Rural Nonprofit Resilience Through the Supply and Demand Theory

by

Isabella Leonardi

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Kathleen Andereck, Chair
Gyan Nyaupane
Lili Wang

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ABSTRACT

Rural communities experience various challenges, including having higher education options, regulating the workforce, access to capital and goods, and infrastructure development. Despite these challenges, what makes these communities unique is their ability to be resilient, considering their small population. A prime example of this is Gila County, located in eastern Arizona. This area includes a cluster of rural towns that have survived for a long time, 142 years! Amidst the rise and fall of the copper rush from the 1880s to the 1950s, as well as the development of U.S. 60 that bypassed multiple towns, Gila County prevailed. The health of this community is deeply connected to the current nonprofit sector. This county is home to a few churches, one private nonprofit school, a variety of public charities, a community hospital, and several volunteer organizations. In order to understand how Gila County nonprofits have been so successful, this study uses the Supply and Demand Theory to answer the central idea: how do leaders build resilient nonprofits? Using in-depth interviews and demographic data collection, this study reports on the views of rural nonprofit leaders with years of expertise. It answers four key questions: 1) How strongly do nonprofit leaders equate being resilient to the longevity of their organization? 2) How is funding currently used in rural nonprofits' program development? 3) How is collaboration between community members and rural nonprofits necessary for success? 4) How does the organization currently use technology to further its mission? Through the lens of the Supply and Demand Theory, this study pinpoints how rural nonprofit leaders have utilized their resources to create an equilibrium between supply and demand. The results show that successful nonprofits showcase resilient practices through their current leadership. These

findings expand upon current research on succession planning, funding resiliency, internal and external collaboration, and overall use of technology. By expanding on this knowledge, valuable information has been documented for both active and upcoming nonprofit leaders. Capturing the first-hand expertise of successful leaders in rural Arizona provides advice, inspiration, and hope for those to come.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The geographical location this research focused on was Gila County, located in

eastern Arizona. Gila County comprises the integrated towns of Globe, Miami, Hayden,

Star Valley, Payson, and Winkelman. On February 8, 1881, this area was formed from

parts of Maricopa and Pinal counties (Cities and towns in Gila County, n.d.). Since then,

it has grown, and the boundaries extended farther eastward to the San Carlos River by

public petition in 1889. The original county seat was in the mining community of Globe

City, now known as the town of Globe. It is officially the 10th oldest town in Arizona

(Cities and towns in Gila County, n.d.). Across the six towns that make up Gila County,

the total population is approximately 53,589 people (U.S. Census: Arizona Population,

2020). The four communities of Hayden, Miami, Star Valley, and Winkelman are rural,

defined as a community of 2,500 or fewer residents (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). Globe and

Payson are considered urban clusters, defined as towns with 2,500 people or more but at

least 50 miles from a large urban area (Walters, 2021) (Figure 1). This combination of

rural and urban areas creates a unique dynamic that brings about different challenges in

comparison to urban cities like Tempe, Scottsdale, or the metropolitan area that is

Phoenix. The three largest racial and ethnic demographics that make up this county are

White, Hispanic, or Latino, and American Indian (U.S. Census: Arizona Population,

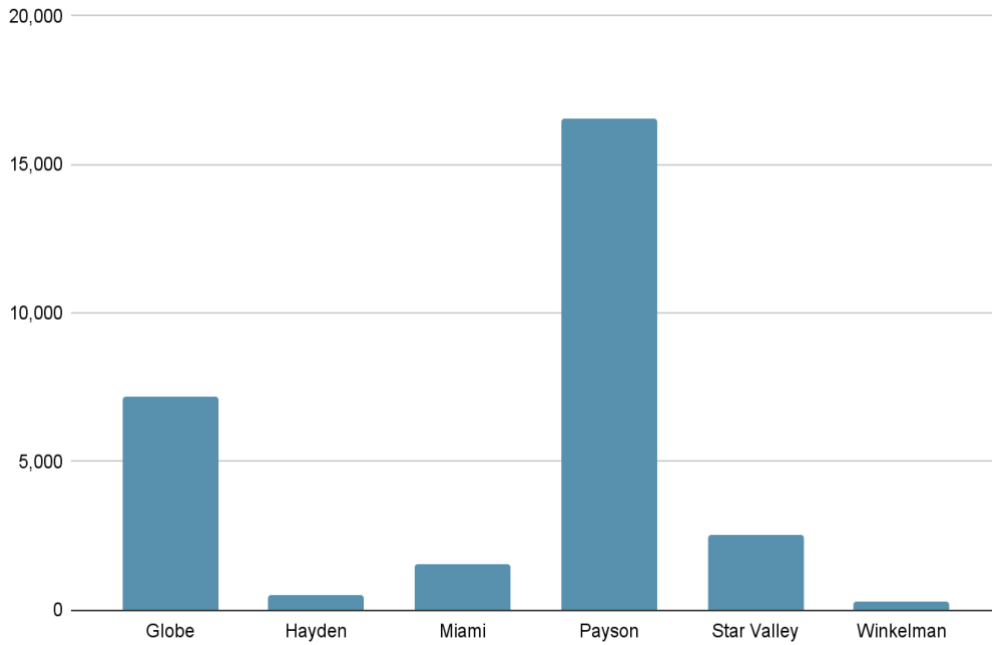2020) (Figure 2).

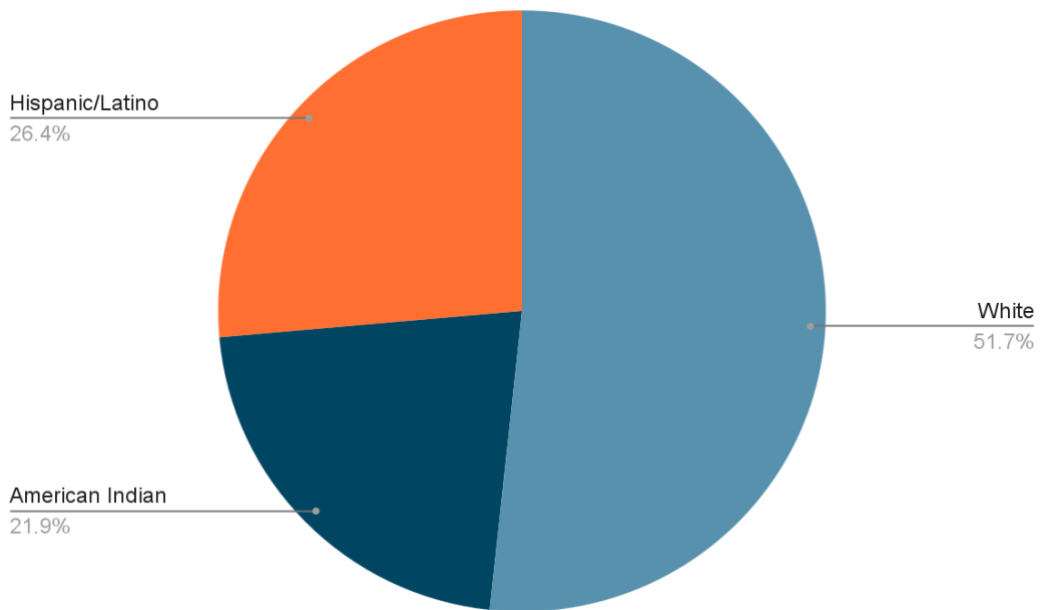**Population & Demographics**

Figure 1. Gila County Population 2020. [1]

Figure 2. Ethnic Demographics in Gila County 2020[2].

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[1] U.S. Census: Arizona Population, 2020

[2] U.S. Census: Arizona Demographics, 2020

Income & Poverty

One of the more significant issues that rural nonprofits deal with is lack of funding. Studies have shown that urban areas receive twice as much government funding per capita for services in comparison to rural areas, even though there is a significantly higher concentration of those living under the poverty line in rural areas (Potluka & Fanta, 2021). Researchers analyzed government assisted funding for nonprofits in different locations. They found that on average, metropolitan nonprofits have a budget of $800 per person per year, urban nonprofits have a budget of $420, and finally, rural nonprofits have a budget of $39 per person (Shapiro, 2021). This indicates a clear disparity of assistance that rural nonprofits receive and should be considered when looking at poverty rates.

In order to gauge poverty in Gila County, it is necessary to compare Gila County residents' income to state and federal poverty levels. In 2021, the federal poverty income was between $13,000 and $47,000 (U.S. Census: Federal Demographics, 2020). The threshold was $13,788 for an individual living alone. For a single parent of one child, the threshold was $17,529. For a family of four with two children under 18, the threshold income was $27,740, and for a family with eight people, the threshold was $47,093. If a family's total income is less than the corresponding threshold, then that family and everyone in it is considered impoverished.

Currently within the state of Arizona, the median income of a household was $65,913. Per capita income in the past 12 months for a household was $34,644. Overall, around 12.5% of residents in Arizona are considered living in poverty (U.S. Census: Arizona Demographics, 2020).

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Where do Gila County residents land in comparison? The 2021 Census for Arizona places the median household income of Gila County at $51,406. Per capita income in for the area in 2020 was $27,794 (U.S. Census: Arizona Income & Poverty, 2021). The most recent data indicate that nearly 16.8% of Gila County residents live in poverty, while 17% of individuals do not have funds to pay for insurance (U.S. Census: Arizona Health, 2020). All this information shows that there is a desperate need for more support in Gila County in terms of poverty relief. A resilient nonprofit sector is vital to the community's poverty relief effort (Heijan, et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will examine the factors that may influence nonprofit resilience. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following central question of this study: *How have current nonprofit leaders in Gila County, AZ been successful in managing organizations that have survived for at least one year?*

The four key research questions are:

Research Question 1: *How strongly do nonprofit leaders equate being resilient to the longevity of their organization?*
 Research Question 2: *How is funding currently used in rural nonprofits' program development?*
 Research Questions 3: *How is collaboration between community members and rural nonprofits necessary for success?*
Research Questions 4: *How does the organization currently use technology to further their mission?*

The topic of resilient nonprofit practices was chosen as the priority of this study to further expand upon research related to resilient community development. There has always been a clear need for social service agencies in rural areas (Heijan, et al., 2019), and this study determined how allocated resources were being used by nonprofit leaders. So far there has been limited research on nonprofit services in Gila County leaving a large gap to cover. Nonprofits in this county have resilient traits like committed leaders, adaptive employees, social support from the community, and flexible programs. Altogether, the future of rural nonprofits can be related to the findings of this study because such a specific examination of nonprofit resiliency in Gila County has yet to be done. Capturing how nonprofit leaders have created a balance of supply and demand is vital knowledge for the nonprofit sector as a whole.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: SUPPLY AND DEMAND THEORY

The Supply and Demand Theory was used to uncover resilient nonprofit practices. This theory is rooted in economics and dates back to the late 1700s. Adam Smith popularized the concept in 1776 when he used it to showcase market behavior (Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004). Since then, the theory has been adapted for other research areas with resource management at its core. Studies on the demand for housing, public spaces, and social media use have all been paired with this theory for research purposes. In terms of nonprofit research, there have yet to be a variety of studies done with this theory (Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004). Some researchers believe there is no direct correlation between supply and demand because revenue for nonprofits is not always driven by demand but rather by the ability to pay for the delivery of services.

This study argues that the nonprofit sector is a good fit to use the Supply and Demand Theory because nonprofits manage data which can provide an unbiased prediction of what is needed by the community. The nonprofit market is unique in terms of prices because it is never driven by cost, supply, or demand as seen in for-profit businesses. This sector has helped to support the critical basic needs of the community, which arguably are in the highest demand amongst the majority of blue-collar individuals (Kidd, 2016). Organizations like hospitals, food banks, thrift stores, education centers, and mental health clinics are some examples of nonprofits that save community lives. These institutes aid in the needs of a community much more than boutique shopping centers, restaurants, and movie theaters (Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004).

