Significance of the Study

Torraco (2007) expressed, human resource development (HRD) "has advanced the understanding that new ideas, innovation, and resourcefulness—all products of learning and employee development—are inseparable from organizational success and sustainability" (p. 343). However, he continued, marginalized workers, such as adults with limited education and skills, have not benefitted from these improvements in the workplace. Without the requisite education and skills, these adults continue to be denied access to family-sustaining employment opportunities. As a result, leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations are increasingly contending with growing demands for core services in an era of diminishing resources. This research serves to address a contemporary issue within the fields of adult education and family literacy. In addition, this study is centered on leadership and organization performance, two components of HRD. The goal of this research study is to make a significant contribution in both scholarship and practice to adult education and human resource development.

This study contributes to this issue from a research, policy, and practice standpoint. From a research perspective, by examining this topic through the resource dependence framework, this study provides a scholarly contribution to the issues surrounding external influences on adult education and family literacy organizations.

Leaders must constantly scan the environment to acquire and manage resources, as well as remain aware of competitors, all of which affect organization survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). In addition, leadership and organization performance are constructs within HRD, and thusly contribute to that body of literature.

In terms of policy, this study demonstrates the importance of local, state and federal governments providing continued economic and support resources to meet the needs of the growing number of adults who lack the skills necessary for economic self-sufficiency. Research demonstrates that without intervention, the number of underprepared adults in the workforce will continue to increase. Funding for adult education and family literacy programs is essential to assist adults and families in improving their self-sufficiency and economic mobility.

This in turn informs practice. As resources continue to diminish, leaders of other adult education and family literacy organizations will be able to draw from the findings of this study. While qualitative research is not generalizable, the practices shared by the participants of this study will encourage other organizational leaders to implement new strategies to meet the needs of their clients. Furthermore, leadership and HRD spans a variety of contexts and organizations. Professionals working within an adult education or family literacy organization would be positioned to develop new strategies or form strategic partnerships as well.

Delimitations

This study included three organizations that met the parameters established for inclusion in this study. In designing this research study, the selection criteria was delimited to Texas-based adult education and family literacy organizations in service for at least five years or more. A targeted sample of two to four organizations were eligible for inclusion in this study. Moreover, eligible participants were defined as executive and program leaders within these organizations. Delimiting the sample size in this manner allowed for an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon, especially in gaining perspectives of both the executive and program leaders of the organizations.

Definition of Key Terms

When data was collected for this study, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220) was the federal policy guiding adult education and family literacy providers. This legislation provided the framework for a unique national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation's businesses and the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers (Public Law 105-220). This Act as it originally existed ended June 2015, and was reauthorized and amended as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113–128). However, for purposes of this study and to remain in alignment and context with the data, definitions from the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 are provided below.

- Adult Education: Services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals who: (a) have attained 16 years of age; (b) are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and who (c) lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society; do not have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or are unable to speak, read, or write the English language (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 203(1)).

- Eligible Provider: (a) a local educational agency; (b) a community-based organization of demonstrated effectiveness; (c) a volunteer literacy organization of demonstrated effectiveness; (d) an institution of higher education; (e) a public or private nonprofit agency; (f) a library; (g) a public housing authority; (h) a nonprofit institution that is not described in a – g that has the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 203(5)).
- Family: Two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or decree of court, who are living in a single residence (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 101(15)).
- Family Literacy: Services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities: a) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; b) training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; c) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and d) an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 202(7)).
- Literacy: An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 202(12)).

- Low-Income: An individual who (a) receives cash payments under a Federal, State, or a local income-based public assistance program; (b) received an income for the 6-month period prior to application for the program involved that, in relation to family size, does not exceed the higher of the poverty line or 70 percent of the lower living standard income level for an equivalent period; (c) is a member of a household that receives food stamps; (d) qualifies as a homeless individual; (e) is a foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made; or (f) is an individual with a disability who meets program requirements (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 101(25)).
- Low-Skilled: An individual that has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test or a comparable score on a criterion-referenced test (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 101(4)).

Additionally, there are terms outside of the Workforce Investment Act for which a definition would prove useful:

- Title I: Provides federal funds go to schools with high percentages of children from low-income families. These funds pay for extra educational activities to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. The majority of Title I funds are allocated at the district level in all states through four different grants (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).
- Title II: Allocates federal funds to increase academic achievement by improving teacher and principal quality. This is accomplished by: increasing the number of

highly qualified teachers in classrooms; increasing the number of highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools; and increasing the effectiveness of teachers and principals by holding schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement (US Department of Education, n.d.).

Organization of the Dissertation

This research study follows the traditional five-chapter dissertation format. The first chapter introduces the dissertation topic and provides a rationale for its importance. The second chapter presents a review of the relevant literature. The third chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and methods. The fourth chapter presents a summary of the participants and presents the findings drawn from the analysis of the data. The fifth chapter reviews the research questions in relation to current literature and draws implications for research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The leadership of federally funded adult education and family literacy organizations in the United States have been impacted by major shifts in the external environment throughout the years. However, the past few years have proven especially challenging, marked most notably by the Great Recession, the worst economic crisis in the US since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Economic Policy Institute, n.d.). Though the recession ended in 2009, the enduring effects remain. Malatesta and Smith (2014) reported nonprofit managers faced a new reality given the fiscal environment of reduced funding and increased demand for services brought about by the Great Recession. Reductions in federal and state funding have greatly affected the ability of organizations to meet the need for the delivery of services. Given the economic and resource constraints from the external environment, adult education and family literacy organizations have been challenged to compete for the resources necessary for the survival of the organization.

Coupled with this new fiscal reality, adult education and family literacy providers have been confronted with meeting an increased need for services amongst low-income, low-literate adults and families. As evolutions in the global economy have transformed the world of work, the basic literacy and skills necessary for employment that provides family-sustaining wages have simultaneously increased. Resultantly, many low-income working families lack the requisite literacy and skills to access and participate in the labor market, thereby becoming further marginalized in the new economy. Organizations charged with providing education and literacy services which facilitate the economic mobility of these families are challenged with an increasing demand for core services in an era of scarce resources. The strategies leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations utilize to provide solutions to this growing problem are critical to the survival of low-income families in the contemporary society.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating the most recent economic downturn. The bodies of literature concerning adult basic education and family literacy, the nonprofit sector, and nonprofit leadership provided the framework for this study. The first section of this literature review provides an evolution of the legislation establishing the adult basic education and family literacy system in the United States. The next section offers literature detailing the nonprofit orientation of adult education and family literacy, which comprises a large segment of the field and was a criterion for inclusion in this study. Lastly, literature related to the distinct concerns of nonprofit leadership is discussed.

Adult Education and Family Literacy in the United States

The federal government's role in framing and supporting the Adult Education system in the United States evolved in proportion with major events that transformed the nation. Periods marked by increased immigration, war efforts, and the global depression, among others, magnified education and skill deficits that prevailed in society and required federal intervention (US Department of Education, 2013). Between 1862 and 1962, a series of distinct pieces of federal legislation were enacted to address emerging societal needs, to include vocational training, adult literacy instruction, General Education Development (GED), and infrastructure to promote adult education on a national level (US Department of Education, 1991, 2013). Amongst these were the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Adult Education Act of 1966, the National Literacy Act of 1991, and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, each of which is discussed below.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964

By 1962, poverty ranked as the leading social issue in the country, along with racial inequality. To mitigate this societal concern, President Johnson (1964) declared an "unconditional war on poverty" and proposed a more expansive, coordinated approach to advancing the economic condition of under-privileged, under-skilled, and under-employed citizens. Johnson professed, "Our aim is not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it". To that end, he proposed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-452), which Congress passed in that same year. The central tenet of the legislation outlined the following:

> The United States can achieve its full economic and social potential as a nation only if every individual has the opportunity to contribute to the full extent of his capabilities and to participate in the workings of our society. It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and

> training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. (Public Law 88-452, p. 508)

This law was hailed as the first federal comprehensive anti-poverty program and included supports for such initiatives as community development, job training and education, and social and economic support for low-income families. Accordingly, a suite of federal programs was established to address root causes of poverty, particularly as they concerned one's ability to participate in and contribute to society (Sticht, 2002; US Department of Education, 1991, 2013). These social and economic reforms centered on developing the human capital of impoverished adults to advance their employability and self-sufficiency (US Department of Education, 1991). As Rose (1991) noted, the law "was committed to the development of skills, but not the creation of jobs" (p. 14).

The Adult Basic Education Program (Title II, Part B) was one small component of Johnson's antipoverty measures. Literacy education was framed as a pathway to economic mobility and advancement for adults living in poverty, as expressed in the Act's purpose statement:

> It is the purpose of this part to initiate programs of instruction for individuals who have attained age eighteen and whose inability to read and write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability, so as to help eliminate such inability and raise the level of education of such individuals with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities

> for more productive and profitable employment, and making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities. (Sec. 212)

Bannon (2016) explained, “Positioning literacy education as a means to increase human capital served to rationalize federal efforts to invest in adult basic education” (p. 321). As such, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was authorized to allocate federal funds to the states for the provision of job training and adult basic education (Rose, 1991; US Department of Education, 2013). However, the OEO delegated the administration of programs to the Office of Education. Within two years of the Act’s passage, every state in the nation submitted a state plan and received federal funding to advance the war on poverty through adult and literacy education and skills training programs. As a result, 335,000 adults participated in basic education programs (US Office of Education, 1967).

Adult Education Act of 1966

Two years after the initial launch of Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act, the anti-poverty programs, to include the Adult Basic Education Program, were scheduled for legislative review. As this reauthorization approached, adult education groups lobbied Congress to move all adult education programs from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education. Proponents suggested this move would: (a) ensure citizens had access to services, regardless of financial standing; (b) house programs in the office that administered them since being established; and (c) properly align the adult education system with that of the elementary and secondary education system (Bannon, 2016; Rose, 1991; Sticht, 2002). Bannon reported several members of

Congress long believed adult education programs were misplaced in anti-poverty legislation. Furthermore, the OEO Director was not an advocate of allocating poverty funds to adult literacy programs, and he, along with President Johnson, supported relocating the programs (US Department of Education, 2013).

Thus, the Adult Education Act of 1966 was signed into law as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (PL 89-750, Title III). The passage of this Act effectively moved adult education programs under the purview of the Office of Education. With the move, the scope of adult education was expanded to include limited English proficiency, basic education, and citizenship, as evidenced in the purpose statement below:

> It is the purpose of this title to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults, to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens. (PL 89-750, Title III, Sec. 302)

Given these modifications, much of the adult education framework from the Office of Economic Opportunity carried over to the Office of Education (Rose, 1991; Sticht, 2002; US Office of Education, 2013). States were required to submit plans to receive funding, and the methodology for allocation was consistent with previous years. The federal government continued to provide funding for adult education programs, up to 90% of costs. To ensure federal dollars were used only towards program growth and development, states were required to sustain state funding levels annually (Rose, 1991;

US Office of Education, 2013). In addition, staff development and special projects were included in funding appropriations, components believed essential for the continued growth and development of the field (Rose; US Office of Education).

The Adult Education Act proved to be a notable and enduring piece of legislation. For the first time, the federal government invested in a long-term, national strategy for adult education that transcended job training and employment (Rose, 1991; US Department of Education, 2013). Furthermore, Rose posited, passage of the Act implied an acceptance of adult basic education into the US education system – though anticipated synergies and benefits of said membership never materialized. In subsequent years, a series of amendments to the Adult Education Act enlarged the scope and purpose of adult education. These amendments included: a) lowering the eligible age to participate in programs from 18 to 16 (1968); b) expanding services to include adult secondary education (1970); c) reframing the purpose of adult education to "…enable all adults to acquire basic skills necessary to function in society", thereby shifting from a school-based to a competency-based model of development and evaluation (1978); and d) providing grant awards to workplace literacy and English literacy programs (1988) (Rose; US Department of Education). As Sticht (2002) explained, the combined effects of these and numerous other amendments enacted between 1968-1988 expanded the number of adults eligible to receive services, as well as the number of providers eligible to receive funding.

National Literacy Act of 1991

The final amendments to the Adult Education Act occurred 25 years after its inception, with the passage of the National Literacy Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-73). Preceding this enactment, President Bush (41) and the states' governors developed six national performance goals to advance the educational and economic well-being of Americans, as well as ensure the competitive position of the country. He noted:

> Education is central to our quality of life. It is at the heart of our economic strength and security, our creativity in the arts and letters, our invention in the sciences, and the perpetuation of our cultural values. Education is the key to America's international competitiveness. (Executive Office of the President, 1990, p. 2)

The collective set of goals were ambitious; they were designed to be achieved within 10 years and required fundamental reforms in the way education was structured and delivered (Irwin, 1991). Adult education and lifelong learning were included amongst the imperatives and listed a single, overarching goal: "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Executive Office of the President, 1990, p. 5). Irwin reported this performance goal set the foundation for the provisions of the National Literacy Act of 1991. This alignment was apparent in the Act's opening purpose statement:

> To enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and

> achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs. (Public Law 102-73)

The National Literacy Act of 1991 amended and extended funding provided through the Adult Education Act, as well as authorized a number of new adult literacy initiatives. These new programs included: (a) establishing a national, multi-agency literacy institute to improve the system and delivery of literacy services; (b) developing a network of state and regional resource centers to enhance the coordination and efficiency of literacy services; and (c) developing a national workforce coalition to assist small and mid-size businesses in creating literacy programs (Irwin, 1991; Rose, 1991; US Department of Education, 2013). Additionally, adult education programs were expanded via Even Start, such that childhood education and adult education for parents were combined into a unified family literacy program (US Department of Education). Program standards and accountability measures strengthened during this era as well, with evaluation indicators informing progress towards national goals, funding award decisions, and program sustainability (Rose; US Department of Education). These mandates reflected the education reforms necessary for alignment with the national adult literacy performance goal (Irwin). Literacy, then, was viewed as the pathway to economic self-sufficiency for individuals and families. Moreover, investing in literacy initiatives was ultimately seen as an investment in the economic well-being of the nation.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The enactment of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220) transformed the adult education and literacy system in the US. President Bill Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act into law in 1998, effectively consolidating more than 70 federal programs into a comprehensive workforce development system (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). As detailed in this legislation (Public Law 105-220), the reformed system was structured to better facilitate the training and development needed to uplift the skills and capabilities of the American workforce. Additionally, it was designed to improve users' access and choice by offering multiple programs and services in a single location.

Legislation in the preceding decade broadened the scope of adult education to encompass workforce skills to advance the country's economic position (Rose, 1991; Bannon, 2016; US Department of Education, 2013). This was demonstrated by the introduction of workforce literacy grants in 1988 and further expanded to two national programs in 1991 (Irwin, 1991; US Department of Education). Bannon explained the continued emphasis on workforce training, functional literacy, and basic skills training contributed to the prioritization of human capital development over human potential in adult education. A US Department of Education (2013) report provided additional information:

> The impetus for the new legislation was the emerging view that the economic needs of the country were tied to the success of education and employment programs in helping youth and adults achieve maximum success. This, coupled

> with general efforts to foster greater cooperation and collaboration among agencies with common clients and program funding issues, led to this major shift in provision of education and training. (p. 24)

Both the Adult Education Act and the National Literacy Act were repealed with the enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 251(a1-2)). Consequentially, adult education no longer received legislative and funding considerations as a distinct federal program. Instead, the enterprise was subsumed as one component within the workforce training and development system, namely Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA, Public Law 105-220). Belzer (2007) explained, "This integration means, ideally, that both employment and education needs can be addressed through entry into either the workforce development or the ABE system" (p. 561). However, Bannon (2016) noted the corollary outcome of merging these efforts:

> We see a consolidation of federal programs and funding streams, which for adult education meant that programs serving anyone from welfare recipients to dislocated workers to individuals pursuing secondary school completion would all be housed under the same law and, as a result, experience greater competition for funding. (p. 331)

The AEFLA succeeded previous legislation as the primary source of federal support for adult education and family literacy programs. Accordingly, a revised definition of literacy was provided which aligned with the systemic adult education reforms: "An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society" (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 201). In accordance with this definition, the federal government, states, and localities formed a voluntary collaborative to support the literacy development of adults in three areas of focus:

1. Assist adults to become literate and obtain the educational skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
2. Assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and
3. Assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.

(Public Law 105-220, Sec. 202).

Together, these statements provided the purpose and framework for this collaborative to structure and deliver programs. Peyton (2007) noted the incorporation of family literacy marked a historic milestone in adult education legislation; the inclusion legitimized family literacy as an effective intervention in advancing the literacy and skills of the country. From that lens, the AEFLA provided the following definition of family literacy:

> Family literacy services are services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:
>
> a) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children;
>
> b) training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children;

c) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and

d) an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

(Public Law 105-220, Sec. 202(7))

This approach provided a unified infrastructure for parents to develop their basic literacy and skills in adult education courses, discuss their educational needs and the needs of their children, and work side-by-side with their children during Parent and Child Together (PACT) time (Logan et al., 2002).

To be considered for a grant, each state submitted a plan that outlined programs and activities in the areas of adult education and literacy, family literacy and English language literacy (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 231(b)). Once state plans were approved, formula grants were awarded to states based on the number of adults aged 16 and older who were not enrolled in school and did not possess a high school diploma (Public Law 105-220, Sec. 211(d)). In Fiscal Year 2014, grant awards to the states ranged from approximately $803,000 (Wyoming) to $86.8 million (California) (US Department of Education, 2014). The Great Recession resulted in a significant reduction in resources available to fund adult education and family literacy programs, leaving institutional leaders to strategize to meet increasing demands with diminishing resources. Therefore, Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003) was used as the guiding framework to explore how leaders leveraged resources during times of economic downturn.

Theoretical Framework: Resource Dependence Theory

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 established a system of adult basic and literacy education in the United States through state-administered programs that received federal funding through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) described in the previous section (Public Law 105-220). Per the mandates of the Act, the federal government, states, and localities formed a voluntary partnership to provide educational opportunities for under-educated, un-employed, and under-employed adults 16 years of age and older. The basis of this multi-tiered partnership was the availability of financial and other resources needed to sustain programs on a local, state, and national level. Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003), which concerned the organization-environment dynamic was used to examine how this flow of resources influenced organizational behavior and survival.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) developed their theory of resource dependence to explain how the management, structure, and overall viability of an organization was influenced by resource and relationship dependencies in the external environment. According to the theory, organizational behavior was best understood in context of an organization's environment, with particular attention to the forces that facilitated or impeded the flow of critical resources. They provided additional insight:

> What happens in an organization is not only a function of the organization, its structure, its leadership, its procedures, or its goals. What happens is also a consequence of the environment and the particular contingencies and constraints deriving from that environment. (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 3)

Their theory was based on the assumption that organizational performance and success transcended the utilization of resources as a key metric. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) asserted, "The key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources" (p. 2). However, this proved a complex endeavor given organizations were not closed systems independent from the environment within which they operated. Rather, organizations were generally open systems vulnerable to the forces which impacted the availability of critical resources necessary to sustain operations (Heimovics et al., 1993). Pfeffer and Salancik provided an account of the inherent issues which accompanied resource dependence:

> Problems arise not merely because organizations are dependent on their environment, but because this environment is not dependable. Environments can change, new organizations can enter and exit, and the supply of resources becomes more or less scarce. When environments change, organizations face the prospect either of not surviving or of changing their activities in response to these environmental factors. (p. 3)

This lack of autonomy and control by organizations was reflected in the theory's core tenets: (a) organizations are constrained by, and dependent on, other organizations that control critical resources, and (b) to maintain autonomy, organizations attempted to manage their dependencies on external groups (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003). As Froehlich (1999) noted, the degree of dependence experienced by an organization was determined by the importance and concentration of resources provided. She explained, organizations that possessed critical resources were positioned in a place of power, while organizations depending on others for those critical resources were vulnerable to control and decline. Nienhüser (2008) provided additional insight:

> Concentration of resources means above all concentration of power. The fewer the number of resources, the higher the concentration of power in the environment, and the more numerous the connections between actors (i.e. complexity), the sooner conflicts and interdependencies arise and the higher the amount of uncertainty is that needs to be reduced. Uncertainty on its own is not a problem. Only when there is uncertainty and dependence on critical resources the organization is forced to take measures to reduce uncertainty. (p. 12)

This resultant power-dependence dynamic held critical implications for organizational survival and called for the effective management of resource dependencies (Froelich, 1999; Malatesta & Smith, 2014; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003). Nienhüser (2008) stated this, in itself, was the rationale for the importance of management in organizations. Managers performed an essential role in efforts to reduce environmental uncertainty and manage dependencies, specifically in their decisions and actions to address external constraints. Heimovics et al. (1993) noted, "The way chief executives deal with external events is the criterion of leadership effectiveness" (p. 425). Moreover, Malatesta and Smith (2014) posited managers have the discretion to alter the power-dependence dynamic through effectively scanning the external environment and applying the appropriate strategy to most effectively reduce uncertainty and secure vital resources. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) proposed two action roles leaders may perform to address environmental constraints – advocator and processor. The advocator attempts to change the organization's constraints and social context to better the situation for the organization. The processor adjusts the organization's actions to meet the various demands imposed upon by constraints in the social setting. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) stated, "Both images of the role of management imply a sensitivity to the social context in which the organization is embedded and an understanding of the relationship between the organization and its environment" (p. 19). The researchers noted that ideally both roles are performed, and both are equally difficult.

In their 30-year review of Resource Dependence Theory, Hillman et al. (2008) related the theory's "near-axiom-like status in organizational theory and strategic management" (p. 1405). While the theory has been empirically tested and validated across a spectrum of disciplines, scant attention has been paid to how organizations acquire critical resources and/or reduce external contingencies while navigating a challenging economic environment. AbouAssi and Tschirhart (2018) proclaimed Resource Dependence Theory's predominance in understanding the funding, performance, and management of nonprofit organizations. This was due in large part to the structure and management of nonprofit organizations, particularly given their tendency to rely on external funders, face instability in the flow of funding, and deal with volatile demands (Ebrahim, 2005). However, with the continued diminishment of government and public resources, understanding the foundational constructs of resource dependence would advance leadership's knowledge and practices in the effective stewardship of their organizations. Strategic leadership of adult education and family literacy entities requires a firm understanding of the operating environment and the factors that impact organizational performance and viability.

The Adult Education Operating Environment

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 authorized the provision of federal funding to support an array of adult education and literacy services for under-educated, under-employed, and unemployed adults in America. Per the mandates of the Act, for-profit entities were not eligible to receive these federal funds. Instead, local education agencies, community-based organizations, libraries, higher education institutions, correctional agencies, volunteer literacy organizations, and other private and public nonprofit agencies were eligible to receive funding through a competitive process (National Skills Coalition, 2011). In this doctoral study, three community based, non-profit organizations were represented, each informed by the systems within which they operate. Therefore, a discussion of the operating environment of adult education and literacy providers follows.

The contemporary nonprofit sector emerged with President Johnson's extensive social reforms of the 1960s, which expanded federal funding to support the provision of a vast array of services, to include social and human services, education and training, community development, and health care (Salamon, 2012). During this era, the federal government emerged as the primary financial resource for nonprofit organizations, with state and local governments providing supplementary resources. However, by the 1980s, this funding dynamic shifted with President Reagan's administration, which worked to diminish the role of government, contain federal expenditures, and redistribute control to the state and local levels (US Department of Education, 2013). Rose (1991) described the impact Reagan's fiscal policies had on adult education programs during that period. For the first time since enactment of federal legislation, adult education appropriations stagnated, for-profit organizations competed with nonprofit organizations for federal grants and resources, and the use of volunteers was promoted as a cost-savings measure in national efforts to bolster literacy. Alexander (2000) explained the devolution of federal programs, namely the decreased federal funding and increased competition for resources, resulted in financial vulnerability for nonprofit organizations. She explained:

> The financial cutbacks of the 1980s and the changes that occurred in the government-nonprofit partnership during the Reagan era marked the beginning of a transformation in the norms of nonprofit relations and the requirements of survival. (p. 292)

This federal retrenchment lasted through the early 1990s and was succeeded by various cycles of slow growth and sharp reductions in federal expenditures (Salamon, 2012; US Department of Education, 2013). Salamon noted, the 2000s were characterized by expansive federal containment efforts, particularly in response to the banking crisis and subsequent recession in 2008, the federal deficit that resulted from President Bush's tax cuts, the Iraq and Afghanistan war expenditures, and efforts to stimulate economic recovery. Malatesta and Smith (2014) corroborated these reports, adding state and local governments received reduced governmental financial support as a result of the Great Recession. Similarly, Boris et al. (2010) reported that 40% of nonprofits faced a significant budget deficit. They explained, "The US economic recession has depleted many nonprofit budgets while increasing the demand for their services" (p. 1). Moreover, this trending decline in fiscal resources was predicted to persist for the ensuing 50 years (Government Accountability Office, 2011). The diminished state of the nonprofit fiscal landscape highlighted the need for strategic resource management for organizational survival.

At the root of these challenges was the ability of nonprofit organizations to obtain critical resources necessary to sustain operations. This speaks to the central tenet of Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) resource dependence theory: "The key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources" (p. 2). Nonprofit organizations had to adapt to changing conditions in the external environment to obtain and manage resources in an effort to fulfill organizational mission and goals (Ahmed, 2012). This required organizations to diversify streams of revenue as to not be highly dependent upon a few resource providers for survival.

Given the fluctuating fiscal landscape within which nonprofit organizations operated, leadership was increasingly challenged to develop new strategies to provide much needed resources and services to clients, as well as sustain operations (Malatesta & Smith, 2014). To that end, Alexander (2000) conducted a seminal study concerning nonprofit adaptation and survival strategies to explore how leadership navigated challenges within the environment and maintained organizational viability. She collected and analyzed data from a series of longitudinal focus groups of executive directors and program managers in social nonprofit organizations dedicated to low-paying clients and the poor located in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. In total, nine focus groups were conducted over the span of 18 months, and 56 participants from 48 unique organizations participated in the study. Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependence theory informed her study. She explained:

> Resource dependency theorists believe that organizational goals evolve and are displaced through a dynamic process of interaction with the environment. But they judge adaptation differently: if an organization can sustain a resource stream, adaptation was effective. (p. 290)

Informing the RDT framework, Alexander (2000) identified four adaptation strategies that emerged from her investigation:

1. Pursue strategic expansion. This was the primary adaptation strategy cited by participants. To be effective, expansion efforts had to be grounded in the organization's mission and strategic plan. Moreover, survival had to transcend a financial perspective. Otherwise, this endeavor resulted in increased financial and resource instability for nonprofit organization, as well as dismantled relationships with funders.
2. Develop business management techniques. The business strategies effective for nonprofit organizations included strategic planning (to manage change), technological capacity building (to create leaner organizations), marketing, fundraising, and new organizational management practices.
3. Increase boundary-spanning activities. Organizational survival was dependent on the collaborations and partnerships with other organizations that were

cultivated and maintained. Participants shared board members, staff, and clients shared in fostering these relationships, and resources obtained from such networks included grants, donations, in-kind services, client referrals, media attention, and technical resources. The challenges to networking included partnering with complementary agencies and maintaining organizational mission (not-conforming under financial stress).

4. Maintain public service character through commercialization. This study centered on nonprofit organizations that provided services to low-paying clients and the poor. Commercialization of services would provide the organization less dependence on government funds and a level of autonomy in sustaining programs. However, this would require a shift from community needs to demand for services, which would have corollary impact on organizational mission and goals.

