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Exploring Shared Leadership in a Social Enterprise Nonprofit Board of Directors

Carol Anne Finkelstein Hinton

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EXPLORING SHARED LEADERSHIP
IN A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NONPROFIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By

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B.S., Management, Arizona State University, 1981
M.H.S.A., Healthcare Administration, Arizona State University, 1983

Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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May, 2017
To Rebecca and Robert,

Being your mother has rooted me,
and your love has been the sunshine I needed to grow.

May this dissertation be a testament that anything in life is possible,
if you are willing to work for it.
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It always takes a group of people working together with a common purpose in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration to get extraordinary things done.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner
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ABSTRACT

Case study research was conducted to explore the existence of shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors to identify the common characteristics and traits of board members, and the factors that facilitated or inhibited the development of the board as a shared leadership team. Creating and sustaining a committed and involved board of directors that works as a team were key challenges for the social enterprise board. Current research on shared leadership and the governance of social enterprises and nonprofits provided the conceptual framework for the researcher to develop and test two proposed models in a case study situated in a social enterprise.

Purposive sampling bounded the study to one social enterprise board of directors located in Southwestern region of the United States. The first model, Developing Shared Leadership in a Nonprofit Board, elucidated the researcher’s postulation of the elements necessary for shared leadership to exist in a board of directors. The second model, Best Practices of Nonprofit Boards and the Process of Developing Shared Leadership, was constructed from the benchmarks found in the current literature for board structure and composition by which the researcher
measured the readiness of the social enterprise board to act as a team and share leadership.

Using a case study design, data were collected from triangulated sources that included interviews, observations, a focus group, and archival documents. Two iterations of coding comprised of first and second cycles were conducted utilizing established coding methods. The constant comparison process was applied, the resulting codes were categorized and subcategorized, and the quantities of occurrences were calculated to make inferences about the emerging themes. The results of the case study and the use of shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors were presented using a linear-analytic approach.

The findings from the thematic analysis showed that the important antecedents of shared leadership were present in the social enterprise board. The data collected from the case study were compared to the best practices found in the literature review and the findings indicated the social enterprise board had achieved many of them. Important qualities and characteristics of shared leadership were present in the board members such as trust and transparency. Impediments to shared leadership were identified as the infrequency of board meetings and unfamiliarity with other board members which impacted board member relationships, group cohesion, and the board’s ability to act as a team.

Two models were created by the researcher in response to the findings: Dynamic Elements of Shared Leadership in a Social Enterprise Board, and Fundamental Building Blocks for Successful Boards. These models have practical implications for social enterprises and nonprofit organizations that can be replicated and tested in future
research. This case study research identified the key factors contributing to the social enterprise's board performance, that may enable social enterprises and other nonprofit boards to derive the benefits of cultivating and sustaining shared leadership.

*Keywords*: Nonprofit boards, social enterprise boards, shared leadership
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Chapter 1 – Research Topic Overview

Introduction

In recent years, nonprofit organizations have emerged in increasing numbers to address various global and social causes including homelessness, women’s rights, disability issues, and funding for local schools (Jensen & Meisenbach, 2015). In the United States there are more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations; almost half have budgets of less than $1,000,000, and many have no executive director or paid staff (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2016). Nonprofit organizations come in all sizes, from tiny all volunteer entities operating on a shoestring budget, to complex organizations operating in many cities and countries with budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars (Wolf, 2013). The variety of fields in which they operate is also extensive: education, health, human services, religion, national and international aid, environment, culture, and arts. One major commonality of most nonprofits is a governing body or board of directors that makes decisions on behalf of the organization to ensure its continued operation.

Communities worldwide entrust nonprofit boards with the power and resources necessary to act as fiduciaries and guide their organizations with skill, experience, expertise, and integrity (Holland and Jackson, 1998). Without an excellent board of directors, a nonprofit organization is unlikely to attain its full potential (Herman and Renz, 1999). I believe the challenge lies in formulating a strong team from the collective efforts of individuals who have varying expectations of the requirements for serving as a member of a board of directors. Although individuals may possess relevant professional and business acumen and altruism related to the services provided by the
organization, working as a team and sharing the leadership responsibility for the board’s and ultimately the organization’s performance, can be arduous (Laughlin & Andringa, 2007).

Conversations I have had over the years with board members and executive directors of nonprofits caused me to question why a gap exists between the perceived capabilities of a board based on its membership and the actual functioning of a board as a team. I have witnessed the struggle of experienced, committed individuals trying to work as a team and allocate responsibility for leadership of the board with disappointing results. My own experiences working in volunteer board leadership positions convinced me that distributing leadership responsibility to accomplish the work and maximize board member involvement is the most productive and motivating for all. This dissertation research allowed me to explore the inner workings of a board of directors to discern why and how shared leadership existed and its potential to improve board performance.

**Background**

The experience of choosing a topic and a board to study, conducting the research, and writing the dissertation was purposeful and aligned with my values. Doing work that matters to me is akin to, as Kouzes and Posner suggested, “taking a journey through my inner territory” (2007, p. 50). Reflecting upon what led me to pursue my doctoral degree and study nonprofit boards, I realized this has been a lifelong vision. From a young age, I have wanted to be of service to others and use my innate abilities. Raised in a large family, my journey began with parents who were exceptional role models and cultivated strong core values in their children. Being
intentional about making a difference in the world and always acting in the best
to

interests of others have been ingrained in me from an early age.

Working in the field of healthcare administration and seizing opportunities to
serve in my community have sustained my need to stay connected with my values. One
of these opportunities was through United Way’s Women in Philanthropy as a leader in
a project focused on the creation of a community impact model to improve resources
for building women’s self-sufficiency. In 2007, in partnership with the University of
New Mexico, a survey was developed, administered, and analyzed to determine the
barriers to self-sufficiency faced by women in the central New Mexico region and to
identify the best use of financial resources donated by women to United Way. From the
survey results, five priority needs were identified related to the root causes of poverty
for women, and we developed an action plan to create lasting change using a
comprehensive approach versus funding alone. We established goals to fill the gaps in
service, expand system capacity, impact government policies, increase awareness of
women’s issues, and change community attitudes. In 2008, as a result of our work,
United Way’s Women in Philanthropy began to fund nonprofit organizations focused on
improving and increasing services that addressed the barriers to self-sufficiency faced
by women. Sharing the leadership responsibility by including the nonprofits in the
decision making proved to be a successful model for implementing sustainable change.

Impetus for Study

The idea for this study was prompted by my knowledge of the numerous and
varied challenges faced by nonprofits in the local community, combined with a personal
mission for my research to provide critical and applicable information for nonprofit
boards. I made brief presentations of my research study proposal to various community groups and asked for referrals of nonprofit organizations deemed to have boards of directors that practiced shared leadership. My networking led to informal conversations with the executive directors of local nonprofits, revealing the ongoing challenges they experienced with their boards of directors. Creating and sustaining a committed, involved board of directors was their biggest worry, regardless of the number of employees, type of services provided, or size of budget. Some of the questions that surfaced included the following:

“How can I develop and sustain an effective board?”

“What are realistic expectations of engagement from board members?”

“Why is it so difficult to get the board to act as a team?”

“How can I get board members to take on more responsibility?”

Interacting with these nonprofits provided a new perspective for me about the trials they face in the current economic environment and the importance of strong leadership. The executive directors relied on their boards of directors for guidance and support, not only to provide the highest quality services to the people they served, but also to bring in outside resources to sustain the nonprofit’s mission for future generations. Although their primary relationship was with the president of the board, the executive directors endeavored to capitalize on the input of all board members and utilize their talents effectively and efficiently to benefit the nonprofit (Brown, 2002).

I have witnessed the challenges faced by the executive directors and board presidents as they attempt to successfully manage a team composed of community
leaders, who are subject matter experts with unique skills and abilities, and varying levels of commitment. The importance of sharing the leadership responsibility for setting goals, fulfilling the mission, guiding future direction, and responding to changes in the national and local economies can be better understood by taking a closer look at the competing exigencies of nonprofit boards.

**Current State of Nonprofit Boards**

Ongoing performance of the nonprofit organization is dependent upon the expertise, experience, and personal characteristics of its board members, and their affinity for the population receiving its services (Brown, 2005). Today’s nonprofit boards juggle multiple demands in their struggle to keep the clients and services in the center of every decision. There is an ongoing need to build partnerships and alliances to expand and maximize existing resources (Brown and Ruhl, 2003). Perpetual challenges involving stakeholders, funding sources, resource allocation and future trends place unrelenting strains on the organization and the board.

The particular board of directors I studied is situated in a social enterprise which is best explained as a nonprofit that funds its own social programs with revenues earned from its services or products. I will expound on social enterprises and their importance to the nonprofit sector in subsequent sections. For now, I am conveying the positioning of the Social Enterprise (SE), in the larger context. As a means of illustration, I developed a diagram depicting the integral relationships of the peripheral forces SE strives to balance and the board’s ultimate responsibility for all of them (Figure 1.1). This outside-in perspective demonstrates the all-encompassing importance of the board’s leadership in dealing with continuous and sometimes competing demands that
influence its ability to govern effectively. The diagram represents my understanding of how the board of directors I studied fit into the community and the local nonprofit sector. A brief description of each of the five strata in Figure 1.1 will explain how I interpreted the impacts these external pressures have on nonprofit performance and the organization whose board I studied. The outer circle depicting board leadership will be explained in the subsequent conceptual framework section.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 1.1. External Factors Impacting SE’s Board Performance.*

**Centrality of customers and programs.** Nonprofit and social enterprise board members want to believe they are changing their communities and that is a powerful incentive to say yes to serving on a board. Establishing measurable outcomes that enable board members to see their progress on meeting goals for the organization is important to keep them engaged and involved. Successful social enterprise boards are given up-to-date information about production, programs, and current financial status. I saw SE’s leadership and staff providing reports and discussing their business at the
quarterly meetings. The board members heard detailed reports about the programs provided to the employees and their families, enabling the board members to assess the changes happening in their own community.

**Stakeholders.** The importance of understanding stakeholders in board deliberations is fundamental to effective governance (Brown, 2007). Stakeholder participation at the board level can add value to decision making on issues that will affect them (Mason & Royce, 2007). The input I received from interviewing SE board members confirmed the importance of their role in making connections to stakeholders that influence local economic development. They listed community leaders, state and local officials, and potential customers as being critical contacts for increasing visibility and awareness of SE’s important work in the community. Staying current with a multitude of constituencies required the board to become informed and involved in order to develop positive, ongoing relationships with each of them (Parker, 2007).

**Funding sources.** Overall, it is imperative that SE’s revenues, outside funding, and other resources are maintained to provide stable work for the employees and the programs available to them and their families. To sustain ongoing operations, most nonprofits must continuously seek out funding relationships with donors, stakeholders, and other nonprofit and for profit organizations (Hale, 2013). SE’s board has specific financial indicators to measure and monitor the financial performance of the social enterprise and it has supported the procurement of outside funding to supplement its revenue. Other nonprofits in the community are competing for the same local grants and SE has been selective about its funding partnerships. The city government had financed a specific program in the past and SE’s leadership team and the board decided
to discontinue it when the reporting requirements were too intrusive to employees and their families. To support obtaining external sources of funding, board members have participated in site visits from foundations, planned and attended events such as open houses and community fundraisers, and made personal contributions.

**Resource allocation.** SE’s current revenue is relatively fixed due to being at capacity in terms of physical space and size of its workforce. The business revenue from production dictates the monetary resources available to fund SE’s programs. The board is responsible for increasing resources to be less dependent on grants to make up for shortfalls in revenue. SE and other nonprofits with similar missions want to expand their social programs with the help of their boards of directors to maximize resource allocation and pursue potential partnerships. The boards’ social capital, comprised of information networks and community contacts, can be developed to share and obtain expertise and information, and secure a variety of external resources (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012; Jaskyte, 2012).

**Predicting future trends.** One of the major responsibilities of a nonprofit board is to formulate a precise, detailed vision of what the organization should become in the future (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002; Tweeten, 2002). For SE, developing this vision with board input, along with the steps required to turn it into reality, is a complicated task. It is difficult for SE’s leadership to predict the stability of its customers with a high degree of confidence and envisage steady revenue to pay its employees and fund its programs. The board can make an impact by helping to grow the business and improve SE’s ability to react quickly to market changes. It is important for the board to understand the social and political factors influencing SE’s position in the marketplace and stay current
with the market trends (Tweeten, 2002). The national, state, and local economies need to be monitored continually to stay abreast with changes in the sectors that may impact the SE’s programs and the families served.

**Conceptual Framework**

To successfully juggle the five external factors impacting board performance, my supposition was that a board had to identify and function as a shared leadership team. From my review of the literature, I concluded that a nonprofit board of directors has the potential to “profit” from using shared leadership and capitalizing on the existence of specific attributes related to its performance as a team. My proposition was that nonprofit organizations and their boards of directors are natural examples of leadership teams that could benefit appreciably from adopting the strategies of shared leadership. I wanted to identify a nonprofit organization with a board that believed it practiced shared leadership and conduct a study. My overarching goals were to determine how and why shared leadership existed, what were the strengths of the board and the common characteristics and traits of the board members, and what facilitated or inhibited shared leadership in the board.

I also wanted to explore a model I had developed to prepare a board to share leadership. In addition to the numerous organizations that exist to serve nonprofits and their boards, there were multitudes of books and research articles focused on the theories and best practices for nonprofit boards to become high performing teams. I wanted to glean from these resources the essential ingredients to create a successful board with the idea that having them in place facilitated sharing leadership.
Developing Shared Leadership in a Nonprofit Board

The two major drivers represented in the conceptual framework of this study are nonprofit boards of directors and shared leadership. The diagram in Figure 2 elucidates my postulation of the relationship of a nonprofit board of directors with the factors necessary for shared leadership teams to be successful. The inner circle represents the outer ring shown previously in Figure 1.1, and the five peripheral linked ovals are the elements of shared leadership in a board setting. These key components include common goals and values, expertise of board members, board member traits, interdependent relationships, and team processes.

Figure 1.2. Developing Shared Leadership in a Nonprofit Board.

Figure 1.2 is illustrative of the interconnectivity of these key components. My study involved the examination of these components and their applicability in a board of directors; those results will be presented in Chapter 4. The following discussion will
describe the five critical elements and their importance for a board of directors striving to use a shared leadership model of governance.

**Common goals and values.** Two important reasons that individuals are chosen to serve on a nonprofit board are their commitment to the nonprofit’s mission and willingness to take on the responsibilities of ownership and accountability to achieve the goals of the nonprofit (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002). If they have benefited from the experience of an organized and well-executed recruitment and orientation process, they should comprehend the importance of shared values and understand the organization’s goals and the steps required to reach those goals (Laughlin & Andringa, 2007). According to my model, this initial shared mindset provides board members with common goals and values and establishes a strong foundation for shared leadership to evolve.

**Expertise of board members.** Specific and varied knowledge, skills, and experience are typically targeted in the board member recruitment process to develop boards composed of subject matter experts with a strong potential for sharing leadership responsibilities (Pearce, Wassenaar, & Manz, 2014; Vandewaerde, Voordeckers, Lambrechts, & Bammens, 2011). High performing boards have learned how to build a group of individuals with abundant talent into a dynamic team where the leadership function is distributed (Conger & Lawler, 2009). I have served on boards where superior outcomes were achieved from optimizing the diversity in individual expertise and boards. Time was dedicated to building relationships at a retreat or in meetings, to learn what talents were available, and how to draw upon them as the work required. This process seemed critical to me because it developed the board’s identity
as a team and created respect for each board member’s contribution to the mission of the organization. I concluded that knowing the strengths and personalities of the board members, as well as hearing their commitment and willingness to be involved, enabled the board to share leadership and distribute the work as needed.

**Board member traits.** The criteria I have seen and used for board member selection related to traits typically target an individual’s personality, leadership potential, and capacity to participate in a team setting. The personality traits of each board member vary in terms of individual expectations of accountability and responsibility, proficiency in staying on task, communication styles, and capability to give and receive feedback, making it difficult to predict how the individuals will function as a team (Holland, 2002). Board members’ dispositions, a willingness to cooperate and work interdependently with others, and their ability to influence and be influenced by other team members, are all likely predictors of shared leadership (Brown, 2007). Shared leadership requires board members to possess traits of seeing themselves as leaders, acknowledging and accepting others as leaders, as well as valuing equity and inclusiveness (Chait, Holland & Taylor, 1996).

**Interdependent relationships.** Cultivating the interdependence of board members who possess vitally important expertise and experience can have a powerful influence on board performance (Brown, 2007). At its most basic level, I see the board as a group of people working together for the common goal of accomplishing the mission of the nonprofit. This connection provides a foundation for individual members to thrive if an atmosphere of trust and collaboration exists, enabling extraordinary work to be accomplished (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). I have been involved with boards
that maintain a hierarchical culture where board members were figureheads instead of active participants. Conversely, I have seen board environments where openness and trust were cultivated and interdependence was fostered, enabling board members to share information, cooperate and take on leadership roles. A board composed of members with a collective vision who possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to tackle complex problems is primed for shared leadership because the creativity and innovative potential of the board of directors are maximized (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

**Team processes.** Beyond the selection of individuals with characteristics and leadership qualities that can make a positive contribution to the board, much of the board’s effectiveness is determined by the processes of the board and how the board functions as a team (Conger & Lawler, 2009). Once group norms have been established and board members have opportunities to spend time together to learn each other’s strengths and weaknesses, the team develops its own processes and the emotional and psychological support begins to form (Drescher, Korsgaard, Welpe, Picot, & Wingand, 2014; Small & Rentsch, 2010; Solansky, 2008). As different members lead and influence one another in positive ways, commitment and cohesion will likely increase, which in turn, will increase the shared leadership within the group (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my research was to study the existence of shared leadership in a nonprofit board of directors to identify the common characteristics and strengths that board members possess and exhibit, and how those facilitate or inhibit shared
leadership. My informal discussions with nonprofit directors about shared leadership in their boards, combined with my knowledge of the nonprofits receiving grant funding from United Way, led me to a social enterprise that I approached to be my case.

This innovative organization had been recognized repeatedly for being highly successful in achieving its mission and cited as having strong leadership in its management team and board of directors. I met with the executive director and discussed my research interests. As a social enterprise, it has a dual mission of producing goods and providing social programs to its employees and families. We talked about the board of directors and the variations that may exist related to the twofold mission. I was intrigued with the possibilities of what I would learn from studying this unique board and the executive director saw benefits in being examined and agreed to move forward.

**Study description.** Based on a case study design and qualitative coding methods, my study began with a review of the current literature on shared leadership, nonprofit boards, and social enterprises. Utilizing a bounded, purposive sample of a board of directors from SE, a social enterprise nonprofit in the Southwestern region of the United States, I collected data from the triangulated sources of board member interviews, observations of board meetings, and examination of archival documents. Through the application of thematic analysis to my data, I uncovered and linked board member traits and attributes of the board process related to shared leadership. I used a focus group for member checking and to gain the input of a subset of board members that had been interviewed. I made conclusions about how and why shared leadership existed, what the strengths of the board and the common characteristics and traits of
the board members were, and what facilitated or inhibited sharing leadership in the board. In addition, I assessed my proposition that a board of directors needed to have specific best practices in place for leadership to be shared effectively.

The case: SE. The board of directors I studied was situated in a social enterprise nonprofit identified as SE. Established as a social enterprise organization in 1994, SE began as a sewing and handwork poverty alleviation project with a single goal of providing living wage employment for women from low-income communities. The founders of SE implemented strategies from projects around the world that recognized when a woman is given an opportunity to earn an income, she will invest in her children and family first.

Over the past 20 years, SE has operated a contract manufacturing business that provides high quality production services involving cutting, sewing, assembly, kitting, shipping and handcrafting for local and national companies. SE has employed over 100 people and currently earns 85% of its operating budget through production contract revenues. Today, the organization’s success proves that a sustainable business can be driven by a social vision. SE has created a strong organizational culture based upon commitment and involvement in the prosperity of its employees and their families, as well as the community in which they live and work. SE’s missions and underlying core belief that social programs enable greater employee productivity and reduced turnover evolved into a successful nonprofit women’s economic development organization.
Research Questions

The primary research question investigated:

What are the individual and team characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the development of shared leadership in a social enterprise nonprofit board of directors?

Specific questions explored included:

1. How do the concepts of shared leadership apply to the social enterprise nonprofit board?
2. What conditions existed that prepared this board to utilize shared leadership?
3. What characteristics of shared leadership were present in the board of directors of the social enterprise nonprofit and were they attributed to the individual, the board or both?

Significance of the Study

Examining the significance of shared leadership in a social enterprise board setting added to the field of study in three ways. First, I have supplemented the current theories with my study findings, clarified the mitigating factors for creating and sustaining shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors, and developed new, useful models social enterprises and many nonprofits can replicate. Second, my research has identified some of the key factors contributing to SE’s board performance that will enable social enterprises and other nonprofit boards to derive the benefits of cultivating and sustaining shared leadership. Third, through the creation of new models to explain shared leadership in a social enterprise board, I have increased its usefulness and capacity to be replicated in nonprofit boards.
My research contributed to the body of knowledge of shared leadership in teams represented by a social enterprise board which had not been studied as determined by my review of the current literature. On an individual level, my research explored experiences and examined relationships; while on a collective level, my research assessed what determinants facilitate shared leadership in a social enterprise board. The case study method combined with coding and thematic analysis proved to be a good fit for my research. I performed a triangulated study of a single group using a reliable system to keep track of the data and code it to identify natural categories and their linkages, and to develop themes (Saldaña, 2016). The data collected were not available before and will be shared with the study participants which include the executive director and the board of directors of the social enterprise. They can use the study results for further exploration as a team to assist them in making improvements to achieve the level of shared leadership they desire.

**Researcher Assumptions**

1. The nonprofit board would be open to my study and the board member participants would be stable for the duration of the study.

2. Shared leadership would be viewed as a positive trait by the nonprofit organization and the board member participants.

3. Board member participants would respond honestly and accurately to all questions in the interviews and focus group.

4. Board member participants’ responses would be made independently of other participants.
5. Use of the case study method and applying coding and thematic analysis would provide rigorous and established procedures to research shared leadership and nonprofit boards and would result in testing my ideas and perspectives empirically.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. The study was limited in scope by having one social enterprise nonprofit board agree to be observed and by the number of board member participants willing to be interviewed and partake in a focus group.

2. The results may not be applicable to all social enterprises nonprofit boards of directors and may not be generalizable to all other types of teams.

3. My dual role as observer and researcher could have been a limiting factor because I had proposed models that I was trying to validate. The entire research process was interactive and involved my past experiences and my current interests.

**Definition of Key Terms**

For the purposes of my research study, I defined and clarified specific terms:

**Shared leadership:** A term that describes a dynamic, interactive influence process or emergent state including two or more members of a group with the objective of leading one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals, or both, and to maximize team effectiveness (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Conger, 2003).

**Nonprofit organizations** (Bolton & Mehran, 2006; Jensen and Meisenbach, 2015): The term “nonprofit” refers to the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3)
describing organizations that are tax-exempt entities dedicated to furthering causes enumerated in the tax code. For tax purposes, nonprofits are classified as a 501(c)(3) organizations and the federal tax code specifies that nonprofits may not distribute excess funds to shareholders. Instead, the “profits” must be applied back into the nonprofit to further its cause in order to maintain its tax-exempt designation.

Social enterprise: A business with a primarily social mission that uses its surpluses for achieving the social objectives rather than being driven by profit maximization (DTI, 2002).

Board of directors: This term is synonymous with board of trustees and is used to label the nonprofit organization’s governing body.

ED: The abbreviation, ED, refers to the executive director of SE.

SE: The abbreviation, SE, refers to the social enterprise that is the subject of the case study.

SL: The abbreviation, SL, refers to shared leadership.

Summary of Chapter 1

Various and compounding external factors impact nonprofit boards including multiple stakeholders, limited funding sources, inadequate resource allocation and unpredictable future trends. One internal factor, the board of directors, is held responsible for responding to many of the external factors (Carver, 2006; Firstenberg, 2009). Nonprofit organizations tend to view their boards as integral components of the leadership team, and successful boards have commonalities that have been studied and widely reported (Carver, 2006). Also critical to the effective performance of any board
is the ability of its directors to share leadership and to work as a dynamic team (Conger & Lawler, 2009). Shared leadership is a team process whereby individuals share the responsibility for goal achievement and a positive internal team environment (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Nonprofit boards appeared to have the right mix of people and setting to benefit from the use of shared leadership. Vanderwaerde, et al. (2011) examined boards of directors from a team perspective and found the board setting to be a fertile environment for shared leadership to flourish. Given the common mission and duties of nonprofit boards and the requirement of every board member to share the responsibility for goal achievement, the concept of shared leadership aligned with the targeted objectives of nonprofit boards (Raelin, 2003).

