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Examining Hierarchy Structures in Non-Profits; The Keller Model

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EXAMINING HIERARCHY STRUCTURES IN NON-PROFIT AGENCIES:

THE KELLER MODEL

AN APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT

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For as long as I can remember, I have always been interested in how things are structured in organizations. More often than not, I find myself more enthralled in figuring out strategies in how I would structure the organization differently, when I encounter one. It was not until I started in the Leadership Studies program at the University of San Diego, that I finally got the chance to disseminate hierarchy models, and find out where my passion lies in the field of leadership. I have the desire in understanding and restructuring the processes and structures of hierarchies because they are the backbone, the roots, the brick – and – mortar of organizations all over the world. My capstone project started with challenging myself into designing a different structure than what is commonly utilized in the American workforce. I have come up with a model, that is not just structured differently, but a model that involves an entire culture within. According to my environmental scanning work, there are just five typical (more so traditional than typical) hierarchy models. I believe that the scarcity in available models gives for limitations in ways that an organization can perform, and even more saddening, when the organization does not take into consideration that they could resolve a lot of issues within their organization by ensuring that their hierarchy model is tailored for the uniqueness of their organization. Taking into consideration a non-profit organization that is centered around altruistic service towards a community, having it structured like a corporation pyramid would not make sense. I believe that for an organization (especially non-profits) to succeed on as many levels as possible, every staff member needs to feel accountable and worthy for and of their position within their own organization. No matter what tier of ranking they find themselves in, there are degrees of importance in what they do. For every-thing that they do, they need to be provided with the opportunities to be able to express their opinions, values, and perspectives so

to contribute to the growth of their own organization. As aforementioned, culture plays a pivotal role in my project in two ways.

The first reason is more so because of my personal ties with the Deaf culture, and the second reason is because my community (the Deaf community) functions on a level that is different from people who have the ability to hear. Being Deaf, we lose one of our five senses, resulting in our dependency on sight. In the Deaf community, everyone uses their hands in distinct forms that require the structure and peculiar use of grammar, which helps them survive in a world that is not tailored to their own. The Deaf community, has undergone years and years of oppression, members have started to consider themselves unable of such important roles, such as leadership for example. When someone gets into a position of power, they have a tendency to idolize them as the savior that will bring our community towards the greater good. In this process, everyone is misunderstood in their beliefs of what leadership is; a process, not a person. Taking into consideration of the five hierarchy models that are available, none of them seem to be tailored to the Deaf community. With the model I present, I believe it will have a twofold impact towards my community. Providing them with the clarity that as members, they have just as much to contribute to the growth as their leaders, and that my community can function effectively with a structure that is tailored especially for them.

According to my environmental scanning, there are just five traditional hierarchy structures, ever since the industrial revolution, with the pyramid hierarchy structure being the most popular model. The pyramid structure is also known as the vertical structure, as the tree structure, and so forth. This structure has the front-line staff on the very base (or the bottom) and as you move up the chain of command, the scope of authority increases. Front-line staff, to mid-level managers, to directors, to Deputy Directors to Executive Directors at the very top, which

resembles a pyramid or a tree. America is now around 240 years old, and for America to have just five existing hierarchy structures, is unbelievable. Due to the limited number of hierarchy structures available, organizations all over the nation are forced to fall back to the traditional pyramid structure. In an ever-changing world, everything needs to be updated to keep up with the generational gap that humankind makes at a demanding rate. Everyone's phones, cars, clothing, technology, education, anything and everything is constantly changing. Why, then, are hierarchy structures left on the shelves to collect dust, and not being updated to keep up with the ever-changing world we live in.

The five typical hierarchy models are; The Traditional Hierarchy (also called The Pyramid Structure), Flat Organizations, Flatter Organizations, Flatarchies, and Holacratic Organizations. Using the pyramid hierarchy model for example, this model is utilized in many fortune five hundred companies, and this model makes perfect sense where structures work effectively based on tiered decisions. Managers, Supervisors, Directors, Vice President, Chief Executive Officer, and then finally, the Board of Directors. There are always tiers and in tiers, authority is a respected and successful aspect of the company. I find it incredibly annoying that non-profit agencies, which are always centered around the concept of altruism, are structured as a for profit corporation. The agency that I currently am employed with, is structured with the tree/pyramid structure, and as a student of the leadership field, I constantly encounter roadblocks within this structure. I find that I cannot embrace the concept of altruism if my supervisors are constantly exercising their authority because their positions allow them to do so. Utilizing the pyramid structure in agencies like mine, simply does not make sense. It provides for a struggle in developing a shared vision, struggle in understanding the company mission and values, struggle in general staff efficiency and performance, and even worse, struggle in providing the said

community with the actual service that they need. In the agency that I am employed as the mid-level manager, I find that I am constantly given informal authority in areas where I do not have authority. The staff of the agency look to me as a leading force that the organization needs, and they take into account my thoughts and feedback. In times that require authority figures to make decisions, I am instead given the informal authority to make decisions, when my formal position of authority does not entail the responsibilities that I have. There are series of confusing issues within the agency and more often than not, those that hold positions of formal authority, often exercise it. If I am constantly finding confusions and hitting roadblocks in every turn, it is safe to assume that other staff members within my agency feel the same. This is why I decided to conduct an applied project based on hierarchy structures, with a specific focus on non-profit agencies that serve the Deaf community in the state of California.