Overall, the four adaptation strategies identified by the participants in Alexander's (2000) study concerned employing business strategies to affect the viability of nonprofit human service organizations. These strategies were more or less acceptable, depending on the structure and available resources of the nonprofit. Organizations considered traditional and more established found these strategies effective in their efforts to remain viable in the changing environment. However, smaller, community-based and faith-based organizations expressed these strategies were inaccessible given the resources and infrastructure needed to implement and support them over the long-term. Alexander noted though these adaptation strategies emerged as key findings, an organization's survival ultimately depended on the capacity to sustain relations with core stakeholders.

Mosley et al. (2012) expanded upon Alexander's (2000) work on adaptation, examining how nonprofit human service organizations responded to changes in the economic environment. Similar to Alexander's (2000) study, this study was also framed by resource dependence theory's central tenet – organizational survival depends on the ability to acquire and maintain scarce resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, 2003). With this lens, the authors posited, "The more organizations need certain resources, and the more they depend on entities for those resources, the more likely those external entities will influence processes and actions within the organization – including adaptive tactics" (Mosley et al., 2012, p. 284). The researchers conducted a longitudinal, quantitative study of executive directors of 667 nonprofits in Los Angeles County in 2002, with a follow-up study conducted in 2004, before and after California experienced an economic downturn. Of particular interest in this study was how the organization's managerial, structural, or financial characteristics in 2002 correlated with the adaptive tactics it utilized in 2004. Mosley et al. surmised the findings will illuminate which organizations are vulnerable and which are protected from the environmental challenges provided the given variables.

In Mosley et al.'s study, the adaptive techniques were set as the five dependent variables: (a) adding new programs; (b) discontinuing existing programs or reducing staff; (c) expanding or starting a joint program with another organization; (d) pursuing additional earned income; and (e) expanding or starting advocacy involvement. The results of this study aligned with Alexander's (2000) study in that the larger, more established nonprofit organizations had the resources and infrastructure to access and adopt these techniques. As the researchers summarized, "capacity matters" (p. 296). As they explained:

> Our findings suggest that size trumps other managerial and financial characteristics in promoting the use of adaptive strategies during times of economic uncertainty…One can infer that increased capacity allows larger organizations to be more flexible and versatile, allowing them to pick and choose adaptive tactics that provide better control over their revenue streams. Organizations with few resources simply may not be able to make changes even though they would like to. (Mosley et al., 2012, p. 296)

In addition to capacity, the financial set of variables proved significant determinants in organizations' utilization of adaption technique. The researchers explained:

> This set of findings seems to imply that when faced with serious funding cuts organizations retrench, stay away from pursuing earned income, and do not show a systematic pattern for trying to manage the environment through joint programming, adding new programs, or advocacy engagement…Judging from these findings, most managers do not seem to be responding to financial stress and funding declines in a particularly proactive way. (Mosley et al., 2012, pp. 297-98)

The combined benefits of both studies (Alexander, 2000; Mosley et al., 2012) illuminated how nonprofit organizations navigated challenging periods of economic challenges to maintain viability. Moreover, it offered nonprofit leadership empirical evidence of innovative ways organizations responded in periods of diminished funding and resources.

Froehlich (1999) investigated the effects of various revenue strategies, including private, government, and commercial funding, on nonprofit organizations in an effort to diminish the impact of resource dependence. In her analysis, Froehlich found strategies rooted in private contributions from individuals, corporations or foundations were accompanied with a higher degree of revenue instability and organizational goal displacement (modifying goals and activities to satisfy contributors) as compared to other strategies. This was due in large part to restrictions placed on the funds by the donor, including pursuit of traditional endeavors and avoidance of controversy. However, a government-based funding strategy demonstrated low revenue volatility, yet was still accompanied with relatively high degrees of goal displacement. As she explained, although government funding was generally accessible and supported a broad range of missions, the mandates exacted by government grants and contracts have influence on nonprofit structures, processes, and participants, thereby affecting the mission and pursuits of the organization. The third strategy Froehlich examined, commercial strategy, resulted in temperate revenue volatility, with very little impact on the organization's goals. Rather, commercial revenues proved to be the most supportive of nonprofit organizational goals.

Overall, Froehlich's (1999) investigation determined that each revenue strategy held advantages and disadvantages and it was essential that nonprofit leaders knew the fundamentals of each strategy and how they aligned with the mission of the organization. More importantly, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) stated the overarching responsibility of nonprofit leaders was to manage the resources of the organization, rather than be wholly dependent upon them for survival, including adapting strategies as changes in the environment occurred.

Nonprofit Leadership

Each sector of the economy has specific responsibilities to fulfill, as well as opportunities and challenges with which to contend, bearing distinct implications for the organizational leaders within each context (Ahmed, 2012; Herman and Heimovics, 2005). The nonprofit sector, in particular, has transformed as a result of the external environment which has caused a shift in organizational demands and priorities. As a result, organizational survival was dependent upon the ability of nonprofit leaders to respond to these contemporary challenges in innovative and effective ways (Golensky, 2011). Herman and Heimovics (2005) conveyed nonprofit leaders were primarily responsible for the constant integration and management of mission, resource acquisition, and strategy:

> The choice of mission for an organization depends on the potential for acquisition for sufficient resources to carry out that mission. Conversely, the acquisition of certain kinds of resources can influence the mission an organization chooses to undertake. Any mission, no matter how great the cause, is likely to fail if the organization lacks the necessary and sufficient resources to

> pursue it. Moreover, the decisions about strategies for acquiring resources must be consistent with the mission and ethical values of the organization. (p. 153)

Accordingly, any effort undertaken in one area had a direct impact on other areas. As Herman and Heimovics (2005) explained, nonprofit leaders must constantly ensure that the decisions and actions in one area are both consistent and mutually reinforcing in the other two areas. This generally involved strategic leadership of both the board and the chief executive, which in the nonprofit realm, was referred to as governance (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed described three approaches to the board-executive partnership: (a) the traditional approach in which governance rested with the board; (b) the shared partnership in which governance was a shared responsibility between the board and the executive; and (c) the situational approach in which the unique situation of the nonprofit determined who governed (pp. 96-97).

Regardless of the prescribed approach chosen, from a legal standpoint, the board held the highest position in the organization's hierarchy (Ahmed, 2012; Herman & Heimovics, 2005). However, Heimovics et al. (1993) countered the traditional perspective of nonprofit leadership that placed the board of directors as the top leadership of the organization. Instead, they argued that the chief executive officer or the executive director in some organizations occupied the most pivotal position in the nonprofit organization. As the entrepreneur of the organization, these executive leaders must constantly clarify and redefine the direction of the organization as a result of the constantly changing environment that creates threats and opportunities calling for strategic attention. They explained, "Because the political and funding challenges facing nonprofit organizations are so complex and volatile, their resolution is often beyond the scope of the volunteer boards and must be a principal concern of chief executives" (Heimovics et al., 1993, p. 420). Due to the uncertainty of resources and the increasing needs of individuals and families who rely on services for well-being and survival, the chief executive officer or executive director were critical to managing human, fiscal, and material resources for the strategic operation of the organization.

From a practical standpoint, the executive leader generally assumed much of the management and governance responsibilities (Ahmed, 2012; Herman & Heimovics, 2005). As Ahmed explained, similar to the external environment, the internal culture, history, and other factors influenced an organization. These same forces influenced the responsibility of the executive, causing job duties to change and evolve as needed. While it was critical to stay abreast of these environmental changes, it was equally essential for the executive to ensure decisions and actions were in alignment with the mission and goals of the organization.

To that end, Herman and Heimovics (2005) identified four strategies nonprofit leaders should consider adopting to effectively fulfill organizational responsibilities:

1. Accept and act on their psychological centrality. The executive is primarily responsible for conducting the organizational operations, while enabling the nonprofit board to fulfill its leadership role.
2. Provide board-centered leadership. The boards of nonprofit organizations are more likely to be active, effective bodies when supported by an executive who is willing to serve the board as a facilitator and enabler.

3. Emphasize leadership beyond their organizations' boundaries. Given the extensive dependence of nonprofit organizations on their external environments, executives generally recognize the importance of "networking" and other external activities for understanding the changes in the environment. Furthermore, some recognize the importance and value of affecting events in the environment.
4. Think and act in political ways. An important part of the leadership role consists of building coalitions, bargaining, and resolving conflicts. Politically astute executives are comfortable with the fact that interests differ and conflict, and are skilled at negotiating, compromising, and forming alliances. (pp. 168-169)

Herman and Heimovics (2005) explained these strategies were highly interrelated, such that as leaders developed their skills in one area, their corollary skills in other areas would also be enhanced. The distinguishing characteristics of this leadership framework were grounded in board-centered, external environment, and political leadership skills, which Herman and Heimovics (2005) posited were critical to effectively leading nonprofit organizations.

Though the distinction between leader and manager has been clearly articulated in the literature, those called upon to take responsibility for the well-being of non-profit organizations often serve as both leader and manager (Fisher & Cole, 1993). As Fisher and Cole explained, "Leaders are nevertheless called on to manage and managers are expected to lead. Both roles are critical to the success of the program" (p. 5). Drawing on evidence from the literature, the researchers highlighted four major competencies of effective nonprofit leadership: (a) setting a vision or creating an agenda for the organization, (b) sharing the vision and ensuring that followers are aligned with the vision, (c) maintaining a reliable, consistent disposition and philosophy, and (d) knowing one's strength and capitalizing on that strength to mobilize employees and external stakeholders and supporters.

Those who lead and/or manage nonprofit organizations have responsibilities for setting the direction of the organization or program, encouraging others to buy into the agenda or direction, and influencing or inspiring them to work towards the accomplishment of established goals. They often fulfilled a critical role of advocacy, both internal and external to the organization. Advocacy entailed maintaining strategic relationships with employees, board members, clients, funders and policy makers, to name a few. Effective communication was key to maintaining such interpersonal relationships within the organization, the community, governmental agencies and the professions within which programs held membership. Faced with diminishing resources and increasing demands, nonprofit leaders sought new strategies to address these challenges. Nonprofit organizations responded, in part, by freezing or reducing salaries, drawing from established reserves, reducing staff size, and/or merging and partnering with other programs to reduce competition for funding (Boris et al., 2010; Malatesta & Smith, 2014).

The new reality which confronted nonprofit organizations called for a close examination into the leaders' perspectives of this changing landscape. Of particular interest was exploring the development of leadership and how that informed the leveraging of resources to meet the needs of increasing numbers of individuals and families who relied on them for services. Norris-Tirrell et al. (2017) investigated the career paths of nonprofit executive leaders to determine the factors that contributed to their progression to the executive role. The authors used a random sample of LinkedIn profiles of 12 leaders from national nonprofit organizations. They analyzed the profiles of the executive leaders to include their gender, educational attainment, generation group, career mission focus, experience with the nonprofit sector, functional job experience, and willingness to relocate.

The study found the most important factors that affected progression to executive leadership were gender, education, age, mission focused career, and sector-specific experiences (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2017). Of the study participants, 82% had previous professional experience in the nonprofit sector, 38% had previous nonprofit CEO experience, and 35% were promoted from within their organization. The findings suggested a pathway of career progression through the nonprofit sector and a common practice of moving across sectors for career advancement:

> The practice of moving out to move up indicated an ongoing opportunity for internal succession planning and intentional leadership development so that more nonprofit organizations can capitalize on mission-driven talent from within when recruiting top executive leaders. (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2017, p. 161)

Other studies of nonprofit leaders found individuals reported a career calling and a deep desire to serve (Whitaker, 2012). Moreover, they were highly experienced and enjoyed high levels of job satisfaction, with aspects of the work they found most rewarding to be making a difference, having rewarding work, having high levels of responsibility and autonomy, and having supportive colleagues (Nickson et al., 2008). Similarly, Brinckerhoff (2000) reported that nonprofit leaders chose to remain in their nonprofit sector because of their commitment to their respective organization. Nonprofit organizations depended on their top-salaried position, often their executive leadership, for the successful operation of the organization. Indeed, it has been established that effective leadership was the most important predictor of organizational sustainability and survival (Carson, 2011). Therefore, these leaders must be well versed in the nuances of managing volunteer organizations, organizational productivity, as well as the industry sector within which they provide leadership (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2017).

Summary

This section provided a review of literature related to adult education and family literacy, including relevant legislation, the nonprofit environment, and nonprofit leadership. These bodies of literature, framed by resource dependence theory, provided a guiding structure to explore the perspectives and experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations. These organizations have been impacted by constant changes in the external environment, which have resulted in the decreased supply of resources and increased demand for services, among other outcomes. This research study sought to understand and describe how leaders perceived and responded to challenging environmental changes to sustain adult education and family literacy organizations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating a downturn in the economic environment. Reductions in federal and state funding have greatly affected the ability of organizations to meet low-income, low-literate adults' increasing need for the delivery of services. While several white papers and reports have been published on the economic factors impacting these organizations, there has been little empirical research investigating how leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations managed the rising call for services despite declining organizational resources and increased competition. This research study offered an opportunity to understand the experiences of these leaders, as well as to contribute to the field's scholarship and practice.

Three research questions developed from themes in the literature guided this study:

1. How do adult education and family literacy leaders describe their journey to their current leadership positions?
2. From an organizational leadership perspective, how are adult education and family literacy organizations impacted by the downturn of the economic environment?
3. How do adult education and family literacy leaders leverage resources to sustain organizations in an era of economic downturn?

I framed each of these research questions to elicit the participants' perceptions of their own leadership experiences. I was "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Accordingly, I applied a qualitative research design utilizing the multiple case study method. Yin (2014) explained case studies are most appropriate when: 1) the research questions asked "how?" or "why?"; 2) I, as the researcher, had little or no control over events; and 3) the study concerned contemporary events. This study met all three of Yin's standards for case study research.

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research design for this study. The first half of this chapter provides an overview of the qualitative paradigm, followed by a rationale for qualitative case study research. The second half of this chapter details the research design of this study, including site selection, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical assurances, and role of the researcher. A summary paragraph concludes the chapter.

The Qualitative Paradigm

As noted in the previous section, this research study met the essential hallmarks of the qualitative paradigm, which served as the framework for this study. An overview of the qualitative paradigm is warranted, juxtaposed with its quantitative paradigm counterpart, to illuminate the diverse perspectives of each philosophy. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) summarized each philosophical orientation in Table 2 below. The ontological (nature of reality) and epistemological (nature of knowledge) underpinnings of each perspective explain in large part the differences between qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Guba, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Table 2 Epistemological Perspectives

	Positivist/Postpositivist	Interpretive/Constructivist
Purpose	Predict, control, generalize	Describe, understand, interpret
Types	Experimental, survey, quasi-experimental	Phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutic, grounded theory, naturalistic/qualitative
Reality	Objective, external, out there	Multiple realities, context-bound

Adapted from S. Merriam & E. Tisdell (2016, p. 12). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation (4th Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

As evidenced in Table 2, quantitative research emerged from a positivist orientation, while qualitative research developed from the constructivist orientation (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln; 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell discussed quantitative research “assumes that reality exists ‘out there’ and that it is observable, stable, and measurable” (p. 9). In contrast, the same scholars expressed qualitative research “assumes that reality is socially constructed…there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event” (p. 9). The distinguishing factor being knowledge is constructed and shared in qualitative research, while in quantitative research, knowledge is found and established as law (Creswell; Denzin & Lincoln; Merriam & Tisdell; Patton).

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Provided the tenets of each paradigm, qualitative research was the appropriate framework to design this study. I was interested in understanding how executive and program leaders of adult and family literacy organizations interpreted their experiences during a challenging operating environment, and what meaning they constructed from those experiences. Creswell (2013) stated qualitative research was appropriate when a problem needed to be explored to establish a deep understanding of the issue. Moreover, multiple truths were constructed through the interpretations of a single event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research allowed these leaders to share their experiences, which have been largely absent from the literature. Moreover, exploration and understanding of this issue was critical to the scholarship and practice of the adult education, family literacy, and human resource development (HRD) fields.

Rationale for Case Study Research

In an effort to thoroughly explore this contemporary issue, I employed the qualitative case study method. As previously discussed, this study met Yin's (2014) benchmarks for case study research. Other scholars have developed definitions of case study research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, Yin's two-fold definition, which reflected both scope and features of case study research, guided this study:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that:
    a. investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when

b. the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident

2. A case study inquiry:

    a. copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

    b. relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in triangulating fashion, and as another result

    c. benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (pp. 16-17)

This two-fold framework positioned me to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations as they navigated unstable operating environments. As the investigator, I was able to explore issues of leadership practice, sustainability, and innovation in-depth through the convergence of organization and environment to illuminate the specific factors which contributed to this phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Given that this research agenda had not been extensively explored, the nature of this study warranted this methodological approach.

Research Design

Site Selection

Site selection established the boundaries of the entire study, thereby delimiting the observations and recordings of the inquiry's respondents to the selected context (Erlandson et al., 1993). Participants in the qualitative study were selected deliberately in a non-random method, based on factors relevant to the study – this is purposive sampling (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling required the selection of cases that were likely to provide information-rich data related to study goals (Yin, 2014).

The Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning (TCALL) is the official state resource and professional development center for adult education and family literacy in the state of Texas. This agency proved invaluable over the course of this study, especially as it concerned identifying eligible organizations for this study. TCALL maintained comprehensive contact and historical information for Texas adult education and family literacy providers and the leaders thereof. With the assistance of the Director of TCALL and the Research Assistant for the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Grants for Texas, several organizations were identified and selected as potential sites for this study. These organizations met the parameters established for inclusion in this study: Texas-based adult education and family literacy organizations in service for at least five years or more.

Texas was selected as the site of study for several reasons: a) nearly 40% of the population in Texas speaks English as a second language, double the national rate; b) approximately 4 million Texas adults lack a high school diploma; c) high school dropouts cost the State of Texas $9.6 billion annually; and d) literacy programs in Texas serve less than 4% of the 3.8 million adults in need of adult basic education (University of Texas at Arlington, 2015). This sampling of the adult education and family literacy climate in Texas supported the need for research and development into the phenomena.

I established a targeted sample of 2-4 organizations eligible for inclusion in this study. Delimiting the sample size in this manner allowed me to do an in-depth investigation and gain perspectives of both the executive and program leaders of the organizations. I invited several organizations across the state of Texas to participate in this study, with three organizations ultimately accepted my invitation. All three organizations were non-profit, community-based organizations; however, the contexts in which they operated varied greatly. Adult education and family literacy programs are traditionally sponsored by various organizations, to include faith-based organizations, community nonprofit organizations, public school districts, and post-secondary education systems, among others. This study sought to understand how the nature of the sponsoring organization influenced the leadership innovation and the economic efficiency of the program. As such, the organizations included in this study were: a) an adult and community education department of an independent school district; b) a social and educational services organization; and c) an educational services provider with main offices in a community college.

Upon agreeing to participate in this study, each organization had to submit a Site Authorization Letter to Texas A&M's Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A). This letter granted me permission to conduct interviews and document research within the participants' organizations, while setting boundaries, such as time, date, and client interactions. Receiving site authorization was essential for individual participants of any organization to participate in this study, which is discussed in the next section.

Participant Selection

This research study focused on the perceptions and experiences of executive and program leaders of purposively sampled adult education and family literacy organizations in Texas. The executive leader was typically responsible for all facets of the organization, while the program leaders were responsible for specific programmatic areas within the organization, such as Basic Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Equivalency Diploma (GED), Workforce Development, etc. Insight into their experiences as leaders within the organization was essential, especially given the diminishing availability of resources coupled with increasing demand for services.

As previously noted, initial prospective participants were identified with the assistance of the Director of TCALL and the Research Assistant for the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Grants for Texas. Participant selection was dependent wholly and first upon site selection and authorization. For executive and program leaders to participate in the research study, the site had to be properly authorized in accordance with IRB protocols. Three organizations accepted my invitation to participate in the study and authorized their organizations as sites of research. Furthermore, all available program and executive leaders within each of the organizations agreed to participate in my study. Overall, eight leaders from three adult and family literacy organizations participated in this study. This small representation of purposely selected cases allowed for depth in the pursuit of data, while keeping the collection process manageable, as suggested by researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Data Collection

In qualitative research, interviews are reflected as dialogues or interactions between the researcher and the respondent with a purpose (Creswell, 2013). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), interviews enable the inquirer and the respondent to take a journey through time to reconstruct the past, gain a deeper insight into the present, and make some predictions about the future. Accordingly, data for this qualitative case study were collected primarily through conducting in-depth interviews with the participants. One onsite, face-to-face, semi-structured interview with the executive and program leaders was scheduled within each organization, with as many follow-up phone calls and/or emails to clarify points and ask additional questions as needed.

The interviews were digitally recorded with participants' permission and professionally transcribed. Furthermore, in accordance with the tenets of qualitative case study research, data were collected from organizational documents, archival records, memos, researcher notes, and other documents, which added to the rich contextual data of the study. All the data were compiled and organized into a case study database as Yin (2014) recommended. This allowed me to manage and access the data in an organized manner.

Interview Protocol

Research questions for this study focused on leadership development, leadership practices, as well as economic and sustainability practices, challenges, and opportunities. The semi-structured questions that comprised the interview protocol originated from this study's research questions and were shaped to elicit leaders' experiences in an era of diminishing resources (See Appendix B).

I met with each executive and program leader in their respective place of work. In two of the three sites, the visits were coordinated such that the participant interviews could take place in one day, given their locations required me to travel two to four hours. The third city also required travel time (one hour); however, that same day coordination was not possible. During each interview, I introduced myself, explained the research study, and reviewed consent form components prior to its signing and commencing the interview (See Appendix C). I specifically emphasized the voluntary nature of each participant's engagement in the study, her assurance of confidentiality, and her freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant signed the consent form for this study, and the interview followed.

The interview protocol was organized into three sections to align with the three research questions that guided this study (See Appendix B). The first set of interview questions, derived from the first research question, reviewed the participants' leadership development over the course of their careers to present. The second set of interview questions, based on the second research question, examined how their programs and organizations have been impacted by changes in the external environment, specifically diminishing economic resources, from their perspective as a leader. The final set of questions, based on the third research question, explored how they navigated these periods of instability between the external environment and the organization to address organizational imperatives, such as sustainability and innovation.

Probing was a technique used to gather more detailed information about something that had been asked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). They were essentially follow-up questions, or as Seidman (2013) preferred, opportunities for further exploration. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, they "can be as simple as seeking more information or clarity about what the person has just said. These are typically who, what, when, and where questions" (p. 123). To that end, the following list includes examples of follow up questions used during my interviews:

1. What do you mean by that?
2. What did you do then?
3. How did that make you feel?
4. What happened during that experience?

The individual interviews generally lasted 1.5 – 2.5 hours. The interviews were digitally recorded with the participants' permission, and during the interview, I took reflective and clarity notes. Upon completion of the interviews, the recordings were professionally transcribed to accurately capture the data. To promote credibility in this study, the transcripts were sent to the participants for review and feedback as a form of member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Documents

To triangulate the data collected from semi-structured interviews, Yin (2014) recommended collecting supplemental data from documents. Prior to conducting the face-to-face interviews, I gleaned as much extant information from each organization's website and social media sites. Once onsite for the interviews, I collected supplemental documents from each program and executive leader as appropriate and available, including annual reports, program evaluations, marketing materials, and the like. The sum total of this data provided a fuller picture of the participating organizations.

Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described data analysis as the process of assigning meaning to data by, "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (p. 202). As they explained, this process occurred throughout the research study, such that the data collection and analysis was an interactive process that progressed steadily throughout the qualitative study. The resultant meanings produced as a result of data analysis constituted the findings of the study, which were organized and detailed in such a way that explained the data collected from the study (Merriam & Tisdell). Though Merriam and Tisdell noted this approach was appropriate for all qualitative research, the researchers stipulated case study design had several caveats. They explained:

> First, a case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data. Data have usually been derived from interviews, field observations, and documents. In addition to a tremendous amount of data, this range of data sources may present disparate, incompatible, even apparently contradictory information. The case study researcher can be seriously challenged in trying to make sense out of the data. (pp. 232-233)

Yin (2014) stressed the importance of systematically managing all the data components of the case study in a database. However, my research was a multiple case study, which Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited presented even more issues with which to contend given simply the large amounts of raw data. Accordingly, I followed the recommended two stage data analysis method: a) within-case analysis; and b) cross-case analysis (Merriam & Tisdell; Yin).

I began data analysis for this study during the data collection phase by reading each case for a sense of overall ideas (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Upon completion of each case's interviews, I prepared a profile of the organization and the participants interviewed. This allowed for an initial understanding of the organization, the services provided, and the career history of the participating leaders. As Merriam and Tisdell suggested, during the within-case analysis, I analyzed each case distinctly; I discovered as many factors which impacted each case individually through thematic analysis. Once I completed the first phase of analysis, I proceeded to the next phase of analysis in which I conducted analysis across the cases to search for similarities and differences in themes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell; Yin).

I manually coded the data utilizing the constant comparative method, "which involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). Through this method of data analysis, patterns emerged in the data, ultimately exposing categories and themes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell). I created an Excel workbook to capture the codes, categories, and themes for each interview transcript. Though not conventional, creating this workbook allowed for easily accessible data management and creation of my notecards, which I used to ultimately create the findings report in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that as the researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in this research study. In this role, the relationship between the study's participants and I were interrelated, with each influencing the other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I mitigated biases and assumptions throughout the study by emphasizing multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell). Accordingly, it was essential that I utilized trustworthiness measures to ensure methodological rigor and soundness, authenticity of the participants' distinct responses, and the ethical protection of their multiple constructed realities (Creswell, 2013; Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam & Tisdell).

I also maintained a journal to record observations and thoughts when conducting qualitative research. As Stake (2010) explained, research journal notes may contain study references and contact information for participants, as well as researcher notes, concerns, and contemplations. Meaningful connections may emerge between theory and practice to provoke deeper understanding through the journaling process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2013) noted, reflection creates a deeper understanding of research as a process and allows researchers to consider the phenomenon being studied as well as the influence of their assumptions on the investigation.

In keeping a research journal, I was able to examine assumptions and personal reasons for conducting research, discover biases, and consider their influence on my research (Stake, 2010). I kept a journal in electronic format for ease of preparation and to store links to research articles for review and potential inclusion in this study. When themes emerged from data analysis, I conducted an ongoing literature search on topics related to tentative findings and stored links in the journal, resulting in additional peer-reviewed articled being added to the study.

Additional trustworthiness techniques utilized in this study were triangulation and member checking. These were credibility-enhancing techniques which concerned demonstrating the realities of the participants have been interpreted and represented as accurately as possible by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks were conducted to allow participants to review the interview transcripts. This ensured the reconstructions of their realities were represented appropriately (Lincoln & Guba). Member checking occurred continuously throughout the research study to assist participants in correcting errors immediately, remembering additional information, and assessing the overall representation of the reconstructed inquiry. Interviews were triangulated with data collected from notes in my research journal and documents collected from each program and executive leader.

