

EXPATRIATE TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN THE NON-
PROFIT SECTOR IN THAILAND

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PROFIT SECTOR IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Leadership succession in the for-profit and non-profit sectors has been studied at great length, yet there is little information on expatriate to national transitions in lower income or emerging economies. This research explores the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand. Qualitative, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with expatriate, ethnic Thai, and ethnic tribal non-profit leaders. Content analysis was used to extract and examine the data.

Results indicate that plans for expatriate to national succession must occur simultaneously with the start of the non-profit, and these plans should be a part of an organization's strategic priorities and sustainability review. Succession evokes a number of fears for local staff and deeply conflicting emotions for expatriate leaders, but not talking about succession fosters other fears and significant anxiety. Non-profits with expatriate leadership (and their boards) should clarify their intentions regarding succession and take the time needed to provide the training and capacity building necessary to develop and support local leadership.

Re-framing succession is necessary in this cross-cultural context. Shared leadership is preferred as non-profits move towards full local leadership and increased local funding of programs. The latter includes the organized pursuit of fund-raising within Thailand and in other countries throughout Asia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a house which becomes a home,
one hands down and another takes up
the heritage of heart and mind,
laughter and tears, musings and deed.
Love, like a carefully loaded ship,
crosses the gulf between the generations.

We live, not by things, but by the meanings
of things. It is needful to transmit
the passwords
from generation to generation.

-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Introduction

This Capstone explores some of the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand. Particular attention is paid to the role of the board of directors in the management of these transitions, capacity building and developing leaders, and the broader cross-cultural issues which make this type of succession particularly difficult. This research illuminates some themes that can guide and inform both expatriates and nationals as they walk through this unique leadership transition.

Background and Context

Over the past four decades, there has been marked growth and interest in leadership and leadership studies (Gilmore, 1988; Heifetz, 1994; Maxwell, 1998). In the midst of this literature lies the theme of leadership succession; its impact, its importance, and its relevance in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors (Adams, 2010; Bridges, 1993; McKenna, 2015). Broadly defined as “the smooth transfer of

power from one leader to the next” (Balsler & Carmin, 2009, p. 185) this process should begin several years prior to the actual leadership transition in order to ensure program continuity.

In this ocean of research and data, succession planning specific to non-profit organizations has also emerged, and there are books and articles with instructions about how to effectively manage the process (Adams, 2010; Weese & Crabtree, 2004; Dym, Egmont & Watkins, 2011). Non-profit leadership transitions have been described as “complex” and involve “unique challenges and opportunities” (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 272); non-profit succession is also linked to organizational sustainability and operational effectiveness (Santora & Bozer, 2015, pp. 245-246; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015, pp. 69-70). Conversely, without adequate planning, non-profit successions can be “disruptive and...deleterious to the effective operations of the organization” (Santora & Bozer, 2015, p.245).

Given this information and forceful call for strategic action, it is ironic that the majority of non-profits do not have succession plans. A 2006 survey of almost 2,000 non-profit executives revealed that only 29% had even mentioned the subject with their boards (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006, as cited in Gothard & Austin, 2013); a 2011 survey of 3,000 non-profit executive directors revealed that 83% of the respondents did not have a succession plan (Cornelius, Moyers, and Bell, 2011). Other articles are replete with statements such as non-profit organizations “...see succession planning as important, yet are doing little about it” and they “appear ill-prepared for and unrealistic about the...challenges they identify” (Froelich, McKee & Rathge, 2011, p.13).

Importance of Topic

A glaring gap in this research are studies regarding leadership transitions from expatriates to nationals in lower income or emerging economies. In the fall, 2013 issue of the *International Leadership Journal*, the editors ask for “more international research on non-profit executive succession” and state that an “exploration of these issues in non-US countries would be extremely beneficial to see how other countries prepare for non-profit executive succession” (Santora & Sarros, 2013, p. 6). Yet this call for more international research does not mention anything regarding leadership handovers from expatriates to nationals.

The need for research on this particular angle of non-profit succession is also important when one considers additional variables. The first is the number of leaders who are preparing for retirement. According to US Census Bureau estimates, “...annual increases in those reaching age 65 will consistently rise...surpassing four million by 2020” (US Census Bureau, 2008, in Froelich, McKee & Rathge, 2011, p.4). In the non-profit sector in Thailand there are a large number of expatriates in leadership roles who are preparing to retire in the next several years. In the organization in which I am employed I know that approximately 30% of the workforce is retiring in the next five years. Many of the employees in this group are currently working overseas in various non-profit leadership capacities, which makes increased understanding of the expatriate to national succession issues even more urgent.

My primary interest in this topic is due to my own experience leading a Thai non-profit from 2000 to 2015, and working diligently to develop leaders, build capacity, and pass the mantle of leadership to the ethnic minority national staff.

Throughout this period I attempted to find models of expatriate to national leadership transitions to guide us along, but could not find any.

I am also deeply motivated to study this topic because of my passion to see healthy, sustainable non-profit organizations with engaged boards of directors. Leadership succession is a very serious challenge because it impacts everyone; the outgoing leader, the incoming leader, the organization's employees, its culture and identity, and (perhaps most important of all) the continuity of services for program beneficiaries. I hope to gain information through this research which may help other non-profits with expatriate leadership in Thailand prepare for and walk through this process.

Literature

The current literature on leadership succession planning specific to non-profits reveals several strategic tasks that should be included in any executive transition. The latter includes the executive director working closely with an organization's board of directors to prepare for the impending exit. This should involve the CEO "initiating sensitive conversations" with the board of directors many months prior to her departure; managing the transition of relationships with multiple stakeholders both inside and outside the organization; and, alongside the directors, potentially re-casting the organization's vision and mission to ensure "its future in the community" (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 273). The executive-board relationship may be fraught with dynamic tension for a variety of reasons (including income, cultural, and social disparities) but Gothard and Austin emphasize that "effective and purposeful collaboration between executives and their boards" is critical for a successful transition (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p.273).

Another key point in the literature is described as a “fundamental shift” in framing leadership succession itself. Instead of framing it as succession *planning*, current literature points to the frame of succession *management*. Instead of searching for “...a well-qualified replacement for a particular position in an organization” (Metz, 1998 as cited in Gothard & Austin, 2013, p.276) succession management focuses on developing leaders over time, and raising up those individuals who embody the organization’s mission and values. Succession management is described as a process that is “...formal, on-going...holistic and strategic...systematic and consistent” (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 276). Pursuant to the latter, the only research regarding expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector that I could locate states that leadership succession should not be “...reduced to purely a planned outcome...but that it ought to be viewed as a collective responsibility and dynamic catalyst towards a new beginning” (Sworn, 2012).

Research Question

The main research question is “what are the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand?”

Assumptions

My first assumption is that expatriates in the non-profit sector in Thailand intend to turn over the senior leadership of the organizations they work for to nationals. I recognize that there are different models of leadership, and that the non-profit sector in Thailand will be more or less dependent on foreign funding for the immediate future. However, I still assume that expatriates actually want to turn over the top leadership at some point to a Thai national.

My second assumption is that the majority of non-profits run by expatriates in Thailand do not have succession plans – emergency or otherwise. I also assume that

almost all of the leaders in these non-profits have not broached the subject with their current board of directors.

My third assumption is in regard to boards of directors of non-profits in Thailand. I assume that many non-profit boards do not provide comprehensive governance to the organizations for which they are responsible. If leadership succession is primarily a function of the board of directors (Gothard & Austin, 2015) this does not bode well for the expatriate to national transition process.

According to Dym, Egmont & Watkins (2015), a board of directors has three main responsibilities; financial oversight and providing “feedback in the management of organizational finances”; setting “policy and strategy”; and hiring, firing, and supervising the program director (Dym, Egmont & Watkins, 2015, pp.9-10). The latter gets complicated in the non-profit sector in Thailand when a non-profit’s CEO is an expatriate, employed by an organization based in a country outside of Thailand, and the non-profit’s local board of directors is comprised of Thai nationals (some of whom are ethnic minorities). Another complication is that nine organizations in this study have both a local and international board of directors; this two-board model adds to the confusion around the board of directors’ role and responsibilities.

Two cornerstones of Thai culture are relationships and hierarchy; using a survey by Hofstede, Thais rank high in the ‘Power-Distance’ Index. This means that ethnic Thais expect and prefer there to be greater hierarchal gaps among people, and that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1962, in Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 1995, p. 17). These deep and different cultural norms impact governance in these non-profits, and I explore some of this in greater detail through this study.

My Role

My role, or positionality in this research is multi-layered. First, several expatriate non-profit leaders who participated in this study are my colleagues - some of whom I have known for almost two decades through our employer and its global affiliations. At first glance, therefore, I am a practitioner who will interview other practitioners. However - because I have living in the United States for the past four years and am no longer a program director in Thailand - I am both an insider and outsider to the setting. Additionally, three Thai national (tribal) participants are my former direct reports.

In order to mitigate this positionality as much as possible, I first emphasized my role as a graduate student and a learner, and committed to sharing the results of this study with all the participants. Second, I hired a trusted ethnic Thai colleague who works outside the non-profit sector to conduct the interviews with the Thai nationals. I hope that this provided the Thai national participants (especially my three former direct reports) with an added layer of comfort and confidentiality during these interviews.

Data Collection Methods

This research is qualitative and exploratory. It is qualitative because it considers each participant as “having expertise broadly and specifically in relation to” his/her own experiences (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991, van Manen, 1990, in Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.9) and each person’s context “as central to understanding” an idea or experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.5). It is exploratory because there is such little information available on this specific type of leadership succession – and no research based in the Thai non-profit sector. Therefore, an exploratory, qualitative interview

design was selected as the methodology of choice, given the overall aim of this study and its goals.

Interview questions were developed based upon information in the literature review and specific to the Thai non-profit sector. Semi-structured interviews were used as these allowed the researcher to probe and veer off-script as needed and appropriate. 18 people were interviewed; ten expatriate, and eight Thai nationals (one ethnic Thai, and seven tribal people from three different tribal groups). Every interview was transcribed verbatim; the Thai language interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English. I used content analysis to tag and code the data from the interviews. Once this data was tagged and coded, I expanded or collapsed its categories as necessary and then explored its patterns and themes.

Overview of Capstone

This Capstone has five chapters, organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This Chapter covers the background and context of this topic, its importance, a brief review of the literature, the research question and methodology, assumptions, and an overview of my positionality as a researcher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on non-profit succession planning. This includes a summary of the two studies on expatriate to national leadership succession (one case study, and one qualitative research study) that have informed this Capstone.

Chapter 3: Data Collection Methods

This chapter provides the details of the qualitative exploratory interview design, including the research question, interview questions, and methods that were used to gather and interpret the data.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter provides an overview and comprehensive description of the research results.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Conclusions

This chapter provides an analysis of the data and the conclusions drawn from this research. It includes the practice implications of this study, a description of the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

Leadership succession impacts all aspects of an organization, yet many non-profits do not have any formal or informal succession plans. This research illuminates some of the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand. This Capstone contributes to the research literature on non-profit succession planning, specific to international contexts. It also fills a major gap in the literature by providing information on expatriate to national transitions. Both expatriates and nationals working in the non-profit sector in Thailand (and in other emerging or lower income country contexts) may find this Capstone relevant as they travel through this same leadership transition.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

Over the past several decades, a flood of information has emerged in the United States regarding leadership succession planning in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The comprehensive process of succession management is linked to organizational sustainability, program effectiveness, and the smooth continuation of services or product delivery (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015; Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams, 2017).

A distinct gap in the non-profit succession literature are studies regarding transitions from expatriates to nationals in lower income or emerging economies. This Capstone begins to fill this gap by examining some of the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession transitions in the non-profit sector in Thailand. The latter is crucial to understand, in part due to the high number of expatriates in Thailand currently holding leadership roles in non-profit organizations. Many expatriates are the founders of these non-profits and nearing retirement age, which highlights the need for succession planning in these organizations.

In this chapter, I review the leadership succession literature beginning with some of the for-profit research that continues to inform the non-profit sector. I provide definitions that are important in order to understand the context of this Capstone – e.g., the description of the status of tribal people in Thailand and the relationship dynamic between ethnic Thais and the tribal minorities. I summarize trends in the literature, which include the continued lack of succession planning, the emotional aspects of saying goodbye, the unique aspects of transition related to organizational founders, reframing succession *planning* as succession *management*

and the critical role of a non-profit's board of directors in leading this process. I also summarize some literature related to succession planning in countries outside the United States – specifically, in Australia, Brazil, Israel, Italy, and Russia. I could locate only two studies that directly address expatriate to national leadership succession; one in a non-profit based in South America, the other in Cambodia. I go into detail regarding these studies and their outcomes, as they have informed my interview questions and this Capstone in general. I discuss assumptions that have been made and point to gaps in the literature. All of these themes have informed the interview questions selected for this research, specific to expatriate to national succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand.

2.0 Background and Context

Over the past five decades an ocean of information has emerged in the United States regarding leadership succession. Broadly defined as “the smooth transfer of power from one leader to the next” (Balsler & Carmin, 2009, p. 185), this watershed transition has been described as “the most important turnover an organization will face” (Grusky, 1960, in Stewart, 2016, p. 43). Ideally, the process should begin years prior to the actual change in leaders to ensure program continuity and service delivery. Although succession planning has been emphasized in overall leadership studies for many years (Gilmore, 1988; Maxwell, 1998) it is still considered one of the “hottest topics” in the corporate world today (McKenna, 2015, p. 5).

The literature regarding for-profit succession has informed the non-profit succession literature in several key areas. Gilmore (1988) discussed the need to take some time, prior to an official change in leadership, to conduct “an analysis of the strategic challenges” facing the organization (Gilmore, 1988, p. 16). Gilmore was also one of the first to describe the transition as a *process*, not an event – a process that

“will vary depending on the circumstances that surround the departure of the leader, the amount of advance notice, the strategic challenges facing the organization, the health of the enterprise...and the availability of qualified successors internally or externally” (Gilmore, 1988, p. 17).

One well-known study in the for-profit world compares the executive succession process to a relay race (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, Mischke, 2002). The four critical components of this race are sequencing, timing, the “baton-passing technique” and “communication/teamwork” (Doherty, 1963, in Dyck, Mauws, Starke, Mischke, 2002, p. 148 -149). Sequencing can be compared to lining up the runners in a way that maximizes the opportunity to win – putting the best runner first, and the most competitive runner last. Regarding timing, it is hypothesized that the baton of leadership is less likely to be dropped “if the principals take the care and time needed to securely pass it” (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, & Mischke, 2002, p.147). The point is that succession should be managed in a timely way so there are no interruptions in service delivery; the authors cite that “a botched pass could...make the firm insolvent” (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, & Mischke, 2002, p.148). How to hand the baton to someone, or receive it (i.e., the “baton-passing technique”) is a metaphor for the incoming and outgoing leader(s). Letting go - or struggling to grab the baton - relates to leadership styles and “different expectations of how the baton should be transferred” (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, & Mischke, 2002, p. 149). Finally, the authors of this study note that proactive communication is essential in strategic succession. This metaphor of a relay race and these concepts can be seen throughout much of the non-profit succession literature and succession design.

The for-profit literature is also replete with the call for corporations to “ensure talent development at all levels” and ensure that board members are engaged. Tichy (2015) writes that

The board is responsible for making succession a top priority and tackling not just the technical but also the political and cultural issues head-on. Its other responsibilities include assisting in developing the leadership pipeline at all levels, benchmarking internal versus external candidates, and ensuring fair and equal exposure for all candidates to the board. (Tichy, 2015, p. 9)

Beginning in the 1980’s, case studies and research specific to leadership transitions in non-profit organizations also emerged, and there are now many books and articles with instructions about how to effectively manage the process (Dym, Egmont, & Watkins, 2011; Adams, 2010, Vanderbloemen and Bird, 2014).

Leadership succession in non-profits is considered more complex than in for-profit corporations, given the “centrality of mission and values” in non-profits (Balser & Carmin, 2009, p. 186). Non-profit transitions involve “immense change” and include “unique challenges and opportunities” (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 272); effective succession planning has also been linked to organizational sustainability and operational effectiveness (Santora & Bozer, 2015, pp. 245-246; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015, pp. 69-70). Conversely, without succession plans, non-profit leadership transitions can be disruptive and “...deleterious to the effective operations of the organization” (Santora & Bozer, 2015, p. 245). The non-profit succession literature also includes the admonition that leaders should “...understand that there is no success without a successor” (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2004, p. 26) and your organization simply “...cannot be great, unless it can be great without you” (Jim Collins, in Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2004, p.171).

Given this resounding call for strategic action, it is unfortunate that many non-profits lack succession plans. In 2006, a survey of almost 2,000 non-profit executives revealed that only 29% had even mentioned the subject with their boards (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006, as cited in Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 273); a 2011 survey of over 3,000 non-profit executive directors revealed that only 17% of the respondents had a “documented succession plan” (Cornelius, Moyers, and Bell, 2011, p.3). Other articles on leadership succession cite that non-profits “...see succession planning as important, yet are doing little about it” and they “appear ill-prepared for and unrealistic about the ...challenges they identify” (Froelich, McKee & Rathge, 2011, p.13). The data from a 10-year survey conducted during 2004 -2014 suggest that succession planning “... has been seriously neglected in both small and large non-profits” (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015, p. 70).

There are some theories as to why non-profits struggle with succession planning more than for-profit corporations. According to a 2017 report by Third Sector New England and the Boston Foundation, 877 non-profit leaders and 330 board members cited fund-raising as their biggest operational challenge (Norton & Linnell, 2017, p. 5). It is difficult to support development, capacity building and leadership transition activities when the non-profit is chronically under-capitalized. This same report also indicates that many non-profit CEOs inherit organizations that are “faltering, frail, dysfunctional, or requiring a turn-around” (Norton & Linnell, 2017, p. 5); these situations may push leadership succession activities further down a non-profit’s list of priorities.

Leadership succession has been discussed in the literature for over fifty years. Despite the admonition that this process is “the most important turnover an organization will face” (Grusky, 1960, in Stewart, 2016, p. 43) and is linked to

program sustainability and the continued provision of services, a swathe of recent surveys indicate that most non-profits are still neglecting this activity.

3.0 Definitions

In this section I will explain and define terms that are relevant to this Capstone.

Expatriate: A non-native person. In the non-profit sector in Thailand, expatriates holding leadership roles come from countries including (but not limited to) the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore.

National:

- a) An ethnic Thai, a member of the majority people group in Thailand.
- b) Tribal person.

It's estimated that there are over 100 million persons representing tribal groups throughout the area that now includes Southwestern China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos, PDR. In Thailand, the six main tribes are the Akha, Hmong, Mien, Lahu, Lisu, and Karen (pronounced "Kah-ren"). Each tribe has its own distinct culture, language, clothing, and traditions – different from each other, and quite distinct from the majority Thai culture in which they live (Lewis, P. & E., 1984, p.7).

Over the past fifty years, the relationship between tribal people and ethnic Thais can be described as precarious at best. Due to irreducibly complex factors (a summary of which fall outside the scope of this Capstone) the Thai government did not allow many tribal persons to secure legal Thai citizenship. Without full legal status, and with limited or no Thai language skills, many tribal people have experienced discrimination and oppression within the majority Thai culture. Although

Thailand boasts "...a vibrant and engaged civil society" and "...is the only theater in the region for action on human rights"... every day in Thailand "...virtually every article in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights is violated...*in the lives of upland minorities*" (Rutherford, 2003, emphasis mine).

By 2017, approximately 60% of the three million tribal people in Thailand have secured full legal status (Wandee Chuenchooprai, personal communication, May 2018) and there is an increase of basic schools in rural areas - allowing tribal children to access education at age-appropriate levels. Although significant progress has been made, tribal people continue to experience discrimination in Thailand. This Thai-tribal, majority – margin relationship is deeply relevant to this Capstone, as some of the representative non-profits have all ethnic Thai staff. Some other non-profits in this study have all ethnic tribal staff, while other organizations have both ethnic Thai and ethnic tribal staff. These dynamics add additional layers of complexity to the succession conversation in these organizations.

Religious order: belonging to a group of people who are united by their practice of religion.

Non-profit sector: organizations not "conducted primarily to make a profit" (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2018).

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Lack of Succession Planning

The most recent research on non-profit succession planning indicates that even after several decades of "formalizing approaches to succession planning (and) executive transition management...a significant gap remains between practice ideals and actual practice" (Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams, 2017, p. 338; Froelich, McKee, & Rathge, 2011, p.15). The data show that non-profits are not using the tools

available to help them engage with this process, or addressing the need to have transition planning in the first place.

There are multiple reasons for the latter, including a lack of awareness (non-profit boards may be unaware of the availability of succession planning tools); a lack of urgency; misunderstanding the “challenges of succession and transition” (boards may see executive transition as a time to just replace a leader, versus a “hiring decision wrapped inside of a large organizational change process”); succession planning tools are considered too complex; and unrealized norms (“the non-profit sector has yet to widely adopt the norm that among the responsibilities of a board are the duties to plan...and to manage the...transition when it occurs”) (Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams, 2017, pp. 341- 342).

The latest data show that most non-profits are not adequately addressing or planning for leadership succession (Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams, 2017).

4.2 Psychological Aspects of Leadership Transitions

In addition to the reasons cited above, another barrier to a transparent discussion of succession planning is psychological; non-profit leaders and their boards may avoid this conversation altogether. From the board’s perspective, the reluctance to initiate this conversation may be due to “the desires of board members to be sensitive to the needs and autonomy” of the executive (Gothard & Austin, 2012, p.274). From the executive’s perspective, the avoidance of the conversation may be due to a range of difficult emotions. These include self-doubt, e.g., feeling that he/she may be “abandoning friends and colleagues” (Austin & Gilmore, 1993, p.37); a loss of self-worth and place (Weese & Crabtree, 2004, p. 25); and low self-confidence and fear (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p.27). Fear about succession includes the fear of the unknown, fear that succession will happen sooner than they are ready for it, fear

that all they have done “will be lost” under someone new, and fear of losing a level of comfort that they have achieved (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 27). One executive noted that “my lament...was more a focus on what I was losing...versus what I could gain from a new role” (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 43).

Because many leaders “...place their entire identity in their job” (Vanderbloemen and Bird, 2014, p. 41), even contemplating this change requires “...considerable self-reflection and assessment” (Adams, 2005, in Gothard & Austin, p. 272). This period requires a leader to “... reflect on what might have been...to disengage from satisfying relationships, and to come to terms with one’s accomplishments and disappointments” (Austin & Gilmore, 1993, in Gothard & Austin, p. 272). The exit also “...requires a proactive letting go” (Adams, 2005, in Gothard & Austin, 2012, p. 12).

