Stakeholders' Perception of the Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Community Factors That Have Led to the Barn Theater's Sustainability in Porterville, California

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Stakeholders’ Perception of the Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Community Factors That Have Led to the Barn Theater’s Sustainability in Porterville, California

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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November 19, 2016
Stakeholders’ Perception of the Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Community Factors That Have Led to the Barn Theater’s Sustainability in Porterville, California

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I appreciate all the support that I received to complete this dissertation from so very many people.

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The learning and growth that has taken place over the past 3 years is priceless. I am a transformed person and professional because of this experience.
ABSTRACT

Stakeholders’ Perception of the Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Community Factors That Have Led to the Barn Theater’s Sustainability in Porterville, California

by Mary Shaw

Purpose: This qualitative, phenomenological research study was designed to describe the lived story of the stakeholders of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California.

Methodology: This study allowed the lives of the participants to be explored in order to determine what themes or patterns within organizational culture, leadership, and community factors contributed to the sustainability of the theater. The population of the study was 80 community theaters in California that are registered with the American Association for Community Theaters. The research sample included 14 purposively selected stakeholders of the theater. An interview process was completed, transcripts were transcribed, and data were coded using NVivo software. Care was taken to ensure reliability and validity of the interview process and coding of the data.

Findings: The findings indicated that organizational culture, leadership, and community factors of the theater have led to its sustainability. Volunteers and mentoring were noted as organizational cultural factors. Shared leadership and interpersonal relationship skills were identified as important leadership factors. The unique value of the theater to the community, sense of belonging, and the ability to influence others through the medium of theater arts were identified as important community factors.

Conclusions: The Barn Theater is a model for other community theaters because of its emphasis on organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community. Community theaters need to recruit high-caliber volunteers who are passionate and share the common
goals about the art. It is also crucial for mentoring programs to be established. Leaders must receive training to complete their jobs effectively. A welcoming community atmosphere must be created where volunteers feel that they belong, have an emotional connection, have influence over the decision-making process, and where their personal needs are being met.

**Recommendations:** Leadership training in the areas of communication skills, problem solving, strategic planning, conflict management, and mentoring must be implemented with the board of directors at the theater. In addition, an extensive outreach program that brings youth into the community is crucial to its sustainability for generations to come. Finally, the theater must obtain historical landmark status in order to secure federal financial support through grants.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The origin of theater arts remains shrouded in mystery, though evidence of its existence can be traced to 8500 B.C. during prehistoric times (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). The first records of live theater, as it is now understood, began in Ancient Greece. Theater arts is a means of telling stories about people and events, either actual occurrences or fictional stories. The actors on stage communicate to the audience, who then responds. Theater, therefore, is the interaction of the actors and audience (American Association of Community Theatre [AACT], n.d.; Cermatori, Felton-Dansky, & Hatch, 2014; R. Cohen, 2014; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Moats, 2014; Van Erven, 2001).

According to the classical scholar Edith Hamilton (1993), Western theater was born in Athens, Greece. Beginning in the 5th century B.C., the Ancient Greeks were fascinated by the tragedies that occurred in Greek myths, and these myths provided inspiration for their plays. For example, Sophocles transformed the Greek myth of Antigone into a tragic play, depicting the lead character who suffered tragedy for burying her brother against the wishes of the king. Comedy and other theatrical entertainment were further developed during the expansion of the Roman Empire into Greek-held territories. Andronicus and Naevius were two Roman playwrights who adapted Greek plays into Latin (Turnbull, 2007). By the 2nd century B.C., drama was firmly entrenched in Roman culture (Brockett & Hildy, 2008).

During the 13th century, medieval drama came into being as a result of the fall of the Roman Empire, and primarily consisted of actors who traveled throughout Europe enacting religious stories to local audiences (Brockett & Ball, 2013). Political and religious strife exemplified this period in history. Medieval times gave way to the
Renaissance, which lasted from the 14th to the 17th centuries, and is considered the bridge between the Middles Ages and modern history (M. Perry, Baker, & Hollinger, 2002). During the Renaissance, there was a rebirth of theater, culminated in the writings of William Shakespeare in England, whose works served as a basis for modern theater (Brockett & Ball, 2013; Gascoigne, 2001; Turnbull, 2007).