Ethical Assurances

Ethical assurances for this study included issues of integrity, such as securing informed consent, minimizing risk, ensuring right to privacy, and portraying respondents' views honestly and accurately (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Integrity was an important concern throughout this qualitative study from research design to data collection, analysis, and reporting. Data collection methods demonstrated the need for integrity to preserve participants' rights to privacy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As such, participation in this research study was voluntary. Each participant completed an informed consent form, and received verbal and written assurance of her confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity throughout the research study. Neither the site, nor the participant was published or identified in any format; pseudonyms were used in their stead. Moreover, participants were informed and understood they could withdraw from the study at any time without risk of penalty. Research records and transcriptions from interviews were stored securely and will be destroyed in accordance with IRB guidelines. Following these procedures protected the rights of the participants.

Role and Positionality of the Researcher

Part of my role as researcher was my connection to the topic of study. In this position, reflexivity remained essential and entailed "reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Guba & Lincoln, 2013, p. 278). With researcher and participant interpretations forming essential elements of data collection and analysis in a case study, reflexivity must include mindfulness of the researcher's background such as bias that could influence the study's direction and the subjective interpretations of data (Guba & Lincoln). Creswell (2013) suggested identifying one's own biases and assumptions at the onset of a study, which follows.

After earning my undergraduate degree in 1998, I worked two years at a charter school in Texas, which served at-risk high school students. The charter school was the last opportunity for many of the students to earn a high school diploma, for the traditional high school format proved not to be a good fit for them. These students dealt with issues of teen parenthood, the juvenile justice system, holding full-time jobs, and unstable home environments, all while trying to earn a high school diploma. They were victims of the cyclical effects low-income and low education levels have on the family unit. Earning their high school diploma would be essential to breaking their family cycle and improving future opportunities.

After I left the teaching profession, I worked in human resources for the next 10 years. During that time, I took advantage of volunteer opportunities to mentor and tutor at risk students. Through my teaching experience, I witnessed the power education had to uplift disadvantaged students and I wanted to continue that work. Through various volunteering opportunities, such as the YMCA's Black Achiever's Program, I was able to work with at-risk teens, empowering them through education.

After 10 years working in human resources, I transitioned to a fulltime doctoral student in Human Resource Development (HRD). My personal interest in empowering at-risk youth through education initially drew me to the topic of adult education and family literacy. Given HRD's concern with learning and development for overall performance, I wanted to ensure this study combined my personal and scholarly interests. Therefore, the topic of this study focuses on leadership and organization performance within the context of adult education and family literacy. As a result, this study is appropriately aligned within the HRD domain, while simultaneously exploring an issue that HRD researchers have not previously addressed.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the research methodology for this qualitative multi-case study designed to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating major shifts in the economic environment. Following an introduction containing an overview of the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions presented in the first chapter, this chapter identified the research methods for this study and justified the applicability of the qualitative case study design. The first half of the chapter provided an overview of the qualitative paradigm, followed by a rationale for qualitative case study research. The second half of the chapter detailed the research design of this study, including site selection, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical assurances, and role of the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating the most recent economic downturn. During the Great Recession, the financial and housing markets collapsed, resulting in increased unemployment and poverty for working families. Low-income adults and families increasingly sought services from adult education and family literacy providers to facilitate economic security during such times. How do leaders of such organizations manage to meet the growing need for services despite declining organizational resources and increased competition? The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do adult education and family literacy leaders describe their journey to their current leadership positions?
2. From an organizational leadership perspective, how have adult education and family literacy organizations been impacted by changes in the external environment?
3. How do adult education and family literacy leaders leverage resources to sustain organizations in an era of economic downturn?

In an effort to thoroughly explore this research agenda, I used the qualitative multiple case study method. This approach allowed me to explore this issue within the context of actual organizations (Yin, 2014). In this chapter, I first present a profile of each of the three cases and their participants, followed by the major findings of the study.

Case Profiles

To protect the identity and ensure the confidentiality of the organizations, each site was labeled Case 1, 2 or 3 with a general description of the type of organization studied. Additionally, the individual participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Case 1: Department in Independent School District (ISD)

Case 1 was a department within an independent school district charged with providing learning and development opportunities for the entire community. Through a broad array of programs and curricula, this organization focused on serving “children, parents, and adult community members by providing educational and enrichment opportunities that help all achieve the ability to function, contribute and compete in an ever-changing world” (2011-2012 Annual Report, p.1). Kelly, the director, explained the department began years ago with a sole focus on community education and has steadily expanded over the years to provide an expansive array of educational programs. A brief description of the major programmatic areas provided by Case 1 follows.

Community Education

The community education program was established in 1984 to “foster lifelong learning for all community members” (2011-2012 Annual Report, p.2). Accordingly, a variety of personal and professional development classes were offered throughout the year for children, adults and seniors in the community. Classes were organized into four major categories: a) Profit and Information Technology; b) The Arts; c) Mind and Body; and d) Fun and Play. In addition, many certifications and continuing education credits were available to those in such occupational fields as teaching, counseling, accounting and social work. Overall, 11,000 students registered for 1,600 course offerings throughout the 2011-2012 year as reported in the annual report. Moreover, the program sustained itself through tuition and fees paid by program registrants.

Adult Education

The Adult Education program area in Case 1 was founded on the belief that all Texans have the fundamental right to a basic education. The department's mission was that every adult living in Texas had the basic skills necessary to be an effective and functional member at home, at work, and in the community (2011-2012 Annual Report). Accordingly, instruction was provided in basic education, adult secondary education/general education development (GED) preparation, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Translating this mission to actual program enrollments and completions, 1,674 adults enrolled and completed program requirements for adult education during the 2011-2012 academic year – 693 in basic education, 936 in ESOL, and 45 in ASE/GED classes (2011-2012 Annual Report, p. 7).

Apprenticeship Training

As detailed in the 2011-2012 Annual Report, Case 1 offered fiscal management for nine apprenticeship programs in surrounding communities to prepare adults for skilled trades and occupations. These programs included Insulators, Carpenters, Electricians, Telecommunications, Iron Workers, Plumbers and Pipefitters, and Sheet

Metal Workers (2011-2012 Annual Report, p. 9). Course curricula involved structured, on-the-job, paid training. In addition, students were required to make a three- to five-year commitment to reach program completion. According to the 2011-2012 Annual Report, 700 students were enrolled in the Apprenticeship Training program, and 112 completed the program during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Family Involvement

Created in 2009, Family Involvement was the newest program area in the department and was designed to build community between schools and families to enhance the overall learning of children. A variety of free educational workshops were provided for adult family members throughout the school district, with free childcare provided. Workshop topics include: a) parenting workshops, such as “How to Help My Angry Child” and “Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren”; b) parenting newcomer workshops, such as “Understanding the School System in the USA” and “Path to Productive Summer”; c) a program which provides books and CDs to learn the English language at home; d) a six weeks early literacy series for parents with children under the age of 5 to prepare children for school; e) American Heart Association CPR class (without course completion card); and f) a parenting series for parents facing various challenges, such as defiant teens or obstacles at school (Family Involvement Flyer, n.d.). The ultimate goal of these workshops was to increase children’s success in school through the increased involvement and influence of parents. During the 2011-2012 academic year, the number of children enrolled was approximately 1,000 and adults reached an enrollment of nearly 1,500 (2011-2012 Annual Report).

Family Literacy

Since 1993, Case 1 offered a holistic family literacy program for the school district and surrounding communities. Moreover, despite the zeroing out of federal Even Start funding, this organization guaranteed the continuation of this program going forward. This integrative program was comprised of the following curricula: English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), adult secondary education (ASE), interactive literacy activities, academic home visits, and parenting sessions. Overall, a total of 1,397 children and 2,581 adults were enrolled in family literacy initiatives in 2011-2012 (2011-2012 Annual Report).

Learning Tree

The Learning Tree program provided an after-school environment for children to have access to academic enrichment, as well as social and recreational experiences, including Girl Scouts, Junior Achievement, and Read Across America (2011-2012 Annual Report, p. 14-23). It began in 1999 with three grant-funded after-school centers. By the 2011-2012 academic year, learning tree sites were available at 39 elementary schools and 6 middle schools throughout the school district, with approximately half of the locations operating as tuition-based programs.

The following table (Table 3) illustrates the funding history of Case 1 by the program areas described above.

Table 3 Case 1 – Three Year Funding History by Program.

Program	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Adult Education	$915,874	$1,026,067	$930,717
Apprenticeship	$575,821	$621,000	$555,442
Community Education	$1,082,201	$1,082,201	$1,186,281
Family Involvement	$96,454	$144,502	$76,200
Family Literacy	$802,134	$932,862	$890,757
Learning Tree	$3,315,580	$3,805,971	$4,724,957
Special Project	$7,000	$41,400	$9,675
Total	**$6,795,064**	**$7,654,003**	**$8,374,029**

Adapted from 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Annual Reports.

To understand how these programs have been impacted by changes in the economic environment, if at all, I interviewed the director of the department, as well as the coordinators of the adult education program, the family literacy program and the family involvement program. A brief profile of each person follows.

Kelly Smith – Director

Kelly earned her undergraduate degree in Interdepartmental Secondary Education and her teacher's certificate in Special Education from a private liberal arts college in Texas. After graduation, she spent three years working at a Title I middle school teaching reading to migrant students. Kelly then transferred to a high school and taught junior- and senior-level English. Three years later, a Title I consultant position became available in the central office, for which she applied. By this time, she completed her master's degree in Educational Supervision and felt prepared for the transition to a supervisory role. Kelly was selected for and accepted the consultant position. However, she soon realized she moved from the classroom to supervisor too quickly. After less than two years as a consultant, Kelly decided to return to the classroom to focus on her career development.

Kelly accepted a position at a middle school working with students who were below reading level, thereby beginning her 30-year career with her current school district. At that time, the school's demographics were shifting due to integration and changing school district boundaries, resulting in a large influx of Hispanic students. She expressed her prior experience working with migrant students made her an ideal candidate for this teaching position. Within a year, she was named coordinator of the English department and held that post for 12 years. During that time, she was the lead for writing curricula across disciplines, as well as for conducting staff development on teaching writing across content areas. In addition, she was named teacher of the year at the middle school, the school district, and at the region.

By 1993, Kelly was ready for a new challenge. She returned to school to obtain her mid-management certificate, which required an additional 30 credit hours beyond her master's degree. Once she completed her certificate, Kelly embarked on the path to school principal. She quickly advanced from a middle school assistant principal dealing with discipline issues, to a vice principal handling instruction and master scheduling, to being named principal within three years of receiving her mid-management certificate. In her role as principal, Kelly focused on the organization of the middle school's education, particularly academic teaming. This approach grouped students with a core team of teachers who combined resources and knowledge to provide interdisciplinary instruction and collaboration. Kelly led this effort for six years.

However, due to changes in the economy and standardized testing protocols, the district could no longer support the school's academic teaming approach to education. Rather, the middle school returned to the more traditional departmentalized approach in which students received instruction from several different teachers who each specialized in a single content area. Kelly had a difficult time accepting this change. At that time, the director position became available in the adult and community education department within her school district. After obtaining more information about the position from the outgoing director, Kelly decided that was where she belonged. In 2004, she was selected to be the director to lead all program areas under the adult and community education umbrella. Though she no longer worked in K-12 schools, Kelly explained her primary objective remained to assist children, which she accomplished through working with adults and families in her programs.

Wendy Rogers – Coordinator, Adult Education

Wendy received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from a public university in California. Then, she and her new husband relocated to his new military base in Texas. Rather than obtaining a teaching credential, Wendy decided to pursue a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling. While in graduate school, Wendy was hired as a data collector for a state agency's pilot program on standardized testing and evaluation. Once she completed her master's degree, she decided to continue working with the agency as an evaluator. Although, she felt this position did not give her a commensurate title or salary for her graduate degree, she accepted it and worked her way up in the organization. Wendy started out evaluating Title I and Title II programs in the local school district. Soon thereafter, she was tasked with evaluating the adult education program within her employing agency. Wendy surmised she did a good job because, "They would rather have me work with them than instead of work against them".

Wendy assumed even greater responsibility in the agency when she was hired as a professional development staff member in the Adult Education department. She traveled across Texas conducting staff development on basic education and adult secondary education, including computer technology, which was being newly introduced into adult education classrooms. She spent several years doing this work. However, lack of money and recognition ultimately prompted Wendy to leave the organization after 20 years. Her employment status with the agency was grant-funded and based entirely on the grant cycle. If the grant was renewed, then her position was renewed; if the grant was not renewed, then her position was not renewed. Wendy explained, "Every time the grant was over in June, I didn't have a job until the grant got re-upped again in September." Furthermore, the entire Adult Education department was grant-funded and subjected to the same grant cycle, proving very stressful for Wendy who had assumed grant-writing responsibilities for funding the departments' activities.

Once she learned of the availability of the coordinator of adult education position within the school district, she quietly applied. Wendy was selected and has been with the adult and community education department since 2000. As the program coordinator, Wendy managed the adult secondary education program, the GED preparation and testing program, and the ESOL program, among other adult education initiatives within the department.

Michelle Jones – Coordinator, Family Literacy

Michelle's entire professional career, which spanned over 20 years, was spent working in education with her current school district. She earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Bilingual Education from a private university in Texas. Additionally, she received certifications to teach K-8th grade and bilingual education. After graduation, Michelle taught 2nd grade bilingual instruction for three years. During this time, she returned to school to work on her master's degree in Educational Leadership and a mid-management certification, both of which she received in 1995. The following year, Michelle was appointed the program facilitator of a new reading program, marking her transition from the classroom to administration.

Michelle's role as the facilitator of the reading program involved coordinating the academic support and the family support children needed to ensure their academic success. To that end, she collaborated with teachers and parents to establish goals, measure progress, and communicate about the overall welfare of the students. Once a week, Michelle conducted a workshop for parents to help their children be better students. Her team also provided referral services to students who appeared to be struggling in and out of the classroom. She explained this role provided access to, and a depth of knowledge of, issues facing economically disadvantaged families, and the impact it had on children in the classroom – much more than she would have known as a teacher.

Michelle continued as facilitator of the reading program for two years. However, a change in school leadership was accompanied by a change in vision and a lessening of the strict adherence to the protocols that the reading program required. Michelle was uncomfortable with this shift, and began to look for vice principal positions. However, her friend was leaving her position as coordinator of the family literacy program within the school district, and encouraged Michelle to apply for the position. At first, Michelle hesitated because she was not sure if she was ready to be in charge of an entire program. However, the point came when she was ready to leave her facilitator position, so she applied and was selected for the position. Since 1998, Michelle has served as the coordinator of family literacy for the adult and community education department, leading efforts to provide education outreach services to adults, children, and families in the community.

Amanda Taylor – Coordinator, Family Involvement

Amanda received her bachelor's degree in Business Management Advertising from a liberal arts university in Texas. Once she graduated, worked in sales for a Spanish television channel Texas for six years. She then worked in advertising for five years, where her markets were in regions of Texas with largely Hispanic populations, including Laredo and The Valley. Amanda then left the field entirely to teach religious education classes at a Catholic church, which she did for the next seven years.

After a brief return to the advertising field on a part-time basis, she applied for her current position of family involvement coordinator. Amanda was aware that a significant portion of the adults and families served by the department were economically disadvantaged and were Spanish speakers. She identified with this population and knew the challenges facing these families at home, in the school, and in the community. Amanda wanted to help these families address obstacles so that they could have a good life. In the end, she was selected to be the coordinator and is responsible for all family involvement programming efforts and initiatives. Furthermore, she uses her sales and advertising background to market the program within the community, especially to partner with economically disadvantaged schools and nonprofit organizations.

Case 2: Independent Community Organization

Case 2 was an independent community organization located in a rural town in Texas. Its core mission was providing educational and support services to improve the economic standing of adults and families in surrounding communities. Founded in 1992, the three founding members, including the current executive director, formed the organization to mitigate the social and economic issues which affected the community at that time. Over the course of twenty years, the organization maintained its anti-poverty mission while expanding its scope to address the educational needs of the community.

As such, programmatic services within Case 2 were organized into two categories: social services and educational services. Through the social service programs, the organization offered assistance and resources to low-income families in the community and surrounding areas. As detailed on the organization's website, the primary areas of social services concerned homelessness prevention/financial crisis, forms assistance, and the on-site thrift store.

Homelessness Prevention/Financial Crisis

Through the use of federal grants, the organization helps families faced with losing housing due to eviction, as well as families that required assistance securing housing. To be considered for this program, individuals or families must have an income at or below the poverty line and be in the midst of a recent financial crisis, such as loss of income.

Forms Assistance

Assistance with the completion of government and legal documents was provided with the understanding that the requisite literacy skills necessary to accurately and wholly complete such complex documents were quite high. As such, the organization provided trained individuals, including bilingual staff, to assist community members with such involved literacy matters in order to increase their economic resources, food resources, health resources, education resources, and the like. Anyone that needed assistance completing a form was eligible for this program.

Thrift Store

Case 2 operated and maintained a free, on-site thrift store. The store offered clothes, shoes, linens, furniture and appliances, all of which were free for members of the community.

In conjunction with these social services, Case 2 also delivered learning opportunities for adults and children in the community and surrounding areas. The educational component within Case 2 was comprised of the following programs: family literacy, English as a second language, GED partnerships, and an early childhood development center (Seaman, 2012).

Family Literacy

This program served low-income families with at least one parent with basic education needs and at least one child under the age of eight years old. There were four components to this program: adult education, which was provided in the form of English as a second language classes (ESL); early childhood education which was provided through the Early Childhood Development Center; parenting education; and parents and children together activities (PACT).

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Beginning through intermediate ESL classes were offered to assist students learn the English language. Classes were offered during the day as part of the family literacy program, as well as in the evening, with childcare available for children aged 3-10.

GED Partnerships

Case 2 does not directly offer GED preparation courses or testing services. However, the organization encouraged the completion of both and partnered with other agencies in the community that provided GED services. As a result, Case 2 served as a referral service for those students seeking information concerning the GED, referring them to their partnering agencies.

Early Childhood Development Center

This center served the children of the parents in the family literacy program. Research-based instruction was centered on preparing children to be successful in a literate world, while ensuring the activities were age-appropriate and fun.

Table 4 illustrates the three year funding history of Case 2 by the program areas described above.

Table 4 Case 2 – Three Year Funding History by Program.

Program	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
E/L Civics	$103,503	$112,127	$93,701
Emergency Food & Shelter	$10,110	$4,000	$0
Emergency Shelter Grant	$69,332	$83,871	$108,348
Family Literacy	$199,868	$163,364	$94,019
Local Revenues	$8,776	$29,774	$62,140
Total	**$391,589**	**$393,136**	**$358,208**

Adapted from 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Annual Reports.

In reviewing the Annual Financial Report (2012), this organization received 26% of its revenue from the English Literacy (E/L) Civics program ($94K) and 26% from Even Start Family Literacy Program ($94K). The total revenue for the organization in 2011-2012 was $358K.

I wanted to understand how the adult education and family literacy efforts provided by Case 2 were affected in recent years by changes in the economic environment. Therefore, I interviewed the executive director of the organization, as well as the adult education coordinator. Given this was a smaller organization than Case 1, there were only two leaders in this organization, both of whom met the criteria for inclusion in this study.

Carol Williams – Executive Director

Carol described herself as having a nontraditional background. She completed work towards a bachelor's in English; however, she never finished the final math and physical education credit necessary for degree completion. She eventually earned a Nonprofit Management Certificate and a Paralegal Certificate along her career journey. Prior to becoming involved in the adult education and social services field, Carol volunteered for a domestic violence shelter and was hired on as a case worker. After two years, Carol was fired by the director of the shelter, whom Carol perceived was treating her unfairly. That incident served as the motivating force for Carol to create her own nonprofit organization.

Carol, along with several other staff from the domestic violence shelter, formed a nonprofit agency in a neighboring town. She explained people in this area lived in poverty and were disconnected from social support systems because there was no public transportation between cities. Their nonprofit organization addressed the poverty issue by providing social and education services directly to the community. This marked the beginning of Carol's 20-year career as director of the organization. The agency started with one project-based learning class delivered to a group of homeless people, and have evolved to the social and education services available in present day. Carol directs the efforts of all of these programs, with the assistance of her small, but effective, team.

Heather Nichols – Adult Education Coordinator

Heather double majored in Political Science and Communication at a private liberal arts college Texas. Two years later, she returned to school to receive her certificate in Secondary Teaching. Upon graduation, Heather started teaching at a middle school; however, she realized she did not want to be a secondary teacher, though she enjoyed educating people and desired to work in a nonprofit organization. To that end, she enrolled in a developmental adult education program to complete a master's degree. It was during the course of her graduate studies that Heather became familiar with the organization in Case 2. She met Carol, the executive director, while writing her thesis; Heather included students from the nonprofit in her study. Carol hired Heather to teach one evening GED class per week. When the organization received funding to start an Even Start program, Heather's role expanded to teaching GED preparation as part of that program. She was also responsible for the E/L Civics grant, primarily because she possessed the educational credentials the grant mandated, which Carol lacked. Over the course of 12 years with the organization, Heather transitioned from the ESL classroom into administration. For the past six years, Heather has been in her current role of adult education coordinator, in which she supervises the current teaching staff and collects and reports data for the various programs.

Case 3: Community College Partnership

The third case in this study was an organization that partnered with the local community college to provide educational services to adults and families in the community. This organization was founded in 1990 with a mission of improving lives through the elimination of illiteracy. The initial program consisted solely of the delivery of adult basic literacy instruction. However, through a myriad of collaborations with other agencies, English as a Second Language (ESL) was soon offered as an educational program. Based on the successes achieved by the organization, the local community college subcontracted its entire adult education program to the organization in 2001, 11 years after its inception. This partnership broadened Case 3's educational services to include Adult Basic Education, GED preparation, college preparation, and ESL programs. In addition, the organization offered family literacy services in conjunction with the community college and school district. A brief description of the program areas is provided below.

Adult Basic Education

Basic education courses were provided for adults possessing a 4th grade math or reading level as determined by a pre-test administered by the organization. Instructors and in-class volunteers worked in concert with students to ensure the self-paced curricula met the learning needs of adults.

GED Preparation

Tutoring and instruction was provided for adults preparing to take the GED exam. Students who pre-tested at the requisite level can take pre-GED and GED courses, which are delivered in a standard classroom environment. In addition, tutoring is available in the areas of math, reading and writing for those who require additional support.

College Preparation

A college readiness program was offered for students who have completed the GED exam, but were not at the college-level in one or more areas. The objective of this intensive program was to facilitate the successful transition of the adult to the college environment. To that end, eligible students took courses at the local community college to address their particular academic needs, as well as to assist in their acclimation with the college's structure and culture.

Dual Enrollment

Case 3 offered a dual enrollment program in which adults had the opportunity to simultaneously complete school and work-related courses to become employable upon program completion. Students enrolled in this program had the benefit of taking courses to complete their GED while also taking workforce training classes, such as Pharmacy Technician, Physical Therapy Aide, Medical Admin Assistant, and Certified Nurse's Aide. The primary objective of this program was that students completed both the GED and the certification at the same time to make the goal of employability attainable.

English as a Second Language

ESL instruction was provided at multiple skill levels to meet the needs of adult learners. In addition, individual and group tutoring was offered to supplement classroom training. Classes were also available for those students preparing to take the U.S. citizenship examination.

Family Literacy

In collaboration with the local school district and community college, a family literacy program was provided to families in need. This partnership, structured as a family learning center, provided educational services and childcare to low-income, Limited English Proficient (LEP) families free of charge. Adults eligible to participate received parenting education, job-related skills, and parenting and child together time (PACT) each week.

Community Book Program

This program provided new and gently used children's books to low-income families. The books were made readily available throughout the community so that children have easy access to choose and keep a book.

The following tables illustrate the funding histories of Case 3 by the program area (Table 5), by federal funding (Table 6) and by state funding (Table 7).

Table 5 Case 3 – Three Year Funding History by Program.

Program	12/31/2010	12/31/2011	12/31/2012
Public Support	$204,217	$219,484	$728,540
Grants	$940,458	$1,070,934	$1,001,346
Foundations	$0	$0	$135,375
In-kind Donations	$194,044	$220,261	$239,051
Special Events	$37,036	$48,579	$139,896
Book Sales	$24,821	$19,224	$16,377
Gain/Loss on Assets	$914	($3,018)	$32,611
Dividends	$524	$5,500	$18,265
Interest	$433	$329	$329
Miscellaneous Revenue	$2,376	$0	$1,377
Total	**$1,404,823**	**$1,581,293**	**$2,313,167**

Adapted from 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Annual Reports.

Table 6 Case 3 – Two Year Federal Funding History by Source.

Federal Funding Source	12/31/2011	12/31/2012
U.S. Department of Education	$525,097	$522,308
U.S. Department of HHS	$71,042	$65,814
U.S. Department of Labor	$42,052	$0
U.S. Department of HUD	$35,467	$28,235
Total	**$673,658**	**$616,358**

Adapted from 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Annual Reports.

Table 7 Case 3 – Two Year State Funding History by Source.

State Funding Source	12/31/2011	12/31/2012
U.S. Department of Education	$91,981	$94,712
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	$88,947	$175,690
Total	**$180,928**	**$270,402**

Adapted from 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Annual Reports.

As in the first two cases, I wanted to understand how the adult education and family literacy efforts provided by Case 3 were affected in recent years by changes in the economic environment. As such, I interviewed the executive director of the organization, as well as the parent services coordinator.

Tara Brown – Executive Director

Tara earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from a public university in Texas. After graduating from college, she taught 2nd grade reading at an economically disadvantaged elementary school. Tara explained that in working with her students, she observed how both the children and the parents struggled within the low-income environment. She continued to teach for six years until she began a family of her own. For the next 10 years, Tara stayed home to raise her two children until 1990, when a friend asked her if she would help some adults learn to read. Tara did not like the fact that an adult could not read to their child, so she agreed to tutor the adults for free. A few months later, Tara's friend received a $30,000 grant to form the organization studied in Case 3. Tara helped her with the initial grant and has been with the organization since. She was hired as a Program Director for Teaching and Curriculum where she was in the classroom working directly with the adult learners.

During that time, the organization went through three executive director changes. After the last executive director's departure, Tara was approached about assuming the position. Tired of the constant leadership changes, she accepted the offer to serve as Executive Director in 1996. Admittedly, she felt more comfortable in the classroom and questioned whether she was the right fit for the director position. However, in time, she developed into an effective leader, especially astute at community engagement and fundraising. She has remained in the position to this day, where she directs the programs and services within her organization.

Phyllis Davis – Parent Services Coordinator

Phyllis studied graphic design in her home country of Argentina, but did not complete her degree. Having a bilingual education background, she taught English as a foreign language to kindergarten children for eight years. Then she, along with her husband and two young children, immigrated to the United States and settled in Texas. Though she identified as bilingual, Phyllis took classes to improve her English language skills. This was how she became familiar with the organization in Case 3. Phyllis took the placement exams to determine which ESL course would be appropriate for her level.

However, she tested too high to be placed in any class. Instead, she was asked to volunteer as a tutor or to work as an ESL instructor for lower level courses. Based on Phyllis' immigration status at that time, she was restricted from working, so she accepted the volunteer position with the organization.

Phyllis explained she learned a lot in her volunteer position, and it allowed her to become familiar with the organization and the community. Once she received her work documentation, Phyllis was hired as a part-time teacher position for beginning ESL courses. She continued to teach until 2009, when she was offered her current position coordinating the organization's family literacy program. In her new position, Phyllis' role expanded from ESL instruction to being responsible for the education of parents and children. In addition, she provided support and resources to families, such as assisting in making doctor's appointments or information concerning the school district.