A slew of challenging emotions may prevent non-profit leaders from discussing succession planning. These include the fear of losing one’s identity, fear of the unknown, and fear of losing the status, community, and self-worth that was associated with the leadership role.

4.3 Psychological aspects of transition/ founder-leaders of non-profits

Addressing the emotional aspects of succession may be especially difficult for founders of non-profits, and founder succession transitions have been described as “the most complex and challenging” of all (Adams, 2010, p. 55). Founders have dedicated their entire lives to a certain cause, and

working on the cause is a calling. This zeal makes thinking about preparing the organization for life without the founder difficult. There is an absence of clarity regarding letting go, how long to lead, what would trigger a

decision to move on, and how to go about making these decisions. (Adams, 2010, p. 64)

Additionally, issues of one's personal identity become particularly acute with non-profit founders. In some cases, the organization's identity and the founder's identity become one, or the organization is the founder and vice-versa (Balser & Carmin, 2009; Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014). This enmeshment makes a discussion of leaving - let alone leaving - all the more difficult. Santoro and Sarros (1995) discuss a case where the founder of a non-profit refused to identify a successor. This was due to his belief that "...he was immortal, that he was the one and only leader of the organization, and that he could not be replaced or replicated" (Santoro & Sarros, 1995, p. 30). In this case, the founder began to hand over the control of the organization only after he had experienced two personal tragedies. The literature is full of similar case studies regarding non-profit founders that have great difficulty letting go (Santora & Sarros, 1995; Hernandez & Leslie, 2001; Santora, Sarros & Esposito, 2012).

In response to these mixed emotions around succession, leaders of non-profits are encouraged to "recognize their own limitations and mortality", "identify a successor and convey their thoughts as soon as they reach a level of comfort in their leadership position" (Santora & Sarros, 1995, p.31) and even invite on-going feedback on their level of humility (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 85).

Founder successions are particularly difficult due to the complex emotions surrounding the exit. Some founders believe they are immortal; others cannot imagine letting go of what has been their deepest calling and life's purpose. Other non-profit founders may feel that they will lose their identity if they are no longer leading the organizations they founded.

4.4 Reframing Succession Planning as Succession Management

Recent research on non-profit succession planning describes a key shift in framing succession itself. Instead of using the frame of succession *planning*, the literature points to the frame of leadership succession *management*. Instead of searching for “...a well-qualified replacement for a particular position in an organization” (Metz, 1998 as cited in Gothard & Austin, 2013, p.276) succession management (also referred to as “executive transition management”) focuses on developing leaders over time, and raising up individuals who embody the organization’s mission and values. Succession management is a process that can be “...formal, ongoing...holistic and strategic...systematic and consistent” (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 276). In other literature, this different frame is referred to as organizational “sustainability management” and takes this concept one step further. Organizational sustainability management includes succession planning, but also identifies and addresses an organization’s vulnerabilities so that it

is not dependent on any one leader, funder, strategy or way of thinking in order to survive and grow. Organizational sustainability planning touches on everything from framing choices for the future (including asking whether the organization should exist or what different structure it should take) to building a more diverse staff and board leadership. (Norton & Linnell, 2017)

I think that changing this frame - from the need to have a succession *plan* to a frame where an organization and its board are providing ongoing succession management – has a number of positive implications. One positive implication is this might help mitigate the difficult emotions around an executive exit. By talking about succession and leadership capacity building on a regular basis, and making the discussion truly “...formal, ongoing... holistic...systematic and consistent” (Gothard

& Austin, 2013, p. 276) this should hopefully lessen the secrecy around succession, and help to address the fears surrounding it as well.

The literature points to the fact that the non-profit sector is currently re-framing succession planning, referring to it as executive succession management (Gothard & Austin, 2013, p. 276) and/or sustainability management (Norton & Linnell, 2017). This shifts the frame away from a one-time, solitary action (i.e., replacing a leader) to a broader, evolving, transparent discussion about building leaders, developing capacity, and organizational sustainability. If the latter is managed well, it could have many positive implications.

4.4.1 Opportunity for Re-Casting Vision and Direction of the Organization

The literature also points to leadership transition as a pivotal season in which to re-cast and/or reaffirm a non-profit's essential vision, mission, and goals. This includes taking the time to do a full analysis of the "strategic challenges facing the organization" and requires consideration of

the organization's past and future, including the ways in which the wider environment is posing new problems or opportunities. The two greatest risks are carrying on business as usual when the organization needs to consider a dramatic shift, and conversely, overreacting to the current leadership by moving to an opposite type without a careful appraisal of the true strategic context. (Gilmore, 1988, pp. 16-17)

Clinging to the past, or excessive efforts to maintain the status quo, may "impair an organization's ability to thrive and survive at times when change is essential" (Balser & Carmin, 2009, p. 198). To this point, Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams note that succession is not just acquiring a new leader, but it's a "hiring decision wrapped inside of a *large organizational change process*" (Tebbe, Stewart,

Hughes, & Adams, 2017, pp. 341- 342, emphasis mine). Sworn (2012) adds to this by emphasizing that leadership succession should not be “...reduced to purely a planned outcome...but that it ought to be viewed as a collective responsibility and *dynamic catalyst towards a new beginning*” (Sworn, 2012, emphasis mine).

I agree that prior to replacing a leader, an organization must take a step back and engage in a pro-active, intentional analysis of the current context in which it exists. This analysis must include a review of current social, economic, legal, environmental and political variables and the changing trends which impact the non-profit’s ability to engage in its mission. This activity must be done in preparation for a leadership succession.

The literature does not address what an organization should do with the data from these types of evaluations. Many non-profits, even after completing a comprehensive review of the changing trends which impact their mission and having all the current contextual data in front of them, may not have the expertise to know what to do with it, and/or how to make needed changes.

Evaluating a non-profit’s current context and having a clear vision for its future is an important step in the leadership succession process, and should be a part of succession management and/or a non-profit’s sustainability management activities.

4.5 Role of the Board of Directors in Leadership Succession

A non-profit’s board of directors plays a pivotal role in succession management, and the consensus in the literature is that the board is responsible in terms of initiating and guiding the process through the arc of its beginning, middle, and even after the change in leaders (Gothard & Austin, 2012; Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes & Adams, 2017; Tichy, 2015; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015). Some proponents of succession management emphasize that a team of key

personnel is responsible for overseeing a successful transition, yet stress that the board of directors is still the primary driver and the board should not “abdicate the responsibility for this transition by assigning the work to someone else” (Weese & Crabtree, 2004, p. 53).

It is ironic, therefore, that many boards may “...rely on their executive director to initiate the planning process” (Gothard & Austin, 2012, p. 274). Additionally, several articles emphasize that “...in the end, most of the success of a transition rises and falls on the shoulders of the outgoing” leader (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 57). This appears to be a significant contradiction. One cannot assume that leadership succession is the board’s responsibility while simultaneously assuming and communicating that the non-profit’s CEO will initiate and lead the process.

I think that the unmitigated emphasis on the board of directors’ role in leadership succession reveals the underlying assumption that non-profit boards are engaged, and board members understand their roles and responsibilities. Some research points to the fact that weak and unengaged boards do not contribute to successful leadership transitions (Stewart, 2016, p. 49-51; Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes, & Adams, 2017, p. 341) yet overall, non-profit boards in succession literature are discussed as though they are healthy and provide continuous good governance (Gothard & Austin, 2012). My experience after working in the non-profit sector for the duration of my career (in Boston, Massachusetts, and in Southeast Asia) is that the latter is not always true. Some of the other literature regarding non-profits also points to the challenge of disengaged and ineffective boards (Marx & Davis, 2012; Jaskyte & Holland, 2015).

Non-profit succession literature emphasizes the role of an organization’s board of directors in initiating and supervising the leadership succession process. This

literature on non-profit succession seems to assume that most boards are healthy and functioning, and can handle these tasks with aplomb. Some literature indicates that the CEO is responsible for leading the organization through this process.

4.6 Non-profit Leadership Transitions: Minister/ Pastor Succession

Several books have been written regarding the leadership succession of Protestant church pastors in the United States (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014; Weese & Crabtree, 2004). A faith community may be viewed as a non-profit organization, and many aspects of pastoral transitions are relevant to the overall non-profit sector - including the faith-based, non-profit sector in countries outside the United States.

While the succession literature for Protestant pastors borrows heavily from the literature on general leadership studies and organizational culture (Schein, 2010; Heifetz, 1994; Cameron & Quinn, 2011, Gilmore, 1988; and Grenier, 1997) there are several points that are applicable to leaders with the non-profit sector in Thailand.

First, although this literature does go into detail regarding activities that should be a part of the transition process (e.g., developing an emergency backup plan, and having a succession policy, sustainability review, executive transition plan and timeline, etc.) Vanderbloemen & Bird (2014) emphasize that succession is a process, not an event; there is no universal approach or set of rules that one must follow to engage in it. One important task is that the process must be done in the context of a church's (or organization's) specific culture (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 29, 30, 95). They state that the succession conversation has to be natural and ongoing, it should not be avoided, and leaders can't wonder "when to think about succession...but must have a mindset that always thinks about succession" (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p.181).

This literature also goes into detail (pursuant to Section 4.4) regarding how an anticipated change in leadership must be the catalyst for a comprehensive evaluation of the changing trends that affect an organization's mission. The essential question is not "who will our next leader be?" but "should our organization have a long-term future?" (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 115; Weese & Crabtree, 2004, p. 53).

While these books provide comprehensive overviews of the succession process, one salient point applicable to the non-profit sector in Thailand relates to the characteristics of pastor-leaders, and how these characteristics may help or hinder the succession conversation. Non-profit founders have often dedicated their entire lives to a certain cause and, as Adams notes, "working on the cause is a calling" (Adams, 2010, p. 64). Vanderbloemen & Bird frame this "dedication to a cause" in a church context, stating that perhaps there is no other career that

ties identity to job more than the pastorate. What other job coincides with more key parts of life? Who else performs their daughter's wedding at work? Who else buries longtime friends as part of their job? The same things that make the pastorate the best job on the planet can also make it the hardest type of work to leave. (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2004, p. 41)

An additional point emphasized is that if leaders ignore succession planning or even discussing it, these leaders are not leaving any space in their lives should anything happen in the future that (temporarily or permanently) takes them away from their work. They say that "...if you view succession planning...as unrealistic...there are unknown variables. These variables include not knowing the future burdens and dreams God might develop in your heart...or how your health or family circumstances might change" (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 32). One of my biases regarding leaders of non-profits in Thailand – particularly founder-leaders – is

that some of them seem to operate within a frame of invincibility, as though there will never be anything else in their lives that would take them away from the non-profit at which they work, or lessen their enthusiasm for its mission. Therefore, this latter point of Vandembloemen & Bird's seems especially important.

The literature regarding pastoral transitions adds to the dialogue on non-profit leadership succession. It emphasizes the need for ongoing and transparent conversation about succession, the importance of analyzing the current context impacting the non-profit prior to selecting a new leader, and the admonition that ignoring or avoiding the leadership succession conversation may lead to dire consequences.

In the next section I will discuss leadership succession planning in countries outside the United States. This includes comparative studies across Australia, Brazil, Italy, Israel and the Russian non-profit sector. The section also includes a review of the only expatriate to national leadership succession studies I could locate: a case study of a non-profit in Bolivia and Ecuador, and a qualitative research study in Cambodia.

4.7 Non-profit Leadership Succession Planning in Countries outside the United States

The social, economic, and political context in any country affects its non-profit sector, and there is some scattered research on leadership succession in countries outside the United States. The *International Leadership Journal* devoted its fall, 2013 issue to this topic, highlighting succession planning in the non-profit sector in Israel, Brazil, and Italy.

Not surprisingly, overall research results were similar to what has been found in the United States; most of the non-profits in these countries are unprepared for

leadership succession. In Israel, only 16% of the organizations in the study had a succession plan, and the majority of executive directors “never or rarely advise their boards on succession planning” (Bozer & Kuna, 2013, p. 20). Unique factors which impact the Israeli non-profit sector include a sense of complacency in NGOs, resulting from the “rapid growth and growing dominance of the Israeli third sector from the late 1970’s through today” (Bozer & Kuna, 2013, p. 23) and a volatile and unpredictable political environment. The latter contributes to short-term, rather than long-term, planning (Bozer & Kuna, 2013, p. 23).

The non-profit sector in Brazil experienced rapid growth through the second half of the 1990’s as the country moved forward after 20 years of “authoritarian military dictatorship” (Comini, Paolino & Feitosa, 2013, p.28). A survey of 100 CEOs of Brazilian non-profits showed that there is a profound lack of awareness regarding succession in Brazil. One of the barriers to implementing succession planning was cited as “lack of interest” in the top CEO position, as this role is “...usually unpaid” (Comini, Paolino & Feitosa, 2013, p. 44).

Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito & Bassi (2015) took some of the latter research data and conducted a broader study, comparing results on non-profit succession planning in Australia, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Russia, and the United States. Across these six countries, the results showed that non-profits have “overwhelmingly not planned for executive succession” (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito & Bassi, 2015, p.70). Due to the fact that succession planning is linked to organizational sustainability, this study ends with a warning: non-profit organizations should “consider the consequences of not planning for executive succession” (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito & Bassi, 2015, p.80). Non-profits, *regardless of their global*

location, should “...heed Gothard and Austin’s (2013) and Gilmore’s (2012) advice that

non-profit governing bodies should connect succession to strategy to allow an organization, its staff, and its constituents an equal share in the benefits of a coordinated strategy. Achieving this coordination would not only ensure seamless succession outcomes, but also enhance the sustainability or organizations by perpetuating and improving the cultures of those organizations. (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito & Bassi, 2015, p. 80)

There has been some research conducted on leadership succession in countries outside the United States. Most of this research points to the fact that the non-profits in these countries are not adequately addressing or managing the leadership succession process.

4.7.1 Expatriate to National Leadership Succession in Bolivia and Ecuador

Ricke-Kiely and McMerty-Brummer (2012) describe a case study of leadership transition in a faith-based non-profit with branches in Bolivia and Ecuador. This research sheds light on the many challenges of cross-cultural leadership transitions in an organization - similar to countless non-profits outside the US - that is a) dependent on U.S. funding; b) owned and governed by a U.S. board of directors; c) legally represented by a local board of directors, and d) has both nationals and expatriates in leadership positions.

The non-profit in this case study was founded by a “passionate” American who possessed “overwhelming confidence and focused resolve” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 188). He opened a program in Bolivia, quickly established a U.S. 501-c3 to process donations, and formed a board of directors (made up of three of his closest friends). After four years of operation, the program in

Bolivia was turned over to a local religious order and the non-profit opened a second branch in Ecuador. It was during this period that the founder was killed in a bus accident. His wife (described as a “modestly educated Bolivian woman”) stepped into a leadership role, relying on “...a team of international volunteers to manage many of the logistical and technical responsibilities involved with running an international NGO” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 188).

From this point forward, the leadership structure at this non-profit went through multiple iterations – each with its own challenges. Two of these leadership models pertinent to this Capstone are described as follows:

a) National and Expatriate

In this model, the non-profit Program Director is an Ecuadorian national. The Assistant Director, working *under* the authority of the national, is an expatriate. The Program Director oversees all the national, Ecuadorian staff; the expatriate manages the work “led and staffed by the team of international volunteers” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p.193).

According to the case study, this model resulted in “turmoil and issues of power struggles” due to “...a lack of clear separation of roles and defined hierarchy of decision-making authority” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p.190). The expatriate Associate Director acted like a co-director, assuming “greater responsibility and authority” than her position warranted (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p.190). She also managed the English-language communication with the U.S. board of directors, which made the Program Director feel as though she was excluded from important “decision making conversations”. This created distrust between the national and the expatriate.

b) *National, National, and Expatriate*

In this model, the Program Director and Assistant Program Director are nationals. The “Associate” Program Director is an expatriate who supervises the international volunteers. These three roles make up the leadership team.

In this non-profit, the role of the Associate Director (filled by an expatriate) had frequent turnover, resulting in a “setback in institutional knowledge and the continual rebuilding of trust” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 191). As the role of the Assistant Director grew more prominent and in alignment with the Program Director, this created a perceived two versus one dynamic, pushing the Associate Director out. Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer note that

while the three person leadership team offered a creative tension and balance of experience, perspective, and cultures, *cultural misunderstandings and misconceptions* often hindered the team. These *cultural differences were not only between South Americans and North Americans but also between religious people and lay people. A language barrier between Spanish-speaking sisters and English-speaking volunteers (who were learning to function in a second, and sometimes, third or fourth language) compounded these cultural differences.* (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 191, emphasis mine)

There are several other key points to note from this case study. The non-profit’s Bolivian branch had to close, because the religious order “...to whom it had been entrusted could no longer support it financially” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 190). Last, the U.S.-based board of directors “took control” of the branch in Ecuador, and its Ecuadorian board of directors - determining that the local board was a “risk and...liability” with many “inactive members... with potential legal

authority to dissolve the organization or compromise its activities” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p. 189). The latter raises power and authority issues which need to be explored further in the overall expatriate to national succession conversation.

Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer’s case study sheds light into the complexity of cross- cultural leadership and leadership transitions. While the death of a founder is mentioned in the literature as one of the reasons why non-profits need succession plans, it is sobering to read about a non-profit where this actually occurred. The authors also end with a warning: because leadership transitions are hugely significant in the life of an organization “...chance should not determine how and when” it occurs (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p.198).

4.7.2 Expatriate to National Leadership Succession in Cambodia

Within the non-profit succession literature, I found one qualitative research study that analyzed the unique aspects of transition from expatriates to nationals in emerging economies. The main purpose of “A Leadership Journey of Change: Expatriate to National Leadership Succession in the Kingdom of Cambodia” was to “explore the influencing factors of cross-cultural leadership succession from expatriate to Cambodian leaders within the non-profit sector in Cambodia” (Sworn, 2012, p. 7).

Sworn first provides information about Cambodia itself, critical to the context of her research. Key details include Cambodia’s status as a post-conflict nation, still affected by the atrocity of its civil war and genocide. It is estimated that almost three million Cambodians were killed by the Khmer Rouge throughout the period of 1975-1979 and there remains a significant lack of trust among Cambodians which is “associated with their trauma of betrayal” (Sworn, 2012, p. 6).

In the early 1990's, as part of Cambodia's rebuilding process, the United Nations and other international organizations implemented numerous economic and social development programs. These programs depended on external financial and human resources. Even though Cambodia is now an emerging economy, expatriates still occupy many leadership roles because they continue to be associated with "funding, status, knowledge, credibility and stability" (Sworn, 2012, p. 20). Sworn also adds that the non-profit sector in Cambodia is "constantly shifting...due to a changing environment, and the transient nature of expatriate workers" (Sworn, p. 20).

The goal of Sworn's research was to uncover a) the processes and outcomes of leadership succession for both Cambodians and expatriates; b) to analyze the experiences and effectiveness of the planning and implementation of cross-cultural leadership succession, and c) "to make recommendations to contribute to a more empowered, effective, and sustainable national leadership" (Sworn, 2012, p. 8).

A purposeful sample methodology was used to identify 6 Cambodians and 7 expatriates for a total of 13 research participants. All the expatriates had the direct experience of a "leadership handover, or attempted leadership handover" within their organizations; all the Cambodians held leadership positions following succession from an expatriate leader or founder. Sworn then linked the responses from the expatriate leader and the Cambodian successor in the same organization, creating what she called a 'succession pair', in order to have a "comparative perspective on the same succession process" (Sworn, 2012, p.22). The expatriate participants had lived in Cambodia for an average of 17 years and represented 6 different nationalities. The Cambodian participants had 5 to 15 years of leadership experience (Sworn, 2012, p. 33).

Sworn's literature review identified four main themes. These themes are a) the essence of leadership; b) leading within a cross-cultural context; c) organizational culture in the non-profit sector; and d), leadership succession. Using semi-structured interviews (which were audio-recorded and then transcribed) Sworn used content analysis to identify, categorize and link participant responses to each one of these four themes.

Under the first theme a), the "Essence of Leadership", participant responses included statements regarding leadership styles, character and practices; power dynamics; leadership role models; vision; trust; leadership knowledge and learning; support and empowerment; cross cultural communication; and gender issues. In this cluster of responses, trust, cross-cultural communication, and issues related to gender and leadership were cited the most.

Sworn then takes each sub-theme and provides more details. For example, regarding "trust": 86% of the comments made by the Cambodians were negative (the words 'negative' and 'positive' are not defined). Responses included "the need for trust between expatriate and Cambodian leaders" and "the need to develop trust from Cambodian leaders with their own staff". The Cambodian participants stated that for the expatriate leader "...it is not easy to trust Cambodian people" and that "...most local (Cambodians) trust expatriates more than local people" (Sworn, 2012, p. 37).

Regarding the second theme (b, leading within a cross-cultural environment) corruption was cited as the second most pressing national cultural issue by the Cambodians – along with an expressed desire to see this change (Sworn, 2012, p. 39). Another theme was the Cambodian civil war; this was mentioned by expatriates in the context of its continued influence, and the "distrust that still exists" between fellow Cambodians. It was interesting to note that the Cambodians "did not refer to the civil

war specifically, but comments... related to how the country must move past this” (Sworn, 2012, p.40). “Who would understand the dynamics of what Cambodians had gone through with this long war and still a lot of fundamental distrust...impacting their culture?” (Expatriate male respondent, p. 40).

Regarding c), organizational culture and the non-profit sector, the issues of corruption and nepotism were cited most often. The Cambodians said that they were very concerned by the prevalence of nepotism within organizations “...that afford the local leader protection and impunity from any authority structure” (Sworn, 2012, p. 41). One Cambodian male respondent stated that “...local people have more power when they get their relatives in, we call it relative commission, and they take sides, as relatives are never wrong, never wrong” (Sworn, 2012, p. 41).

Under the 4th theme (d, outcomes of the leadership succession journey) there were responses related to the succession process, the transition stakeholders, the timing of the transition, and issues post-succession. The desired process and time period for succession “varied considerably among the respondents”. Both expatriate and Cambodian staff mentioned the need to include all staff in the process, and the Cambodians felt that many transitions were too rushed (Sworn, 2012, p. 45). Donor relations was also raised. The Cambodians said donors do not trust them yet, and expatriates take the lead in communicating with overseas donors. The expatriates confirmed the latter, mentioning that “the transition for (overseas) donors to support local leaders takes time” (Sworn, 2012, p. 46).