In 1620, theater was introduced to America with the arrival of the Pilgrims, who came to a new land seeking religious freedom. However, their strict religious beliefs and laws prevented participation in live theater. Laws forbade stage plays and theatrical entertainment of any kind (Hornblow, 1919). Consequently, performances were held secretly with little documentation (Dunlap, 1832). Only after the American Revolution, 163 years later, did theater come alive in America. Theatrical programs were established throughout the eastern states, beginning in Virginia, Massachusetts, and North Carolina (Brockett & Hildy, 2008; Hughes, 1951). By the early 1800s, theater was firmly established as a popular form of entertainment for the nation’s 4,000,000 inhabitants (Brockett & Hildy, 2008).

Following Manifest Destiny in the 19th century, theater troupes performed plays in rural towns along well-traveled routes to the West Coast. As the West was settled, many professional theater companies took root on the West Coast, creating competition among actors for employment. To deal with this competition, community theaters were established for the purpose of providing necessary experience and training for new actors (Wilmeth, 2006). Community theaters provided opportunities for professionals and amateurs to work together. This fostered mentoring and training for amateurs, experience they could eventually use to secure employment as professional actors. It also provided
opportunities for networking among actors and directors. However, sustainability for these little theaters was a problem from the beginning. Many of the original community theaters closed due to lack of funding or inability to secure a location for performances (Kuftinec, 2003).

In California, community theater began to appear in 1917, with the opening of the Pasadena Playhouse (n.d.). The Pasadena Playhouse experienced amazing success and ultimate failure since its beginnings in 1917 (Pasadena Playhouse, n.d.). The Bakersfield Community Theatre was founded in 1927 and struggled for survival. Unable to afford a permanent location, performances were held in the local high school for many years (Dias, 2015). In 1937, the Lamplighter Community Theater was founded in the San Diego area. It experienced its successes and failures and struggled to build an audience base (Faulconer, 1982).

Today, there are community theaters in multiple cities in Central California. The oldest is the Barn Theater in Porterville, California. It was founded in 1947 by a group of theater lovers and championed by Peter Tewksbury, who went on to become a famous television director in the 1950s. Tewksbury directed Father Knows Best, My Three Sons, and Leave it to Beaver. It was his vision, energy, knowledge of organization, and ability to network among various groups that inspired the success of this small theater. The Barn Theater has experienced its financial ups and downs since Tewksbury left, yet it has been sustained for 68 years (Merryman, 1984).

Throughout its history, sustaining live community theater has been a challenge. It is generally agreed that earning profits is not a top priority for nonprofit organizations such as community theater. The primary aim of these regional theaters is to provide
entertainment, culture, and artistry for their audiences—to make connections with the audience members’ hearts and souls. However, social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors affect their sustainability (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010).

Background

Global and Historical Perspective on Theater

Community theater is a worldwide phenomenon that manifests itself in the sharing of personal stories about the lives of those individuals from local communities involved in the writing or performing of productions (AACT, n.d.; Cermatori et al., 2014; R. Cohen, 2014; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Moats, 2014; Van Erven, 2001). Playwright Lee Hall stated, “Whether you are a writer or an actor or a stage manager, you are trying to express the complications of life through a shared enterprise. That is what theatre was, always” (BrainyQuote, n.d., p. 1).

Theater began during prehistoric times as a means for people to share stories of their experiences. Paintings, or pictographs, dating back to 8500 B.C., were discovered in Mesopotamian caves of an early prehistoric culture with evidence of musical instruments that may have provided a rhythm, while men and women of the tribe joined in a communal dance. Researchers suggest that these rituals appeared to be a form of dramatic presentation, later evolving in such places as Egypt and Greece to include celebration of religious values and events (Gascoigne, 2001). Finally, a written record of theater as dramatic entertainment began in Greece around 600 B.C. and included information describing the rite of Dionysus, a religious spectacle, which developed into a
theatrical form of storytelling and drama (Brockett & Ball, 2013; Banham, 1988; Vince, 1984).