Before I delve into my hierarchy model, I need to provide an understanding of the five existing models. The Traditional model is designed much like a pyramid, with the front-line staff member on the very bottom, and then it is tiered in layers. As you move up each layer of tiers, the rank increases as well as the amount of authority that goes with it. It ends at the very top with the Chief Executive Officer, enjoying the limelight. With the Flat Organization, which is structured differently, where the chain of command is decentralized. The departments are loosely structured, and the span of control is extremely wide. On the other hand, in Flatter Organizations, the aim is to open up the layers within the organization, to increase communication, where collaboration is the ideal strategy to gain efficiency. In Flatarchies, think of Flat combined with Flatter Organizations, only with extra circles that lie on the space around the model. Those circles are incubators that function without the need of the organization, but feed into the overall success of the organization itself, acting as a dynamic influence. Finally, the fifth model, the

Holacractic Organization, which shares a similarity at a glance, with my hierarchy model. The Holacratic model is exactly the same as any flat model, but there are circles that overlap each layers of the flat model. This signifies that the employees have the opportunity to move across and work with one another regardless of the department they are from. This model signifies also, that there is no need for direct approval from their authority figure to do so, the approval has already been granted based on how the organization is structured. It should also be noted that there is an organizational structure called the Amoeba-Shaped Organization, which closely resembles the Keller Hierarchy Model. Both structures share the capacity for flexibility, and for growing together. However, the disadvantage of the Amoeba structure, "As there is no middle level management, the flow of communication from front line employees to the top management may be affected." (Omshree, N.D.) While my model has not been put into use, I can still confirm that there are middle level management found in the Keller Model which should be at an advantage over the Amoeba Shaped Organization.

With the Keller Model which I created (See figure 1, page 11) after watching a professor in one of my courses earlier into the semester draw a Venn-Diagram on the white board. I realized that a structure could be organized as a layer on top of one another. Each department around the center of the diagram would be crossing their own boundaries, allowing for staff members to move around the organization and provide support as needed. This is especially important because in non-profit agencies, staffing support is scarce, and the organization is more likely to be small (consisting of less than 50 staff members). Non-profit agencies are centered around the community, so it makes sense to include them as the major force in the structure, and ensure that the service for the community is always at the forefront.

Hierarchy models are quite the tricky topic to center my paper around, due to the scarcity of information, and research on the subject. As aforementioned, there are just five major, and typical, hierarchy models. For example, renowned start-ups like Google, are heavily invested in Flatarchies, where staff members can bypass middle management and go directly to the CEO. Another startup like Apple has the pyramid structure but the managerial structure is a bespoke and wheel. In this style, middle managers have autonomy but the final decision still centers in the middle with the CEO. Nowadays organizations are starting to recreate their own organization structures. I believe that organizations nowadays feel safe in their comfort zones, and are not willing to recognize that the way their organization is structured could be a causing factor to the issues they have within. I think there is a definite correlation between the structure and the culture of an organization. Having an organizational culture is a dynamic process, which is nurtured and cultivated based on both, the structure, and the leadership style of the person at the helm. Which then brought me to analyze my model, and I adjusted this to reflect the dynamic process of the organization, which in other words meant that I was moving from a 2-D structure to a 3-D structure. (See figure 2, page 12)

In order for me to confirm my suspicions that most organizations are relying on the traditional hierarchy model, and because my model is tailored towards the Deaf community, I decided to choose eight non-profit agencies in the state of California. Those eight "sister' agencies are scattered across the state so to provide advocacy, interpreting, mental health, and various services with access to budgets from their county governments respectively. Initially, a survey would be prepared, and it would be sent out to the sister agencies. This survey would consist of several general questions regarding their agencies' structure, and if the employee was satisfied with how operations were done in their agencies respectively. The more I committed to

the project, the more time I spent discussing my project with my cohorts, even my roommates, I realized that doing a survey wouldn't get me the results that would lead me to prove my suspicions and/or theories.

I completely discarded the survey, and decided to proceed with an informal interview process. A great deal of this decision came from myself being a low-tier manager in my profession, it would allow for the subjects that I interview, increase their leeway in expressing their opinions. I can see them through the same lenses that they see me with, I am then able to write down responses that hold more weight beyond the responses that I get from a survey that was unanimated. To also add weight to my responses, I decided that I would choose two subjects from each sister agencies, one would be a lower tier staff, and one would be part of the administrative team. I feel this would give me a better idea of how each side of the lens perceives one another in the very same organization. I would like to also note that I acknowledge the loss of information when doing the interview face-to-face rather than allowing the interviewees a private and anonymous space to record their answers. I feel that, in the Deaf culture, having a face-to-face interview would hold more weight than having them respond to questions on paper. As aforementioned, the Deaf culture depends a whole deal on visibility, and in visibility, we find clarity. Of which I feel was imperative to the generation of data in this research.