After identifying the key themes in the data and linking these with theories in the literature review, Sworn then extracts the four main themes that cut across both the expatriate and Cambodian participant responses. These are a) cultural factors; b)

power distance; c) gender egalitarianism; and d) corruption issues. Key points of note are as follows:

Cultural Factors: The data revealed that the Cambodians stereotyped expatriate values and practices, even though the expatriates represented six different nationalities. Expatriates stereotyped Cambodian characteristics in the same manner.

Power Distance: Sworn writes that “examples of power distance dynamics were common... Cambodia has a high power distance score (see Hofstede et al, 2010) which impacts its leadership values and behavior, and organizational culture and practices” (Sworn, 2012, p. 53).

The Cambodians also noted that their culture is changing, particularly regarding the “traditional collective family structure” (Sworn, p. 54).

Gender Equality: There is continued gender discrimination in Cambodia, which impacts females in leadership positions (Sworn, p. 54).

Corruption Issues: Corruption impacts organizational trust, transparency, fund raising and accountability (Sworn, p. 55).

Last, Sworn discusses organizational effectiveness after leadership succession as perceived by the research participants. The Cambodians said that expatriates should “...develop an exit strategy from the very beginning” in order to contribute to an effective succession process. All participants mentioned the need to have “*joint responsibility and flexibility*” - as the Cambodians felt their new responsibilities were more difficult than they had anticipated, and the expatriates “found it hard to let go” (Sworn, p. 57).

Finally, the importance of *sharing the vision* for the organization was highlighted as a key factor. The Cambodians “expressed a need to allow the local

leader enough time to be confident in the vision and direction of the organization” (Sworn, p. 57). Additionally,

The effectiveness of leadership succession can be seen when (national) *leaders are able to enlist others in a common vision (Kouzes and Posner, 2007) that they believe in, develop, and own themselves, rather than repeating purely what has been done by the expatriate.*” (Sworn, p. 58, emphasis mine)

Although there are salient and profound cultural differences between Cambodia and Thailand, these nations do share some of the same, broader values. For example, Cambodia and Thailand are both high power distance countries (Hofstede, 2010). The concept of “saving face” is also critical in Thailand, as it is in Cambodia. These deep cultural values affect the way that people build and maintain relationships.

It is unfortunate that this study didn’t have more detail regarding the emotional aspects of transition. It was mentioned that the expatriates had difficulty letting go, but that was the extent of the discussion. The emotional aspects of executive transition is a major theme in both the for-profit and non-profit succession literature, so it is surprising that this was not more prevalent in Sworn’s outcomes.

Last, I highlighted Sworn’s final sentence about the importance of having a shared leadership vision (see above) because I think that is a critical point which must not be overlooked. Five out of the seven expatriates interviewed were the founders of their non-profits. If national leaders “...need to be able to enlist others...in a common vision that they develop and own themselves” then a corollary point of discussion is whether expatriates should be founding non-profits overseas in the first place.

5.0 Gaps in the Literature

A glaring gap in the current literature are studies regarding leadership transition from expatriates to nationals in lower income or emerging economies. In

the fall, 2013 issue of the *International Leadership Journal*, the editors ask for “more international research on non-profit executive succession” and state that an “exploration of these issues in non-US countries would be extremely beneficial to see how other countries prepare for non-profit executive succession” (*International Leadership Journal*, Fall, 2013). Yet this call for more international research doesn’t mention leadership transition from expatriates to nationals in any country of the world. The case study based in South America (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012) and Sworn’s qualitative research (2012) in Cambodia are two first steps in this conversation, but much more needs to be done.

In the non-profit sector in lower income or emerging economies, there are a number of expatriates in leadership roles. In the Thai non-profit sector many of these expatriates are the founders of these organizations; several founders are retiring now, or preparing to retire in the next several years. In my own (U.S. based) organization I know that approximately 35% of the workforce employed overseas will retire within the next five years. All of this makes increased understanding of the expatriate to national succession issues even more urgent.

6.0 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have reviewed the literature on non-profit leadership succession. Although leadership succession has been linked to organizational effectiveness, continuity of services and organizational sustainability, most non-profits (in the United States, and also in several other countries outside the United States) do not have succession plans, and succession is not discussed at board meetings. There are several ideas about why non-profits continue to struggle with succession planning. These include the fact that many organizations are chronically under-funded, and simply don’t have the capital to support leadership development

and transition activities. It has also been suggested that non-profit boards may be unaware of the tools available to guide them through this process - or they may know about these tools, but consider them too complex to be helpful.

The psychological aspects of leadership transition is a prominent theme throughout the literature. Non-profit leaders who dedicate their entire lives to a certain cause may struggle to let go, and/or not know how to leave or when to leave. Knowing when to let go, grieving the loss of one's life purpose, and relinquishing one's identity in relationship to the non-profit itself are some of the particularly acute emotions for founder-leaders. In order to address these emotions, it is suggested that non-profit leaders should acknowledge their own limitations, openly discuss succession, and invite feedback into their job performance and even their level of humility.

There are two major themes in the current literature about non-profit succession planning that are intricately linked. The first theme is the call to re-frame succession planning as sustainability planning, which shifts the focus away from simply replacing a leader. Sustainability planning includes plans for succession, but these plans are integrated into the mission, strategic priorities, goals and sustainability review of the non-profit.

The second theme, linked to the first, is the call to re-evaluate the non-profit's vision, mission and goals prior to hiring a new leader. Changing economic, political, environmental and social trends surrounding the non-profit warrant a full evaluation to assess whether the non-profit has a future – or not. The question is not who the next leader will be, but whether the non-profit will continue to exist in its present form. These two themes overlap, as an on-going assessment of changing trends can be a part of the organization's sustainability review.

A non-profit board of directors is the primary team responsible for initiating and overseeing the leadership succession process, although some literature suggests that the non-profit's existing CEO is responsible for initiating these conversations and guiding the organization through the process.

A profound gap in the literature are studies regarding expatriate to national leadership succession in lower income or emerging economies; I was able to locate only two studies regarding this specific type of succession. One case study, based in Bolivia and Ecuador, sheds light into the complexity of this transition and the complications that arise from having two boards of directors. This case study provides information about the benefits and challenges of several iterations of expatriate and national leadership, which is helpful to other non-profits who are experimenting with similar models.

The other study I could locate regarding expatriate to national succession in the non-profit sector was based in Cambodia. The non-profits in this study had already experienced an expatriate to national leadership transition. Key results include the need to discuss succession (and an expatriate exit strategy) from the very beginning. Participants also mentioned the need for "joint responsibility and flexibility" due to the profound cross-cultural context of this transition. Last, this study notes that successful expatriate to national transition can and will occur when the national believes in and develops his/her own vision for the non-profit and does not simply follow the expatriate's vision.

In the next Chapter, I will discuss the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

1.0 Introduction and Research Question

Over the past 30 years, studies regarding leaders and leadership have proliferated (Heifetz, 1994; Grenier, 1997; Gilmore, 1988; Maxwell, 1998; Schein, 2010; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In the midst of these studies lies the theme of leadership succession - its importance, its impact, and its relevance in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Despite tomes of research on this topic, I could find just two studies regarding expatriate to national leadership succession in lower income or emerging economies (Sworn, 2012; Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012). This Capstone begins to fill this gap by examining some of the factors related to this unique type of leadership succession. The research question for this study is “What are the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand?”

In this chapter, I describe the methodology I used to conduct this research. This study is based on qualitative research and uses an exploratory, qualitative interview design with semi-structured interviews and a purposeful sample. I describe the process through which I developed the interview questions. I discuss content analysis, and how I used this technique to sort the data into categories and subcategories in order to trace and identify themes and patterns. I close this chapter by discussing ethical considerations and the study’s limitations.

2.0 Methodology: Exploratory, Qualitative Interview Design

In order to answer the research question, it was critical to choose a design that would maximize the opportunity to hear each participant’s thoughts, feelings, experiences and knowledge within his/her context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The latter

is especially important when the research participants come from many different ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The essence of qualitative research is “viewing, understanding, and engaging with people as having expertise broadly and specifically in relation to their own experiences” (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991, van Manen, 1990, in Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.9). This type of research strives to “understand individuals, groups, and phenomena in their natural settings in ways that are contextualized and reflect the meaning that people make out of their own experiences” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.2). Qualitative research views context “...as central to understanding any person, group, experience, or phenomena” and acknowledges “the subjectivity of all researchers” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.5). It assumes that the research process itself “generates meaning and important frames for understanding data” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Maxwell, 2013, in Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 10).

Therefore, an exploratory, qualitative interview design was selected as the methodology of choice, given the overall aim of this study and its goals. An exploratory, qualitative interview design was selected because it views each participant’s *context* as critical to understanding the data. It seeks to understand *meaning*; the researcher is a part of the process, and is invested in how people make sense out of their experiences. It also acknowledges that *relationships* are a key, inherent part of the research process itself (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.10). Last, the research is exploratory because there are no existing studies on expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand.

This research complies with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46.102 (2009) and is deemed IRB exempt.

3.0 Data Collection Methods

The data was gathered through in-depth, qualitative semi-structured interviews, supplemented by observations (e.g., prosody and nonverbal communication, organizational artifacts, etc.).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the preferred methodology to gather the data. This is because the ‘semi-structured’ format begins with a list of pre-determined questions, but the researcher is able to probe, and ask other questions which help clarify answers and gather more information. Pre-determined questions and the opportunity to probe provides the climate in which “stories and narratives” may be shared (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2001). Semi-structured interviews are also known for being “flexible, accessible and intelligible...and...capable of disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, in Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246).

I hired a trusted colleague (a Thai national who works outside the non-profit sector) as my research assistant. After the interview questions were developed (see Section 5 of this Chapter) this assistant translated them from English into Thai. Together, we reviewed the translation of each question to ensure that it was clear and unambiguous in the Thai language and in a Thai context. I reviewed exploratory, qualitative interview design with this assistant, discussed when and how to probe, and together we conducted one interview in the Thai language. This pilot interview was a training opportunity for my assistant, and it allowed us to vet the Thai translation of the questions for linguistic and cultural accuracy. (Data gathered from this pilot interview is not included in the survey results.)

I sent a letter of invitation to participate to 21 persons during the period of October and November, 2017. (Please refer to Appendix C.) This letter was sent via email. It explained the purpose of the research, provided details regarding my graduate study, and invited the recipient to participate. In the letter, I suggested two dates and times for the interview and invited the participants to choose the date, time and venue that was most convenient for them. The letter closed with a reiteration of the aims of this research, the confidentiality of the responses, and my approach as a graduate student and a learner. I referenced the informed consent form, and attached a copy to the email. Because I have met and/or worked with 14 out of the 21 persons who were invited to participate, I personalized each letter of invitation.

I first wrote this letter of invitation and the informed consent form in English. (Please refer Appendix A.) Then I had both the letter and informed consent form translated into Thai. Once these translations were complete, I sent the letter and informed consent via email to each Thai research participant.

My research assistant conducted seven interviews with Thai nationals. I conducted ten interviews with expatriates and one interview with a Thai national. At the beginning of each interview, the informed consent form was reviewed and signed by the participant. Each participant agreed to have the interview recorded.

These semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout the period of January and February, 2018. The interviews ranged in time from one hour to 2.5 hours, with an average of 90 minutes per interview. Each interview was recorded using “Audio Note” (an audio-recording device accessible on a laptop computer or mobile phone), and then manually transcribed. The Thai interviews were manually transcribed into the Thai language, and then translated into English by my Thai

assistant with assistance from one other Thai (unrelated to the non-profit sector) who is currently living in the United States.

The process of manually transcribing the interviews proved invaluable, as I was able to hear each interview as an observer, catch phrases and expressions about which I had not been previously aware, and listen to the way I used probes and interacted with the participant. The audio recording of these interviews also allowed me and my assistant to document our observations of each participant's emotions, prosody and body language during the interview – all of which enhanced the understanding of the words that were spoken.

15 interviews were conducted in person. My research assistant conducted two interviews using Facetime and WhatsApp, respectively. I conducted one expatriate interview via Skype, as the participant had moved back to the United States.

4.0 Sample

A non-random, “purposeful” sampling technique identifies and selects “individuals or groups of individuals” who have extensive experience and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter (Patton, 2002, in Palinkas et al, 2001, p. 2). Additionally, these individuals should be willing to participate, and have “the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner” (Bernard, 2002 & Spradley, 2009 in Palinkas et al, 2001, p. 2).

Due to my (15+ years) experience working in the non-profit sector in Thailand I identified 21 individuals (both expatriate and national) who work in the top leadership positions at eleven non-profits. These individuals possess the knowledge and experience that is relevant to the purpose of this research, and were accessible to me and my assistant within the given time frame. Therefore, given the specific

purpose of this research, a “purposeful sample” was used to intentionally and strategically select the group of participants.

The eleven non-profits in this study are all legally registered Foundations, and nine organizations have a corresponding 501c-3 status (or its equivalent) program branch in countries outside Thailand. Ten out of the eleven non-profits are legally registered as social welfare organizations and provide services such as community development, micro-enterprise, education, and/or care for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of trafficking in persons. The other legally registered Foundation provides humanitarian assistance (specifically, relief and community development) and education via a national telecommunications platform. Seven non-profits in the sample are faith-based organizations. This variable (faith-based, or not faith-based) was not considered in the selection of these organizations.

Only one non-profit in this sample has experienced a successful expatriate to national leadership transition. Six non-profits in this sample attempted succession one or more times - expatriate to Thai national, expatriate to tribal national, and expatriate to expatriate - and failed. The latter will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Ten expatriates and eight nationals (seven tribal persons from three different tribes, and one ethnic Thai) agreed to participate, for a total of 18 participants.

The national participants are an average of 47 years old and have an average of 14 years of senior leadership experience. In this group, one tribal person holds the top “Program Director/CEO” position. Two hold the “Assistant Program Director” or “Associate Program Director” role. The other tribal participants each hold a senior leadership role. The ethnic Thai participant holds the “Associate Executive Director” role.

The ten expatriates in this study are an average of 57 years old, and they all hold U.S. passports. They have lived in Thailand for an average of 22 years. Two expatriate participants have lived in Thailand for over 45 years. Six expatriate participants are the founders of the non-profit in which they work and continue to hold the “Program Director/CEO” title.

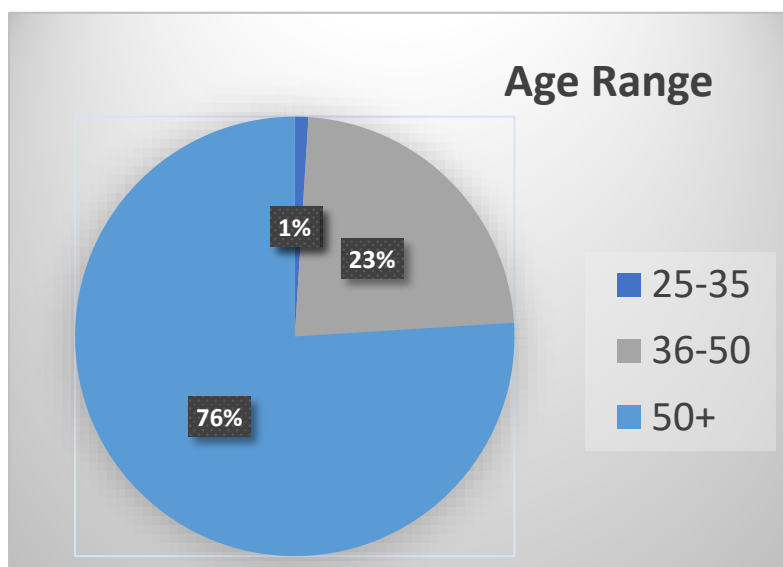


Table 1: Age Range of Participants

This chart shows the age range participants in this study. The majority of the participants (76%) were over 50 years old and 23% were between the ages of 36 and 50. One participant was in the 25-35 age range.

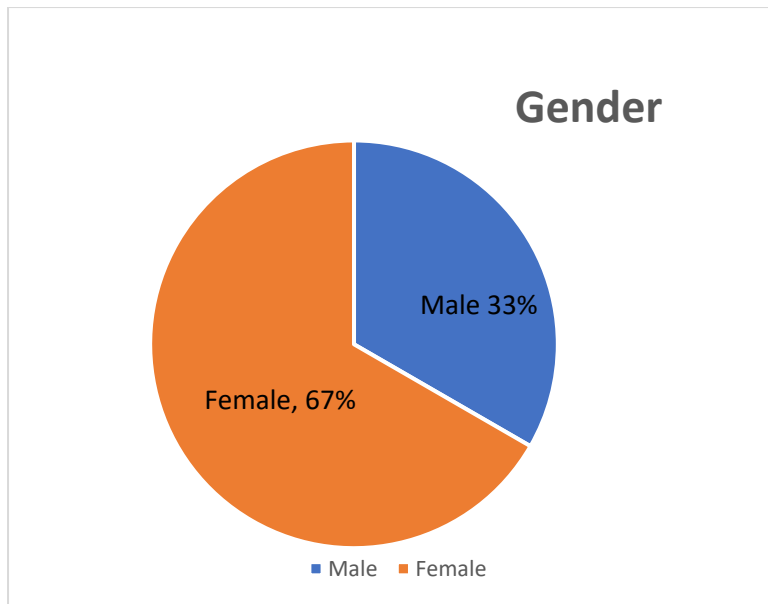


Table 2: Participants by Gender

This graph shows the gender distribution of the participants. 12 participants in the study were female (67%) and six were male (33%).

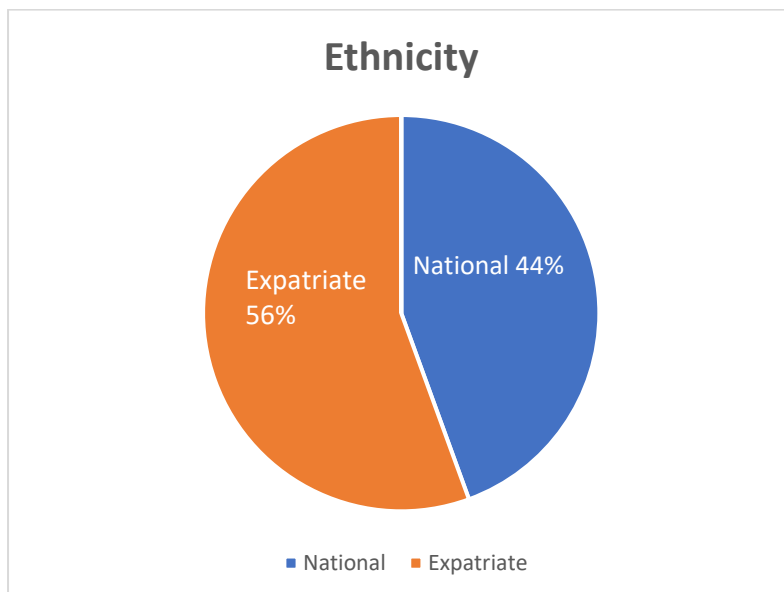


Table 3: Nationality

This chart shows the nationality of the participants. There were eight Thai nationals (one ethnic Thai, and seven ethnic minorities from three tribes) and ten expatriates in this study or 44% and 56%, respectively.

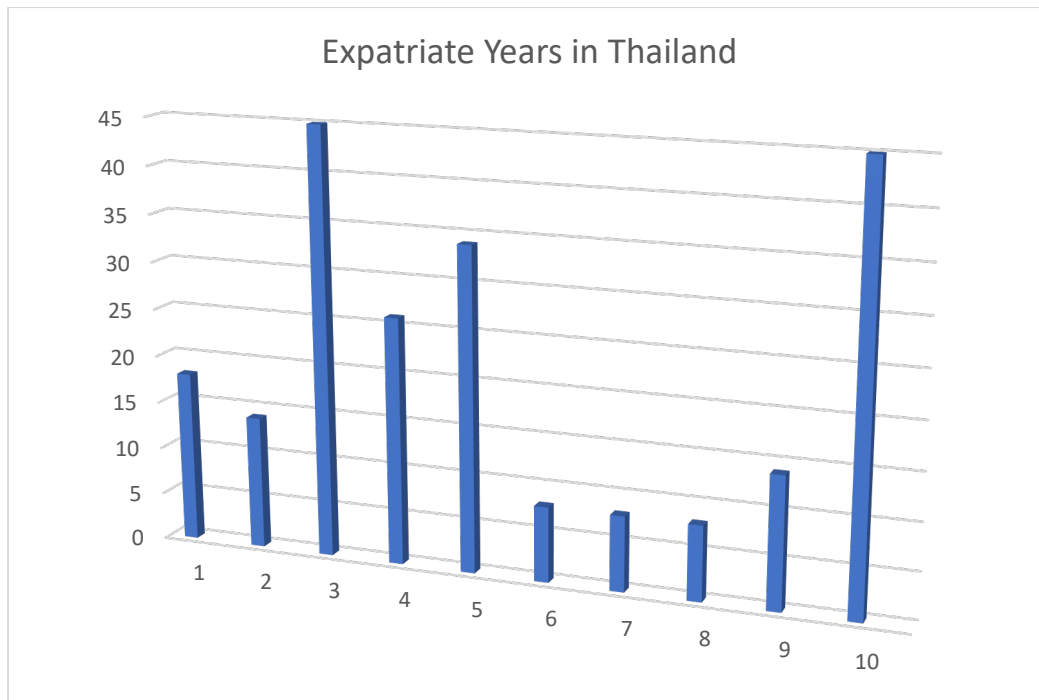


Table 4: Expatriate Years in Thailand

This chart shows the number of years that the expatriate participants have lived in Thailand. Three expatriate participants have lived in Thailand for eight years; two expatriate participants have lived in Thailand for 45 years. The other participants have lived in Thailand for 17, 14, 26, 34, and 14 years, respectively.

4.1 Formulation of Interview Questions

The formulation of the interview questions was based on documented trends and information from the literature review on non-profit leadership succession.

(Please refer to Appendix B.) These interview questions were also developed in relationship to the primary purpose of the research. The questions were grouped into four subject areas as follows:

Section One: Introductory Questions

These questions were designed to establish rapport between the interviewer and the participant, and to allow the participant to relax and share information about his/her role, what has made him/her proud of the organization, and when he/she felt most frustrated with the organization. The answers to these questions also provides a

glimpse into the organization's mission and the participant's passion for what he/she is doing, along with his/her leadership style.