By 300 B.C., Romans were so inspired by Greek art, culture, and theater that many Greek texts and plays were translated into Latin. These plays were often performed at festivals, where popular comedic, carnival-like celebrations with music, dancing, and masks were performed (Turnbull, 2007). Additional Roman theatrical entertainment included chariot racing and gladiatorial combat. By the end of the 4th century A.D., Christianity emerged as the official Church of Rome and became a powerful force that influenced cultural events throughout the Roman Empire (McLachlan, 2010). The Church frowned upon storytelling with stage violence and crude humor, viewing such violent reenactments as a form of pagan worship. They also opposed the disrespect shown to Christianity by satiric actors. As a result, all theaters were closed. The last record of a theatrical production in the Western Roman Empire was in 533 A.D. (Banham, 1988; Brockett & Ball, 2013; Turnbull, 2007; Vince, 1984).

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 600s A.D., the Christian Church expanded their influence over an otherwise unstable political structure and banned theatrical performances (Turnbull, 2007). Understandably, there is little record of theatrical performances between 600 and 1000 A.D. There were a few traveling players who kept theater alive by performing religious stories and melodrama throughout the countryside. Around 1000 A.D., the Church reintroduced drama into church services as a method to expand Christian doctrine (Turnbull, 2007). Theatrical events during medieval times were not clearly documented, and therefore historians have little knowledge about the format of their production (A. H. Nelson, 1972).
By the 12th century, cultural influences from the Crusades resulted in a rebirth of classical learning. The Crusades provided an opportunity for Western Europeans to travel to new lands and be exposed to different philosophical principles and innovative scientific discoveries. This helped lead to the Renaissance period from the 14th to the 17th centuries, where there was a renewed interest in classic Greek and Roman art, literature, and theater (Brockett & Ball, 2013). In Italy, neoclassic theater flourished, reinvigorating classic comedy and tragedy masterpieces from ancient times. Neoclassical theater emphasized a strict observance of the unity of time, place, and action and valued dignity and authenticity in playwriting (Turnbull, 2007).

During the 16th century, Queen Elizabeth I embraced the Renaissance spirit and supported theater arts and early modern playwrights, such as William Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote plays that are still performed all over the world. His plays were important for their reflection on a wide range of human emotions. Traveling companies took his work out on the road to small towns and performed in makeshift theaters. These were glimpses into what would later be considered community theater (Mabillard, 2000).

**History of Theater in America**

Theater in America dates as far back as the latter half of the 17th century. The first theaters were those built at Williamsburg in 1716, New York in 1732, and Charleston in the 1760s (Dunlap, 1832). With the onset of the Revolutionary War in 1776, little attention was paid to theater. After the war, however, theater centers in New York City and Philadelphia became very popular thanks to President George Washington, whose love of theater was contagious among the American public. America celebrated its victory against England by indulging in the arts, everything from Shakespeare to
political satire. By the turn of the century, theater grew in other major cities on the East Coast as well as in the Midwest in St. Louis (Brockett & Hildy, 2008; Hughes, 1951).

Manifest Destiny pushed America’s border westward, and with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, theater companies could travel easily and perform all over the country. Wilmeth (2006) stated, “The expanding transportation system in the United States allowed actors and actresses to tour the country, bringing professional theater to many towns and cities that had never before experienced it” (p. 18). The railroad played a key role in helping the new nation embrace dramatic productions as a desirable form of entertainment.

Vaudeville emerged in the early 1900s as a popular form of theater entertainment. Vaudeville shows consisted of a series of unrelated acts, including singing, dancing, and comedy. Themed vaudeville shows and musical revues were performed all over the country. E. F. Albee is known as the “Father of Vaudeville” thanks to his innovative expansion of theater chains across the country where vaudeville shows and musical revues could be booked as much as 2 years in advance (Cullen, Hackman, & McNeilly, 2004). During the 20th century, musical revues led to modern Broadway musicals.

According to Shefter (1993), “Broadway musicals, culminating in the productions of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, 1940 to 1960, became enormously influential forms of American popular culture and helped make New York City the cultural capital of the nation” (p. 35). As opportunities in professional theater grew, competition was also on the rise. Amateur actors wanted to find venues for training and performance. To help these amateurs gain experience and thus compete for professional acting positions, community theater began to emerge around the country (Hughes, 1951).
Community Theater in California

The American community theater movement, or “Little Theater Movement,”
began in the early 20th century as a means for performers to produce inspiring, politically
based plays that reached a large number of participants from local areas. The primary
goal of the movement was to experiment with innovative styles of producing live
entertainment. The Little Theater Movement also served as a venue for training,
socializing, and peer support (Chansky, 2008; Gard & Burley, 1975; Hornblow, 1919;
Kramer, 2006; MacKay, 1917).