This research study focused on a social enterprise board of directors as a shared leadership team with the goals of determining how and why shared leadership existed, identifying the strengths of the board and common characteristics and traits of board members, and understanding what facilitates or inhibits shared leadership on that board. Going beyond the selection of individuals with specific expertise, traits, and leadership capability who can make a positive contribution to the board, much of the effectiveness of the board’s governance is determined by the process of the board (Conger, 2009). My research included interviews of past and current board members, observations of board meetings, orchestration of a focus group, and examination of archival documents.

The purpose of the first chapter was to introduce the need for this study through discussion of the background, conceptual framework, purpose, and significance of the
study. Researcher assumptions and limitations of the study were included along with a
definition of key terms. Chapter 2 provides a thorough assessment of the current
research available on nonprofit boards, social enterprise boards, and shared leadership.
Chapter 3 describes the population selected as the case, the research methods, and the
data collection procedures that will be used for the study. Chapter 4 presents the data
analysis and Chapter 5 discusses the findings and interpretations of the thematic
analysis. Chapter 6 presents the implications of the study and suggestions for future
research.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of my research study was to examine a social enterprise board of directors using interviews, observations, archival document review, and a focus group to identify the common characteristics and strengths board members possess and exhibit related to the qualities of shared leadership. The intent of this chapter is to review the outcomes from my examination of the recent literature and pertinent research on the topics of nonprofit boards of directors, social enterprises, and shared leadership. Each of these topics is broad in scope and I determined specific goals at the outset to limit the span of the research I conducted. I will present the goals for each topic and subsequent findings in this chapter, along with a discussion of the identified gaps and future research recommended. The literature review for the research design and methodology will be presented in the next chapter.

Nonprofit Boards of Directors

The first major area of concentration encompassed nonprofit boards. I established four separate goals to guide my review of the relevant literature which included books and journals from the fields of nonprofit management and leadership, nonprofit governance, public and voluntary sector leadership, public administration, and social enterprises. One goal directing my review was to explore the similarities and differences between for profit and nonprofit boards. My second goal was to gather information from the current research about the key components related to structure and composition required for a board of directors to be successful as the governing body of a nonprofit organization. My third goal was to investigate the research related
to the internal factors contributing to the board’s performance as a team: and more specifically, the practice of shared leadership in nonprofit boards, and the existence of board capital. My fourth goal was to review the literature concerning governance in a specific sector of nonprofits known as social enterprises. The board of directors I studied is situated within a social enterprise nonprofit organization, SE, located in the Southwestern region of the United States.

**Overview – Nonprofit Boards**

The nature of board participation in nonprofit organizations can vary from being a generally passive seat occupant at meetings to an extremely active leader in setting goals and guiding the fiduciary and governance responsibilities (Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005). Although the majority of nonprofit boards are composed of volunteer members, they differ substantially in structure and process (Brown, 2002). At one end of the spectrum are small, informal boards with no job descriptions being led by the founders of the nonprofit organization, who recruit board members as needed to get the work accomplished. The opposite end of the continuum is a large board, like United Way, where members are appointed by organizations with high visibility in the community. For these national nonprofit organizations, board membership is dictated by representation of significant donors rather than selection of individuals based on specific knowledge, skills, and experience (Glaeser, 2003).

Nonprofit boards have been studied extensively over the last twenty years, and the research confirmed what I had learned from my own experiences: A relationship exists between the performance of nonprofit boards and the performance of their organizations (Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1992). Nonprofit consultants have written
volumes about the specific strategies used by high performing boards of directors to form a strong team capable of guiding their nonprofits. Tactics identified for high performance in the research include recruiting the right people, ensuring their active and continued commitment, developing board practices to produce superior outcomes for the organization, and maintaining high levels of achievement as a team (Bradshaw, et al., 1992). A team composed of board members with a collective vision and the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities have the basic ingredients to achieve success (Holland & Jackson, 1998).

**For Profit and Nonprofit Boards - Similarities and Differences**

Before diving into the critical components that contribute to a high performing board, I will briefly discuss the differences and commonalities between nonprofit and private sector boards. In researching effective governing boards, I thought there may be potentially transferrable lessons to learn from the experiences of private sector boards. Although basic differences exist such as representing shareholders versus stakeholders, and paid board members instead of volunteers, I was interested in exploring the similarities between the two types of boards.

I found the two types of boards resemble each other in that the individuals who serve usually have full time jobs elsewhere and do not have the same investment in the organization as the employees. Also, compared to most work groups, both nonprofit and private sector board members do not spend much time forming and operating as a team inside the boardroom or outside in a social setting. This makes it difficult to develop a genuine sense of team identity and to learn how to function as a team (Conger & Lawler, 2009). I learned more commonalities exist when looking at the critical
maintenance factors of the board as a team. To understand corporate board process and effectiveness, Finkelstein and Mooney conducted 32 structured interviews with corporate board directors and found that board effectiveness requires five interrelated process goals; engage in constructive conflict, avoid destructive conflict, work together as a team, know the appropriate level of strategic involvement, and address decisions comprehensively (2003). From my experiences, all of these process goals were accurate for nonprofit boards as well.

To summarize, I found the major differences between the two types of boards were the mission, board membership, and the constituencies they represent. In the for profit world, the board’s main objective and mission was to earn an appropriate return on invested capital for its shareholders. In contrast, a nonprofit board’s mission was to monitor financial stability in order to maintain and increase funding for the clients it serves (Epstein & McFarland, 2011). The homogeneity of the board’s membership was also an important dissimilarity I discovered. Compared to the corporate sector, nonprofits appeared to regard diversity of board membership as a more important selection criterion, with prominent public and professional profiles, network relationships, and communication skills ranked more highly than in the corporate sector (Parker, 2007). The other key difference that created an ongoing challenge is the multitude of constituencies and relationships a typical nonprofit had to develop and maintain, whereas a for profit board primarily had shareholders. Board structure and composition were important elements of successful performance for both types of boards. The next section of the literature review will provide the details on the findings related to best practices for nonprofit boards.
Key Components of Nonprofit Board Performance

Over twenty years ago, Bradshaw et al., studied the relationships between board structures, processes and board performance as well as between board performance and organizational effectiveness (1992). As the nonprofit sector has grown in size and economic impact, increasing attention has been paid to nonprofit board performance, and one predominant areas of board research has been centered on how to build an effective, high performing board (Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Many factors influenced a board’s ability to achieve high performance. In my literature search, I focused on finding the “best practices” with the intent to impart what I learned with the board of directors I studied as well as other interested boards and community organizations. For this section of the literature review, topics included under the heading of board structure are size and tenure. The board composition heading covers the topics of recruitment and selection, diversity, job descriptions, orientation and evaluation and assessment.

Board structure. A significant share of the governance research over the past decade has focused on the boards themselves, with explicit attention given to how they are organized, how and why their structures vary, who can participate, and how board members are included and involved (Renz & Andersson, 2013). The structure of the board can compel or constrain a board’s effectiveness for reasons related to size, attendance, and the time board members devote to their roles (Cornforth, 2001).

Parameters for size. No one size of board was prescribed as being best. An optimal range of nine to nineteen members was recommended along with having an odd number of members to minimize the possibility of tie votes on controversial issues (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002). Ideally, board size was determined by finding the right
balance; it should be large enough to get the work done, and have diversity in terms of member characteristics, knowledge, skills, and experience (Conger & Lawler, 2009). At the same time, it had to be small enough to function as a cohesive, focused, and deliberative body for policy formulation, decision-making and oversight.

**Tenure of board members.** Tenure included term length and term limits of individual board members. Research on the tenure of nonprofit board members indicated that the length of time served is an accurate reflection of positive attributes such as experience, knowledge and relationships, as well as a strong predictor of future performance (Brown, 2005). Term length is the number of years a board member serves before needing to be reappointed or reelected. Two or three year terms are recommended because it gives a board member adequate time to learn the role and make a contribution, and also the opportunity to assume a leadership position. Term limits are the number of successive terms a member can serve before being required to leave the board. The case against term limits was based on the argument that performance, value, and ability to contribute need not necessarily decline with length of service or age (Brown, 2005). However, I know from experience that term limits guard against member burnout and board stagnation and provide a nonjudgmental mechanism for allowing the board to incorporate new blood and to be continuously rejuvenated.

**Board composition.** Board composition is one of the topics that has been increasingly studied in the nonprofit board literature since 1987 (Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Efficacious board composition included careful design with explicit criteria to seek out, screen, and select members based on organizational challenges and board
needs (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002). The aim is to develop a board membership profile that represents the different characteristics of the nonprofit’s key stakeholder groups, enlists board members with connections to both existing and new constituencies, and brings critical expertise and financial resources (Parker, 2007). At least one member of the board should be a CPA or have the ability to understand financial statements and assist the board in making sound financial decisions (Brown, 2007). Board member selection may also be dictated by the necessity of complying with regulatory, philanthropic, or grant award constraints stipulating diversity requirements.

**Recruitment and selection.** As I discussed, well-functioning, effective boards were constructed with a focused effort on the right composition based on explicit criteria and fixed term lengths. Typically, a small committee of the board was charged with the responsibility of formulating a plan for recruiting and selecting new board members and providing a thorough orientation. More than ten years ago, the criteria proposed by nonprofit management scholars for selecting potential board member candidates were limited to ones possessing connections to funders, technical competencies, or providing strategic direction (Brown, 2005). Given the board’s critical role in fulfilling the mission of the nonprofit, the recent trend is to build the board to have diversity and stakeholder representation (Freiwirth, 2013).

The first steps in the recruitment process were determining the skills and competencies needed on the board, followed by developing a process for identifying potential board member candidates (Brown, 2007). In addition, the board members must have relevant backgrounds and current knowledge about the nonprofit
organization’s area of specialization. The importance of selecting the right people cannot be overstated.

**Diversity.** Demographics plus profession and personality are important considerations when constructing a balanced board with an invaluable array of perspectives (Firstenberg, 2009). Demographic characteristics included place of residence (aim to have the majority of board members living or working in the community served), community involvement, age (minimum and maximum), gender, race, and ethnicity (Harris, 2014; Widmer & Houchin, 2000). The diversity of board membership (including racial and ethnic membership) has remained relatively unchanged in the United States with more than 86% being Caucasian, about 3% are Hispanic, almost half are women, and fewer than 7% are under the age of 35 (BoardSource, 2010; Ostrower & Stone, 2006). A study by Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin (1992) of over 400 Canadian health and human service nonprofits, found that higher percentages of women and younger board members were positively associated with boards that shared leadership.

**Board job descriptions.** Compiling a board member job description has been an important yet often overlooked responsibility of the board. This vital document has three distinct purposes. The first was to convey to prospective members the targeted characteristics, knowledge, skills, experience, perspectives and values the organization is seeking in a board member (Trower, 2013). The second purpose of the job description was to clearly state the criteria used for initial selection and for periodically assessing the performance of individual board members. Included in the criteria are baseline expectations for supporting the mission of the organization and being able to
participate in orientation, board meetings, retreats, organizational events, and fundraising (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002). The third key objective of the job description was to specifically state the expectation of thorough preparation for board meetings to enable substantive input by board members (Tweeten, 2002). Separate job descriptions were written for each board officer with similar information as well as specific position-related duties.

**Orientation.** Once new board members were elected, the onboarding process began with a carefully crafted and executed orientation process. The primary objectives of orientation are to equip new members with introductory knowledge and induce their involvement in the nonprofit, to provide clear expectations of roles and responsibilities, and to become familiar with the meeting and committee processes (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002; Trower, 2013; Tweeten, 2002). In partnership with the executive director, a specific person or board committee managed the orientation process with the goal of building a successful team, including periodic assessments for updates or redesign if needed (Tweeten, 2002). Providing guidance on the roles and functions of the board is a key component of a comprehensive orientation that directly influenced perceptions of board performance (Brown, 2007). Mentoring should be incorporated into orientation, pairing new members with experienced ones to act as guides, advisors, and coaches for at least the first year of service (Tweeten, 2002). I have witnessed improved outcomes for board member participation and retention as a result of a thorough, well-executed orientation process.

**Evaluation and assessment.** Systematic evaluation of overall board performance and individual board member assessments were the two types of
evaluations required for continuously monitoring effective performance in nonprofit boards (Brown, 2007). Boards that conducted regular evaluations found they were more productive in terms of clarifying expectations of accountability and developing shared commitments among members (Holland, 2002; Lichsteiner & Lutz, 2012). The Governance Self-Assessment Checklist (GSAC) was designed for nonprofit boards and public sector organizations to identify strengths and weaknesses in the governance of their organizations (Gill, Flynn, & Reissing, 2005). The GSAC was also used to educate board members about the essentials of good governance, and to improve their governance practices (Gill, et al., 2005). Although the most commonly used assessment tool was a board survey, Trower recommended several other methods for evaluating board performance including interviews, outsider observation and feedback, as well as open discussions with board members and management staff to discuss strengths and opportunities for improvement (2013). My case study research used the methods advocated by Trower and the results may serve as a partial assessment of the board.

**The Board Acting as a Team**

The board’s ability to work as a dynamic team and practice shared leadership was foremost in predicting its success (Conger & Lawler, 2009). Numerous researchers have examined boards of directors from a team perspective and found the board setting to be a fertile environment for shared leadership to flourish (Mayo, Meindl, & Pastor, 2003; Vanderwaerde, et al., 2011). Sharing leadership roles and responsibility had the effect of increasing the opportunities for intrinsic motivation because the creativity and innovative potential of the board of directors is maximized (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). High performing boards learned how to take a group of individuals with
abundant talent and assemble a dynamic team where the leadership function is apportioned (Conger & Lawler, 2009). These boards formed a high level of trust, a strong commitment to the mission of the organization, and equitable distribution of responsibility and accountability for performance have profited from the benefits of a shared governance style (Avolio, Jung, Murry, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Freiwirth, 2013). The existence of trust and an atmosphere of openness were necessary to foster members’ willingness to convey information, contacts, and other external resources (Hillman & Dalziel, 2003).

**Governance of Social Enterprises**

My review of the literature included social enterprises and what is known about their governance. The board of directors comprising the case I studied is situated within a social enterprise nonprofit, identified as SE. Categorized as a subset of the nonprofit sector, social enterprises were developed as a result of limited public funding for social causes, beginning in the 1960s (Kendall, Knapp, & Forder, 2003). In the past decade, social enterprises have emerged as a vehicle for developing innovative economic solutions to social problems in local communities (Mason & Royce, 2007; Wolk, 2010).

Social enterprises were commonly defined as organizations with a social or environmental purpose supported by the achievement of their business goals (Doherty, Foster, Mason, Meehan, & Meehan, 2009; Spear, Conforth, & Aiken, 2009). Dart termed social enterprises as organizations that “enact hybrid nonprofit and for profit activities” (2004, p. 415). Prior to the last decade, the research literature on the governance of social enterprises was sparse. Little evidence existed related to the distinctive challenges faced by these boards of directors, intimating that social enterprise
governance required a new model that combines for profit stewardship and nonprofit democratic leadership (Dart, 2004; Pouyat, 2010). The general assumption was made that the governance challenges facing social enterprises were similar to those of traditional nonprofits. As more organizations emerged, primarily in Europe, it became apparent this new type of board required unique skills in combining entrepreneurial activity with a social mission to manage business opportunities and financial risks (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Research was needed to determine the appropriate governance model to support the distinctive aspects of operating a social enterprise.

Over the past ten years, the study of social enterprise governance structures increased, attracting more attention in Europe than in the United States (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). In the UK, the social enterprise sector has played a significant role in supporting the social economy which includes nonprofits and other philanthropic organizations (Mason, Kirkbride, & Bryde, 2007). Varied and inconsistent findings were reported from studies focused on the work and impact of boards in social enterprises. Board input and influence were portrayed as minimal due to the influence and control of the social enterprise's executive director (Light, 2008). In contrast, other research reported that boards have been relied upon heavily as a source of new ideas and change agents through their ability to improve stakeholder relationships (Paton, 2003).

In addition to the board's ability to guide or shape the organization, fiduciary aspects of serving a social enterprise were considered. Studies comparing the conventional governance structure of nonprofits with social enterprises found the differences to be related to the social enterprise board's involvement in risk management, legal structures, and role clarity issues between the board and staff of the
organization (Spear, et al., 2009; Mason, 2010). Renz and Andersson explained that some of the challenges faced by social enterprise boards “are transparency, the impact of professionalization, and community engagement” (2014, p. 35). All three of these were discussed by SE’s board members, although not all were labeled as challenges for their board.

In addition, I found it interesting that the origin of the social enterprise was one of the factors impacting the governance practices and structures in social enterprises. Organizations founded independently to serve a specific population may have different governance requirements than spin-offs from the public sector or an existing nonprofit (Spear, et al, 2009). I concluded that these divergent results support the need for further study of social enterprise governance to advance the understanding of leadership requirements, to clarify the role of the board, and to determine the relevance of shared leadership.

Shared Leadership

The second major area of concentration for this literature review was shared leadership. Numerous fields of studies explored shared leadership; sources included journals from psychology (social and personnel), qualitative social research, education, group/intergroup relations, organizational studies, and management. Four goals were ascertained for my review of the literature related to shared leadership:

1. To survey the definitions of shared leadership.
2. To understand the evolution of shared leadership as a distinctive leadership theory.
3. To examine the methods used to measure shared leadership.
4. To appraise the benefits and detriments of using shared leadership in a team setting comparable to a nonprofit board.

**Definitions.** A cursory examination of shared leadership gave me the impression it was a new style or theory of leadership, when in fact, the idea of shared leadership has existed for almost a century. The term, “shared”, is synonymous with distributed leadership, and the definitions attributed to various scholars described shared leadership as a dynamic, interactive influence process or emergent state that includes two or more members of a group with the objective of leading one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals, or both, and to maximize team effectiveness (Avolio, et al, 2009; Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Conger, 2003). Concurrently, Hoch, Pearce, and Welzel (2010) defined share leadership as a collective social influence process shared by team members and aimed toward the achievement of one or more common goals. The word, “influence”, was a key term used frequently in definitions and it is how this influence occurs that is significant in shared leadership.

Pearce (2004) viewed shared leadership as a derivation of the influence process, characterized by the development of two or more members as leaders. As an emergent team property, influence evolved as multiple individual team members engaged in task activities and took on leadership roles involving direct motivation and support (Carson, et. al., 2007; Small & Rentsch, 2010). Not limited to the internal functioning of a team, shared leadership was also defined as a process that involved peer or lateral influence, and at other times involved upward or downward hierarchical influence (Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce, 2006; Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark & Mumford, 2009; Pearce
& Conger, 2003). I have been a member of teams that shared leadership successfully and perceived it as a positive stimulus for how work was accomplished. I also saw that a spillover effect incurred beyond the team itself into the workplace or academic setting.

**Evolution.** Mary Parker Follett (1924) can be ascribed with the first notable mention of the idea of shared leadership. She was a social worker, management consultant and pioneer in the fields of organization theory and organizational behavior. Follett’s opinion was that one should look for guidance on a situation from the person best suited to give input. She emphasized that the person identified with the most knowledge, not necessarily the designated the formal authority, determined the leader. A few decades later, social psychologists, Bales and Heinicke (1953) provided further evidence of the existence of shared leadership through their research on small group interpersonal interaction. They found that two informal leaders often emerged in leaderless groups: one focused on the group task and one concentrating on relational issues.

The participatory leadership style was a likely predecessor of shared leadership. In 1961, another social psychologist, Rensis Likert, described the group method of supervision as one that facilitates subordinate participation. He suggested that instead of supervising each subordinate separately, managers should rely on group meetings to encourage discussion between peers that is supportive, constructive, and oriented toward problem solving. During this same time period, Katz and Kahn (1966) also studied organizations and the distribution of leadership from a social psychology perspective. They further defined leadership as the exertion of influence on organizationally relevant matters by any member of the organization, and purported
the most effective organizations are those in which influential actions are widely shared (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

One of the most dramatic and important shifts in the evolution of leadership theory occurred in 1978 with the release of the book, *Leadership*, written by historian and political scientist, James Macgregor Burns. His seminal work reconceptualized leadership as being process-oriented with a major emphasis on follower development. Burns (1978) advocated that a key responsibility for any positional leader was to take on the responsibility for developing followers into leaders. He made it clear that organizations needed to be full of leaders at levels. Due in large part to his work, the conventional role of followers began to be reconstructed to one of being a collaborator, co-creator, and central to the leadership process. The idea of the social construction of leadership persisted, and from it emerged the existence of influence as a defining factor for followers in groups or teams.

Building on the concept of the development of followers as leaders, Manz & Sims, Jr. (1980), began to study self-management as a replacement for formal leadership and its impact on self-managing work teams. They wanted to further explore the concept of self-leadership as it applies to groups or teams. In the subsequent 15 years, they concentrated their research on employees leading themselves, and as a result, self-leadership studies moved beyond the individual to the group level of analysis. More recently, Manz partnered with Stewart and Courtright to further explore the concept of self-leadership as it applies to groups or teams and review the research from a multilevel perspective (Stewart, Courtright & Manz, 2011). The findings of their meta-analysis confirmed that the outcomes of team self-leadership relative to performance...
showed improvement in productivity as compared to traditionally managed teams. In alignment with my thinking, much of the self-leadership team research involved who was on the team (composition) and what the team had as its goal (task characteristics).

**Development of shared leadership theory.** Gary Yukl, a leadership scholar and professor at SUNY, defined leadership as an influence process involving the determination of the group’s or organization’s objectives, motivating task behavior in pursuit of these objectives, and influencing group maintenance and culture (1998). He helped set the stage for shared leadership 20 years ago when he proposed leader effectiveness should be measured in terms of the leader’s contribution to the quality of group processes as perceived by the followers. For individual team members, Yukl (1998) encouraged the same empowering behaviors supporting shared leadership; building the self-confidence of followers, increasing their skills, and contributing to their psychological growth.

Clearly, leadership theories were expanding well beyond traditional concepts of a single leader in organizational settings. Shared leadership contrasted with the conventional paradigm of vertical leadership where the emphasis was on the role of the manager. Hierarchically, the manager was positioned above and external to a team, had formal authority over the team, and was responsible for the team’s processes and outcomes (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004). A key distinction between shared leadership and traditional models of leadership was that the influence process expanded beyond the downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Demonstration that shared leadership was a more important predictor of team effectiveness than traditional vertical leadership was made through various studies on
change management teams (Pearce & Sims, 2002), new venture executive teams (Ensley, et. al., 2006), and virtual teams (Pearce & Sims, 2002).

**Measuring shared leadership.** The literature review revealed the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to research and measure shared leadership in settings such as organizations and in teams situated in university settings. The two most common quantitative methods for measuring shared leadership were utilizing a questionnaire and performing a social network analysis. I was not amenable to either of these approaches because the case (board of directors) to be studied required in depth analysis using interviews and observations, and quantitative methods would not have provided the rich data I was seeking.

The two most frequently used qualitative approaches included leadership sociograms and ethnographic methods (Gockel & Werth, 2010). The leadership sociogram method involved the observation of group meetings and recording of patterns of interaction. This approach provided an understanding of the details of the group dynamics along with performing a social network analysis to quantify the interactions. Drawbacks to this approach were that it was time consuming and limited the data gathering to observations only.

The ethnographic approach involved extensive, long-term observations of the group in its natural settings. The use of this method for qualitative research had the advantage of not being limited to formal meetings and supported the understanding of ongoing group dynamics (Gockel & Werth, 2010). The extensive time required of the researcher for data collection is its primary disadvantage. These qualitative methods
were closer to meeting my research goals although not entirely compatible with the sources of data I collected.

**Questionnaires.** Researchers have utilized a modified version of existing questionnaires (e.g. Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire), that were developed to rate leadership behaviors (Avolio, et al., 2009; Ensley, et al., 2006; Hoch, et al., 2010; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Team members assessed leadership behaviors displayed by the team and ratings were averaged at the team level to arrive at a shared leadership score. Measuring each of the team members separately as the sources of influence, and the group as the target of influence, provided data about the influence of individuals to the overall leadership of the group. Although these questionnaires explained the shared influence in a team, they minimize the variations in perceived contributions of each individual member (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Aggregating team members’ assessments about the degree to which leadership is shared, or specific behaviors are exhibited in a team environment can be an important indicator of shared leadership, however, this approach fails to capture the relational influences (Carson, et al., 2007).

**Social network analysis.** The second method used to quantify shared leadership employed a social network approach and measured the existence and pattern of leadership distribution among team members (Carson, et. al., 2007; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006; Small & Rentsch, 2010). Calculating network density and network centralization of the team members as well as group level patterns of relationships was an attempt to reduce the subjectivity of the questionnaire responses of the first quantitative method (Mehra, et al., 2006). Network density measured leadership quantity by identifying the number of leadership ties in the network (group)
in proportion to the total number of possible ties. The second measure, network centralization, showed the distribution of network ties and how they are organized around particular focal points (individuals) to determine which are the most influential. Although these social network indices reflected the amount and distribution of leadership in the team and the extent to which team members were viewed as leaders in general, they said little about the nature or quality of the leadership itself.