Section Two: Leadership Succession

This section explores the participant's understanding, experience with, and opinions regarding expatriate to national leadership succession, and succession in general. Data was gathered regarding the benefits and challenges of both expatriate and national leadership, what it would look like specifically for the participant if the process was handled well or poorly, and who is responsible for choosing the next leader.

Section Three: Engagement with Board of Directors

The literature is full of information emphasizing the role of the board of directors in a successful leadership succession process. This section explores the degree to which the participant's board of directors provides good governance and engages in leadership succession tasks.

Section Four: Leadership Succession specific to the Thai non-profit sector

This section concentrates on the future of the non-profit sector in Thailand, explores the challenges of the expatriate to national succession process, and asks participants for suggestions regarding how to implement, manage and improve the process.

The participants responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to answer questions and share their personal experience, knowledge and opinions regarding expatriate to national leadership succession. Two expatriate participants referenced how important this research is in the non-profit sector in Thailand. Several participants thanked the researcher for including them in the study, stating that the interview spurred them on to think more creatively about the topic and identify gaps in their organization's practices. One participant asked for a copy of the interview design, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate. Several participants

recommended that I interview other people, referring me to expatriates and Thai nationals who are also grappling with the leadership succession process.

5.0 Content Analysis of Data

The data in this study, gathered through semi-structured interviews, was analyzed using a content analysis approach. Content analysis is a method which is used to comprehensively categorize verbal or written documentation. In this process, the researcher takes the data and breaks it up into “conceptual chunks that are then coded or named” (Wilson, 2007, p. 41). Because this study seeks to elicit data on human experience and knowledge, and is concerned with “meanings, intentions, consequences, and context” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, in Elo & Kyngäs 2007, p. 109) content analysis was considered as the best approach through which to analyze and interpret the data.

Content analysis is also considered an effective tool which can be used to develop “an understanding of the meaning of communication (Cavanaugh, 1997) and to identify critical processes (Lederman, 1991)” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, pp.108-109). Before I began the content analysis process, I developed a short list of “pre-set” codes based upon the key themes in the literature review and the interview questions. These pre-set codes represented broad categories such as “founder-leader emotions”, “board of directors’ engagement and role” and “cross-cultural: views of own culture” etc. I first read through all the interviews without coding. Then, on the second and third readings, I tagged the data with as many headings and notes in the text as was possible, using both the pre-set codes and other codes to identify and classify themes. I created a chart to organize the codes into categories, expanding, collapsing and shifting sections as more data was tagged and identified. The purpose of creating these categories was to “...provide a means of describing the phenomenon, to

increase understanding and to generate knowledge” (Cavanagh, 1997, in Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 111).

Once the data was coded, I analyzed the concepts and themes, words and categories, and interpreted these findings “based on the patterns” that emerged (Wilson, 2007, p. 42). I linked this data to the research question and created a chart as appropriate to supplement the findings.

6.0 Research Ethics

Prior to each interview, I reviewed the informed consent form with each participant. This form provided a detailed overview of the purpose of the research, the request to record the interview, the assurance of confidentiality and the possible risks and benefits of participation. Each participant understood that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequences. The informed consent form also included the contact information of my Capstone Advisor and the University of Pennsylvania’s Institutional Review Board, in the event that participants had concerns regarding the validity of the research or its ethics.

Ensuring that participants understood these ethics and all the information on the informed consent form was especially important due to the cross-cultural context of this research. One aspect of this cross-cultural context is the high status and power of white expatriates in Thailand. In order to mitigate my positionality as a white expatriate (and a former non-profit program director) as much as possible, I hired a Thai assistant to do all the Thai national interviews, except for one (please refer Section 3.0 and 6.0 of this Chapter). I also emphasized my role as a learner and graduate student with all the participants. I think that this emphasis helped me and my

Thai assistant gain entry into several organizations and dispelled any role confusion or the purpose of the interviews.

6.1 Bias

I am aware of some of the biases that I bring into this research study. In this section I will discuss some of these biases and the ways in which I have attempted to recognize and account for them.

First, I worked as a Program Director for a non-profit in Thailand for 15 years. Over this period - through many non-profit networking events and shared activities - I met and/or worked with 14 out of the 18 participants in this study. Three national participants are my former direct reports. Four expatriate participants are my colleagues (i.e., we are employed by the same U.S.-based organization). Although I have been employed in a different role for the past four years both within and outside Thailand, my established relationships with these participants may have influenced their answers, just as my opinion regarding their style and philosophy of leadership may have subconsciously influenced the way I conducted the interviews.

Another bias of which I am aware is confirmation bias – judging the responses through the lens of my own opinion and my own answers to the interview questions – and the tendency to emphasize the answers that match my opinion.

I attempted to control for this bias by first, explicitly stating the assumptions that I bring to this research (outlined in Chapter 1). I examined the data in light of these assumptions and was clear about when the data confirmed or did not confirm these assumptions. I made a conscious, deliberate choice to keep myself open to all answers and philosophies that emerged in the data and change my opinion as appropriate and necessary.

Second, I attempted to control for bias during the interviews by emphasizing my role as a graduate student and a learner – not a former program director of a non-profit in Thailand. I reiterated at the beginning of each interview that there were no right or wrong answers, and verbally affirmed each answer that was given (e.g., saying “yes, thank you” to simply affirm the answer that the participant gave).

Third, the interview design and questions were vetted with my research advisor, graduate student peers, and a trusted friend who has some expertise in leadership transitions. This vetting eliminated leading questions and strengthened the interview design.

Fourth, in order to foster a comfortable and transparent interview climate and mitigate my positionality as a white expatriate, I hired a Thai assistant to conduct all except one of the Thai national interviews. These include the interviews for my three former direct reports. However, there is still a chance that my 15+ year relationship with these participants may have influenced their responses.

7.0 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study as follows:

7.1 Sample Size

It is estimated that there are *at least* 300 registered and nonregistered organizations with some form of expatriate leadership, or expatriate *involvement*, throughout Thailand. The actual number may be over 1,000 (Scott Coats, personal communication, 8 May 2018). The registered non-profits include legal Thai Foundations. Unregistered non-profits include many children’s homes. While these latter groups and programs are known to the Royal Thai Government’s Department of Social Welfare and Human Security, they remain unregistered.

Despite conversations with two Thai researchers and multiple attempts through other venues, I was unable to access a source or evidence to confirm the exact number of legally registered Foundations with expatriate leadership in Thailand. One complicating factor is that many expatriates register their non-profit organizations in the name of their Thai friends or colleagues, which makes finding the exact number more challenging (Prasit Saetang, personal communication, 21 March 2018). Regardless, the sample size of ten expatriates and eight Thai nationals who represent eleven non-profit organizations is a tiny fraction of the organizations that have expatriate leaders in Thailand. This is a limitation of the study.

7.1.2 Time constraints

Time constraints limited the opportunity to select, invite and interview more participants. There was only one ethnic Thai participant; all the other nationals were tribal persons. Ideally, there would have been more ethnic Thai participants in order to have a more balanced and representative data set.

Additionally, although my Thai assistant and I conducted one pilot interview together and spent several hours reviewing the interview questions and design, <name> is not an experienced interviewer. The way in which some probes were used may have impacted the participant responses. Time constraints prevented us from spending more time together reviewing the interview protocol and types of appropriate probes.

7.2 Organization's corresponding 501c-3 status, multiple levels of expatriate leadership

Pursuant to Section 4, nine non-profits in the study are legally registered *and* have a corresponding 501-c3 status (or its equivalent) program branch in countries outside Thailand. Some of the organizations that have two boards also have multiple

levels of expatriate leadership (e.g., the founder-leader lives in the United States, visits Thailand occasionally, and has full authority over the expatriate leader of the non-profit in Thailand). The data from the interviews indicates that the latter caused some confusion for some participants (both Thai and expatriate) regarding what level of expatriate to national leadership succession was being discussed.

7.3 Language Context, Translation Limitations

Pursuant to 7.1.2, seven out of the eight participants in this study are ethnic minorities from three different tribal groups. For the tribal participants, Thai is their second or third language, and there were three people translating and interpreting the Thai into English. On some occasions, after reading the English translation of the interview transcript I went back and checked the words in Thai to cross-reference the translation. Using both Thai and English is considered a limitation of this study, as certain words may have been interpreted in different ways.

8.0 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the methodology I used to conduct this research. I chose a qualitative research design because of its focus on exploring social phenomena: how people make meaning out of their lives, how each participant's context shapes his/her attitude, behavior and opinions, and how interpersonal relationships are an important part of the data gathering process.

Due to my experience working in the non-profit sector in Thailand I identified 21 individuals (both expatriate and national) who work in the top leadership positions at eleven non-profits and invited them to join the study; eighteen people agreed to participate. In this purposeful sample, there were ten expatriates and eight Thai nationals (one ethnic Thai, and seven ethnic minorities from three different tribes). At the time of this study, the average age of the expatriates was 57 years old, and they

had worked and lived in Thailand for an average of 22 years. The Thai national participants were younger, averaging 47 years old; these participants had an average of 14 years' experience working in the non-profit sector.

I gathered the data through in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews. I based the interview questions on themes in the literature review and aspects specific to the Thai non-profit sector. In order to mitigate my positionality as a white expatriate and former program director in Thailand, I worked with a Thai assistant who conducted all but one of the Thai national interviews; I also emphasized my role as a graduate student, and someone truly eager to learn more about this unique form of leadership succession. I attempted to control my bias by making a conscious and deliberate choice to remain open to all responses and change my opinion(s) as necessary. I used content analysis to drill through the data and identify its themes and patterns. I read through the data multiple times, and then coded and tagged categories as they emerged.

This study has several limitations, including the small sample size of 11 non-profits, time constraints, and the challenges inherent in using, transcribing and translating both English and Thai.

In the next Chapter, I will describe the results of this research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Leadership succession in both non-profit and for profit organizations has received much attention over the past fifty years (Adams, 2010; Gilmore, 1988; Gothard & Austin, 2013). A gap in the literature is the topic of succession from expatriates to nationals in lower income, or emerging economies. This Capstone begins to fill this gap by asking: What are the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand?

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, and interview questions were based on themes in the literature specific to leadership succession in non-profit organizations. Each interview was recorded using Audio Note, and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews conducted in the Thai language were transcribed into Thai, and then translated into English by my Thai assistant and one other Thai person currently living in the United States.

A non-random, 'purposeful' sample was used to select a group of 18 participants; six male, 12 female. These participants hold senior leadership roles in 11 non-profit organizations throughout central and northern Thailand (i.e., Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai). In this group, there were ten expatriates and eight Thai nationals. Seven Thai nationals are ethnic minorities from three different tribes (the Akha, Karen, and Lahu). At the time of the study, the expatriates averaged 57 years old and had been living and working in Thailand for an average of 22 years. The Thai nationals averaged 47 years old and had an average of 14 years senior leadership experience in the non-profit sector. All the non-profit organizations in this survey are

legally registered Foundations in Thailand. Nine organizations also hold 501-c3 status (or its equivalent) in countries outside Thailand, and have both a local *and* international board of directors.

I used content analysis to code the data and identify its categories and patterns. I first created pre-set codes based upon themes in the literature review (e.g., founder-leader emotions). I then read the interview transcripts multiple times, and tagged and coded the data using these pre-set codes and other codes as different themes emerged. I put the codes into categories and related subcategories, and expanded, collapsed, and shifted these categories as necessary.

In this Chapter, I review the results derived from this content analysis. (Please refer to Appendix D for the full content analysis count). The results are separated into four main categories that emerged in the data as follows: a, Leadership: Characteristics, Metaphors and Philosophy; b, Organization's Preparation for Succession; c, Organization's Succession Process; and d, Succession Outcomes. This Chapter is organized in four sections according to these categories. The cross-cultural context of expatriate to national leadership succession was also a dominant theme in the data and will be discussed throughout this Chapter.

Section 1: Characteristics, Metaphors, and Philosophy of Leadership

The interview data was rich with comments related to leadership characteristics, and the benefits of having Thais and/or expatriates as leaders. Both Thai and expatriate participants used metaphors to describe leadership, and three expatriate participants (30%) described their philosophy of leadership.

The cross-cultural context of expatriates, ethnic Thais and ethnic tribal people working together was the subject that generated the greatest amount of data. Due to the volume of responses on this topic, I coded the data into two categories: expatriate

and national *views of expatriate and national leaders*, and more expatriate and national *views of one's own culture and other cultures*, respectively (see Section 2).

1.1 Leadership Characteristics

National Leaders:

Seven Thai participants (87%) and five expatriates (50%) made a total of 82 positive statements regarding national *leaders*, and what they would bring to the CEO role in a Thai non-profit. For the Thai participants, the core of these comments related to a national leader's ability to understand the local context, culture, and target group far better than the expatriate. One participant shared that “a national leader understands the social context, which is important in the society in which we work” (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018). Another participant said “if we have a national leader, provided that person is ready in terms of maturity, qualifications, experience and language, *it is definitely better*. The national leader knows local culture, lifestyles, and is familiar with the people” (Tribal female, participant #7, personal communication, 24 January, 2018).

The expatriate participants also affirmed that Thai national leaders have greater cultural understanding and social context competencies compared to an expatriate. One expatriate said that “the Thais supersede the expats, because they understand culture, they understand emotional language, they understand all the hidden things that – unless you were raised Asian – you wouldn't understand...” (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January, 2018). This same participant also shared that

I would love to see our organization grow...and a Thai leader would have a different skill set than us. They would just take the organization to where we can't take it. A Thai could do that, because of the good relationships

– good relationships with government, good relationships with the churches...training wise, relationships...Thais are going to listen to their own people, more than they are going to listen to a foreigner. (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January, 2018)

Expatriate Leaders

Eight Thai participants (100%) made 65 positive statements regarding expatriate leaders. Expatriate leaders were enthusiastically described as fair, determined, precise, highly qualified, well-accepted, inspirational, passionate, wise, intelligent, credible, trustworthy, faithful, sacrificial, and good at fund-raising. One participant shared that “expatriate leaders are highly qualified in terms of leadership skills and ability and they are loved, and trusted” (tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018). Another participant said that “one thing we have to admit is that expatriate leaders are generally accepted by the Thai or local (tribal) people for their advanced civilization and development” (tribal male participant #2, personal communication, 2 February 2018). Several Thai participants shared that it would be difficult to find a Thai - or even another expatriate - to replace their current expatriate leader.

In my experience, the expat leaders I have worked with are charming and unique. Tribal leaders can't compare to them in terms of <the expat's> credibility that has been long established by them. The expatriates are remarkable. Concerning their characteristics, it's all positive; e.g., their faith, their faithfulness, and their commitment. I think these are their characteristics and not many people can compare with them – even other expats! (Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

Three expatriate participants (30%) made 24 positive statements about the benefits of expatriate leaders. One expatriate shared that “expatriates bring...a broader perspective...they have knowledge and ability, and the expertise to go beyond the local context and access a broader resource base” (female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

Seven Thais (87%) and five expatriates (50%) made 82 positive comments about Thai national leaders. The essence of these comments related to a national leader’s ability to understand the Thai social context and culture, and develop local networks and relationships better than an expatriate. Eight Thais (100%) and five expatriates (30%) made 89 positive statements regarding expatriate leaders. Thai participants described expatriate leaders in glowingly positive terms, including but not limited to fair, faithful, fully devoted, charming, unique, credible and trust-worthy. Expatriate participants noted an expatriate’s ability to go beyond the local context and access resources both within and outside Thailand.

1.2 Leadership Metaphors

A metaphor by definition is a figure of speech, a word or phrase that is ‘applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable’ (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2017). Metaphors allow us to capture a truth – how we really think or feel about something – through a word picture or image. These images enhance understanding and often reveal a person’s cultural context, assumptions and beliefs. Two Thai (25%) and five expatriate (50%) participants used metaphors to describe leadership.

One tribal participant described leadership as a weapon: “...You give out a weapon, you need to set the scope of authority for the person who uses it.” This participant also referred to leadership as akin to a dictator: “How would the family

members feel, to be ruled by someone who does not know them?” (Tribal male participant #2, personal communication 2 February, 2018). Another tribal participant described expatriates and nationals sharing non-profit leadership as black and white water buffaloes walking together under the same yoke.

Black and white water buffaloes are walking together...there is balance. This is important. You see buffaloes working in the field, and you see their yoke. If two people are walking together under the same yoke it means they are walking side by side and not leaving each other. Expatriate and national leaders are like white and black water buffaloes... we can walk together. Everyone is important, and no-one is in front, and no-one is behind. (Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

Adams (2010) writes about non-profit founders who dedicate their whole lives to the mission of their organization, and for whom working on this mission “is a *calling*” (Adams, 2010, p. 64, emphasis mine). Five expatriate participants (50%) also used this metaphor. As one participant explained,

What is critical to me, is calling. You can teach anyone skill, you can teach people the how-tos, the strategies – but you can’t teach someone **calling**. Because when things are hard, when everybody else quits, the person who’s called, and knows they are called, there is longevity. So, calling is critical for succession. (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January, 2018)

Metaphors provide images and symbols which clarify meaning and enhance understanding. They are a part of each individual’s cultural consciousness. A total of 7 participants (38%) in this study – both Thai and expatriate - used metaphors to describe leadership and their images regarding expatriate to national succession.

1.3 Philosophy of Leadership and Succession

One's philosophy of leadership impacts leadership succession. Four expatriate participants (40%) expressed philosophical support for national leadership of non-profits in Thailand, and linked an organization's long-term sustainability to local leadership. As one expatriate shared,

Transitioning to national leadership...it's always going to be better. It's what your goal is. It's what, it ultimately should be – it should be the ultimate goal to have national leadership. To indigenize an organization. I hang on to this, because there are so many potential benefits. National leaders will understand their people better, no matter what. The communication, the heart language, the ownership – the ownership side, because they're nationals. This philosophy...is deeply engrained in our <name of Protestant denomination> tradition. This is how we have always tried to do things. You work alongside others. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January, 2018)

Four expatriate participants expressed a philosophical preference for national leadership of Thai non-profit organizations.

In this section I have presented results from the data regarding characteristics of national and expatriate leaders, leadership metaphors, and philosophy of leadership. In the next section, I will discuss the results related to an organization's preparation for succession.

Section 2: Preparation for Succession

An organization's preparation for leadership succession (and/or lack of preparation) is the overarching theme of this section. The data is classified into five subcategories as follows: a, emotions regarding succession; b, organization is not

ready; c, leadership development and capacity building; d, fund-raising; and e, the cross-cultural context of expatriate to Thai national leadership succession.

2.1 Emotions

The complex emotions around leadership succession was the second most dominant theme in the data. Both Thai national and expatriate participants shared fears and anxiety in anticipation of this transition.

Five Thai participants (62%) expressed sadness that the expatriate might leave, and fear that the organization might not survive without him/her. One Thai participant said "...at this moment, we do not see anyone who can be the successor. We have none" (tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018). Another participant expressed "if the expatriate is gone, what if the successor is not good at fund-raising? How would the <target group> survive?" (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January, 2018). This same participant shared that "the <expatriate> should have prepared for this a long time ago...<name of leader> is worried, the donors are worried, and many staff are worried, too" (tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January, 2018). Another Thai participant shared "I don't see anyone that truly understands the purpose of our organization. Thus, I don't think we are quite ready for a succession. If we lose our current leader, it would be difficult for this organization to continue" (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018).

Five Thai participants (62%) shared their feelings about leadership succession. These feelings included fear that the organization would not survive with the expatriate leader, anxiety, and sadness.

2.1.1 Expatriate founder-leader emotions

The emotions expressed by non-profit founder-leaders regarding succession were particularly acute. Six founder-leaders (100% of expatriate founder-leaders in this study) expressed a range of emotions related to the prospect of leaving. These emotions included difficulty letting go, the need to come to terms with past successes and failures, deep issues of identity and loss of identity, feeling that leaving would be tantamount to abandoning the work and staff, sadness regarding loss of family and community, and guilt.

One founder-leader expressed "...my biggest challenge...is knowing how to let go. The <target group> have become my family, and just letting go, and trusting someone else, is going to be a challenge for me. For me, to let go, to trust...it takes time" (Female expatriate participant #5, personal communication, 18 January, 2018). Other founder-leaders equated leaving with abandonment. One participant shared that

I don't want the *team* to feel that I'm abandoning them. I don't want <target group> to feel that I'm abandoning them. There's a lot of abandonment. I want to say '...this has nothing to do with you. It really has something to do with me, and my identity, trying to do something new.'

(Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

One of the most difficult issues that non-profit founders may grapple with is their identity in relationship to the non-profit they founded. In some cases, the founder-leader's identity is so entrenched in the organization's identity that the two are literally one (Balser & Carmin, 2009; Santoro & Sarros, 1995; Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014). In some cases in Thailand, a non-profit is not known for its mission, but known for its charismatic founder. One participant spoke poignantly about her identity in relationship to the organization she founded, sharing that

I think for so many years this has been my identity. It's been what I've lived for, what I've breathed, ate and slept. I think this is what happens with many founders... they get so caught up on this one identity, and their entire life is defined by it, that to move away...*to succeed <somewhere else> would be, almost, in some way, failure.* (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018, emphasis mine)

Founder-leader emotions about succession are particularly complex. Six founder-leader participants in this study (100% of founder-leaders) made over 50 comments about their emotions regarding this transition. These emotions include (but are not limited to) fear, sadness, loss of identity, loss of community, difficulty letting go, sadness, and guilt.

2.1.2 Need for Succession, and Desire to Move On

Woven throughout the theme of letting go and coping with loss, six expatriate participants (60%) also mentioned an actual *longing* for succession - the sense that it was the right thing to do, and how much they were ready to move on. One founder-leader shared "... I can't wait until somebody takes my job. I wanted to step out of my role two years ago, but God said not yet" (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January 2018). Another participant discussed where they envisioned themselves in the future and acknowledged that succession was the right thing to do – eventually:

There's obviously going to be a succession at some point – this <non-profit> is something I've been passionate about, but I always intentionally started <non-profit> with the notion of wanting to pass it on to the Thai people...to assist in building up something, but then stepping back, stepping away – that hasn't happened yet, but it's definitely on my radar, as something

that I think will probably happen within the next five years. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January, 2018)

Other expatriates expressed that they were tired and ready for a change.