Community theaters in California started to emerge in 1917, with the opening of
the Pasadena Playhouse (n.d.). It grew rapidly, opening its own acting school, but
unfortunately, success was not sustained. The School of Theatre Arts closed in 1969, and
the theater went bankrupt soon after. It reopened several years later but again filed for
bankruptcy in 2010 (Boehm, 2010). Another early community theater was formed in the
city of Bakersfield, California in 1927. This community theater program has operated
continuously from 1927 to the present. However, in recent times it has struggled for
survival (Dias, 2015).

Community Theaters in Central California

As early as 1925, community theaters were established and set the tone for live
entertainment in Central California. The Turlock Community Theater opened in 1925 for
the purpose of cultural enrichment and became a center for performing arts. Despite its
successes, the theater closed due to the deterioration of the physical condition of the
theater. In addition, profits from theatrical productions failed to produce enough revenue
to sustain the theater. Other Central California theaters include the Lindsay Community
Theater in Tulare County, established in 1983 (Munter, personal communication, 2014); the Encore Theater in Tulare, opened in 1979 (Burley, personal communication, 2015); and the Ice House Community Players in Visalia, that have existed for over 30 years (LaMar, personal communication, 2015). All these theaters have seen their financial and organizational ups and downs, and sustainability into the future has become a predominant concern. The Barn Theater in Porterville, boasting 68 years in the business, is an interesting success that may explain and help solve the problem between community theater and sustainability.

The Barn Theater in Porterville was established by Peter Tewksbury in 1948 and is the longest running community theater program in Central California. Tewksbury loved theater arts and was ready to inspire people in Porterville to build a strong community theater program. According to Merryman (1984), “Tewksbury’s dream was to establish a little theater based upon the New England summer theaters; a place where professionals and amateurs worked together to produce quality theater” (p. 15).

Tewksbury organized and led an active program in Central California; however, after he moved to Los Angeles to pursue his dream of working in the television industry, the lack of leadership became a problem and the Barn Theater struggled for survival from 1954 to 1961. Board members were discouraged but unwilling to abandon their mission. In an effort to restore the theater, a “Save the Barn” campaign was formed. During this campaign, those people involved realized that they needed to work together toward the common goal of directing and producing quality theater (Merryman, 1984). Merryman (1984) stated, “The key to the Barn’s survival has always been people. As long as there
have been a few individuals who were willing to put forth an effort to direct a play, the Barn has survived” (p. 110).

**Related Theoretical Frameworks**

It is important for nonprofit organizations to address the challenges of sustainability, taking care to balance financial needs with the organizational mission. Some of the key threats to nonprofit sustainability are lack of leadership, community support, financial accountability, and poor quality of service (Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote, & Gonzales-Morganti, 2014). From the beginning, the original founding father of the Barn Theater, Peter Tewksbury, was passionate about establishing a sustainable community theater in Porterville, California. He wanted the program to endure and directly addressed sustainability issues during the organizational phase of program development. A series of systems were established, designed to foster sustainability, including process monitoring, accountability criteria, a mentoring program, and quality control guidelines. Tewksbury believed these systems would lead to sustainability.

There are four theoretical frameworks that are related to the Barn Theater, including sustainability theory, leadership theory, organizational culture, and community theory. Sustainability theory includes the factors of leadership and organizational structures. Leadership theory identifies characteristics of leaders who are able to facilitate an organization’s move toward common goals. Organizational culture addresses common practices, values, and beliefs that control how the team members behave with one another. Finally, community theory describes the sense of belonging that individuals enjoy through their involvement with an organization. Applying these
theories to the Barn Theater will help describe and explain factors that have contributed to its sustainability.

**Sustainability theory of nonprofit organizations.** Sustainability is the first theoretical framework related to the Barn Theater’s extended existence as a nonprofit organization. Sustainability theory is a means of explaining the simultaneous and overlapping achievement of economic prosperity, a healthy environment, and social equity aspects of an organization that lead to ongoing productivity for current and future generations (Allen & Ervin, 2007; Harris, 2003; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). With community theaters in every region in the United States, theories have emerged that can describe economic, environmental, and social factors as they relate to their sustainability. The long and sustained history of the Barn Theater supports these concepts of sustainability, which can be identified and implemented by other such community theaters.