Building on social network analysis, Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, and Bergman (2012) conducted a study that combined behavioral observations and assessment of individual leadership behaviors by trained raters and cluster analysis. Shared leadership was calculated using two measures; the number of members on the team who performed positive leadership behaviors, and the amount of leadership behavior exhibited by the team using leadership ratings for each team member aggregated to the team level. Their findings indicated that teams with numerous types of leadership behavior, combined with the existence of multiple leaders, reported less conflict, greater consensus, and higher intragroup trust and cohesion than teams that did not experience shared leadership (Bergman, et. al., 2012). The social network approach clearly supported the benefits of shared leadership in a team process, but it did not advance the understanding of how accountability and responsibility for goal achievement was shared in a team setting.

**Research on shared leadership in a team setting.** The previous sections defined shared leadership and provided background information on its evolution and development as well as a description of the various methods used for measurement. This section of the literature review is devoted to exploring the application of shared
leadership in a team setting analogous to a nonprofit board of directors. The majority of research I found related to shared leadership in teams was conducted in academic settings and not easily transferable to other venues. Specific results gleaned from this research are valuable for evaluating the benefits and drawbacks to using shared leadership in teams. In this section, the findings from the current research will be presented first, followed by a discussion of the aids and impediments to developing shared leadership in the setting of a nonprofit board.

**Findings from the current research.** Two general inferences about shared leadership in teams were made from the research reviewed, although they are not conclusive or definitive. My first conjecture was that shared leadership occurs instinctively when it is not externally imposed and leaders emerge naturally. Particularly interesting to me was the research on team participation in shared leadership that was observed and analyzed for naturally occurring shared leadership versus externally imposed shared leadership. Bergman, et al. (2012) performed a study that examined the process of shared leadership in 45 ad hoc decision-making teams composed of undergraduate students that simulated cross-functional task forces, akin to the composition of a nonprofit board. Utilizing behavioral observation, their study explored the relationship of shared leadership to the team processes such as intragroup conflict and consensus-building, and emergent states such as trust, cohesion, and satisfaction. Their findings supported the relationship between shared leadership and positive team functioning: teams with shared leadership reported less conflict, greater consensus, and higher intragroup trust and cohesion than teams that did not experience shared leadership (Bergman, et al., 2012).
Similar results were found in a separate study conducted by Solansky (2008) with autonomous and self-managed work teams composed of undergraduate students. No external input on group dynamics or communication was provided to the team. Solansky was looking for differences between teams with a single leader versus teams with shared leadership. Comparable to the triangulation in my case study, he used multiple sources to collect data from the teams including surveys and sociograms. Findings concluded the shared leadership teams had motivational, social and cognitive advantages over teams led by a single individual (Solansky, 2008). With these insights from Bergman, et al., and Solansky, my research provided further understanding of how the board as a team develops its shared leadership style and the specific characteristics and strengths of individual team members that allow shared leadership to occur.

*Aids and impediments to developing shared leadership.* The second supposition I made from the research was that when specific antecedents are met through the presence of a positive internal team environment, shared leadership can be accelerated. A study conducted by Small & Rentsch (2010) involved 60 teams comprised of undergraduate students simulating a top management team charged with building a new company. Four different instruments were used independently to measure trust, collectivism, team performance and shared leadership. The results showed a significant relationship existed between teams that developed intragroup trust early in the team’s formation and the amount of shared leadership exhibited as the team advanced through the study. The individual team member’s orientation to collectivism (view of the team’s well-being) and personality composition were predictors of the rate of emergence of shared leadership (Small & Rentsch, 2010). The
researchers concluded from their study findings that shared leadership increased over time, trust and collectivism were antecedents of shared leadership, and therefore, positively related to team performance.

Similarly, Carson, et al. (2007) proposed that shared leadership is a condition of mutual influence embedded in the interactions of team members. Their study explored the conditions that support shared leadership in work teams by identifying and testing these conditions. Over a five-month period, 59 consulting teams composed of graduate students were engaged in consulting projects, worked directly with clients, and used a faculty advisor as the external leader. These researchers found that for teams lacking a strong internal team environment, external coaching was critical for building shared leadership among the team members (Carson, et al., 2007). The major limiting factor in connecting these studies to my proposed research was that the teams were composed entirely of students who may have different motivations for sharing leadership and varying levels of commitment to long-term relationships as compared to nonprofit board members.

Overall, leadership scholars, past and present, reinforced that shared leadership promotes both task-related and social dimensions of group functioning, and can be expected to enhance group performance (Drescher, et al., 2014). Shared leadership established a bond among team members as they distributed power and responsibility for the team’s outcomes, and it allowed cohesion to develop naturally and collectively, instead of through the imposition of a single leader (Bergman, et al., 2012; Carson, et al., 2007; Hackman, 2002; Solansky, 2008). Practicing shared leadership provided team members with confidence, satisfaction, and ownership because they were part of the
creation and maintenance of team processes and objectives (Solansky, 2008). Although
the current research on shared leadership did not specifically include nonprofit boards,
I concluded that the findings related to the conditions influencing the practice shared
leadership can be extrapolated, and will be discussed in the following section.

Factors influencing shared leadership in nonprofit boards. Given the
impact of shared leadership on individuals and groups or teams in organizations,
Vanderwaerde, et al. (2011) proposed similar dynamics can be expected in the
boardroom as well. These researchers examined boards of directors from a team
perspective and found the board setting to be a fertile environment for shared
leadership to flourish. Notwithstanding these glowing recommendations, I know the
process of establishing shared leadership can create some difficult challenges for
nonprofit boards to overcome. The team environment can be more complex, requiring
greater cohesiveness and increased ability to communicate versus teams with a single
individual leader (Solansky, 2008). Every board member may not be capable of thriving
in this type of environment.

I found two major impediments to the success of shared leadership in a team.
One was the time required for its development. The potential success of shared
leadership was thwarted if the team had a short life cycle or had limited access to group
meetings that enabled team interactions to occur. Underscoring this need for team
longevity were the results I found in two studies (Avolio, et al., 1996; Small & Rentsch,
2010). These researchers reported that shared leadership was lower in the beginning of
the process when team members initiated their tasks. In later stages of development
when team members had a more accurate understanding of each other’s skills and
abilities, shared leadership was more prevalent. I know nonprofit boards are at a disadvantage because two to three years is the average tenure I have seen for board members and board meetings may occur monthly or as infrequently as every quarter.

The second impediment, which I suspected to be more important than time spent together, was the prerequisite that all team members were able and willing to perform and accept non-hierarchical leadership. I know all board members do not possess equal levels of leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities, and successful task achievement is not a given. A high level of leadership capability was not necessarily a guarantee of team performance either, because all members must be open to the possibility of being leaders as well as followers, for shared leadership to occur. A related stipulation I extracted from the research was whether or not the leaders saw each other as leaders. In other words, board members needed to be cognizant of their own competencies and those of each individual, and be motivated and willing to accept leadership based on the situational needs of the board (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Friedrich, et al., 2009).

These barriers to effective use of shared leadership underscored two key points for me. One was the need for the board to spend planned time together outside of the formal meetings to learn what talents were available and how to actively draw upon them. I concurred with the research that it was vitally important for board members to respect each individual’s contributions to the mission of the organization and to learn each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The second point was the importance of board members having opportunities to exhibit their leadership skills. As different members led and influenced one another in positive ways, commitment and cohesion most likely
increased, which in turn influenced the amount of shared leadership within the group (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). All of these factors affected the team environment, impacted internal relationships, and provided incentives and reinforcement for the board to share leadership.

**Summary of Chapter 2**

The most effective way to summarize the connections made in my review of the literature is through a diagram depicting the process I proposed for a board to be able to share leadership. The literature review gave me the benchmarks for board structure and composition by which I measured the readiness of a social enterprise nonprofit board to act as a team and share leadership. From the current research on nonprofit boards, I developed a model (Figure 2.1) to illustrate what I proposed as the critical components required for the board to be able to practice shared leadership that became the central focus of my literature review. My case study used this model to examine SE’s board and determine how it compares to these benchmarks. In addition, I studied the implications these components have on the formation of the board as a team. The perceptions and experiences of the board members definitely influenced their ability to share leadership.
The blue oval nodes connected by the arrows are the key areas of concentration for my research on nonprofit boards and shared leadership. The orange rectangles are the components of board structure and composition required for the board to act as a team. Ultimately, following this process leads to successful shared leadership (green hexagon).

The purpose of my research study was to explore shared leadership with the board of directors of SE, a social enterprise nonprofit organization. The results of my literature review confirmed my choice of a single case study as the research design for conducting my study. A case study involving triangulated data collection including interviews, observations, archival document review and a focus group would provide
answers to my research questions. Chapter 3 provides the specific elements of the case study design and the use of the constant comparative method for coding the data collected to identify emerging patterns and themes.
Chapter 3 – Research Study Design and Methodology

Introduction – Use of Qualitative Study Design

After careful deliberation culminating from my review of the literature on nonprofit boards, social enterprise governance, and shared leadership, I chose to perform a qualitative study. I was interested in understanding the process by which actions and outcomes occur in a specific type of nonprofit board and its use of shared leadership. Qualitative analysis focuses on the beliefs, assumptions, situations, actions, and accounts (Charmaz, 2006) that contribute significantly to the understanding of the humans or groups under investigation. Qualitative studies in leadership have remained relatively scarce because the quantitative model of using surveys and questionnaires has been the dominant data collection method (Avolio, et al., 2009).

For the purposes of my study, qualitative research was advantageous because of its capacity to explore leadership phenomena in depth and answer the “why” types of questions not addressed by quantitative research. As a researcher, qualitative methods brought me closer to the participant board members instead of relying on more remote, inferential empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I wanted to test my ideas for why shared leadership may or may not exist in a social enterprise board of directors. A major strength of using qualitative research is the capability to examine the processes that lead to the outcomes (Maxwell, 2005). I concluded that experimental and survey research would have been less effective at identifying the key elements. This chapter provides the details about the qualitative research design and methodology I used to study shared leadership in a nonprofit board.
Methodological Approaches

Once the decision was made to utilize a qualitative research design, I narrowed the options for methodological approaches to a holistic single case study combined with the methods of coding and analysis of interviews, observations, a focus group, and archival document review. Together, they supplied the structures and processes I needed to conduct a concentrated and comprehensive study of one specific nonprofit board of directors. The following sections will present the foundational background and discuss the relevance and suitability of case study and coding and thematic analysis methods for my research.

Case study methodology – definitions, origins and criteria for use. The various definitions of case study are comparable in terms of being situated in everyday occurrences and focused on the exploration of a program, a process, an event, a group of people, or an institution and the inherent explanatory relationships (Merriam, 1988). In general, the case study method is a comprehensive research approach used to generate a multi-faceted understanding of a complex situation, incorporating specific data collection and analysis approaches to investigate phenomena in real-life contexts (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011; Simons, 2009). Case studies enable a researcher to study current phenomena in a real-life setting, where boundaries between context and phenomenon tend to be blurred (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

Applicable in numerous fields including economics, psychology, sociology, and political science and medicine (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007), the origins of case study can be traced back to a French sociologist and economist, Frederic Le Play, who used case study in his work to look at family budgets in relation to the economic conditions
of the working class (Healy, 1947). In the 1960s and 1970s, textbooks on research methods tended to focus on variations of experimental designs and statistical methods of analysis (Merriam, 2009). Case studies were limited in use to the occasional in-depth descriptive study of a phenomenon or to present a historical perspective. Finally, in the late 1970s and 1980s, case study research as a methodology was introduced into the field of education with the idea that meaning is created subjectively (Stake, 1978), and began to be written about by Yin (1984), Merriam (1988), and Stake (1978), as a means of interpretation.

Explaining how results were achieved became important for developing policy and applicable practice, and case study became one of the primary research approaches used in qualitative research in the fields of health and education (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). The use of case study has increased in traditional disciplines as well as practice-oriented fields due to its distinctive features of problem definition, design, data collection, data analysis, and composition and reporting (Yin, 1994). The case study strategy is preferred for studying research problems that meet specific criteria (Yin, 2013):

1. Seeking answers to how or why questions.
2. Little control over the people or events being studied.
3. Object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context.
4. Boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear.
5. Use of multiple sources of evidence is preferred.

These criteria fit for my single-case study of the board of directors of SE, situated within a distinct segment of social enterprise nonprofit organizations. I explored
questions of how and why a social enterprise board shares leadership. I had no ability to influence or manipulate the board members or the work they performed. Although the object of study was the board of a social enterprise nonprofit, the impact is not confined to SE, and the sources of evidence included interviews, observations, a focus group, and board archival documents.

The fact that SE had received grants from United Way every year since the fund was initiated indicated to me the potential existed for studying shared leadership. Grants were made to organizations that had strong support from their boards and included stakeholders in their decision making. I selected the case to study because it was unusually interesting in and of itself and I wanted to investigate the board's leadership style. For Stake (1995), the foremost concern of case study research is to generate knowledge of the subject(s) being studied through discernment and understanding of the issues intrinsic to the case itself. To logically link the data collected and interpret the findings, I used coding and thematic analysis.

**Coding and thematic analysis – use and study application.** The holistic and categorizing strategies of case study method (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) allowed me to focus on the board of directors I was studying broadly as a team as well as the specific elements of my conceptual framework and research questions. Coding and categorizing are two processes frequently applied as researchers begin to make sense of the data (Simons, 2009). Coding allows the data to be fragmented into units and labeled with words that describe or explain it, and then be reorganized and linked to consolidate meaning and develop explanations (Saldaña, 2016).
To interpret the data using coding, I began with specifics and moved towards generalization by taking detailed data and analyzing it to discover patterns. My goal was to find repetitive patterns of thoughts, beliefs or opinion, and actions, and then organize them into categories, and ultimately, themes. I relied heavily on Saldaña’s *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2016) to guide my approach. The method of coding and developing theoretical categories that could be continuously refined, as well as constantly compared and checked by the data, was the best one for me to follow to achieve a higher level of conceptualization.

Coding and thematic analysis was a cogent choice to use in tandem with case study method for numerous reasons. First, I was interested in a unique group that represented a complex unit with multiple variables of potential importance. Collecting data in the context of a real-life setting, with the intention of comparing it to my conceptual framework, while acknowledging my own reflexivity as the researcher as well as the view of the participants, required a method that was comprehensive and logical (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Secondly, I wanted a method of analysis comprised of systematic procedures for coding the data to establish patterns or themes that could be organized into a case study database. The case study database was a useful tool for organizing the voluminous materials and data I collected during the course of my case study (Yin, 2008). The database consisted of the archival documents, transcriptions of the twelve interviews and focus group, notes from the interviews, focus group, and board meeting observations, field notes, the Excel spreadsheets used for data analysis, memoing notes, and drawings from my thematic analysis. The third rationale was my need for a method adaptable to case study that allowed me to
examine a specific topic using multiple sources of data for the purposes of triangulation and make assessments during each stage of the analysis (Creswell, 2013).

**Population and Sample**

Studying the existence of shared leadership in a social enterprise nonprofit board of directors using case study method required narrowing of the population to find a suitable sample. Limiting the study to nonprofits in my community that were classified as sustainable social enterprises and had been operating for at least 20 years, resulted in a few qualifying organizations. A minimum of 20 years in operation gave me an opportunity to study past and current board members and look at board transitions over time. An appropriate sample is composed of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic (Bowen, 2008). My goal was to locate a social enterprise board of directors considered to be successful as a team, with individual members that could identify with a shared style of leadership.

For my study, I used purposive sampling to locate the participant group, the board of directors of SE. After meeting with the executive director and the president of the board of directors and receiving their tentative approval, I composed a letter to the board explaining my study. A letter was sent electronically by the executive director and board president asking the board members to confirm their ability and willingness to participate in my study. This board was comprised of people known to be excellent examples of the concepts I studied and who had experienced the process of shared leadership. After the board members concurred, I received written approval from the president of the board and the executive director to conduct the research study.
Research Protocol

**Ethical procedures.** Conducting case study research required ethical procedures be followed to protect the human subjects who are participating (Simons, 2009). I followed the IRB guidelines and protocol for research that involved human subjects. The purpose of the study was made clear with the board president and executive director of SE and explicit permission was granted to access documents and files related to the board of directors. Informed consent was obtained from each person interviewed and observed, and all activities were conducted on the principle of confidentiality. Interview participants included past and present board members and the executive director.

**Data management procedures and confidentiality.** Data for the research study was collected through interviews, observations, a focus group, and archival document review. Confidentiality of the research study, the data collected, and the results were maintained with the highest level of integrity throughout the course of the study and dissertation completion.

1. All data collected were stored in a password protected private computer or in hard copy form in a locked file drawer in my private home office. I was the sole person to have the password and the key.

2. Observations, interviews and the focus group session were audio recorded and notes were scribed on paper. Audio data were transcribed and combined with the written data.
3. All data collected were coded and analyzed using scholarly methods of coding, and thematic analysis. All data were stored in my private home office. I was the sole person to have the password and the key.

4. All electronic correspondence related to this research were deleted from my accounts and computer after the study was completed.

5. All digital data were transferred to a disc for use during the study and then deleted from my computer upon completion of the research.

6. Each participant was given a unique identification number and the key to these numbers was stored on a password protected Excel document. All documents had the ID number and no documents contained participant names or personal identifiers. Data were linked from the protected Excel document.

7. The Excel linking document was destroyed once data collection was completed. All data (hard copy and digital) will be destroyed within four years after the completion of the study.

**Consent to participate.** Verbal and written consent were obtained from voluntary participants prior to the start of the study, whereby they were informed about the overall research purpose and its procedures, as well as the risks and benefits of participation (Appendix A). Participants were provided with an explanation about the study and required to read the consent form and ask any questions before signing two forms: one for the researcher and the other for the participant. At the time the consent form was signed, the participants were assured that even though they had agreed in writing to participate in the study, they maintained the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. I explained to participants that anything they said
or did would be kept confidential and all unique identifying information was removed from my board observation notes, the interview transcriptions, and all other data collected from the archival review. Transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed by the interviewees and checked for accuracy.

**Data Collection**

Case study method combined with coding and thematic analysis gave me the capacity to manage a variety of data collected using multiple sources to gather rich, detailed information in an authentic setting (Willis, et al., 2007). The steps required in both approaches for data collection, data analysis, and description of findings were not separate or linear in progression; they were integrated (Willis, et al., 2007). The qualitative methods used allowed me to constantly compare the data as I gathered it and think about how to interpret emerging themes and summarize the findings while being open to additional interviews, observations or documents if clarification was required (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Willis, et al., 2007).

Data collection was done through individual interviews of past and present board members, observations of board meetings and a focus group. Additional sources of data included archival documents such as orientation materials, bylaws, and past board meeting minutes. The three phases of data collection are discussed in the following sections: fieldwork, data analysis, and thematic analysis using a focus group. The diagram in Figure 3.1 illustrates the elements constituting the triangulation of the fieldwork phase of the data collection process. Interviews, observations, and notes from reviewing archival documents were collected for coding and data analysis. In addition, a focus group was convened to conduct member checking of the themes developing.
Phase 1 – Fieldwork

Archival documents. Documents were useful in my case study research to represent, reveal, and enrich the context as well as contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the issues (Simons, 2009). I examined various documents related to the board of SE, including recruitment and selection materials, orientation, committee selection, board member roles and responsibilities, bylaws, and evaluation documents. I contacted the executive director to review the materials and went to SE’s main office. The office manager gave me the materials and directed me to a table nearby to conduct my work. The process of examining archival documents involved looking for the
messages being inferred or “reading between the lines” (Yin, 1994, p. 57). I searched for clues to understand the culture of the board, the values underlying the written policies, and the actions and behaviors of the board as individuals and as a team.

**Interviews.** I set up twelve semi-structured interviews to gather live data from the board president, former and current board members, and the executive director. After scheduling each interview, I sent the participant the description of the interview protocol and questions (Appendix B). I developed an interview protocol around the topic area of shared leadership in the context of the board with the questions to be asked of each interviewee. I wanted to gather data to test my theory about the critical factors I thought were necessary for shared leadership to be useful in a board setting.

To achieve the level of depth and detail necessary to obtain rich data, I carefully chose the wording and arranged a specified order to the questions, beginning with close-ended questions to give me background information, moving into specific open-ended questions, and ending with a broad open-ended question (Creswell, 2013). The questions were crafted to help me understand each SE board member’s views of the board and her interpretation of shared leadership and its usefulness and application within the board. I wanted to know the skills and traits each board member thought were essential for sharing leadership individually, and as a team. In addition, I wanted to know their perceptions of the style(s) of leadership practiced and what had been distinctive about their experiences as a member of this particular board. Finally, I was interested in learning about their knowledge of and interactions with other board members.
A list of the seven interview questions include the following:

1. What are the strengths of the SE board that help it function effectively and what could be improved?

2. What does the term “shared leadership” mean to you and how do you think nonprofit boards could benefit from this style of leadership?

3. Can you give me an example of a situation involving the board where you saw shared leadership occurring?

4. If you think of the board as a team, what skills or traits do board members need to have to share the leadership responsibility? What about the team as a whole?

5. Is there anything about SE’s environment that helps or hinders the board’s ability to share leadership?

6. What would be hard for an outsider like me to understand about what it means to be a member of SE’s board?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me, or any questions you were expecting that I haven’t asked?

The semi-structured interview protocol provided me with the ability to analyze responses during the process of collecting the data (Creswell, 2013). The questions I composed were sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant’s specific experiences. The freedom to rephrase questions and modify the order based on the interviewee’s input was beneficial because I could dive deeper into topics I hadn’t anticipated being relevant to my study.
Before asking the first question, I established rapport with the person being interviewed by asking about the number of years served on the board, positions held, any orientation received, previous board experience, and personal knowledge, skills and abilities. The actual recording began after I described the research study, the content to be covered in the interview, and permission had been obtained from the interviewee to tape record and document what was said. During the interview, it was important for me to monitor my own reactions to the responses I heard and limit myself from deviating from the standard questions to reduce variations in data collected. I tried to balance the need to be respectful of the interviewee by keeping track of the time consumed by the interview and bringing the interview to closure without rushing. After the interview, I was timely and conscientious about properly transcribing the recordings, and conducting a preliminary analysis of the responses to guide further data collection.

**Participant observations – board meetings.** A very important resource for my fieldwork was the observations of the board of directors during their formal meetings. The SE board meets quarterly and I attended three meetings over the course of my study. Observations required verification and may have been unreliable without another means of comparison such as an interview or document review (Klenke, 2008). Watching the board interact as a group prior to the interviews gave me an introduction into the physical setting and the participants in their own environment. I was able to acquire knowledge about the activities that occurred and topics discussed. Gaining early insight into the individual and group interactions, conversations, and nonverbal cues was very helpful as my data collection progressed.
Interviewing after the meetings allowed me to check the accuracy of the observations I had made during the board meetings. Conversely, observations I performed after the interviews allowed me to compare what a person had said was occurring with the reality of what did happen in the board meetings. This dual sequence allowed me to see the interactions between the interviewees and their peers and have a perception of “what is not being said” from the prior knowledge I gained from the interviews. During the time I was conducting the case study research, a potentially fruitful source of substantiation presented itself. I was given the opportunity to attend an unanticipated fundraising event where board members had shared in the planning and execution and all board members were invited to participate. Due to the fact prior permission to “officially” observe was not procured, I took off my researcher hat and participated in the live auction instead.

**Focus group and member checking.** I used a focus group to fulfill three primary purposes. The first was to confirm the themes and concepts I had formed from the data collection and analysis. The second was to provide an opportunity for the participants to share and compare their thoughts about the data. The third was for me to observe the interactions of the board members while they explored and clarified their individual and shared perspectives (Morgan, 1988). A focus group was a useful forum for me to hear and understand a range of responses, individually and collectively, and to go below the surface answers I heard during the interviews.

The targeted size of the focus group was 6 to 12 participants and the format of the process encouraged meaningful interaction (Klenke, 2008). Given my knowledge from the interviews and observation of a two board meetings, I decided to ask all
twelve board members to participate, predicting a few would not be able to attend. After meeting everyone in the one-on-one interviews, I thought the past and current board members would all be genuinely interested in what each other had to say about the research topic, and share their experiences related to serving on the board.

Permission was requested from the executive director and board president to schedule the focus group prior to the January board meeting. They concurred on selecting a time that was convenient to maximize attendance and both agreed to participate in the focus group. I contacted each interviewee electronically, provided an explanation of the focus group and the protocol to be followed (Appendix C), and asked for a commitment to attend. The focus group consisted of 8 board members and was held in the conference room at SE. I acted as the facilitator and had a colleague perform the duties of recorder and observer.