This informal interview consists of eight major questions with sub questions designed to draw more responses out of my subjects. All of the eight questions have been based off the concepts from the Fifth Discipline textbook by Peter M. Senge, because of the textbook's core focus on building the strength of an organization and its members. The Fifth Discipline is centered around building clarity around issues that are difficult when working alongside other humans, and especially when working in a structured system. This is an attempt by Peter Senge

to change the thinking nowadays that everything functions in separate forces, into the thinking that we are in learning organizations. In learning organizations, using the Five Disciplines, the organizations are constantly expanded, nurtured, and create generative learning. The Five disciplines are; Mental Models (adoptions of mental images that influence how we think), Shared Vision (genuine vision created by the team, makes people excel and learn because they want to), Team Learning (team members engaging in dialogues without any assumptions), Personal Mastery (approaching life and work as an artist would), and Systems Thinking (the final discipline that combines the other four into a clear practice of theory). Applying the concept from the textbook to my informational interview would supplement my questions with the weight that is necessary to prove organizations need to function with different models so to foster growth and change. Especially when the organization has a community and culture of its own, as is found in the Deaf community.

The informal interview question template are as follows:

1. **What is the name of your agency, what are the services provided within the agency, and how many staff members work for the agency?** (This provides supporting background information).

2. **How is your organization structured?** (Traditional, flat, flatarchies, holacracy, etc?)

3. **Do you feel your organization has a vision of where you all are going within the next five years?** (Shared Vision).

4. **Do you feel your organization allows for free flow of information, the ability to "travel" through other departments within your organization for support, and resources?**

    a. **Are there room for genuine thinking, or is it restricted to people of your rank only?** (Team learning).

5. **Do you feel/think the system that your organization is run on is working efficiently, and provides for a place where you/staff members are welcome (to share and learn together) and encouraging for an atmosphere of evolvement?** (Mental Models).

6. Two-part question – used interchangeably between both tiered staff:

    a. **Do you feel your position in the organization is important, important enough for you to share your feedback, opinions, and important that you are providing the work your organization needs to succeed?** (I am my position Learning Disability).

    b. **Do you feel the staff members of your organization understand their role in the organization, and are equally contributing to the successes as the higher tier staff does (in regards to decision making, steering the organization, shared vision, etc) and that your staff members are allowed to pool their resources together? How? Is it stated in the hierarchy structure – and are the staff members aware of it?** (Inquire if they think their staff have "I am my position" mindset?)

7. **Are you constantly striving for the better version of yourself within your position in your agency? (attending workshops and trainings, looking for resources to enhance services, and so forth)**

    a. **Are you happy in your position?** (Personal Mastery).

8. **Does your position provide for the involvement in your community, to the degree that your community has a dependency on the agency?**

a. **Is there a sense of interdependency between your position and the system that you are working for?** (Personal Mastery).

9. Present a crude, but not a final, example of Keller Hierarchy Model. Inquire both low and high tier employees how they would feel should their organization decide to utilize this model:

   a. **Do you feel everyone is as equally important as their superiors?**

   b. **Do you think this is efficient in terms of resource, transparency, and support?**

   c. **Do you think you can contribute more to the organization with this model than you could with your current structure?**

The goal of this informational interview is to draw information from the bottom and the top tier people so to illustrate a clear understanding of how each organization functions with the hierarchy structure in their agencies. With the assistance of the five disciplines, the answers gathered from the survey will provide for adjustments that are needed to make my hierarchy model concrete, for organizations to utilize. During the interview, I provided background information on my research; the purpose, the noticeable gap in leadership styles in organizations, and as well as providing a photo description of my model for the participants to be able to provide data for the entire research. Summarized at-a-glance data generated from the responses of the interviewees are noted on figures 4, 5, and 6 (pages 14 – 16).

Conducting my interviews was an insurmountable task, as I found out that I was not as knowledgeable about the eight sister agencies in the state of California that serves the Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deafblind population. It turns out that G.L.A.D. (Greater Los Angeles Association of

the Deaf) is the parent organization of four other agencies spread across central California. This immediately took away half of my research data as those four agencies (including GLAD as the parent organization) would all be operating on the same structure. Regardless of this information, I found that all of the sister agencies were structured in the traditional sense, the pyramid found in fortune five-hundred companies. There is a nearly-identical tone found in the administrative staff, and the front-line staff, within the GLAD organization in regards to their disdain towards how they are structured. I interviewed only two staff members under the GLAD umbrella, and the responses were just enough for me to not pursue in obtaining more interview slots with staff members in other agencies under GLAD.   Every response to the questions that I asked were in a negatory tone and the reasoning was constantly pinpointed to the Executive Director of their organization. "We do not have a shared vision, because it is just the CEO's vision." (Participant 1, informational interview, March 2017) "We are restricted in how we function within the organization due to the pyramid structure, everybody reports to the CEO." (Participant 1, informational interview, March 2017) When I interviewed GLAD's front line staff, paying close attention to the same questions I asked participant 1, I got the same exact responses, "…No we do not have a shared vision because the CEO does not share her goals, we are all doing our jobs without knowing where we are going in the long run. In the next few years, I can honestly say I have no idea what is going to happen to GLAD, or to us." (Participant 2, informational interview, 2017) As I continued, the responses were the same, "…No we are extremely restricted in access to resources and support from other departments, because everything goes in one direction, to the top. The CEO is the only person that approves of everything." (Participant 2, informational interview, March 2017) It should be noted that as I conducted the interviews with both staff members of GLAD separately, I realized that both of them referred to the leader of the

organization as the CEO. I had not inquired to the GLAD staff as to why the leader of a non-profit had such a title, but I have a suspicion, that it definitely had something to do with the pyramid structure.