We need for God to call a young family, and for them to come over here, to do what we do, so we can go home. I was thinking, even last night, that I am tired. When are we going to go home? I am...struggling with this. (Male expatriate participant #7, personal communication, 16 January 2018)

Executive emotions regarding leadership transitions are well-documented (Austin & Gilmore, 1993; Balser & Carmin, 2009) and almost all the emotions cited in the literature are evident in these results. Founder-leaders expressed the most acute feelings, particularly around their identity as tied to the organization they founded. Both national and expatriate participants discussed grief, loss, and sadness, and fears that the organization would not survive post-succession. Other data indicates that many expatriate participants are simultaneously ready to make this change.

2.1.3. Failed Succession

Six non-profits in this study attempted succession and failed, and two non-profits in this group of six experienced more than one failed succession. Experiences of failed succession include a) *expatriate to ethnic Thai* succession (4 cases); b) *expatriate to tribal* succession (3 cases); and c) *expatriate to expatriate* succession (2 cases).

Seven expatriate participants (70%) shared their feelings regarding failed succession, noting increased worry, disappointment and sadness about succession in general due to these experiences. One expatriate founder-leader used the words “nightmare” and “horror story” when she talked about this.

<The failed succession> has been a **nightmare!** The first successor was a Thai, and I was thrilled with that, because I wanted us to be a predominantly Thai organization. <Thai successor> came in with more of a western take on addressing issues, and was very forthright and opinionated, and it didn't fly well with the Thai team. Well, the next person I hired was even worse...just even worse! And <name> was an expatriate. And it was just really really awful. It makes you weary and worrisome about who you let into the organization. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

Another participant refers to the time, effort and energy he expended in training and developing a successor, and how disappointed he felt when the transition failed:

To feel like I had gone through the process, building up leadership, and creating a handover process – because of my experience, I felt like I could bridge that gap...between expatriate leadership and national leadership, and help make that transition go smoothly. I was actually thinking that I had done that successfully, until it didn't happen. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January, 2018)

Some of the cross-cultural dynamics between Thais and (ethnic minority) tribal people (and in particular, some of the more internecine aspects of these relationships) was present in the conversation around failed succession. One case of failed succession was described as follows:

One of the successors was an ethnic Thai. He showed himself to be very capable – very, very impressive. And he didn't last six months. He got thrown out by the <ethnic tribal> staff. There were a bunch of reasons for that,

but what was deeply clear, was that there was neither acceptance on both sides. He was not ethnic minority, he didn't have those roots they did, and he didn't accept them, and they didn't accept him. It was like, wow! Some of the things he said, some of the ways he treated people...there were other issues, but that <Thai-tribal dynamic> was definitely a very important part of the problem. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018)

Six non-profits in this research (54%) attempted a leadership succession and failed. These attempts included expatriate to *expatriate* succession, expatriate to *ethnic Thai* succession, and expatriate to (*ethnic minority*) *tribal* succession for a total of nine failed succession attempts. Participants expressed disappointment, frustration, and sadness about these experiences. Leader personality characteristics and underlying power and authority issues between ethnic Thais and ethnic tribal minorities were cited as some of the reasons for these failed successions.

Given these experiences, it was not surprising that fears of failed succession showed up in the data. Four Thai nationals (50%) and three expatriates (30%) mentioned these fears, mostly related to choosing the wrong person as successor. One participant said "You cannot force someone to take your vision, your ideas...if the successor is not able to discern the intention of the predecessor, simply takes the job and does it carelessly...it can damage the organization" (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018).

A fear of failed succession was a theme in the data. Such fears may contribute to an organization's avoidance of the succession conversation.

2.2 Organization is not ready

Three Thai (37%) and three expatriate (30%) participants said that their organization was not ready for leadership succession. The Thai participants made general comments about this e.g., “I am concerned about the lack of preparation” (Thai female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018) to more pointed statements about their organization’s lack of training and capacity building. Three other Thai participants (37%) pointed specifically to their lack of capacity in English language fluency as one of - if not the only - reason for this lack of preparedness. One Thai participant shared “I am afraid to speak English. I can do everything that the CEO does, but the English is the problem” (Thai female participant #8, personal communication, 6 February 2018). Another Thai participant said point blank that “The only thing that is not replaceable in an expat leader is the English language” (Thai female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018).

Two expatriates (20%) also said any Thai national successor would need to be fluent in English. “We end up having to deal with situations with foreigners...and if you don’t have English, and you are Thai, you can’t address these issues” (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

Six Thai national participants (75%) and three expatriates (30%) said that their organization was not ready for succession. The need for continued training and capacity building and lack of fluency in English were described as the main reasons for this. One expatriate participant (10%) also suggested expatriates had created dependencies which contributed to an organization’s lack of readiness for succession.

2.3 Leadership Capacity Building, Staff Development

Non-profit succession literature cites leadership development and training as one of the most important ways to prepare for succession (Tichy, 2015; Tebbe, 2017; Adams, 2010). Six national (75%) and four (40%) expatriate participants emphasized that training and capacity building was also central to successful leadership transitions. One participant even defined leadership succession *as* staff development: “Leadership succession means staff development. A good leader will develop his/her staff so that they can look ahead into the future. It is to build up the staff leadership capacity” (Thai male participant #5, personal communication, 25 January 2018). Other tribal participants also described leadership succession planning as capacity building. One leader shared that

Currently, even though there are no active conversations regarding succession...if you were to ask me if I have a succession plan, I must say that I have a plan to develop this employee and that employee – so that they can fill the shoes of those who retire or leave the organization. When I spot potential leaders, I begin to assign them tasks to shape them for the role. Therefore, we have <leadership capacity> development plans. (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

This same note was hit multiple times. Another tribal participant said that “Successful expatriate to national leadership transition is the result of intentional leadership capacity building and efforts...it demonstrates the fruit of someone’s labor” (Tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January, 2018).

Conversely, a lack of capacity building and leadership development was linked to an organization’s demise.

If the organization has only one runner <the current leader> and this leader does not prepare a successor, what will we do when the person cannot run any further? If there is no training or development for the staff, it will be difficult. It will not end well; the organization will come to a dead-end. (Tribal male participant #2, personal communication, 2 February 2018)

Six (75%) Thai nationals and four (40%) expatriates made over 40 comments regarding the importance of training staff and developing leaders. The latter was cited as a critical part of preparation for leadership succession.

2.4 Fund Raising

Six national (75%) and three (30%) expatriate participants discussed fund raising as an essential part of preparation for succession, and eight (100%) national participants mentioned the unique intersection between fund-raising, English language proficiency, and relationships with donors. Some Thai participants acknowledged that they could probably raise funds within Thailand, but not elsewhere – as one participant put it, the Thai national’s fund-raising acumen “...may be at the local level, not the international level” (tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January, 2018).

Other expatriates stated the only thing preventing Thai nationals from the most senior leadership positions was the ability to raise funds. “I work with amazing Thai people – and absolutely they could run an organization better than me (sic). Just because I’m a foreigner, doesn’t mean that a Thai person couldn’t do it. *Other than the fund-raising*” (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018).

The need for English language proficiency to communicate with donors, craft proposals and write reports was also mentioned.

If you are not good in English, you can't write reports or coordinate with others. The lack of skills in English is an obstacle for coordination with the donors, or international partners and our network. The problematic area for me is to raise funds from abroad because I have a problem with the English language. (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

Another Thai national shared that “Although some Thais are very good in English, the word choices are still not as accurate as that of the expatriates. The English language is essential for project presentations, fund-raising and project proposals” (Tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January 2018). Expatriates also discussed lack of English language fluency as an obstacle to donor relationships and fund raising. “<The national's> English is just not at a level of a CEO. <National> really doesn't have the skills to go and get money, from the outside” (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018).

The need to fund-raise in the English language was one of the main reasons why several participants said their organization was not ready for leadership succession.

2.5 Cross-Cultural Context

The challenges and joys of working cross-culturally and the relationship dynamics between expatriate leaders, ethnic Thais, and ethnic minorities was the dominant theme in the data. Expatriate and Thai national participants expressed their feelings and thoughts regarding their own culture and their views of other cultures (this includes tribal participant views of other tribes) - and how characteristics in each

culture impact, for better or worse, the expatriate to national leadership transition. In this section I discuss some of the data regarding these cross-cultural themes.

2.5.1 Thai National Views of Own Culture

Seven Thai national participants (87%) expressed views of their own (Thai, tribal) culture. These comments were both positive and negative. One tribal male identified himself as a Thai. “As a Thai, I am more aware of the realities in our society, and am able to contextualize and understand more of what is going on <than the expatriates>” (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018).

One tribal participant discussed the challenges of working with people from many different tribal groups. “My colleagues are from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Most of them are okay. However, sometimes, the difference in our cultures causes us to have different ways of interacting with the target group” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018).

Other participants talked about the issues of power and authority between Thais and tribal people. One participant said that “A Thai leader may not be able to control the staff. If the national staff and the national leader have a confrontation, it will be severe” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018). This same participant also shared that “Tribal leaders will choose their successors from their own tribe; this is easier in terms of communication, and the leader can expect the staff from the same tribe to be more obedient” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018). Another tribal participant mentioned staff diversity as a good thing *and* a problem.

One of the problems is the diversity of staff...our staff come from six different ethnic minority groups. If the local leader is only concerned for the

people from the same tribe as him/her, the staff from the other tribal groups may feel inferior or upset. (Tribal male participant #5, personal communication 23 January 2018)

2.5.2 National views of expatriate culture

Seven national participants (87%) expressed 26 comments regarding their views of expatriates and expatriate culture. The key theme was that expatriates had different perspectives than Thai or tribal nationals. "...Working with expatriates...sometimes the different perspectives can make you feel frustrated. The difference in ethnicity makes us think differently. The cause of our misunderstandings is the difference in views, especially when dealing with challenges" (Tribal male participant #5, personal communication 23 January 2018). Another participant shared this same idea, stating "The challenge is in the way the expatriates think. They don't understand the context of Thai society very well. This is a small issue that causes some distance between Thais and foreigners that work together" (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018). Other national participants made positive statements about expatriates and compared the cultures in this way:

Academically speaking, the expatriates are better than we are because they study higher. Thais do not like reading, and tribal people are worse! We cannot compare with the expatriates in terms of academic knowledge, but we are better in farming. The knowledge of the <existing expatriate leader> would be the only thing that is hard to replace. (Tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

Seven Thai national participants (87%) made 26 comments regarding their views of expatriates and expatriate culture. The Thai nationals said that expatriates do not fully understand the Thai social context in which they work and think differently

than Thai or tribal nationals. Highly positive comments about expatriates were also shared.

2.5.3 Expatriate views of expatriate culture

Eight expatriate participants (80%) made 35 comments regarding expatriate culture. These comments related to expatriate attitudes, personality characteristics, how an expatriate should adapt to Thai culture, and how an expatriate may be a bridge between cultures. One participant discussed an expatriate's need to adapt to Thai culture:

Normally an expatriate...if we're talking about a new person without experience...doesn't have a handle on the culture. They're too blueprinted, structured, and many lack flexibility. When I first came to Thailand, I had everything structured, and wanted things done this way, that way. I learned very quickly that you have to be flexible and the western approach isn't always the best approach. (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication 31 January, 2018)

Another participant also refers to the expatriate's need to adapt:

For a westerner coming into Thailand, <the cultural differences> are one of the biggest struggles. Because we come with a certain type of personality that is very direct, it's very problem-solving oriented, seeing something and wanting to address it head-on. It <Thai culture> really does take some getting used to. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

Eight expatriate participants (80%) expressed 35 views of their own culture. These comments related to the need for an expatriate to adapt to Thai and tribal

culture, and how an expatriate may be a bridge between cultures. In the next section, I will discuss the data regarding expatriate views of Thai and tribal culture.

2.5.4 Expatriate views of Thai and tribal culture

Ten expatriate participants (100%) expressed over 100 comments regarding Thai and/or tribal culture. Most of these comments were positive (e.g., Thais are “smart, humble, brilliant and fabulous” (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January 2018). Several participants reflected on the Thai cultural values of respect and deference for elders, saving face, and trust in relationships. “You earn trust in Thailand. You don’t get it just because you have a degree, or you’re from the west – that’s only surface trust, surface relationship. Working relationships in Thailand come from years of investment on the ground” (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

Other participants reflected on the expatriate’s need to adapt.

Coming into the Thai culture...it took years...and it takes, years later, so much *patience*. Because you see a culture where, and I hate to generalize, but you see a culture where it is very much saving face – it’s so ingrained – you don’t want to head on address issues, you’d rather be roundabout with it, and talk to someone, who talks to someone, who finally gets to you with what the issue is. This passive-aggressiveness isn’t something that to me personally, or in my workplace, I had ever experienced. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

The expatriate participants also shared their views of the relationships between Thais and tribal people. These thoughts ranged from “There are so many Thai people that don’t have a clue about tribal culture” (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018) to “The Thais don’t understand <target group>.

They don't understand <additional target group>. They don't understand how you present <target group> in the media" (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

Other expatriates talked about the relationship between different tribes and some of the ways these dynamics play themselves out in organizations.

One of the things that happens in this country, in this culture, are the dynamics between tribal groups. The board has picked someone of their same tribe and have asked <person> to apply <for the CEO position>. This is the dynamic! (Female expatriate participant #5, personal communication, 18 January 2018)

Ten expatriate participants (100%) made over 100 comments regarding their views of Thai and/or tribal culture. In this next sub-section, I will discuss expatriate and national views of Thai-tribal and intra-tribal conflict.

2.5.5 Views of Thai-tribal, inter-tribal conflict

Four (40%) expatriates and two (25%) national participants discussed discrimination between Thais and tribal people, and inter-tribal conflict. One expatriate (who works in a non-profit that provides services to tribal people) shared why <participant> would not support expatriate to ethnic Thai leadership succession:

We would never, ever get the <ethnic Thai> to take our leadership position. He/she would never take our position. Because the whole thing would fall apart. Because <name> is Thai. The <ethnic tribal> staff do not trust <name of Thai>...because he/she is Thai. If <ethnic Thai> goes to a village, their whole demeanor is "These people *live* like this?" but if <tribal staff> go to a village, they fit right in. (Male expatriate participant #7, personal communication, 16 January, 2018)

Other participants spoke about conflict within and between tribal groups. One tribal participant said that

Our current tribal society suffers from divisions and conflicts. I myself have witnessed a lot of conflicts. In many cases...tribal people do not respect each other and look down on one another. We are divided in our thinking. If the leader is not from the same tribe (as the staff) according to my experience, it normally causes division and affects the work. (Male tribal participant #5, personal communication, 23 January 2018)

Expatriates also spoke of intra-tribal conflict. “Do you remember when the <tribal> organization split? They were hitting each other...throwing tables and chairs” (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018). Another participant described inter-tribal conflict and how it impedes expatriate to national leadership succession.

I don't think it <inter-tribal conflict> is always a discrimination issue, but a relational issue. There is discrimination that comes into play, but it's related to deep-rooted conflict that goes way back in some of their cultures. And the interesting thing is it does not cross the major ethnic barriers, as much as it stays within that ethnicity. I mean, I don't know if this is so important for your research, but you get red, black and yellow <tribe> working around a table, and they'll kill each other! It's fascinating to me how they do that. And they'll backstab each other because they're a different sub-group. It's just so **complicated**. It's ethnic, it's linguistic, it's cultural. What you're talking about here is – it's another level, from just Thai – or say, **Thai** national leadership transitions from an expat. This thing is **a lot** more complicated. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January, 2018)

Both expatriate and national participants mentioned their view of Thai and tribal conflict, along with intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflict. These relationship dynamics impact an organization's process of leadership succession.

2.5.6 Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates

Three (30%) expatriate participants and one tribal national (12%) mentioned a Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates; this data corroborates my personal experience of this same bias (based on 15+ years living and working in Thailand). A Thai bias in favor of white expatriates impacts leadership succession. As one expatriate explained,

The confidence <Thai, tribal> people have in expats as opposed to nationals is completely different. Generally, national staff, communities, organizations, everybody – they automatically – they are discriminatory. They are biased towards, really, white expats. That's the truth. So...I'm a white expat, so I get another 2100 brownie points. <With a white expat in leadership> there is always confidence that everything is going to be fine. This has nothing to do with what you do – but everything to do with who you are. *This puts a huge burden on the next <national> person who is trying to come into leadership.* (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018, emphasis mine)

Regarding this bias, one expatriate said categorically that the Thai leaders of a multinational corporation based in Thailand (with whom the non-profit does business) "...do not want to work with a Thai. They want to work with me" (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018). This same leader goes on to share that

I think we would not have had the <major corporation> account if I didn't go in as an expatriate. I was able to talk to the secretary in Thai, and was able to talk to the CEO, and he let me come in... <Expatriates> can be a bridge between different cultures and the hill tribe culture to the government. The hill tribes may not be able to get in the door. We can use our pro-activity... we go in and we won't take no for an answer. (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018)

Another participant shared that "...Sad to say, but sometimes it is beneficial to be a foreigner here with the government. Especially if <a local> is the wrong age, the wrong culture – like you know, hill tribe – for whatever reason, <the Thais> discriminate" (Female expatriate participant #2, personal communication, 15 January 2018). One of the tribal participants also shared a reflection on this same issue:

In my opinion, people tend to recognize an expatriate more than a local person. It seems ordinary when a local person does something; when a foreigner does something, it seems more interesting and more attractive. When Thai people initiate an activity, people do not look at it as something special. When an expatriate initiates something, people pay more attention to it and are inspired by it more. (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

Three expatriates (30%) and one national (12%) mentioned a Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates. This bias is an additional cultural obstacle in the succession conversation.

In this Section, I have reviewed the results in the data regarding an organization's preparation for succession. The data show that non-profit staff and especially founder-leaders must work through difficult emotions as they

psychologically prepare for this transition. Both expatriate and national participants discussed other aspects of organizational readiness, which include the ability to fund-raise and work with donors, and the importance of on-going leadership development and capacity building. The latter includes the unflagging pursuit of English language fluency for the Thai and/or tribal national staff.

This Section ends with an overview of the data related to the cross-cultural aspects of expatriate to national leadership succession. Both Thai nationals and expatriates expressed their views of their own culture and other cultures, and shared their opinions regarding intra- and inter-tribal conflict. Some participants mentioned a Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates, which impacts the succession conversation.

Section 3: Succession Process

In this section, I discuss the data regarding the succession process. This data is separated into four main categories: a, timing of succession; b, the process of selecting or choosing the new leader; c, the non-profit's vision; and d, the role of each non-profit's board of directors in these governance and succession tasks.

3.1 Timing

Seven Thai nationals (87%) and nine expatriates (90%) made 74 comments regarding the importance of timing in the expatriate to national leadership turnover. These participants emphasized the need for a slow, gradual transition with several years of training and overlap between the expatriate leader and national successor. One Thai participant shared that this type of succession process “would take a minimum of one to two years *if* the person has been in the organization for four to ten years” (tribal male participant #2, personal communication, 2 February 2018); another participant shared that “...there must be an appropriate, constructive, gradual period

of time <for training>...you can't just throw your authority onto someone" (tribal female participant #1, personal communication 24 January 2018).

Expatriate participants also emphasized the need for a slow transition, suggesting that the process might take at least four or five years:

There are so many different issues, there are so many cultural barriers... <the successor> would need to be in the organization probably at least four years, being a part of it, understanding all of it, all of the ways the different departments work, the vision, the culture that we are established in, as well as the culture that we are related to and our networks." (Female expatriate #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018)

While many participants referenced the length of time needed for training ("the new person would come on board and work with me for at least five years") (male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018) others spoke specifically about how an abrupt change would be deleterious to the organization. "It's not 'I have my PhD in management, one two three four, and I'm going to come in and do it' – that doesn't work in this culture" (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31st January 2018).

88% of all participants referenced the need to go slowly through the expatriate to national leadership succession process. Most participants suggested that this transition would take a minimum of four to five years.

3.2 Choosing the New Leader

The data was mixed regarding choosing the next leader. Three expatriates (30%) and one national (12%) suggested that the board of directors was primarily responsible for this; three nationals (37%) and two expatriates (20%) stated the existing expatriate leader was responsible to choose. 38% of all participants (four

Thai national, three expatriate) stated that a team was responsible to select the next leader (i.e., the board of directors, the existing leader, and the staff of the organization were together responsible for this task).

Although the latter was a prominent theme, four Thai participants (50%) also said that it was the expatriate leader's responsibility to initiate a conversation about succession. One Thai participant suggested that it was unnecessary to discuss succession if the expatriate did not initiate the conversation, because "if the founders feel they can continue, I don't think there is a need to talk about the transition of work to others" (Thai male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018).

The majority of participants stated that a team of key personnel (the non-profit's board of directors, the existing leader, other staff and stakeholders) were responsible for choosing the next leader. Some participants shared that the existing expatriate leader was responsible for initiating this conversation. Two expatriate leaders (20%) said that they were ultimately responsible for choosing the next leader, although they would do this in partnership with other stakeholders.

In the next sub-section, I will discuss the selection criteria and process. This includes the data regarding avoiding bias, favoritism and nepotism; insiders vs. outsiders; and the difficulty in finding the right person.

3.2.1 Selection Criteria and Process

Participants discussed the selection criteria and process to choose the new leader. It was noted that there should be no personal bias, favoritism or nepotism involved. 50% of all participants (five Thais and four expatriates) stated that the successor should be an insider, someone who had grown and developed with the organization and was trusted by the existing staff. As one participant put it: "Appoint a successor who trained with the organization. Don't bring in a person from the

outside! Someone from the outside won't understand" (Thai female participant #8, personal communication, 6 February 2018).