As the facilitator, I began by defining the scope of the session to help the board members understand the importance of hearing different opinions and experiences in relation to the questions being asked. I asked everyone to make a brief introduction and one board member participated by phone. I explained the process I would follow and I confirmed with the board members that they knew the session would be audio recorded. Also, I told them they would receive the transcribed results for approval or modification and that I would remove all names from the transcriptions before I began to code. I verified with the board members that signed consents covering the focus group had already been obtained during the individual interviews. Ground rules were listed and discussed and everyone agreed to follow them.
Board members were given an explanation of the model I had developed before my research began and I shared the current findings I had gleaned from the input received from board member interviews, meeting observations, and archival review. Board members discussed each component of the model and the concepts and themes I had identified. They added information to areas they believed needed substantiating or were ambiguous. I asked targeted questions to clarify and supplement information shared during the one-hour session. As the concomitant researcher and facilitator, I intentionally balanced my need to obtain information from the discussion and the needs of the participants for comfortable, unhurried interactions.

**Field notes.** In the course of conducting my interviews, observing board meetings, and reviewing the archival documents, I recorded field notes. Written comments about interactions I witnessed, impressions of what I saw occurring, insights which would be useful later in my analysis, impressions or interpretations, and anything else that seemed important for me, constituted my field notes (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I have incorporated my field notes into the parts of the related discussions in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Phase 2 – Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis I pursued for my case study entailed multiple iterations of coding that would ultimately lead me to the identification of categories and themes. Coding is basically the procedure by which data is lumped into categories and specific properties are labeled (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The process I followed for coding and analyzing the data was based on Saldaña’s methods in his book, *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2016). He supports customizing the coding method
to suit the unique needs and concerns of the researcher’s study. For my case study, I wanted to code the data I acquired from the interviews, observations, and documents, and store all of it in my case study database. Establishing a case study database was complicated yet it proved to be very important for preserving my collected data in a well-organized format that made my own analysis more efficient because I could retrieve specific data easily.

**Memoing.** Memoing was an important component of the thematic analysis that I used to make notes to myself on the coded categories as they developed. Capturing in text my own reflexivity about the interviews and observations in real time proved useful when I analyzed the codes and their relationships to the data. Keeping track of the “emergent insights, potential themes, methodological questions, and links between themes and theoretical notions” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 287) was beneficial. Documenting my comments on the meaning of coded categories, potential explanations of connections I saw developing, and general descriptions of what I discovered about the data proved to be very helpful as I began my first iteration of coding.

**Coding.** Using a combination of basic coding methods to approach my data and analysis, I progressed from the raw or real data to abstract constructs that represented the themes and assertions I made about my research findings. As my analysis progressed, I realized a second examination was required. Two iterations of data analysis allowed me to view the data from different perspectives using distinctive types of coding. I will explain the types of coding in subsequent sections of this chapter. After careful deliberation, I determined two cycles of coding in each iteration were necessary for me to perform a thorough analysis and develop subcategories and categories with
accuracy and confidence. Each source of data was kept separate at this stage of data analysis. I created a flowchart to show the five different stages involved in the first iteration of my coding process (Figure 3.2).

![Flowchart of Coding Process](image)

*Figure 3.2. First Iteration of Coding Process.*

**First iteration, first cycle.** First cycle coding was the initial step I took to review all of the interview and focus group data in their original transcribed format. I underlined the words that specifically answered one of the seven questions I posed to the board members or words related to my topic of study. While underlining key text, I wrote multiple preliminary codes in the margins. The same process was used for coding the archival documents, observations, and field notes. Concurrently, I kept a memoing journal to document ideas for later reference and possible coding. Each incident in the data were coded into as many categories of analysis as applicable, with new categories
created as necessary. Data from the twelve interviews were coded by interviewee and by interview question and I created two separate spreadsheets for displaying each. Archival documents were coded by type and chronological order. Excel spreadsheets were constructed for each source of data collected to analyze results in isolation first. The text was transferred to the separately tabbed sheets and columns were established for entering multiple codes for each entry.

Two types of coding, In Vivo and descriptive, were used during the first cycle of the process in both iterations. In Vivo coding involved using a word or short phrase from the actual language and terms in the transcripts from the board members themselves (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Interview transcripts and observations recorded from the board meetings were coded verbatim to capture the meanings intended without a filter. Descriptive coding was applied for field notes and documents to provide a detailed inventory of their contents. Also called “topic coding”, descriptive coding summarizes the basic subject of the specific data into a word or short phrase (Saldaña, 2016). By assigning labels to the data at a basic level, I established an inventory of topics that were organized to fit my study purposes.

**First iteration, second cycle.** Subsequent to the arrangement of codes completed during the first cycle, I reorganized my coded data to advance my analysis and completed a second cycle of coding. The principal goal of second cycle coding is to “develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 234). I developed a condensed yet selective list through the second step of reconfiguring the data. Each entry was labeled with a term composed of a few words that best described it.
I utilized concept coding for the second cycle of the process and assigned a word or short phrase to the data that represented or symbolized a broader or higher level meaning than the single thought or action itself (Saldaña, 2016). Assigning concepts allowed me to view the data as ideas rather than topics. I transcended the fundamental codes and looked at the bigger picture of what was being represented or implied.

**First iteration, data categorization.** To advance to the level of labeling the data for categories and subcategories after the two cycles of coding were completed, new spreadsheets were made. The first cycle codes (188 total codes) were listed in the left hand column and the second cycle codes were placed in columns across the top of the sheet. Each first cycle code was considered in relation to the second cycle codes and a count of one was entered if a connection existed.

To accomplish the second cycle coding, I sorted the data for frequency and significance to develop the most logical and prominent categories. A total for each second cycle code was calculated and used to weight the importance of each at the category or subcategory level. A total of 28 concept codes were assigned and grouped together according to my best judgment of the connections and patterns I had identified. Figure 3.3 illustrates the frequencies of the codes from the second cycle. Figure 3.4 displays the frequencies as a bar chart and Figure 3.5 illustrates the connections I made between the categories as a cluster diagram.
**Figure 3.3.** First Iteration - Frequencies Categories and Subcategories.

**Figure 3.4.** First Iteration – Relative Code Frequencies.
After examining the results, I decided it was time for peer debriefing. A colleague who was a doctoral candidate agreed to review my work to ensure credibility. Over the course of six hours, we had an intense dialogue about the coding process and the categories and subcategories I had developed. We wrote them on sticky notes and used a white board to arrange and rearrange their order. Our goal was to find the emerging themes and concepts through our combined interpretation of the data, and then compare it to my solo effort. We had difficulty connecting all of the 10 categories and subcategories into the next level of concepts and themes and concluded that a second iteration of coding all of the data was the solution. As an ardent researcher, challenging my interpretation of the data was extremely beneficial and caused me to examine the data differently. A second iteration was needed to reveal more insight into the board members’ thoughts and ideas.
**Second iteration, first and second cycles.** The approach for the second iteration of analyzing the same data aimed at focusing internally on the content of the data and its meaning for the board members rather than on the higher level issues identified. Figure 3.6 illustrates the process I used for the second iteration of coding. In Vivo and descriptive coding were used again for the first cycle of the process in the second phase of coding because of their continued and consistent value in helping me to acclimate myself to prioritizing the board members’ voices, perspectives and insights. In the second cycle of coding, however, I used focused and values coding as the methods.

![Diagram of Coding Process]

*Figure 3.6. Second Iteration of Coding Process.*
Focused coding typically follows in Vivo coding and groups the data based on the most frequent or significant codes and “requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138). Qualitative research such as my case study seemed particularly appropriate for the application of values coding because I was exploring interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences and actions of the board members. Values coding was the application of codes to accurately reflect the board members’ values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2016). In parallel to concept coding in the first iteration, values coding more closely represented the actual perspectives of the board members.

Next, the same procedure was followed as I had done for the first iteration of coding. New spreadsheets were made with the first cycle codes in the left hand column and the second cycle codes in columns across the top. Each first cycle code was considered in relation to the second cycle codes and a count of 1 was entered if a connection existed. To accomplish this second cycle coding, I sorted the data for frequency and significance to develop the most logical and prominent categories. A total for each second cycle code was calculated and used to weight the importance of each at the category or subcategory level. At the end of the second cycle, 27 codes existed and I began to see the major categories and themes developing (Figure 3.7). The bar chart shown in Figure 3.8 illustrates the frequencies of the codes from the second cycle.
### Figure 3.7. Second Iteration - Frequencies of Categories and Subcategories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Cycle Codes</th>
<th>Board Management</th>
<th>Board Member Selection</th>
<th>Board Responsibility</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Leader Characteristics</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Shared Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Knowledge</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Management</td>
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<td>Board Member Duties not articulated</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Member Expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Policy</td>
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<td>Consensus Building</td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Governance</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transparent Leadership</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trustworthy Leader</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Totals</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3.8. Second Iteration – Relative Code Frequencies.
Figure 3.9 reflects my initial thematic analysis of the second iteration of data and the relationships I established between the categories and subcategories.

![Cluster Diagram](image)

*Figure 3.9. Second Iteration – Cluster Diagram.*

**Phase 3 – Thematic Analysis**

**Data reduction and synthesis.** Thematic case study included “identifying categories or stories in transcripts, deriving themes and patterns by progressive focusing of issues, generating themes through analytic process and integrating and rearranging interview and other field data” (Simons, 2009, p. 142).

I used gradual steps to systematically reduce and make sense of the data:

1. I entered the data into Excel worksheets and sorted the interviews by board member (using alpha/numeric representations) and by interview question.
2. I analyzed the interview data, observations, and archival data and assigned codes to complete the first cycle (Figure 3.2).
3. I organized the codes further using concept coding for the second cycle.

4. I combined the codes into the first iteration of categories and subcategories and entered the data into a new spreadsheet in my case study database.
   a. I assigned weights to the second cycle codes by adding together the number of first cycle codes that were attached to the second cycle code.
   b. I assigned a “1” to each category and subcategory that the second cycle code applied.
   c. To calculate a total for each category and subcategory, I multiplied the weights to wherever I had entered a “1” to arrive at a total for each that I termed, “frequency of occurrences” (Figure 3.3).
   d. I used a bar chart to display the totals for each category and subcategory (Figure 3.4).

5. I used the totals to guide my thematic analysis and organized the categories and subcategories into a cluster structure to show connections (Figure 3.5).

6. I looked for emerging themes and was not able to connect the categories and subcategories into higher level concepts with ease. I was too mechanical about the process.

7. At this point, I decided to take a fresh look at the data and recruited a fellow doctoral candidate to provide a different perspective.

8. After receiving valuable peer consultation, I completed a second iteration of sorting the codes using the same two cycles, however I used focused and values coding for the second cycle instead of concept coding (Figure 3.6).
9. I combined the second cycle codes into a new set of categories and subcategories.

10. I entered the data from Iteration 2 into a new spreadsheet in my case study database and calculated the frequency of occurrences using the same logic described in 4.c. (Figure 3.7).

11. I used a bar chart to display the totals for each category and subcategory in Iteration 2 (Figure 3.8).

12. The totals guided my thematic analysis and I organized the categories and subcategories into a new cluster diagram to show linkages (Figure 3.9).

13. I developed themes and concepts using the results from each of the iterations and performed member checking with a focus group.

14. Incorporating the feedback I received from the focus group, I proceeded to combine the two sets of categories and subcategories from both coding iterations.

15. I aggregated both iterations and displayed the results in a table and identified the commonalities to show the categories that were also subcategories (Figure 3.10). I labeled this table as “First Round” of the aggregated categories and subcategories.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board as a Team*</th>
<th>Board Composition</th>
<th>Board Management</th>
<th>Board Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Process</td>
<td>Board Member Abilities</td>
<td>Board Member Expectations</td>
<td>Board Member Abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member Intrinsic</td>
<td>Board Member Selection</td>
<td>Board Knowledge</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Evolution</td>
<td>Board Policy</td>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Clarify Roles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>BM Selection</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Board as a Team*</td>
<td>Board as a Team*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Board Composition</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Board Structure</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goals &amp; Direction</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evolution</td>
<td>Board/Staff Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Succession</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Board Member Tools</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
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<td>Involve</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Executive Director (ED) &amp; Organization Leadership</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Leader Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ED Characteristics</td>
<td>Board/Staff Connection</td>
<td>ED &amp; Organization Leadership</td>
</tr>
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<td>Evolution</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founder ED</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Succession</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Social Enterprise Governance</td>
<td>Shared Governance</td>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board as a Team*</td>
<td>Shared Governance</td>
<td>Board Member Input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Board Member Intrinsic factors</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Board Member Traits</td>
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<td>Board/Staff Connection</td>
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<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Clarify Roles</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Demographic</td>
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<td>Social Enterprise Governance</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bolded categories are underlined when appearing as subcategories**

*Figure 3.10. Aggregated Categories and Subcategories – First Round.*

16. I studied the table and evaluated the information I had from the triangulated sources of data I had collected.

17. I used a method for evaluating the strength of a code developed by Harding, and a code shared by about one-fourth of the board members merited consideration in my analysis (2013).

18. I condensed the categories and subcategories into a “Final” aggregated table (Figure 3.11) and included the quantities of code occurrences next to each heading, then proceeded to theme development.
Theme development. Reflecting on the number of steps I followed in my progression of data reduction and synthesis, I thought my approach was logical and pragmatic. For me to be convinced of my results, interpretation of the data required numerous iterations for me to combine the categories and subcategories in multiple formats to prove to myself I had considered many perspectives. I used the constant

![Aggregated Categories and Subcategories - Final.](image)

*ED = Executive Director
comparison process to make sense of the data, organizing and arranging it into different configurations until I saw the story it told. From that point, I created a new model to visually represent the data, to explain the primary themes, and to map the links between concepts I thought were related (Simons, 2009). I will present the model and discuss the results in Chapter 5.

**Trustworthiness of Data**

To parallel quantitative paradigms, Lincoln & Guba (1985) developed a set of essential criteria to establish trustworthiness of the data that they termed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these terms is discussed in relation to its applicability to this case study, the methods used to measure the trustworthiness of the data, and the actual practices of the researcher to meet the criteria.

**Credibility.** Paralleling internal validity, credibility is the extent to which the results are realistic or believable from the standpoint of the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was a very important factor in completing this study. It involved maintaining the participants’ commitment during data collection, satisfying their curiosity in hearing about the findings, and confirming that they viewed the results as accurate and useful. The six methods I used to ensure credibility were triangulation, respondent validation, member checking, saturation, reducing researcher bias, and a thick, rich description of the case (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2007).

**Triangulation.** Applied as a method to strengthen reliability and validity, triangulation required that as a researcher, I would use multiple and varied sources of
data to provide affirmation and substantiation (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My research protocol stipulated that the data was collected over time from individual interviews, observations, a focus group, and archival document review to achieve triangulation. Using this method enabled me to check for consistency and varying viewpoints about the data, methods, and emerging theoretical strategies.

**Participant validation and member checking.** Another applicable strategy to assess the quality of my research was the use of formal, informal and continuous verification of data and emerging results by board members from whom the data was collected over the course of the study (Rossman & Ralles, 2012). Individuals had multiple opportunities to see how their comments or observations were reported to safeguard the accuracy, relevance, and objectivity of the data (Simons, 2009). For participant validation, I sent the transcriptions of board member interviews to the interviewees to be reviewed for accuracy and meaning and they returned them to me. Member checking was arranged using a focus group where I obtained input from the board members after I had collected most of the data and had completed a preliminary analysis. In the focus group session involving eight board members, I shared a graphic and text depicting the preliminary results of the interviews, meeting observations, and archival document reviews. Modifications and enhancements were made during the session and the results were sent to the participants who reviewed, edited, and returned them to me.

**Saturation.** Data collection was terminated once I determined saturation had occurred. To prevent me from collecting redundant data once I began to see similar incidences of text being repeated, I used saturation as the indicator that no additional
data was being found to develop new classifications (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Two stages of data collection contributed to saturation in this case study. The first stage occurred when I interviewed every past and present board member and the results were shared at the focus group session. Very few new or separate ideas were added to the basic concepts developed by the initial categorization and the final themes presented at that stage of analysis were confirmed by the focus group. The second stage or incidence of saturation was after I coded the data collected and combined it into categories. Saturation was reached due to the redundancy of information and the void of new categories being required for me to code the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

**Reducing research bias.** Qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between the researcher and the values and expectations they bring to the study, but instead, with understanding how a researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study and avoiding the negative consequences (Maxwell, 2005). Merriam states, “it is expected that case researchers transfer to the readers some of their personal interpretations of relationships and events” (2009, p. 52). For me, this meant that although I have a solid foundation of prior knowledge about nonprofit boards and shared leadership, I recognized my own biases and made sure my research design anticipated and alleviated this concern.

Two methods were employed to reduce researcher bias. Spending time in the environment of SE was a way of immersing myself in the case and moderating my preconceptions (Willis, et al., 2007). In addition to the time I was onsite for board meetings, interviews, and document review, I toured the facility, shared a potluck lunch
provided by the employees, and attended a fundraising event. Increasing my understanding of the culture, workplace setting, and employee interactions helped me to interpret the board members’ explanations in that specific context.

The second strategy involved the study participants and aimed at increasing my sensitivity to the study questions and the possibility of negative interpretation by the board members and executive director. When requesting permission to study this board as its own case, I reassured the participants that it stemmed from my interest in studying the functioning of their board and was not initiated for purposes of critique. In conducting all phases of the data collection, I took into consideration and was respectful of the potential dynamics that may have existed in the relationships between the board members, the board president, and the executive director.

Transferability

Paralleling external validity, transferability is the extent to which the results can be conveyed or transmitted to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a case study, this research may be limited in its application to other social enterprise nonprofit boards because of the different missions, types of business and social programs.

Dependability

Paralleling reliability, dependability is the extent to which the same results can be obtained by independent investigators (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research protocol was one strategy used to provide fidelity to the case study, ensuring it was conducted ethically and according to the norms for acceptable and competent research practice (Yin, 2014). Another researcher could replicate this case study and follow the
procedures using same population group and expect comparable outcomes. In addition to the research protocol, a second strategy was the existence of a case study database. Its establishment and maintenance required a chain of evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions that an external observer would be able to follow (Yin, 2014). A third strategy to allow another investigator to reach the same conclusions was being aware of the internal and external pressures to finish this dissertation and the proclivity to ignore data that did not fit my conclusions. I was intentional about continuously revising conclusions to resolve data appearing as exceptions to the core analysis until an accounting had been made for all discrepancies.

**Confirmability**

Paralleling objectivity, confirmability is the extent to which my study results can be sanctioned or substantiated by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For me, a critical and challenging requirement to complete this case study was verifying that the findings stemmed from the characteristics of the research subjects and the context of the study rather than from personal biases, motivations, or perspectives. Peer debriefing was the strategy I used to test confirmability and it was difficult to find scholarly colleagues willing to serve as independent sources and review the coding categories, theme development, and analytical aspects of my study. The time commitment and attention to detail provided by another doctoral candidate granted me with authentic, rigorous feedback on the accuracy of data interpretation and the internal logic I used to make conclusions.
Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter described the two approaches I used concurrently in my qualitative research study of shared leadership in a nonprofit board of directors, case study method and Saldaña’s (2016) coding methods. Employing these two types of qualitative research methods allowed me to collect detailed data about a bounded sample population and use the constant comparison process for data analysis to discover patterns and emerging themes. I found value in using bar charts and cluster diagrams to illustrate frequencies of codes and relationships of the data.

The three phases of data collection and thematic analysis included important steps that I followed intensely. Phase 1 consisted of the fieldwork where archival documents were reviewed, semi-structured interviews of past and current board members were conducted, and board meetings were observed. The progressive steps I followed to complete my data analysis comprised Phase 2. I applied two cycles of coding, using two complete iterations to categorize and subcategorize the concepts. From the coding, I calculated the frequencies of occurrences to synthesize the data into the emerging themes. In Phase 3, I continuously refined the themes and checked back to constantly compare my data. To complete Phase 3, I created a visual representation of my theme development to achieve higher levels of conceptualization.

Chapter 4 presents the results of my data analysis, beginning with an overview of the case and the board members. The findings from the interviews, observations, focus group, and document review will be provided in the next chapter. In addition, I will connect these findings with my thematic analysis results.
Chapter 4 – Results of Data Analysis and Findings

Overview – Case Study Reporting Approach

The structure I used for this chapter was one described by Yin (2014) as an alternative to the standard case study report, called the linear-analytic approach. This approach was similar to one used to compose research reports, and I found it paralleled the organization of my dissertation. The linear-analytic approach I used started with the issue being studied and a review of the literature, and proceeded to the methods used, the data I collected and analyzed, and ended with my findings. This approach allowed me to incorporate the models I proposed when I began the case study. My goal was to provide descriptions of the board members and the setting of the meetings with a strong emphasis on analysis of the findings and explanation of my conclusions.

In this chapter, I present the results from my data analysis and compare what I learned to the models I proposed at the beginning of the study. A review of the data collection process and my triangulated sources of data will be provided followed by detailed explanations of what I learned from the interviews, observations, and focus group. Finally, I will compare the case study findings with the results of my thematic analysis.

Data Collection Process

For my case study, I used multiple sources to collect data to capture detailed and comprehensive information about SE’s board and its board members, and to provide a means of triangulating the data. I interviewed twelve past and present board members, observed three quarterly board meetings, conducted a focus group with board
members, and reviewed archival board documents including orientation materials, bylaws, and past board meeting minutes. The data were collected over a period of seven months, primarily onsite at SE and some of the interviews occurred at the board members’ workplaces. I used audio recordings of the interviews and focus group to capture the live data and documented notes manually for the observations and archival data review.

**Organization of Data Analysis Results**

The results I present in this portion of the chapter were produced from the process I followed for coding and analyzing the data, beginning with the Excel spreadsheets and ending with the categories and subcategories I identified and explained in Chapter 3. First, I set up the case by describing the SE board members. Second, I provide the results of the interviews in the order of the questions. I borrowed the formatting scheme from Yin, who suggests it as an alternative to traditional narrative to allow the “reader to do her or his own cross-case analysis by following the same question across all of the participants” (p. 185). Next, I transition to the board meeting observations beginning with a description of my route to the room at SE where the board meetings were held. The third section includes the results of the focus group where I describe the board members’ input to Model A. Fourth, I compare the key components of shared leadership and best practice from my literature review with the data I collected about SE. Finally, I intersect the results of these four sources with my thematic analysis results.
The Case – SE Board Members

Before I delve into the interview data, I describe the board members objectively in terms of their years of service, board positions held, previous board experience, and their personal knowledge, skills, and abilities. The twelve board members are represented by the abbreviation, BM, followed by a number. I add my own impressions at the end of each board member description, “My insight on ...,” to give my personal subjective insights. Following the board member descriptions, I present the responses to the interview questions using direct quotes to explain the results. I read and reread the interview responses to be able to weave together the concepts and themes that emerged for each question. This allowed me to see redundancies in what the board members said because a few of them were focused on specific concerns and repeated them in answering different questions. Looking for common themes also helped me to see where the board members’ answers were represented by the larger data set that included the other sources of data. The format I used is to list the question and explain the answers.

Board member descriptions. BM1 is a past board member who served on the board for 5 years. Three of those years she was president and the other years BM1 was active on subcommittees. Previous board experience was with a large community nonprofit where she was active in a women’s philanthropy initiative and where she served as the co-chairperson of the oversight council. She learned about SE from her service on the council. BM1 has a manufacturing background and is an expert in hiring, training, and process redesign. She used her expertise to help SE make the production floor more efficient.
My insight on BM1: An engineer-type who likes to have clear goals and direction. I think she was frustrated by the lack of role clarity as a board member and input to decisions as president. She said, “Obviously we all understood the ED had the ultimate responsibility for any decisions, but I think at least while I was on the board we sometimes struggled with our role and our authority.”

BM2 is one of the newest members of the board and hasn’t held any formal office yet. She served as president of an international school and was a board member for a state technology board. BM2 explained to me that she has started several companies and brings a spirit of entrepreneurship to SE. Her background is in communications and marketing and she helped with the recent fundraising event at SE.

My insight on BM2: One of the younger board members, I think she is willing to help in any area. She wants to understand the expectations of the board from SE’s leadership and how she can contribute. She made a statement, “I think there could be a perception that the competency of SE’s leadership and staff has been such that board members didn’t need to provide much direction and input because the organization was run effectively.”

BM3 is a current board member who joined 3 years ago and she has extensive experience serving on boards with high visibility. She served as chairperson for three large community boards. As a retail business owner, BM3 brings a business perspective to the board and a deep understanding of the day-to-day operations and stresses of running a business. She sees herself in an advisory capacity and uses her abilities to provide strategic direction and “keep up with the tempo of growth.” “A perfectionist who is impatient and a micromanager” is how BM3 describes her personality. She has
provided valuable input to SE about reporting financials and understanding employee benefits.

My insight on BM3: One of the more experienced board members, she is extremely knowledgeable and wanted to serve on this particular board before she retires. I think she is willing to give her input during board meetings but doesn't have additional time to devote to SE. Her suggestion was to, “Get somebody involved who’s younger and who’s really going to be an advocate for the business.”