The goal of resilient nonprofit practices is to reach market equilibrium (Keller, 2021). This is defined as: "an equilibrium priced market which results from a balance between supply and demand input and output" (Britannica, 2023). In order for nonprofit leaders to know if they are aiding in reaching market equilibrium, they can look at their organization's capacity to serve (Boyne, 2003). From their perspective, they should know how many programs and services they can provide as well as have knowledge on operations such as volunteers, use of technology resources, and collaboration with other players in the same fields (Bryan, 2019). Capacity then functions as an enabler to build resilient practices that nonprofits utilize daily when working to achieve their missions and objectives.

The supply and demand theory has been used in studies to help understand the concept of market equilibrium better. One study in Oregon and one in the Czech

Republic included interviews with nonprofit leaders from over 400 different nonprofits in both rural and urban areas. Conclusions from these studies indicated a recurring deficit between demand and supply in two key areas: finances and human resources (Valentinov & Vaceková, 2015; Carlson, Kelley, & Smith, 2010).) This can be a common issue when nonprofits are in areas with high levels of poverty because the demand for services tends to be so high that even with nonprofits being at full service, they cannot match what needs to be supplied (Carlson, Kelley, & Smith, 2010). Many rural and urban nonprofits have limited capacities resulting in limited services. This can be a challenge in areas where poverty is high but populations are not homogenous and have a multitude of needs (Kidd, 2016).

In order to use the Supply and Demand Theory in this research, there first needed to be a defined understanding of what would be studied (Figure 3). In this research, *supply* was defined as what the nonprofit has in terms of resources. To collect data on supply, questions were centered around resilient leadership practices, resilient funding practices, current programs, internal and external community support, and technology use to create an online presence. *Demand* was defined by to what extent leaders felt they meet the community's needs. This involved questions about services requested by the community, how equipped leaders felt they were for the community's needs, quality of service, and overall impact to meet community demands. Leaders were asked to share their success stories, which meant asking tangible questions such as, "how many people they served," and "how often they provided services." The final connection to the literature used the findings of the Supply and Demand Theory to determine the overall

resiliency of the organization. Organizations with leaders with a high resilience skill set

and established roots can often gauge a balanced supply-to-demand rate based on their

expertise (Branche, 2014). Gila County nonprofit leaders were chosen as the population

because there are a number of successful nonprofits with longevity. Many of the leaders

saw the economic changes based on the success and downfalls of local mines like

Freeport-McMoRan, Resolution Copper Mining, and Old Dominion (Cities and Towns in

Gila County, n.d.). With their knowledge of the history and economic development of

Gila County, they have their own understanding of what resilient practices to utilize when

there is a high demand for service but a limited supply of resources.
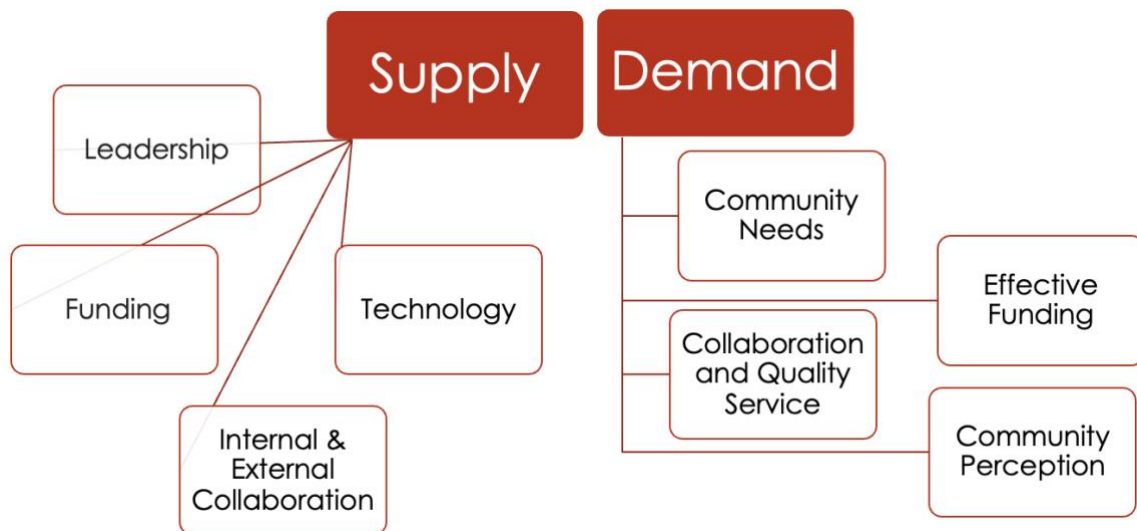

Figure 3. Use of the Supply and Demand Theory in the Study.

DEFINITION of TERMS

Community Collaboration: The process by which citizens, agencies, organizations, and businesses make sustained commitments to work together to accomplish a shared vision (Murray & Greer, 1994).

>**Interpretation:** *Communicating with multiple stakeholders in the community to identify avenues to support the organization's mission.*

>**Example from Text:** "When leaders were asked if there were any drawbacks to collaborating with one another, it was unanimously that there were none" (pp. 54-55).

Digital Divide: The gap between individuals, households, businesses, and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels concerning both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities (OECD, 2001).

>**Interpretation:** *The population of a study having limited access to technology like Wi-Fi, computers, smart phones, tablets.*

>**Example from Text:** "Nonprofit leaders did not personally feel the impact of the divide but it could still be possibly for residents of Gila county to experience this" (pp. 59)

Financial Resilience: Using financial resilience to maintain business amidst adversities. (Zahedi, J., Salehi, M. & Moradi, M, 2022).

>**Interpretation:** *Planning for future financial spending when finances are limited based on external events.*

>**Example from Text:** "What nonprofit leaders and researchers have come to realize is financial resiliency is tied to organizational capacity, and it does not happen overnight." (pp. 16).

Market Equilibrium: An equal priced market which results from a balance between supply and demand input and output" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., n.d.).

>**Interpretation:** *When the nonprofits have enough supply of resources to meet the demands of the community***.**

>**Example from Text:** "In order for nonprofit leaders to know if they are aiding in reaching market equilibrium, they can look at their organization's capacity to serve" (pp. 6).

Nonprofit Organization: A business that has been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) because it furthers a social cause and provides a public benefit (National Council of Nonprofits, 2019).

>> **Example from Text:** "This included nonprofits that aid with food scarcity, housing aid through rebuilding homes, and rehoming of individuals. It also included health care services, thrift stores, and youth aid programs that supported education and the arts" (pp. 43).

Nonprofit Resilience: An organization that can sustain itself over the long term and perpetuate its ability to fulfill its mission (Masaoka et al., 2010).

>> **Interpretation:** *An organization that has solid infrastructures in place which promotes their ability to serve the community long-term.*

>> **Example from Text:** "This highlights the resiliency of the nonprofits' efforts because they were making diligent steps to keep the community engaged" (pp. 64)

Resilience Practice: Being able to describe a system, assess it resilience and then manage its resilience through actions (Walker & Salt, 2012).

>> **Interpretation:** *Having and utilizing resilient skills to achieve or accomplish a goal.*

>> **Example from Text:** This was showcased by the resilient practice deemed by the participants as role fluidity. A key attribute of being a resilient leader was being able to wear multiple hats at once." (pp. 46)

Supply vs. Demand: The amount of a specific good or service available in the market in relation to the amount of the good or service that customers want to buy (Moss, 2010).

>> **Interpretation:** *The quality and quantity of resources nonprofits are able to provide to meet the most current needs they identify in a community.*

>> **Example from Text:** "Participants noted that events and programs met the community's needs but never exceeded expectations" (pp. 65).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Researchers have been trying to answer one question: What makes a nonprofit resilient? Is it their leadership, the community, the programming, or simply a commitment to the mission? It is ultimately a combination of all four which will become apparent through this study. An extensive review of resilient nonprofits was made with a few key focus areas: leadership, finances, collaboration, and technology. Various studies have been done on a mixture of metropolitan, urban, and rural communities within the United States, as well as international regions of Russia, Italy, Germany, and China. This review considers nonprofits serving different types of communities and not just rural ones because having resilient nonprofit practices has become a goal of the nonprofit sector as a whole (Young, & Searing, 2022). The specific data collected for this study only included rural leaders' commentary, but the findings themselves can relate to most nonprofits attempting to become more resilient. This range of studies reviewed brought a variety of ideas to light regarding diverse leadership, financial resilience, utilizing internal and external collaboration, and the digital divide. This chapter will set the stage to identify how supply and demand balance is directly related to resiliency practices that nonprofit leaders implement.

Resiliency Practices

Oftentimes, the resilient practices of nonprofits are triggered when an event occurs that cannot be addressed by routine measures (Comfort & Kapucu, 2006, p. 310). What boosts the ability of a nonprofit to be able to adapt in changing times stems back to resilient leadership (Williams et al., 2017). Research has found one aspect of gaining leaders who already have resilient practice skills is supporting diversity in the workplace. As populations grow, new minority groups are given opportunities to excel and they often bring resilient skills with them. The nonprofit sector benefits as a whole from more people of different ages, gender, color, and background. There is no one-size-fits-all way to lead nonprofits, so it is even more crucial to support people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities to step into leadership roles (Keller, 2021). One study in particular asked 33 nonprofit leaders in Virginia, and five executive leaders in Ohio about their work in maintaining resilient organizations (Colemon, 2019). Participants were given 45-minute phone interviews. First, they were asked to rank themselves on their ability to be resilient. Along with ranking themselves on a resiliency scale, they were also asked questions about their age, gender, race, education, and family history. The results from the study indicated that diversity gave leaders resilient skills to manage adaptive organizations. Leaders who identified as women of color considered themselves especially resilient and accustomed to turning barriers into challenges in comparison to everyone who was not a woman of color who was interviewed (Colemon, 2019). These

conclusions were all based on self-reporting so there could be some bias in the information.

Resilient leadership practice is important with research suggesting diverse individuals, hiring externally, and focusing on transformational leaders could promote resilient practices (Kidd, 2016). One example of resiliency practices that leaders performed was fostering collaboration with the community to gain more support (Leigh, Shapiro, & Penney, 2010). Another practice was adapting to events out of the organization's control by adjusting the internal functions of the organization (Williams et al., 2017). Unsurprisingly, rural nonprofits have limited numbers of people to choose from for their workforce. This factor, on top of serving communities with a lot of needs, can create a challenge. For rural nonprofits to survive they must have a plethora of resilient practices. Research from this study will fill the gap to better understand how small populations with limited diversity, can still have leaders that use resilient practices.

Another study expanded upon how a resilient nonprofit's practice was to give employees training on how to serve diverse populations. Nonprofit employees were asked to what extent diversity training was used within their organization. The findings concluded that most of the respondents felt as though having diverse training strengthened their organization's ability to be successful (Leigh, Shapiro, & Penney, 2010). One specific aspect was that it allowed for a greater understanding of how to foster collaboration within diverse workgroups. The training also gave leaders knowledge on how to create an atmosphere of safety and trust and gave them confidence to be comfortable talking about sensitive topics involving race and gender (Leigh,

Shapiro, & Penney, 2010). Overall, supporting diversity and training on how to serve diverse groups is a vital resiliency practice.

Succession Planning

Another topic involving resilient practices was related to succession planning. Since the nonprofit sector is often understaffed with high expectations for role fluidity, there can be struggles with obtaining and maintaining high-level leadership. One study examined succession planning by interviewing top executives at an urban nonprofit. Through a survey, respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they felt succession planning was essential and overall affected the organization. Respondents largely perceived succession planning as necessary, with 70 percent indicating a 4 or 5 on the importance scale, with five being "very important." However, in a follow-up question to see what the organizations were doing to support this, less than 20 percent of organizations developed a formal plan for CEO transition (Froelich et al., 2011).

A similar study centered around researching what current practices are put into place to create a succession plan. One significant change mentioned in the past few years was that when key leaders stepped down, instead of looking internally, organizations would more often hire from external sources. This was shown to be successful because new hires brought a fresh dynamic to the organization. Further findings of the study seemed to indicate that the external hires stayed with the organization but this study would need to be repeated to confirm (Johnson, 2022). One way to aid in succession planning through internal hiring was found when nonprofit leaders were able to supply transformational leadership to their employees (Branche, 2014). Branche (2014) found

when leaders play an active role in training their employees are more likely to want to stay/apply for other roles. The findings showcase the important resilient practice of transformational leadership within nonprofit organizations. Leaders who are strategic in their decision-making can bounce back from adversity.