Summary

Although the cases differed in context, they shared the overarching goal of providing services to low income and low literate adults in their communities. They represented the diversity of adult education providers across the state, which include independent school districts, community colleges, and independent non-profit organizations. While there was some variability in program offerings, collectively, they offered the core services of adult basic education, family literacy, GED preparation and testing, academic enrichment for adults and families, and support services and resources.

As noted in Table 8, the eight participants in this study were all women who experienced various paths to leadership of adult education and family literacy

Table 8 Participant Summary – All Cases

Pseudonym	Current Position	Years in Position	Prior Position	Highest Degree
Tara Brown	Executive Director	17 years	Program Director, Teaching & Curriculum	Bachelor's in Elementary Education
Phyllis Davis	Parent Services Coordinator	5 years	Part-time ESL Instructor	N/A
Michelle Jones	Coordinator, Family Literacy	15 years	Program Facilitator at Elementary School	Master's in Educational Leadership with Certification in Mid-Management
Heather Nichols	Adult Education Coordinator	12 years	Adjunct Faculty at Community College	Master's in Developmental Adult Education and Adult Education Administrator Credential
Wendy Rogers	Coordinator, Adult Education	13 years	Staff and Professional Development at State Agency	Master's in Guidance and Counseling
Kelly Smith	Director	9 years	Middle School Principal	Master's in Educational Supervision with Certification in Mid-Management
Amanda Taylor	Coordinator, Family Involvement	3 years	Part-time Advertising	Bachelor's in Business Management Advertising
Carol Williams	Executive Director	20 years	Case Worker at Domestic Violence Agency	Adult Education Administrator Credential and Certificate in Non-Profit Management

Note: Self-reported at time of data collection.

organizations. At the time of the study, they held such titles as executive director, director or coordinator. They had varied educational credentials, with four earning master's degree, two with bachelor's degrees, one with a certificate in nonprofit management, and one with no identified education credential. Tenure in their current position ranged from 3 – 20 years, with a total of 94 years of experience among them at the time of data collection.

Leadership Journey

In this section, I present the participants' pathways to leadership of adult education and family literacy programs. These are organized according to the following categories: (a) foundations of leadership, (b) transition to leadership, and (c) leadership of adult education organizations (See Table 9). Discussion of these categories and their corresponding themes and subthemes follows.

Foundations of Leadership

As participants reflected on their foundations of leadership, they described their early preparation and the various pathways leading to their introduction and engagement with adult education and family literacy. As noted in Table 9, prior to their current role, four of the participants had careers in public education, one with the community college, two worked in adult and community education and social services, and the other in the corporate sector. Their reflections highlighted their career preparations and pathways, motivation for leadership, priorities and challenges in leading adult and literacy organizations, and strategies to overcome challenges.

Table 9 Summary of Leadership Journey Themes.

Category	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Foundations of leadership	Career preparation	Teacher education Adult education Alternative preparation
	Career pathway	Public school educator Adult educator Alternative pathway
Transition to leadership	Motivation to lead	Career development Mentorship Race and ethnicity Motherhood
Leadership of adult education organizations	Priorities	Board governance Programs and services Marketing/Communications Human resource management Financial management
	Challenges	Financial resources Human resources Operational capacity
	Strategies	Develop financial strategy Restructure staff operations Restructure student operations Develop partnerships

Career Preparation

For some participants, their career preparation started with their participation in teacher education and then adult education; others took an alternative route to the leadership of adult and literacy education.

Teacher Education

Half of the women in this study prepared for their careers in adult and family literacy by completing courses of study in teacher education. Kelly, Michelle, Heather, and Tara each obtained formal degrees and/or certifications in elementary and secondary education, as well as experience in the instruction of school-aged children. Kelly, who graduated from a liberal arts college in Texas, received a degree in Interdepartmental Secondary Education, specializing in special education. She discussed how her selection and participation as one of 20 interns in the Teacher Corps program proved instrumental in her undergraduate experience:

> We had to experience teaching at Pre-K, elementary, middle school and high school…so that we could make a very educated decision as to what area we were going to concentrate on. And then [with] special education, we had to go through a whole spectrum of working with the deaf and blind, working with all the different kinds of challenges that special education students go through. That way, when we made our selection…we were very educated as to what we were getting ourselves into. So, I could not have had a better undergraduate program, and from such a prestigious university.

Upon completing her bachelor's degree, Kelly began her teaching career at a local middle school. Soon thereafter, Teacher Corps partnered with her assigned middle school to sponsor teachers in attending graduate school. Through this partnership, Kelly received her master's degree in Educational Supervision within two years of completing her undergraduate degree. She was then able to pursue leadership-oriented positions within a school district. Ultimately, she earned a Middle-Management certificate, positioning her to become an elementary or secondary school principal.

Similarly, Michelle also studied elementary education during her collegiate years. She earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Bilingual Education from a private university in Texas. She received certifications to teach in Kindergarten through 8th grade classrooms, including dual-language classes. Shortly after beginning her teaching career at an elementary school, Michelle entered graduate school to advance her studies. Within three years of earning her undergraduate degree, she received her master's in Educational Leadership and her certification in Middle-Management. As she explained, these educational attainments qualified her to pursue a vice principal or a principal position within a school district.

Tara received formal classroom training in elementary education, akin to Kelly and Michelle. Tara discussed her natural affinity to teaching, stating, "I was born to be a teacher, it's a natural thing, and I like everything that's related to education". As such, she attended a public college in Texas to pursue a bachelor's degree focused on elementary education. Upon graduation, she embarked on her teaching career. She was hired as an elementary school English teacher, where she served for six years before leaving the profession to focus on her family.

Heather was the sole participant with designations in both elementary education and adult education. She studied political science and communication at a Texas-based liberal arts college, from which she earned a bachelor's degree. Within two years, she returned to her alma mater to obtain her teaching certificate, becoming the newest generation in her family's long lineage of school teachers. She expressed, "Everybody in my family are teachers, they're all grade school teachers…My mom is a teacher, her sister, my sister-in-law, my cousins, everybody, both sides of the family." However, she soon discovered teaching in a traditional K-12 classroom was not a good fit. Rather, she re-directed her passion for teaching to adult learners, deciding to pursue an advanced degree in adult education.

Adult Education

Three participants, including Heather discussed in the previous section, also have training in education, but from a framework of working with adults rather than school-aged youth. Carol, Heather, and Wendy each received college degrees and/or certifications in adult education. These three participants have varied educational and life experiences, which led them to pursue formal adult education programs. Carol, one of two non-degreed participants in this study, attended college intermittently over the years. Ultimately, she did not fulfill all the degree requirements, lacking two courses to complete her bachelor's degree in English. However, she received formal training from a state agency in Texas that provided professional development to educators throughout the state. She explained this agency implemented both a teacher and administrator adult education credentialing system to professionalize the field. She recalled:

> I had to get it. They had to give me a waiver to get into that because I was lacking a bachelor's, which was a prerequisite. But, because I'd been in the field so long, I got grandfathered in, for the same reason I was allowed to run the Even Start program, even though I was not bachelored.

Carol was amongst the first group of participants to receive the adult education administrator credential, which was a state-wide certification. In addition, she obtained certifications in non-profit management and legal assistance, which proved useful in her position as executive director.

In contrast, Heather, the adult education coordinator and Carol's counterpart, pursued a more traditional higher education path. As discussed in the previous section, she received her teaching certificate in elementary education. After a brief period teaching at a middle school, which Heather described as "terrible" and "horrible", she realized she had no desire to be a classroom instructor. Rather, she wanted to transition to the non-profit realm of education. She expressed, "I thought I'll go back to graduate school. I'll do like all the other new graduates who don't really know what they want to do with their lives. So, I'll go hang out in grad school for a few years". Heather enrolled in a developmental adult education program at a state college, eventually earning her master's degree. Similar to Carol, she also partook in the adult education credentialing process, earning a national certification in teacher adult education. Resultantly, Case 2 was represented by both a state- and nationally-recognized adult education credential, the only case to have obtained these designations.

Wendy rounded out the participants with a formal adult education background. She studied psychology at a public university in California, earning her bachelor's degree in the field. Soon thereafter, she and her new husband relocated to Texas. Once settled, she considered obtaining her teaching credential, however opted not to, believing she would be behind her peers. Wendy explained California had a 5 year degree and certification program, while Texas had a 4 year program. Instead, she decided to enroll in graduate school at a local state college, where she earned her master's degree in guidance and counseling. Of the six participants with an education background, Wendy was the only educator whom did not possess any type of certification.

Alternative Preparation

As evidenced above, education in the broad sense emerged as the primary field of study for most participants in this study. However, two participants, Amanda and Phyllis, did not possess any education-related degrees or credentials. Amanda, joined Case 1 with a background in marketing, having earned her bachelor's degree in business management advertising from a private university in Texas. Comparatively, Phyllis received no formal education in any field of study. She joined Case 3 as a volunteer shortly after immigrating to the United States from Argentina, where she spent her career working in graphic design.

Career Pathways

The participants took various paths in preparation for their careers. Those experiences paved the way for their various roles in public school education, adult education, as well as positions outside the realm of education. The career paths of the participants is discussed in this section.

Public School Educator

Though only half the participants in this study held degrees and/or certifications in public school education, six of the eight participants spent a portion of their career working with school-aged children in formal settings. Kelly, Amanda, Michelle, Heather, Tara, and Phyllis each provided instruction to young people in various classroom environments. The narratives of these participants revealed varying degrees of experience, which are shared in this section.

Amanda and Phyllis each began their career in a field unrelated to adult and family literacy. They both described their journeys as "funny" given where their careers began. When asked to discuss her career path, Amanda shared, "That one is going to be funny because my degree is in Business Management Advertising. So, my degree is very different than what I'm doing now". Phyllis expressed a similar sentiment, "See, that's funny. I'm from Argentina and over there I started graphic designs, nothing to do with family literacy or education". Despite lacking an education-related academic credential, both Amanda and Phyllis' career journey led to working with school-aged youth.

Amanda's teaching experience took place in a religious, rather than a traditional public school, context. She taught religious education to children at a Catholic church for seven years. This teaching period proved unique in her largely business background, which consisted of various positions in sales, marketing, and advertising.
Comparatively, Phyllis' experience occurred in her home country of Argentina, located in South America. She recalled attending a bilingual school as a child and her ability to easily grasp the English language. As an adult, Phyllis capitalized on her dual-language background; she taught English as a Foreign Language to kindergarten children in Argentina. Phyllis worked in that role for eight years until she and her family immigrated to the United States and she eventually joined Case 3.

The remaining participants in this section possessed bachelor's degrees and/or teaching certificates in elementary or secondary education. Michelle shared a background similar to Phyllis in that she grew up in a dual-language home, although she was born and raised in the United States. Having earned teaching certifications in both elementary and bilingual education, Michelle provided bilingual instruction in second grade classrooms for three years. By this time, she and her fellow faculty elected to adopt and implement a new reading program with which other elementary schools in the district were reporting successes. Michelle recalled, “My principal appointed me, or took me – I always say she took me out of the classroom – and she made me the facilitator for the program”. This new administrative role marked the beginning of her transition from teaching to leadership.

Kelly also provided classroom instruction to dual-language learners. She began her career at a middle school teaching reading to migrant children as part of a Title I program. Kelly explained programs designated Title I provide targeted instruction to children from low-income families to assist students in meeting academic standards. She worked with these students for three years, when, having long desired to work with older students, she asked to be transferred to a high school. Her request was approved, and soon thereafter, she admittedly embarked on her leadership journey prematurely. She shared:

> I went to teach at the high school level. [I] did junior and senior English, which I loved. And…you know, I always get myself into these leadership things, which is all good, but you know, it's difficult. I had the cheerleaders, the dance team, and the pep squad, all three, and teaching juniors and seniors. But I loved it, and I did that for a year and a half. At that point, though, a position came up in

> central office in a Title I consultant type of position. I went and applied for that, and I got that, and I did that for a year and a half. I came to find out I didn't feel ready to leave the classroom. I loved teaching more than I loved supervising.

Kelly noted that though she was prepared academically for administration, experience-wise, she left the classroom before she was ready. She determined her ascension into administration occurred too fast, and returning to classroom instruction would be appropriate for her career development. In an effort to preserve some semblance between her administrator and teacher salary, Kelly moved to her current school district, which paid teachers at a much higher rate. That was 30 years ago. She recalled her transition to teaching:

> I applied for a position in a middle school here in [the school district]…and I got the job on the spot, primarily because [the school district] was changing drastically. That was the time when they were trying to integrate schools more. [The middle school] had been a very exclusively Anglo population, and now with the integration and the reshuffling of boundaries, they were going to have a lot more Hispanic children, and a lot more children that needed teachers that were open to teaching…So, they hired me on the spot. Within a year, they named me coordinator of the English department. I was at [the middle school] for 11-12 years, and most of those years I was the coordinator of the English department. I loved teaching middle school.

The love for teaching she discovered after returning to the classroom was evident and did not go unnoticed. Kelly was honored as teacher of the year by the middle school, the school district, and the school region within the same year. “That was quite an accomplishment for me,” she recollected. By this time, she felt ready for “something else, something challenging”. Kelly decided to leave the classroom to pursue and obtain progressively responsible leadership positions within the school district.

Tara shared a similar passion for teaching as Kelly, describing herself as a natural-born teacher. She spent six years teaching English in an economically disadvantaged middle school. Through working with her students, Tara reportedly gained insight into how poverty affects the whole family. She expressed, “I was in a low-income school, and I was very concerned about the parents. I didn’t go there expecting that, but in helping the children, I began to see that their parents were struggling also”. Though she departed teaching for ten years to focus on her family, this newfound insight proved useful upon her return to education. Her new role involved a transition to working with adult learners, as well as the family unit as a whole.

Heather didn’t share the same love for teaching as Kelly and Tara. She pursued her teaching career primarily out of obligation to her family’s extensive legacy of service in public school education. She stated:

> Everybody in my family are teachers. They’re all grade school teachers…My grandmother had a master’s in education back when people didn’t do that, like in the 1930’s she got that. My mom is a teacher, her sister, my sister-in-law, my cousins, everybody, both sides of the family. And it didn’t occur to me – I really didn’t know what else I wanted to do.

Heather held one public school teaching position, which she summarized as a "terrible experience". She had a positive student teaching experience, but her first teaching assignment upon graduation was not very positive. She soon realized she was not destined to carry on her family's legacy. She shared:

> I had taught middle school, and it was out of my field. It was a school with lots and lots of problems. Not necessarily like extreme poverty and the problems you would think of – it was personnel problems and discipline problems, and it was horrible. They didn't run me off like they had run off the three teachers before me in one semester, but I left that job. I thought I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but I did not want to be a classroom teacher.

Heather reflected on her teaching experience, and admittedly enjoyed being an educator, just not in the public school setting. Rather, she wanted to marry her love of education with the nonprofit sector. To that end, she returned to graduate school to study adult education, better positioning herself for a career transition to a nonprofit adult educator.

Adult Educator

Three participants possessed varied experiences in the field of adult education early in their careers. Wendy, Heather, and Tara each spent a portion of their careers as an adult educator prior to assuming leadership roles. Wendy, the only participant in this section without prior public school education experience, entered the field as a graduate student working towards an advanced degree in reading, though she ultimately obtained a master's degree in guidance and counseling. As part of her studies, she participated in a pilot training program concerning standardized testing and evaluation offered by a state agency in Texas. Upon completion of the training program and her master's degree, she sought employment with the same state agency. Wendy recalled being advised her level of education and military-wife status would serve as deterrents, rather than assets, on her employment application. She shared:

> In order to get into the system at [state agency], my then boss said, "Don't tell them you have a master's. Don't tell them you're a military wife"…and this was a long time ago. You gotta remember, this was 30 years ago. And they just said, "If you really want to get in, you don't tell them this". So, I didn't put it on my application.

This strategy to gain employment with the organization proved effective. Wendy was offered a position as an entry-level data collector, despite her advanced education and training. She accepted the position, and soon worked her way up the organization:

> One of my jobs was to evaluate the adult education program at [Texas state agency]. I guess I did a really good job because they said, "We would rather have you work with us instead of work against us". So, I got hired on in the adult education program as…the one who helped write the grants and also went out and did a whole bunch of staff development.

Wendy advanced from a data collector to a staff development professional providing trainings for basic education and adult secondary education professionals across the state of Texas. She performed this work on behalf of the agency for 20 years before departing to join Case 1.

While Wendy's career journey began in adult education, Tara and Heather transitioned into the field after each holding teaching positions in the public school system. Despite the legacy of service to public education Heather's family established, Heather did not experience the same personal fulfillment as a public school educator. Rather, she believed she would be more satisfied teaching in an adult education setting, specifically providing GED instruction. She recalled:

> I knew that I didn't want to be a teacher, but I thought I could do GED. I did an internship at [local community college], which is how I got started with them...I thought, "Well okay, I could do adult education. I like teaching adults. I just don't want to teach kids, especially older kids." So, I got involved in that – it seemed like a pretty concrete career path.

Accordingly, she returned to graduate school to obtain an advanced degree in developmental adult education, believing adult education instruction would be a more fitting career path. Once she completed her master's degree, she was hired on at Case 2 to teach one night class per week, which complemented her full-time day job. After a while, Heather had her first child. So, she decided to leave her full-time position so she could raise her daughter. However, she continued her working relationship with Case 2. She recalled:

> I continued working here one night a week. And then we got the Even Start program…which I didn't really know a whole lot about at the time. But, I could see that they had gotten this grant and were going to start this new program.

With the Even Start grant, Heather's teaching capacity within the organization evolved. Though she continued working on a part-time basis, she went from working one night a week to working 20 hours per week with the organization. Moreover, she was designated the GED instructor on the grant, which aligned with her post graduate career experience and goals. She continued in this role for several years until a combination of organizational and personal changes transformed her career from the classroom to administration, which will be discussed in the next section.

As discussed earlier, Tara departed her elementary school teaching career to start her family. She reflected on that time:

> I'd been home for 10 years, and I read to my children. It was almost over the top. I read to them every morning as soon as they got up – this is the gosh truth, it just worked – before they even ate breakfast. I read to them at lunch, and I read to them at night, and they both just learned to read on their own basically. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing…I saw how well my children did by just me reading to them.

By this time, an adult learning center opened in her community, which Tara found "kind of interesting" in that it was managed by the local school district, rather than the city. She shared how she became involved in the center:

> The lady that ran it knew me, and she knew I was at home. So, she called me and asked if I would help some adults learn to read…I was in (snapped fingers) just like that…because I thought, "I can't stand it if some adult can't read to their child. I just will not be able to tolerate that". So, I started helping.

Tara joined the adult learning center as a volunteer tutor. She expressed, "I didn't know I was going to end up where I am now. I was just helping out". As the center evolved, Tara's career developed in step with the organization. Over the course of 25 years, Tara advanced from a volunteer tutor to a program coordinator to the executive director of the organization.

Alternative Pathways

Three participants had career backgrounds largely characterized by roles outside the realm of education. Amanda, Carol, and Phyllis each possessed diverse professional careers prior to joining their respective cases. As previously discussed, Amanda taught religious education courses at a Catholic church for several years. However, her education and career background focused primarily on marketing, advertising, and sales. With her bachelor's degree in business management marketing, Amanda spent six years working in sales for a Spanish-language television station, followed by five years producing advertising for a beverage company. In addition, she worked part-time for an advertising agency before joining Case 1. Amanda reflected on the catalyst of her career change from marketing and advertising to adult and family literacy: "I know the struggles that a lot of these families go through". The largely Hispanic, low-socioeconomic demographic of the school district reflected her own family of origin, which fueled her decision to change careers and serve this under-resourced community.

Similar to Amanda, Carol also made her final career change with the intent of providing services and resources to an under-served community. However, she described the career path she took along the way as having "a little bit more of a nontraditional background". After voluntarily leaving college, Carol explored a number of occupations before settling in with her current organization. She recalled, "I lived in Austin, moved out to the country, raised angora goats and rabbits, had a fiber business…[and] had a yarn-spinning and dyeing business for a number of years". Following these endeavors, she spent two years volunteering at a domestic violence shelter, advancing within the organization from a volunteer to a case worker. In her role, she became increasingly informed of the lack of public support services available within the surrounding communities.

> [We] identified that there were specific problems in [the local city] that we felt the area was under-served. At the time, there wasn't bus transportation between [the city and neighboring town]. All the social services were in [the neighboring town]. There was not a food stamp office here at the time. Most of the people who were living in poverty were very disconnected from a support system.

Of particular concern was the low high school completion rates, which Carol believed contributed to the overall poverty plaguing the community. She recalled:

> The dropout rate was pretty phenomenal. It was about 50% of students who entered 9th grade did not graduate from high school. So, there was a big population of people who really weren't prepared to get the kind of jobs that could lift them out of poverty.

Carol, along with several of her peers, formed a nonprofit to address poverty in the under-resourced communities through the provision of educational and social services.

Thus, Carol's separation from the domestic violence shelter marked her career shift into adult and family literacy.

Phyllis began her career in South America working in graphic design, "nothing to do with family literacy or education". However, as previously discussed, Phyllis eventually transitioned to providing English instruction to school-aged children prior to moving to the United States.

This section discussed the education and work experiences which formed the participants' leadership foundation – both formal and informal. In reviewing the career preparation and pathways of the leaders, formal education and work experience in K-12 education played a large role in the development and perceptions of several participants. Three participants had direct education and/or experience in adult education, which facilitated their transition to leadership in the field. However, the participants who joined adult education with a business and social service background offered a different perspective that proved beneficial as well. The next section discusses how participants used these experiences to transition into leadership within adult education.

Transition to Leadership

As noted in Table 9, supporting the category of transition to leadership was the primary theme of leadership motivation. This included the following subthemes: (a) career development, (b) mentorship, (c) race and ethnicity, and (d) motherhood.

Motivation to Lead

Three participants held executive leadership positions. Kelly, Carol and Tara were responsible for the overall leadership and management of their respective organizations. The remaining five participants served as program coordinators in each case, providing day-to-day management of their respective program areas. Case 1 employed three program coordinators, the most of the three participating cases: Amanda, family involvement coordinator; Michelle, family literacy coordinator, and Wendy, adult education coordinator. Cases 2 and 3 each had one coordinator respectively: Heather, adult education coordinator; and Phyllis, parent services coordinator. Each participant reflected on her career journey, specifically the motivating factors which led each to pursue a career in leadership.

Career Development

Kelly actively pursued leadership opportunities throughout her career journey. Kelly expressed it was the inherent challenges that motivated her to serve in increasingly responsible leadership roles. "I always get myself into these leadership things, which is all good, but it's difficult". This was evidenced in the progression of her career – faculty advisor to the cheerleading, dance, and pep squad teams, to coordinator of the English department, to coordinator of a middle school, to assistant principal, to vice principal, and ultimately principal of a middle school. She discussed how the culmination of these experiences prepared her for her current position of leadership in adult and community education:

> I feel like all of it led to this, where I could be creative. I could be resourceful. I could share my passion for learning, for lifelong learning, because I think it never ends…That's what's beautiful – I feel like all that work I did in middle school, where these little kids are like, "Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing here?"

> – This is my payoff because now everybody comes because they want to and because they have a goal. And they're so grateful and so appreciative of everything that we do for them.

Kelly conveyed the beauty she finds in providing learning and development opportunities for individuals of various ages, backgrounds, and cultures. Moreover, she found satisfaction in assisting learners "improve their technology, their language, their writing, their math, and now with real purpose".

Heather's background in elementary and adult education informed her journey into leadership as well. Like Kelly, Heather was intentional in her journey from the classroom to a position in leadership. She recalled, "Over the years, she's [Carol's] allowed me to get less into teaching and more into administration. Everybody doesn't love that, but I did. I was ready to do something else". Her career transition began during her third year of teaching adult education courses with the organization, when they were awarded an English Literacy and Civics (EL Civics) Grant. Ordinarily, grant management duties were under Carol's purview as the executive director. This particular grant, however, required a bachelor's degree, which Carol did not possess. Therefore, Carol designated Heather as the grant coordinator, thereby marking her entry into organizational administration.

Given the small, team-based organizational infrastructure of the organization, Heather was increasingly charged with both classroom and coordinator duties over the years. However, she recalled a pivotal time during her career in which she realized "things changed, and I don't want to teach GED anymore". She continued:

> It's [GED] a difficult population to serve, just because they don't show up half the time. It's hard to keep them coming. They have a lot of needs…I was just frustrated with planning lessons and then having only two people show up. And, I thought, this is my time to – it was a good time to move into a supervisory position.

Heather felt prepared and willing to advance exclusively into a leadership position. At that time, the only position with supervisory responsibilities was the executive director; all staff reported to her. However, impending personnel changes in the Even Start program soon created the opportunity Heather sought.

Carol was in the process of hiring her sister as a teacher in the program. Given the staff reporting structure, this hire would have directly violated the organization's nepotism policy. To uphold company policy, as well as avoid losing a qualified teaching candidate, Carol promoted Heather to a newly created Adult Education Coordinator position. In this role, Heather was primarily responsible for supervising and training the teaching staff, among other program-related administrative duties. She shared, "I like being a support staff person; it's just how I view myself. I make sure my teachers have what they need to do what I need them to do". Though it happened out of necessity, this staffing change fulfilled Heather's career aspirations and facilitated her transition from the classroom to administration, where she has remained to present day.

Michelle's career path also informed her motivation to serve in a leadership capacity. However, while Kelly and Heather actively pursued leadership opportunities, Michelle approached her career development more passively, waiting for opportunities to present themselves and accepting them out of duty or necessity. Three years into her career as a teacher, Michelle recalled being “taken out of the classroom”. At that time, her school adopted a new reading program, and the principal appointed Michelle the facilitator of the program. In this role, her professional responsibilities expanded to include parental involvement and education, as well as the family life of the child, thereby bringing her career into the realm of family literacy.

However, two years into the reading program, the principal retired, and a new principal was hired in her stead. This change in leadership was accompanied by a shift in campus priorities and faculty development. In the subsequent year, Michelle became increasingly aware that the reading program would not be successful in the new administration. Through direct classroom observations and meetings with peer facilitators at other schools in the district, Michelle realized they were no longer upholding the rigorous standards of the program.

In considering the next phase of her career, Michelle believed a vice principal role was the next logical step. She desired a position which leveraged her career and educational background, but did not make her wholly responsible for a program area or department. As she searched for such a position, Michelle’s colleague informed her that the Family Literacy Coordinator position within the school district was coming available and encouraged her to apply. This coordinator position fell squarely outside of Michelle’s search parameters, given it would position her as the lead for the family literacy program. Initially, she passed on the opportunity despite meeting the requirements of the position. She expressed, “Oh no, I’m not ready for that”. Instead, she continued working as the reading program facilitator while searching for a vice principal position. However, she grew increasingly unhappy and anxious to depart the elementary school. So, when she was contacted a second time about applying for the coordinator position, Michelle was "ready to go" and released any prior reservations she had about serving in this leadership capacity. She interviewed and was ultimately hired for the family literacy coordinator position

Though Michelle did not actively seek a transition from the classroom to administration, she expressed the roles allowed for growth and capacity-building in her career. Moreover, the experiences developed and honed her skills for her current coordinator position, where she has been in service since 1998. Tara's leadership journey resonated with Michelle's in that she did not seek or aspire to her current executive director position. Tara began her tenure with Case 3 as a volunteer working with adult learners, and shortly thereafter was hired as a program director focusing on teaching and curriculum development. She expressed having career satisfaction in the classroom and focused her efforts on directly supporting the learning and development of her students.