GLAD is a rather large organization spanning a large portion of southern and central California (with the exception of San Diego county). With satellite offices spreading as far east as Riverside county, as far south as Orange county, and as north as Bakersfield. All of these agencies report to the central headquarters located in Los Angeles, which leads me to determine that the CEO had considered herself as having a consequential role. Had she changed the title to reflect that, I would never find out without interviewing her myself.

In terms of satellite offices and CEO's, I interviewed two staff members from the NORCAL Center on Deafness, located in Stockton, California, of which I learned that they had functioned on the same structure as GLAD. What NORCALCD differed from GLAD was that their shared visions and mental models surpassed that of GLAD. "We have somewhat similar visions that we determined together, but we do not have a five-year plan, we revisit the vision annually." (Participant 8, informational interview, March 2017) "…Yes our structure (pyramid) is efficient, because of the CEO. I doubt we would find ourselves progressing anywhere without the CEO." (Participant 7, informational interview, March 2017) When I inquired NORCALCD staff on mental models, both staff members agreed that everybody's position in the organization was there for a purpose and they are considered equal as their leader.

This is the total opposite of what I found with GLAD, where their staff said, "…No, every staff members are their own positions, they work for their position's purpose only, and that is to follow the CEO's orders. Our opinions do not matter to the CEO nor do the CEO take into consideration any opinions." (Participant 2, informational interview, March 2017) Comparing

the responses from GLAD and NORCALCD, I see that both agencies are structured the same; with offices spread across the state, the boundaries of authority are designed to go directly to the CEO, and the leader has the CEO title. However, NORCALCD staff find themselves comfortable in how dependent they are of their CEO, while the GLAD staff expressed discomfort. "Honestly, organization structure would not matter to me and the organization, because what we need, is a new leader. Leadership is more important because that is somebody who takes risks, leads us, and understands us." (Participant 2, informational interview, March 2017) "…I think with the Keller Model, there would be more transparency, support, and communication in effect, but what we really need at this point is a new leadership." (Participant 1, informational interview, March 2017)

I then interviewed staff members from the San Diego-based agency; Deaf Community Services of San Diego, INC. and the responses were relatively the same. What differed DCS from the rest of the agencies that I interviewed, was that the front-line staff and the administrative staff both appeared to be content with the structure, and had no issues whatsoever with their leader. "…yes because I am focused on working with my team, and because we all follow a chain of command. The staff here are content with the structure." (Participant 3, informational interview, March 2017) Comparing this response to the administrative staff of DCS, "…Yes that's why I am the Deputy Director, there is a clear chain of command and I am responsible for the entire agency. Everyone here is equally as important as the administrative team." (Participant 5, informational interview, March 2017) What I found interesting was when I inquired about DCS' team learning disciple, the front-line staff were very content that there were policies in place and that it was there for a reason, and the administrative level staff feel the same. "…information and support is easily found within the agency, I feel there are no aversion

to policies because policies are there for a reason." (Participant 3, informational interview, March 2017) "Generally we all share the same vision and goals, but we have different approaches to it because we all work in different departments. We all do share the non-profit altruism however, and we are comfortable in that we have clear set of authorities in place." (Participant 4, informational interview, March 2017)

       The interview with DCS staff gave some insight into the mental models of DCS, "…There is not enough recognition from the top tiered staff but we need to be aware also, that the lower tiered staff should recognize their supervisors. I believe it's because the feeling is that we are disconnected from everybody else due to us always being in our departments. Maybe it's due to the constraints of our schedule, and there are no incentives for us to do so. We all meet once a month for agency-wide meetings, but that's it." (Participant 4, informational interview, March 2017) A striking difference in the staff of DCS' responses were apparent in question number three when I inquired for their agency's shared vision. "I sometimes wish I had better understanding of other departments within the agency so that I can appreciate them more for the work that they do." (Participant 4, informational Interview, March 2017) "…Yes everyone has the same vision." (Participant 5, informational interview, March 2017) and the third staff had responded to this question by referring to his department, instead of the entire agency, "…our department follows our contract visions and then the agency's visions. We always need to make sure our department visions match with the agency's visions due to our contract." (Participant 3, informational interview, March 2017) Those responses from three staff members of different levels of authority show that there is a need for the organization to have a collective agreement of their shared vision.

There is one exception however, with the organization called the Deaf Counseling Advocacy Referral Agency DCARA. This agency had just recently gone through major overhaul in that they restructured almost everything, with a new Executive Director at the helm. The new leader had remained with the organization's original structure (pyramid), but instead he had led everyone to take the social enterprise approach to the pyramid sense. "Yes I believe that my role and my staff's role in the organization is equally as important, which is why I wanted to take the social enterprise approach." (Participant 6, informational interview, March 2017) Participant 6 kept the traditional structure to avoid completely overhauling the entire organization and being the cause of all chaos. Instead, he kept the structure and took an updated approach to the traditional pyramid. This provides for clear and direct boundaries of authority, and at the same time, provides for an inclusive approach that not only enhances his staff but also enhances the community that it serves in the long run. "There is a serious need of staff development and training…having transparency to look inwards first before looking outwards, to understand ourselves first before we are able to help others." (Participant 6, informational interview, March 2017) Partic had come into the organization as a newly appointed Executive Director and noted that there was need of staff development, he decided to keep the pyramid structure, but approach it with a different sense. Participant 6's approach was to treat the organization as a social enterprise, which is an ingenious way of keeping the pyramid structure in place, but treating it with a different approach. Social Enterprise ties the passion of social missions, with business-like principles. Social Enterprise is designed with the missions and values of the organization as its' central and sole purpose, and it is a contemporary approach to discovering methods that resolve social issues. While this may be an approach, it is not a structure, which makes it a topic for a different applied research project.