3.2.2 Difficulty finding the right person

The topic that generated the most data in this category was difficulty finding the right person to succeed the expatriate leader. Seven expatriate participants (70%) and three Thai nationals (37%) made over 40 statements about this. The right Thai national successor was referred to as "one in a million", "a diamond in the rough" and as difficult to find as "a needle in a haystack". One expatriate spoke with passion about this:

We are looking for a Thai director and trying to find that ideal candidate. Everyone that I meet...is...*just* missing those pieces that I'm so desperately looking for. I feel like I am truly looking for this diamond in the rough. And I'm not sure that I'll ever find it! It's about trying to find that person that would take on this role – find that person who would love the organization as much as I would – but often that's a founder's mentality, right? Because this was my passion, my baby. So *finding* someone to come in with that role, and the heart, but also with the knowledge, the education...it's a challenge! It's definitely a challenge – to find that ideal individual. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

The need for fluency in English, and the faith-based element for some of the non-profits in this study added another challenge. Regarding fluency in English, one participant said that "we have talked about – who is going to take the reins, who can meet with big donors – I mean, just has the *posture* to do that in English. So, we are having a hard time finding that person" (Female expatriate participant #9, personal

communication, 6 February 2018). Regarding the faith-based element of several non-profits, one participant shared that

I guess another challenge is Thailand's culture. We are faith based; we want Christians in leadership. We want people who are understanding of, and accepting of the challenges...of people who fall into <the target group>. And so far in Thai culture it just hasn't been able to get there. There are very few Thai Christians in leadership who are willing to step into these places. And the potential hires gets smaller and smaller when you factor in these elements. Most Thai believers who fit this criteria are working for the large NGOs that pay really good salaries. (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018)

37% of nationals and 40% of expatriates also mentioned that qualified Thais usually work for the larger international NGOs which pay bigger salaries. One participant noted that "the successor has to be a motivator, a coach, a mentor...how do you find that person? For us to find someone, a national, you'd have to pay them a very high salary per month" (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018). Another participant shared that

We don't have that 2,000-3,000 USD/month that UNICEF pays their Thai person. If we are going to hire the right people, we actually need to have a good salary to hire the kind of people we need. This has been a problem for us: we pay the <faith- based> non-profit salaries. (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018)

Difficulty in finding the right Thai national to succeed the expatriate was the topic that generated the most responses regarding the selection of the new leader.

Participants suggested that qualified Thais with fluency in English typically worked for international organizations that could pay higher salaries.

3.3 Vision

A non-profit's vision for its services is the reason it exists. Three Thai nationals (37%) and four expatriates (40%) discussed their non-profit's vision, stating unequivocally that this vision comes from, and belongs to, the expatriate. One participant shared that "expatriates have a clear vision and mission, specifically for the organization they established" (Thai male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March, 2018). The expatriate participants also made it clear that they brought the vision for the non-profit. One founder-leader shared

It just so happened that I brought the vision. It just so happened that I saw a gap that the local Thais weren't addressing. Maybe they saw it, but they didn't know how, or they didn't have the desire at the time to address it. So I just created the structure around wanting to address the gaps in services.

(Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

Another expatriate described <expatriate's> vision for the non-profit and suggested that to leave <expatriate> vision to nationals might be a form of paternalism:

When westerners come over, and they have a vision, and they hire a national and expect the national to carry on the vision, and then it gets to the place where the organization has grown, and there is a lot of responsibility, and it's a large organization, and the westerner leaves, and the Thais or nationals – they are expected to move on. For many nationals, there is a sense of abandonment. I would not raise up a national, turn <the NGO> over to them, and then have them *carry on the vision that came from a foreigner*.

That's a form of paternalism...leaving the nationals to carry out something that was your idea. (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018)

Another major part of this data was the point that successful expatriate to national leadership transition is linked to the national's full understanding and embrace of the expatriate's vision. One participant expressed that "succession means we are able to recognize the purpose of the one who originally set up this organization. If we are unable to understand <the expatriate's> purpose, we will never know how to lead the organization" (Thai male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018). This same participant went into more detail regarding this, sharing that

Succession means transferring <the expatriate's> vision to the minds of Thai people like us. Simply hiring someone for the job...who cannot discern the intention of the predecessor... can damage the organization. The locals must stand up for the ideas that <the expatriate> initiated. (Thai male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018)

Another participant shared this same idea, stating that "succession will not happen if the successor's perspective and vision is different from that of the expatriate leader" (Thai female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018). The data shows that both Thai and expatriate participants acknowledge that the vision for the non-profit is the expatriate's vision. Eight participants, both Thai and expatriate (44%) also state that successful expatriate to national leadership succession will only occur when the nationals fully embrace and understand the expatriate's original vision for the non-profit.

In this next sub-section I will discuss the data regarding the board of directors' role and engagement with the non-profit.

3.4 Board of Directors Role and Engagement

As referenced in Chapter 2, a non-profit's board of directors plays a pivotal role in succession management. The literature makes it clear that the board is responsible to initiate, guide, and oversee this process (Gothard & Austin, 2012; Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes & Adams, 2017; Tichy, 2015; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015).

Data in this study on the role and engagement of each non-profit's board of directors (regarding general governance, and succession activities) was mixed. As mentioned previously, nine non-profits in the sample have a 501-c-3 (or its equivalent) program branch outside Thailand and have both local and international boards. In several other non-profits in this sample, the non-profit's CEO is also the chairperson of the international or local board of directors. These two factors can be seen in the data and add a layer of complexity to the succession conversation.

First, eight Thai participants (100%) said that their non-profit's board of directors provided necessary legal oversight and 44% of both Thai and expatriate participants said that their local boards were supportive and helpful. One Thai participant shared that ““It has been easy to coordinate and to work with the current board. They are always willing to work with us and support us” (Thai national participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018). One expatriate described this relationship as follows:

I feel like...the local board...gives us a sense of security that they have our back – does that make sense? It's what they give to us. If I were to die in a car crash tomorrow...I feel like they would just pick it up. They would get

stuff done. I'd feel like they would know what to do. We have a really great team. (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018)

Two expatriates (20%) described in detail the significant contributions of individual board members (e.g., networking, accessing resources, and developing relationships with important Thai government officials) to their work. One expatriate participant (10%) shared that the non-profit's local board was a board "in name only" but that the international board was deeply engaged and supportive. Another expatriate participant (10%) said the opposite - the local board was engaged, but the international board was not.

There was some ambivalence in the data regarding the role and engagement of each board of directors. 50% of expatriate participants and two Thai nationals (25%) - many of whom said that their board was engaged in the work - also said that their board was disengaged. One participant said that "the board has their own work, so they don't play a big role in our work" (Thai female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January 2018). Another participant shared that the local board provided basic legal oversight and the international board was more engaged, but "it would be nice to have both the international board and the Thai board more engaged...it seems hard to keep it moving forward. Things get thrown back on my plate. It is hard to keep board members engaged" (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018). The same participant who shared that the local board would "know what to do" and "get stuff done" in an emergency also said that

I do all the grant proposals...all the fund-raising...and the international and the local board wouldn't know how to do that...so, this is a problem! As

much as the organization could keep running, it would still have to have those grants...and the grant reporting. Okay, I better not get in that car accident tomorrow! (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018)

Other expatriates spoke bluntly regarding their board of directors' lack of engagement. "The board is just a rubber stamp. They never contribute anything...they could care less, as long as I am doing my job...there's just no support, let's put it that way. It's great for flexibility, but it's a little scary" (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018). Another expatriate shared that participation on a board in Thailand was a status symbol (both for the board member, and the organization) but it didn't really mean a lot more than that.

<The board> didn't want to be responsible <in the crisis>. They were happy to just dump the whole thing. To me, that is typical. I mean, that's a board that's like – you're on a board because it looks good, it gives you some status in society. This is typical. Board members don't see themselves playing any real role, they're just, in name only. 'I have status, and you can use my status.' (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018)

The data shows that 100% of the local non-profit boards in this sample provide legal oversight for the organizations they govern. Several participants expressed gratitude for the important contributions of individual board members. 38% of all participants also shared that their boards are disengaged. The data show discrepancies and role confusion between the local and international board of directors.

3.4.1 Board of directors and succession planning

90% of both Thai and expatriate participants stated that leadership succession was not discussed at board meetings. “We have never talked about leadership succession” (Thai national participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018). One Thai national and one expatriate leader, working at the same non-profit, stated that leadership succession was discussed at a board meeting only because major donors had raised the issue. A few participants, both Thai and expatriates, mentioned that there was secrecy around the topic of leadership succession.

<Leadership> succession has never been discussed at board meetings and I think it’s because the board never thinks that I’m going to leave! So, really, <the board and I> haven’t talked about what happens if I leave. It hasn’t been broached. It’s kind of the elephant in the room. So, no-one really wants to talk about it - that means that it will never happen! But, it’s something – I mean, to be a responsible organization it needs to happen.

(Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

One participant said in <leader’s> experience, succession planning was really crisis management:

Succession is not talked about in any kind of systematic way; there is no real discussion about planning for succession. It’s usually ‘oh no! We’re losing the director! How do we get through this?’ It is not real planning. It is crisis management. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018)

The data shows that succession planning is not discussed at board meetings and the non-profits in this sample do not have succession plans. The data also shows that there is some secrecy around the topic of succession.

In this section I have discussed the data regarding the expatriate to national succession process. This process includes the need to take an extended period of time (e.g., from four to ten years) to train and develop national leaders. The majority of participants suggest that a team of people should be responsible for selecting the new leader. Insiders are greatly preferred over outsiders. A significant challenge in the expatriate to national succession process is finding the right person, and the data is clear that the non-profit's vision came from the expatriate.

The data was mixed regarding each non-profit's board of directors. The local boards provide legal oversight and some individual board members are highly engaged on a personal level with the organization. Other data suggests that the board of directors are disengaged. Leadership succession is not discussed at board meetings and none of the non-profits in this sample have leadership succession plans.

Section 4: Succession Outcomes

In this section I will describe the results related to succession outcomes. This includes emotions, suggested models of leadership, and aspects related to post-succession organizational sustainability. The section ends with a description of the recommendations made by Thai and expatriate participants to expatriates regarding leadership and succession in this context.

4.1 Emotions

In addition to the fears and anxiety expressed in anticipation of succession (see Section 1) 55% of all participants also expressed hope and excitement at the possibility of change and having national leaders. One participant said that "At a time, the work was in the hands of the expatriate leader...next, it will be in the hands of tribal people. We are on the right path!" (Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018). Another participant expressed that

If one day, a local person steps up as a leader, it is the result of the capacity building and leadership development by the first generation of leaders. What would it look like if 20 years pass by, and the leader is an expatriate, and 30 years pass by and the leader is still an expatriate – when we said our mission is to develop tribal people? In this light, it is beautiful when a local person steps up. It gives credit to the previous leaders...it is the outcome of their efforts. (Tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

55% of all participants expressed hope, pride, and excitement over the possibility of national leadership.

4.2 Models of Leadership

Participants in this study expressed ideas regarding different models of leadership. These different models include shared leadership (permanent shared leadership, and as an interim step towards full national leadership) and ideas regarding the future role of the expatriate.

4.2.1 Shared Leadership

Five Thai nationals (62%) and eight expatriates (80%) expressed a vision for shared non-profit leadership. At its core, this model has a Thai national as program director, with an expatriate working *under, or alongside*, the Thai national. One Thai national participant suggested that

It would be beneficial to have expatriates help with some areas in the organization. The NGO should have expats on their management team or serving as volunteers – they don't have to be the leader – to help with fundraising. This will help the organization succeed under local leadership. I agree with locals leading organizations, but since these organizations have long been

run by expatriates, I think it is good to have at least one expatriate serving as a volunteer to help. (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

This same participant also mentioned that having both local and expatriate leaders would be “a good learning opportunity for us – much better than staying within our limited local views. This diversity will lead to both organizational and staff development” (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018). One expatriate also spoke to this point. “...Bringing two different world views, experiences, histories, coming together to share and to complement, and then there’s a merging, a sharing that take place... we have a greater impact that way, and complement each other in gifts, skills, and understanding” (Female expatriate participant #4, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

The expatriate participants also spoke effusively about a shared leadership model. One participant said

I love Thailand! And I want to live here forever. But I would rather a Thai doing my job. And I’d just come alongside. I’m happy to work under a Thai person. And just do grant proposals. And there was a Thai leader.

(Expatriate female participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018)

Another expatriate said “Maybe something more ideal <than only national *or* expatriate leadership> is an expat and a national working side-by-side as co-directors” (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018).

Several participants pointed to the role that an expatriate could have from within or outside Thailand. “It would be nice if the Thai national runs the organization, and the expatriate helps out abroad” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018). One expatriate suggested that

Even if we are turning <the work> over, sometimes I think it's still helpful for expatriates to stay. Not in the director role, but there is still a role for cooperation. What the expat brings, and what he/she is able to see. What local people bring, because they are in the culture. The turnover doesn't have to be: now there is a national, so there doesn't have to be an expatriate. There is still a role for the expatriate! (Female expatriate participant #5, personal communication, 18 January 2018)

Two national participants (25%) and three expatriates (30%) spoke about an on-going role for the expatriate, although as one participant put it "the role and where it fits in the organization must be clearly defined" (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018). One expatriate shared that "it would be ideal...if I would still be a part of <the non-profit>...on the peripheral...coming in and supporting it however I can, but really feeling confident in knowing that I've hired the right person to continue the vision" (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018).

The theme of succession - as it is linked to leadership development and capacity building - was also in the data regarding shared leadership. One participant said that

The expats should not just complete their work and leave it all to the local people. Even though the expatriates have built up the local leader they are still bound to walk them through from wherever they are...this doesn't mean the local leaders are not capable...they can do it, but it will be easier to do together with the expatriates...Effective leadership succession occurs when the predecessor still commits to the organization. At my organization, the expatriates did not just stop, draw back or abandon the work. They let go of

some of the work and built up leaders. This is an opportunity to build leadership among the tribal, or local people, from generation to generation. (Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

4.2.2 Thai national *or* expatriate model

Four Thai nationals (50%) and one expatriate (10%) suggested that in the end, it didn't really matter whether a non-profit leader was a Thai or an expatriate - as long as the person had the capacity to lead. One participant said the non-profit leader could "be anyone, as long as they are able to successfully lead the organization. I don't have strong feelings that the leader must be a Thai national, or an expatriate" (Tribal female participant #1, personal communication, 24 January 2018). Another participant described this same idea:

Do you dare get on a boat knowing that the boatman does not know how to row? Some expats can row and get us to the other side of the river, while other expats may not know how to do it. In that case, we prefer a local person who we know can row. It depends on the capacity of each person. An expat can be better than a local person. On the other hand, a local person can also be better than an expat. It doesn't really matter whether the leader is an expat or a local person, as long as the person has passion, love, vision, and is qualified in terms of capacity to lead the organization to move us forward. It depends on the capacity of each person. (Tribal male participant #2, personal communication, 2 February 2018)

In this section, I have discussed the data related to post-succession models of leadership. A majority of participants expressed a vision for shared leadership of non-profits, as a permanent model or as an interim step towards full national leadership of programs. Both Thai and expatriate participants support the idea of a continued role

for the expatriate, within or outside Thailand. Four national participants (50%) and one expatriate (10%) suggested that it really didn't matter if the leader was an expatriate or Thai national, as long as the person had the vision, passion and capacity to lead effectively.

4.3 Post-Succession Organizational Sustainability

Six national participants (75%) and five expatriates (50%) discussed organizational sustainability in a post-succession context. Fund-raising, donor relationships and current trends in philanthropy were mentioned. One expatriate participant (10%) linked Thai non-profit program sustainability with having “the least expatriates as possible” (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018).

Fears related to fund-raising were again mentioned by both Thais and expatriates. One participant shared that

<Post-succession> money would be a big issue. We have not trained somebody to do the grants. We would really have a big crisis if <the leader> died tomorrow! We're be find temporarily, but then where's the money for 2019?! Money is the biggest thing!” (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication 6 February 2018)

Another participant shared that “Thai people do not know the funding sources. It is difficult for us to raise funds within Thailand. We do not know as many funding sources as the expatriates. The fund raising, post-succession...will be problematic” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication, 25 January 2018).

Embedded in the theme of post-succession fund-raising was data regarding trends in philanthropy, and the need to access more resources from Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia. One participant shared that “We need to depend more on

financial support from Asia, and the local leader needs to be prepared for this” (Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018). One expatriate participant discussed this trend in greater detail.

Everyone thinks that they can find, and still continue to seek, foreign funding sources...as their main funding base. But I think that organizations that proactively figure out how they are going to access the national funding base – whether it’s wealthy people, or companies, or whatever – but Thailand is rich. And organizations need to figure out a strategy of how they are going to be financially viable with national funds. Some organizations are already starting to do that, pretty successfully. Any organization that sees their organizational funding coming from abroad, in the long term, they will probably experience a crisis in the next few years. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018)

An expatriate participant mentioned relationships with donors. This topic is present in other sections of this Capstone (see Chapter 2) but it emerged as related to the post-succession context as well.

The whole donor/ donor relationships piece is a challenge. Will foreign donors keep giving, if there is no longer an expatriate here? I see funding as one of the major challenges without an expat here. Also, when do you say yes to a donor, and when do you say no? Donor relationships are nuanced and challenging. Will the new person understand this? (Female expatriate participant #5, personal communication, 18 January 2018)

Last, one tribal participant linked fund-raising and effective internal management systems as important post-succession tasks related to sustainability. “If we have excellent internal management but no funding, all activities will need to stop.

On the other hand, if we have funding but poor management, the same thing would happen. Both funding and management <post-succession> have to go together” (Tribal female participant #3, personal communication, 24 January 2018).

In this section, I have reviewed the results regarding organizational sustainability in a post-succession context. The need for effective fund-raising was mentioned along with donor relationship management. Several participants referenced changing trends in philanthropy and suggested that non-profits in Thailand begin to seek more resources from Thailand and other countries throughout Southeast Asia.

4.4 Recommendations from participants regarding expatriate to national leadership succession

88% of all participants made suggestions regarding how best to manage the expatriate to national succession process. These suggestions include the need to “talk about succession... because no discussion about it leads to organizational anxiety and fear” (Tribal female participant #6, personal communication 25 January 2018) and the admonition to successors to “provide training and capacity building, and love the organization” (Tribal male participant #2, personal communication, 2 February 2018).

Five expatriates (50%) and one Thai national (12%) suggested that the non-profit’s board of directors could and/or should help with fund raising and provide assistance in setting strategic direction for the organization. “Boards should raise funds. I don’t know any <local Thai> boards that raise funds. But it’s time to think this way. More ethnic minorities have access to money, and know how to think about raising money. So yeah – raise funds!” (Expatriate male participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018).

4.4.1 Recommendations from nationals to expatriates

Five Thai national participants (62%) had some sobering suggestions for expatriates leading non-profits in Thailand. One tribal participant shared that

As an expatriate, you will only be staying in Thailand temporarily. You come to Thailand with good intentions and a strong will. My advice is to make the importance of what you plan to accomplish here evident to the locals without forcing the Thais or locals too much. Thais have their own perception of things. You have a strong determination to help Thais, but this determination and enthusiasm must be ignited in others as well. You need to make people understand that you are helping their people, in their country; it is also their work to take care of the people you are working to help.

You need to understand that you are not here to conduct a takeover or to manage everything to your liking. Conversely, you need to work with the locals, helping them see <your purpose, your passion>. The awakening and empowerment of the locals will spread from one person to the next until the locals stand-up for the ideas that you initiated. This empowerment will make the change sustainable. This is the heart of succession – spreading your love to the locals. They are the key to sustainability. (Tribal male participant #4, personal communication, 9 March 2018)

4.4.2. Recommendations from expatriates to expatriates

The data was also full of recommendations – even words of warning – from expatriates to expatriates regarding expatriate leadership of Thai non-profits and the expatriate to national succession process. This data includes comments such as “foreigners are outdated <in Thailand>...I know that’s really brazen to say, but if the Thais have the same skills that I do, it should be a Thai person <as the CEO>. It shouldn’t be me. We do not need foreigners” (Female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February 2018). Other suggestions are admonitions to those who are considering starting non-profits in Thailand.

There are expatriates that want to come over here and do this <work in non-profit>. My advice is, see what's already being done. If it's being done, figure out ways to help or connect with the people who are doing it already. Better for you to come alongside, or come see if you can help what's already going on. (Male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018)

Another expatriate was more direct about this. He shared that

Learn as much as you can, and don't think that your way is the only way. For a westerner...if there is some way to come over here, and recognize that your world view, and the way that you boxed up Christianity, doesn't exist over here. It is your job to figure out what the world view is over here...and how <Thai nationals> see things. Because Jesus' world view is probably not yours, but one of the world views over here. (Male expatriate participant #8, personal communication, 16 January 2018)

One founder-leader also referenced expatriates who want to begin their own non-profits in Thailand. She said

It's necessary <for expatriates> to have the *input* and the *advice* and the *wisdom* of the local Thai community. It needs to be a part of the plan. Just because it's not done the western way, that doesn't mean that it's not done the right way. And collaboration needs to happen. I really feel that we need to empower the local community, to give them the tools that they may not necessarily have, but not to underestimate their ability to help themselves, and to be pioneers in their own right. (Female expatriate participant #6, personal communication, 30 January 2018)

The strongest word of admonition to expatriates was not to start non-profits in the first place. One participant spoke with passion and at length regarding this.

Do not have expatriate leadership in the first place. It's time to change the model. Nationals are perfectly capable of starting their own organizations and leading their own organizations. We don't have to think that we can...oh, we started it, and we hand it over. That was 100 years ago! *Hello!* We're in the 21st century. Look at all the people around us with all the capacity they have! We come alongside, and enlarge capacity. And do it from a serving, coming alongside mentality. If we were in – I don't know where...*In what other country is it appropriate to have a white foreign national in leadership?!* The Burmese don't need it! Anyway – yeah! Don't! (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018).

In this sub-section, I have discussed the data regarding succession outcomes. A majority of participants expressed hope and excitement around the thought of Thai national leadership of programs. Participants also discussed shared leadership, and how this model was ideal as an interim step towards full local leadership of Thai non-profits - or as a permanent model in this particular context.

The results also indicate that post-succession organizational sustainability is related to fund-raising and current trends in philanthropy. It was suggested that Thai non-profits actively pursue fund-raising from within Thailand and throughout Asia, given the rise of wealth throughout this region.

Last, the participants in this study made suggestions regarding expatriate to national leadership succession and expatriate leadership of Thai non-profits in general. These suggestions include the need to discuss succession, and a desire for

board members to have a more active role, providing strategic direction and fund-raising. These suggestions also include words of warning: expatriates should learn as much as they can, have the on-going advice and input from the local community, and not force themselves or their vision onto Thai nationals. Some expatriates suggested that expatriates are no longer needed in Thailand.

In this Chapter, I have presented the results from this research. The cross-cultural aspects of this unique type of succession and the frustrations and joys of working in a deeply diverse cultural context was the dominant theme in the data. The majority of participants made highly positive statements regarding expatriate and/or Thai national leaders. Participants also shared views of their own culture and their views of ethnic Thai, ethnic tribal, and/or expatriate cultures. Cross-cultural issues that impact succession include power, authority, status, conflict, and communication challenges.