BM4 is a past board member who was involved with SE in a fundraising capacity before she joined the board. She spent 4 years on the board and held no formal office, although she was asked to be president and declined. BM4 worked in the nonprofit field for many years before becoming a financial investor. She served as vice president for a children’s museum and chairperson of the search committee for the museum’s new ED. In addition, BM4 was the development director for a private school and a member of the steering committee for emerging practitioners in philanthropy. Her expertise is in nonprofits and nonprofit boards, fundraising, financial investing, leadership development, cross-cultural leadership, and the ED evaluation process. While serving on SE’s board, BM4 shared responsibility for creating a board orientation notebook and developing an evaluation process for the ED.

My insight on BM4: A woman who is returning to serve on the board a second time, she has a historical perspective on SE. Her extensive experience with nonprofits and boards will add to the current skill set of the board. She shared, “I have done a lot of leadership development work and not just developing board members, but developing leaders in different cultural communities.”
**BM5** is the current president and has been a board member for 6 years. She worked with SE previously in the finance area and business development. Her nonprofit experience includes being the chief financial officer for a national military museum and the CFO for a speech and hearing center. BM5 has also been volunteer member of the development committee for a city zoo and botanical gardens. Her skills and expertise involve finance, development and fundraising, case management in social programs, and she has the ability to modernize processes and look strategically at a business. She has helped SE in these areas and also created bylaws for the board.

My insight on BM5: She is a financial expert who is personable and respected by everyone. She has always lived out of state. She has a close relationship with the ED and is proud of SE’s accomplishments and likes leading an all-female board, “There are not many periods when you get to really be on something with a lot of other women involved in a business and leadership role and it’s been pretty captivating to watch how we work together because it is different; there’s not as much of a hierarchy.”

**BM6** was a small business owner when she joined the board 5 years ago as an at-large member. She moved to another state and has continued to be an active member of the board. Her volunteer experience included being the founder and president of two local business associations and also served as the secretary for a national association of business owners. As a private business owner, BM6 said she is “like-minded” and understand all facets of running an organization, including budget and new business development.

My insight on BM6: She has a strong connection to the community, the ED and SE and feels obligated to continue on the board even though she no longer resides locally.
Her knowledge as a small business owner is relevant and useful but there is a disconnect with the other board members because she attends in person once a year and participates by phone for the other three meetings. She shared, “I don’t feel like I’m doing enough but I don’t know what I should be doing.”

**BM7** is a current board member involved in work related to city government. She has served on the board for 3 years and is the current secretary. Her past board experience was local nonprofit boards related to housing and women’s health. BM7 has expertise in local government and said she brings “a high level of commitment and an understanding of local community connections and networking” to the SE board.

My insight on BM7: She is a person who doesn’t speak up much during the meetings and contributes more when she is one-on-one. Her understanding of the history of SE and commitment to its future was evident. She said her desire is for the board to focus on the years ahead, “How do we create this organization that exists outside of and beyond who birthed it?”

**BM8** is one of the founding board members and has worked at SE for over 20 years. She is a past treasurer of SE’s board and served on the board of a Latino education nonprofit. Her perspective as an employee, a member of SE’s leadership team, and as an immigrant community member has been invaluable.

My insight on BM8: She is a self-taught woman with the desire to help the employees reach their potential on the job and with their families. She shared, “I think everyone here has the capability to be better than you are in the organization and in the world.” She is completely committed to getting the board members to spend time with her and the employees to learn about the culture and hear what is important to them.
She is frustrated by the lack of involvement of other board members, “For me I think it’s going to take a couple hours every three months to come and share and have that connection, that real connection.” I found myself concentrating on really listening to her words to fully comprehend what she was saying because Spanish is her first language.

BM9 was the first president of SE’s board after the founders decided to formally establish a board and was a member for three years. She served on boards for nonprofits related to the environment, early childhood education, social enterprises and development of entrepreneurs. BM9 has done development work in immigrant and Latino communities and has a “rigorous commitment” to economic and social justice. She was an asset to SE for all these reasons and added that she is “a strategic thinker and a ballsy doer.”

My insight on BM9: She lives to help social enterprises, entrepreneurs and other startup ventures. She was opinionated about how the board and the ED worked together during her tenure, and at the same time, she understands what it means to be responsible for the organization and its employees in every sense. Her statement was, “The ED is over confident in areas where she shouldn’t be and is under confident because she’s never trusted that many other people to help her get stuff done because she’s had to do it all.”

BM10 is the founder of SE and the current ED. She served on the boards of a community development loan fund, women’s health, and was president of the board for a preschool.

My insight on BM10: She is a rare, extraordinary, remarkable woman who exudes passion and commitment for SE and the plight of immigrant women and other
social causes. She has difficulty letting go and believing the board wants to help in a big way, “At the end of the day you just have to do it and I guess it’s easier for me sometimes to do it myself.”

**BM11** is one of the newest board members who joined the board a year ago and was the chairperson for the recent fundraising event at SE. She did business development work for SE before joining the board and has a strong desire to be involved and engaged. Her expertise is project management and organizing events. BM11 has served on the board for a local charter school.

My insight on BM11: She is ready to become fully immersed in what needs to be done and she is smart, organized, and personable. Her biggest complaint was that she wants to know the board members and to have the board become a strong team to help SE. Her comment was, “I may be the only one feeling this way but the fact that we really don’t know each other that well and what each brings to the table, and what their expectations are makes a difference.” She is young and energetic and will continue to be an asset to the board. I think she is becoming more comfortable with speaking in the meetings and expressing her desires.

**BM12** is a past board member who was president for 3 of the 5 years she served. She has extensive experience working with entrepreneurs and said she has a “passion” for social enterprises. She is familiar with the mission and manufacturing focus of SE and has expertise in professional development in business and has the ability “to go deeper.” BM12 has served on the board for a Buddhist center.

My insight on BM12: She is also coming back on the board to serve a second time. She has a calm presence and seems to be a person who thinks through decisions
thoroughly. Her abilities to see the bigger picture and to strategize on how to achieve short term and long term goals are valuable. She said, “I think there is a real opportunity to serve SE significantly and the ED needs to have the current and future board address the succession plan because it’s significant for supporting the production side and programmatic side in terms of funding relationships and business relationships.”

**Interview Responses**

**Question #1 – What are the strengths of the SE board that help it function effectively and what could be improved?**

I wanted the first question to launch the interview using a positive approach. The board members described affirmative aspects of the board and were given an opportunity to identify improvements needed. Three strengths emerged along with a list of areas for improvement.

**Connection to SE.** Passion for SE, combined with being drawn to its mission and the ED, were high on the list of strengths. A board member explained the culture of the organization as, “everybody believes in the same thing and that’s powerful.” Board members said that the presence of staff members on the board brought “a connected feeling to work and meetings” and having every level of staff represented helped the board to make good decisions. They stated that people on the board really care about the organization, there wasn’t much conflict, and a common “willingness to do what’s needed” existed.

**Diversity.** Board members said there was “very good representation” across different skills and personal interests, and an equal valuing of experts and non-experts
on the board. “We have expertise in just about every area, and there’s no shortage of capability on the board.” Board discussions were said to be inclusive and thoughtful and transparency was evident on “everything from financials to relationships.” One board member stated a strength of the board is the “fiduciary responsibility” and the meetings were “very well organized with financial information in particular.”

**ED influence.** As mentioned earlier, the ED was seen as a strength by all board members. They are “inspired by her as she is the founder,” and “she is the reason people are there.” Her leadership was considered to be strong and “she has done a good job of getting skills to make good decisions.” The ED is “always willing to try whatever idea someone has,” and is “very good at transparency.” One board member talked about not being able to detect where the ED needs help. “What can the board do that the ED and team are struggling with and not able to fit in?”

**Improvements.** Many of the obstacles to sharing leadership identified by board members were also centered on the ED. They said they understood that being the founder of SE explained the “good and the not so good.” “She tends to overshadow people and has a really big personality.” In board meetings, members said that the “decision process would have maybe ended up somewhere else if the ED were not in room.” A board member said she determined that on a specific issue, the “ED is never going to give on that and I’m not going to fight that issue”. Other statements related to her control of the board and the appointment of new board members. “She has been leader of the board no matter who was president.” “She’s very protective of who we bring on board.”
Other ideas for ways to improve related to board structure and composition. A few board members said their orientation was minimal and they felt new board members needed specific introductory knowledge because they had, “no preconceived idea about board service for a social enterprise,” and “not having a formal orientation means that people don’t know how to engage effectively or consistently.”

Board members living out of state made the camaraderie difficult, however, the local board members recognized that the skills and talents offered by the nonlocal board members, “might be worth continuing to have them participate from a distance.” Related to distance and its impact on the board as a team, many board members mentioned their concerns about the frequency of meetings. “If you have quarterly meetings, you don’t have people involved because they don’t feel connected.” “Having quarterly meetings equates to BMs not knowing enough to contribute to decisions.” On the other hand, the ED “feels like people are volunteering and she can’t ask too much more of their time.”

**Question #2 – What does the term “shared leadership” mean to you and how do you think nonprofit boards could benefit from this style of leadership?**

I used this question to learn how board members defined shared leadership and transition into how it could be useful for boards, which is an integral part of my case study’s purpose.

**Culture of shared leadership.** An interesting discovery was that SE’s organizational culture promoted shared leadership and included the employees in, “trying to find ways do it better.” The operational and programmatic decision making included all levels within the social enterprise. It was a natural phenomenon to have
shared responsibility between the board and management as it related to specific tasks or aspects of the organization, such as solving problems in production or considering expansion of programs for employees and their families. Having employees on the board was mentioned as an example of shared leadership. When answering this question, a board member who is an employee said the loyalty to the organization is different for board members and “there’s room to evolve with the expectations and follow through.”

*Definitions.* Board members defined shared leadership as “having a group of people addressing a problem rather than single person,” or “it is represented by everyone taking part and not being the only one sitting on the board taking responsibility for something,” and “it means everybody feels a stake and some ownership whether you’re a person on the floor or board president.”

Other responses identified what board members thought were necessary for shared leadership to exist. “Sharing responsibility and tapping into everyone’s strengths,” or “it involves taking advantage of what everyone has to offer,” and “it means showing respect and listening.” Sometimes a board member would think about her own contributions and make a comment such as, “I don’t feel like I’m doing enough but don’t know what I should be doing.” “I feel like we probably would do a better job of sharing responsibilities if we structured our meetings a little differently” was a response connecting the content of the meetings with ability to share leadership.

*Commitment to shared leadership.* A long-tenured board member said the board had evolved into acting more like a board, and during the years where the economy was suffering, she saw shared leadership occurring. “We couldn’t have made
those difficult decisions without everybody in the room.” The ED also talked about how she struggled with sharing leadership with the board over the 25 years of SE’s existence. “Making a go of the business took all of my energy and I couldn’t realistically include them in the day to day decisions.” She stated that, “involvement is the key strength needed to share leadership,” and posed the question, “How do you get them involved in programs in an effective, low cost, easy to manage way?” The ED sounded frustrated when she talked about the current board. “When we try to do stuff to engage the board, I don’t know it’s what they want to do.” “I give them opportunities for shared leadership but they don’t run with it.” Answers related to how the board could benefit from shared leadership elicited responses such as the following:

- “There’s room for improvement in shared leadership.”
- “The board has potential for shared leadership but I really can’t say I see it now.”
- “Shared leadership absolutely has a place on this board, I would love to see more of it.”
- “To have shared leadership there also needs to be a high level of trust and integrity.”
- “Main struggle with shared leadership is we don’t think we have the right to tell ED she’s not going to do something. It’s not clear where that line was drawn.”

**Question #3 – Can you give me an example of a situation involving the board where you saw shared leadership occurring?**

My purpose for this question was to evoke responses focused on how shared leadership was demonstrated in SE’s board meetings, deliberations, and activities.
Answers to this question ranged from specific tasks completed with board members taking overall responsibility, to using a board member’s expertise to fill a need that SE staff had identified.

**Involvement in tasks.** As one board member aptly stated, “The board would get involved by taking responsibility for a piece of the pie which needs to be done.” Examples of tasks included interviewing for a significant programmatic hire, compiling a handbook to be used for orientation, and developing an evaluation process for the ED. Once a board member used her specific expertise to help with processes on the production floor at SE. She said during the years she served as president of the board, “We would identify a sub-team with expertise and take on that assignment.” Her viewpoint was that, “involvement is what SE needs from the board and is the best use of the board.”

**Process of sharing leadership.** I asked board members about the process for taking on these assignments and how the decisions were made in the board meetings. “We had discussions about what needed to be done to hire for a new position or organize for a fundraising event and someone suggested we have a team and the ED was very open and said let’s try a committee and see how that works.” I gathered from the interviews that the ED was willing to have projects led by board members, and at the same time, “the ED and staff are not relying on the board to just take care of it.” The ED said she “has been hesitant in the past to form committees because she feels the board members are really busy.”

**Examples of shared leadership.** Visibility and fundraising were two examples of shared leadership mentioned frequently by board members where they took on
responsibility of helping the ED to “get her voice into the larger community and raise awareness of SE.” A few board members viewed their role as filling a gap in the ED’s personal skills and interests. Acknowledging that the “ED’s personality is not to waste time,” and the “ED doesn’t see value in building relationships for the sake of networking” are two examples. As a result, a board member said, “They were involved in going after grants or networking with people in the community for resources or giving input on fundraising.” Others said that only a few board members took advantage of “opportunities where we could support in terms of visibility and recognition.” “A lot of directors have a harder time with high visibility and working on that for SE.”

A past president of the board answered this question from a different perspective. During her tenure she said, “We had to make some really difficult decisions about hiring, about staff and programs, and I saw shared leadership come into play.” “The ED was good about shared leadership and servant leadership, and she would ask if the idea we were discussing matched our vision.” A past board member remembered having great discussions. “We were able to be very open and direct with each other and disagree, which is healthy.” She said the ED was willing to hear other viewpoints and “there was very respectful challenging of some of her decisions.” More recent input on board discussions varied from “It’s not a board where we’re really kind of supervising the ED,” and “From a board perspective, it isn’t our decision,” to “The ED was really willing to listen to the business side of expanding or changing or relocating.”
Question #4 – If you think of the board as a team, what skills or traits do board members need to have to share the leadership responsibility?

The essence of my case study research centered around the answers to this question. The responses of the board members had wide boundaries because they talked about a range of subjects that I am categorizing for ease of understanding. The first subject included specific traits, “We need introverts and extroverts,” and skills, “A good skill to have on the board is a business owner and somebody who’s in the education field for the programs.” Next, were the skills related to board capital such as, “building relationships with community organizations with crossover missions,” “We need people who network very well and are leaders in community,” or “We need someone who’s connected in the community, somebody who can consistently represent SE,” and “Having policy connections is important for shared leadership and connections to the business community.”

*Board composition.* Board composition was the second category of skills and traits, and the responses included diversity and balance in board members:

- “Diversity is always good in a board because it brings in those different ideas.”
- “We’ve mostly always had women on the board and we always did know how to share leadership.”
- “Men would be very intimidating to some women who work at SE and come to board meetings.”
- “We need additional diversity on our board like gender, racial, cultural.”
- “You find the person who is ideal but do they have time and energy and money?”
• “We need to balance the production with program side and have the right amount of operations and planning people.”
• “ED needs to balance skill sets with just being a friend of SE.”

**ED and board member selection.** The point of the discussion regarding the ED’s selection of new board members leads into the third category of the skills and traits needed to share leadership. I heard comments including, “The ED thinks strategically about invitations she makes to join the board if she sees it could benefit SE,” and “The ED screens potential board members although we do get to vote.” Another board member’s statement, “We need to be careful about adding new board members to make sure they really fit into this great culture,” was a positive reflection about the board experience, as was “There are no personality conflicts. Everybody is respectful, gets along and is real committed.”

**Commitment.** The fourth category of what is needed to share leadership included declarations made by board members about commitment as a trait necessary to share leadership that ranged from positive to negative. “Board members are committed and passionate about SE” was affirmative. “Maybe there wasn’t an obvious role for them or an obvious fit and the commitment wasn’t there” was neutral, and “Board members don’t spend enough time in the organization and really aren’t committed” was the opposite view of board member commitment. Also included in this subject area is a comment about how to increase board involvement, “We need to have recognition of what it is people bring to the board.”
Question #4, Part 2 – What about the team as a whole?

The second part of this interview question related to the skills and traits the board members thought the board needed to function as a team. One board member said, “When you get a bunch of leaders in the room and you don’t have the ability to work as a team, that can be difficult.” Continuity of the board members was mentioned as a trait that helped the board to be a team, along with having a board president who is “a strong leader with her own unique skill set.”

Another skill and trait was the ability to communicate opinions and ideas. I heard statements such as, “I think we are open to conflict and have constructive confrontations” and “We welcome different thoughts and ideas.” A board member talked about trust being important for the board to be a team, “We can’t feel intimidated or afraid on any level during the board meetings and can speak our minds.” The board president offered similar thoughts on the traits necessary for the board to act as a team by saying, “in order to have it, there needs to be a high level of trust and integrity.”

Board members also brought up meeting frequency and physical presence as being reasons the board struggled to function as a team. “There is very little time that we come together as a board,” “We could benefit from meeting more frequently,” and “the person on the phone can engage, but not like when they’re in the room” are three examples of the concerns expressed.

Social enterprise and the team. I found important responses to this question about the necessary skills and traits for the board to act as a team correlated with being a social enterprise. A few board members said they did not possess much knowledge about social enterprises and how they differ from other types of nonprofits. Having
board members on the team who were, “good at evaluating the cost and benefit of growth and change,” was an important skill for a social enterprise board. The statement, “We have to be able to accept a little more risk associated with any recommendation we make, otherwise we stifle the organization,” is a trait unique to social enterprise boards (Mason & Royce, 2007).

A past board member said that during her years of service, people on the board recognized that the ED was “taking on the bulk of everything and they didn’t want that, they wanted to help her and to help SE.” She said board members “should understand they do not have the responsibility of running the day to day operation of SE, and their input, questions, comments should be made with that in mind.” The ED’s perspective is a succinct final statement for this question: “The management team should be able to rely on the board for input and different perspectives to best utilize their knowledge.”

**Question #5 – Is there anything about SE’s environment that helps or hinders the board’s ability to share leadership?**

The purpose of this question was to help me understand what aids or blocks the board member’s ability to share leadership. SE’s culture, reliance on the ED, composition of the board, and the board meetings were the general categories for the responses to this question. These same subjects had been brought up in previous questions, and I began to see some themes developing.

**SE’s culture.** When board members spoke about the culture, they described SE’s environment as “the quiet culture of the Mexican ladies.” One board member said she “felt a little bit of a disconnect culturally and class-wise from not speaking Spanish.”
Having staff included in the board meetings was mentioned again as a positive trait of shared leadership within the board. “Employee presence on the board is a good idea” and “I feel connected and engaged with reality by having staff in the meetings” are two examples. Another viewpoint was offered when a different board member answered this question. She said, “staff members tend to be quiet and that’s a cultural issue,” and “Board members who are leaders have very strong opinions, and staff would hesitate to contribute.”

**Connecting board members to SE’s culture.** A few board members who are SE staff and the ED made statements about the board being hindered by the lack of connection to SE’s environment. They “want each board member to know more about what we do here, otherwise it is a limitation not to see the work we do.” Suggestions made were for board members to “take a couple hours and come and share and have real connection,” and “have relationships with the people in the organization, not just come to meetings every three months.” The ED explained her way of getting board members to be more familiar with SE’s culture and its employees, “Board members are required to hang out with me at SE and see programs, go to a workshop - some people never make that happen and it’s important.” One board member said she felt connected, “Having employees on the board shows me more of how the day-to-day business goes.”

**Reliance on the ED.** Reliance on the ED is how I described a separate subject area the board members talked about related to SE’s environment and what helps or hinders shared leadership. There’s a perception that the competency of SE’s leadership
and staff is translated by board members to mean the board does not need to provide much direction and input:

- “The ED’s leadership has made the organization thrive.”
- “The ED is always focused on the business and impact on employees and programs.”
- “If she ever left, do we have a strong enough structure to go forward?”
- “What are we here for, what’s our real purpose?”
- “It’s easier for ED to do it herself than try to recruit a board member to do it.”
- “We would not push ED to do that because she so valuable to organization.”

**Composition of the board.** Other hindrances or impediments created by environment were explained by using examples related to the composition of the board. The board president lives in another state. She attends the quarterly meetings in person and spends at least one extra day at SE while she is there. Another board member who was a local small business owner before she moved out of state has remained on the board. The fact that two board members live out of state prompted comments such as, “It’s a little troublesome to have our board president living out of town. It makes it hard to do shared leadership.” A different board member also weighed in on the president’s residence, “It makes communication difficult but I wouldn’t want her to leave the board.” The other board member calls in for the meetings and said, “Being on the phone for a meeting is pretty hard to do for three hours.” The composition of the board being all female was seen as a limitation of the environment by a few board members, “SE would be more competitive if men were on the board.”
**Board meetings.** The frequency and content of the board meetings was talked about in the interviews. I heard generally negative statements about the frequency such as, “We meet four times a year. I’m not sure that’s enough,” “There’s too much to get through at board meetings,” and “It bothers me that we meet once a quarter.” The ED shared their sentiments, “We need to meet more often which seems impossible.” When I asked a board member if this topic had been brought up in a board meeting, she said that “conversations with ED around meeting more frequently haven’t been positive.” Board members sounded willing to meet more often, especially as a means to build their relationships. “I have very limited visibility with board members, we only get together four times a year,” “We don’t have regular committees to pull us together in between meetings so it’s hard to know one another” are good examples. A newer board member made a statement that relates to building cohesion in the board as a team, “I don’t really know the other board members well enough to say I have a high level of trust yet.”

Environment was interpreted by some board members as being the quarterly meetings themselves and included the atmosphere, camaraderie, and process of discussing the business of SE. They said the meetings were, “very transparent, we have a very well-working board.” The tone was expressed as, “opinions came out, decisions were made and everybody was on board.” “A balance between people who have passion and ones who have run businesses” is how one board member described the discussions, and “It’s been pretty captivating to watch how we work together because there’s not as much of a hierarchy,” was another board member’s view of the process.
A board member who is a business owner said she helps the process and contributes to the discussions by “challenging and supporting the ED by being supportive and responsive to the business.” The board president made a similar statement, “It’s important for the board to see where we stand on the financial health side.”

**Question #6 – What would be hard for an outsider like me to understand about what it means to be a member of SE’s board?**

I asked this question because I wanted to know what I might be missing after hearing twelve boards members talk about their experiences, and from observing the board meetings. Answers ranged from the history of SE and its mission being hard for an outsider to understand about being on the board, to the idea that board involvement is much more than the meetings. The fact that as a social enterprise, SE is a complicated organization was also identified as not easily understood by an outsider. Again, I heard some answers that were repeats of information conveyed in earlier questions which indicated to me that the board member considered those issues to be very important.

**History and mission of SE.** Past board members were the first ones to say, “Reading the mission and vision is not enough, you have to see it with your own eyes,” “New board members don’t have the history which might make it a little difficult, although hearing about the growth is useful to have some perspective.” Past and current board members made comments about the balance that exists between the social and economic missions of SE. “One mission can’t exist without other mission, aspects of both make different people more excited or engaged,” was a good representation of the general ideology. More specifically about the first social program
established at SE, a longstanding board member said, “We wanted women to be able to work and see their children, that’s why we started daycare.”

**Board involvement.** The varying levels of commitment and involvement were represented in various statements. “Two or three people usually did all the work when I was on board,” was a past board president’s input about what outsiders might not have known during the years she served. One board member who is also SE staff said attending meetings is not enough for board members to know SE. “How can a member of board be involved by just hearing it from the ED?” “A solution is to make sure every board member is on a committee,” was her remedy. When board members talked about meetings being their only source of information and interaction I heard, “Four times a year and you only know a few board members,” “New board members have a hard time figuring out what their role is from the meetings,” and “It’s hard that we are not doing more as a group.” Other input from board members about being an outsider at meetings was, “In the board meetings, it is hard to understand who are the board members and who are staff,” and “There’s a lot to digest in a three-to-four-hour board meeting.”

**Social enterprise implications.** As a social enterprise, SE is a complex organization, and a board member who had served on numerous boards during her career made three distinct observations, “It’s a very different kind of board than most,” “It’s hard to understand all of the moving parts of SE,” and “Most nonprofit budgets are completely data driven (by the number of people served) and SE’s is actually real numbers.” A board member who joined the board recently said, “The board is asked to deal with the business without really knowing what goes on.” The ED and a staff board
member had their own views on the business emphasis in the meetings and the board’s involvement:

- “Hearing reports on production and programs is unique to social enterprises.”
- “Board meetings are much more focused on the numbers because SE is a business.”
- “Business decisions have to be made outside of the meetings because they happen daily.”
- “Board doesn’t know what our business looks like.”
- “Board doesn’t have big policy decisions to make.”
- “A board can only be viable as long as there are new ideas coming in.”