I have come across several feedback and self-analysis of my model during the interviews. For example, when I interviewed participant 5, the Deputy Director of the San Diego non-profit agency, he advised that there are not clear and direct boundaries of authority found in my model. This would cause for confusion, and overstepping of boundaries. The same was said from participant 8, front line staff of NORCALD, who mentioned that he would much rather the pyramid structure because of the clear and direct tiers of responsibility and authority. A DCS front line staff mentioned that he liked the idea but was reluctant to believe that anybody in the organization would be open to the change. Gathering those feedbacks, I consulted with my cohort which provided me with an even better approach to the model. The Keller model is now, instead of a figure that resembles a Venn diagram (See figure 1, page 11) or a Sphere diagram (see figure 2, page 12), it is now an Atomic structure. (See figure 3, page 13) This structure is an evolved version of the model I created throughout this Applied Research project.

With version 3.0, I find that this model has expanded in its purpose and clarity so to give its users better comprehension, in the direction, and boundaries of authority within their agency structure. There is a great deal of metaphor that ties the atom to an organization, which makes it a near-perfect model visually, and visual aids are especially useful when introducing new concepts to an organization. Not to mention the fact that the Deaf community rely heavily on visibility/visual aids. For example, within an atom, there are elements that present its character and structure, and they are connected to other electrons which then build the entire physical structure of a cell. Now, think of it as different departments within an organization, and as each department move around, they serve its purpose. The electrons travel around in specific routes that compose of an electron "cloud". Think of the routes as the department's boundaries, as much as they are free to move around, they remain in specific routes as displayed by the black

lines in Figure 3. As the electrons move around in the atom, that movement represents the

flexibility of the organization in working together, growing together, and creating a shared

experience. Having a model that explicitly shows shared experience enables the organization to

thrive because it consists of the Five Disciples needed for a healthy organization.

Like cells, organizations that are using the Keller Hierarchy model would be able to add,

divide, or even create, more departments within the organization. Picture the nucleus, which rests

in the very center of the atom, which represents the community. Non-profit agencies are

established solely to serve a community in need, putting the community in the nucleus (center)

enables everyone involved in the organization to have the mindset of serving the community.

The electron that orbits right next to the nucleus (community) represent the Board of Directors

who are responsible for bridging and monitoring the organization with the community. The

electron right after the Board of Directors represent the Administrative team which consists of

the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Human Resources Manager, and so forth. Note that

there is an importance of bundling the Administrative team together, which enables everyone in

the organization to understand that leadership is a process and not somebody with sole authority.

The remaining electrons floating around the atom represent departments within the organization.

Each department has its own director, which like the Administrative team, is bundled together

with all of its staff members. Looking at this model as a whole, it is easy to see that at any given

time, electrons are constantly moving around to work together in order to compose a physical

being. This physical being ultimately ties the organization to the community it serves, akin to a

cell.

Assembling the hierarchy structure puzzle, it is easily noted that there is a need for

restructuring non-profit organizations. Staff morale is either low, or working in a monotonous

fashion, and there is an underlying fear of change noted amongst staff members I interviewed. On top of my current experiences working for my non-profit agency, all of the data I have generated from this project, it is safe for me to assume that this model needs to be implemented in non-profit organizations. The next step in this process is to find an organization that is willing, and ready, for such a change. According to my interview data, all of the interviewees reported being ambiguous to the structure in terms of boundaries of authority and how every department would be able to work together.

I believe that the atomic structure model is an explicit model that provides for a clear understanding in how non-profit agencies should be operated. Doing this research has further validates the understanding that leadership is a process that requires the involvement of everyone. In non-profit agencies, the staff need to embrace the altruistic leadership concept, and embrace that everyone in the organization is working together, and what better way than having a model to show for it. When non-profits operate with the pyramid model, there is a sense of rigidity in that there is a straight line from the bottom to the top in terms of authority with rank, and it is all locked in, no chance of movement at all. This makes sense for large for-profit companies where the climate is filled with competition and cut-throat opportunities, not non-profits where everyone is working together to support and enhance a community. This project is a gateway for me to conduct further research in enhancing the leadership experience in organizations, as much as it is my contribution to the continuously expanding world of leadership theories and approaches in this ever-changing world we live in.