The second most dominant theme in the data was the psychological aspects of transition. Both Thai national and expatriate participants expressed anxiety and fear, and questioned whether the organization would survive without the expatriate leader. A part of the latter was fear regarding fund-raising, and the lack of capacity of local staff to secure funds and write reports in the English language. Expatriate founder-leader emotions were the most acute, and founder-leaders expressed fears and grief anticipating this transition. One founder-leader expressed that - because her identity was so intricately tied to the organization's identity - to leave and succeed in a different role would feel like failure. Many expatriate participants also mentioned that despite their fears and mixed emotions, they were ready to move on.

Participants emphasized the need for on-going and intentional leadership development and capacity building for local staff, particularly in the areas of English

language acquisition and grant writing. It was suggested that this type of leadership training might take from two to three years to upwards of a decade. The majority of participants suggested that a team of key personnel was responsible for initiating and guiding the succession process through to completion.

Many participants, both expatriates and Thai nationals, discussed difficulty in finding just the right person to succeed the expatriate leader. Both expatriates and Thai participants were unequivocal that the expatriate brought the vision for the non-profit; it was suggested that the organization would only be able to survive if the successor fully understood and embraced this same vision.

The results are mixed regarding each non-profit's board of directors. Many individual board members are actively supporting the non-profit, but participants long for broader, deeper engagement from their local and international boards. With only two exceptions, succession is not discussed at board meetings, and the non-profits in this sample do not have succession plans.

Participants expressed excitement about the future possibilities of local leadership. The majority of both expatriate and Thai national participants described shared leadership as the preferred model in this cross-cultural context, as a permanent model or an interim step towards full local leadership of programs. It was also recommended that Thai non-profits begin to seek funding from within Thailand and throughout Asia given the rising wealth in this region. This Chapter ends with a summary of the recommendations made by both expatriates and Thai nationals regarding the leadership succession process.

In the next Chapter, I will share my analysis of these results and my overall conclusions from this study.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

1.0 Introduction

Studies regarding leadership have dominated the organizational landscape for over forty years (Gilmore, 1988; Heifetz, 1994; Adams, 2010). Embedded in this literature is the theme of leadership succession, which has been described as “the most important turnover an organization will ever face” (Grusky, 1960, in Stewart, 2016, p. 43). A distinct gap in the non-profit succession literature are studies regarding expatriate to national succession in lower income or emerging economies. This Capstone begins to fill this gap by exploring this research question: What are the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand?

I used a qualitative, exploratory interview design to frame and conduct this research. I created interview questions based on information in the literature review and aspects of succession specific to the Thai non-profit sector. I used a non-random, purposeful sample to invite 21 people from 11 registered non-profits to join the study; 10 expatriates and 8 Thai nationals agreed to participate. In this group of 18, there were 12 females and 6 males. The Thai nationals included one ethnic Thai, and seven persons who represent three different tribal groups (the Akha, Karen, and Lahu). At the time of this study, the expatriates averaged 57 years old, and had an average of 22 years’ experience living and working in Thailand. The Thai nationals averaged 47 years old and had an average of 14 years senior leadership experience in the non-profit sector. Six expatriate participants are the founder-leaders of their organizations.

Ten out of the eleven non-profits in this research are legally registered as social welfare organizations and provide services such as community development,

micro-enterprise, education, and/or care for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of trafficking in persons. The other legally registered Foundation provides humanitarian assistance (specifically, relief and community development) and education via a national telecommunications platform. Additionally, these 11 non-profits have different target groups. Some work exclusively with ethnic Thais; others work exclusively with tribal minorities (and have only tribal staff); and others have both Thai and tribal staff and beneficiaries. Only one non-profit out of the 11 in this sample has experienced a successful expatriate to national leadership succession.

I interviewed ten expatriates and one Thai national; a Thai research assistant interviewed the other seven Thai participants. All interviews were recorded using Audio Note, and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews in the Thai language were transcribed into Thai, and then translated into English by my Thai assistant and one Thai person currently living in the United States.

In this Chapter, I provide an analysis of the data, and show how this data answers the research question. I discuss the connections between the data and the existing literature and suggest practice implications based upon the results of this study. I review the limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research. I conclude this Chapter with a discussion of this study, my personal interest in this topic, and some of the key learnings that emerged from this experience.

2.0 Analysis

The purpose of this research was to explore the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand. The interview data reveal a rich kaleidoscope of information regarding the factors that influence this specific leadership transition. Drawing on the results as described in

Chapter 4, I have analyzed six key factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in Thailand as follows:

2.1 Failed succession is common and influenced by profound cross-cultural challenges

I was surprised to learn that six non-profits in this study (54%) had attempted succession and failed, and three non-profits (in this group of six) had experienced more than one failed succession. Altogether, these six non-profits experienced nine failed succession attempts. As stated in Chapter 4, the failed succession attempts included expatriate to *expatriate* succession, expatriate to *ethnic Thai* succession, and expatriate to (*ethnic minority*) *tribal* succession.

These situations (described by one participant as a nightmare and a horror story) illuminate some of the reasons why this particular type of succession is particularly difficult. Three different non-profits experienced failed expatriate to expatriate leadership succession. In these cases, the data shows that the expatriate successor a) could not adjust to living in Thailand; b) had pressing health and family concerns that necessitated moving back to their passport country; and c) was the wrong fit and damaged the non-profit and its mission.

The data regarding failed expatriate to ethnic Thai/ethnic tribal succession show that additional cultural values — power and authority, conflict, communication, and the often discriminatory relationships between ethnic Thais and ethnic minorities — contributed to the failure. In one non-profit, the ethnic Thai successor was pushed out by the tribal staff; ethnic differences and a lack of acceptance on both sides were cited as the reasons for this. Other data corroborates the complicated relationships between Thais and tribal people, in addition to inter- and intra-tribal conflict, all of which impact succession.

Throughout my tenure in Thailand, I heard countless times that having an expatriate leader was the only way to ensure fairness and equity in the non-profits that are staffed by, and work exclusively with, people from different tribal groups. This point was also in the data – the sense that expatriates are fair, and that work tasks would only be distributed equally with an expatriate (as opposed to a Thai or tribal) leader. As I explored this theme as it developed in one interview, the participant shared that this (fairness, equity in distributing work tasks, an expatriate vs. an ethnic minority leader) is

Very complicated. And the more I work here, I find that I still am only just barely understanding it. In Thailand, you have the major, dominant culture being the Thai people, and all the ethnic people being very small in number. They're just like little cogs in a wheel. It's easy for the tribal people to feel a sense of community as minority people in a larger culture. But when they start working together in the same organization, and they're trying to help ethnic minority people...then you get to the nuts and bolts of it. Who are we helping? We have limited resources – how do we divide up those resources?

I don't think it <inter-tribal conflict> is always a discrimination issue, but a relational issue. There is discrimination that comes into play, but it's related to deep-rooted conflict that goes way back in some of their cultures. And the interesting thing is it does not cross the major ethnic barriers, as much as it stays within that ethnicity.

It's just so **complicated**. It's ethnic, it's linguistic, it's cultural. What you're talking about here is – it's another level, from just Thai – or say, **Thai** national leadership transitions from an expat. This thing is a **lot** more

complicated. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018)

I was surprised to learn that six non-profits in this study had experienced nine failed succession attempts. These experiences reveal some of the reasons why expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand is profoundly difficult. Underlying cross-cultural values, assumptions, and issues related to ethnicity, power, authority, discrimination, and relationships impact succession outcomes.

2.2 Finding national successors is particularly difficult when the non-profit's vision comes solely from expatriates

The data is explicit in this sample that each non-profit's vision came from the expatriate leader. Several Thai participants emphasized that a successful expatriate to national leadership transition could only occur when the nationals understood, embraced and promoted the *expatriate's vision* for the organization. Founder-leader participants were unequivocal in stating that they brought the vision to establish the non-profit. In one case, a founder-leader suggested that to hand off <the expatriate's> vision to a national would be akin to paternalism and abandonment. The data also indicates that a successor who doesn't understand the expatriate's vision could damage the organization.

I think this data regarding the expatriate's vision is linked to the data regarding the difficulty in finding the right successor. Seven (70%) expatriate participants made over 38 comments regarding how difficult it is to find the right person with just the right combination of skills. One founder-leader said that some potential successors were highly qualified, but they were just missing one or two of the characteristics the founder-leader was looking for.

It is important to recognize that the data does point to some of the unique reasons why finding the right person is especially difficult in this context. Many qualified Thai nationals who are fluent in English are working for much larger, international non-profits (e.g., World Vision, Compassion International) or the United Nations. The faith-based aspects of several non-profits in the study also adds a layer of complexity; these organizations hire non-Christians, but (as one participant put it) not for the top CEO positions.

Even when one considers these variables, the fact remains that if the expatriate brings the vision and claims it as his/her own, then it does not come as a surprise that it is difficult for this same expatriate to find the perfect person to replace him/her. If transitioning to national leadership is the true intention of expatriate-led non-profits in Thailand, this will involve some pro-active letting go on behalf of the expatriates, and allowing a new and/or modified vision for the non-profit to emerge from the local leaders.

2.3 Succession is not discussed but many expatriates are longing to leave

16 participants (88%) from ten (90%) organizations said that leadership succession has never been discussed at board meetings, and all the non-profits in this sample (100%) do not have succession plans. Yet the data also show that six expatriate participants (60%) expressed a desire for succession and a longing to move forward in their lives. Some founder-leaders were particularly vocal about this, expressing simultaneous passion for their mission *and* their readiness to do something different.

This data serves as a gentle warning to the expatriates who want to start non-profits in lower income or emerging economies: these expatriates should not overlook the fact that one day, they might also want or need to leave. A corollary point is to

make sure succession planning begins when the non-profit begins, and is integrated into the organization's narrative and policies. (The latter will be discussed more in Section 3 of this Chapter.)

Vanderbloemen and Bird's (2014) point to expatriate leaders seems especially relevant in this context: "...if you view succession planning...as unrealistic...there are unknown variables. These variables include not knowing the future burdens and dreams God might develop in your heart...or how your health or family circumstances might change" (Vandenbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 32).

Succession is not discussed at board meetings and the non-profits in this sample do not have succession plans. Therefore, I was intrigued to see that 60% of the expatriate participants were quite transparent about their desire to transition out of their leadership role. This data serves a word of caution for anyone who seeks to start a non-profit in Thailand, or in other emerging economies. If an expatriate does go ahead and start a non-profit, succession planning should be integrated into its activities from the very beginning.

2.4 Having two boards is a confusing model of governance and lack of alignment hinders the succession process

The data show considerable inconsistencies regarding the actions and engagement of each board of directors responsible for governing the non-profits in this study. While all the local Thai boards do provide necessary legal oversight and many individual board members are actively supporting and promoting their non-profit, other data indicates that the majority of local boards are disengaged. A salient piece of data is that 16 participants (88%) from ten (90%) organizations said that leadership succession has never been discussed at board meetings. One expatriate participant did share that leadership succession had been discussed in the non-profit's

international board meeting only. In the one other case where succession planning had been discussed, the non-profit's donors initiated the conversation.

A significant factor that adds a layer of confusion to the expatriate to national succession conversation is that nine out of the 11 non-profits in this research have a corresponding 501c-3 (or its equivalent) program branch in countries outside of Thailand. In many cases, these 501c-3 organizations were set up to provide donors with tax-deductible giving opportunities, and they also have their own board of directors. Therefore, these nine non-profits have both a local and an 'international' board of directors.

Having two boards is unlike any other system of governance in non-profit organizations - or even multinational for-profit corporations. A global, multinational corporation with divisions all over the world (e.g., Apple, American Express) still ultimately reports to one central board of directors and one CEO. Non-profits in the United States (e.g., United Way, Habitat for Humanity) may have chapters all over the country, but are still accountable to one board and one CEO.

For the nine non-profits that have two boards of directors, the data show that these boards are not working in alignment and do not share the same priorities and goals. There is already a general lack of clarity regarding the local board's roles and responsibilities. For the non-profits that have two boards, this lack of clarity is magnified ten-fold. This lack of alignment impacts lines of accountability, ownership, and a transparent conversation about succession. I will discuss ramifications of the latter in the "Practice Implications" section of this Chapter.

The two-board model of governance is unlike any other form of for-profit or non-profit governance. For the nine non-profits in this sample that have two boards, it is clear that these boards are not working in alignment, nor are they discussing or

planning for succession. This lack of alignment has further impeded a transparent conversation about expatriate to national leadership succession.

2.5 Adulation of expatriates and the Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates complicates expatriate to national succession

The data show that the Thai/tribal participants attribute overwhelmingly positive characteristics to expatriates and expatriate leaders. An underlying theme in this data included statements regarding the ethnic Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates. As one participant shared, this bias and these attitudes place a huge burden on whoever succeeds the expatriate.

With a <white male> in leadership...there was always confidence that everything was going to be fine. Everyone said this! It had nothing to do with what I did, but everything to do with who I was. This puts an unrealistic, huge burden on the next person who is trying to come into leadership. The donors...don't have confidence <in the nationals>. The nationals...don't have confidence because they feel like they're filling in big shoes. Generally, national staff, communities, organizations, everybody - they're discriminatory. They are biased towards, really, white expats. That's the truth. (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January, 2018)

The adulation of white expatriates and the underlying Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates puts huge pressure on a Thai/tribal national who succeeds an expatriate. These themes make me curious about other cultural values, and the deeper issues of learned helplessness, projection and dependency. This Capstone does not explore underlying psychodynamics or these latter topics; however, I do think they warrant more exploration in a different study.

2.6 Thai nationals and expatriates have vision for shared leadership

Five Thai (62%) and eight expatriate (80%) participants shared a heart-felt and irrepressible vision for shared leadership of the Thai non-profits in this study. The descriptions of shared leadership were varied, but at its core, this model would have a Thai national in the senior leadership/CEO role, with expatriates helping in various capacities and a) working alongside, or b) directly under the authority of the national leader. This model is fraught with its own challenges but as an interim step towards full national leadership, I think it has significant benefits.

Shared leadership allows national leaders to take the helm of the organization while simultaneously receiving support from expatriates in areas such as donor management and fund-raising. Ongoing shared leadership would also provide the time necessary to develop other leaders along with pursuing more local funding sources for projects. The image of black and white water buffaloes walking side-by-side (as described by a tribal female participant) is a beautiful metaphor for this model, and worth repeating:

Black and white water buffaloes are walking together...there is balance. This is important. You see buffaloes working in the field, and you see their yoke. If two people are walking together under the same yoke it means they are walking side by side and not leaving each other. Expatriate and national leaders are like white and black water buffaloes... We can walk together. Everyone is important, and no-one is in front, and no-one is behind.

(Tribal female participant #7, personal communication, 24 January 2018)

A shared leadership model is not without complications. Yet the data show that the majority of participants are excited and hopeful about moving towards this, perhaps as an interim step towards full national leadership of programs. In this

interim, shared leadership model, I think that Thais nationals and expatriates can demonstrate that they are co-laborers in a relationship of equals (where there is transparency, partnership, and friendship) as they implement the non-profit's mission.

Five Thai (62%) and eight expatriate (80%) participants expressed a vision to move towards full shared leadership of Thai non-profits. This model has many benefits as a long-term interim solution in the journey towards full local leadership of programs.

In this section I have analyzed six key results from the data about expatriate to national leadership succession. This analysis includes a) failed succession is common in the non-profit sector in Thailand, and these failed succession attempts are influenced by profound cross-cultural issues; b) finding the right successor is difficult when the vision for the non-profit comes exclusively from the expatriate; and c) succession is not discussed, but many expatriates are longing to leave. Additional analysis of the data reveals that d) having two boards of directors is a confusing model of governance and may complicate a transparent discussion of succession; e) a Thai cultural bias in favor of white expatriates puts great pressure on a national successor; and f) shared leadership is the preferred interim model as non-profits move towards full local leadership of programs.

3.0 Connections between the data and the existing literature

There are numerous connections between the data in this study and the existing literature regarding succession planning in non-profit organizations. In this section I will describe these connections in six key areas as follows.

3.1 Lack of succession planning

The existing literature indicates that non-profit organizations see succession planning as very important, yet do not have succession plans (Gothard & Austin,

2014; Cornelius, Moyers & Bell, 2011; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015). Studies in non-profit organizations in countries outside the United States (Brazil, Italy, Israel and Australia) indicate that the majority of non-profits in these countries also do not have succession plans (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito & Bassi, 2015). Given this information, it is not surprising that 100% of the non-profits in this sample also do not have succession plans.

3.2 Psychological aspects of transition

Austin & Gilmore (1993), Santoro & Sarros (1995), Adams (2010) and Vanderbloemen & Bird (2014) write extensively about the psychological aspects of transition and how emotionally challenging succession is - particularly for founder-leaders. Virtually all of the emotions described in the literature were present in the data in this study, and this was the topic that generated the second highest amount of data.

Expatriate participants expressed their sadness and grief over losing their well-established community and friends, and letting go of their deepest calling and life's purpose. Thai national participants also expressed fears, anxiety and sadness about the transition, and wondered if the non-profit would survive without the expatriate leader.

3.3 Leadership metaphors

The data in this study include some beautiful metaphors regarding leadership and succession, two of which are also in the existing literature. The first metaphor - that leadership succession is akin to a relay race and passing a baton – is a well-known and often expressed description for this transition (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, Mischke, 2002). The second metaphor describes leadership as a “calling” (Adams, 2010). Five expatriate participants in this study (50%) also referred to leadership as a

calling. One expatriate participant (10%) said that someone's calling to leadership was more important than any professional skill or capacity. No Thai national participants in this study refer to leadership as a calling.

3.4 Need for continuous leadership development

The literature speaks to re-framing 'succession planning' as 'executive transition management'. This shifts the focus away from a singular event (i.e., having a plan and replacing a leader) to a holistic and ongoing discussion of succession, which includes the continuous capacity building and development of new leaders (Adams, 2010; Gothard & Austin, 2013).

The need to provide training and capacity building to new leaders was also a prominent theme in the data in this study. Six Thai national participants (75%) made over 25 comments about the importance of leadership development as it relates to succession. Two Thai participants even defined succession as leadership development and training. One Thai participant shared that even though her organization did not have succession plans, it did have leadership development plans, which she considered equally important. Four (40%) expatriate participants also talked about the importance of leadership training and development as an integral part of succession management.

3.5 Role of board of directors

The non-profit succession literature emphasizes the role of the board of directors in succession planning and executive transition management (Tebbe, Stewart, Hughes & Adams, 2017; Tichy, 2015; Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015; Adams, 2010; Weese & Crabtree, 2004; Dym, Egmont, Watkins, 2011). The data in this study shows that non-profit local boards are both engaged and unengaged with the non-profit they govern. Participants expressed gratitude for the

contributions of individual board members; some of these participants also expressed frustration that their boards were generally uninvolved. Nine non-profits in the study (81%) have both a local board and an international board of directors. It appears that the two boards are not working in alignment. This lack of alignment further impedes a transparent conversation about succession.

3.6 Shared leadership model

One case study in the literature describes expatriate to national leadership succession at a small non-profit in Bolivia and Ecuador. As stated in Chapter 2, this case study sheds light on the challenges of cross-cultural leadership transitions in an organization outside the United States that is a) dependent on U.S. funding; b) owned and governed by a U.S. board of directors; c) legally represented by a local board of directors, and d) has both nationals and expatriates in leadership positions.

This case study describes several iterations of leadership between the expatriates and nationals that occurred after the expatriate founder-leader was tragically killed in a bus accident. One of these iterations of leadership was shared leadership - where the executive director was a Bolivian national, and the expatriate worked under her authority as the “Associate Director”. This model of leadership in this Bolivian non-profit resulted in “turmoil and issues of power struggles” due to “...a lack of clear separation of roles and defined hierarchy of decision-making authority” (Ricke-Kiely & McMerty-Brummer, 2012, p.190).

A desire for shared leadership was a resounding point in the data from this research. As described in Section 2.6, 13 participants (72%) expressed the hope to work in shared leadership situations and have the expatriate stay in some role. I think this is still a viable and productive leadership option for the non-profits in this sample.

However, it is prudent to learn from this case study and be prepared to address the challenges of shared leadership along with its benefits.

In this section I have described the ways that the data in this study corroborates and corresponds to the existing literature on non-profit succession planning. The non-profits in this study do not have succession plans, and (with two exceptions) succession is not discussed at board meetings. Leadership transitions evoke many emotions, especially for founder-leaders. Developing leaders and building capacity over time is one of the best ways to prepare for succession. Non-profit boards should be involved in leadership succession activities, and moving towards a model of shared leadership may be the best interim step on the way to full national leadership of non-profits in Thailand.

4.0 Practice Implications

In this section, I will describe four major practice implications of this research:

Re-framing Succession

Role of Local and International Boards

Trends in Philanthropy

Expatriates should not start non-profits

The first three practice implications are intricately related.

4.1 Re-framing Succession

Succession is not linear, and the literature describes it as a process, not an event (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014). Succession “must be tailored to each situation” and there is “no uniform approach that works for everyone” (Vanderbloemen & Bird, 2014, p. 20).

For a non-profit with expatriate leadership in Thailand, it will be helpful to re-frame succession and define what it means in this unique context. A preliminary question must be: Does this organization and its stakeholders ultimately support

expatriate to national leadership succession? If the answer is no, then long-term plans for always having an expatriate director at the non-profit must be articulated and outlined. (Such plans would need to include details regarding how to recruit the expatriate leaders, how they will be funded, and who will provide their orientation, training, and supervision.)

But if the answer to the question “Does this non-profit and its stakeholders ultimately support expatriate to national leadership succession?” is yes, then the next step is to define what succession will look like — and re-frame it as necessary.

Reframing succession might mean defining it as shared leadership for an ongoing period of time. As nationals participate in capacity building and training, they can step into leadership roles alongside the expatriates. As mentioned earlier, this model demonstrates expatriates and nationals working as co-laborers in a relationship of equals; it also provides the time needed to develop other new leaders and pursue local resources.

Reframing succession might also mean creating both short and long-term strategies to replace the foreign leader and foreign funding with a local leader *and* local resources. This might also require a shift in perception which emphasizes to locals that they have the capacity to dream, to build, to envision, and access local resources for their programs.

In this section I have discussed re-framing succession. The process of re-framing succession might begin with an honest conversation regarding the non-profit’s intention for succession. If the non-profit and all its stakeholders support expatriate to national leadership succession, then strategies can be developed to pursue and sustain this goal.