FUNDING

Financial Resiliency

Another recurring research concept seen in a few journal papers is how an organization's funding sources can affect the productivity and resilience of programs. The capacity of most organizations is based on conditions in the local environment and internal management characteristics (Wright, 2018). Two studies found evidence that how well-equipped a nonprofit is to provide programming is dependent on a few specific aspects of funding including available funding, the location of the nonprofit, and the training available to employees on healthy budgeting practices.

Studies were completed on nonprofit employees in rural southern United States as well as nonprofit employees that belonged to the NeighborWorks group (Wright, 2018). Researchers were able to conclude based on a large amount of data that an organization's funding for a program from community donors was dependent on how deep their roots were in said community (Walters, 2021). For example, a newer organization will need more time to find donors from the community. Organizations that had been around for some time made these connections and were gathering most of the funding to manage detailed programs that the community was familiar with. Despite having the same passion for the community, newer organizations will often have a difficult time obtaining donors over long-standing nonprofits (Wright, 2018).

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A huge factor of funding programs is keeping the perspective of the future constantly in mind with every significant decision made (Willems, Van Puyvelde & Jegers, 2023). What nonprofit leaders and researchers have come to realize is financial resiliency is tied to organizational capacity, and it does not happen overnight (Walters, 2020). What helps with creating these models is having a well-organized evaluation at the beginning stages of an organization. A nonprofit may have incredible ideas and goals, but in order to support its overall mission there needs to be resilient financial practices in place. An example of financial resilience is when nonprofit leaders delegate someone to constantly review and compare budgets for every project and program (Walters, 2020). It is their job to be aware of not only the nonprofit's capacity but also the resources available to them and how to use them most efficiently (Willems, Van Puyvelde & Jegers, 2023).

Other resiliency tactics nonprofit leaders used during crisis were knowing the most pressing financial needs of their organization, and using outreach to gain funding (Searing, Wiley, & Young 2021). Nonprofit leaders need to build frameworks around cash flow monitoring. A resilient practice that worked was when leaders knew each budget intimately which allowed them to know where to take money from in a crisis. In a situation of turmoil, portions of the budget might need to be tapped into to keep the organization running. In some places, this can mean ending programs that are not as successful, or it could be spending more time on current donor-stakeholder relations to gain added support (Searing, Wiley, & Young 2021). Nonprofits can also try to gather new donors by reaching out to the community. Hosting monthly donations call-a-thons are successful (Pettey & Pettey, 2013). When nonprofit leaders can pivot in the face of

funding turmoil, they boost their organization's resiliency (Searing, Wiley, & Young 2021).

For an organization to be able to have funds to function at its highest capacity, there needs to be a substantial investment from nonprofit leaders. Skills like guidance on how to obtain funding, managing investments, and bookkeeping are all necessary traits that can be learned and should be a minimum expectation of knowledge before any nonprofit begins (Walters, 2020). This does hint at the need for further examination of how nonprofit leaders develop resilient funding practices when education on the topic is not guaranteed. Volunteer leaders for example often step into their roles with the best intentions but might not be the most experienced in budgeting, funding, and financing as a whole. This research will provide answers as to whether volunteer nonprofit leaders are equipped with enough knowledge of financial resiliency to manage funding successfully.

COLLABORATION

Scholars determined that developing collaborative relationships helps with long-term resilience because stakeholders were more likely to provide recurring support (Keller, 2021). These relationships as a whole allow nonprofits to formulate adaptive partnerships internally within their sector and externally with the audiences they serve (Hudson, 2009). Within this research, internal stakeholders were defined as nonprofit employees as well as other nonprofits with a similar mission. External stakeholders were defined as members of the community including volunteers and the populations being served.

Internal

New and established avenues of internal collaboration ensure that nonprofit leaders have a network system that they can capitalize on. This has been seen when leaders have to depend on the structure, diversity, and functional redundancies of their organization to be resilient through any situation (Beatley, 2009). One study looked into the internal collaboration of 36 local nonprofit organizations in New Zealand, after experiencing a record earthquake in 2011. After interviewing nonprofit leaders, results indicated that internal collaboration between the 36 nonprofits bolstered their ability to aid the community. Leaders indicated that they used multiple levels of connectivity which allowed for expanded service provision to be sustained through resource sharing (Hutton, 2018). Collaborations allowed for multiple nonprofits to divide and conquer in the face of crisis. Internal communication allowed for a continuous assessment of the needs of the communities and ensured priorities captured resilient aspects, such as functional redundancy and diversity (Hutton, 2018). Realistically, internal collaboration between nonprofits happens when nonprofit employees decide to network and get to know one another. The first step to this happens when leaders of an organization inform themselves of other nonprofits around them. The findings of one study of 94 different nonprofits showed that what played the largest part in collaborating was when nonprofits were of similar size, were in the same location, had common funding, and had similar founding dates (Atouba & Shumate, 2015).

Other possible motivations for internal collaborations were related to a nonprofit's willingness to cooperate with others, their previous history of collaboration, and their need to share expertise (Sowa, 2009). Ultimately, findings have discovered that

nonprofit leaders tend to engage in collaborations between organizations when they perceive they will gain benefits both for the services they deliver and for their organization as a whole (Sowa, 2009). Important questions to ask about internal collaboration are "Who shares your organization's values and approach and can you serve clients better by combining services?" (Browning, Hutton, & Phillips, 2022).

External

On the other side of research, scholars have found that the organic nature of nonprofit operations depends heavily on external collaboration. Through these connections, resilient organizations are formed and can facilitate a continuity of services even when the economic, social, and environmental conditions of a community fluctuate (Paton & Johnston, 2017). Nonprofits have been coined as the third party between the government and communities. Their collaboration with the community gives them first-hand knowledge of the most pressing needs of an area. Both local villagers in China and nonprofit leaders were interviewed on how they felt their community was able to recover from a major earthquake that hit in 2008. Findings discovered that eternal collaboration occurred when nonprofit employees routinely asked members of the community what services could be improved (Paton & Johnston, 2017). This created communication channels to track government aid, nonprofit resources, and community satisfaction. It ultimately boosted the output of the nonprofits because they were able to funnel their resources to the exact needs of the community.

A final aspect of external collaborators is with volunteers. They are considered one of the main resources for a nonprofit (Browning, Hutton, & Phillips, 2022). One-way nonprofit leaders can gain more volunteer support from the external community is by

collaborating on role expectations. A leader has to look at their nonprofit organization and decide how many volunteers they need and what functions they can perform. Having a basic schedule of tasks to be completed should be the first step. The second is getting to know volunteers and what they expect out of their role. This type of role collaboration keeps all parties satisfied (Browning, Hutton, & Phillips, 2022). Some nonprofits are run only by volunteers. One study surveyed 529 different employees that were all volunteers within an organization with 20 volunteers to every paid employee. Data showed that the relationship between volunteers and paid staff needed to be formed upon the practices of collaboration. This meant ensuring paid employees saw volunteers as being a part of the workforce and not as a unique stakeholders. Volunteers also valued being recognized when they proposed innovative management strategies to enhance volunteer recruitment success and retention. Collaboration is key especially in nonprofits with a large volunteer force because they are the workforce behind the mission (Studer, 2016).

Overall, internal, and external collaboration enables an organization to bring different strengths, resources, and knowledge to a task. It assumes that nonprofits can forge a greater depth and understanding of succeeding in their mission by way of a partnership (Keller, 2021). Research so far has provided a conclusion on the strengths of internal and external collaboration. Collaboration has been connected primarily with positive benefits, but what happens when it is so deeply woven into a nonprofit structure that a nonprofit could not function without it? Dependency on collaboration could cause a domino effect of nonprofit failure. The gap that remains here is seeing if an organization with especially bonded internal and external ties can still be considered resilient.

TECHNOLOGY

The Digital Divide

Many rural towns face a technology gap known as the digital divide. This happens when there is a distance between demographics and regions with access to modern information and communications technology and those with restricted access (Fryer & Granger, 2008). Some examples are when individual community members do not have personal access to computers that would allow them to connect with their community virtually. It is especially apparent when broadband internet is not accessible throughout the area. A few studies have researched these concepts in-depth to understand how significant this barrier is and how it can affect rural nonprofit development.

One study was conducted to better understand if nonprofits had technology and how they use it. This included having access to computers, printers, and phones. Analysis involved looking into technology availability, attitudes of nonprofit staff regarding technology, and how often technology was used by volunteers. Questions were also asked about the role of volunteers in this relationship, and finally, there was data collected on how residents felt it was necessary to use technology within programs (Humphrey et al., 2004). Findings from this survey confirmed that the digital divide was present in part of New River Valley. What appeared to be the main cause of this was lack of funding. Nonprofits expressed that when their organization obtained money it was through specific grants which rarely included technology as a part of their budget. This resulted in a lack of funds to increase organizational and technological capacity (Humphrey et al., 2004).

A similar study done in rural Italy dove deeper into nonprofits' current relationship with technology. The data collected from the provinces indicated that nonprofits who classified themselves as human services had the most limited access to computer resources compared to all other types of nonprofits (Humphrey et al., 2004). Other results of this study reported that one of the things that did not influence nonprofits' relationship with technology was the size of an organization but instead, similar to the first study, it all came down to the technology budget of an organization. Respondents from both studies mentioned that they thought volunteers and community members both classified technology as being valuable and necessary for a nonprofit to have. However, this was only the case in areas where broadband internet was widespread so that there could be interaction from the community (Fryer & Granger, 2008).

Social Media Use

In addition to the digital divide research, a similar study was done concerning social media use within rural nonprofits to connect them with the community. More often than not, nonprofit organizations do not invest in social media. An important question is how important it is for a nonprofit to supply the community with a strong social media presence. There can be many challenges to the growth of social media in areas with limited infrastructure development. Nevertheless, research has indicated that this is an essential resource that needs to be tapped into in order to communicate with a community, especially within a rural area (Liegel et al., 2019). To answer questions about social media use in a rural area, structured phone interviews were conducted with 21 nonprofit representatives in a rural region. Nonprofit representatives were asked

questions about social media use and message content, effective communication strategies, and best practices in social media use. The results showed that most NPOs maintained at least one Facebook page. The leaders within the organization recognized its promise as a communication tool to speed up the process of communication (Liegel et al., 2019).

One issue that has hindered the use of social media thus far was primarily due to resource constraints. The data indicated that almost all of the NPOs used social media as a secondary communication strategy to complement traditional approaches. When respondents were asked what they used social media for they mentioned using it primarily to share information and solicit donations or volunteers. Representatives identified the key obstacle in supplying a strong social media presence was finding funding for a social media manager. Without one designated employee, the mission to go online can quickly go to the wayside for more pressing roles. Only when the role of social media managers is valued will a nonprofit be able to supply a consistent online presence (Liegel et al., 2019).

SUPPLY MEETING DEMAND

Community Needs

Before a nonprofit leader can act on the needs of a community, they first need to be able to determine what would help (Heijman, et al., 2019). A study looked into nonprofit leaders' actions in three different states: Georgia, Kentucky, and Mississippi (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). Leaders were asked questions about serving their

community, including demographics of the population served, the amount of people they served, and the characteristics of their organization that made them successful. The results found that nonprofits served a variety of members in their community with no single group in particular. What made them successful was steering clear of employees who were resistant to change and communicating their needs with board members. A few mentioned that in previous years there was a disconnect of understanding between board members and clients (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). Through the practice of observing and communication, leaders felt as though their organization had strong problem-solving strategies. Leaders were able to fix systemic underinvestment problems by constantly being aware of what the community needed (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021).

One study investigated what social services were needed in a community by collecting data from the leaders themselves. This involved asking leaders and looking at data to determine the demand for services. Findings indicated that the overall economic security of each organization is based on meeting the supply-to-demand rate (Prentice, et al., 2023). There was a consistency across the nonprofits interviewed that suggested that they must be prepared to supply more in areas with a less even market and greater population of need. They were required to supply less in areas with more for-profit businesses that had a variety of priced resources (Prentice, et al., 2023).