In her sixth year with the organization, however, Tara was presented with the opportunity to serve in an executive leadership capacity after a series of executive directors joined and left the organization. Her initial reaction to the offer was, "I just don't want to give up teaching". Admittedly, teaching came naturally to Tara, and she did not envision a career outside of the classroom. She expressed, "I loved being the program director. I got to just concentrate on teaching and curriculum. I never had a desire for being the E.D. Never". She factored the effects of the leadership churn and the needs of the organization, yet continued to vacillate in her decision-making process. It took the counsel of her mentor and past executive director to convince her to accept the position. Though she questioned her decision and leadership capabilities long after assuming the role, Tara eventually acclimated and grew into being the executive director, and she continues to serve the organization in this capacity.

Mentorship

Three participants in this study shared how having a significant relationship with a mentor proved critical in their career journey. Tara, Carol, and Michelle each noted specific individuals who were instrumental in guiding and shaping her career. Tara's mentor played a pivotal role in her career journey. As discussed in the previous section, when Tara was offered the executive director position, she did not want to sacrifice her teaching career for a leadership position. A conversation with her mentor helped alleviate her hesitation transitioning to leadership:

> One person, one of my mentors, really helped me with it. He was convinced I should do it, and he said, "You know, you can help your 30 or so students a year that you work with, or you can help thousands. You've got to decide what kind of impact you want to have". Man, that just ate at me.

Though Tara wavered in her decision-making process, her mentor ultimately convinced her to accept the executive director position. However, upon assuming the role, Tara questioned whether she had made the right decision. Admittedly, she struggled the first two years in the position:

> I'll be honest with you, for two years – for two solid years – I thought I'd made a mistake. I just hung in there and kept doing it. I can't even believe I did that. I would call the other [executive director] and say, "Are you sure you don't want to come back? Did that job not turn out exactly like you wanted it to so you can come back over here"? And, she would talk me through it.

Her new role required her to perform outside of her teaching comfort zone. She was responsible for intensive networking and fundraising efforts, working with the board of directors, and the collective programs and services of the organization. Tara recalled her mentor's assistance in adjusting to her new responsibilities. "He helped me a lot after I got started. I'd be struggling with something, [and] he was always there to advise me and give me support". Tara relied on her mentor's guidance, as well as the support of the past executive director, to withstand the initial adjustment period that accompanied her transition into leadership.

Carol benefitted from a mentoring relationship which helped guide the course of her career as well. She revealed her leadership inspiration stemmed from an initial desire to seek justice, but was nurtured and developed with the assistance of her longtime mentor. Carol and her mentor became acquainted with each other at the domestic violence shelter where they each worked. Upon Carol's involuntary discharge from the shelter, which she perceived as "unfair", she was compelled to create her own community-based nonprofit organization. Her mentor voluntarily left her counseling position with the shelter due to "poor management". She joined Carol in her efforts to start a new nonprofit, specifically encouraging Carol to expand the vision of the organization to include educational outreach. Carol expressed:

> When we started the program, she [her mentor] went back to school…fast track program, and got her degree in education so that she could help us set up the educational arm of the business. It was her interest in education as the real solution to poverty issues that inspired me to move in that direction. She was right, of course.

Carol explained this period proved pivotal in both her and her mentor's lives. "Everybody was a winner". Her mentor became a founder and board member of the new nonprofit, effectively transforming her career from social work to education. Furthermore, the new organization broadened its outreach efforts to include education, a direct result of the influence of her mentor.

Michelle discussed her mentor's role in preparing her for a career in leadership. She credited her hiring principal's ability to "see things in people" and provide opportunities for growth beyond the classroom. She recalled:

> [The principal] was really good…It was me and some other ladies that she would give responsibilities to. And she would always say, "Don't think that I'm trying to pass off all this work that I don't want to do. I just feel that you all can be leaders. And [Michelle] is working on her masters [in] education leadership, so I know she wants to be a vice principal or principal one day. So, you've gotta get those experiences". So, she would help you which I thought was really good.

Michelle recollected several instances in which the principal provided such opportunities to expand her leadership capacity. One of the more significant occasions stemmed from her position as the reading program facilitator at the elementary school. The school principal designated Michelle the manager of the reading program budget. Michelle recalled, "That was my initial experience with a school budget, other than my home budget". She had to learn budget codes, policies and procedures, review and approve expenditure requests, balance budgets – she had to simultaneously learn and administer those budgets, all while facilitating the reading program. She reflected of that time:

> All those little things that I learned, that then prepared me for here, because then when I came to Even Start, I had this huge budget and all these codes and all these things to buy. So, I think if I hadn't had that experience, I think I would've been a little bit more overwhelmed – I was already overwhelmed, but I would've been really like wow, like lost. But, I think that's because she did that…When I came over here, I still had to learn [about budgets], but I had experience, so it wasn't like a huge learning curve.

As Michelle described, the culmination of these learning and development experiences resulted in being better prepared to step into a leadership role when the opportunity presented itself.

Race and Ethnicity

Three participants – Amanda, Michelle, and Phyllis – each shared how their race and ethnicity informed their motivation to serve in a leadership capacity. Each woman was of Latin descent – Amanda was born and raised in Texas, while Michelle and Phyllis families originated from Mexico and Argentina, respectively.

As Amanda reflected upon her call to leadership, she recalled her upbringing in a South Texas border town. She described her hometown as being comprised largely of economically disadvantaged, Spanish-speaking families, much like the families served in her coordinator position with the school district. Amanda explained, "I know the struggles that a lot of these families go through. That was part of the passion of why I wanted to do this". She was compelled to lead the family involvement program because she was positioned to provide learning and development services that weren't available in previous generations. Amanda shared an example of her great grandparents to illustrate her inspiration:

> My great grandparents were immigrants to this country. I've always thought of how did they feel when they came, not knowing the language, not being educated. What kind of services would they have appreciated? What would they have utilized? I always try to go back and think of if these services were around when they first came, imagine what they would have done with their lives.

Envisioning services from this perspective served as an effective framework for Amanda to build up the program. The combination of her heritage and lived experiences positioned her to understand the needs of the community in which she worked and lived. She professed, "These kids can go out and succeed, just like everyone else". And knowing this, she explained, fueled her personal passion to lead this effort.

Similar to Amanda, Michelle's ethnicity also served as a motivating factor on her path to leadership. Born and raised in Mexico, Michelle and her family immigrated to the United States when she was about 9 years old. As she recalled, there was not a formal program available for her or her family to access ESL instruction or basic support services as they acclimated to living in a new country. Instead, Michelle learned English primarily through reading books and correspondence, and in turn, she served as an interpreter for her parents. She expressed, "I just had to read, and learn to read in English, because I just needed to help my mom with everything". Michelle explained:

> If we had this [family literacy] program when we were young, oh my goodness, I'd be like a nuclear physicist or something, and it'd be great! I see all the ladies here, [and] I see my mom in them. And the kids – I see them and that's me. And, this is my mom and me trying to make better…I tell the students this: "My mom and me were able to come over here with my dad. He was also from Mexico. We all came and accomplished this much. Can you imagine if we had a family literacy program"?

The Hispanic families which largely comprised Michelle's family literacy program mirrored her own heritage and experiences, thereby fueling her willingness to serve in a leadership capacity. Comparably, as Phyllis reflected on her own experience assuming leadership of Case 3's family literacy program, her sentiments strongly resonated with those of Michelle. She recollected:

> How can I say this? I could see me in my family literacy students. Me a while ago, like five years ago. They were going through the same things that I was

going through. But, for them it was a little bit harder because they didn't have the language to communicate and make it easier.

Though she was born and raised in Argentina, Phyllis expressed she "knew a lot of English". In addition to her mother being American-born, Phyllis attended bilingual schools as a child and taught bilingual education for several years as an adult in Argentina. As such, when she immigrated to the States with her family, the English language did not serve as a barrier, as it does for the families in her program.

Nonetheless, upon settling in Texas, Phyllis sought classes to improve her English because "You always learn. Always". This pursuit of ESL courses brought her to Case 3. Though her English proficiency proved too high for classroom placement, Phyllis was offered the opportunity to volunteer as a beginner ESL instructor. She remembered of that time:

> I didn't have my paperwork to work. I could just live here, but I couldn't work. So, I was a volunteer which was good because I could get out of home and do something for me. And, I learned a lot there too. It was good also to get to know the society, people, and the community.

She related to the immigration experiences of her students, and used her dual languages to advance the development and comprehension of English language and communication. When the program expanded from ESL instruction to a holistic family literacy program, Michelle became the coordinator of the program and continued to leverage her background and experiences to meet the learning needs of her families.

Motherhood

Tara, Phyllis, and Amanda each shared how being a mother informed their careers. Tara, the executive director in Case 3, spoke specifically of how her career pursuits were borne directly from her experiences teaching her children to read. She shared:

> I was very attracted to [my position] because I'd been home for 10 years, and I read to my children. It was almost over the top. I read to them every morning as soon as they got up – this is the truth, it just worked…They both just learned to read on their own basically. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing…And then I saw how well my children did by just me reading to them. Then this lady who knew me called me and said would I help some adults read. I was in just like that…because I thought I can't stand it if some adults can't read to their child. I just will not be able to tolerate that. So, I started helping.

Thus, Tara returned to the workforce to support the literacy learning and development of the program's adults and families. Her co-worker, Phyllis, similarly experienced career motivation from being a parent. Phyllis, an immigrant from Argentina, desired to assist families in navigating the elementary and secondary public school system in the United States. This sentiment was borne directly from her involvement in her children's school experiences upon arriving in the States. She said:

> We moved here with my family. I had two sons already…and I started this journey with them in the public school system, and it was kind of hard. And even knowing English, it was hard…It wasn't the language barrier. It [public

> school system] was so different from what I was used to, and I had to fight for what I thought was right for my kids. Not always would they explain to me what was going on, so I was constantly trying to figure out what they wanted me to do with my kids…It would have helped me a lot when I was dealing with my kids going to school…to have somebody telling me, "Okay, this is what you're expected to do". I didn't have that. I had to figure that all out.

To that end, she credited her children, as well as all children in general, as the motivating force guiding her career path into family literacy. Phyllis utilized her experiences as an immigrant parent navigating an unfamiliar American school system as a platform to assist adults and families in her role as family literacy coordinator.

Amanda echoed Phyllis' experiences of navigating the U.S. school system and similarly attributed her career directly to her role as mother. She discussed the vast amount of information parents must filter through to ensure their children's educational needs are met, which often proves frustrating for parents. She shared:

> I was always an involved parent. I still am a very involved parent with my children. But, there's still so much I still learn…Oh my gosh, there's so much information out there, I mean I get a headache…And, we have a lot of that on our low-income families. There are a lot of Spanish speakers that don't know English. Can you imagine how lost they feel with not understanding the school system?...It's frustrating as a parent. I try to stay on top of it, and I still don't know everything. So that has really motivated me.

Amanda elaborated upon her motivation, stating educating both children and parents was essential to alleviating the information overload families faced:

> I mean there's so much. And, I feel as a parent, I think they need to know, they need to be educated. The schools try to educate the parents and the students, but their staff keeps getting smaller and smaller. Their demands get bigger and bigger. The paperwork they have to fill out is more and more. So, as much as schools try to do that, they cannot possibly reach everybody.

It was within this under-resourced space that Amanda leveraged her position to provide education and support to the families within her district. As an involved parent navigating the school system, Amanda constantly asked herself, "What else do I need to do"? She carried this same question with her, as well as her own personal experiences, in executing her role as program leader.

Leadership of Adult Education Organizations

This section details the experiences participants shared in their leadership and management of adult education and family literacy organizations. They described their experiences with (a) setting priorities, (b) managing challenges, and (c) developing strategies to address the challenges.

Leadership Priorities

The participants in this study provided leadership, management, and overall direction within their respective cases. As the economic environment shifted and grew unstable, each leader navigated her organization through changes and shifts in organizational operations. Over time, leadership dealt with increased demands for services, diminished financial resources, and limited support resources as they worked to fulfill the mission of the organization. As reported, there were shared leadership priorities amongst the participants which proved essential to sustaining the organization and meeting the learning and development needs of the attendants. These leadership priorities included: (a) board governance, (b) programs and services, (c) marketing and communications, (d) human resource management, and (e) financial management. A discussion of each follows.

Board Governance

Carol, Tara, and Kelly – the three directors in this study – discussed the governance structure of their respective organizations. As nonprofit entities, each had a board of trustees (Case 1) or board of directors (Cases 2 and 3) in place which served as the organization's governing body. In general terms, the board was a collective group of volunteers responsible for the oversight of the agency, particularly as it related to strategy, policy, budget, resources, and the like. However, the structure, relationship, and level of engagement between the board and the organization varied with each case.

The three organizations in this study were established as nonprofit, community-based organizations. Given Case 1's integration into a school district, the structure of and relationship to their board differed significantly from the other two cases. In this instance, the board of trustees was composed of nine members elected by the voting public in the school district. As elected officials, board members served and made decisions on behalf of every student and staff member in the school district, as well as the families whose tax dollars supported the public school system. As such, the board set the goals, policies, and budget at the district level, which then informed the decision points and activities of each school and programmatic area within the district.

Kelly’s position in the district wasn’t one that required her to report to or work directly with the board of trustees. However, she was familiar with the governance process and the role of the board, in large part because of her long-tenured teaching career. She used that knowledge in her position as director to align her department and standardize operations to more effectively support the district’s mission and strategic plan. She shared, “The school district is ultimately about K-12. So, I have to connect what we are doing here to how we are helping K-12, because that's the main mission of the school district”. As such, Kelly and her team worked to demonstrate the relevance of programs and services to the district as well as the community. This approach proved effective in demonstrating her department’s relevancy within the district. Kelly further noted:

> Our district totally embraces [our department]. And when our students graduate and get their GED, they participate in a graduation ceremony along with the seniors in high school. They walk across the stage, and the board members shake their hand, and the superintendent gives them their diploma. It's a big deal. It's a huge deal.

Kelly’s interactions with the board primarily occurred at such school and community events within the district. In contrast, Carol and Tara reported directly to and met regularly with their board of directors, a discussion of which follows.

Carol conveyed her board as being supportive, but not actively engaged in the governance of her organization. The board was comprised of 8 volunteers from the community, with the potential to expand to 13 members. Due to grant protocols, a minimum of three seats were reserved for client representatives and a formerly homeless individual. Though there was no personal financial mandate, a few members provided in-kind services to the organization. One board member, a former mayor and certified public accountant, reviewed the organization's audits and kept board members abreast of progress and findings. Another member was a retired assistant district attorney who oversaw the voluntary legal work performed within the organization. A retired ESL teacher who previously worked with the organization joined the board to continue her service in education.

Though a few board members served as individual contributors, collectively the board did not actively engage in the oversight or sustainability of the organization. Rather, they employed a hands-off approach to governance, meeting quarterly with Carol to receive updates and address the particular needs of the organization. Carol explained, "They're supportive, but they're not like 'let's go and do a fundraiser' or 'let's make sure you get all these policies in place'". Instead, Carol assumed those responsibilities with assistance from Heather and other staff. In Carol's view, the board existed primarily to ensure the organization maintained its non-profit 501(c)(3) status. Accordingly, she kept the board apprised as votes and/or signatures were needed.

While Carol described her board of directors as not being "super-involved" with her organization, Tara shared a markedly different depiction of her board. She stated, "I love my board. It’s a very important relationship”. In her case, the governing body was composed of 23 community members of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, income levels, and experiences. Each board member contributed directly to the viability and sustainability of the organization, primarily through active engagement in the financial and program activities of the agency.

From the financial frame, board members were required to make a personal donation to the organization each year. Tara explained, “You have to donate. We’ll take $25, we’ll take $2,500. We don’t care, but you have to donate because we're all gonna put skin in the game. That’s just the way we operate”. According to Tara, this directive proved effective and resulted in nearly $25,000 in sustained annual funding for the organization. In addition to a personal contribution, board members were also responsible for spearheading the fundraising activities of the agency. Members worked in coordination with Tara to develop funding goals, as well as identify and pursue potential donor and funding opportunities in the community.

To that end, members worked collectively in service to the organization. Contrary to the board in Case 2, Tara’s board members actively engaged in the activities of the organization. They participated in a variety of services, from fundraising dinners to community events to monthly board meetings. To supplement these activities, Tara provided weekly updates to ensure members remained informed and engaged. She shared:

> Every Friday they get an update about what’s going on here at [Case 3], so they’re very in touch. This is not come in every 2 or 3 months and kind of get

> caught up. They know what's going on all the time. They know how much money is in. They know where we're off. They know everything. They're very involved and very informed.

As evidenced above, the director's relationship with the board varied with each of the organizations studied. Each board was necessary to the organization from an accountability and transparency lens. However, from a sustainability frame, the board engagement in Tara's case better positioned the organization to survive reductions and/or eliminations in federal and state grants. As Tara reported, the board was actively involved in the activities of the organization and responsible for the fiscal aspects, to include fundraising. Carol lacked this engagement with her board, and as noted, lacked the financial resources and the community partnerships that Tara and her board were able to develop and leverage. Developing adequate funding streams is essential to effectively attending to the remaining leadership priorities, beginning with the programs and services which constitute the organization.

Programs and Services

The need and responsibility to provide basic education and resources for low-literate, marginalized adults and families in their respective communities was a top priority amongst the leaders in this study. Accordingly, the primary purpose of their programming was to provide participants the skills and resources necessary to be self-sufficient and participate in society. Wendy expressed, "The main thing is that they have a better lifestyle. That's the main thing." Admittedly, what one person required for an improved quality of life differed from the next. A common approach amongst the three organizations was to center the students' needs in the planning and delivery of programs. Tara described how this approach looked in her organization:

> They're just thinking "I need a better job. Or, I need to be able to talk to my child's teacher. Or, I need to be able to communicate with the doctor." So, you always start with their needs. We try to do whatever they need, just try to take them where they are. This is what you need, and then we just try to make it happen.

Tara, as well as the other directors and coordinators, designed and delivered programming wrapped around the needs of the communities they served. As detailed in the case studies, these programs included basic education, GED preparation and testing, ESL instruction, and family literacy. During several interviews, a variety of topics were reported which supported these programs: parenting skills, financial literacy, health literacy, child development, workplace safety, school safety, workforce development, civics, and legal services to name a few.

Carol and Heather discussed the intended outcomes of their programs and services. As it concerned their ESL curricula, Carol articulated, "We're trying to address their need to acquire English language that's usable in the community. So, spoken English, reading, and writing". Heather concurred, emphasizing the importance of the community aspect. Participants learned English, but they also learned about citizenship and community engagement. Heather described the knowledge and skills students sought through this program:

> They're trying to get a well-rounded experience of not just straight-on English out of a textbook. But, English for a purpose – parenting, schools, jobs, and then things like banking, pharmacies, how to deal with a doctor appointment…It just reminds you that there's so many different things you need English for.

Heather explained students learned English in the context of their lives and communities. She expressed the courses reflected "life issues", and she and Carol were intentional about including the students in the planning process.

Michelle shared the adults in her program "all have different needs". As the family literacy coordinator, she worked with the whole family in the improvement of second language acquisition, literacy development, and family skills. From her lens, the parents simply wanted to help themselves and their children become their best selves. She provided insight behind their motivation for joining her program:

> They want to be successful. They just don't know how to start, or what exactly do they need to do so their child will be the gifted and talented child, or get good grades, or maybe go to a good college, or have a good job. [They're thinking] "I may be on welfare, or I may be on – the government may be helping me. But, I hear that my child, you know, that may not happen to my child. My child may have more than I ever had". But, their challenge is "Where do I start? What do I have to do so they have a better life than I did?"

These quality of life questions represented the needs that drove the clients to the organization for instruction and resources. Michelle noted her family literacy program provided the appropriate starting place for families to begin work addressing these questions.

Michelle worked in tangent with Amanda to support the skills development of the families in the program. Amanda in particular focused her efforts on engaging parents in their children's school life. She shared for some parents and families, there was an intimidation factor that had to be acknowledged and worked through:

> With our Title I parents, some of them do feel intimidated because maybe they may not have the education level. Or, when their experience of school was not very good, they didn't like it. So, they really don't wanna deal with their kid's school.

To that end, Amanda reported the endeavor of engaging parental involvement was "on the rise" in the school district. She educated parents and families on its inherent value and discussed the importance of having a working relationship with teachers and counselors. She expressed, "They can teach them one thing at school, but if it's not being implemented at home, it's not gonna work". Consequentially, Amanda worked to develop a collaborative community of parents, families, and schools to support the academic lives of the students in the district.

Amanda and Heather shared similar views concerning parental involvement and engagement. They both agreed parental involvement was essential to the success of the child; however, each demonstrated this principle to differing degrees. Amanda worked towards building partnerships and collaborations between families and schools within her district, while Heather worked on a smaller, more individual scale. In Heather's case, the family literacy program was shaped by what the mothers needed to best support their children. As she explained, the main objective was to help the parents become and/or stay involved in their children's education. She articulated, "That's always been a big focus of our program". This overarching goal was supported by small, tangible tasks such as scheduling a parent-teacher conference or writing a note to the teacher. In addition to these practical matters, she also helped parents address cultural and institutional barriers which hindered participation in their child's education.

The family literacy programming in all three cases occurred during the day to align the parents' schedules with their children's school schedule. Comparatively, the evening programming in each case leaned towards a workforce orientation. Providing adult education programming, to include GED preparation and ESL instruction, in the evening accommodated adults who worked or looked for work during the day. Wendy expressed, "The nighttime [is for] the people that need the jobs". In recent years, she observed an increased emphasis on needing the GED credential to advance in career. Heather shared a similar observation as she reflected on her evening students, "People are probably out of work, or realize that they're not going to get a promotion or get a better job".

Given the workforce population, Heather worked to ensure instruction was relevant to students' specific learning needs. She provided a sampling of the questions which framed her lessons:

> What can we do to keep you in your job or get you a better job? Do you have specific tasks of English you need to learn how to do? Do you need to learn a vocabulary for this particular job? Have you got a test you need to pass?

Accordingly, instruction was molded around the knowledge and skills learners needed to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment. In this case, however, they no longer offered GED preparation due to a loss in funding. Carol explained for years they were subcontracted to provide GED services, but in this most recent academic year, the contract was not renewed. Consequentially, Heather and Carol shifted resources to complete students who were in the midst of their courses and referred new inquiries to other providers. This situation which Carol and Heather found themselves was unique and unlike the other two cases in this study. Rather, GED preparation courses were available at Cases 1 and 3; moreover, Case 1 had an on-site GED testing center available.

To round out their programs, leadership in each case worked to connect adults and families to resources and supports in their respective communities. Phyllis maintained a repository of resources to assist the families with whom she worked. She shared, "I do have resources. So, if they come, "Hey, my child is having problems with this or with that," I tell them where they can go for help. I do that a lot." Similarly, Amanda and her peers connected adults and families in their programs with agencies and services that addressed needs outside of the case's scope. Amanda shared:

> [We have] resources for food services, to help pay with bills, to help with attorney, medical, food, with counseling, because a lot of our families do not

> have the extra money. So, we have built these – it's like a summary of all these resources…These are the organizations that we recommend. And, you either get these services for free, or it's a sliding scale, or it's dependent on your income.

Amanda expressed these resources were offered because "we can't do everything". Given the limited resources within which each case operated, supplementing organizational programs with community supports proved effective in holistically meeting the needs of the adults and families. From Amanda's perspective, her role was to stay abreast of the changing needs of the adults and families with whom she worked. She shared:

> Those needs will change, from year one to year ten. They're gonna be different. And, I expect them to change because, you know what? People change, society changes, children change, schools change. You know, it's very different. So, I need to always make sure, and be the most updated, and always try to stay on top of what it is our families lack or need.

Leadership in each case made a concerted effort to keep their programs and services relevant to the needs of their participants. As Amanda noted, those needs were dynamic and changed over time. Moreover, she and her peers were "constantly changing, constantly improving" as they worked to remain responsive to the adults and families in their programs. The next section reviews the approaches leadership took to market and promote these programs and services.

Marketing and Communications

As evidenced, the programmatic activities within each case comprised a significant share of each leader's workload. To promote these learning and development opportunities, leadership engaged in various activities within their respective communities to raise the profile of their organizations. These cases did not have a marketing department with an allocated budget dedicated to the marketing activities of the organization. Rather, this function was performed as part of each leader's role; each represented her organization and/or performed targeted outreach efforts to various stakeholders within the community. They aimed to communicate the value and increase the visibility of their organizations, while simultaneously keeping related costs free to minimal.

Kelly expressed it was essential she and her team engaged in marketing activities on behalf of the organization, both within the school district and the community at large. As the executive director, she stated her responsibility was to demonstrate how the department supported the mission and strategic plan of the school district. "Our purpose in existing is to support the school district and the community it serves", she explained. This purpose framed her approach to representing the department and promoting its programs. Kelly provided additional insights into her messaging strategy:

> I am the advocate for all of the programs that I oversee. By advocate, I let everyone know what we are doing over here because if we don't do that, the district may not see us as relevant. But, then I also – as an advocate, my job is to show them how we are supporting them because the school district is ultimately

> about K-12. So, I have to connect what we are doing here to how we are helping K-12 because that's the main mission of the school district.

She explained the school district's focus on "lifelong learning" served as the foundation for the programs and services offered within her department. Moreover, Kelly posited her ability to articulate and demonstrate her department's relevancy to the stakeholders in the school district and community influenced the continued sustainability and viability of her organization.

Kelly was supported by her program coordinators – Amanda, Michelle, and Wendy – in her efforts to raise the awareness of the organization and its programs. Amanda's parental engagement program was the newest program to the district. As the coordinator, she was charged with getting buy-in for her programs from parents and families, as well as from teachers and administrators. Accordingly, she spent a portion of her time "selling" her program, which she explained meant "getting people interested in it". Amanda shared her advantage in this respect; she was positioned to apply her advertising and sales background to her current leadership role. She provided insight into this aspect of her role:

> There's a lot of people with a lot of power that don't understand the full concept of these programs, [that] don't understand the full impact that we can make on these parents. So, I love going out and selling the programs. Whenever I can – on duty and off duty (laughter). I do it with my friends, and I do it with anybody and everybody that'll listen to me.

Amanda worked to increase her program's presence across the district and community. She sought opportunities to speak directly with teachers and principals to inform them of her program and increase campus implementations. She also created advertising targeted towards parents and families to raise their awareness and increase their participation in her programs.

In addition to Kelly and Amanda's efforts, Michelle provided a fuller picture of the various tactics the department utilized to market their programs. She explained, "We do several different things, because we know that it's just not one thing." To start, they developed a website that described the department's programs, services, personnel, and integrated with the school district's website. As a companion to the website, they produced a digital and print course catalog that detailed the community and adult education classes available each academic period. In preparation for their fall and spring recruiting cycles, they created and distributed flyers and brochures, participated in children's fairs, spoke about their program on public television and public radio, and provided an overview at meetings and conferences. Michelle described what drove their marketing strategy:

> Our old superintendent would say, "You know me, as long as I have one or two or three I'll talk." So yeah, wherever we have the opportunity, we'll go and talk about our program, to recruit, to let people know.