When I talk about gateways to further research in leadership theories, approaches, and experiences, I mean that in discovering models and approaches that would provide a better understanding of the situation for an organization to thrive. I came across the Invisible

Leader(ship) theory while working on this project and found it to be something that resonates with my project on so many levels. At first thought, Invisible leader(ship) might come off as an oxymoron, but every leader will face this issue at one point in their lives, empowering others and getting credit. As aforementioned, this project has validated that leadership is the process, not a person, which makes the art of leadership the process of shifting the image away from the leader and towards authentic humility. That in itself is the exact kind of concept that non-profit agencies need to utilize in their everyday service. Starting from the very core, which is their organizational structure, then a ripple effect will start to take its process. Affecting the mental models of the staff, generating shared visions, developing team learning and personal mastery, and then ultimately, the systems thinking of the entire organization. No longer will the Executive Director call themselves the Chief Executive Officer of an organization that is not designed to make profits; no longer will the front-line staff continue to think that they have no say in the organization and that they are simply pawns in the non-profit chessboard game.

How organizations are being run is based solely on the process of leadership and how much the leader is willing to step out of their boundaries of authority, and give credit to the entire organization, not just themselves, even though they may play a vital role in enacting the necessary changes. The leader (or leaders in this case) are responsible for the establishment of a healthy workplace climate, and culture, that fosters generative learning. Workplace climate and culture, is the underlying factor in contributing to the success of a hierarchy structure, which is why I cannot stress the importance of designing an appropriate structure to fit the needs of any form of organization. Another vital aspect of the invisible leader(ship) concept is that this concept considers that every member of the organization is involved in the process, united by a common purpose and goal, which signifies each member as a leader in their own field.

Everybody is working together towards a shared goal and for the purpose of achieving that goal in so many different fields akin to the several departments a non-profit agency may have. This concept applies to altruism, servant leadership, and the likes of those that should be utilized in non-profit agencies. There is no need for cut-throat competition within the agency to move up ranks, to bring in profits, or even to generate statistics, because they are serving the community not themselves. This leads me to validate that there needs to be an organization structure that goes in place of non-profit agencies. As I have mentioned in the Keller Model, there are distinctive lines of authority but every level of authority is placed so that they are constantly working together and not layered above one another. This placement gives credit to everybody involved with the organization. In the long run, shows the overall success of the organization from everybody involved, not just the "CEO" at the top, and provides for the appropriate workplace culture that is necessary for the agency and the community to thrive. "The greatest leaders are those that people barely know exist." (Schimmer, 2011)