**Leadership theory.** Leadership is the second theoretical framework that contributes to the environmental, economic, and social conditions of a community. An effective leader inspires a clear and compelling vision for the organization and engages with its stakeholders to bring the organization to maximum efficiency (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Over the years, a variety of leadership theories have been presented in research literature. During the mid-1850s, the great man theory was proposed, asserting that the qualities of a great leader are intrinsic, not learned, and they will emerge as the situation presents itself (Carlyle, 1841). The trait theory suggests that leaders are born with the intelligence, sense of responsibility, and creativity that will lead them to excel at leadership (Galton, 1869).
During the mid-20th century, behavioral theories of leadership offered an alternative perspective on leadership, followed by the contingency theory of leadership developed in the 1960s. The perspective of this theory was that leadership was situational. Fiedler’s (1964) contingency theory proposed that important leadership characteristics were open and respectful relationships, goal orientation, and power or authority in the organization. During the 1970s, transactional leadership theory was developed. In this theory of leadership, motivation was an important factor. Rewards and punishments served to shape the organization. The theory is based upon the need for a mutually beneficial relationship between the leaders and follower (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

Transformational leadership theory has developed over the past 30 years and asserts that transformational leaders are charismatic and able to build positive, trusting relationships with stakeholders, which results in the organization making changes to its mindset that benefit the organization as a whole (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Warrilow (2012) identified four important traits of transformational leaders: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal and individual attention. In combination, these four traits lead organizations to make desired, groundbreaking changes through strategy and structures of an organization (Geib & Swenson, 2013).

Community theaters need an effective transformational leader who inspires a clear artistic direction, a shrewd and fact-based business perspective, and a strategic plan for long-term success (Mulcahy, 2011). They also facilitate open, trusting relationships among stakeholders. Maintaining open relationships among stakeholders is a difficult task for leaders of a community theater, because they rely on each other to reach
organizational goals. R. Nelson and Schwimmer (2010) concurred by stating that many theater companies fail because they do not take the time to lay down the organizational groundwork, communication networks, or leadership needed to survive. Effective leaders of community theater programs, such as Tewksbury, exhibit traits similar to the qualities of a transformational leader. Tewksbury inspired a group of theater lovers to achieve outstanding success by creating a team of visionaries who worked together and empowered each other to create the original Barn Theater organization (Merryman, 1984).

Organizational culture. The third theoretical framework that is pertinent to the sustainability of the Barn Theater is organizational culture. Features of the organizational culture of the Barn Theater will also help describe factors that contribute to the theater’s sustainability. Organizational culture is the system of common views, ethics, and norms that allow people in an organization to accomplish goals within the structure of that organization (Walter, 1985). It helps people understand what expectations they need to satisfy to fit in and what they can anticipate from others (Kofman, 2015). Cultural patterns exist among individuals and within systems of an organization, forming a collective mindset that guides the operation of the organization (Anderson, 2012). Determining the common goal, Ethics, norms, and social structure that exist at the Barn Theater may help to explain factors that have led to its sustainability. The organizational culture of a community theater is vital to its success, for it helps maintain a balance between social, economic, and environmental factors (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson and Schwimmer, 2010).
The culture of the Barn Theater has developed over time and includes such factors as commitment to, passion for, and engagement with the mission of the theater. The members of the board of directors attend meetings, engage in remodeling projects, work at the box office, and help each other with each production before, during, and after the show opens. The culture is one of mutual respect and genuine commitment to excellence and to decision making that will help the theater continue to sustain its systems (Merryman, 1984).

**Community theory.** Community theory is the fourth theory that contributes to the sustainability of nonprofit community theaters such as the Barn Theater. The concept of a community is both a way of thinking and a way of interacting with others. It is a series of interactions and human actions that have importance and expectancies among its members and actions based on shared expectations, values, principles, and implications among people (Bartle, 2007). This interface is vital to building the groundwork of a successful response to the needs of community members. Gusfield (1975) explained that there are two major usages of community. The first is the physical location where members of the community live or work. The second is the value of interpersonal relationships that unite people to each other to form a social unit with a sense of community. Bartle (2007) stated, “The community has a life of its own which goes beyond the sum of all the lives of all its residents” (p. 110). The goal of community theater is to draw together a community of people who are on the same wavelength, have a passion for theater arts, and enjoy performing to live audiences. They connect, communicate stories, and thrive on the audience’s response with an energy that inspires creativity. Ideally, they work together in an organized manner with norms,
responsibilities, leadership, and pathways for communication clearly defined (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson and Schwimmer, 2010).