4.1.1 Role and alignment of local and international non-profit boards

Either one of the models described in Section 1 (shared leadership, or full national leadership) will require strategic action by the non-profit's board of directors. The data shows that at present, the boards are not fund-raising, and leadership succession is not discussed in board meetings. Additionally, for the nine non-profits that have both an international and local board, these boards are not working in alignment.

Moving forward, an immediate practice implication is to clarify the roles and responsibilities specific to both the local and international boards; these boards must decide how to align their work in order to best support the non-profit. Leadership succession planning (and/or leadership succession management) must be discussed, and the intention of the boards regarding succession must also be made clear.

If the non-profit's local and/or international board of directors does support expatriate to national leadership succession, short and long-term strategies must be created to achieve this goal. These strategies should include a discussion of the current structure of the non-profit, the future structure that would best support succession, and a plan that outlines how to move forward. The latter will require the local and international boards working together over a period of years to make this happen.

In this section I have discussed the role and responsibilities of the non-profit's local and international board of directors. The data shows that succession is not discussed at board meetings and the non-profits in this sample do not have succession plans. It is imperative that the boards clarify their intentions regarding expatriate to national succession for the non-profits they govern, so that the succession process can move forward. Without clear intentions the process breaks down. Once these

intentions are made clear, the board(s) can align their priorities and goals, creating the strategies that support expatriate to national succession.

4.1.2 Local leadership, local funding

Reframing succession also may require a shift in perception. This shift in perception not only includes supporting local leadership, but supporting and pursuing increased local funding of programs. “Local” in this context means accessing funds from within Thailand and/or from other countries throughout Southeast Asia. Five participants in this research (27%) mention these current trends in philanthropy and the need to access more funds from Asia. This data is a critical piece of the broader expatriate to national succession conversation.

According to a report by the UNDP, philanthropy in China is expanding rapidly. Charitable donations from mainland China’s top 100 billionaires reached 4.6 billion USD in 2016 (Saich & Johnson, 2017, p. 30). Thailand has sustained impressive economic growth over the past several decades, and Thais are known for giving generously — although organized giving is still in a nascent stage (Phaholyothin, 2017). Regardless of the latter, the rising wealth of Asia’s upper and middle classes provide more fund-raising opportunities within Thailand and throughout Asia. Each non-profit’s board of directors must understand these changing trends and support local fund-raising initiatives.

Reframing succession is not limited to supporting local leadership and expatriate to national succession: it also requires the organized pursuit of local funds to implement the non-profit’s mission. As local fund-raising increases, dependencies on the expatriate leader should also decrease.

4.2 Expatriates should not start non-profits in Thailand

The expatriate and Thai national participants in this research had some words of caution for expatriates who are currently leading non-profits in Thailand or considering starting non-profits in Thailand. These words of caution provide another practice implication.

One expatriate shared that foreigners were “outdated” and “no longer needed” in Thailand (female expatriate participant #9, personal communication, 6 February, 2018). Other participants suggested that expatriates who want to begin their own non-profits in Thailand must find out “what’s already being done” before starting anything on their own (male expatriate participant #3, personal communication, 31 January 2018). Other words of caution included the need for expatriates to learn as much as they can...seek the advice, wisdom and input of the local community...and don’t think that the “<expatriate> way is the only way” (male expatriate participant #7, personal communication, 16 January 2018). One participant emphasized that expatriates must “**not** underestimate <the Thais> ability to help themselves, and be pioneers in their own right” (female expatriate participant #6, personal communication 30 January 2018).

The strongest word of admonition that has an immediate practice implication was that expatriates should not start non-profits in Thailand at all. One participant shared with great passion that

It’s time to change the model. Nationals are perfectly capable of starting their own organizations and leading their own organizations! Look at all the people with all the capacity they have! In what other country is it appropriate to have a white foreign national in leadership?! Expatriate

leadership? Yeah – *don't!*" (Male expatriate participant #10, personal communication, 25 January 2018).

In this section, I have discussed practice implications regarding expatriate to national leadership succession. These practice implications for Thai non-profits pursuing expatriate to national leadership succession include a) the need to re-frame succession; b) aligning the work, priorities and goals of the local and international boards; and c) supporting local leadership and local funding through the pursuit of funds in Thailand and throughout Asia. Another practice implication is that expatriates should not start non-profits in Thailand in the first place.

5.0 Limitations of the Study

In this section I will outline several limitations of this study.

One limitation is the sample size. It is estimated that there are at least 300 registered and/or unregistered organizations in Thailand that have some form of expatriate leadership or expatriate involvement. Other estimates indicate this number could be upwards of 1,000 (Scott Coats, personal communication, 8 May, 2018). Exact numbers are difficult to find, because expatriates will sometimes use the names of Thai friends or associates when registering non-profits (Prasit Saetang, personal communication, 21 March, 2018). The sample size of 18 participants working at 11 registered non-profits reflects a tiny representation of the non-profits that have expatriate leadership in Thailand. Time constraints also limited the opportunity to select, invite, and interview more participants.

For the seven (tribal) Thai nationals in this research, Thai is their second, third, or even fourth language. The interview questions were developed in English and then translated into Thai, and the tribal participants were interviewed by an ethnic Thai. Although the interview protocol was vetted with my Thai assistant, it is still

possible that certain words or concepts did not translate well. The latter may have prevented deeper communication in the interview process.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of equal representation between the ethnic Thai and the ethnic tribal participants. There was only one ethnic Thai, and seven ethnic minorities. Ideally, the group of participants would have had an equal number of Thai and tribal nationals – or only focused on expatriate to ethnic Thai, or expatriate to ethnic tribal succession.

6.0 Recommendations for future research

A glaring gap in the current literature on non-profit succession planning is the topic of expatriate to national leadership succession in lower income or emerging economies. Although this research begins to fill this gap, there is much more to be examined regarding this angle of succession.

First, given the cultural, social and economic disparities between the ethnic Thai and the ethnic tribal people in Thailand, it is recommended that additional studies look exclusively at expatriate to national succession with ethnic Thais **or** ethnic tribal people. If the research is focused on succession with one ethnic group (as opposed to two) this could generate more information regarding the cross- cultural challenges specific to that ethnic group.

Second, it is recommended that more research regarding expatriate to national leadership succession be conducted in many other lower income or emerging economy countries. Given the number of aging expatriates who are preparing for retirement – or even the number of expatriates who are simply ready to leave - studies in many different emerging economy contexts are even more urgent. The data from this research adds to the information on effective practices for this particularly challenging transition. It helps to strengthen local leaders and provide a roadmap for

ongoing discussion between expatriates and nationals who are in non-profit leadership roles.

Another recommendation is to do more research on *founder-leader* expatriate to national successions. As I analyzed the interview data (and read about leadership succession in general) it became clear that there are aspects of founder-leader successions that may be distinct from an organization or corporation's second or third succession. It might be helpful to do a study solely on the *first* expatriate to national leader's succession.

Last, the underlying psychodynamic issues of working in a cross-cultural context are significant and worth further exploration. These psychodynamics include (but are not limited to) issues of learned helplessness, projection, and dependency. While an analysis of these psychodynamics goes beyond the scope of this Capstone, it is recommended that other researchers explore these important issues in the expatriate to national leadership succession conversation.

7.0 Conclusion

My personal interest in pursuing this research was my own experience leading a non-profit in Thailand and walking through an expatriate to national leadership succession. I went to Thailand to succeed the charismatic and visionary expatriate founder-leader of a small but well-known non-profit organization. After 12 years of capacity building with local staff, I looked for information that would help me and the leadership team walk through the expatriate to national transition. I did find two studies that referenced expatriate to national succession in the non-profit sector, but nothing else. This study begins to fill this gap, and provides information that might help other non-profits who intend to make this same transition.

The participants in this research included Thai nationals who were both ethnic Thais and ethnic tribal people. Given the pronounced cultural differences, social status discrepancies and relationship history between these groups, it may have been wise to focus exclusively on expatriate to ethnic minority/tribal succession *or* expatriate to ethnic Thai succession - not both.

My findings were informative and answered the research question: what are the factors that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand? The data answers this research question as follows: a discussion of expatriate to national succession must occur simultaneously with the start of the non-profit, and succession plans should be a part of an organization's long-term strategic priorities and sustainability review. Succession evokes a number of fears for local staff and deeply conflicting emotions for expatriate leaders, but not talking about succession fosters other fears and significant anxiety. Non-profits with expatriate leadership should openly clarify their intention for succession and take the time needed (several years, to upwards of a decade) to provide the training and capacity building necessary to develop and support local leadership.

No organization in the sample had a succession plan, and (with two exceptions) succession was never discussed at board meetings. Participants expressed gratitude for the involvement of their boards – particularly local boards, and individual board member contributions vis-à-vis networking, legal assistance and accessing resources. Participants simultaneously expressed that their boards were unengaged and they would appreciate more board involvement, especially regarding fund-raising and strategic visioning for the organization. Nine non-profits have both a local and international board of directors, which is a confusing form of governance.

The two boards are not working in alignment, which impedes a transparent conversation and subsequent action regarding succession.

Moving forward, the non-profits in this sample, their local boards and international boards are encouraged to re-frame what succession in this context means. It may mean working towards a model of permanent shared leadership between the expatriate and the nationals; it may mean shared leadership for a period of time, until the non-profit can sustain local leadership and access local funding. The latter should include the unflagging, organized pursuit of fund-raising in Thailand and in countries throughout Asia. Although philanthropy in Thailand is in a nascent stage, accessing more funds within Thailand would decrease some of the existing dependencies on the expatriate leader (e.g., need for proficiency in English, working with foreign donors, etc.)

Participants in this study had sobering suggestions for expatriates who lead non-profits in Thailand and for those who are considering starting non-profits. These suggestions included the need for the expatriate to adapt to Thai culture, listen and learn from Thai nationals, and recognize that the western way of doing things is not the only way. Expatriates should not force their vision on Thai nationals or ‘conduct a takeover’ (as one participant put it). Expatriates must also recognize that despite their passion for their mission, there might come a time when they have to leave (e.g., an unexpected medical emergency) – so they simply cannot overlook or ignore the need to discuss and prepare for succession.

Expatriates who want to start non-profits in Thailand should take the time to research what is currently being done prior to establishing any new organization. Instead of starting something new, expatriates could come alongside others, working in partnership from the beginning with Thai nationals. One participant expressed

emphatically that it was no longer appropriate for any expatriate – especially a white American – to begin any non-profit in Thailand.

It is my hope that the results of this research will help expatriates and nationals in the non-profit sector in Thailand clarify their intentions regarding succession and move towards a holistic integration of this conversation into their organization's strategies, goals, and sustainability review. As leadership succession is an essential part of organizational continuity, it is hoped that this research will contribute to strengthened local leadership and an increasingly sustainable non-profit sector in Thailand.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form (English)

University of Pennsylvania
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Karen Smith, MSOD Student

Title of the Research Study: Expatriate to National Leadership Succession in the Non-profit Sector in Thailand

Protocol Number: To be assigned

Principal Investigator: Dana Kaminstein, Ph.D.

Emergency Contact: Same as principal investigator

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this research study. We appreciate your making the time to provide us with your thoughts and reactions.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to explore the issues that influence expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand.

Permission to Record the Interview: We are also asking for your permission to audio record this interview. If you give us your permission to audio record this session, we will have a transcript made of your interview from the recording. Transcripts of the interviews will enable us to comprehensively analyze the interviews for similarities, differences and themes. When we send the recording for transcription, your name will not be associated with the transcription; to protect your privacy, we will have a code number associated with each recording. The transcripts will also be identified by a code number, rather than a name. If you do not want your interview recorded, that is fine. We would still like to interview you, and the researcher interviewing you will take notes during the interview. As with the transcript, your name will not appear on the interviewer's notes.

Confidentiality: Everything you say during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. The only people who will have access to the recordings and the transcripts are the main researcher and her advisor. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations and publications, but at no time will you be identified. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, the only document linking your identity to the recordings or transcripts will be kept in a password protected file on a flash drive. If we use quotes from the interviews, we will remove any part of the quote that could identify the person who made it, and we will sufficiently disguise quotes so that they cannot be associated with the person who made the comment.

Risks:

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some small possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

Benefits:

There are a number of possible benefits from participating in this study. First, by participating in the interview you may become aware of things that you have gained or learned. Second, by providing your thoughts, reactions and learnings you will be helping to identify the issues influencing expatriate to national leadership succession in the Kingdom of Thailand.

In any research study it is possible that you will not receive any benefits from participating.

Withdrawal Privilege:

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. If you decide at any point that you want to withdraw from this study, you may do so without any consequences.

Voluntary Consent:

If you have any questions about this consent form, your participation in this research study, or other questions, please contact Karen Smith at (email) and/or (phone number). She will be glad to answer any of your questions.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Office of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.

By signing this form below you provide your consent to be interviewed. Keep in mind that your participation is totally voluntary.

By signing this form below you provide your consent to: (please write an X in your preferred option)

_____ be interviewed and to have the interview recorded.

_____ be interviewed and NOT have the interview recorded.

Participant Signature
Date

Participant's Printed Name

Phone Number/ Fax:

APPENDIX B: Interview

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, and for taking the time to speak with me.

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the unique factors involving expatriate to national leadership succession in the non-profit sector in Thailand. There has been a lot of research on general principles of leadership succession in non-profit organizations; however, there is almost no research that looks at the issues surrounding expatriate to national succession. This study is an attempt to address this need.

My name is Karen Smith, and I worked in the non-profit sector in Thailand for 15 years. I am interested in gaining more knowledge regarding this topic because of my own work experience here. During this interview, I will ask you some questions related to this issue and your perspective on it. Your answers will be completely confidential; I will not identify you or the organization you work for in any way. The interview should take approximately one hour.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Interview Questions:

1. Introductory Questions:

Please tell me about your role at (name of organization). How long have you worked for the organization? What initially attracted you to the organization/this type of work?

Describe a time when you felt proud of the organization?

Describe a time when you felt frustrated with the organization?

2. Succession Planning:

How would you define or describe 'leadership succession'?

What has been beneficial /what do you imagine would be beneficial about having a national leader?

What do you think is beneficial about having an expatriate leader?

What would it look like for you to feel that leadership succession went very well?

What would it look like for you to feel that leadership succession was handled very poorly?

What opportunities may arise as a result of a change in leaders at your organization?

What problems may arise as a result of a change in leaders?

Who is best suited to choose the next leader? Why?

What can you do with your remaining time, to help the person who succeeds you to succeed?

3. Engagement of/with Board of Directors

Describe the ways you interact with the board of directors

What are some of the major contributions of the board (to your organization)?

Is leadership succession discussed at board meetings? How is it talked about?

<If it is not talked about> How is it not talked about? Share some ways it is not talked about...if it is not talked about, does that mean it's not talked about at formal meetings?

What could the board do, that they are not doing at the present time, to help you do your job?

4. Non-profit Sector and Impact

What are some of the biggest challenges you face as you consider leadership succession planning?

As you look to the future of the non-profit sector in Thailand, what suggestions do you have for expatriate to national leadership transitions?

Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?

**APPENDIX C:
Sample (Personalized) Letter of Invitation to Participate**

Dear (name of participant),

Warmest greetings to you!

I hope that you are doing well as you serve God in so many ways in Thailand. I've been pleased to catch a glimpse of your travels and work and life through Facebook and am delighted to work in the same networks as you and (name of organization).

Again, I hope you are well. I am really in support of all you're doing and the overall (and critical) effort to <mission of non-profit>. I was delighted to meet (name) in 2016 - she's been so helpful. Thank you very much for introducing us (me and (organizational name) to her.

As for me, I completed a special assignment with (name of organization) and have now returned to my status as <title> as of July, 2017. Another major task I am working on is completing the MS degree I began in <date>. I've been studying organizational dynamics, and learning more about groups and teams, organizational culture change, and leadership succession planning - particularly with non-profit organizations.

The latter is, in fact, one of the reasons that I am writing to you. My research is on expatriate to national leadership succession in Thailand. I wanted to ask if I could interview you as a part of this research. I hope to conduct individual interviews while I am back in Thailand during <dates>. I expect that each interview will take up to one hour.

There are a few more important details about this that I want to share.

First, all the interview data will be completely confidential. Each person interviewed and his/her related organization will not be identified in any way.

Second, the interviews and all data regarding the process will be kept on a flash drive, and this data will be destroyed after the research is complete.

Third, I am attaching the informed consent form, which has additional details regarding confidentiality, anonymity, research methods, etc. I will bring copies of this form in Thai and English to the interview itself.

Last, I am doing this research as a learner and as a student, not as an employee of (name of organization) or as the former program director of (name of Thai non-profit). It is my hope that I will learn many things as a result of this study but again, I wish to emphasize that no organization or person interviewed will be identified in any way.

I will be in Thailand from January 7th to February 21th, and am wondering if you could meet me for an interview on Tuesday, January 9th or Wednesday, January 10th? I can meet you at the offices of (name of organization) or another place in Bangkok

that would be convenient for you. If meeting in person is not possible, I would request that we could meet via skype or over the phone.

(name) I very much appreciate your consideration of this request, and look forward to re-connecting with you in Thailand in January if you are there!

Appendix D: Content Analysis Count

	Thai		Total # responses from Thai nationals	Expat		Total # responses from EXPATs	Total # Responses, Thai and Expat
	M	F		M	F		
I. Leadership: Characteristics, Metaphors, Philosophy of Leadership							
A National leaders							
A1, positive statements	3	4	34	1	4	48	82
A2, non-positive statements		2	6				6
B Expatriate leaders							
B1 positive statements	2	6	65	1	2	24	89
B2 non-positive statements	1	1	2				2
C Metaphors: leadership as							
C1 weapon	1		1				1
C2 baton passing		1	1		1	1	2
C3 lead rower in a boat	1		1				1
C4 water buffaloes		1	2				2
C5 dictator	1		1				1
C6 calling				1	4	15	15
D Philosophy of Leadership and Expat-Nat'l Succession							
D1 national leadership is always better				1	2	14	14
D1a, national leadership linked to sustainability				2		6	6
D2 organization does not support expat-national succession	1		5	1		3	8
2. Preparation for Succession/Organization Preparedness							
A, Emotions							
A1 fears, anxiety, sadness	2	3	23		1	2	25
A1a, organization has experienced failed succession (6 orgs; 9 failed attempts)		1	1	2	5	9	9
A1b, fears of failed succession	2	2	17		3	16	33
A2 founder-leader emotions				1	5	55	55
A2a, expat recognizes importance, need for succession, desire to move on				2	4	33	33
B, Organization is not ready							
B1, expat has built dependency				1		3	3
B2, lack of English language		3	11		1	3	14
B3 national must speak English				1		1	1
C, Leadership development and capacity building							
	3	3	27		4	14	41

D, Fund-raising	2	4	19	1	2	9	28
D1 English language and fund raising	3	3	15		1	1	16
D2 English language and donor relationships	1	2	3		1	6	9
E, existing leader responsible to initiate succession process	1		3	1	1	5	8
F cross- cultural context							
<i>F1, views of own culture</i>							
F1a tribal/Thai view of own culture	3	4	12				12
F1b tribal views of inter-tribal conflict	1	1	3				3
F1c expatriate views of own culture				3	5	35	35
F2, tribal views of expatriate culture	3	4	26				26
F3, expatriate views of Thai, tribal culture				3	7	87	87
F3a expat views of Thai-Tribal relationships/inter-tribal conflict				3	1	9	9
F4 Expat/Thai view of Thai bias in favor of white expatriates		1	1	2	1	12	13
3. Succession Process							
A Timing	2	5	25	3	6	49	74
B Selection/choosing/finding successor							
B1 Existing leader (expat) initiates discussion	1	3	5		1	3	8
B1a, Expat leader responsible for succession process					1	3	3
B2 Existing leader chooses	2	1	6		2	3	9
B3 Board of directors chooses	1		1	1	2	6	7
B4 All stakeholders (board, stakeholders, staff) responsible to choose	1	3	12	2	1	8	20
B5 Selection criteria and process		1	3	1		3	6
B5a, avoid favoritism, bias, nepotism	1	2	7	1		3	10
B5b, insider preferred	1	4	8	1	3	7	15
B5c, outsider okay	1		1				1
B6 Secrecy around discussion	1	2	3		1	2	5
B7 Avoidance of topic/discussion	1		1				1
B8 Difficulty finding the right person	2	1	4	2	5	38	42
B8a, difficulty finding Thai Christian leaders					3	7	7
B8b, salary issues of qualified national		3	9	1	3	7	16
C, vision: successor must understand expatriate's original vision, purpose in order to succeed	2	1	20	1	4	19	39
C1, founder expat brought the vision				1	2	5	5
C2, national leader must be visionary		1	1		2	2	3
D board of directors role and engagement							
D1 local board provides legal oversight	3	5	8		2	2	10
D2 local board supportive, engaged at basic level	1	3	7	1	3	21	28

D3 international board highly engaged					1	10	10
D4 local board highly engaged, supportive					2	14	14
D5 local board disengaged		2	2	2	3	18	20
D6 local board engaged only in emergency situations		1	1	1	1	4	5
D6a, board abandoned non-profit in crisis				1		1	1
D7 succession is not discussed at board meetings	3	4	7	3	6	16	23
D7a succession discussed only at int'l board meetings					1	2	2
D7b donor initiated succession discussion only		1	1		1	1	2
D8 secrecy	1	2	3		1	1	4
4. Succession Outcomes							
A emotions							
A1, hopes, pride, excitement around regarding national leadership	2	4	11	2	2	15	26
A2, embracing change	2		7	2	1	4	11
B models of leadership							
B1, shared leadership	1	4	21	3	5	20	41
B2, diversity is good	1	1	4				4
B3, expat should stay in some role		2	2	2	1	6	8
B4, Thai or expat leader: "it really doesn't matter" as long as they have capacity	1	3	4	1		1	5
C power, authority							
C1, fears that new leader will abuse power	1		4		1	3	7
C2 fear that national will abuse power and money; deceive the expat				1		1	1
D sustainability	2	4	14	1	1	2	16
D1 fund-raising	1	3	5	1	3	11	16
D1a, trends in philanthropy & fund-raising		2	4	1	2	11	15
D2 understanding, propelling vision forward post-succession		1	1	1	2	9	10
D3 donor relationships post-succession	2	1	9		1	9	18
D4 ownership				2	1	8	8
D5 lack of long-term commitment of millennials					2	2	2
E recommendations from participants to expatriates	2	3	5		2	12	17
E1 expats should not start non-profits				1	1	9	9
E2 board of directors should help fund-raise		1	2	2	3	13	15
E2a, boards should help with strategic planning		2	3	1		3	6