**ED’s devotion to SE.** The last topic included in the responses about what would be hard for an outsider to understand about being on SE’s board is the ED and her commitment to the success of this social enterprise, and most of all, its employees. “The ED has listened and responded to these women at SE for the last 25 years,” and “The ED is a servant leader,” were two of the most poignant comments. A past board president described a time when SE was suffering from the economic recession and the ED made decisions that needed to be shared with the board. The board president said, “We had to have a conversation about letting the board know when the ED makes a personal decision to finance SE’s shortfalls in order to make payroll.” She added, “The ED was so humble she didn’t want to tell board, but it was necessary for transparency and good governance.” The current board president said, “As the founder ED, she needs to see this has to be sustainable beyond the current leadership.” These final comments
summarized the general feelings I heard from the board members. “What you don’t see from the outside is the connection to all of these women doing really awesome things,” and “Once you’ve been on the board, if you leave, something will truly be missing from your life.”

Question #7 – Is there anything else you would like to tell me, or any questions you were expecting that I haven’t asked?

The last interview question was open-ended to allow the board members to say what had not been said or explain what they had prepared as answers to questions not asked. Their responses ranged from giving me more information about community involvement, to reflections on how the board has evolved over the years, and some final thoughts about what it means to serve on SE’s board.

**Involvement in community.** Board members said they “take their responsibility seriously and have mutual respect and would like to be more effectively involved.” They saw many opportunities to, “get the board more connected and engaged in this community.” One newer board member said, “I’m not doing my job given the fact so many people don’t know about SE.” They recognized that “Going to events or meetings to spread the word is not ED’s favorite thing” and they saw opportunities to “do more in terms of getting outside recognition for amazing work SE does.” A long-term board member who works in city government concurred with “getting more involved at the local government level to share great work of SE.” However, her experience on the board gave her the idea that “We don’t get involved in those kinds of external causes, and I think it has to do with ED and board president not living here.”
Board evolution. The board has witnessed many changes in the organization, and more specifically, transitions of the board as it has evolved from being composed of three of SE’s founders to the present board of directors. Past board presidents shared some memories. “I saw the board move into a more professional board whereas for years the board existed because of the founders.” “During those years, we did more in quarterly meetings and it was dynamic and sometimes difficult,” and “In those years we worried about the ED leaving and discussed what we needed in order for the SE to get stronger and not fail.” Changes in the board’s roles and responsibilities were noted, “The ED had ultimate responsibility for decisions and we struggled with our role and authority.” Other comments included, “The board cannot change too rapidly,” and “Have to make change methodically to take everybody along.” One of the past presidents shared, “in the past, the ED said this is not a time to grow our board.”

The current board president has served on the board for six years and said she has seen “a higher level of governance each time we grow a little more in order to have proper structure.” One of her goals is “to have a board with a little more intention, a little more structure.” She also said the board’s “biggest risk is revenue stream, the dependency on one contract,” referring to the business or production side of being a social enterprise. Another challenging dynamic for her is the succession plan for the ED and within the board. “How do we create this organization outside of and beyond who birthed it?” was how she expressed her concern. The ED shared her thoughts about her worries for the board in answering this final question. “The board doesn’t look at strategic planning a year out or three years out or five years out,” and “I’m not sure what matters to the board, I just know there’s not enough people pitching in.”
**Final thoughts.** The last thoughts from board members were contemplative of their experiences with SE. My favorite came from the board president, “Once you’ve been on the SE board, if you leave I think something will truly be missing from your life. You’ll probably know exactly what it is and that’s sort of the connection to all of these women doing these really awesome things.” Other memorable statements included, “I get a lot of satisfaction from being on the board,” “We’re not a group of best friends who are there to rubber stamp,” “I believe there is a lot of trust between board members and the ED,” “Based on other boards, SE is very well run organization,” and “I love the board and would love to see SE succeed.” Those positive comments are the perfect end to twelve interviews and a nice transition to my board observation experiences.

**Board Meetings - Environment of the Case**

SE is located on a major street near downtown in a commercial building. The footprint that includes the building, loading dock, childcare areas and parking lot, is as wide as a city block. The main entrance is on the opposite side of the busy street and is set back from the side street with the parking area in between. The front door is a solid steel door with a window that is covered. A doorbell is located on the wall next to the door and a small handwritten sign instructs visitors to ring the bell because the door is usually locked.

When I arrived for board meetings or to read the archival documents, I rang the bell and was welcomed by one of the employees or the office manager. Once inside, I was in an open kitchen area with long tables where I saw lunchboxes and lunch sacks sitting. I walked past the tables and followed a short, wide hallway past the offices where the office manager and the ED were located. I noticed a large metal device that
looked like an alarm and learned it was the bell for announcing breaks, when it suddenly rang loudly. Women came into the kitchen area, most were speaking Spanish and the conversations sounded lively. If I wandered into the large production rooms, I saw long, wide tables where packaging and other assembly was performed. The other large room was the sewing area, and it was filled with small tables where sewing machines were being used by women who were constructing garments, bags, and numerous other items, depending on the day. The general feel of the building was similar to being in a warehouse.

After I passed the offices, I turned the corner and found the door to a large, multi-purpose room used for meetings, gatherings, fundraising events, and many other purposes. At one end of the room, a large white board covered the purple wall, and on the opposite side of the room, I saw a table covered with a tablecloth, a few homemade dishes, and a big bowl of tortilla chips. Above the table were long orange shelves attached to the orange wall. Framed photos lined the shelves with images of people and celebratory gatherings that represented the history of SE. The other two sides of the room were long; the one facing the busy street was dark pink and had high windows and a steel and glass door that was locked and used infrequently as an entrance. The other long wall was yellow and had four large (five feet by three feet), brightly colored banners with images of SE’s programs and people artistically displayed. They were very attractive, and I learned one of the employees designed them.

As board members arrived, they visited with one another and helped themselves to the food that had been prepared by the office manager. The tables where the board members and staff would be seated were positioned in a U-shape with a table in the
middle that had an old-looking projector with small objects underneath to level it. During the meeting, the ED and other staff members jiggled the cords to keep the projector working. The sewing room was on the other side of the wall with the food and photos, and a whirring sound could be heard from time to time. The ED always sat at the top end of the U on the street side of the room, and the president of the board usually sat at the bottom of the U in one corner. Board members sat in different seats at each meeting I attended, and the staff sat at the table if there was room, or close to the wall with the banners if there was no space at the table. The same room was used for the focus group. For that session, I asked to move the tables together because we had a smaller group and I wanted the tape recorders to pick up all voices.

**Board Meetings – Observations**

I attended three quarterly board meetings and sat at the table if there was room or in a chair close to the wall if there was no space at the table. At least half of the women present in every meeting were employees of SE, either in a leadership role or program staff. Each three-hour meeting had a similar agenda covering business and production first, program reports second, and any general board matters filled up the remainder of the time.

The financial reports were presented by the finance director using the projector to display the information and additional explanation was given by the ED. Questions were responded to by the ED even though the finance director was giving the report. Minimal input or remarks were made by the board members, with the exception of the board member who is a business owner. In one of the meetings, she shared knowledge and expertise about budgets and ratios and then asked a question, “Are you comfortable
with the status of income?” She offered a suggestion of producing a seasonal financial status with historical data to show trends that was well received by the ED who responded, “Make us better.” In another meeting, the same board member offered a suggestion for considering a bonus to be paid to employees instead of a wage adjustment. She explained to the board the difference between wage adjustment and a raise and I saw heads nodding around the table, indicating either agreement or comprehension of the information. The ED’s gave her input on why it would not work and the discussion ended.

The board president had a strong financial background and would contribute to the conversation by asking questions such as, “What are other risks we should be aware of besides the revenue budget?” During the discussion about increases to wages, she talked about employee benefits as another source of increasing the value of working at SE. She stated the purpose of a social enterprise is to employ, educate, and “lift the boat” for employees. She added, “For me, the exciting part is what it does for the individual, it’s an investment.” She asked for volunteers to evaluate employee benefits and determined expertise was needed outside of the board because no one had skills in that specific area. A board member offered her organization’s human resources director as a source of information to guide the board.

The board members typically perked up when the agenda moved on to programs. Reports were made by the lead staff members for each program. The ED always complimented the staff after the reports were completed. At one of the meetings, the staff member said the goals of the program had been exceeded and expressed concern about having the resources to meet the higher demand, “We are
looking at different ways to fill the gap in funding.” The ED talked to the board members about “centering on the values of SE” and that “accountability is the same for production and programs.” Positive feedback about the staff capabilities was shared by the board president, “We can have a high confidence level in SE’s financial performance which in turn allows the programs to expand.” The staff members would exit the room once they were finished.

What was discussed in the last part of the agenda at every meeting related to “board business” and varied from increasing SE’s visibility in the community, to reporting the results of a fundraising event, or recruiting new board members. The visibility discussion got started when a board member expressed her desire to raise the profile of SE within the community, “In 22 years here, I have never seen us talk about SE like this.” She raised her hand in the air to demonstrate what she meant by “like this.” The board president expressed concern about the fact she does not reside locally and “can’t participate in making that happen.” No comments or feedback were made by the board members.

The results of a fundraising event were reported by a newer board member who had taken on the responsibility to organize and execute the event. She said, “It was a huge amount of work by a few people.” One of the few board members who had attended stated it was “a huge success.” The ED expressed her appreciation for the work done by the board member. “She just ran with it and made it happen.” Board member recruitment was discussed at two of the meetings. At the first meeting, the ED reviewed the terms of the current board members and if they were present, the board member would confirm her commitment to completing the term. One of the board
members said she would like to see more diversity in board membership and asked if the ED would consider a male candidate for the board. She replied, “We tried that once and it wasn’t a good fit.” The ED explained that she is focused on finding people with knowledge of SE who are active in the local community. She said, “Raising the profile of SE can be impacted by who we recruit.” The ED asked for names to be submitted from board members and there was no response or input from the board members on this topic. The second meeting had a different outcome when the subject of board membership was discussed. The board president asked for a volunteer to lead a workgroup tasked with looking at the board’s composition and the objectives for board member recruitment. A board member who has served on many community boards agreed to lead the group.

The additional observations I made related to the process of the board meetings. I noticed everyone paid attention to the presenters or the board members who spoke during the meetings. At every meeting, I would look around the room periodically to see if anyone was looking at a computer or a cell phone, and I did not witness either one happening. Board members would raise their hand if they wanted to ask a question, comment on a presentation, or add to the discussions. At one of the meetings, the ED walked around the room during the staff presentations. She would adjust the slides when some else was speaking and I could tell it was distracting because I saw board members turn away from the person speaking and look at the screen. At the same meeting, when a board member was in the middle of asking a question, the ED interrupted her before she was finished. My final observation about the process of the
board meetings is that overall, the three hours were used efficiently and the meetings always ended on time.

**Focus Group Results**

Before I observed the third board meeting, I was able to convene a focus group with board members who could come earlier on that same day. To set the stage for the focus group results, I will convey the information I shared with the eight participants who were past and present board members. I explained the one-hour session would be devoted to examining the model I developed and, more importantly, reviewing the findings from the data collected. The board members had received this information prior to agreeing to participate. I told them the audio recording would begin once the introductions were completed and their names would not be used in transcribing the recordings. We went around the table and made introductions. One board member was out of town and participated on a speaker phone.

Next, I explained the purpose of the focus group was to help me refine the data I collected from the interviews, observations, and document review. I told the group that I would consider the session successful if the following checklist was completed.

1. We have an inclusive model and your lists of modifications or additions have been exhausted.
2. You believe your input has been heard and accurately represented.
3. Everyone is able to participate in the discussion and provide feedback on the findings.
Before I began the discussion, I explained the background of my study and purpose of the focus group to the board members.

1. The primary research question that I’m answering is what are the individual and team characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the development of shared leadership in a social enterprise board?

2. On the screen, I projected the SL Model (Figure 4.1) and explained we would discuss each of the five key components.

3. For each of components, I summarized what I learned from the interviews and other data I had collected.

4. Board members were encouraged to openly discuss each component and share their thoughts and ideas.
**Common goals and values.** The first key component is common goals and values. I explained that in the interviews, I heard board members say they are committed to SE’s mission, they are very passionate about SE, they value and respect the transparency of the organization’s leadership, and they benefit from having staff on the board and in the meetings. They said they are very interested in sustaining the success that SE has had for many years, and want to help achieve its goals but weren’t sure how. I also heard that they are willing to be active participants and expect to be accountable for specific responsibilities. Then I asked the focus group, “What’s not on this list?”

The board members made comments that they agreed about being strongly committed to SE’s mission to provide training and jobs for immigrant women. The common values they talked about were the transparency of SE’s leadership and having staff on the board. One of the board members said that, “traditionally, board responsibilities are financial sustainability and leadership. We need to determine what those mean for SE.”

Related to common goals, the first answer I heard included three statements, “I don’t see us having a specific goal. Your model rings more true to our values and the passion around it. I don’t see a goal that we hope to accomplish a specific something by a certain period of time.” A different board member gave her view of the board having goals, “This isn’t a board that has a goal that one day we’ll reach our goal and say we don’t need to exist anymore; we’ve reached our goal.” Another board member said, “What is the common goal?” “We need to better articulate the goals, especially as they relate to the board.”
Some of the ideas that were voiced included the following:

- “It’s important to have long and short term goals for SE.”
- “We should be financially sustainable and make a surplus to expand programming.”
- “I’d like to see expansion of the program so that we can impact more people including employees and members of the community.”
- “There is no real end goal, the main goal is continuing.”
- “How can we create measurable outcomes from these goals?”
- “Does this currently exist at the program director level?”

The board members talked about how they could build consensus around common goals. They wanted to become familiar with SE’s strategic plan because most of them had no knowledge about it. Overall, the message I heard was they agree that having common goals and values is important. They believed values were shared and could name them, but the goals were unclear. “So if we’re talking about common goals for our board, they need to be common goals as stated from a board level, not the day to day operating goals for SE.”

**Expertise of board members.** We moved on to the second component necessary to share leadership in the SE board, the expertise of board members. The board members said yes, they believe the board needs a variety of people, skills and expertise. They were not fully aware of other members’ abilities (except employees because they heard them present in the board meetings). “I’d like to learn what talents
are present with the board members, but we don’t have time to get to know one another.”

**Board matrix.** They talked about initiating a board matrix to capture skills and expertise as well as specific interests for being on the board. One board member said, “I would add, on the other side, what is the individual’s interest in serving on the board. Someone might want to be engaged in resource development and somebody else might want to be more engaged in just the business plan or the long-term strategy.” The board member on the phone said, “We talked about this same subject at our retreat last year and the board members took turns talking about all of it, but we never made a matrix.” Another board member said, “We can better recruit new board members based on the gaps, if we know what they are.” The ED listed the information she’d like to know:

- Geographic location
- Talents
- Expertise/background
- Motivations and interests
- Availability (quantity)
- Type of availability

When I asked the board member on the phone to share her thoughts, she said the board had a retreat at the end of 2015 and took an inventory of everyone’s strengths, skills and willingness to help in specific areas. “The board also discussed very specific goals and a board member helped spearhead some of these around visibility.”
“We need to come back around again and have the energy to do this, maybe on a yearly basis.” "There were some pretty concrete goals and expectations as well. It just seems like it’s in alignment with the board.”

**Accountability.** The board president finished the conversation by saying, “An annual check in around board attributes is great, but I’m also hearing that returning to the board’s goals and strategic plan on a periodic basis would be uniting, beneficial. We need a governance checklist. Isn’t that my responsibility?” What I learned from the interviews and the focus group discussion is that in the past, the board had worked on understanding the skills and areas of interests of the board members, but nothing was documented, and no follow up occurred. As a result, the current board, including the ED, is not aware of the expertise or skills each person possesses, and the president’s remarks about the bigger picture tells me this is an important component for sharing leadership.

**Board member traits.** Moving on to the next oval on the diagram, I told the focus group members that this next section was more about them as individuals on the board. This was one of the interview questions, and I had heard each of them tell me what are good traits to have in order for leadership to be shared. The responses I shared on the screen included trust, integrity, diversity in ideas brought to the board, becoming more involved when situations dictate, and communicating clearly. They also liked having varied personalities, both introverts and extroverts, a having board members with a low need for power, who are always willing to listen to others and be influenced. I added that other traits they mentioned as being important were a high level of integrity and trustworthiness.
Visibility. The first comment offered was about being an extrovert, "I consider myself to be a spokesperson for SE. At every cocktail party I go to, I'm talking about SE and really making sure the community knows, so I feel like the extroverts really need to help spread that word." This was followed by, "We talk a lot about visibility and I think whether it's introvert or extrovert or skills, board members should have SE as one of their priorities wherever they go because we can only grow visibility through talking about SE with our connections." That last statement led to one that steered the conversation in a completely different direction, “I think it would be valuable to have a clear understanding of what the ED wants from this board and specifically from board members. I probably know in general, but once again, we keep reviewing that who we are today is not who we were a year ago and it's not what we want to be next year.” I thought this board member offered valuable insight about linking board composition to the overall roles and expectations of the board. She made an important point about setting long term goals and identifying what is the board's responsibility and what are the expectations of board members.

Involvement. Another board member shared her thoughts, “What's important on the board is that people don't just look at this is the expertise that can provide to the board because they need to do more than provide just their little bit of expertise. It's that kind of willingness to do more than just what you're good at to broaden themselves.” Her statement evoked head nods and sounds of agreement around the table. They were ready to move on to the next component. Overall, I heard them say board members are more than a set of skills – they are here for the right reasons and
are willing to go above and beyond their defined “role” or expertise they have outside of the board.

**Interdependent relationships.** To begin the discussion about this component, I told the board members I was interested in learning how they thought the board worked together as a team and I reviewed what they told me in the interviews:

- “You want to have closer ties and build stronger connections.”
- “You feel the board operates in an atmosphere of trust but you think it could be brought out more.”
- “You want to learn about other board members, their strengths and weaknesses.”
- “Some of the current board members expressed concern about the physical proximity of board members that don’t live here. They feel it inhibits full engagement on the board.”

**Location of board members.** I asked the board member on the phone to begin the discussion, and she made statements related to living out of state, “I’m in love with SE, but here I am, and I can talk all I want about it here and I do, but it’s going to have a different impact if you’re local. I’m happy to be on the board, but I do think some of the goals of visibility and awareness mean that it just makes sense to have as many local people as possible.” The ED gave her input about having out of state board members but her preference wasn’t clear, “This doesn’t matter to me as much as maybe it does to other people. Some of the stuff that I need as an ED I can deal with specific board members from afar, it doesn’t really matter that I can see them or not. It does matter
that they come to more board meetings than not; I get that.” The board president responded by saying, “I think where people live isn’t the issue. We need to do more to create opportunities for the board to be together and understand each other, because at the meetings, no matter if you’re out of town or in town, I don’t think that happens.”

**Building relationships.** I thought the board president’s comment was insightful, and it elicited comments from other board members, “I think what would really help build cohesiveness is to know more about each other on a personal level.” Another person said she agreed and added, “I’m sitting next to a founding board member, and I know nothing about her because we never do that.”

The last comment in this section related to the time required of SE board members, “Of all the boards I’ve ever been on in my life this is actually one of the least time consuming boards I’ve ever been on, so I think that there’s room to add that in because it’s not a board that takes incredible amounts of our time.”

**Team processes.** I explained to the group that when I used the term, team processes, I was talking about how the board members work as a team, either in the meetings or in committees. I added that I hadn’t collected as much input from the interviews on this question, although I did witness group interactions in the board meetings I had observed. I shared that what I have noticed is the board members offer their opinions in the meetings, and when work needs to be done that involves the board, I see the ED or board president asking individuals for help. I said that I understand the board doesn’t have formal committees and asked them to talk about how the board process looks to them.
**How work gets done.** The first board member to speak talked about how work gets done, “There’s a group norm of how we handle normal business of the ED kind of calling on a different member of the board and then working with one person or maybe there will be two of us, but it’s not often.” Another board member added, “Maybe two board members will go off and work on something, but it’s not often more than that and I think in part it’s the most direct and perceived efficient way to do it, right?” The board president said, “We’ve thought about forming committees, but it didn’t really seem we were large enough to do that; that was almost taking up time that we needed to use elsewhere.”

**Trust.** The comments continued related to what gets discussed in board meetings. A board member made a statement that referred to having staff in the meetings and hearing about the work they do. She said, “I think a lot of times there isn’t a lot of discussion, but it’s not because people feel they can’t speak up. It’s because there’s a level of trust that these people really know what they’re doing, and we might ask them questions about it, but we’re not going to say no because it’s that level of our belief in the staff. It also goes to what was said early on; what is our job?” The response given by a past board member was poignant, “There’s a lot of trust, and that’s deserved, but I think it also becomes very important for the board to at least occasionally step up to supporting a visionary kind of examination and discussion, so that we don’t get complacent and take for granted the ongoing success, and miss an opportunity to grow and evolve and be more of a leader at a sector level and on a national level.”

**Social enterprise implications.** The conversation had moved from what the board currently discusses to what the board should be discussing. Next, a board
member posed the question, “What’s the difference between a regular nonprofit and the board of a social enterprise?” “I could make up some stuff but I really believe that would be a valuable conversation to have.” The ED responded, “That’s a conversation we will have at our April meeting.”

**Conclusion of focus group.** At this point, I looked at the clock and saw we were running out of time. I asked if anyone else wanted to comment on the board process, decision-making, or what gets discussed at board meetings. One of the new board members who had been responsible for organizing the major fundraiser last year shared how she felt. She said, “As a board member, I felt like I was stepping on toes of other board members when I asked them for help, and it never really felt completely comfortable to me.” Her statement didn’t get any response from the rest of the group which signaled to me I should conclude the session. I asked if anyone else wanted to add anything to this part or to any of the sections we talked about previously. Hearing and seeing no one respond, I thanked the group and we adjourned.

**Case Study Findings and Thematic Analysis Results**

As I discussed in the previous sections, my case study report included the results of my data analysis and findings derived from the document review, interview responses, board meeting observations, and focus group results. During the data analysis, once I completed the data reduction and synthesis, I was ready to move past the formation of categories and link the conceptual elements together in a meaningful way. “When categories and their properties are reduced and refined and then linked together, the analysis is moving toward the development of a model or theory to explain the data’s meaning.” (Merriam, 2009, p. 192). The final eight categories covered
a wide spectrum of topics and concerns expressed by all of the board members, and I felt they accurately represented the data I collected and the input I received (Refer to Figure 3.11). I wanted to transcend the categories and connect what I found in my case study of SE. The use of a Venn diagram enabled me to show the linkages of the overlapping categories and subcategories and provide a conceptual interpretation of the data (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. Dynamic Elements of Shared Leadership in a Social Enterprise Board.

My original model of the key components for shared leadership did not accurately depict SE’s board. I modified it to reflect my findings and to illustrate the interconnectedness of the key issues and the complexity of the case. In the next chapter, I will propose a revised SL Model to explain my interpretation of the findings.
Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 built on the research methods I discussed in Chapter 3 and provided the findings of my research. Using a linear-analytic approach (Yin, 2014), I reported the results of my case study and the understanding of shared leadership in SE’s board of directors. I provided details from my triangulated sources of data that included board member interviews, observations of board meetings, outcomes of the focus group, and archival board documents. My literature review on the topics of shared leadership and nonprofit boards gave me information about best practices and insights to shared leadership that were applied to my research.

The case study findings that led to the thematic analysis results were also presented in Chapter 4. The final eight categories were linked together conceptually and I created an illustration of their relationships using a Venn diagram. The connections and overlaps of the important themes interpreted from the findings revealed that the original model I proposed did not accurately reflect the current state of SE’s board, its members, and their perceptions of shared leadership.

In Chapter 5, I share my findings from the thematic analysis and compare them with the two models I proposed before I began my data collection. I contrast SE’s board structure and composition with the benchmarks I found in my review of the current research on nonprofit boards. In addition, Chapter 5 will complete the circle on my entire case study by aligning the research questions with the findings, discussing the implications of my research, and suggesting ideas for future research.
Chapter 5 – Interpretations & Implications

Overview

The purpose of my case study was to conduct in depth research on the existence of shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors. I investigated the common strengths, characteristics, and traits that the board members possessed and exhibited and how those and other factors facilitated or inhibited shared leadership in the board. The broad themes around which I centered my research were shared leadership and nonprofit boards. In addition, I wanted to apply what I learned from my review of the current research and literature on nonprofit boards related to the best practices for board structure and composition and complete an assessment of SE’s board. I proposed that a board would be better prepared to share leadership if these best practices were followed.

Chapter 5 is the culmination of the focused research I pursued because I was interested in nonprofit boards and their use of shared leadership. In this chapter I will interpret my findings from studying SE’s board in correlation to the best practices from the literature review, discuss the results of my thematic analysis in parallel with the original research questions. In addition, the implications of my study in relation to the model I had proposed before my case study began will be described, and a revised model will be presented. Finally, I will discuss how my study findings created value for SE and other implications of my research.

Literature Review Findings and SE

Through my literature review, I took a deep dive into the current research available on best practices for nonprofit boards. The details of what I learned is
discussed in Chapter 2. My findings inspired me to create a model depicting the factors necessary for a board to have in place before shared leadership can exist. The purpose of this section is to review what I learned from my case study of SE as it relates to the first two nodes in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Governance Best Practices from Literature Review.