The leadership in this case worked collectively to promote their programs and services via various outlets, to include print, digital, and face-to-face communications. In comparison, Carol and Heather utilized several of these methods to support the work of their organization, though in a less intentional and less resourced manner.

Similar to the previous case, leadership in Case 2 promoted their programs and services at school fairs and community events. As Carol discussed, the overall marketing strategy was rooted in the community relationships they developed over the organization's 20-year existence. They leveraged their affiliations within the school district, as well as with former clients, to cultivate referral-based marketing sources. Carol provided additional insights on this approach:

> We know those [school district] counselors very well. So, when they've got student families they may identify, even though they're working with a K-12 population, they're in touch with families that have additional needs, and they'll make referrals…We've also been here for 20 years. So, some of our GED adults were little kids in our summer camp program back when their folks were younger.

As Carol reflected further on the marketing activities of her organization, she expressed the following:

> It never seems to me – Heather might have a different perspective because she does the recruiting – to me it doesn't seem like we really work that hard to recruit. But, we do (laughter) because I always just see we've got a waiting list.

To supplement Carol's efforts, Heather disseminated information on programs and services via direct communication and internet platforms. She viewed her role as an information gateway, "I get to be kind of the clearinghouse for people". Accordingly, she updated the organization’s website and social media sites to reflect current information on course listings, registration dates, and orientation dates. Moreover, she also included course listings for other providers on these sites. She explained:

> I don’t like to tell anybody, “I don’t know”. I wanna be sure if we can’t help them, then I can find somebody who can, and give them what they need, and point them in the right direction. So, that requires keeping up with other programs around here and links to their websites.

Heather revealed she did not consider herself “super social”, so the marketing aspect of her role proved a challenge. However, she understood, “You really need to be out there and increasing visibility, and I have to kind of do that in my own way.” As such, Heather and each of the leaders worked to advance their programs and services within their respective communities.

Human Resource Management

In addition to the priorities discussed above, the personnel within each case emerged as a top priority amongst participants. Leadership credited staff as indispensable to fulfilling the mission of their respective organizations. As Kelly expressed, “The people make the difference”. Accordingly, the recruitment, retention, and development of staff proved vital, especially as it concerned meeting the dynamic needs of literacy learners. Heather shared her perspective:

> It sounds cheesy, but the best resource we have around here are the people who work here because of all the knowledge and all the years of knowledge that we have, and that you need to make other people see how long you’ve been doing

> stuff. And, that you have the experience to – if everything sort of dissolved, but we still had a core group of people who could do things, that they can move into a position and keep things going.

As Kelly and Heather articulated, employees were essential to the core business of each organization. However, Kelly noted, “It's hiring good staff, and training them, and communicating with them your expectations…So, if everybody is doing their job, it works”.

As part of their leadership roles, each participant embodied aspects of a traditional human resources manager. Common responsibilities included: recruitment and selection, compensation, training and development, decision-making, employee relations, and crisis resolution. Each leader supported their staff in their daily responsibilities. Michelle shared her experience managing her team:

> I have to make sure that my staff has everything they need in order for us to recruit families, to carry out the program, to make sure it’s working. And, if it’s not working, okay, what do we need to do to fix it or to improve? Because everything always needs improvement. And, as staff leaves, to make sure we also bring more staff, qualified individuals.

Similarly, Heather also ensured her staff members had what they needed to complete their jobs. “I take care of the teachers and make sure they have what they need”. In her case, this included providing accountability and transparency as it concerned funding guidelines and performance standards. Heather provided additional insights:

> There's coordinating the teachers and making sure that they have their staff training every year, making sure that we are following all the grant guidelines, and that students are performing well, and attendance isn't slipping for some reason.

In addition to managing the day-to-day work, leadership served as advisors and advocates on behalf of their staff. Carol stated part of supervising staff involved mediating and resolving conflict; in her position, there was an expectation to help staff navigate difficult situations. Additionally, Kelly noted an expectation to ensure staff followed organizational policies, as well as applicable legislation, in the execution of their duties. Kelly detailed further:

> They expect advocacy. They come to me for that. And, they come to me for questions that they know I have the experience from my background to handle as far as staff, you know, when we get into issues with staff. And, I have to make sure that they're doing things correctly, so we're not getting into any legal issues, grievances, handling those kinds of situations. They'll come to me for that.

Comparatively, Amanda reported being a strong advocate for her staff, especially given how new her department was in the district. She worked to ensure her team had the resources they needed for effective performance. She shared:

> I support my staff because I know their heart is in it, and they're doing what's best. And I'm gonna – the other thing too with my staff is, I'm always wanting what's best for my staff. If I feel they need A and B, and they don't have it, I'm gonna go to [Kelly] and say, "In order for us to succeed, in order for us to do

better, we need this and that." I don't think I'm afraid to ask for stuff. So, if they tell me no, that's okay, I tried (laughs).

The recruitment, development, and retention of staff within these three cases proved to be a priority amongst each of the participants. Accordingly, leadership shared a commitment to ensure personnel were supported with the resources they needed to fulfill their duties, whether physical or emotional. Furthermore, each leader served as an advisor and an advocate to help staff navigate difficult and ambiguous situations.

Financial Management

Managing financial resources proved to be a critical function for each of the leaders in this study. The participants conveyed a shared experience within the field – government funding sources were diminishing and often inadequate to meet the needs of the low-literate, low-income adults and families in need of services. Resultantly, a major component of their responsibilities was to manage and develop financial resources to support programs and services. As Tara shared, "My job is to try to keep money coming in, so we don't have to go down too much with what we're doing".

Tara admitted it took effort to transition from an educator to a corporate outlook as it concerned money management, but it was necessary. She revealed, "I had to totally learn how to be a business person. Business was not my training, I had to learn how to do that". Kelly shared a similar experience to Tara in her journey to fiscal leadership. She too found it necessary to adopt a business approach to managing the finances of the department. She provided insight into her rationale:

> My community education programs are locally funded. I'm expected to bring in as much revenue as goes out in expenditures. Therefore, I had to be very frugal, and very creative, and set tuition. I had to run a business. I never had to run a business before…So, I had to learn about grant-writing, and about managing grants, the performance measures, and how to keep that grant funding.

As evidenced above, leadership was charged with developing alternative funding sources for continuous delivery of services, to include grant writing, fundraising, and the like. Carol reported her staff mainly expected her "…to keep finding the money year after year to pay their salaries – that's the first thing, and most important thing, that they think of". In addition to employee salaries, participants reported a secured source of funding essential to employee benefits, curriculum development and delivery, assessment tools, educational technology, maintenance and facilities, and other operational expenses. Though the three cases had varying degrees of public and private funding, not one had secured funding that was guaranteed each year. Resultantly, they operated on a year to year basis as state and federal grants were continued.

Despite the unstable financial environment, leadership worked to provide adults and families the learning and development they required. To that end, participants reported understanding and managing the budget was an important aspect of both program and financial management. Leaders were responsible for allocating and spending the budget according to established priorities, to include adhering to donor restrictions and grant protocols. Poor fiscal management held potential consequences for the program, which as one participant reported, included placement on a financial improvement plan (FIP). Wendy shared her experience:

> That [FIP] was when we had not used up all our money. What that meant was that every month, I met with my special revenues people, and my grant people, and [Kelly]. And every month, we'd look at my budget to see where we're doing the way we're supposed to, you know. And every month, I'd get "You spent 90%. You spent 80%." That type of a deal. And, that was the best thing that ever happened.

While Wendy's program was no longer monitored under a financial improvement plan, she was thankful for the knowledge she gained in budget management, particularly as it related to accounting for different streams of funding. One of the important lessons learned was that fiscal management was a collaborative approach. Kelly agreed, noting the budgeting process in her organization was a collaborative effort between her, the coordinators, and other key departments within the school district. This team-oriented approach to fiscal leadership included funding development, grant writing, and budget planning and management. As she explained, this method created a culture of checks and balances in her organization.

Leadership Challenges

The contexts that framed the leadership priorities, in part, represented the challenges organizations faced in the delivery of adult and family literacy services. These challenges included (a) financial resources, (b) human resources, and (c) operational capacity.

Financial Resources

A predominant challenge experienced by the participants concerned the economic environment in which they operated. More specifically, the lack of stable and available funding sources needed to sustain programs and services presented as a common issue amongst the leaders in each case. As Amanda expressed, "Funding is always a challenge. Always". In Kelly's experience, Adult Education providers were consistently allotted limited funding in proportion to their charge of supporting community members with limited skills and resources. She had yet to experience a period in her career where there was a surplus of funds with which to work. Heather echoed these sentiments, "Funding has always been uncertain. I mean in Adult Ed., no one is used to having pots and pots of money". Tara provided additional insights:

> Money is always a challenge. That's just a standard challenge. [Referring to annual report] You can see how our money has gone down. I mean, you can only enroll so many. Money does matter (laughs). "No money, no mission," – that's our motto around here. So, keeping the coffers filled. But, that's always a challenge, I think, is money.

While funding challenges were ever-present in the field, several participants explained the administration of fiscal resources grew increasingly inconsistent and unstable. The resulting uncertainty in funding bore direct consequences for adult and family literacy organizations.

As designed, the federal grants that funded Adult Education programs were intended to be competitive-based awards. However, as Carol explained, there was a number of years in which the funds were not competitive; rather, the funding was continued each year. From her perspective, this was a benefit to her small, independent organization because it served as a source of guaranteed funds on which to depend and base operations. That period of time provided Carol the financial security to attend to her other leadership priorities. However, for Kelly, she perceived her department vulnerable to the ambiguous administration of federal grants. She shared:

> Every year [funding sources] changes. They always start out telling us, "Oh no, this won't be a continuation year. You're gonna have to apply". Then they change it, and that happened this year. So, every year we're under the threat. That's the hardest part about managing Adult Education.

Historically, federal and state grants were reallocated each year. However, there was uncertainty in the administration of those grants, particularly in how they would be awarded and how much would be allotted in a given year. This lack of secured funding exacerbated the challenges inherent in leading and managing adult education programs.

Coupled with this uncertainty was the risk of losing entire streams of funding and the implications that held for leadership and the organization. As previously discussed, adult and family literacy programs were free to the community, and therefore, did not generate revenue to supplement business expenses. Resultantly, as funding for a program were reduced or eliminated, leaders were left to identify alternative paths to continue program delivery or cease the program altogether due to lack of resources. Several participants experienced this first-hand when Even Start funding for family literacy education was eliminated, or as Carol lamented, “It was taken away”. Heather added, “We’re used to being year-to-year around here, but this is really pretty significant, even with all the changes over the years. The end of Even Start was a big funding change”.

Michelle explained though Even Start funding was awarded as a four year grant, in reality, their annual allotment was subject to the federal budgeting process. “Every year, it was whether the President approved the budget or not”. Moreover, before elimination, Even Start funding was zeroed-out in the federal budget several times, ultimately receiving funding just prior to budget approval. This process resulted in Michelle and her team being concerned about future funding allocations. She shared:

> You know, every year you’re sad. Or, you’re like “Oh my god! Are we gonna get funded?” It was to the point that it was just really stressful. So, I had to just accept the way things were, and this is the way it is every year. It’s gonna come to reauthorization or the President saying if it’s in or not.

Michelle’s program received funding for family literacy for 20 consecutive years before the elimination of Even Start federal funding. She shared, “I think we did pretty well being funded that long”. Since Michelle’s program was part of the school district, she had access to alternative resources to compensate for the loss of Even Start funding. For Carol, however, they experienced a significant loss when Even Start funding ended given their small, independent organizational structure. She explained:

> We were a small, pretty grassroots nonprofit, which we still are. We’re not affiliated with any bigger outfit. So, we don’t have somebody to tap into if funding slows…Without federal or state dollars, we couldn't do this. There's just

> not enough in tiny little bits of money from the Barbara Bush Foundation or Dollar General, which we get.

Consequentially, Carol was in a position where she had to find new funding sources or consider staff lay-offs to account for the loss in funding. She shared:

> That's the kind of stuff that we've been dealing with through the diminishment and then final eradication of Even Start. And, now with these Adult Ed. funds, it's just a constant insecurity. So, it's hard. Very hard.

While several participants experienced funding losses and the consequences therein, Phyllis was the sole participant who reported a contrary experience; she did not experience a significant impact as a result of funding losses or economic shifts in the environment. She shared:

> [Tara] manages to keep everything the way it is. Nobody has been fired. No one had to reduce the hours because of funding cuts. Again, the Barbara Bush Foundation, they reduced the amount – it was $50,000 last year, and the years before, and this coming year it's like $38,000 or $41,000 or something like that. So, we are having funding cuts, but I don't feel it. We're very lucky… she does magic (Laughs). And, I'm sure there are a lot of sleepless nights behind it, but we're kind of lucky.

Due to the governance and administration structure within her case, fiscal matters were not within Phyllis' scope of duties. Rather, Tara, with support of the board of directors, addressed funding and budgetary concerns, leaving Phyllis to focus on coordinating the family literacy program. Her experience was unique and an anomaly amongst the participants. Generally, the other leaders experienced insecurity around funding availability and levels necessary to sustain operations. As Wendy shared, given the shifts in the economy and changes in funding, "We don't have as much". In her program, this had direct consequences for staffing, technology, classroom, and other resource-intensive decisions. This was a phenomenon shared by the leadership in each of the cases and held corollary human resource and operating capacity challenges, a discussion of which follows.

Human Resources

The funding-related issues leadership encountered held direct consequences on various facets of the organization. A primary concern amongst leadership centered on the human resources function. The ability to recruit and retain adequate and qualified staff to sustain operations proved challenging in the current environment. For Amanda, her funding and staffing issues were correlated. She posited the lack of financial resources was directly tied to her inability to appropriately staff her programs. As previously discussed, she and one assistant staffed her programs, which served most of the campuses in the school district. She explained the lack of funds and personnel impeded her ability to meet the demands for her programs. She conveyed:

> Our biggest challenge is staff. I need more staff because the need is there. We have so much work to do, we just don't have the manpower to do it. So, I would say that would be my biggest challenge – staff and funding.

Since her department was part of the school district, Amanda often utilized the teaching and administrative staff to deliver content for trainings and workshops. Though campus staff served as an accessible pool of talent, they did not resolve the ongoing challenges she faced coordinating and staffing programs across the district. She shared:

> It's having staff, because school staff is not gonna volunteer. They've got families of their own. So, I've got to pay them, and in order to pay them, I gotta have money. That's a challenge…We don't have the staff or the money, so you know, we can only do so much.

With Amanda's program being relatively new to the district, the limited access to funding and support staff affected her efforts to grow the program and extend its reach to all campuses in the district. Despite the increased need for adult and family literacy services, leadership lacked the financial and human resources necessary for program growth and innovation. Carol stated:

> You've got a grant for $100,000 from E.L. Civics, but you know, they want you to move 150 adults from point A to point B. You need a certain number of staff to do it, which actually exceeds the amount of money you're getting just to pay base salaries.

Heather shared her experience in this regard:

> It has limited our growth in that we cannot pay. We cannot have more classes than we already offer because we don't have the staff and the money to pay more staff…If we had a little more money for salaries, I could add another classroom and the night classes. We've got a big wing of a building; we can use more rooms. It's limited us in the ability to expand – let's put it that way. We haven't contracted too much, but we can't really grow. We can serve more people in one

> class, but you can't have 40 people in a class. No one is really gonna learn, and they won't all fit in there. So yeah, it's been difficult with the budget restraints to serve more people. There's only so much we can do, unless we can hire more teachers.

As Heather reported, program expansion was not an option under current circumstances. Moreover, as the financial resources of the organization changed, the corresponding number of personnel within the case also changed. She explained, "We used to have more employees, and it's kind of dwindled down as the money has gone. So, the employees have gone". As employees resigned or retired, Carol and Heather used the salary savings to sustain programs, rather than re-fill the position which proved cost-prohibitive. Using employee attrition, rather than lay-offs, allowed leadership in this case to address the shortfall in funding and continue to deliver programs and services. Heather reflected on the state of her case:

> We do not have big salaries around here, that's for sure. We could pay people more if we had more money. Not even way, way more, but just enough more to make it like more competitive. (Sigh) So really, just having the amount of people we need, and being able to pay them enough I think is the biggest challenge… I honestly think that if we had more money to pay people, we could hire a little more people, or we could pay the ones we have better. That's the biggest constraint, I think.

Similar to Amanda, Heather found her primary challenges to be obtaining adequate funding and staffing to effectively and efficiently carry out the mission of the organization. The employees that remained were charged with additional responsibilities to cover the new-found personnel gap, without being granted additional resources or compensation. Furthermore, employees experienced insecurities around continued employment within the organization, particularly as it concerned salary funding. Several participants shared how these uncertainties, experienced by both leadership and staff, impacted morale and the environment within the organization. Michelle shared, “That was always difficult, because you yourself had to keep your morale up, and not just yourself, but your staff”. Carol provided additional insights:

> Everybody is stressed because nobody is certain they'll have a job next year. I think everybody was stressed because they didn't know if funding was gonna go away in the middle of the summer program…So, in May, people were anticipating that they may be job hunting later in the summer. And, once you start to think in that way, then your loyalties to where you are presently diminish.

Carol conveyed the work environment suffered in correlation to employees’ concerns about continued funding and employment. As Kelly reflected on her staff, she shared the following:

> What scares me the most is we're dealing with people – people that are affected by this…That's always a major concern for me with these grant-funded programs, you know. We're talking about people, and their livelihood, and their families. And, even though we always say, "When you got hired, you knew you were grant-funded, and that your position, it's existence, was dependent on this

grant", you're still dealing with people. You have to try to meet everybody's needs, and it's not always possible.

The shifting context in which these cases operated had a direct effect on employees' sense of security and stability in their job. As the work climate shifted and became more unstable, leadership experienced increased stress, as well as diminished morale and loyalty amongst staff members. Carol summarized, "It's just definitely diminished the environment of hope that we had had in the past, from loving what we do."

Operational Capacity

Corollary to the aforementioned challenges leadership dealt with in each case were the capacity issues each encountered in their efforts to meet the learning and development needs of current and prospective learners. The lack of adequate financial and human resources resulted in an inability of each case to accommodate all who sought to attend adult literacy or family literacy programming. Of primary concern was the ability to develop and sustain the capacity necessary to effectively fulfill the mission of the organization. For each case, capacity issues generally surfaced in the form of waiting lists; what undergirded these waiting lists were linked to funding and staffing, as well as physical space, technology resources, partnerships and the like.

Tara and Kelly detailed how capacity issues surfaced within their organizations. In Tara's instance, she discussed the relationship between financial resources and the ability to accommodate learners within her organization. As she shared, her programs have a waiting list of 100 people. She explained as funding became precarious, the number of students that can be accommodated became questionable. "The number of students that we can serve is the main thing. That's really the only thing that impacts us now". She continued:

> I'm not going away, and [Case 3] is not going away, but it's just less students I can serve. I'll just have to find the money somewhere else, or figure out how to do it for less money or something.

As Tara navigated the challenges within her organization, waiting lists were utilized as a stop-gap measure. Similarly, Kelly and her peers employed the same tactic as they worked with diminishing resources. She shared, "We have, and had to have, waiting lists going. That has all come about as a result of funds not being available". Kelly revealed despite increased interest in her programs, the lack of financial resources impacted her ability to meet those needs. She explained:

> We had to not offer classes over the summer, you know. By May, we're out of money. So, we have to tell people, "Come back in August."…We had to put them on a waiting list because we didn't have any more funding. So, even though we had more people interested in taking classes, we couldn't offer more. There's a limit to what we can offer based on the funds.

In addition to limited funding for staffing adult and family literacy classes, space resources were also identified as a barrier to meeting the needs of those seeking services. As Heather shared, "There have been times where literally the facilities have limited the number of students we can serve". In her case, the daycare accommodated a limited number of children. Because family literacy programs integrated child literacy and adult literacy, the number of adults granted access to the program was dependent upon space availability in the child care center. As a result, waiting lists were utilized to manage the adults and families who wanted to participate in programs.

Carol provided more insight into this capacity issue. She explained an additional layer complicating this issue was the staff-to-child ratio required for the daycare. The staffing guidelines for the child center was 1:3 for babies and 2:12 for toddlers. The number of children admitted to the center was dependent on staffing levels which was dependent upon funding availability. She illuminated the reasons for using a waiting list in her case:

> In our family literacy component, we'll have a waiting list of people with kids who haven't been able to get into our Adult Ed. component because the early childhood is filled…It's harder for somebody with several children under school-age to get in, because we have somebody on the waiting list with four kids – 0, 1, 2, 3. And, you know, to get four openings at once is a little bit harder. Still, because we know that person is maybe more in need, we strive to meet the needs of the people who are learning.

Phyllis experienced a similar predicament in her family literacy program. She cited the lack of space as the only issue facing her program. "We could have more families, but we don't have child space in the childcare center". She lamented on the capacity barriers she faced:

> Our only issue is the space. We don't have more space. If we had more space, we could serve more children, which would be more families… I would love the

> program to grow to have more families. I would love that. I don't see how it can be done with no more space.

As Phyllis and other leaders expressed, the lack of physical space affected their ability to reach the maximum number of adults and families. As evidenced, the ability to operate at optimal capacity proved complex and dependent on multiple variables.

As the participants revealed, financial resources were essential to the effective delivery of programs and services, and to support the learning and development needs of the community. Wendy placed funding at the root of the multiple challenges leadership faced in organizations, particularly the relationship between funding and stakeholder needs. She expressed the following:

> I think the biggest challenge is balancing funding and needs…So, the needs of the teachers, the needs of the students, the needs of the school district, the needs of the program – do all that together (laughs). Funding usually wins.

Achieving optimal operating capacity proved a challenge with participants in this study, particularly given the financial and human resources challenges they worked to navigate. As the leaders shared, limited funding streams and resources were at the center of these organizational issues. As such, obtaining and operating with adequate resources, financial and otherwise, would position the organization to compensation for lost resources, as well as remain a viable entity despite shifting environmental circumstances. The next section discusses the strategies leadership utilized to address organizational challenges and better position organizations to sustain themselves over time.

Leadership Strategies

As detailed in the previous section, participants increasingly encountered diminishing resources in the leadership and management of their respective cases. With the reduction and/or elimination of public and private funding awards, a widening gap materialized in the available and necessary resources required by organizations to sustain operations. As traditional modes of operating proved insufficient in the new economy, leadership pursued and implemented various strategies to accommodate for the gap in resources, to include: (a) develop a financial strategy, (b) restructure staff operations, (c) restructure student services, and (d) develop and leverage partnerships.

Develop a Financial Strategy

The participants generally agreed that depending wholly on specific funding awards or grants was no longer sufficient in the current operating environment. The practice of basing continued operations on uncertain and unstable financial resources was not sustainable over time. Leadership acknowledged a more planned, intentional approach to developing the organization's financial capacity was necessary in the current economic environment, particularly as it concerned budget management and fund development. Stewardship of available resources, as well as funding streams which aligned with the organization's mission, were key components in working towards financial sustainability of the organizations.

Kelly stressed the importance of being "very strategic, extremely strategic". She explained in recent years, her team had developed a practice of implementing and monitoring budgetary processes as a means to guide organizational leadership and performance. “You know, it's not about just spending to spend, but what is it tied to? Always going back to the goal of what we're trying to do”. Wendy expressed a similar sentiment, “My strategy is my budget – knowing what I’ve got. And, I can only do what the budget says. I can’t do what I want to do”. Accordingly, leadership in this case established protocols to facilitate an effective, intentioned budget management process. Kelly described their process:

> We meet monthly to see where we are on our expenditures, because we need to spend down all our funds, and we need to make sure that we're spending them the way we said we were gonna spend them, and things like that. So, we're checking each other. There's always this check and balance. We've created that culture.

Kelly and her team worked in partnership with the Grants and Special Revenues departments to ensure an effective and transparent fiscal process that aligned with that of the district. In so doing, leadership developed a framework which allowed for informed resource allocation and decision-making in their work to fulfill funding goals, as well as the mission of the organization. Additionally, Kelly delegated tactical budget management to each of her coordinators at the program level as an added source of control and accountability. She explained:

> I have all these coordinators, who that's their prime job. [Wendy] handles all her budgets, [Michelle] handles hers, [Amanda] after-school programs, all that. And then, I'm always monitoring and supporting them and making sure we're meeting the performance measures, and having those budget meetings, and checking on the reports – the reporting that has to go with all these grants.

As detailed above, the budgeting process proved an essential component in the organization's overall financial health. A large part of this process involved identifying current and future funds with which to support core business activities. To that end, a targeted financial strategy became increasingly important as resources and supports contracted and the economic environment grew more unstable. As resources diminished, protocols and requirements for remaining funds grew more involved and demanding for grant recipients. In response, leadership became more intentional in their pursuit and acceptance of funding awards, especially as they considered the limited staff and supports with which they had to operate. As Heather explained, "You want to go after the funding that's right for you".

In this regard, leadership in the first case discussed an experience in which they accepted, and later returned, a grant award that proved too complicated to fulfill. In the most recent academic year, they returned a family literacy grant worth $50,000 due to a newly implemented fundraising requirement incorporated into the grant. Wendy noted in the previous three years, they were awarded and successfully fulfilled this funding award without any issues. However, given the structure of their department and the policies which guided their work, engaging in fundraising activities was not in alignment with the business of the organization. Michelle expressed, "We had to let it go because of fundraising. That's just not how we're built – our program, the time, the effort". Kelly provided further insights on this matter:

> We turned it back because they were wanting to go out and fundraise. When do we have time to fundraise...We didn't sign up for that, and they didn't tell us that

when we went after the grant. They didn't tell us that until we got the money. That was just wrong…It did not make sense at all. We just had to say no. We said, "Thank you, but no thank you".

The participants expressed disappointment at having to forfeit the grant, particularly due to its significance in supporting their family literacy programs in recent years. Wendy acknowledged, "It would've worked, except they wanted all that volunteer stuff. And, we just couldn't stand on every corner and sell pencils, although [Michelle] would've done it (laughs)". As coordinator of the family literacy programs, Michelle conveyed her regret that she and her staff were unable to fulfill the terms of the grant:

> That was one of the things that I really felt bad about, because I felt like I let the school district down…I'm okay with it now, but I did feel sad, you know, because I worked really hard for all my programs.

Through this experience, leadership realized the importance of aligning organizational mission to the intent of donations, grants, and other funding streams. Ultimately, Kelly and her team determined the additional fundraising requirements impeded their ability to deliver learning and development opportunities to adults and families in the school district and community at large. Kelly explained it was imperative they adopt a more intentional, strategic approach in the pursuit and/or acceptance of funding awards. She shared, "We have to be very careful what grants we do go after". She continued:

> I've come to the point that I've learned is it worth it? Can we get that money somewhere else and not have to work as hard, because sometimes it's not worth

> it, you know? You've gotta do so much reporting and so much performance and this and that.

Michelle concurred, adding she incorporated the following framework to assist evaluating potential grants: "Can I really do that? Can our program do that? Do we have the staff and everything"? If they could answer "Yes" to each of the questions, only then would they pursue and/or accept a particular grant or donation.