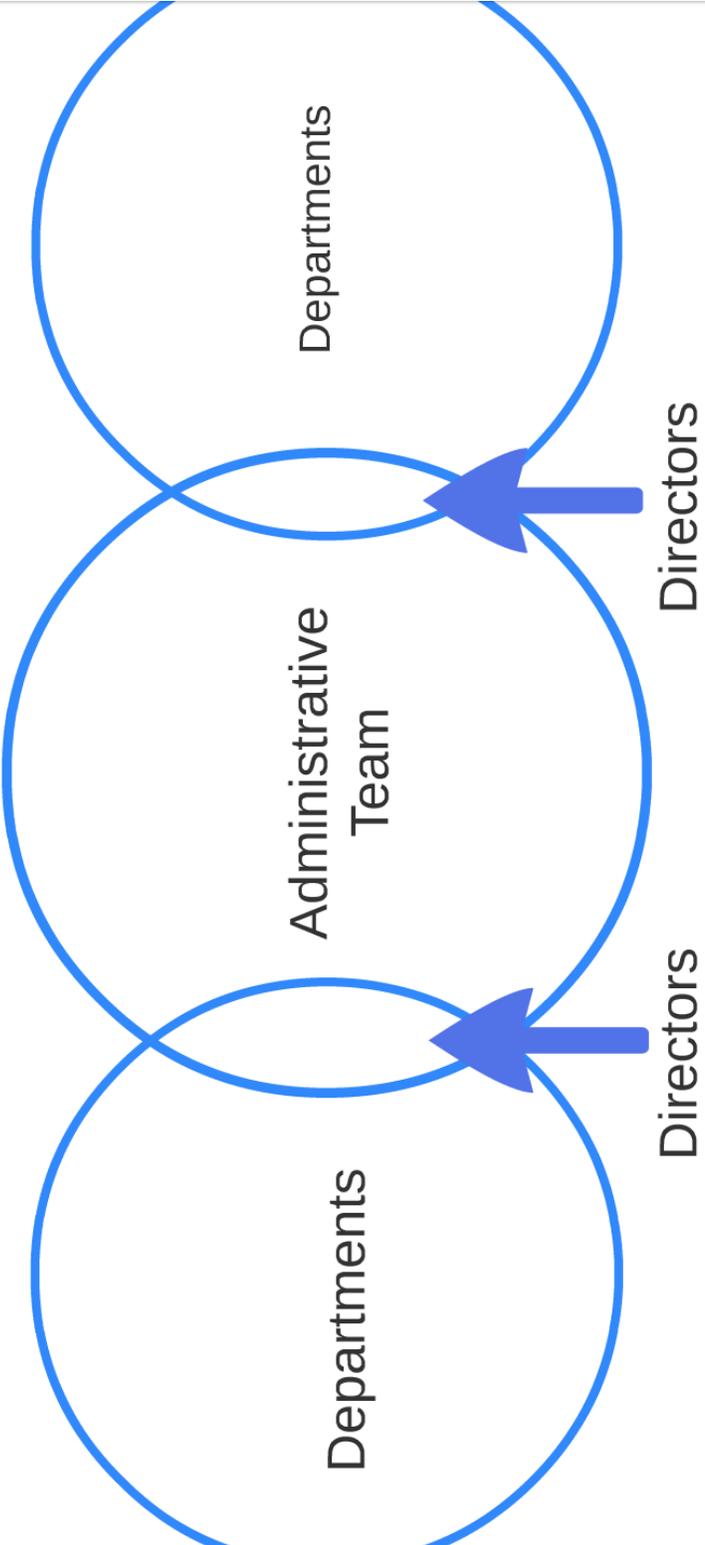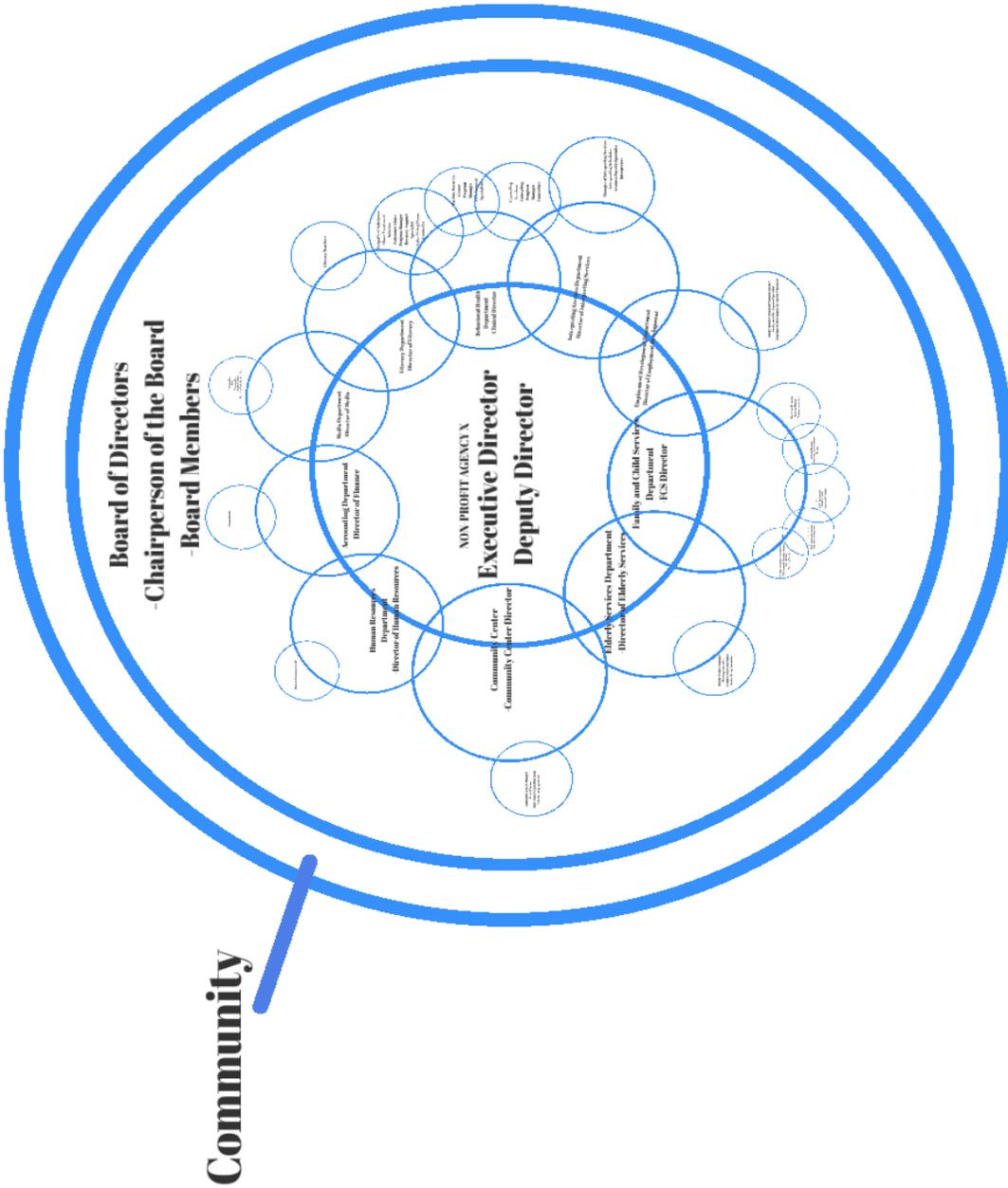FIGURE 1 – "VENN"- First design