I will discuss the two oval nodes (gray and blue) in relationship to SE, board structure and board composition. Governance research over the last decade has focused on the boards, giving specific attention to how they are organized, how and why their structures vary, who can participate, and how board members are included and involved (Renz & Andersson, 2013). The data I collected gave me information on the topics included under the headings of board structure, which is comprised of size and
tenure, and board composition, which encompasses recruitment and selection, job
description, orientation, and evaluation and assessment. In the following sections, I will
describe what I found for each of these topics.

**Board structure.**

**Size.** The bylaws state that, “the SE board consists of seven to ten members, and
at least three members are employed as full time staff at SE, and three members are
community members.” I asked what other types of members are on the board that are
not considered to be members of the community. The answer was government or
elected officials, and that made sense to me.

Nine members currently serve on SE’s board, which is in line with Conger and
Lawler’s recommendation to have an odd number and the right balance, being large
enough to get the work done, and have the right mixture of talents and expertise
(2009). Pointer and Orlikoff (2002) would say the SE board is at the lower end of what
they suggest for size, which is nine to nineteen members. I think SE’s board size is
adequate and logical, given its evolution from three founding members to a size large
enough to include employees, business owners, stakeholders, and relevant types of
expertise.

**Tenure.** The SE board bylaws state that the length of the terms are two or three
years. The intent is to have staggered terms to allow for greater continuity in board
members. Board members must complete a first term of two or three years and then
they can be nominated for re-election. The term limit is six years except for founding
members who have no term limits. In my opinion, the term length and term limits are
realistic given the meetings are quarterly. Past board members served for three to five
years. I think board members need at least a year to understand the programs and business cycles. Serving an additional year or two or six is acceptable to me and fits with the recommended best practices (Brown, 2005).

**Board composition.**

**Recruitment and selection.** My findings showed that the recruitment and selection of new SE board members is tightly controlled by the ED. What I learned from reviewing the archival document is that board nominations can be done by completing a form that is submitted to the ED. It contains information about the nature of the individual’s relationship with the board member, specific knowledge of the individual’s professional abilities, community involvement and personal interests. Also, the form has a question about how the individual might help at SE and the areas or activities that may be of interest. The ED created this form, although she said it hasn't been used for board members who have joined in the last few years because she has been too busy.

In one of the board meetings, I observed the ED talking to the board about two potential board members she had asked to attend the next meeting. She said both had served previously and were interested in coming back on the board. I also read in the board minutes from 2014 that a prospective board member had attended the meeting to get a feel for the business of the board. Attending a board meeting prior to joining would give the prospective an idea of the content of the meetings, however, the meeting process may not be indicative of the involvement expected of board members. In addition, it would be difficult for current and future board members to learn about one another in a meeting given the fast-paced agendas and minimal time for team building.
The research on board composition is clear that the goal is to have a board with a membership profile that reflects the major stakeholders, brings in resources the organization is missing, and is based on a matrix containing the criteria identified by the board (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002; Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Parker, 2007). In a board retreat in 2015, the board discussed creating a matrix to include all of the skills, expertise and areas of interest for each board member. At the same retreat, the board members took turns describing themselves using these identifiers. I read this in the retreat notes and saw an action item to discuss further at the next board meeting. The idea to develop a matrix that is updated annually is a worthwhile effort and it surfaced again during the focus group.

I also gathered information about how recruitment of new board members is accomplished from the board member interviews. A past board president from five or six years ago talked about “looking for board members with skill sets that we were missing rather than just looking for board members who loved SE.” A more recent former board member said, “I'm sure the ED thinks strategically about the invitations she makes to join the board because she sees something there that could benefit SE.” My impression was, in the earlier years when the board was smaller, the ED included the board in the recruitment discussions. As the board grew, the ED took more control as evidenced in a statement from a board member who served a few years ago and is coming back on the board. She said, “My experience was the ED was always very protective of who we were going to bring on.” “I think she would rather have a person who was going to be more backseat but she knew she could trust versus someone that was going to push us in a different direction than she wanted.”
Job description. The job description can be found in the Board Orientation Notebook. It began with a general description of the board’s composition and states that “at least three are part of SE’s full-time staff.” The second section outlined the roles of the board member and it clearly stated the expectations are for board members to be ambassadors, fundraisers, work group leaders, strategic leaders and visionaries, and active participants in the governance of SE. Fiduciary and legal responsibility, visibility, advocacy, fundraising, and commitment to participate are duties of board members written in the job description. In addition, there was a section that describes the role of the board member as an “emergent work group leader.” The explanation said that SE does not have ongoing committees and the emergent work groups were developed as “needs are identified,” and meet for a period of one to six months as needed. Board members were expected to be prepared for meetings by “reviewing provided meeting materials and seeking information regarding meeting agendas prior to the meeting.” This portion of the job description lays the groundwork for board members to share in the leadership.

Also included in the job description were the responsibilities for completing orientation and the SE Volunteer Participation Plan, submitting self-evaluations at the end of each year, and attending meetings and retreats. Terms of service were described and the duties specific to president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary were detailed. At the end of the document, a paragraph entitled “Resource Development” explained the expectation for board members to actively participate in fundraising and networking.
In my mind, the job description contained all of the key elements prescribed in my research on best practices for nonprofit boards. It clearly stated the basic expectations of board members that could be given to prospective members and included requirements for attendance and meeting preparation (Tweeten, 2002; Trower, 2013).

**Orientation documents.** Once an individual has been elected as a member of the board, a two-page form is completed called “SE Volunteer Participation Plan.” This form was also used for volunteers. Written in a question format, the stated purpose was to help identify and plan “the most rewarding volunteer experience at SE.” Based on reading the questions, I interpreted the form as a means of matching the board member’s skills, expertise, and interests with the organization’s needs.

There were other questions to determine the amount of time the board member was able to commit, the types of assignments desired or areas to avoid, and whether the individual wanted to work alone or with a team. Individuals were asked about her personal mission and goals for involvement with SE and if working with the employees or with the board was preferred. I was impressed to see questions about what the individual needed to be successful, what knowledge was lacking in order to get started, and what specific goals would be achieved.

A board orientation notebook was available for me to read, and I think it was the original one that a few board members created six or seven years ago. Although it needs updating, it contained all of the critical documents a new board member would need to understand the history and mission of SE, the programs, financial information, and
board policies and bylaws. Also included was a section devoted to the board of directors with a list of current board members, an organization chart, job descriptions for board members and officers, and samples of agendas and meeting minutes.

**Orientation experienced.** When I interviewed the board members, I asked them to tell me about the orientation they received. The staff members on the board said they did not have any orientation. The same was said by the board member who served as the first president of the board when it was formally established. A past board president who served about six years ago said she was given a binder by the board president and a tour of SE. She described it as “informal.” A more recent former board president did not remember if she received an orientation, written or otherwise. The current board president said she was, “given a notebook and had a one-on-one with the ED.” Three board members remembered creating the board notebook in 2009 and sounded disappointed that it had not been updated. Current board members gave different answers, “I met with the ED and discussed what was expected of board members,” “I took a tour prior to joining and attended a board meeting,” and “I had a briefing with another board member before she asked me to join and then a quick overview from the ED once I came on board.”

The written portion of the orientation met the basic criteria for best practices because the materials provided clear expectations of roles and responsibilities and explained the meeting and committee process (Pointer & Orlikoff, 2002; Trower, 2013; Tweeten, 2002). The fact that it had not been updated since 2009 gave me an indication of the priority placed on orientation. I did not hear about any specific onboarding
process that is done in person with the ED or with a current board member. New board members need introductory knowledge about SE and how the board functions as well exposure to the culture of SE (Brown, 2007).

**Evaluation and assessment.** I did not find any documents for evaluating or assessing board members. The ED said no formal process has been established. Annual evaluation of overall board performance and individual board member assessments are recommended in the research (Brown, 2007). I think it would be an unbiased, non-invasive method for the ED and board president to gather important feedback and make improvements with the board’s input. Boards that conducted regular evaluations were more productive in terms of clarifying expectations, increasing accountability, and developing shared commitment among board members (Holland, 2002; Lichsteiner & Lutz, 2012).

**Thematic Analysis Findings**

In addition to my findings derived from comparing SE’s board with the best practices identified in my literature review, are my thematic analysis findings. My discussion of the findings from the thematic analysis will progress from general to specific. First, I will discuss my discoveries about shared leadership using the answers to my research questions that reflect the modus operandi of SE’s board of directors. Second, I will reveal that the model I had proposed when I began my research was refuted by the findings of my case study research. Finally, I will impart a new model that portrays and defines the current state of SE’s board.
Research questions and findings - the SE board.

The purpose of my study was to answer my primary research question:

What are the individual and team characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the
development of shared leadership in a social enterprise nonprofit board of directors?
I composed three questions that guided my research and the data I collected. Each of
these questions will be answered in this section along with my findings from the case
study of SE’s board.

How do the concepts of shared leadership apply to the social enterprise
board?

Board members affirmed that shared leadership is possible in SE’s board, with
one caveat. There is a heightened sensitivity about the balance of power between the
board and the ED, “That’s the main struggle with shared leadership in the board.” The
board members have great respect for the ED. “She is the founder and person primarily
responsible for the growth and success of SE.” “The ED is such a strong leader that I
think she really has been the leader of the board no matter who was president.” Board
members talked about perceived boundaries that limit their input. “We don’t know
where that line is drawn.” “Do we have the right to tell the ED no, you’re not going to do
that because we disagree?”

My findings indicated that there was an overall commitment from the board
members to share leadership but they were not able to openly discuss their concerns
with the ED or the board president. On the other hand, the ED’s view was, “I guess I
would say that I’m not sure what matters to the board.” A board member who has
served for many years and now lives out of state imparted her wisdom, “I think there needs to be some soul searching.” “I think it would be a relief almost maybe for the ED and maybe for SE – shared leadership is what they want from the board and that’s actually the best use of the board.”

**What characteristics of shared leadership were present in the board and were they attributed to the individual, the board or both?**

My findings from the interviews confirmed the board members believed SE’s board possessed important qualities and characteristics of shared leadership that were identified as being important in my literature review. The study conducted by Small & Rentsch (2010) concluded that trust and collectivism are antecedents of shared leadership. What does exist and is strong among the board members are trust and transparency. “I believe there is a lot of trust between the board members and the ED.” One of the comments I heard was, “the ED is very good at transparency,” and I saw that occur at the board meetings. The ED was honest and direct about her concerns with having one major customer and “being overly dependent was risky.” Although I found trust and an atmosphere of openness existed in SE’s board, the board members said they lacked cohesion and there was not a bond between them. My findings revealed that the board members understood shared leadership and said it happened in a situational or task-specific framework.

From my review of the literature, I had learned the two major impediments to sharing leadership successfully are time (Avolio, et al., 1996; Small & Rentsch, 2010), and the need to have leaders and followers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Friedrich, et al., 2009). Both of these obstacles were present in the SE board and I found they were
linked to how often the board meets and the lack of familiarity with other board members to be able to see each other as leaders. Board members stated that quarterly meetings were too infrequent for them to spend time together beyond the meetings and form relationships to support shared leadership. This also related to the second impediment because the board members were not cognizant of each other’s competencies. I found that the board members as a group possessed multiple and varied skills, expertise, and personality traits, but these were not communicated or understood by everyone. Without knowing the leadership capabilities of individual board members, it was difficult to influence or be influenced (Pearce, 2004). Shared leadership was not acknowledged as a group process, although board members said they wanted to improve their relationships and become more involved. As a result, my findings showed the overall power and responsibility for the board’s outcomes remained peripheral to its domain.

**What conditions existed that prepared this board to utilize share leadership?**

Two of my major findings about the conditions existing at SE that impact shared leadership are the leadership/management culture of SE and the board member job description. What surprised me when I began observing the board meetings was hearing the staff of SE refer to the style of management practiced by the organization as “shared leadership.” Employees at all levels are involved in solving production problems, coming up with ideas to improve the workplace, and mentoring or being mentored to improve their skills at work and with their families. A staff member said, “We have a shared responsibility as it relates to all aspects of the organization.”
In the meetings, I saw examples of the staff asking for input from the board or responding to requests from board members, such as making changes in the way the financial information is reported. Board members had also tapped into the culture of shared leadership at SE. They were able to define shared leadership, and many had experienced it on an individual level with specific activities and projects. One board member said shared leadership means, “Sharing responsibility and tapping into everyone’s strengths.” Another board member said, “It involves taking advantage of what everyone has to offer.” I also heard examples of shared leadership being practiced within the board. A past board member said, “We had discussions about what needed to be done to hire for a new position or organize for a fundraising event, and someone suggested we have a team, and the ED was very open and said let’s try a committee and see how that works.” Board members said they are involved in fundraising, discussing important decisions with SE leadership, and taking responsibility when their skills and interests were a match to the work to be done. I learned they had taken on specific assignments, such as assisting with the hiring process for a new program position, working with the ED to develop a process for her annual evaluation, and creating a board orientation notebook. “We would identify a sub-team with expertise and take on that assignment.” My observations of the board and focus group, along with the responses I heard from board members in the interviews, provided further evidence of the presence shared leadership within the culture of the organization and the board.

A second important way that the board could be prepared to share leadership was the existence of a board job description, which I read when I examined the archival
board documents. I found specific language in the job description that encouraged board members to “demonstrate leadership by leading projects, participating in program events and workgroups.” The job description explained the use of emergent work groups instead of standing committees as needs were identified, and included a statement, “Board members are expected to lead Emergent Work Groups that are relevant to their interests and/or capabilities.” Current board members had not received a formal orientation and were not in possession of the job description. No formal board goals existed, and it was difficult for board members to see how they could help.

Summary of research question findings. My findings did not support the key components necessary for shared leadership that I had proposed in the original model (Figure 5.2). The triangulated data I collected from my case study research were intended to test my own ideas of the relationship of a social enterprise board of directors with factors necessary for shared leadership to be successful. I had created the SL Model based on my literature review to illustrate my interpretation of the process that occurs in the leadership of a board that practices shared leadership. I will discuss my findings from the case study in comparison to the model I suggested for developing shared leadership in a nonprofit board.
Figure 5.2. Developing Shared Leadership in a Nonprofit Board (SL Model).

Comparing the SL Model to findings

The critical factors I had identified for a board to be able to share leadership were represented in SE’s board in various degrees. My findings indicated that SE’s board members had common values related to their commitment to the mission, however, they were unclear about board goals and their roles. The board members were experts in a range of areas including business owners, financial professionals, government specialists, and fundraisers. They possessed similar traits of trustworthiness, transparency, commitment and willingness to be involved.
Interdependent relationships were minimal due to two primary reasons. The first is that verbal or written communication about their expertise, skills, and interests was nonexistent. The second reason was frequency of interaction. They are scheduled to see one another four times a year and do not have other opportunities to build cohesion outside of the board meetings. Similarly, team processes were limited to discussions in board meetings.

My findings revealed a complex environment that was not reflected in the SL Model. The results of my thematic analysis indicated important supplemental factors were influencing the board's ability to share leadership. Four interconnected themes surfaced from the final aggregate categories and subcategories that impacted the performance of SE's board. Three of the themes were related to the factors I identified in the SL Model. However, I found the commonalities were narrow in focus and did not fully describe the dynamic elements of shared leadership I had uncovered in SE’s board.

I reviewed the results of my data analysis again. The process I followed for coding and analyzing the data was based on Saldana's methods in his book, *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2016). Using systematic methods, I had progressed from raw data to abstract constructs that accurately represented the board and board members. Two iterations of data analysis had resulted in the identification of categories and themes that were condensed into a final aggregated table (Figure 5.3). Next to the headings in each square are the quantities of the occurrences found in the codes.
I used the results from the table to develop a new model that exemplified my findings and interpretations. In the section following Figure 5.3, I will present and discuss the graphic representation that accurately depicts the themes and linkages exemplified in SE’s board and the use of shared leadership.

![Figure 5.3. Aggregated Categories and Subcategories – Final.](image-url)
Birth of a New Model

My findings from the data revealed five emergent themes that embodied SE’s board of directors (Figure 5.4). This revised model, “Dynamic Elements of Shared Leadership in SE’s Board,” represents the five themes and their interrelatedness.

1. Board and SE’s leadership as a team,
2. Board composition,
3. Relationships,
4. Expectations and commitment,
5. Board performance.

*Figure 5.4. Dynamic Elements of Shared Leadership in SE’s Board of Directors.*
I concluded that the relationship of the board and the leadership of SE is one of the dynamic elements for shared leadership within SE’s board. A board member said that an important characteristic of shared leadership is, “the ability to work as a team foremost because we’re all leaders, so when you get a bunch of leaders in the room, you must have the ability to work as a team, otherwise it is difficult.” The ability for the board and SE’s leadership to have mutual, supportive relationships was less than optimal for multiple reasons that I will cover in this section.

**Overreliance on SE.** One of the explanations I concluded from the interviews and board observations is the board members have complete faith in SE’s leadership, and are unclear about how they can contribute. “I think that there could be a perception that the competency of the SE leadership and staff has been such that board members didn’t need to provide much direction and input because the organization was run effectively.” The board members thought having staff in the meetings was good for shared leadership, “The ED and her staff are really good at taking care of things and they’re not relying on the board to just take care of it.”

**Misperceptions of ED.** I found the fragile relationship between the board and the ED stemmed from mistaken perceptions on both sides. The board assumes that SE’s leadership does not want their help, and the ED assumes the board does not want to help. In the board meetings, I did not see the board members engaged in conversations with SE’s leadership, yet in the interviews, I heard board members say they would like to receive more information on what is their role, “We support you guys, but what
should we all be doing?” The ED said she is perplexed not knowing how to get board members involved while she is trying to “run a business.” “When we do stuff to engage the board, I don’t know it’s what they want to do.” She said she is willing to have board members take responsibility for specific activities, and I saw this demonstrated with the fundraising event that was led by a relatively new board member.

**Board leadership.** Coupled with the unclear expectations of the board, power and responsibility for the board’s leadership were not distributed. The board is primarily led by two people, the ED and the board president. The ED has a close relationship with the board president, and their skills and personalities complement one another. She told me, “The board president has been a great shared leader because she always helps me think about stuff.” I saw them work together at the board meetings to explain the financials and discuss ideas with the board. The best practices for board leadership from my literature review described the importance of an executive committee. The team of the ED and the executive committee of the board are responsible for structuring the board’s goals and roles in fulfilling the mission (Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Renz & Andersson, 2013). I did hear board members comment on the board leadership. In an interview, one of the board members said, “We don’t have a really strong executive committee, so it’s not like there’s a committee that makes all the decisions and we’re just there to say yes or no.”

**Board/staff connections.** Another conclusion I made explains why the bonds between SE’s leadership and the board members have not coalesced. Primarily, I think it is due to the staff believing the board has little knowledge about SE, and they “really
want each member of the board to know more about what we do here because it is a limitation.” SE’s leadership staff who are board members said they want the board members to spend time at SE outside of the quarterly meetings. They sounded discouraged that board members hear about the good work of employees at the meetings but do not immerse themselves in the day to day operations to get a firsthand view. They have not voiced their concerns directly with board members, and as a result, no change occurs.

**Board Composition**
(lower right quadrant)

The results of my literature review related to board composition, including recruitment and selection, were supported by my findings in SE’s board. The board members represented a variety of fields and expertise that the ED had determined to be useful. I heard a board member give suggestions on what was missing in the current composition of the board. Additional business owners, people with grant writing or public relations experience, and a stakeholder from the field of education were examples given to me. “We need someone who’s connected in the community, somebody who can consistently represent SE.”

Best practices for recruitment and selection of board members begins with surveying the current board members’ competencies and skills (Brown, 2007). The Board Member Participation Plan contained in the board orientation notebook included questions to determine “the talents or skills offered by board members that would be the most useful to SE and most rewarding for the board member.” SE’s board members would like to have a formal matrix to convey current board members’ skills, areas of
expertise, and specific interests related to SE. They see it as a tool for building relationships and sharing leadership and would like to have it updated regularly.

According to my literature review, the aim is to develop a board membership profile that mirrors the key stakeholder groups (Parker, 2007). The board members had ideas for stakeholders that were not represented on the current board, and a matrix would facilitate discussions for recruiting new people to the board. I heard and read that this task had been discussed in the 2015 board retreat; however, no action was taken.

My conclusion is that board member selection occurred according to the ED’s preferences and timing. A board development committee does not exist to recruit and select potential SE board members, and I saw no evidence of the process outside of the ED. A past board member said, "My experience was that the ED was always very protective of who we were going to bring on." "I think she would rather have a person who was going to be more backseat but she knew she could trust, versus someone that was going to be the go-getter and maybe push things in a different direction than what she wanted." I didn’t hear board members say in meetings that they had a potential board member to suggest for consideration. A current board member stated in her interview, “The ED screens potential board members, although we do get to vote.”

**Relationships**
(lower left quadrant)

Building relationships was an important theme I found running through all of the data and the weighted categories supported my conclusion. Multiple sources in my literature review pointed consistently to the importance of relationships in developing and maintaining shared leadership, and I concluded that to be true for SE’s board as
well. My original model included interdependent relationships, and I knew the connections between board members were vitally important (Brown, 2007). Kouzes & Posner suggested that relationships thrive if an atmosphere of trust and collaborations exists (2007). My findings were that the environment surrounding SE’s board was described as open and transparent, “you feel the board operates in an atmosphere of trust but you think it could be brought out more.”

The board members possessed the personality traits and the desire to “have closer ties and build stronger connections.” Creating a board matrix wasn’t enough for them to learn the individual strengths and weaknesses, “it’s very limited visibility with each other.” What I found missing were opportunities to foster the building of bonds between board members. They are willing to work together on committees and would like to have time for socializing around the board meetings. In addition, they want to know the business and programs of SE and forge stronger relationships with the staff.

I heard specific concerns about the frequency of meetings and absence of the out of town board members. They said it is difficult to form relationships with “people you see four times a year, and even more so if you only hear them on the phone.” Board members were willing to meet more often and expand their time commitment to encourage friendships to develop and networking to take place.

The focus group session was an opportunity for board members to learn what one another had said about the meetings. I could tell they were encouraged to hear others reinforce their concerns about not knowing other board members very well and not having opportunities to spend time together outside of the meetings. My conclusions from the interviews and focus group are that the board members have a
strong desire to build relationships and believe that knowing one another will impact
their ability to share leadership. The research literature underscored this vital
connection by linking increased cohesion and commitment of the board members to
increased shared leadership within the group (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

**Expectations and Commitment**
(upper left quadrant)

One of the dynamic elements of shared leadership in SE’s board is a combination
of expectations and commitment. The results of my thematic analysis ranked this
element as comparable to the board and SE’s leadership as a team in order of priority.
Board members share in their commitment to SE’s mission, culture, employees and ED,
and to “doing what is best for its sustainability.” Passion and commitment exist, but
there is no clear path for getting involved.

**Accountability.** The board members join the board with minimum knowledge of
their roles and responsibilities and expect to be involved, but are not sure how to make
it happen. I heard many comments about the lack of clarity in the roles, responsibilities,
and expectations from both SE’s leadership and the board members. Outside of the
written job description, the ED does not communicate her expectations to the board, as
a group or individually. She said she hesitates because she thinks board members have
“limited time.” In contrast, the board members said unanimously that they want to be
more involved.

**Communication.** I know from studying the best practices of nonprofit boards
and comparing SE, the expectations are not clearly communicated to board members
when they join the board or through any formal orientation. I heard the board members
say they didn’t know what was expected of them and that influences their commitment and relationships with other board members and SE’s leadership. They were not familiar with the board job description and had acquired their knowledge from the board meetings or conversations with the ED. “One board member said she felt “not having a formal orientation means that people don’t know how to engage effectively or consistently. At the board retreat in 2015, a board member requested that the responsibilities of the board be written and distributed.

Involvement. Past board members said they took on specific roles, “We were involved in going after grants or networking with people in the community for resources or giving input on fundraising.” Current board members said when they joined, they expected to be involved with SE but were “never clear on what is their role and how they can be of service.” Their comments included, “I don’t feel like I’m doing enough but don’t know what I should be doing.” Board members said they “take their responsibility seriously and have mutual respect and would like to be more effectively involved.” Clearly, there are opportunities to increase involvement because there is no shortage of capability or commitment on the part of the board members.

Commitment. The ED and board members who are staff told me their expectation is for board members to show their commitment by coming to SE and spending time watching production, sitting in on leadership meetings and attending workshops. SE staff “want each board member to know more about what we do here, otherwise it is a limitation not to see the work we do.” This expectation has not been communicated directly to the board although it is stated in the job description. Board
members who do not speak Spanish may be hesitant to be immersed in the workplace. One board member told me she, “felt a little bit of a disconnect culturally and class-wise from not speaking Spanish.”