Another study looked into nonprofits in Russia to determine the scope and ability of socially oriented nonprofit organizations in the area (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). By looking at data on services provided from 2017-2020 and talking to leaders about their successful efforts in the area, it was determined that the leaders identified their organizations as being staples to the community. The findings indicated that most

residents depended on services like health care, and food assistance through nonprofits. The results also indicated that there was an increase in the number of services provided in the Kurgan region when more socially oriented nonprofit organizations opened in the area. In contrast, there was a decrease in the number of services provided in the Orenburg region when the population decreased, and the number of socially oriented nonprofit organizations went from 20 to 15 (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). This confirmed that the nonprofit organization was leading the charge to meet the demand for social services in the area. It also showed that when people need help, they will turn to nonprofits.

A study explored leadership strategies of nonprofits to address a rural area experiencing food insecurity. The justification of this study was that the nonprofit needed to complete the mission to aid sustainable food systems for the people in the area (Okamoto, 2020). The results showed that the resilience of this nonprofit seemed to increase because leaders chose to operate closer along the lines of a for-profit business (Okamoto, 2020). They did not put all their funding into programming and instead invested money into employee education, buying land to expand property lines, and running a weekly market to sell produce. The research ultimately found a flaw because the organization was striving too hard to portray itself as standing outside the capitalist landscape when it was fully within it. What the researcher felt would be better is if leaders in the nonprofit viewed the symbolic system of the for-profit and nonprofit structure as being separate. Since nonprofits can accept funding from the government and receive tax breaks, it's the leader's job to make sure their organization holds to the integrity of a nonprofit (Okamoto, 2020). This study indicates that there is a need for balance between having a resilient nonprofit that has money, but also remaining true to

the mission to serve the community. It is ultimately the nonprofit leader's job to create a resilient organization despite an ever-changing economic climate.

Effective Funding

There is much public scrutiny around the effectiveness of funding use within nonprofits. Since there is a unique way that money is spent and vast numbers of people can come for services, the costs can be high, and the returns sometimes take time to track (Willems, Van Puyvelde & Jegers, 2023). Research has shown that the two most important aspects of measuring funding effectiveness are outcomes and impact (Liket & Maas, 2015). Data indicated that what can be the biggest hindrance to being effective is funding management (Liket & Maas, 2015).

A study was completed in Arizona in 2022 with a few nonprofits including Habitat for Humanity. The research reported that nonprofit organizations had four major expense categories: program expenses, management, general expenses, and fundraising expenses (GuideStar, 1999). Resource Mobilization Theory was paired with the Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness Model to create profiles for leaders who were good at managing these four expenses. Successful leaders reported being able to pay their bills with some funds left over at the end of the year (Berrett, 2022). One leader mentioned what helped them was that they always carefully weighed their financial choices and thought about what would be worth it in the long run. As well, nonprofit effectiveness was determined to be boosted when investments were put into the infrastructure of the organization first and all other expenses second (Berrett, 2022). Organizations were able to survive financial instability when leaders made structural changes quickly to adapt to the ever-changing communities they serve (Berrett, 2022).

The biggest need for funding effectiveness is with nonprofits that serve high populations of poverty. Scholars found that communities in the rural south had populations with the highest rates of rural poverty in all of the US. Out of the 353 persistently poor counties in the US, 252 of them are located in the rural south, with the majority of residents made up of people of color (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). Through the use of Systems Theory and Critical Rural Theory, a study investigated nonprofit leaders' function in the social and cultural dimensions of the community. Findings showed that most leaders identified that they were able to meet the demands of the community through careful funding management (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). This was accomplished because nonprofit leaders regularly took action to acquire outsider donors and apply for government grants (Dvoryadkina et al., 2021). When there is a clear group of individuals that qualify for help in an area, nonprofit leaders utilize a key financial resiliency practice of funding diversification.

Other research furthers the idea of funding effectiveness by looking into how location affects supply and demand. The location of an organization can significantly affect access to materials like raw goods for building, access to a diverse range of employees and volunteers, and the community that will receive services. Findings indicated that the proximity of nonprofits with similar missions affected the number of resources they received. For example, when there were multiple social service nonprofits clustering together, there was often an overlap of resource which affected their ability to meet demands. These nonprofits oftentimes applied for the same grants and there was overall not enough diversity of services that were actually needed. Bielefeld and

Murdoch's study (2004) confirmed that the demands of a community will never be met when multiple nonprofits depend on the same funding.

Collaboration and Quality Service

Two studies have determined that currently, nonprofit leadership identified quality services to be deeply centered around collaboration (Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Potluka & Fanta, 2021). The first study defined collaboration in two ways, collaboration between leaders and their employees, and collaboration between the goals of the nonprofit and the community around them (Snavely & Tracy, 2000). The research was conducted in two rural regions comprising seven counties in southern Illinois and six counties in the Delta region of Mississippi. Both areas comprise large rural spaces filled with trees and wildlife. Within these areas were clusters of rural communities, with about half the residents falling within the 30% poverty level for the area (Snavely & Tracy, 2000). Nonprofit employees were asked questions about the quality of their programs concerning community planning, organization planning, and organizational integration. The study found that the nonprofit employees said that collaboration was necessary for almost all of their success (Snavely & Tracy, 2000). By staying up to date on what other nonprofits were accomplishing, as well as maintaining weekly meetings to discuss the organization's goals, they were able to ensure they had successful programs (Snavely & Tracy, 2000).

Similarly, a large collection of data was compiled in Russia by looking into nonprofit employees' perceptions of how successful they were at meeting the goals of their organization. This research was centered around an employee's current role in infrastructure development and mission completion. They were asked questions along the

central idea of whether the collaborative relationship of living in the communities they served helped them create the best services for their community. A propensity score was collected within the survey for each individual to track how successful they felt their organization is in meeting its goals to serve the community. The data were analyzed and found that there was an extremely optimistic feeling that the participants knew the true needs of their community and were meeting them. Many of them were key collaborators in the community in simple ways like when they asked their neighbors if they were happy with where they lived as well as in more intricate ways like being a part of local Facebook groups, attending city council events, and volunteering. All of these aspects allowed community employees to observe their community from multiple lenses as not only a worker but also as a friend and neighbors (Potluka & Fanta, 2021).

The conclusion from both studies indicated that nonprofit success is not dependent on chance. Instead, it requires a particular type of employee to be in place to collaborate with others. They need to be focused on several collaborative approaches with the community as a whole. Personal relations were vital to empower internal and external teamwork. The limit to this research so far is that studies were based on data from randomly selected employees within a variety of nonprofits. This resulted in a mixture of diverse responses from executives to mid-level, and entry-level employees. The remaining gap requires an intentional selection of individuals to be interviewed. Purposeful sampling as well as the snowball method would provide the most specific responses as to how collaboration boosts quality services.

Community Perception

Community acceptance of a nonprofit organization is crucial for long-term survival, a conclusion based on several studies. One aspect that aids in this is how nonprofits are perceived as being helpful institution within the community. Using the IRS Form-990 data from small nonprofits throughout rural American counties, researchers compared human services to the amount of county rurality and examined residents' responses to how they felt nonprofits were creating an impact. The findings suggest that rural counties were negatively associated with nonprofit human services compared to urban counties (Shapiro, 2021). This negative association was caused by the stigma among individuals who do not seek help because they feel that small nonprofits do not accomplish as much as large organizations (Shapiro, 2021). Based on a randomly sampled telephone survey of 1,002 San Diego County residents, and IRS Form-990 data, scholars also found that when residents perceive nonprofit leaders as being highly involved, genuine, and having integrity, this can lead to acceptance of their nonprofit into the community and higher organizational success (Colemon, 2019). Overall, the data indicates how important it is to have a community perceive their local nonprofits as being successful. The ones who are viewed as small, inactive, or limited in resources will not receive the same support as those with highly connected nonprofit leaders.

The Research Gap

So far, the research has shown that the basis for any organization to be resilient falls highly on how nonprofit leaders collect and manage available resources. Current data has provided answers about how big the needs of rural communities can be and how

dire the problems are in terms of limited funding for programming (Potluka & Fanta, 2021). However, what needs to be added is a potential solution to these problems. This gap that remains can be filled by collecting data through the lens of the Supply and Demand Theory, which has started to make its way into nonprofit research but could be used more to provide solutions related to resilient resource management (Walters, 2020). There is limited research linking Supply and Demand Theory with resilience, especially in rural areas. Therefore, to answer questions about nonprofits' resilience and their abilities to balance supply and demand, a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews from specific nonprofit leaders with long-term success would be used in this study. A one-on-one interview format allows participants to express a unique and in-depth perspective compared to more quantitative, data-driven group research. These leaders can provide insight into what resiliency practices they use, as well as the trials and tribulations they make as leaders in a rural community. As prior research has concluded, rural nonprofits tend to be working with limited resources in all avenues: leaders, funding, volunteers, infrastructure, and technology. If they can be resilient with what they have then a base model of nonprofit resiliency can be created.

Reflexivity

Gila County was chosen as the area for this research because at one point it was booming with life and splendor. This area is made up of a total of seven mountains ranging in size and height. In the 1960s, active mines were in all the surrounding mountains and people were rushing to move to Gila County. These mines employed 70% of working individuals within Gila County (Cities and Towns in Gila County, n.d.). As time passed, most of the precious minerals were mined and employment opportunities

started to dwindle. Along with that, the development of the US 60 maneuvered faster routes around small towns like Globe and Miami instead of through them (Haak, 1991). This has caused a considerable drop in the number of individuals in Gila County since jobs are less available. Since then, poverty has risen, and more than ever, nonprofits are being called to serve the community. Nevertheless, the deep roots of the community within Gila County have been and hopefully always will be resilient. This area is home to multigenerational families that are committed to living there for the foreseeable future (Haak, 1991).

As the author, I have ancestors who have been living in Gila County, specifically in the Globe for the past 80 years. They ran a local business, attended school, and church, and altogether were active members of the community. My mom recollects when Walmart moved in and how it caused many small businesses to close in the following years. I spent my childhood attending events throughout Globe, Miami, and Superior like Apache G, First Friday, and Poppy Fest. The community pride has always been so apparent to me and this made me want to captivate this energy in a study. My mom is a key leader in nonprofit work throughout Gila County and has made me aware of all the work they have accomplished so far. The goal of this research was to encapsulate the knowledge of those making a difference in the area as I recognize that nonprofit leaders are the backbone of this community. I also wanted to inspire others who want to get into the nonprofit sector by giving them a study that recounts real people's lives and the work ethic that is required to be a resilient rural nonprofit leader.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to further understand how nonprofits are successful through the perspective of its leadership. Specifically, the goal was to conduct a qualitative study on nonprofit leaders in rural Gila County. The assumption was that a nonprofit's success is based on the skills of current nonprofit leaders and the structure of the organizations they have created. Through in-depth interviews and demographic data, leaders provided insight on how they utilized their current supply of resources to meet service demands. The intention of this research was to understand how rural nonprofit leaders reach supply and demand equilibrium. Key targets of the study were to deepen knowledge on current leadership practices, uncover the types of funding methods that have been successful, shed light on how collaboration aids in nonprofit output, and understand how technology is used. The aim was to understand better what nonprofit leaders identified as characteristics they had and choices, they made that contribute to their nonprofit's overall resilience.

Study Design

The reason why a qualitative study was chosen as the design for this research was because it created the best environment for individual self-reflection. A survey could have been used to compile data in a quantitative manner, but the idea of what makes resilient leadership requires a deeper analysis through intentional discussion. This idea of being a "successful leader" is not one-size fits all, and so this study was designed to

ascertain what leadership entails in a rural town. The goal of this qualitative study was to "gather and analyze non-numerical data to gain an understanding of individuals' social reality, including understanding their attitudes, beliefs, and motivation" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 205). Collecting these perspectives has allowed for conclusions to be drawn on what creates nonprofit resilience in terms of managerial practices. The information itself was collected in a natural setting. It involved physically going to the respondent's place of work and talking directly to people, which allowed for a proper examination of the opinions of the individual. This is a significant characteristic of a qualitative study; all interviews were done in this setting unless otherwise requested by the participant. The natural setting allowed the researcher to focus on this genuine action of face-to-face interaction. The researcher became the critical instrument in the research by asking questions, setting the scene, and keeping the setting productive yet organic.