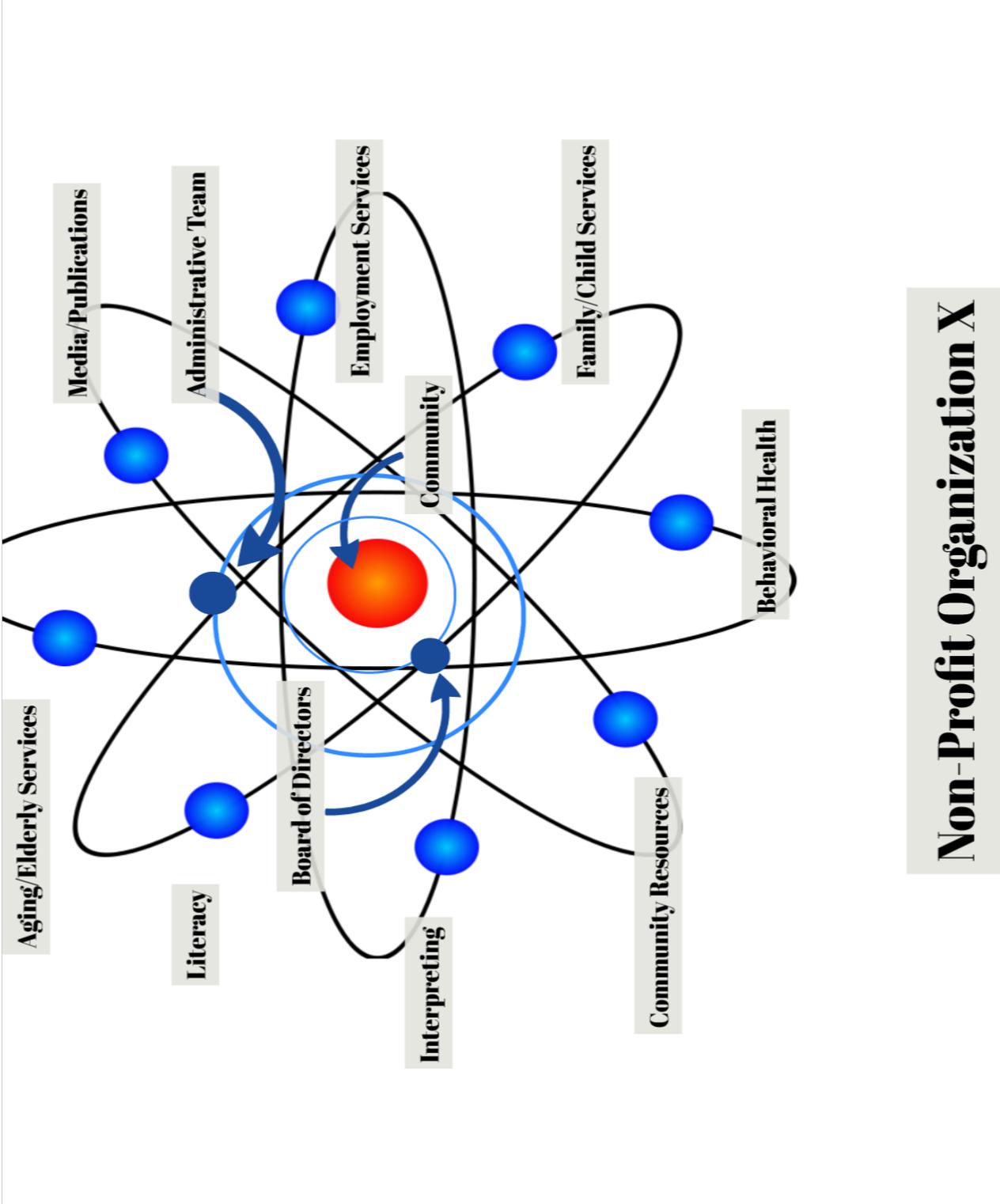FIGURE 2 – "SPHERE" - Second design

FIGURE 3 – "ATOMIC" – Third and final design: "Keller Model"

Applied Project Interview Results (Figure 4)

Structure of Deaf Non-Profit Organizations in California

ORG. Name	Q2: Organization structure	Q3: Organiation vision	Q4: Flow of information
DCS	PYRAMID STRUCTURE	Yes we do/each department differs based on their own visions	Yes depending on authority
DCARA	PYRAMID STRUCTURE	Combination of traditional and contemporary visions, not unified yet	Yes - working on transparency
GLAD	PYRAMID (CENTERED AROUND C.E.O.)	No idea, we are all following CEO's vision/CEO does not share her vision	No - only the CEO has info.
NORCALD	PYRAMID STRUCTURE	Yes but revisited every 5yrs instead of annually	Yes in HQ. Not so in satellite offices

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Applied Project Interview Results (Figure 5)

Structure of Deaf Non-Profit Organizations in California

ORG. Name	Q5: Efficiency & involvement	Q6:Role and responsibilites	Q7: Self improvement
DCS	Efficient- system is there for a reason	Yes/Yes we are our own positions	Yes, plus want feedback from staff
DCARA	Staff development comes first	Yes/staff is more important - front lines	Focused inwards then outwards
GLAD	No idea how system works - everyone follows the CEO	Yes/CEO thinks she is most important	Yes I want to but CEO disapprove
NORCALD	YES because of CEO's expertise	Yes/CEO has more important opinions	Cant due to caseload/duties

Applied Project Interview Results (Figure 6)

Structure of Deaf Non-Profit Organizations in California

ORG. Name	Q8:Community Involvement	Q9:Response to Keller Model
DCS	Yes - Bridge is there between org. and community	Liked but confusing and unclear boundaries of authority
DCARA	Comm. Involvement is important. Need to build bridges	Liked but unsure how staff would accept change, looks confusing
GLAD	YES and NO - due to the CEO	Structure doesn't matter - leadership does. CEO will say no - loss of authority
NORCALD	YES for front line staff NO for admins	Liked the model but unclear boundaries of authority

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Participant 6, DCARA Administrative Staff, 3/8/2017 Personal Informational Interview
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