In comparison, Tara and her team in Case 3 received the same family literacy grant referenced above; however, they reported a wholly different experience to that of Case 1. As discussed, several factors prohibited leadership and staff in Case 1 from carrying out the fundraising component of the grant, to include infrastructure, staffing, and capacity. In contrast, fulfilling the terms of the family literacy grant did not present an issue in Case 3 given their infrastructure, staffing, and capacity were already in place to support fundraising. In fact, Tara reported:

> We've got Family Literacy over there at [the local elementary school] – great program. We get lots of accolades on that program. The [grant foundation] is very happy with it and keeps funding us year after year.

As previously detailed, Tara, in collaboration with the governing board, engaged in fundraising activities on a regular basis. As such, leadership in this case capitalized on this family literacy funding opportunity; moreover, they leveraged the relationship with the foundation to develop funding opportunities beyond the grant award. Tara and Phyllis shared an instance in which, along with the grant foundation, created and hosted a fundraising event on behalf of Case 3. Phyllis shared, "We're kind of lucky…That is for rainy days, I guess, everything that they raised there". Tara provided additional insights:

> Now we have something new. [Referred to budget] This is just interest, because we had [the grant foundation] here. We raised about $800,000, put it in an endowment, and now that's the interest that it's making off of that. So, we're happy about that.

Tara conveyed the board's leadership and engagement was key to the success realized in their fundraising efforts. In this instance, a board member created the endowment and assumed responsibility for its development. Tara shared:

> I really appreciate the board member that I have that started this endowment. She wants that endowment to get to $3.5 million. She's been able to raise – and really, I give her all the credit on that. I have done almost nothing on the endowment. She's raised $850,000 so far, and I think in this economy – pretty miraculous.

As evidenced, the board in Case 3 was essential to fund development and the overall advancement of the organization. The support and collaboration Tara received towards fundraising efforts provided an advantage that leadership in the other cases lacked. In Case 1, Kelly and her team did not have such a relationship with their board, as the school district's structure did not allow for it. Consequentially, they lacked the resources and capacity to assume fundraising efforts in addition to their other responsibilities. Since Tara shared this fundraising responsibility with her board, leadership in this case was better positioned to meet their fiscal responsibilities, particularly in periods marked by limited resources.

In combination with budget and grant management, leadership utilized other measures to bolster the financial position of their respective organizations. The development and utilization of reserve funds emerged as an essential component of participants' overall financial plan. Leadership in each case conveyed the importance of having adequate cash balances available to support the timing of payroll and other expenses, as well as to pay for unanticipated costs or increases. These discretionary funds allowed for continued operations in the midst of a monetary shortfall. Tara explained she witnessed the shutdown of several other organizations because government funding, which had steadily declined over time and become less available, was their only financial stream. Though Tara experienced the same diminishment of funds, she explained, "I've got private funds that's been helping us with that". The dollars raised through Tara and the board's fundraising activities were used to address the reduction in funds on the government side.

In Carol and Heather's case, community donations were used to augment federal and state funding as well. Carol shared, "We've been pretty successful in developing a discretionary fund that we're pretty tight with because it might have to cover salaries during a bridge situation". Carol explained their approach to managing their reserves:

> We've had to be more frugal with our discretionary funds – our donations from the public – and kind of save them up so that when we have, you know, funding ups and downs, we can compensate. And we're careful with the money.

Heather reiterated the fact that donations from the public were vital to the financial health of their organization. However, she made clear these funds were neither the secured nor guaranteed resources necessary to sustain the organization in the long-term. To achieve financial stability, Heather noted, “We need at least one big chunk of money to do anything meaningful”. She acknowledged in their case, she and Carol would need to amplify their efforts towards donor relations and fundraising activities to obtain secured, long-term funding. In the interim, they continued to manage a mix of public and private funds to support their portfolio of services.

In Tara’s case, she learned how to navigate donor relationships early in her leadership career and incorporated that element into the organization’s overall financial strategy. She explained fundraising was not a one size fits all endeavor, and each relationship required attention and development. “With donors, it’s not one answer”. She provided insight into her experiences:

> I’ve learned a lot about fundraising, but there’s so much more I’m sure I could learn. But there’s whole books on how to approach a donor, how to put a presentation together. I’ve gone to a lot of fundraising training, and it’s all been helpful.

She continued:

> There’s no single way to fundraise. Each donor requires a different approach. You have to learn how to approach donors differently. This donor wants this approach. I mean like so many of my female donors – and there’s some rich ladies in [local city], I can tell you. They just want to hear the stories, and that’s

great because I love that part too. But, when I go into [grant foundation], if I don't know my numbers – you ever watch "Shark Tank?" If I don't know my numbers, I'm out on my butt. I better know them. He better not say, "Explain that number to me," and me not be able to explain it. I have to study to go in to see him, but he gives me money.

Tara reported her donor relations and fundraising tactics were key pieces in the financial management and leadership of Case 3. And, though she had a proven and effective strategy, she expressed the work and effort put behind the strategy contributed to its demonstrated success. "It's work. You have to want to work. If you don't wanna work, do something else because this is work". To this sentiment, Heather expressed a note of contention. She agreed consistency was an important facet in developing donor relationships and engaging in fundraising activities. However, the time and effort needed to effectively participate in such endeavors proved challenging in the face of effectively managing programs and services on a daily basis. Heather provided her perspective on pursuing potential funding opportunities:

> Yeah, it's out there. But, if you don't work at it, or if we're all too busy doing our day-to-day jobs to really go and market ourselves to people – I hate that term – then you could lose out to somebody else who did a better, noisier job than you did… And, we're a little agency who is in a school district where 95% of those people don't know who we are. So, we must make ourselves known.

Heather concluded, "You gotta keep it up", as it concerned development of donor relations and fundraising activities. In an effort to sustain and advance the programs and services of each organization, leadership adopted a strategic approach to fund development, and moreover, the financial management and leadership therein.

Restructure Staff Operations

As part of their efforts to improve the financial position and health of their organizations, leadership evaluated the administrative and general operating costs necessary to sustain their organizations on a daily basis. They worked to assess areas with the greatest budgetary impact and, in turn, identified potential cost saving measures. As Heather previously noted, staff was the greatest asset in the organization. However, payroll expenses proved to be the greatest cost impacting the operating budget. Kelly expressed, “The thing that costs the most is staff. So, we have to prioritize what's gonna have the most effect on our performance”. Michelle concurred, adding, “You have the majority of the money in salaries, you know? That’s expensive because they’re fulltime, benefits, you know, all that”. To that end, participants implemented protocols to reduce personnel-related costs without impacting and/or eliminating programs and services.

The primary approach reported by leadership was to adjust employee’s work schedule, as well as to implement a hiring freeze, in an effort to realize salary savings to be used to offset the reduction in monetary grants and awards. Participants conveyed their experiences implementing such changes, transforming the organization’s workforce and culture. Kelly shared, “I've had to make budget changes. And then, thank goodness we were in a good situation because again, you have to think about the people”. She continued:

> Fortunately, because of funding in Adult Ed., I only have three people that are fulltime. So, the rest of them are all part-time, temporary, or seasonal people, and they know that they only get the hours that we can support under the funding.

She explained one fulltime bookkeeper position was eliminated when the incumbent retired. Rather than fill the vacated position, Kelly captured those salary savings and allocated to a resource-deficient area within the organization. This same approach was utilized at the district level as well. Michelle detailed that experience:

> Our district made major cuts – staff, you know? And, thank goodness our district was a little bit luckier than other school districts because we had a lot of people retire, so they held jobs through attrition. They were able to still keep the people. They just put them in different positions, whether some of them wanted it or not. But, at least it was a job.

On a micro-level, Michelle and Wendy each had to devise program-wide changes as it concerned staffing. To accommodate the shortage in funding, employees in both programs reduced their work schedule for the benefit of the organization. As previously discussed, the family literacy program lost significant sources of government and private funding, leaving Michelle and her team to explore ways to bridge the gap between available and necessary financial resources. In this regard, Michelle worked to realize cost savings while protecting the well-being of staff and avoiding department-wide layoffs. "We cut the work days of the staff to make up for the money that we didn't get any more from Even Start". She continued:

> I spoke to the staff and said "We have different options. I could cut staff and no problem. Or, everybody cuts their workdays, and we can make it work." Well, they did, they stayed. We cut the days – they were 220, we went down to 202 workdays.

The former Even Start funding required year-round programming. However, with the elimination of that grant and the program's continuation under Title I funding, they were positioned to align their schedule with the school district's academic year. "So, we cut. That's what we had to do in order for us to carry on". This change affected approximately 30 fulltime teaching and administrative staff throughout the organization. While employees understood and supported the reduced schedule, Michelle was concerned with resulting employee engagement and retention, especially considering the impact on their quality of life. While the salary savings contributed to the sustainability of the organization, the shortened program years held direct consequences on the financial well-being of staff and their families. Michelle provided further insight:

> I mean, staff was sad. They were worried also because now we're making less money, and they have certain bills that everybody has to pay for… I was worried because I thought some of them might go, and then I know they were worried because they were wondering, "Is it gonna work financially in my house for me to have less days"?

Michelle and her staff each had legitimate concerns related to the reduced work schedule and corollary financial outcomes. However, she conveyed, "In the end it worked out". Michelle described the staff's passion for the work they performed and their unwavering commitment to the serving the families in their program. “It was a true testament to their belief, their faith, and knowing that this is a good program, and we’re doing good things for families, and they’re really loving what they do”.

The instructors and supervisors in Wendy’s department experienced a reduction in wage hours as well. In this instance, they had to decrease their hours from full-time to 30 hours or less per week. Wendy reported her supervisors worked much more than the 30-hour cap, so this constraint proved a challenge. She explained the effect this change had within her programmatic area:

> My teachers come in, they get all their staff development from me, and then they realize they could take a fulltime job. So, I lose my teachers to fulltime positions – good teachers – especially when it’s 30 hours. It’s like, “What do you mean I can’t work more than that?” You’re gonna have to go out and get a fulltime job. So, with the economy that way, they need – they’re trying for a better job.

Wendy shared the Adult Education teachers she trained and invested in left for fulltime positions in the school district. In an effort to mitigate the change in hours, she contemplated increasing the hourly compensation of her staff in an effort to be more competitive within the market. However, doing so would have a negative impact on potential cost savings, and ultimately organizational performance. Instead, Wendy explained, the instructional staff that remained often obtained additional employment to offset the loss in wage hours. However, she noted that the teachers loved their work and were ultimately supportive of the schedule change.

Leadership in the other two cases employed similar tactics to create cost savings in their respective organizations. Both utilized a combination of reduced work schedules and employee attrition to decrease operating costs. Moreover, they both utilized volunteers as part of their workforce strategy. Phyllis, who originally joined her organization as a volunteer, shared a combination of paid and unpaid staff were used to meet the needs of the hundreds of students enrolled in their programs. Tara added her experience in this regard, "I did make some cuts because I had some attrition, and I didn't replace them. And, I'm not gonna replace them". Rather, she and Phyllis worked to develop their volunteer workforce to accommodate for the decrease in staff. She explained, "We had to figure out how to be frugal and get more volunteers".

Similarly, Carol and Heather developed a volunteer program as a means of sustaining the program through diminished resources. They introduced volunteers into their staffing model as fulltime employees across the organization had to reduce their schedule to 32 hours per week. Heather explained, "Former students – they come back and have helped us in a volunteer capacity. It's pretty neat. It's something we haven't had a lot before this year". She continued:

> This is the first year we've used volunteers. Other programs use them a lot, but this year [grant foundation] required us to. And, that was a good thing. We were really worried about that in the beginning, but we've gotten more than enough hours… And, we can't pay them, but we have one of those little catchall fundings. We do have donations, and we're able to like buy them gift cards once a month so they can go buy groceries.

Utilizing volunteer staff in a more systemic way was a new endeavor for Heather and Carol. However, with the reduction in funding and other resources, they welcomed the additional support to ensure program and service delivery remained viable. Heather shared, “I’m grateful that we were able to do that because it’s really been nice of them to help us out”.

The staff in each case were essential to advancing the mission of the organization and driving organizational performance. As such, leadership engaged strategies that centered on sustaining programs, as well as safeguarding the continued employment of their staff. Specifically, participants worked towards restructuring aspects of their staffing model in an effort to create cost savings for the organization. Common tactics pursued in each case included decreasing staff numbers through employee attrition, reducing the paid work hours of staff, and increasing dependence on volunteer staff to sustain operations.

Restructure Student Services

As leadership explored ways to deliver cost savings to the organization, the consensus among participants was reducing or eliminating programs was the least desirable option. Rather, leadership and staff absorbed financial and structural changes in an effort to ensure adults and families continued to receive the learning and development opportunities they required. Moreover, efforts were made to buffer adults and families from changes in operations. Tara expressed, “I’m not gonna cut any classes, because I’ve got some private funding”. She held a concern, however, about the number of students they could reach given their current configuration. Yet, she was confidently stated she would develop new funds or find an affordable way to offer programs. Phyllis, in turn, attributed Tara's efforts to the fact that her programs did not lose one family during the last year, despite changes in organizational structure and operations.

Given the shifts in fiscal and staffing strategies, leadership evaluated their overall approach to delivering services and made the appropriate adjustments to ensure alignment with the transforming organization. Moreover, participants sought to maximize availability and impact of their programming. A common approach to restructuring student services involved adjusting the schedule of programs. Michelle and Kelly shared their experience in this regard. Both reported adjusting the adults and families' course schedule to align with the district's academic calendar, in similar fashion to changes made at the staffing level. Kelly explained, "We had to not offer classes over the summer, you know? By May, we're out of money. So, we have to tell people 'come back in August'". Michelle conveyed a similar sentiment, "For the first time we had to shorten the school year because of lack of funding". However, Michelle noted her team continued to deliver a holistic family literacy program consisting of all the components despite newly-implemented fiscal and operating practices. "We carried out the same program, and I'm very proud of that". She continued:

> I don't think they [families] felt anything so far because we still provide all the components. And, that's what I wanted because I truly believe in the family literacy model, and I truly believe that you have to have all the components for it to make an impact on the families.

To that end, Michelle and her team absorbed the effects of the organizational changes so that adults and families continued to have their needs met through programs and services. Phyllis conveyed a similar experience restructuring programs for students. She too adjusted the program schedule, though she reduced the classroom time for the ESL students, as compared to shortening the length of the academic year. She explained this approach:

> We're giving them the opportunity to go out a little bit more. Because, the supervisor found out that the students that are having like 16 hours a week of instruction are getting the same results as the students that are getting like half of it, 8 hours a week. So, that's why we're changing it a little bit and doing different stuff.

Rather than receiving four days of classroom instruction, ESL students received two days of instruction, supplemented with computer lab work and homework. This was in contrast with the family literacy program, which remained a year-round, four days per week program. As Phyllis shared, aligning the parents schedule with their children's schedule contributed to increased parental engagement and overall program effectiveness.

Coupled with developing a new model of delivery for adult and family education, leadership also assessed processes affecting present and potential learners. Restructuring programs to realize cost savings highlighted the number and motivation of students enrolled or waiting to be enrolled in programs and services. In an effort to maximize student outcomes, leadership enacted policies and guidelines to ensure programs were accessible to adults and families with the willingness and motivation to fully participate in services.

Several participants discussed their transition from an open enrollment process to a more managed process. Tara recalled the introduction of managed enrollment in her case: “We didn’t do that [managed enrollment] in the early years. We just kinda let them come and go as they wanted to”. Wendy shared a similar experience, “It used to be that you could come into a class at any time”. However, she explained that process wasn’t effective because teachers were tasked with delivering missed instruction to the new students while presenting new instruction to current students. Wendy discussed the inherent challenges for students and instructors alike:

> Students were mad because, you know, other people were coming in, and they had to repeat things. Teachers were stressed out and things like that. And, if they came in later, they didn’t have that length of time between that pretest and post-test. So, we went from a revolving door type to a managed enrollment…So we have registration at the beginning of our first semester, at the beginning of our second semester, and a third semester.

Though leadership in this case adopted a more structured enrollment process, this alone was not enough to affect student outcomes and success. As Kelly explained, they still operated on a first come, first served basis. “Whoever comes in, we serve them regardless of whether – we don't know how committed they're going to be when they walk in the door”. She continued:

> We just take them, and we take them from where they are, and we work with them. And then, some of them don't come back, and so we've wasted all these resources. I want us to get to the point where we are more selective about the people we're going to serve.

Kelly and her team were in the initial phase of assessing enrollment criteria in an effort to conduct more targeted enrollment. Tara, however, had made strides in that regard. She provided insight into their revised enrollment process: “Now we really do an orientation like we’ve been trained to do, and you have to maintain 75% attendance”. In this instance, as resources and program capacity decreased, stricter enrollment and attendance policies were necessary to ensure students with the willingness and motivation to increase their basic knowledge and skills were afforded an opportunity to do so. However, Tara noted learners that weren’t quite ready to uphold this commitment were welcomed back to the program as their readiness aligned with program availability. She explained:

> We have 100 people on the waiting list. And, we love you, but if you’re not gonna keep that seat full, we’re gonna put somebody in it…You have to be here at a time when you can do this. Sometimes you enroll, you think you can do it, and then something happens – somebody gets sick, a job change, whatever. That’s okay. No hard feelings. But, go on and take care of that. Let’s put somebody else in the seat, and come back when you’re ready.

Implementing student expectations into the enrollment process grew increasingly necessary as resources diminished and the demand for services increased. Phyllis observed greater weight placed on attendance and performance of students in program evaluations. Accordingly, leadership implemented policies and practices to support these measures.

Carol and her team created a formal enrollment process in which students entered into a contract agreement with the agency. Similar to other participants, Carol "found that it works best to have people kind of starting at the same time and finishing at the same time". To support this process, orientations were held once per semester to outline program guidelines and expectations for learners. Carol elaborated on the process:

> During orientation, we inform them really what our participation rules are, and the things that might cause them to lose access to the program – too many absences basically. And then, they sign a contract to participate.

As part of this process, current students' attendance and performance were evaluated in each enrollment period to determine eligibility to re-enroll. As Carol explained, if students maintained a positive attendance and participation record, then they were allowed to continue their program each semester. This positioned the leadership team to better monitor students' progress while ensuring program funds were utilized in an effect, impactful way. Wendy implemented a similar process within her department. She established criteria informing students' admission and continued placement. "If they didn't get their hours and didn't do their progress tests, they didn't get to register for this semester. They had to sit out. And, a lot of people understood that".

As participants explained, managed enrollment proved an essential measure in aligning program funds with students' engagement and performance outcomes. This new model facilitated a more informed, strategic approach to delivering learning and development instruction. Students were increasingly expected to consistently attend and participate in programming to maintain access to programs and services. Restructuring enrollment policies and expectations helped leadership focus on student engagement and performance, which were important program evaluation measures. Moreover, managed enrollment contributed to the strategic allocation of resources to have the greatest impact on the learner, as well as the program.

Develop and Leverage Partnerships

In addition to the strategies detailed above, participants reported partnerships and collaborations to be increasingly useful and necessary in advancing and sustaining the organization. Strategic alliances between the cases and their community partners generally enabled each to realize a greater impact than possible on their own. As Heather noted, "It's all about partnerships in Adult Ed." Accordingly, developing and leveraging relationships with other agencies strengthened and expanded programs and services, as well as streamlined operations, which proved mutually beneficial to those involved.

Several participants reported partnership development to be core to their responsibilities as a leader, as well as to the health of the organization. Kelly stated, "My job is to develop partnerships. And, not just in outside agencies, but partnerships within the school district". These intra-district collaborations resulted in shared services and resources, thereby enabling Kelly to magnify the reach and impact of her operating budget. This was demonstrated in the establishment of her department's learning center for immigrants, which was made possible through a collaboration with the bilingual education department. Kelly realized each department shared a common goal – the learning and development of adults and families in need of English language acquisition. Accordingly, she proposed a partnership to create the learning center and requested funding support to bridge the gap in available resources. Leadership in the bilingual education department agreed and committed to allocate a portion of its budget to fund the computer lab and the salary for the center's coordinator.

Carol and Heather shared a similar experience with leveraging relationships to provide learning and development opportunities for the community. Given their small, grass-roots stature, they relied on partnerships with community organizations to support programs and services. Carol explained:

> When you're a little place like us, you just have got to really develop the relationships to stay in business. You've got to keep that collaboration going. A simple, you know, little falling out can be disastrous.

To that end, Carol worked in tandem with Heather to manage and navigate partner relationships. Heather's position responsibilities included, "coordinating with our partner agencies day-to-day". She detailed the relationship shared with the city's community college to provide adult education to a broader audience:

> One of our teachers is actually an [local community college] employee. They partner with us and pay her salary. So, she's employed by them, not us. But, I

> need to make sure she's okay, and interact with [local community college]'s data people to make sure that everything matches.

As evidenced, the relationship with the community college required coordination, relationship building, and open communication to ensure collaborators' expectations were met and each realized the benefits of the joint endeavor.

Leadership in Case 3 also shared a partnership with the local community college, but on a much more involved, inter-related scale. Tara provided some background on how their partnership came to fruition:

> We didn't have the federal dollars for GED and all that stuff. I was raising private dollars, and we were mostly working one-on-one with people. So, [local community college] had the federal money, and then we started working together…and they went really well. We both were happy with how they went.

A staffing change at the community college prompted the merging of the two programs. Tara explained the director at the community college resigned, which "naturally led into a conversation about us merging". She reported each program maintained an administrative office, and there was an opportunity to streamline these efforts to gain greater efficiencies and economies of scale. She continued:

> We could see immediately that if we put those things together – now that's some funding that can go to the student because it's not tied up in separate offices. And, we also knew that there's some money that [local community college] can get that I'll never be able to get, and there's money I can get that they can't get. So, we thought if we could put that together, the impact would be better.

The merger proved a success in that they realized immediate gains in program expansion and reach. Soon after forging their partnership, student enrollment grew to 2,000 – gains Tara and her team were not able to accomplish independently. Tara noted they've reached the saturation point, however, and acknowledged additional partnerships would be necessary for future growth of the agency's programs and services.

Amanda shared a similar sentiment with Tara as it concerned leveraging partnerships to expand programming. Her parental engagement curricula were relatively new to the district and community at large. Partnership engagement proved essential in compensating for limited available resources and amplifying the impact of her programs. Amanda shared:

> There's no money, you know? And, with budgets being cut left and right, it gets harder and harder. So, I'm always looking for nonprofit organizations that are wanting to partner up, that can help with these programs, and without me having to put money in.

Amanda ascribed her background in sales to her "creative" approach to partnership development. She expressed, "I have limited funding! So, you have to get creative". Her efforts to obtain additional resources were restricted by district policies, which prohibited solicitation of donations. As a result, she approached collaboration and partnership opportunities through the lens of sales, particularly in negotiating terms of agreement and offering potential outcomes and benefits. She shared:

> I look for partners that can say, "Okay, well look, we're gonna bring you the curriculum, we're gonna bring you all the materials, and we'll pay for these.

> But, we need for you to organize it with your families". So, it's a win-win because they're reaching the families they need to reach, and I'm able to provide these for my families without any cost to me.

Amanda referred to an alliance she forged with a local business to support the early literacy program within the department. Family literacy programs comprised a multi-pronged approach: parents' education, early childhood education, and parent and child together time. In this instance, the business supplied the materials and books for the program, while Amanda provided the administrative coordination necessary to support the adults and families with children aged 3 to 4 who participated in the program. This collaboration typified the partnership model Amanda sought to grow and advance her programs.

Support for family literacy and other programs from local businesses and community agencies filled the gap left by diminished and/or eliminated government and private grants. This allowed leadership in each case to continue to meet the learning and development needs of adults and families in their respective communities. As evidenced, there was general agreement amongst participants that leveraging resources in new and creative ways was essential to sustained operations. Heather conveyed the following sentiments concerning partnerships:

> There are so many partnerships. Exploiting existing partnerships, I think, is a better way to move ahead than sitting around waiting for grants to show up that may never show up…I think just staying in good with the people that we already know and getting what we can out of them. It sounds really – it doesn't sound

> good, but because they've got resources, and maybe they've got some new resources coming on. I think that being that way and really pursuing that actively, rather than just sitting here waiting for some federal grant to materialize is a better way to insure your survival, especially when things are really looking iffy at the funding levels, you know, at the federal level.

Heather acknowledged she and Carol had more work to do to engage and develop existing partnerships for the benefit of the organization. Moreover, she advocated for an increased reliance on said partnerships to build operating capacity and pursue new paths to resource and funding opportunities. She captured the sentiments of the group as she expressed building mutually beneficial relationships was key to sustaining organizations, particularly amid economic uncertainty.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of adult education and family literacy leaders as they directed their programs and organizations during a challenging economic environment. This study sought to understand how these leaders managed to sustain services despite diminished organizational resources and increased competition. Six major themes emerged around the participants' leadership of adult education and family literacy organizations. These included the education and work that informed their leadership (career preparation and career pathway); the reasons they aspired to leadership (motivation to lead); and their perceptions of leadership (priorities, challenges, and strategies).

The findings suggested there are multiple paths to leadership in adult education, to include public education, adult education, and other pathways. The participants in this study were generally college educated with career backgrounds in the K-12 system. However, with no established career path or competencies, the findings suggest a former principal with a master's degree has the same likelihood to be an adult education leader as a former social worker with no college degree.

The data also revealed that as participants transitioned into leadership roles, they were either personally motivated or motivated by others to do so. Personal motivations generally concerned one's desire for career advancement and promotion. This was in contrast to being motivated to lead, which generally equated to motivation to serve or be of assistance in a greater capacity. Participants conveyed a shared kinship with their students through race, heritage, motherhood, economics – they understood what their students experienced and wanted to help them be successful.

Finally, based on the findings, the strategies participants implemented to counteract constraints in the environment generally served to adapt the organization to the demands of the environment to ensure continued operations. The primary tactic utilized in this regard were retrenchment practices – reducing paid work hours, shortening the academic year, implementing hiring freezes, and reducing staff through attrition, for example. Leadership in each case were mindful to preserve the integrity of their programs, as well as conscientious about staffing and resource decisions. Though not novel or innovative, the reduction strategies each organization employed provided a practical and humane way to preserve programs and staff. Moreover, they required an intimate awareness and understanding of the dynamics between the organization and its environment. The findings provided new insight into the leadership of under-resourced, over-taxed adult education and family literacy organizations and the environments which inform operations and decision-making.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating the most recent economic downturn. The Great Recession and ensuing reductions in federal and state funding impeded the ability of organizations to deliver services at sufficient levels. Given the environmental economic and resource constraints, adult education and family literacy organizations were challenged to compete for the resources necessary for survival. This study sought to understand how these leaders managed to sustain services despite diminished organizational resources and increased competition.

The three cases in this study were selected through purposive sampling from recruitment through the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning. Each met the parameters established for inclusion in this study: a) an organization which provided adult education and family literacy programming; b) based in Texas; and c) in service for at least five years. The three organizations authorized as sites of research were community-based, non-profit organizations. Moreover, the five program coordinators and three executive directors who worked on behalf of these organizations agreed to participate in this study.

Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, 2003) guided this research, which examined how the management, structure, and overall viability of an organization were influenced by resource and relationship contingencies in the external environment. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) asserted the ability to acquire and maintain resources was essential to organizational survival. Given their open systems: (a) organizations are constrained by, and dependent on, other organizations that control critical resources, and (b) to maintain autonomy, organizations attempted to manage their dependencies on external groups. Managers performed an essential role in reducing environmental uncertainty and managing dependencies, specifically in their decisions and actions to address external constraints.