Interview Design

The semi-structured interviews began with six demographic questions (see Appendix A). After completing the demographic form, participants were asked to respond to the following eight questions listed below in (Table 1).

Table 1

Interview Guide

Q1. What does organization resilience mean to you?

   a. Do people in your organization tend to have resilience characteristics like

   accepting change, being flexible and knowing their purpose?

   b. How has diversity in leadership played a role in your organization?

Q2. Does community collaboration with nonprofits happen often within Gila County?

a. How often has it happened since the start of the organization?

b. Are governmental or nongovernmental organizations better for collaboration?

Q3. In what ways is collaboration with the community important for the success of

your organization?

   a. How active was participation from the community at the last event your

   organization hosted?

   b. Has collaboration brought about any more volunteers to the organization?

Q4. What current programs does your organization offer that have been recreated

multiple years in a row?

   a. What has contributed to the success of these programs?

   b. What do people in the community think about your organization?

   c. When was this program first introduced did it receive a positive response from

   the community?

Q5. How is technology utilized within your organization?

    a. Are broadband networks available to everyone in the area?

    b. How many commuters/digital devices does your organization own?

    c. How is technology incorporated into programs?

    d. What platform has had the most engagement?

    e. Do you have a social media position within the organization?

Q6. How well equipped is your organization to meet the demands of the community?

    a. Does your organization have consistent hours and days open every week?

    b. Are grant often available for your organization to apply for?

    c. Are there often times where events end with more people needing help than you could provide service to?

Q7. What is one success story that you wish to share?

Q8. Any final thoughts you would like to share with future leaders who want to start a rural nonprofit?

Population

The population for this research consisted of nonprofit leaders living in Gila County, Arizona. The leading group of nonprofit leaders available to be interviewed were primarily volunteers. The research population was to include paid employees, but no participants were found who were full-time employees of a nonprofit. Only two part-time employees were interviewed. To ensure that respondents met the criteria of "rural nonprofit leader," they were asked what nonprofit they worked for and had to confirm it was in Gila County. They were then asked for their current role and any past titles they have held at other NGOs. They were asked how long the current organization they served had been in existence and the length of time that they held their positions. Individuals were also asked to submit their home addresses to ensure they lived with a zip code for Globe, Hayden, Miami, Payson, Star Valley, and Winkelman.

Sampling Method

To find participants for this study, the author used purposeful sampling as well as snowball sampling. This is because the respondent needed to meet specific criteria like age, profession, and location of residence (Palinkas et al., 2015). Positions like president, treasurer, founder, and head volunteer were some of the respondents' titles. Each participant interviewed had held their position for at least one year to solidify credibility and knowledge of how the organization was managed. Initial participants were identified through an online search through the IRS 501(c)(3) organization look-up tool. This allowed the researcher to see what organizations had filed taxes in the past year under the tax status of being a charity or nonprofit. The search engine allowed the researcher to

organize this search by town. Globe, Hayden, Miami, Payson, Star Valley, and

Winkelman were all searched through the search engine. With the data found, the

researcher was able to see what organizations were active by seeing who filed taxes for

the most recent year as well as how many consecutive years the organization filed its

taxes. A part of the 990 series form requires leadership members of the organization,

such as president, vice-president, treasurer, and accountant, to be listed. With this

information, people were identified and then other internet avenues were used to gather

even more information. Searches were made on nonprofit websites, social media like

Facebook accounts, and finally personal contact with an individual family member

associated with the author of this study. This allowed for the creation of a detailed list of

phone numbers and emails. Forty names were compiled with contact information, and

messages were sent by email first to see the response, and then follow-up calls were made

on the phone.

Initially, only 6 people responded to the emails. However, what worked well was

when the researcher asked participants at the end of the interview whom they would

recommend as a participant. Through this snowball sampling method, the researcher was

given the most current, up-to-date knowledge on who was active in the nonprofit sector,

as well as more personal phone numbers and emails. This process took a long time as

some individuals took time to respond, others had busy work schedules, and there were

several no-shows. After a little more than two months of interviews, 20 interviews were

completed. The original goal sample size was 30 to get a variety of responses, and with

more time that number could have been reached. The reason why the study stopped after

20 individuals is at that point there was a clear distinction of data saturation. Participants

in the last 3 interviews had similar responses to questions about resilience and impact. Almost all individuals responded similarly about collaboration, grant funding, and technology use. If this study continued in attempts to reach its initial goal of 30 individuals there were doubts if any new information would have been discovered. Ultimately, the researcher felt as though the respondents who were interviewed were at the forefront of nonprofit work in Gila County and had provided enough information for the study. A few participants explained a common idea called STP, meaning the same ten people tend to run the show and be at the forefront of nonprofit work. After 20 interviews, the author confirmed that all ten people who were identified as the "STP" leaders had participated in the study.

Data Collection

To collect data, each individual was asked to participate in qualitative research that consisted of 45-minute interviews. Some interviews went over, but most were 40-45 minutes. All of the 20 interviews were recorded on Zoom. Based on the respondent's schedules and preferences 5 interviews were done only online with no in-person meeting. The other 15 were in-person but still recorded on Zoom through the researcher's portable Wi-Fi hotspot, a laptop, and a portable microphone system. The reason for this was so that all the interviews would be collected electronically in one location to be transcribed later. All the other in-person interviews were conducted at the individual's place of work, the local library, school study rooms, quiet coffee shops, and outdoor parks. Before the online interviews, individuals were sent a short confidential questionnaire with multiple-choice answers and no free-response questions. This was used to collect basic descriptive

information such as age, gender, and education; respondents in person were given a paper version with the same questions and asked to fill it out before the interview (see Appendix A). Once they finished, respondents were given microphones, and the semi-structured interviews took place following an interview protocol developed by the researcher. They were all recorded on Zoom whether online or in-person with the participant's signed consent. The interview itself consisted of eight questions in total. The first questions focus on resilient leadership characteristics. Question 2 & 3 ask about internal and external collaboration. Question 4 addressed residents' attitudes toward nonprofits, and community acceptance of nonprofits. Question 5 asked about technology use. Question 6 asking about funding use. The final two questions provided overarching questions that asked how nonprofit leaders were are able to utilize their resources to be success thus far (See Table 1).

Data Analysis

Interview information was organized and prepared for analysis. This involved transcribing interviews. A computer software program through Zoom was used for assistance to help transcribe digitally. Once all the interviews were transcribed and organized, the data were read and reviewed to get a general understanding of the context. Then codes were created around keywords and phrases (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This allowed descriptive themes to come to light and provided categories of ideas about leaders' resiliency practices concerning their organization's success. Information was coded twice, once by the interviewer and a second time by an associate. The first and second researchers independently coded the data using the codebook. Then codes were

compared for consistency. This intercoder agreement provided a check and balance to ensure that codes and terms were accurately chosen. Any points of disagreement were discussed among the two individuals until a consensus was reached. The overall findings are summed below with a total study population of (n= 20) individuals who participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

To properly ensure qualitative validity and reliability, procedures were implemented to check for accuracy in addition to inter-coder reliability. For validity, triangulation was used by recruiting participants from different areas of Gila County to represent diverse perspectives. This area is vast, so gathering at least two respondents from each town in the county was the goal; however, this did not happen. The majority of respondents came from either Globe, Miami, or Superior. Unfortunately, no individuals responded from Winkelman and Star Valley after multiple contact attempts were made. This study can still be considered slightly diverse by including more than one town. Since this study was smaller and more concentrated, member checking was used to help clarify critical thoughts and themes. Short 15-minute phone calls were made to provide the interviewee with a debrief of the themes and conclusions of the study. They were also provided another thank you for participating and offered to be sent the research paper when completed. All respondents agreed with the themes and are looking forward to reading this report when completed. For qualitative reliability, this study compared results with previous studies where interviews with nonprofit leaders have proven successful (Gibbs, 2007). In a study completed in Sacramento, nonprofit leaders did in-depth interviews to reflect on their skills and talents allowing them to do their job

successfully. This study provided similar conclusions on the relationship between resilience in leaders and their organizations (Humphrey et al., 2004).

Overall, this research provided a deeper understanding of ideas that cannot be gathered with a simple survey. Since the interview setting was personal, it allowed the participants to freely share their thoughts and beliefs on the resilience of rural nonprofits. Some had positive thoughts, and others did not, but what was important was to hear the origin stories of successful rural nonprofits and the history of how they got there. There are not many studies on resilience within rural nonprofits, especially in Arizona. This research has helped capture the knowledge of the leaders who have spent years upon years trying to improve their communities. The results of this study helped to create connections between rural nonprofit leaders and their successes highlighted through their organizational resilience. Managing a nonprofit is a fantastic feat, and the stakes become higher in rural areas. The demand is there, but the supply of resources is only sometimes balanced. This has meant that rural nonprofits must be highly committed to creating good in the world with limited resources. This study demonstrates how researchers can gather knowledge for future rural nonprofits. The Arizona State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved all study elements.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze rural nonprofit resilience through the lens of nonprofit leaders. All respondents (n = 20) had been working for a nonprofits with zip codes in Gila County. In Figure 3, the location of respondents is shown by the town where nonprofit organization they worked for are located.
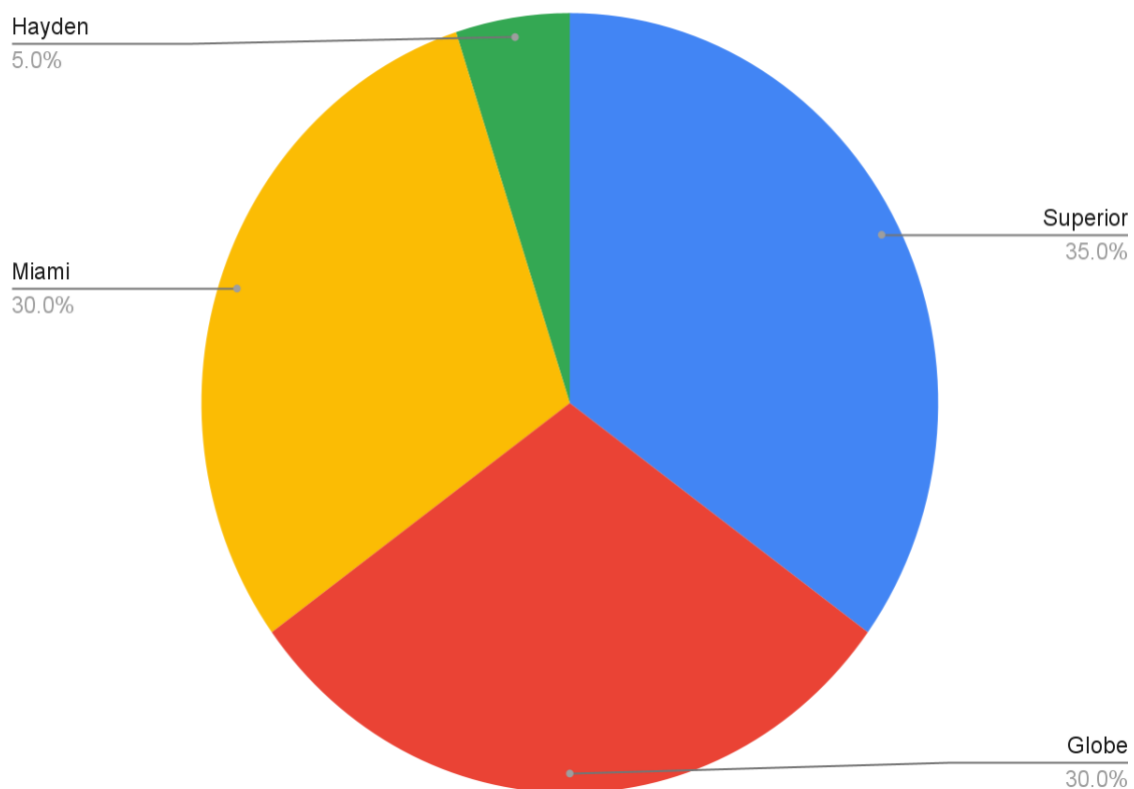

Figure 3. Location of Respondents**.**

The majority of responses came from Superior, with seven respondents, and then Globe and Miami, with six respondents from each. A single individual was interviewed from Hayden. The goal was to get more varied respondents throughout Gila County. However, as time got closer to the end of this study, it became clear that this would not

happen. A more in-depth discussion of the implications of this limitation will happen in the next chapter.