**Board Performance**

I have discussed the four dynamic elements of shared leadership in SE’s board that directly impact the board’s performance; board and SE leadership as a team, board composition, relationships, and expectations and commitment. I concluded that the performance of SE’s board is dependent on these elements, and at the same time, it is defined by internal mechanisms that help a board perform. In the next section, I will describe my conclusions about the board’s foundational structures and knowledge and how they controlled and influenced the four dynamic elements.

**Board structures.** SE’s board had the basic board management structures in place, but they did not translate into a knowledgeable, productive team. I found an outdated board manual with detailed job descriptions and other useful information. However, because the board members did not have the manuals or a formal orientation, expectations were unclear, and the relationships between board members and SE leadership were strained.

The foundational structure did not include standing committees for board members to be assigned when they join the board. I understand SE’s leadership prefers to convene ad hoc workgroups as the need arises and I think is an appropriate way to share leadership for specific, single activities. From the data I collected through the
interviews and meeting observations, I know board members would like to be more familiar with one another and have a greater understanding of their responsibilities. My conclusion is that the formation of ongoing committees, such as board development and fundraising, would enable board members to form bonds in a small group and share their expertise and interests.

Meetings are another important part of the foundational structures impacting SE’s board performance. Although they are held regularly, my conclusion was that quarterly meetings are too infrequent given the input I heard from board members. Again, the relationships, expectations and commitment would benefit from the board members getting together more often. I found that SE had well organized meetings; the agendas and related attachments were sent to board members ahead of time, the meetings were conducted efficiently within the three-hour time allotment, and the minutes were recorded and distributed.

**Board knowledge.** One of my consistent findings was the gap in board knowledge that I heard about from the board members and SE’s leadership. Commitment, expectations, and relationships are all dependent on the board acquiring more extensive knowledge about SE. In previous sections I have discussed my findings about board’s lack of experiential knowledge related to SE operations and programs, “I really want each member of the board to know more about what we do here because it is a limitation.” For this section, I discuss SE’s board building a foundation of knowledge about its purpose and goals based on the overall mission and strategies of SE. The board members did not have a shared understanding of the board’s purpose, and they were unclear about their roles and responsibilities for achieving SE's goals.
I concluded from my review of the archival board documents that the gap in board knowledge is not just a current concern. One of the documents could be helpful in determining where the board member needed additional knowledge and information to become more involved. The Board Member Participation Plan had a question pertaining to the areas where the board member’s knowledge about SE needed to be augmented to become “an active contributor to SE.”

The minutes from a 2013 board meeting stated, “What does the board hope to accomplish and how will we know if we are successful?” In 2014, I read in the minutes, “What needs to be achieved and can be sustained by board members?” The board retreat in 2015 also had statements in the minutes that, “setting board goals related to SE’s short-term and long-term goals” was discussed. In one of the board meeting I observed last year, a suggestion was made to “write up the responsibilities of board.” Taking the time to lay the groundwork for the board to increase its knowledge and understanding of SE’s goals, and create its own goals to support SE is imperative. Without completing this critical first step, the board may not fulfill its potential and perform at its best, and the occurrence of shared leadership may not increase.
Summary of Chapter 5

The dynamic elements of shared leadership in SE’s board of directors represented in the SE’s Board Model are the five interconnected themes I found from my thematic analysis of the triangulated data. Board composition, relationships, the board and SE leadership as a team, expectations and commitment, and board performance were all critical to the board’s ability to share leadership. My overall conclusion is that the board and SE’s leadership understand and support the use of shared leadership. The board members have experienced shared leadership with specific activities, and it is the prevalent style of leadership used to manage the production and programs at SE. The mission and culture of SE are the driving forces behind board members choosing to serve on the board. As a social enterprise, SE has a different focus than a typical nonprofit, and I identified the similarities and differences I had found from my case study.

My case study of SE’s board of directors gave me answers to my research question and helped me to better understand the perceptions and interactions of the board members and SE’s leadership related to shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors. The individual characteristics that facilitate shared leadership are trust, transparency, and commitment to SE’s mission, all of which the board members believe exist. The primary characteristic of the individuals that inhibited the development of shared leadership was the fact they did not live in the local community.

The team characteristics included the right mix of expertise, skills, and specific interests related to SE, and the shared knowledge of how those characteristics are represented by each board member. Three factors were classified as inhibitors of
shared leadership for the board. The first was lack of familiarity with other board members, both in terms of time spent together, as well as knowledge of individual expertise, skills, and interests. The second factor was the unclear expectations of the board members, and the third factor was the underutilization of the board members.

Chapter 6 includes specific suppositions I have made about SE’s board, nonprofit boards in general, and the need for future research. I will summarize my case study of SE’s board and discuss the contrasts between social enterprise and nonprofit boards. The value created from the results of my case study for SE and nonprofit organizations will be discussed along with a new model I propose for social enterprises and nonprofit organizations to build successful boards. Finally, areas for future research will be presented, specifically for boards of directors and shared leadership, and generally, to test the new models I have developed.
Chapter 6 – Summary and Future Research

Introduction

I have participated in governance leadership in various capacities since I was in middle school and have experienced the trials of forming a strong leadership team. Discovering the “magic” of transforming a diverse group of community leaders into a team that can accomplish specific goals has been an interest of mine for many decades. I was especially curious about volunteer leaders serving on nonprofit boards and understanding why some boards perform better than others. Connecting capable individuals into a team with the capacity for collective impact was a challenge I heard voiced repeatedly by nonprofit leaders in the local community. I wanted to discover a potential solution to this pervasive problem.

Summary of Case Study

The purpose of my research was to study the existence of shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors by investigating the common strengths, characteristics, and traits possessed and exhibited, and how those facilitated or inhibited shared leadership in the board. My research was centered around the broad theoretical foundations of shared leadership and nonprofit boards. I studied one board of directors and examined how and why shared leadership existed. In addition, I wanted to apply what I learned from my review of the current research and literature on nonprofit boards related to the best practices for board structure and composition to the same board of directors and complete an assessment. I proposed that a board would be better prepared to share leadership if these best practices were followed.
Using a case study design, Saldaña’s (2016) coding methods, and thematic analysis, my research began with a review of the current literature on nonprofit boards, social enterprises, and shared leadership. The case I studied was a board of directors from SE, a social enterprise in the Southwestern region of the United States. SE was established as a social enterprise to provide living wage employment for women from low-income communities, and has been successful in generating revenue to fund its programs for employees and their families for more than two decades. The board of directors began with three of the original staff members including the ED, and has grown to nine members. The board is composed of SE’s leadership, business owners, and community leaders with a variety of skills and expertise.

Over a period of seven months, I interviewed twelve past and present board members, observed three quarterly board meetings, conducted a focus group, and reviewed SE’s archival board documents. Once my data collection was complete, I proceeded to code the data from my triangulated sources, and completed two iterations of data analysis using two cycles of coding in each iteration. I developed subcategories and categories for each iteration and assigned weights using a method proposed by Harding (2013) as a means of prioritizing the categories. The last step in my data analysis process was to combine the iterations and aggregate the weights to develop the final themes of my research results.

My thematic analysis resulted in the identification of eight categories that exemplified the priority requirements of SE’s board members. These included the elements needed for the board members to act as a team, and also their ability to share
leadership on that specific board. Board performance was the most significant in frequency of occurrences from all the sources of data. This indicated to me that I was ready to use the model I had created from my literature review to compare the case study results with the benchmarks I found for board performance. In addition, I tested the second model I had developed before my case study began to explain what I proposed to be the critical factors necessary for shared leadership to occur in a board.

**Social Enterprise and Nonprofit Boards**

Before moving on to the implications of my case study, I will expound upon my findings of SE’s board and make a comparison to nonprofit boards. First, I will discuss the similarities, which include fidelity to the mission, structure of the board, areas of board member participation, and the challenge of board member involvement. Next, I will describe the primary difference between a social enterprise and a nonprofit (duality of missions), and my findings from the data collected that support my conclusion. Last, I will highlight the need for further research.

**Similarities.** The passion and commitment to the mission of SE was strong for all board members and that devotion is comparable to other nonprofit boards I have experienced. A board member summarized it well, “Board members are drawn to the ED and to SE’s mission, they all believe in the same thing, they’re there for a reason and that’s powerful.” I found the requirements for board structure to be the same for a social enterprise board as a nonprofit board. I confirmed the existence of formal bylaws and board job description(s), the establishment of an executive committee, and the convening of regular meetings through my archival document review. Areas of board
participation also mirrored nonprofits and comparable activities included fundraising, grant procurement, visibility, and event planning. Determining how to get board members to be engaged in useful activities was another commonality. A past board president said, “People are interested in serving because of the programs but what you really need them to do is this sort of governance and oversight, and how do you get them involved in programs in an effective, low cost, easy to manage way?”

**Differences.** Social enterprises have dual missions and evidence of that duality was found in all sources of my data collection. A board member said in the interview, “There is quite a balance between the social and economic mission of the organization.” She continued with her explanation by saying, “One can’t exist without the other but there are aspects of both that make different people more excited or engaged.” Business owners and business developers are represented on SE’s board, and those types of stakeholders are different from most nonprofit boards. The content of the board meetings is definitely dissimilar to what I have experienced in other nonprofit boards. In my review of the archival documents, I looked at numerous agendas, and they typically consisted of the production business of SE and the programs provided to employees. I heard board members comment on the financial content and full agendas they had grown accustomed to during the three-hour meetings. A board member confirmed this by saying, “I think the board in a social enterprise definitely has meetings that are tightly run, and it is much more focused on the numbers too, because it is a business and we are being reported to on the business side, on both sides, and I think that is common to social enterprises.”
I learned from the board members that they were surprised by the complexity of SE. A current board member explained it by saying, “I don’t think very many of us had a preconceived idea about what exactly board service would look like for a social enterprise that was so fabulously self-sufficient.” The challenge of understanding the details of both sides of SE’s mission, production and programs, was aptly described by a board member who served on numerous nonprofit boards:

So you’ve got this contract over here with a large company and this seems to be the company that is the major financial support, and then you’ve got this section over here where they’re always reaching out trying to get jobs to fill the capacity of that sewing section. Then you’ve got the education; you’re educating women; you’ve got GED classes, ESL classes, then you’ve got the nursery and the Hacia program so it’s a little hard for me to wrap my head around all of that, and I don’t know that I have ever seen what we might call an organizational chart that lays out that structure in a way that you can say, ‘Oh, I get it.’

**Social enterprises and shared leadership.** My findings on the state of shared leadership in SE’s board confirmed that the current literature had some gaps in identifying the critical components influencing shared leadership in a board of directors. Many more factors are involved that were not detected in the current research, due in part to the studies being limited to academic settings and organizational teams. Given the results of my study, I developed a new model that more accurately represents the state of shared leadership in the SE board. In the following
sections I will discuss the value created for SE and other nonprofits, along with a new model I developed to describe the fundamental building blocks for successful boards.

Creating Value for SE and Nonprofit Organizations

The results of my case study have specific consequences for SE and for application beyond a social enterprise board. The ED and the board members have embraced my study and asked me to present my findings and conclusions at the next quarterly board meeting. I saw an improvement in the openness and communication of the board members who participated in the focus group. I think one of the reasons for the change was that the discussion occurred outside of a formal board meeting, and the primary purpose of the focus group was to talk about what I had learned from them. A second reason was that they heard other board members affirming their thoughts and opinions and that was perceived as positive.

I also realized that the process of conducting my case study research was empowering because it had given board members a voice to say how they felt and share their concerns in a confidential manner. Being aware of this suggests to me another outcome that has implications beyond the SE board. There is the need to establish an ongoing process for gaining the input of board members in a confidential manner. Annual evaluations and assessments would serve that purpose if the board president would be willing to collect the information and discuss it with the board.

When I made the decision to use the case study method, an important factor was for my research to have application beyond SE’s board. I wanted my results and conclusions to show the value of shared leadership in a social enterprise board and its potential to benefit nonprofit organizations. The proposition I have spawned from my
case study is as follows: Board of directors can develop outstanding boards by following three progressive steps; establishing a foundation, assembling the people, and building relationships. I have evaluated the results and conclusions of my case study research and have synthesized my knowledge into a simple diagram (Figure 6.1). Three progressive levels exist that SE’s board and nonprofit boards can use to address the issues raised by my research. To create and sustain shared leadership in all types of boards of directors, three fundamental building blocks are required; foundation, people, and relationships.

![Figure 6.1. Fundamental Building Blocks for Successful Boards.](image)

**Fundamental Building Blocks for Successful Boards**

**First level: Framework.** The purpose of establishing a solid framework is to create goals for the board based on the goals of the organization. Board members want to be very familiar with the organization’s culture, mission, and strategies for achieving the goals. This sets them up for understanding the board’s goals that are related, specific, and necessary for the success of the organization. Once this groundwork is
completed, the roles and responsibilities of the board members can be developed in alignment with the goals. In addition to goal setting, the first level includes the best practices I found in the literature review for defining board structure; bylaws, job descriptions, orientation, meetings, board matrix, evaluation and assessment.

**Second level: People.** Once the foundation has been properly laid, assembling the best people to constitute the board can begin. Board members perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities as part of a larger team that includes the ED and the staff of the organization. Based on the work of establishing the foundational framework, the larger team of leaders moves to the second level and identifies the stakeholders, and the traits, skills and expertise needed to complete the team. Adhering to this sequence ensures that board member selection is purposeful, people are recruited to match the roles defined in the first level, and expectations for involvement are clear.

**Third level: Relationships.** The first level provided the goals of the organization and the board, the roles and responsibilities of board members, and the tools to get the work done. The second level assembled a group of qualified people to individually and collectively accomplish the work. Forming and fostering relationships is the final building block necessary for boards to be successful. The third level focuses first on the bonds and cohesion within the board, as well as the linkages between the board and the organization and its leadership. Once these connections are developed and strengthened, the board can turn to cultivating relationships in the community and other external resources that will benefit the organization.
Future Research

Nonprofit boards. The current research on nonprofit boards was extensive on topics related to structure and composition, and I used the best practices identified as benchmarks for examining SE’s board. I determined future research should be focused on how these best practices prepare the board to act as a team and share responsibility for the tasks and duties that lead to goal achievement. In my mind, further study on the role of board members and their ability to influence one another, with consideration given to the varying levels of individual commitment and involvement, would be useful. In order to share leadership, clear expectations of the board member’s role have to be communicated when recruitment begins, and the current research did not address how board members viewed their obligation to lead.

Social enterprise boards. Since the 2008 recession, nonprofit organizations have experienced a decrease in philanthropic giving and an increase in the number of social issues that need solving (Block & McCuistion, 2014). A growing number of nonprofits are looking for alternatives to traditional methods of fundraising. SE is an example of one solution for developing a sustainable business model to generate revenue for its social programs and provide unrestricted funding for future growth.

Specifically related to social enterprise governance, I would direct future study towards advancing the limited understanding of the leadership requirements. My research has indicated a different type of board leadership is required to balance the strong role of the ED with the dual missions of operating a successful business and managing social programs. Along with the variation in leadership requirements, I think the role of board governance is a gap in the current research and needs to be studied to
clarify how the board contributes to the goals of the social enterprise and implications for shared leadership. The results of my case study supported the findings of past researchers who pointed to the need for further research on the unclear roles and expectations concerning the board's involvement in the goals of the social enterprise (Spear, et al, 2009; Mason, 2010).

**Shared leadership.** Knowing that shared leadership has the potential to benefit boards of directors in social enterprises and nonprofit organizations implied to me that replication is desirable. However, the current research was limited to academic environments and organizational teams, and I had difficulty understanding how some of the results could be transferred to board settings. Recognition of all board members as leaders, and their willingness to be involved as leaders, are factors to be studied in a board setting. Future research is needed to focus on examining how a board evolves into a team and the process by which shared leadership develops. My supposition was that nonprofit boards tend to be composed of community leaders and subject matter experts and would have a high level of leadership capability. I am interested in further dissection of shared leadership to determine the primary and essential conditions necessary for it to occur and the methods proposed to facilitate its development.

**New models to test.** In addition to examining SE’s board, my case study research allowed me to test a model I developed to explain shared leadership in a board of directors. As a result of my research findings, I designed an improved version of my original model that can be tested by future researchers. Applying the model to other social enterprise boards and nonprofit boards would provide me with new information
to compare with my conclusions from this study. I am interested in contacting the ED’s of other local social enterprises to discuss my findings and get their input to my model.

My second model, “Fundamental Building Blocks for Successful Boards,” will be studied further with a community nonprofit organization that supports entrepreneurial startup businesses. I know the ED and he is interested in hearing my findings with the possibility of presenting them to his board. He has struggled with developing the right sequence of steps for creating board structure, setting board goals, and getting board members involved. His concerns can be addressed by my model, and I could further explore its usefulness with his board. The local TED board of directors has invited me to observe the monthly board meetings. This organization has one paid ED and hundreds of volunteers. The incoming board president said she would like to use shared leadership and is interested in learning more by having me attend and give them feedback based on my literature and research findings. I believe these different experiences will allow me to test my models and further my research.

**Summary**

My case study of SE’s board of directors explored shared leadership in a social enterprise board. The purpose of my study was to conduct research on the existence of shared leadership in a social enterprise board of directors. I investigated the board and interviewed the board members to identify the strengths of the board and the characteristics and traits the board members possess and exhibit. I also examined the factors that facilitated or inhibited shared leadership related to the board and board members.
My interest in studying social enterprise and nonprofit boards of directors had percolated for many years because I have experienced the challenges faced by executive directors and board presidents to coalesce a group of individual leaders and involve them in achieving the goals of the organization. My proposition was that nonprofit board are logical examples of leadership teams that could benefit significantly from adopting the strategies of shared leadership. Through my research, I wanted to understand why board members struggled to share leadership when it appeared to be an innate skill they used to be successful in the workplace. In other words, I wanted to explore the gap that existed between the perceived capabilities of a board to share leadership based on its membership, and the actual functioning of the board as a team.

I also knew there were peripheral pressures common to social enterprises and nonprofits that influenced a board’s ongoing performance. This combination of internal and external demands underscored for me the criticality of the board’s ability to react to the dynamic environment, and more importantly, the board’s capacity to share the responsibility for achieving the goals of the organization (Pearce & Conger, 2003). To begin my study, I determined the five external factors impacting the SE’s board governance were the centrality of customers and programs, stakeholders, funding sources, resource allocation, and predicting future trends.

Through my literature review, I examined the current research on shared leadership, and nonprofit and social enterprise governance. I found insights and best practices that were useful in my research, as well as areas requiring further study and exploration. Shared leadership in a board setting has been found to be a positive, effective style of distributing responsibility for the work of board (Mayo, Meindl, &
Pastor, 2003; Vandewaerde, et al., 2011). My findings convinced me that establishing shared leadership required deliberate preparation and commitment from the leaders of the social enterprise and the board, as well as the individual board members.

I determined from the data I collected through my interviews, board observations, and a focus group that the important antecedents of shared leadership were present in SE’s board. Dedication to the mission, trust, and transparency were evident in my findings. I also concluded that my original model for the components required to share leadership did not match my findings. As a result, I developed a new model containing five dynamic elements that must be managed for SE’s board to maximize its potential for shared leadership. Board composition, relationships, SE and board leadership as a team, expectations and commitment, and board performance are integral components that I found to be the highest priorities for sharing leadership in SE’s board. The major implication from my research was that social enterprises and nonprofits can utilize fundamental building blocks to create vital, successful boards. I look forward to testing my models with other boards and increasing their use of shared leadership.
Appendices

Appendix A Informed Consent - Interview and Participate in Focus Group

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Appendix B Interview Protocol

Appendix C Focus Group Protocol
Appendix A

Informed Consent - Interview and Participate in Focus Group

Carol Hinton, under the supervision of Patsy Boverie, PhD, from the Department of Organization, Information, and Learning Sciences at the University of New Mexico, is conducting a research study. The purpose of the research is to study the existence of shared leadership in the board of directors for a social enterprise nonprofit organization. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a past or present board member for SE.

Your participation will include one interview with the Carol Hinton, and being observed at the board meetings and a focus group. The interview should take no more than 60 minutes to complete and will include questions such as what are your strengths and skills that are useful to the board and how does the board share responsibilities? The focus group should take no more than 60 minutes and will include looking at the data collected from the study and giving input to the common themes found. You will be given written transcriptions of the interview and focus group to review and make any necessary corrections. No identifiers will be used in transcriptions.

Your involvement in the study is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. No names or identifying information will be associated with your responses. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. You may withdraw from participation at any time by notifying Carol Hinton or Dr. Patsy Boverie, or Susan Matteucci or Linnea Bonacci.

You will be given a copy of this signed consent. All data collected will be stored in a password protected private computer or in hard copy form in a locked file drawer in the researcher’s office in a private home. The researcher will be the sole person to have the password and the key. All materials, including audio and digital data will be destroyed within four years after the completion of the study. The findings from this project will provide information on the common characteristics and strengths of board members and how shared leadership is linked to board members and to the board process and environment. If published, the results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Carol Hinton by email at hinton09@unm.edu, or by phone at (505) 220-9064. You may also contact the study supervisor, Dr. Patsy Boverie by email at pboverie@unm.edu, or by phone at (505) 277-2408. From SE, Susan Matteucci (505) 247-8559, and Linnea Bonacci (505) 612-2025 are available. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, you may call the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.
## Appendix A

**Informed Consent - Interview and Participate in Focus Group**

Your signature below indicates you have read this form and all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. A copy of the consent will be given to you.

I agree to participate in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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I have explained the research to the participant and have answered all of his or her questions.

I believe he or she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher</th>
<th>Signature of Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Appendix B

Interview Protocol & Questions

Introduction: The interview session will begin with the researcher explaining how the board of SE was chosen for the study and asking the interviewee to talk about how he or she became involved with SE and made the decision to join the board. Next, the researcher will review the primary research question being investigated and describe the flexible format to be followed. The interviewee will be asked for permission to let the researcher audio record the session. Specific information on each participant will be gathered during the interview: age, occupation, length of tenure on the board, stakeholder representation, and prior experience on nonprofit boards.

Primary Research Question: What are the individual and team characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the development of shared leadership in the board of directors of SE? The researcher is interested in understanding the interviewee’s views of the board, interpretations of the board’s processes, experiences as a member of the board over time, interactions with other board members, and perceptions of the style(s) of leadership the board practices.

Format: Interviewees will be asked to answer open-ended questions that can lead to other topics for discussion.

1. What are the strengths of the SE board that help it function effectively and what could be improved?

2. What does the term "shared leadership" mean to you and how do you think nonprofit boards could benefit from this style of leadership?

3. Can you give me an example of a situation involving the board where you saw shared leadership occurring?

4. If you think of the board as a team, what skills or traits would board members need to have to share the leadership responsibility? What about the team as a whole?

5. Is there anything about SE’s environment that helps or hinders the board being able to share leadership?

6. What would be hard for an outsider like me to understand about what it means to be a member of SE’s board?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me, or any questions you were expecting that I haven’t asked?

The researcher will conclude the session by thanking the interviewee for the spent devoted to answering the questions. The researcher will explain that once the interview has been transcribed, the interviewee will be asked to read the summary and provide feedback on any changes necessary. In addition, the researcher will review the next steps for the research study and the potential for the interviewee to participate in a focus group once the individual interviews have been completed.
Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol

**Size and Duration:** A range of 4 to 6 board members will be in each focus group. The time allowed for the discussion is 60 minutes.

**Room Setup:** Chairs will be arranged in a circle for the focus group participants. Two student observers will be in attendance and will sit outside of the circle, on opposite sides of the room. The researcher will sit in the circle or stand to record what is said. A flipchart and whiteboard will be used to display information and record ideas from the participants.

**Introduction:** The focus group session will begin with the researcher explaining how data for the research study has been collected so far through interviews, board meeting observations, and document review. The information gleaned from these three sources has been analyzed and the researcher wants to share the findings with the focus group. The goals of the focus group are to give feedback to the researcher about the accuracy and inclusiveness of the data, and to discuss next steps to complete the study.

Each participant will introduce himself or herself and the student observers will be introduced and their role in the focus group will be explained. Next, the researcher will review the primary research question being investigated and describe the focus group format to be followed. Board members will be reminded they have already signed an informed consent form to attend and will be asked for permission to let the researcher audio record the session. The recording will begin after introductions are completed. Names will not be used when transcribing the recordings.

**Primary Research Question:** What are the individual and team characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the development of leadership in the board of directors of SE? The interviews, observations, and document review have helped the researcher to gather information related to the following:

1. Views of the individual board members on the qualities necessary to share leadership responsibility.
2. Experiences of board members over the length of their tenure; how has the board changed and what has caused change to occur.
3. Verbal and nonverbal interactions of the board members in meetings.
4. Interpretation of the board’s processes.
5. Perceptions of the style(s) of leadership the board practices.

**Format:**
Focus group participants will be asked to review the written and visual materials provided by the researcher. Researcher will ask the participants to discuss the materials and make suggestions for revisions. Once every participant has given input and no additional information is being offered, the researcher will thank the participants and explain the next steps in the study. They will receive transcription of focus group discussion and be asked to submit revisions and approve final version.
Research Bibliography