Qualitative research design was used to frame this study, specifically the multiple case study method. This approach allowed for the in-depth exploration of a contemporary issue across multiple organizations (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Additionally, participants were able to share their varied experiences as leaders of adult and family literacy organizations. This study sought to understand how they interpreted their experiences navigating a challenging economic environment, and what meaning they constructed from those experiences. To that end, three research questions guided this study:

1. How do adult education and family literacy leaders describe their journey to their current leadership positions?
2. From an organizational leadership perspective, how are adult education and family literacy organizations impacted by the downturn of the economic environment?
3. How do adult education and family literacy leaders leverage resources to sustain organizations in an era of economic downturn?

Data collection for this study included onsite, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with each participant, as well as organizational documents, archival records, memos, researcher notes, and other documents. From these data, six major themes emerged around the participants' leadership of adult education and family literacy organizations. These included the education and work that informed their leadership (career preparation and career pathway); the reasons they aspired to leadership (motivation to lead); and their experiences leading adult education organizations (priorities, challenges, and strategies).

Discussion

In recent years, researchers have reported nonprofit managers had to navigate a transformed operating environment given the fiscal realities of reduced funding and increased need brought about by the Great Recession (Boris et al., 2010; Malatesta & Smith, 2014; Mosley et al., 2012). Moreover, this trending decline in fiscal resources was predicted to persist for the next 50 years (Government Accountability Office, 2011). This new fiscal landscape with which leadership had to contend highlighted the need for strategic resource management for organizational survival. Nonprofit organizations had to adapt to changing conditions in the external environment to obtain and manage resources to fulfill organizational mission and goals (Ahmed, 2012). Given the fluctuating economic environment within which nonprofit organizations operated, leadership was increasingly challenged to develop new strategies to provide much needed resources and services to clients, as well as sustain operations (Malatesta & Smith, 2014).

For the three cases in this study, Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003), which concerned the organization-environment dynamic, was used to examine how this flow of resources influenced organizational behavior and survival. AbouAssi and Tschirhart (2018) proclaimed Resource Dependence Theory's predominance in understanding the funding, performance, and management of nonprofit organizations. This was due in large part to the structure and management of nonprofit organizations, particularly given their tendency to rely on external funders, face instability in the flow of funding, and deal with volatile demands (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018; Ebrahim, 2005). While the theory has been empirically tested and validated across a spectrum of disciplines, scant attention has been paid to how organizations acquire critical resources and/or reduce external contingencies while navigating a challenging economic environment. Given the continued diminishment of government and public resources, understanding the foundational constructs of resource dependence within the context of adult education and family literacy would advance leadership's knowledge and practice in the effective stewardship of their organizations. Strategic adult education leadership calls for a thorough understanding of the operating environment of the field (Grover & Miller, 2016). In this regard, the findings of this study contributes to the literature on resource dependence generally, with a specific exploration in the context of adult education and family literacy and the leadership therein.

Research Question #1

How do adult education and family literacy leaders describe their journey to their current leadership positions?

Over time, a myriad of definitions for leadership have been developed by various scholars (Burns, 1978; Drucker, 2006, 2019; Northouse, 2018; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1998). A core assertion of these definitions was that effective leadership involved influence – the ability to affect followers in positive ways. As Northouse (2001) explained, "Without influence, leadership does not exist" (p. 3). With the ability to influence core to leadership practice, how one journeyed to leadership was an important process to understand. Since much of the work on leadership occurred within the context of for-profit business organizations, it was important to document the trajectory of those in nonprofit leadership positions, including adult education and literacy organizations. Donaldson (1992) found the adult education literature on leadership drew heavily from the management and business literature, with little consideration for the context of the field. Provided this lack of contextual research, Fleming and Cafarella (2000) described adult education leadership as an ambiguous concept. This ambiguity was reflective of a field comprised of adult education administrators from professions and disciplines outside of the field, as supported by the findings of this study.

The finding of this study revealed adult education leaders often experienced a career trajectory that began in a different context and tradition from that of adult education. This was in alignment with findings from empirical studies of leadership in various adult education contexts (Donaldson, 1992; Fleming & Cafarella, 2000; Grover

& Miller, 2016). The participants' educational background started with undergraduate degrees in teacher education (special education, elementary and secondary education), political science followed by an elementary certification, and psychology. Some participants went on to pursue graduate degrees in areas of adult education, developmental education, and guidance and counseling. The Texas Education Agency was a resource used for professional development, certification, and/or administrator credentialing in adult education. While an education-related degree was the predominant route of preparation for most participants, one participant transitioned to adult education with a degree in marketing and another received no formal education in any field of study. She joined her adult education organization soon after immigrating to the US.

Thus, the career pathways of leaders among the organizations studied had beginnings primarily in public K-12 education and programs that served adult learners. One participant started in business and industry, and another was a graphic designer in her country of origin. However, all agreed that what attracted them to adult education was their desire to serve others and bring change to the life conditions of community members. They were motivated by such issues as access to education resources in economically disadvantaged communities, lack of social supports in rural communities, community and resource navigation for immigrants. Part of the inspiration for participants to be leaders of adult education programs stemmed from what they perceived to be social injustice in their communities. In her 1992 publication, *Rethinking Leadership in Adult Education*, Amy Rose recalled Alvin Gouldner (1950) made the case for the discourse on leadership to be expanded to fully understand the concept as a social problem. Gouldner's thesis, articulated about 70 years ago, remained true in current conversations and research on leadership. The pursuit of leadership and engagement in adult education to address social problems was supported by the findings of this study. The participants were motivated by the inequities and inequalities they noted in social systems within their communities, which encouraged them to transition to adult education and family literacy education and pursue leadership roles within the profession. Evidenced in each of these women's transitional journey was the motivation to lead and to make a difference.

Three of the participants held executive leadership positions while the remaining five served as program coordinators, providing support to the executive director and providing leadership of their own program areas. According to Grover and Miller (2016), "Depending on the size and nature of the organization, administrators may be charged with higher level duties such as developing a budget or handling more day-to-day operations and student intake" (p. 8). The findings from this study supported Grover and Miller's assertion that the size of the organization and other characteristics and contextual factors determined career development opportunities for adult education administration and leadership. This was evident in the three organizations profiled in this study.

Research Question #2

> From an organizational leadership perspective, how are adult education and family literacy organizations impacted by the downturn of the economic environment?

The predominant challenges reported by participants concerned the financial uncertainty and diminished resources which impacted the performance and sustainability of the organization. Federal and state grants, the primary source of each case's adult education and family literacy funding, grew increasingly inconsistent each year, particularly in its administration and allocation. As a result, much of the leadership experienced insecurity around funding availability and levels necessary to sustain operations. Mosley et al. (2012) reported the financial crisis created enduring hardships on nonprofit organizations, leaving such organizations challenged to maintain sufficient funding levels in the new economy. Malatesta and Smith (2014) concurred, stating budget cuts at the federal level have cascaded to the state and local levels. This shortage of government funds left nonprofit managers with a budget deficit and left to navigate a new economic reality (Boris et al., 2010). Wendy explained shifts in the economy and changes in funding had direct consequences on staffing, technology, classroom, and other resource-intensive decisions within the organization. This funding insecurity exacerbated the challenges inherent in leading and managing adult education programs.

The resulting uncertainty in funding held corollary human resource and operating capacity challenges. Talent management emerged as a critical need amongst leadership. However, effectively and sufficiently staffing programs and services proved challenging in the current environment given the diminished financial resources. Several participants shared the lack of funding impeded their ability to recruit and hire additional teachers and support staff, which in turn, limited their ability to add more classrooms, deliver services to more students, and grow their programs. Coupled with this recruitment challenge was the practice of using employee attrition to reduce labor costs and increase available program funds. The remaining employees were charged with additional responsibilities to cover the gap in personnel, without being granted additional resources or compensation. Even more, employees experienced insecurities around their own continued employment with the organization, particularly as it concerned the availability of salary funds. Several participants shared how these uncertainties, experienced by both leadership and staff, increased stress and diminished morale within the organization.

Without adequate funding and staffing, the ability to operate at the capacity necessary to meet the learning and development needs of current and prospective learners was a common challenge amongst participants. In each case, capacity issues generally surfaced in the form of waiting lists and signaled the organization was under-resourced in one or more areas, to include funding, staffing, physical space, technology resources, and partnerships. As a result, waiting lists were used to manage the adults and families whom the organization lacked the capacity to serve.

Achieving optimal operating capacity proved a challenge with participants in this study, particularly given the financial and human resources challenges with which they had to contend. Mosley et al. (2012) reported capacity was a key indicator in adaptability to shifts in the environment. They explained, larger organizations with more available resources have more flexibility to control funding changes than do smaller organizations with fewer resources. Participants in this study shared limited funding resources were at the center of their organizational issues. Securing adequate resources to sustain operations, financial and otherwise, would position the organizations to remain viable despite shifting environmental circumstances.

Research Question #3

> How do adult education and family literacy leaders leverage resources to sustain organizations in an era of economic downturn?

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) developed two managerial action roles in addressing environmental constraints – advocator and processor. According to their theory, the advocator worked to manipulate constraints and the social setting to benefit the organization. In contrast, the processor made adjustments within the organization to better align with environmental constraints. Based on the findings, the strategies participants implemented to counteract constraints in the environment generally served to adapt the organization to the demands of the environment to ensure continued operations.

This study found that as participants worked to address organizational challenges, a necessary component was developing a strategic approach to financial management. Confirming Alexander's (2000) findings, this study found the practice of depending on uncertain and unstable funding resources to sustain operations was no longer enough in the current operating environment. Leadership acknowledged a more planned approach to developing the organization's financial goals and practices was more appropriate, particularly as it concerned budget management and fund development. The pursuit and acceptance of funding awards became more intentional, ensuring alignment between organizational mission and grant goals.

The development and utilization of reserve funds emerged as an essential component of participants' overall financial plan as well. Though not a secured or guaranteed source of money, discretionary funds allowed for continued operations in the midst of a monetary shortfall. All three cases accepted donations. Due to policy restrictions, only Cases 2 and 3 engaged in fundraising activities. However, Case 3 was the only organization that had an active, working board of directors with expectations to fundraise on behalf of the organization. Tara attributed the board's engagement to the successes they have realized in developing a six-figure endowment and discretionary funds to sustain the organization. Callen et. al (2010) supported Tara's claim, reporting that nonprofit boards were found to have a significant role in securing financial resources for the organization. Moreover, effective fundraising efforts of the board proved essential when the funding resources of the organization were unstable.

Another mechanism the participants used to leverage resources was evaluating and restructuring systems – for both staff and learners. In an effort to improve the financial position and the operating capacity of their organization, leadership assessed the administrative and general operating costs necessary to maintain the daily operations. Staff payroll proved to be the largest expense which impacted the operating budget. Across each organization, leadership worked to realize cost savings without downsizing staff or eliminating programs. This strategy aligned with Mosley et al. (2012), whose study revealed cutbacks in staff and/or programming was the primary method nonprofit organizations used when experiencing financial stress. According to their findings, managers didn't respond proactively to economic crises; rather, it appeared retrenchment was pursued as their only option. Similarly, the common approach reported by participants in this study was to reduce employees' paid work schedule and implement a hiring freeze. The resulting salary savings contributed to the continued sustainability of the organization. To account for the loss in work hours, Cases 2 and 3 relied more on volunteers to fill the gap. Tara shared, "We had to figure out how to be frugal and get more volunteers". Developing a volunteer staff as part of their workforce strategy proved effective in sustaining services.

Given the shifts in fiscal and staffing strategies, leadership evaluated their overall approach to delivering services and made the appropriate adjustments to ensure alignment with the transforming organization. The primary goal was to ensure adults and families continued to receive the learning and development opportunities they required. At the student level, course schedules were adjusted to match changes made at the teaching level – generally the program year was reduced from year-round to align with the K-12 academic year. This was done out of necessity due to lack of funding to sustain a year-round program.

Additionally, leadership enacted policies and guidelines to ensure programs were accessible to motivated adults and families willing to fully participate in services. A managed enrollment process, coupled with student expectations, provided a mechanism for participants to steward limited resources. Learners were expected to consistently attend and participate in programming to maintain access to programs and services. The revised process enabled leadership to focus on student engagement and performance, which were important program evaluation measures. Moreover, managed enrollment contributed to the strategic allocation of resources to have the greatest impact on the learner, as well as the program.

In conjunction with the aforementioned strategies, participants reported partnerships and collaborations to be increasingly necessary in advancing and sustaining the organization. These findings aligned with empirical research demonstrating such joint ventures were frequently used to gain access to resources while maintaining some flexibility and autonomy (Lefroy & Tsarenko, 2012; Malatesta & Smith, 2014; Mosley et al., 2012; Nienhüser, 2008). Malatesta and Smith (2014) explained the benefits of such partnerships included cost savings, increased capacity, and diminished risk. However, there were risks to be considered as well, such as mission drift and capturing performance measures. For the participants in this study, strategic alliances with community partners generally enabled each to access much needed resources and realize a greater impact than possible on their own. For example, as Amanda developed her parental engagement program, partnerships were an essential component of her expansion strategy. She shared:

> There's no money, you know? And, with budgets being cut left and right, it gets harder and harder. So, I'm always looking for nonprofit organizations that are

> wanting to partner up, that can help with these programs, and without me having to put money in.

Developing and leveraging relationships with other agencies strengthened and expanded programs and services, as well as streamlined operations, which proved mutually beneficial to those involved. Such partnerships filled the gap left by diminished and/or eliminated government and private grants. This allowed leadership in each case to sustain programs and services for adults and families in their respective communities.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

Based on the results of this study, implications for research, policy, and practice will be discussed.

Research

This study illuminated an opportunity for a collaborative human resource development (HRD) and adult education graduate program. Forty million (21%) US adults have low literacy skills, yet the current adult education system serves a small fraction of these adults, and waiting lists are commonly used in every state (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Locally, Texas serves 3.6% of the 3.8 million adults in need of basic education, and it ranked fourth lowest in literacy rates in the nation (Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, 2016). Adult education and family literacy organizations lack the funding, staff, and resources needed to meet these needs. As evidenced in the findings, leadership is addressing organizational challenges through cycles of retrenchment, rather than more proactive, innovative approaches. New interventions are needed to mitigate the chronic challenges confronting adult education and family literacy.

Adult education and HRD graduate programs have an opportunity to expand curriculum to prepare scholars and practitioners to investigate these issues systemically. McGuire (2010) expressed, "The transformative power of HRD lies in its capacity to empower the creation of innovative and radical solutions to real world problems" (p. 1). HRD researchers are positioned to partner with adult education researchers to examine and develop strategic, well-planned solutions to the issues adult education leaders encounter in their work – at the individual, group, and organization levels. In so doing, the bodies of literature concerning career development, organization development, training and development, leadership development, strategic planning, performance improvement, and other areas supporting HRD can transcend the for-profit context, expanding into the nonprofit, adult education, and family literacy realms.

Policy

Given the demonstrated need for increased access to adult education and family literacy services in the US, and especially Texas, policy should focus on providing the resources and infrastructure necessary to increase capacity. The Coalition of Adult Basic Education (COABE) is engaged in this effort nationally. At the state level, organizations such as the Texas Association of Literacy and Adult Education (TALAE) can play a more strategic role in advocating for state reforms that support increasing the number of learners who have access to services. A systemic evaluation of the funding mechanism for programs at the federal, state, and local levels should be conducted to identify opportunities for improvement. Funding formulas and allocations should be assessed to determine appropriateness, considering the number of people needing services, the number of people waiting to access services, the number of eligible providers, and the size of the state, to a name a few factors. This includes evaluating the state matching requirement to determine if the state match amount is sufficient to support local programs and services.

Furthermore, a policy review should be conducted of the 501(c)(3) federal exemption for nonprofit organizations as it concerns the board of directors' policy. As it stands, to obtain this tax exemption status, an organization needs a board of directors with at least three members. However, the structure and expectations for board members are determined at the organization level. Findings from this study suggest establishing these guidelines and/or expectations at the federal level would advance efforts to sustain organizations, particularly as it concerns fundraising. Carol's board was generally disengaged and did not provide support in any fundraising endeavors. Her case was most vulnerable to changes in the environment provided she was not partnered with a larger organization and she lacked the support of the board. Carol admittedly tolerated the board to maintain her 501(c)(3) status. In comparison, each of Tara's board members made a personal donation to the organization and was expected to actively participate in fundraising activities. She demonstrated the most success in this regard, which she attributed to her board. Developing board of director roles and responsibilities in policy would provide leadership the additional support needed to develop organizational resources.

Practice

The data revealed that leadership in each case worked to manage the changes brought on by shifts in the economic environment. Funding changes at the federal level served as the source for the organizational challenges the leadership faced. As each participant shared, retrenchment was the primary solution – reducing paid work hours, reducing staff through attrition, hiring freezes, and shortening the program year, for example. These solutions may be effective in the short-term, however, there are areas for improvement that may offer longer-term results.

To work towards sustainable change, Akdere (2010) recommended strategic planning to produce change and development in nonprofit organizations. As environmental forces influence the ways in which nonprofits deliver services, a strategic planning process focuses efforts on the organization's mission and vision for effective operations. Akdere explained, a new strategy emerges when leadership and the organization commit to the supporting vision of how the organization will achieve sustainability.

As mentioned in policy recommendations, leadership should establish roles and expectations of their board members, to include the expectation of personal donations, fundraising activities, and community engagement. As detailed in the findings, leadership must handle multiple responsibilities with limited resources. An active, engaged board that supports the financial goals of the organization would be beneficial on multiple levels.

Participants were responsible for many administrative roles as part of their leadership positions, to include marketing, human resources, and finance. Most of the participants expressed learning these responsibilities on the job – not from formal training or professional development. With most of the participants having an education and career background outside of adult education, there's an opportunity to formally provide training to adult education administrators in these areas. This would be especially beneficial for those who spent their careers in public school education, like most participants. Leadership in Case 2 both obtained an adult education credential; however, that program ended in 2013. Provided these are essential job functions of the leadership role, they should have access to training and development opportunities in these areas, and that should be incorporated into current professional development curriculum.

Partnerships with community organizations and businesses is a proven method to access needed resources. Depending on the situation and the resources, the flexibility and autonomy of the organization must be considered. However, if leadership stays focused on the organization's mission, partnerships and collaborations are a proven and effective method. Additionally, developing funding streams that aren't government-based, akin to the endowment Tara and her board established, is an effective strategy that gives leadership flexibility when one source diminishes.

These recommendations for research, policy and practice are based on the data from this study and the demonstrated need for increased capacity of access to adult education and family literacy services. The participants worked to make sound decisions to support the mission of the organization. However, there are opportunities to help advance their efforts through the work of scholarship, policy evaluation, and new approaches to work.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a few recommendations for future research. First, this study was conducted when the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 was still enacted and used to legislate adult education and family literacy programs and funds (Public Law 105-220). However, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, Public Law 113-128) has since superseded this legislation, going into effect July 2016. At the time data were collected, the participants knew the legislation change was happening; however, they did not know how it would affect their programs or funding. A recommendation is to conduct a follow-up study to understand how the transition from WIA to WIOA affected programs, funding allocations, resource levels, staffing, partnerships, and board governance, for example.

Additionally, this study focused on changes at the organization level, and how leadership managed those changes to sustain the organization. A recommendation for another study would be to focus on the leader through the intersections of leadership style, motivation to lead, motivation to stay, decision making, leadership development, and similar factors that contribute to the body of scholarship on leadership in adult education. Another recommendation would be to purposively sample for male participants. All the participants in this study self-identified as female. Conducting this study with male participants would provide rich data to analyze and compare facets of leadership along a gender construct.

Lastly, when reflecting on the system of adult education and family literacy, a recommended research study would examine the funding and structure at each level within the system – the federal funder, the state agency that distributes funds, and the local agencies that provide services. A holistic review of the system – from those administering the system – is necessary to better understand strengths, opportunities for improvement, and potential solutions.

Conclusion

This research was reported in five chapters: 1) overview of the research problem, 2) literature review, 3) methodology, 4) findings, and 5) summary, discussion and conclusion. Chapter I provided an overview of the research problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and guiding research questions. Chapter II contained a review of the literature pertaining to adult education and family literacy, nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit leadership. Additionally, studies exploring resource dependency theory within the context of nonprofit organizations and nonprofit leadership were discussed. Chapter III included an in-depth explanation of the methodology that guided this study. This chapter described the qualitative case study design, site selection, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, ethical concerns, and positionality of the researcher. Chapter IV detailed the main findings of the research, which included the education and work that informed the participants' leadership (career preparation and career pathway); the reasons they aspired to leadership (motivation to lead); and their perceptions of leadership (priorities, challenges, and strategies). In Chapter V, a discussion of the findings and recommendations for theory, policy, practice, and future research were discussed.

This study contributes to our understanding of how leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations navigated an environment of diminishing resources and increased need for services. Funding proved to be the central organizational challenge leadership worked to address. Through various program and staff restructurings, leadership realized cost savings for the organization without eliminating active positions. Though the implemented strategies weren’t new or innovative, they managed to realize the additional resources needed to sustain the organization. However, there are opportunities for innovation, with the proper research and support from scholars and policymakers alike. As a result of this study, more understanding has been gained about leadership in adult education and family literacy organizations, which is much needed in scholarship and practice.

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APPENDIX A

SITE AUTHORIZATION LETTER

Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety
750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
TAMU 1186
College Station, Texas 77843-1186

We formally authorize Merlissa C. Alfred, doctoral candidate and co-investigator, to conduct research at our organization for her study, "Leadership of Adult Education and Family Literacy Organizations in an Era of Diminishing Resources." This research endeavor is being supervised by her faculty advisor, ~~Dr. Jia Wang~~, at Texas A&M University.

Ms. Alfred may come to our organization beginning May 15, 2013 and conduct research during working hours until her project end date of August 30, 2013. She will conduct interviews with the director and coordinators within the organization. In addition, she will collect, review and analyze data from our organization's budget reports, financial reports, annual reports, and programmatic description documents.

Ms. Alfred will have no interaction with clients and has agreed not to interfere with work activities. Ms. Alfred has also agreed to provide to my office a copy of the Texas A&M University IRB-approved, stamped consent document before she recruits any employees, and will also provide a copy of her published study.

If there are any questions, please contact my office.

Signed,

Director's Name
Title
Address
Phone Number

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interview – Directors

Leadership Development Journey

1. Please describe your academic and career background that prepared you for this position?

2. How did you initially become involved in the field of adult education/family literacy?

3. What were some of the early challenges as an adult education/family literacy educator?

4. What were some of the rewarding experiences as an adult education/family literacy educator?

5. Who or what motivated you to take on the role of leadership in adult and family education?

Leadership in Adult and Family Literacy

6. What are the roles and expectations of the director?

7. What are some of the major challenges you face in that role?

8. What are some of your rewarding experiences as the director in the field of adult and family literacy education?

9. What adult education/family literacy programs are offered in your organization?

10. How would you describe the students in your programs?

11. What client needs are you trying to address?

Funding Adult Education Programs: Impact of Economic Downturn

12. What sources of revenue fund the different adult and family literacy program?

13. How are these resources generated?

14. What role do you play in generating resources to support the programs?

15. What specific resource constraints has your organization experienced over the last few years?

16. Can you share some examples of specific incidents in which your organization has been impacted by constraints in the environment?

17. What strategies have you developed and implemented to address these resource constraints?

18. How successful or effective have you been in implementing those strategies?

19. What evidence can you share that demonstrates the effectiveness of those strategies?

20. What challenges do you experience in implementing those strategies?

21. How have the resource constraints impacted your ability to meet students' needs?

22. What is your vision for sustaining the programs over time?

23. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about adult education and family literacy education in your organization?

Semi-Structured Interview – Program Leaders

Leadership Development Journey

1. Please describe your academic and career background that prepared you for this position?
2. How did you initially become involved in the field of adult education/family literacy?
3. What were some of the early challenges as an adult education/family literacy educator?
4. What were some of the rewarding experiences as an adult education/family literacy educator?
5. Who or what motivated you to take on the role of leadership in adult and family education?

Leadership in Adult and Family Literacy

6. What are the roles and expectations of the program leader?
7. What are some of the major challenges you face in that role?
8. What are some of your rewarding experiences as the program leader in the field of adult education/family literacy?
9. How would you describe the students in your program?
10. What client needs are you trying to address?

Funding Adult Education/Family Literacy Programs: Impact of Economic Downturn

11. What sources of revenue fund your specific program?
12. How are these resources generated?
13. What role do you play in generating resources to support your program?
14. What specific resource constraints has your program experienced over the last few years?

15. Can you share some examples of specific incidents in which your program has been impacted by constraints in the environment?

16. What strategies have you developed and implemented to address these resource constraints?

17. How successful or effective have you been in implementing those strategies?

18. What evidence can you share that demonstrates the effectiveness of those strategies?

19. What challenges do you experience in implementing those strategies?

20. How have the resource constraints impacted your ability to meet students' needs?

21. What is your vision for sustaining the programs over time?

22. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your program?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Leadership of Adult Education and Family Literacy Organizations in an Era of Diminishing Resources

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Merlissa C. Alfred, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why Is This Study Being Done?
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of leaders of adult education and family literacy organizations in navigating the most recent economic downturn. Specifically, this study will examine how executive and program leaders perceived their organization was affected by changes in the environment. In addition, this study will investigate how executive and program leaders leveraged resources to sustain their organizations in an era of economic downturn.

Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you have been identified as an Executive Director/Program Leader of an adult education and family literacy organization.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?
Up to Three people (participants) will be invited to participate in this study locally – The Executive Director, the adult education program leader and the family literacy program leader. Overall, a total of 12 people will be invited at 4 study centers – 4 Executive Directors and 8 Program Leaders.

What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?
No, the alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?
You will be asked about your experiences leading adult education and family literacy organizations. Specifically, you will be asked about your leadership development journey broadly, honing in on your leadership in adult and family literacy. We will then transition into funding adult education and family literacy programs and the impact the economic downturn had on various aspects of those programs.

Your participation in this study involves one face-to face interview which will last up to 90 minutes. Any additional interactions needed for clarification or verification of information will be conducted via phone, email or Skype.

You may be removed from the study by the investigator for these reasons:

- You separate from the organization.

Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?
The interview will be voice-recorded, however, there will be no use of photos, video or any other image reproduction for this study.

Language for Required recordings:
The researcher will make an audio recording during the study so that the most accurate information, as you express it, is captured and maintained. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study.

Are There Any Risks To Me?
The things that you will be doing involve no more risk than you would come across in everyday life.

Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions/procedures that are asked of you will be stressful or upsetting. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to.

Will There Be Any Costs To Me?
Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?
You will not be paid for being in this study.

Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?
The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only ~~Jia Wang, the Principal Investigator~~ and Merlissa Alfred, the Co-Principal Investigator will have access to the records.

Information about you, including this signed consent form, will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Computer files will be protected with a password.

Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M

University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who may I Contact for More Information?
You may contact the Principal Investigator, ~~Dr. Jia Wang~~, to tell her about a concern or complaint about this research at ~~979-862-7808~~ or ~~jiawang@tamu.edu~~.

For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?
This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. Any new information discovered about the research will be provided to you. This information could affect your willingness to continue your participation.

By participating in the interview(s), you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:
I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

____

Participant’s Signature Date

____

Printed Name Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:

Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

____

Signature of Presenter | Date

____

Printed Name | Date