All respondents worked for a rural nonprofit for a minimum of one fiscal year. This also implied that the organization itself had been in existence for at least one fiscal year. A proportion of respondents, (n = 6), were recruited via purposeful sampling. The rest (n = 14) were recruited through the snowball method. The services provided by all the nonprofits studied was social service assistance. This included nonprofits that aid with food scarcity, housing aid through rebuilding homes, and rehoming of individuals. It also included health care services, thrift stores, and youth aid programs that supported education and the arts. Further examination of the demographic information allowed a participant profile to be created below.

Participant Profile

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents. The age group of these leaders was primarily individuals older than 55 years. This age group was made up of 15 respondents. The next largest age group was tied between 45-54 and 35-44 with two respondents from each. There was no response from individuals ages 18-24, which was to be expected given that previous research has noted that the primary group of volunteers running nonprofits are retired, white women (Valentinov & Vaceková, 2015). This lack of age range diversity in these leaders suggests concerns about long-term sustainability. There was an almost even split of female and male respondents, with nine identifying as male and 11 as female.

In terms of race and ethnicity, Hispanic, White, and Native American made up the interviewees. Eleven of them were white, seven were Hispanic, and two were American Indian/Alaska Native (Non-Hispanic). Looking at education, seven of the respondents graduated with at least a high school diploma. Eleven of the leaders identified having a bachelor's degree, one of them had obtained a master's degree and one a doctorate. A wide variety of participants were interviewed who currently held leadership positions like executive director, founder, president, treasurer, secretary, and one was the head volunteer for an organization. Additionally, many individuals held multiple positions in more than one nonprofit, highlighting that overlap of volunteer work happens frequently. The findings that some might consider the most telling of how necessary resiliency practices are in rural nonprofit can be seen where cashflow is limited. 18 of the leaders interviewd identified themselves as volunteers, receiving no pay for their work in the community. Two members were employed part-time. No individuals held a full-time job through a nonprofit. When leaders at a nonprofit are comfortable sacrificing a salary for the overall survival of their organization this is a resiliency practice.

Table 2

Overall Collection of Demographics Note: (*N* = 20)

Variable	Label	Frequency *(f)*
Age	25-34 years	1
	35-44 years	2
	45-54 years	2
	Over 55	15
Gender	Female	9
	Male	11
Ethnicity	White	11
	Hispanic/Latinx	7
	Native American	2
Education	Highschool	7
	Bachelors	10
	Masters	1
	Doctorate	1
Employment Status	Employed full time (40+ hours a week)	0
	Employed part time (less than 40 hours a week)	2
	Volunteer	18

Interview Results & Discussion

In order to interpret findings, results were broken down into the key themes that emerged from the data, which were determined as: Q1 resilient leadership practices, & succession planning, Q2 financial resilience, Q3 internal and external collaboration, and Q4 technology use to meet demands. All of this was used to uncover the overall impact rural nonprofits have on supply to demand in Gila County

Resilient Leaders and Leadership Practices

The resilient leadership practices of almost all the interviewed participants had some similarities to prior research. Leaders followed resilient practices that include identifying challenges as constraints they could overcome with time and creativity (Colemon, 2019). Fourteen of the leaders mentioned how their original job description tended to be just part of what their role entailed. This was showcased by the resilient practice deemed by the participants as role fluidity. What appeared to be a key attribute of being a resilient leader in Gila County was being able to wear multiple hats at once. At least one individual from each one of the towns said they did more than their original role entailed. One stated that (P2):

> I hold every role when it cannot be filled. You know, I am the master of
> ceremonies or the event, the person organizing the event, or the person there to
> watch the facility. I am all over the place, which is expected in this role
> (Appendix B: Table 3.1).

This expectation of holding multiple roles could be based on the structure of rural communities. One respondent (P3) reflected that they felt they did not know coming into their role that it would become an expectation to do more tasks than their job originally

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outlined. However, it had become a key attribute in their role because they knew their town had a limited population.

Previous research indicated that nonprofit leaders who are diverse in age, gender, race, and socioeconomic background, tend to come into organizations with resilient attributes already a part of them (Williams et al., 2017; Colemon, 2019; Keller, 2021). What is interesting is that the demographic of leaders for this study was not diverse at all. The majority of leaders were in one age group of 55+ and were either White or Hispanic. Yet almost all the leaders showcased resilient attributes through their practice of accepting the changes in their roles as well as functioning independently without much support. For these nonprofits to operate successfully, the attribute of role fluidity was not a suggestion but really the minimum expectation.

Another import attribute was having good morals when running an organization (Okamoto, 2020). This resilient practice was not only connected to community perceptions but also future collaboration. Participant 4 mentioned: "Honesty, integrity, and respect are all the characteristics that you would want in yourself and should exist in the organization." Similarly, a participant (P14) reflected that a "nonprofit's ability not to pay the same taxes as for-profit businesses add to the corporate responsibility that they do everything with integrity because then the community respects you and wants to help." Another leader identified the importance was having integrity within their work because it promoted the organization's resiliency. Participant 6 said, "since nonprofit funds are available to the public, it's important that everything is done by the book so no one can question our intentions. This ensures we are around for the foreseeable future" (See Table

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3.1 in Appendix B). All this shows how Gila County leaders knew and valued their job. Participant 17 summed up this idea perfectly when they said:

> You need to stay focused on what you're in there for and ensure that the program is being run correctly. It's not just about getting your name on a list because they are a well-known nonprofit. You need to be there for all the right reasons.

> Overall, the finding indicates that rural leaders in Gila County have a mixture of

unique and common resilient practices that have made them strong leaders. Up until now, scholars have reported similar findings with respect to resilient leaders and leadership practices (Kidd, 2016, Williams et al., 2017, Colemon, 2019, Keller, 2021). The findings of this study uniquely differ considering the role of a resilient leadership. Role fluidity was a new trait that was not reported before. The idea of wearing multiple hats was felt by almost all the leaders in Gila County. This showcases an important resilient practice that future nonprofit leaders need to be aware of when working for a nonprofits with limited employees.

Succession Planning

The importance of succession planning as a resiliency practice has been found in previous research (Froelich et al., 2011; Johnson, 2022; Branche, 2014). Based on the small population size of Gila County it was important to see what resiliency practices were put in place to manage rural succession planning. The age of respondents did indicate some immediate concerns that succession planning was not a priority resiliency practice of Gila County nonprofits. One participant (P9) said that the average age of individuals in their organization was 70+, with the oldest member being 96. When one participant (P15) was asked who would take over the nonprofit if they left, they quickly

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listed off their younger family members, but this response was one of the only with a definite answer. Most organizations were still determining who would step up and take over especially when leaders were expected to do so much. One participant indicated that expectations of a nonprofit leadership role could be affecting succession planning (P8):

> In my experience, some people tend to get burned out. I mean, I'm not speaking for anyone in particular but for your organization, unless you have the passion for it, you're going to have a hard time with this line of service. You need to be passionate about your work to be in the nonprofit industry (See Table 3.1 in Appendix B).

One participant noted that they got into leadership through stress and fire. Participant 12 stated that: "The organization was going down, and it needed leadership, and it needed somebody that was committed, and so I stepped up, and I did 15 years ago, and here we are." Another individual said they initially did not realize what they were getting into with nonprofit work, and now they are 20 years in. As stated by participant 15:

> What happens in a small town is you'll just come on board because you want to or feel like you should. They might say we only need you for a year. However, the reality is that it's a hard job and there isn't any end to it ever.

When participants were asked if they were concerned about not knowing who would lead after them, there was a general response that most participants expressed that they were not sure who would step up if they left. Participant 18 felt that:

Many groups in this area are run by retired people my age. However, it is

terrifying. Many organizations will eventually die off because there is not an

upcoming generation who will necessarily step up. People say,

"Well, how do we get the young people in here?" Honestly, I do not know.

Overall, there is a clear awareness that succession planning was needed. This

agrees with research done so far that suggests nonprofits can be aware of their lack of

succession planning but not have the resources to fix it (Froelich, et al., 2011) which

appears as an issue in Gila County. A resilient practice of nonprofits would be to plan

and prepare to match the level of interest and concern for executive succession (Froelich,

et al., 2011).

The only succession planning that Gila County leaders had, which was more of a

belief and not a resilient practice, was that of hope in their community. Multiple leaders

shared that from their experience living in Gila County, it was small but tightknit

powerhouse of individuals. One leader said that (P11) "they were sure someone would

step up because that was what people in a small town do." The implication of having no

set direction or fail safes in place indicate that currently there are no resilient practices in

place for succession planning in Gila County. However, the findings do show that a

collective feeling of hope can create natural succession planning when a set plan is not

apparent. In interwoven communities where word travels fast, and everyone knows

everyone, nonprofits do seem to survive leadership uncertainty.

Financial Resilience

Previous data found that the government does not provide a vast amount of

support to rural nonprofits (Shapiro, 2021). This research confirmed in terms of funding

coming in, this was true. Participants were asked about the variety and options for grants. Eleven said they applied to 1-2 per year, while the other 9 did not apply for any. Participants were also asked if there were grant writing positions available within the organization and only one (P15) said this was an established role. One participant mentioned that they felt more comfortable with microgrants. In many ways, they felt they were easier to apply for in a rural area because they had fewer restrictions and lower costs. As stated by participant 5:

> What people don't realize is there's a lot of costs associated with even applying for the grant, whether you're paying somebody to write the grant or you need the special accounting report, or you need this special audit, or you need this special thing. Sometimes that is very hard for rural nonprofits because we often don't have enough cash flow when you're having to save up $100,000 to apply for a $500,000 grant.

The lack of government funding meant other key players has stepped up in dispersing funds for majority of the nonprofits. Of the 20 respondents, nine listed the United Fund of Globe Miami, a nonprofit that was first launched in 1964. They provided funds to nonprofits by collecting donor funds and having nonprofits apply for small grants through them, but they have a limit on the amount of people who can apply in a year. Another key player in the area was the local copper mines. One respondent (P 9) said that the mining businesses had provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to support projects and events in the past 50 years. Besides these organizations and occasional grants, nonprofits in Gila County did not have a variety of funding streams. This points out a prospective problem because previous research indicates a key funding resiliency

practice is to have diverse funding streams through variety of donors, large and small grants, as well as having fundraiser events (Masaoka, et. al., 2010). Nonprofits in Gila County have survived without diverse funding but it begs the questions: how much more successful might they be with more diverse funding and how sustainable is the funding they currently have?

Financial resilience did appear to exist in Gila County according to participants. Two financial resiliency practices Gila County leaders did have a grasp of were the necessity for both teamwork and putting the mission of their organization first. One respondents mentioned how grant applications worked better when they collaborated: (P6)

> When you're going for grants, you should be able to say I have this project, this is what the scope of it is, here's my budget and here's the other nonprofits that will be working with. That stands really tall. They want to see that everyone's working together because you can do bigger things that way (See Table 3.2 in Appendix B)

Overall, Gila County leaders have discovered that teamwork makes the dream work.

The second funding practice that leaders can accomplish on their own was mentioned in prior research. It showed that being highly aware of the finances of an organization creates the ability to rearrange budgets in crisis to use funds on what is most needed to survive (Willems, Van Puyvelde & Jegers, 2023). In order to manage financial capacity with the goal of financial resilience, it's necessary to keep the perspective of the future constantly in mind with every significant decision made

(Wright, 2018). Research has noted that all organizations have capacity levels and for leaders in rural areas this capacity is even more limited (Wright, 2018). This was clear in Gila County when eighteen of the twenty nonprofit leaders were able to identify that receiving a salary for their work was not in the budget at this moment. This decision was based on the awareness of limited funding and small budgets. While sacrificing salaries might not be the forever solution, it is a financial solution that was sustaining multiple organization.

Internal and External Collaboration

Nonprofits that openly try to work with one another obtain greater success in transforming neighborhoods (Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004). When nonprofits are aware of what each organization does, they are able to get people to the correct help quicker. One individual (P6) in this study said that their knowledge and proximity to other nonprofits worked in their favor. They mentioned that they often were providing social services to those without homes. Conveniently they worked in the same office as two other nonprofits, as well as The Social Security office, Section 8, and the Gila County Health Department. Being that they were feet away from these individuals, obtaining essential documents and basic supplies was quicker than ever before.

Internal collaboration is best highlighted by, the unique dynamic of leadership in Gila County. Multiple leaders mentioned, and almost all were aware of, the concept of STP. As stated by a participant (P1): "STP means the 'same ten people' run this town." This group of 10 individuals are deeply involved in the town's events and organizations. Often these 10 will hold roles on multiple boards. Participant 11 noted that: "It is important to know of these key players in the industry as they are the individuals that

have their finger on the pulse." The idea of STP, though likely not desirable from a resiliency perspective, does support collaboration. One participant noted that (P19) "Overlapping leadership has actually opened up relationships and communication avenues for us. Since one individual can decide the future of multiple nonprofits this requires us to be aware of each organization's strengths and weaknesses." Similarly, participant 12 noticed that: "20% of the people do 80% of the stuff, so once you get to know who that 20% is, it makes you much more efficient."

One respondent felt this was happening more and more lately (P8), "especially when nonprofits were small and underfunded." Out of the participants, 90% of them were volunteers. This overlap of leaders and funding constraints highlights a limitation on the capacity of leaders as they must often double-book themselves. One leader said, (P20) "You know what I believe? If this organization is going to fail because of one person, the organization shouldn't be here." This is an important notion that all nonprofits should keep in mind when reflecting on their leadership structure.

Overall, internal collaboration between multiple nonprofits boosts quality services. What was mentioned by almost all the individuals in this study was that they felt as though collaboration with each other was necessary for every event, program, and drive that was put on. Participant 15 said: "No event is put on by a singular nonprofit alone. Many of us know each other and could list each other's accomplishments" (See Table 3.3 in Appendix B). Previous research has highlighted that nonprofit leaders act as community researchers. Through their leadership roles, they can gain knowledge and skills, like the capacity and power of members of their community (Warwick-Booth, 2014). The self-awareness of teamwork that the participants mentioned shows that they

have done their research and know they will be stronger as a united force. When leaders were asked if there were any drawbacks to collaborating with one another, it was unanimously that there were none.

In terms of collaboration externally with the community this is a whole task in itself. Communities feel more inclined to participate with organizations that have strong moral backing (Murray, & Greer, 1994). Community members are more receptive to working with nonprofits when they are given opportunities to openly discuss ideas, voice concerns and feel a mutual respect. This concurs with the data from this research when one leader stated that (P1) "residents in the tight-knit towns of Gila County desire respect and integrity." Multiple leaders identified open communication with the community as vital in healthy leadership. Nonprofit leaders need to value the thoughts and needs of their communities and should only be in the nonprofit sector because they genuinely want to be. One participant indicted the important of self-reflection on the true impact of their programs (P10):

It just really depends on the types of events you're having, and that's why, like in a nonprofit, when you are hosting events, for example a fundraiser. You have to ask yourself, Who is your target? Audience? How does this fit your mission and vision?

This focus on honest intentions and communication creates long-standing relationships within the community. As stated by a participant (P16):

What is most gratifying about being a respected organization is that small communities are active. People do come together for a cause that they believe in.

They are not affluent communities, but you would be surprised how much the

community is willing to step up and give when they believe in you.

The success that comes from collaborating with the community is undeniable

(Table 3.3). One respondent (P8) mentioned that they noticed that "events were the most

successful when they were tailored to the needs of the community." They gave an

example of how they did this through end-of-the-year surveys that they posted to their

nonprofit's Facebook account. Through this data they were able to determine what the

community thought about the programs. Respondents ranked the organization and left a

list of ways they could improve currently, as well as suggestions for the future.

The final aspect of external collaboration is with volunteers. Research noted that

volunteers are a significant form of resource but can be hard to manage (Fernandez &

Tremblay-Boire, 2021). Nevertheless, this type of support is critical to help meet the

needs of the community. Rural towns do not have huge populations, and research has

shown that this can cause the volunteer pool to be limited and often lack diversity

(Fernandez & Tremblay-Boire, 2021), which is a finding of this study as well. A few

leaders in this study noted that motivating volunteers has become a significant task.

According to most respondents, the need for more community help is at an all-time high.

Of the 20 participants, 14 mentioned at least once that they could use 1-3 more volunteers

per event. Upon personal reflection, a participant (P5) said what they noticed about the

current volunteer pool:

> You need to be organized with your time, and what you need volunteers
>
> for. Volunteers that are mismanaged often get in the way. Nothing bothers

me more than when I go to something, and they're like, oh, yeah, can you

come volunteer? And I show up there's not really a job for me to do.

This agrees with findings of a study about sustaining community volunteering.

One participant (P3) noted that the way they motivate volunteers is by telling them,

"*You're not a community volunteer. You're a community worker.* This notion of a

community worker is just so pivotal, and it's just been so important to continue to drive

progress forward" (See Table 3.3 in Appendix B).

 Previous research concluded that using volunteers as a resource requires the

organization to have a sustainability model in mind (Kidd, 2016). This involves knowing

how many volunteers are necessary to put on a program/event and planning accordingly.

The implications of the results so far suggest that the ultimate goal of a healthy volunteer

program is to be able to accurately balance the number of volunteers to the work

available.

This leads to the next topic of how leaders in Gila County capitalize on

volunteers' collaboration. One strategy can be to stay in contact with previous volunteers.

One participant (P9) noted that they often rely on those who helped in the past and call

upon them again when recurring events happen. This is consistent with the data collected

in a recent article about volunteer satisfaction (Fernandez & Tremblay-Boire, 2021),

which found that participants who felt like they were doing an assigned task with detailed

specifications were more likely to return a second time for a similar role. This was

confirmed when Participant 8 stated that: "What they felt ensured volunteers would

return is when they were a part of the conversation of task delegation." Another leader

(P2) also noticed and expanded upon this idea with the reflection that what is essential is

when volunteers are asked: "what skills they have and what they could excel at, and then were given tasks aligned with that." They felt as though when volunteers were given a say in their role, they noticed more returning and eventually becoming long-term volunteers.

What existing research has shown is that collaboration both internally and externally is necessary for a nonprofit's success. Having regular assessments and communication channels with internal and external stakeholders ensures the organization is meeting the true demand of its community (Liket, & Maas, 2015). The findings of this study indicate that collaborating is especially necessary for nonprofits with limited resources. A new concept that was notable in this study but not reported in the research reviewed was the prevalence of the STP. The same 10 people running majority of nonprofits in Gila County showcases the one of the deepest ties of internal collaboration possible. Thus far, the creation of these relationships does seem successful in boosting productivity.

Technology Use

The idea of the digital divide was brought up in research on nonprofits. This is defined by the amount of access to technology a rural area has in terms of broadband internet, cell reception, computers, printers, and sound systems based on funds available (Humphrey & Dudley, 2004). Places where the digital divide is most likely to be present is in rural area in comparison to a metropolitan area (Fryer & Granger, 2008). When leaders in Gila County were asked about access, all confirmed that they had the technological resources they needed including the internet, computers, printers, and their cell phones. This was not expected considering studies before this mentioned that lack of

access was common in rural areas (Fryer & Granger, 2008). One aspect to note is that leaders were only able to speak on what access to technology that they had personally. This does not reflect whether individuals in the community had access to technology or not. One study done in Italy analyzed the use of the internet to communicate within the nonprofit sector despite the social digital divide. They found that the digital divide was real but was decreasing over time and this study was completed in 2006 (Martinelli, et al., 2006). No further questions about the concept of the digital divide were asked within the interview because of the resounding "yes" that technology like WiFi and computers were available to all of the leaders. Nonprofit leaders did not personally feel the impact of the divide but it could still be possibly for residents of Gila county to experience this. Further research within the community would provide more insight on this topic.

The most unique idea mentioned related to technology was not liking technology. Participant 18, an older respondent, said:

We have all this fancy equipment and the wiring, and all that sort. We spent thousands of dollars buying that. And the stupid thing is that we have all this fantastic stuff, and nobody knows how to run it. Most of the people running this organization are our age. One man had to run the equipment by himself and I thought he was going to have a heart attack in the middle.

This concept of technology being a burden was mentioned by only one respondent but there was a recurring theme that there was not a huge investment of any nonprofit's funds or resources into technology. Fifteen respondents commented that they often use technology to complete their work but that they mainly used personal computers and devices. Items like computers, printers, cell phones, and WiFi were identified as being

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vital to their leadership role, but leaders were not given monthly cell phone or WiFi budgets through their organization. When questions were asked about funding and grants to buy technology, no one knew of any. Five leaders stated that they were not interested in using their organization's funding to buy computers or tech for the leader when everyone could use their personal devices.

The use of social media within Gila County nonprofits was not extensive. Only one nonprofit (P5) mentioned the use of platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Seventeen of the respondents said that Facebook was the primary method of communication with the community. Three respondents said that they preferred using a computer and printer to make fliers (P 15).

> We use Facebook. However, probably the best way to get a message out in our
> town is to print out a flier and put it at our grocery store because we have one
> grocery store like everyone goes to (See Table 3.4 in Appendix B)

> They stated that this was the most successful way to convey a message to the
community. Participant 14 commented that:

> We have to remember to be mindful of other media outlets, whether it's our
> newspapers and radio stations because not everybody hears things, and the good
> old-fashioned flier at the grocery store is unbeatable. People still want to see that
> and depend on that to be their news source.

> Two respondents mentioned that their websites and Facebook were in progress
but needed to go live and were not sure when that would be. This is similar to research done in rural areas. These results confirm findings that social media is promising as a communication tool, however due to resource constraints, most NPOs only used social

media as a secondary communication strategy to complement traditional approaches (Liegel, et al., 2019). What was listed as obstacles to social media, which is similar to what respondents in Gila County mentioned, was limited organizational resources and community infrastructure. The implications of not using social media indicates that nonprofits could be missing out on an inexpensive communication tool.

One idea that reiterates the previous section of multitasking leadership was that there was often an overlap of roles resulting in the position of social media/marketing director being tasked to the primary leader. The downfall to this was that these tasks were left for when leaders had the free time, which happened rarely. Only one organization had a social media manager, but almost all noted that it was essential to eventually have the position as a specific role. One participant (P17) emphasized the need to have somebody just doing social media, "because if you do not, it just does not get done!" This finding concurred with prior research that showcased how rural nonprofits struggle to maintain a constant online presence (Liegel et al., 2019).

Success in Meeting Demands

Overall, have nonprofits in Gila County have been able to supply resources to meet the demands of their community? One leader shared that (P1), "Overall, I think the needs of the community are met. Again, it's not linear. It's not just from point A to point B, there's a lot of things that are happening to help us to get the word out and serve the community better." There are a multitude of successful services that the nonprofits provided including free services like a tool lending library, free clothing, free food boxes, free books, and plenty of resources to help individuals find jobs and submit their taxes.

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Participant 7 noted they were very proud that for multiple years these programs have been supplied through a variety of different nonprofits.

There was also a clear desire for annual events that keep with the traditions of the area. Nonprofits were a part of a number of annual outreach events including Apache G, Poppy Fest, the Annual Burger Fry, and monthly art rehabilitation programs. One participant noted (P 11): "you know that you are in place when people are already going, *'Now, what date is that next event?'* We make things happen, and if we didn't, I do not think anyone else would, and the community would suffer. When you are a regular item, you are in!"

Two individuals mentioned how their nonprofit played a crucial role in saving an un-homed individual's life. According to both respondents, an individual came to Tonto National Forest and wandered out in the desert, intending to die. A hunter found him and connected him with a nonprofit, and they were able to provide physical, emotional, and spiritual help. Through their actions, participant 20 stated:

> We saved a life. Through our funding, we could pay for a month at a motel and get him a spot at a shelter, and since then, he has bought a car and started a job working in the community. That there is proof that lives are changed when a community can band together.

This story is an incredible example of nonprofit organizations helping those in need community helping those in need. These successes highlight that, from the respondents' perspectives, the demand and supply equilibrium was reached through a number of different avenues. Leaders showcased key resilient practices like being

adaptive, understanding and committed. Their hard work and commitment to the cause

created a unique finical resiliency plan that allowed 100% of funds to go back to the

organization. Through collaboration internally and externally, nonprofits worked

together to meet the most important demands of the community.

In all the previous research discovered in the literature review, none articulated

the idea of community pride, but after talking with respondents it was clear that this was

a significant shared idea among leaders. Nonprofits in Gila County provide substantial

amounts of social services, but they also are trying to be innovative in the face of change.

Multiple participants stated wanting to try new and unique forms of fundraising through

the support of local tourism. One participant noted that (P18):

> Our goal this year is to invest in a variety of programs. Events for the residents
>
> are a must, but we also need to plan events for people who do not live here. I want
>
> to inspire more individuals to care about this rural town. That is how we obtain
>
> long-term success.

Part of Gila County leaders' goals for the future were to build a connection

between tourism and nonprofit work. A few nonprofits mentioned projects they got

funded aimed at beautification and historical recognition of the county. As mentioned in

the introduction, Gila County is rich in culture and holds historical value. During the gold

rush, the town was booming with life, and since then, the community has realized that to

boost the economy and fight poverty, more people need to come to the area as tourists.

Participant 9 was proud that "through a grant fund, we repainted eleven buildings on the

main street, repaired glass, put in benches, got beautiful vintage lamps in the park, and

put up a large light-up sign at the start of town. All these investments ensure that this community is proud to live here.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study confirm that nonprofit leaders are the heart and soul of a community. This research aimed to examine the perceptions of nonprofit leaders in rural Arizona with questions centered around maintaining resilient organizations over a minimum period of time of one year. This study is important because participants were able to showcase how small towns nonprofit organizations function differently than their urban counterparts and identify practices that contribute to organization resiliency. The scope of ideas that emerged within these individual interviews are instrumental in better understanding rural nonprofit service structure. The efforts undertaken in this study represent a dynamic approach in which ideas evolve across complex community expectations through social service systems. What many participants emphasized is that there was a deep desire from the community to persevere despite limited numbers of leaders, volunteers, and funding.

Before interviews, it was assumed that nonprofits in Gila County have limited capacity to meet all the demand for social service programs in the county. However, it seems that nonprofits in the county have found multiple ways to address community needs. After the interviews it was confirmed that annual fund-raising events were a staple to the community, with some going on for 20 years straight. There was mention of a known expectation from the members of the community that these events would happen

each year without fail. This highlights the resiliency of the nonprofits' efforts because they were making diligent steps to keep the community engaged.

In terms of collaborating with volunteers, participants said more volunteers were always needed. The current volunteer pool was noted as being small and lacking diversity. Collaboration to gain community leaders was also limited. Some individuals in the community had stepped up but not in huge numbers. The main reason behind this could be that almost all leadership positions were volunteer based. A lack of funding for this has resulted in Gila County relying on a small group of 10 leaders to do the majority of the organizations' work.

Given that supply in a rural community is limited, the consensus was that projects need to be done in a certain way. This involved heavy amounts of collaboration between fellow NGOs. Every participant named at least one other nonprofit that they worked with which truly highlights the comradery of a small town. Participants noted that events and programs met the community's needs but never exceeded expectations. In terms of grant use, this was an untapped resource that did hint at issues in the future. Micro funds were talked about as being more user friendly and many depended on the local mining company for funding. This and the United Fund were supplying the majority of the money in the area.

Overall, this study contributes an in-depth perspective that confirms previous research as well as provides new knowledge on rural nonprofit leadership and organization resilience. In order to address the numerous challenges that rural nonprofits face, rural leaders should keep both theoretical and practical implications in mind.

Theoretical Implications

The Supply and Demand Theory was the framework for this research. Many of the survey questions were centered around asking the nonprofit leaders about the amount of goods and services demanded by the consumers and how often the nonprofits could meet the requests through their organization's infrastructure and funding. What the study found was that the nonprofit sector in Gila County was successful in forming an equilibrium where supply and demand intersect. This was being achieved by using practices to achieve resiliency. Through the nonprofits in the area, community members were given access to food, clothing, housing repair, health care and other social services through a variety of programs. Collaboration between organizations aided in this greatly. The current state of the organization's leadership could maintain all programs and annual events expected by the community. Another aspect of this balance was reflected in the fact that 15 of the nonprofit leaders interviewed were associated with organizations that had been around for 5 or more consecutive years. However, there was a caveat to reaching this point of equilibrium. The data indicated that the market was highly dependent on the nonprofits' leaders. Volunteers made up 90% of these leadership roles with no full-time employees. This indicates that this could be the reason why the nonprofits could comfortably meet the demands of the community. No commitment to paying high salaries resulted in the majority of the nonprofits' funds being available for services and programs. This did change how the Supply and Demand Theory was used to

understand rural nonprofit resilience by raising questions as to how similar success could

be duplicated in other rural areas.

Practical Implications

In order to understand the practical implications, there were three key priority

issues deemed vital to promote resilient rural nonprofits:

1.   *Funding diversification.* Considering assets and the current systems used to serve

the community there needs to be a shift to a more diverse range of funding. Being

dependent on one or two resources could create systemic issues long-term. Having

designated roles like grant writer or fundraiser could be the first step in shifting more of a

focus into funding diversification.

2.   *Changing the status quo of the STP.* In this study, participants relied on several

key leaders, referred to as the STP. This idea of relying on a small number of people for

leadership may hinder the desire for the community to step up and calls into question the

resiliency of leadership. Thus, practitioners may need to carefully consider all

stakeholders and how to engage more members of the community so that the pressure is

off a small number of individuals. Mobilization of a larger depth of leaders should

become the new status quo.

3.   *Addressing succession planning.* With a lack of diversity in age there could be

widespread damage when engaged individuals can no longer serve the community.

Instead of continuing down this slippery slope, organizations should consider a careful

reflection in terms of the resiliency of leadership. Who will take over is a large question

that needs to be answered by these organizations.

Future Research

One limitation of this study was that there was no causality in the results, given the qualitative nature of the study. The in-depth interviews also came with some biased responses based on the researcher's presence (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The author noticed that some respondents talked more highly of nonprofits that they had worked with frequently. There were also some notions of agreement that things could be better, but it appeared that the participants did not feel comfortable enough to expand upon this fully as they would between acquaintances. Responses on the negative side of the nonprofit sector were limited which reflects that this was an area that could have been expanded upon.

The other limitation to this study was that interviews were less diverse than originally hoped. There were only respondents from four areas of Gila County when the original plan was to get at least one representative from each of the six towns. Along with that there was not a large variety of social service nonprofits. In one situation, the researcher talked to three individuals from the same nonprofit because they were the most available to talk. The plan originally was to only talk to one respondent from distinctly different social service nonprofits but based on time constraints this did not happen. Since this was a study with no monetary motivation to the individuals, the participants were less inclined to be a part of the research than we thought they would have been. In the future,

research that brings perspectives from multiple states with different rural counties would deepen the scope of this research. The diversity of individuals and geographic locations could provide more extensive and general information.

One of the most notable limitations was the limited geographic scope of the study. All participants were members of nonprofit organizations in one area of rural Arizona. This data reflects a niche area of Gila County. Not all rural areas have large for-profit businesses like the mines or a specific fund to count on. Along with that, resilient and committed leaders who will volunteer their time can be hard to find. The ability to apply these findings to other rural areas is limited because the traits of Gila County are so unique.

What can be taken from this study is that rural nonprofits are the summation of the community surrounding them. Consistent and resilient nonprofit leaders can inspire a variety of internal and external collaboration within community members. Future research could examine the process of implementing more diverse funding source strategies and long-term efforts to address who will lead the community.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your age?

Under 18
18- 24 years old
25-34 years old
35-44 years old
45-54 years old
Over 55

2. What is your gender?

Male
Female
Prefer not to say

3. What is your ethnicity?

White
Hispanic/ Latinx
Black
American Indian
Other

4. Education

Less than a high school diploma
High school degree or equivalent
Associate degree
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Doctorate
Other _____

5. What is your current employment status with respect to the nonprofit you work with?

Employed full-time (40+ hours a week)
Employed part-time (less than 40 hours a week)
Volunteer

6. Location

What is your current zip code? _____

APPENDIX B

CODING FOR QUESTIONS

Table 3.1

Coding for Questions: How strongly do nonprofit leaders equate being resilient to the longevity of their organization?

Code Definition	*Example Quote*
Role Fluidity: Participants describe how leaders supply (S) a key attribute of being able to multitask roles.	"I hold every role when it cannot be filled. You know, I am the MC for the event, the person organizing the event, or the person there to watch the facility. I am all over the place, which is expected in this role."
Integrity at Work: Participant describes integrity within your work boosts resiliency. (R).	"Since nonprofit funds are available to the public, it's important that everything is done by the book so no one can question our intentions. This ensures we are around for the foreseeable future.
Succession Planning: Participants describe the importance of a plan for leadership roles to ensure resilience (R) for the organization.	"In my experience, some people tend to get burned out. I mean, I'm not speaking for anyone in particular but for your organization, unless you have the passion for it, you're going to have a hard time with this line of service. You need to be passionate about your work to be in the nonprofit industry."

Table 3.2
Coding for Question: How is funding currently used in rural nonprofits' program development?

Code Definition	*Example Quote*
Funding Resiliency: Participants outline the importance working together to supplying (S) key funding (F) for the overall resilience (R) of the organization.	"When you're going for grants, you should be able to say I have this project, this is what the scope of it is, here's my budget and here's the other nonprofits that will be working with. That stands really tall. They want to see that everyone's working together, because you can do bigger things and it's a way."

Table 3.3
Coding for Question: How is collaboration between community members and rural nonprofits necessary for success?

Code Definition	Example Quote
Internal Collaboration: Leaders showcases important collaborative (C) relationships	"No event is put on by a singular nonprofit alone. Many of us know each other and could list each other's accomplishments."
External Collaboration (Service Users): Participants address how well they have been able to collaborate (C) with the community to meet the demands (D).	"What is most gratifying about being a respected organization is that small communities are active. People do come together for a cause that they believe in. They are not affluent communities, but you would be surprised how much the community is willing to step up and give when they believe in you. The success that comes from collaborating with the community is undeniable.
External Collaboration (Volunteers): Participants identify a way to collaborate (C) with volunteers to meet the demands (D) of the organization.	"I like to tell volunteers that you're not a community volunteer. You're a community worker. This notion of a community worker is just so pivotal, and it's just been so important to continue to drive progress forward."

Table 3.4
Coding for Question: How does the organization currently use technology to further their mission?

Code Definition	Example Quote
Technology Use: Participants describe the direct ways technology (T) are used to supply (S) communication with the community.	"We use Facebook. However, probably the best way to get a message out in our town is to print out a flier and put it at our grocery store because we have one grocery store like everyone goes to."

APPENDIX C

ASU IRB APPROVAL FOR THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECT

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Kathleen Andereck
WATTS-CRD: Community Resources and Development, School of
602/496-1056
kandereck@asu.edu

Dear Kathleen Andereck:

On 4/18/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Rural Nonprofit Resilience Through the Supply and Demand Theory
Investigator:	Kathleen Andereck
IRB ID:	STUDY00017809
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form_Leonardi .pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Demographic Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Email/Phone Template , Category: Recruitment Materials; • Interview Questions , Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Social Behavioral Protocol_final 03.03.2023 (2)-2.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 4/18/2023.