The members of the Barn Theater have a tremendous amount of pride in the goals and day-to-day operations of the Barn Theater, which links them to the community. They spend countless hours at the theater and work together to maintain the building and the business aspects of the theater as well as the creative excellence that goes into each production. When the members work together toward the greater good of the community, they also benefit socially. Many members of the Barn Theater maintain friendships beyond the theater (Plaisted, personal communication, 2015). Explaining the sense of community that exists at the Barn Theater will provide a model for all community theater programs.

Statement of the Research Problem

Major changes took place in theater arts beginning in the 20th century. Radio and cinema emerged as a means of storytelling on a global basis. This trend continued with the onset of television in the 1950s. In a significant cultural shift, audiences became accustomed to a variety of entertainment in their homes. Subsequently, technological advances in computers and social media resulted in more people finding their entertainment outlet from the Internet. Popularity of theater arts has diminished, and live theater has struggled to reinvent itself in order to continue being relevant in a world increasingly immersed in mass media (K. Johnson, 2011).

Attendance at community theaters has declined, with the average audience member’s age being in the 40s. C. Lambert (2012) stated, “A youthful generation raised amid a digital culture may prove harder to lure to a live theatrical performance” (para 3).
As technology continues to develop, audiences have even more choices for their entertainment. Hudson and Hudson (2013) stated, “Social media has fundamentally changed the consumer’s decision process” (p. 206). J. Moore (2010) asserted, “Technology is threatening to pull the plug on live theater as we know it” (para. 1). Attendance at community theaters has been adversely affected by advances in technology, pulling away the attention of many youth and others more immersed in digital entertainment (Thomson, Purcell, & Rainie, 2015).

As modern technology continues to develop, community theaters are experiencing financial hardships and leadership tension (Kramer, 2006). Community theaters across America had to file for protection under bankruptcy laws. The Pasadena Playhouse was one such theater. Its leaders filed for bankruptcy in 1969, and the doors were closed for a number of years while leadership worked to reorganize (Morath, 2010). Other community theaters experienced similar problems. The Paul Robeson Theater in Brooklyn, New York was another threatened theater. The Robeson lost its nonprofit status, and its roof was unsafe. Building maintenance could no longer be afforded (Pring, 2013). The sustainability of community theater was and still is plagued by financial woes. According to Lynch, 2013), “They have had an unnerving propensity for multiplying like rabbits and dying off like fruit-flies” (para. 9).

Despite these negative forces and societal, economic, and leadership difficulties, the Barn Theater in Porterville, the longest continuously running theater in rural Central California, has survived. The Barn Theater was founded in 1948 and has produced at least five productions each year for the past 68 years. The little theater’s success of attaining sustainability was the focus of this study. Sustainability factors were studied
through the lens of sustainability, organizational culture, leadership, and community theories.

Much of the current literature on performing arts organizations examines their internal components such as finance, marketing, legal issues, and board development of the not-for-profit organization (Byrnes, 2003; Dreeszen, 2003; Miller, 1997). Gregory (2009) studied a community chorus program in Dallas, Texas to identify attributes of its success and longevity. He suggested that further research was needed to describe the phenomenon of macro-interactions that make up the complicated network of activity and human relationships within a nonprofit organization as they lead to success and longevity. K. Johnson (2011) looked at sustainable theater and described how theater companies could adapt to ever-changing economic and social conditions. This study suggested further research to examine the synergistic process of collaboration among community members toward their common goals.

Thanks to its sustainability and longevity, the Barn Theater in Porterville, California warrants study. Despite the changing entertainment landscape, the theater continues to sustain its operation. Why is that? One study examining the history of the Barn Theater from 1948 to 1984 is available. However, there has been no published research on this theater for over 30 years. Developing a clear understanding of the sustained success of the Barn Theater will provide insight for other community theaters striving for sustainability.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the Barn Theater stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?

Subquestions

1. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?
2. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?
3. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Significance of the Problem

Economic strife and technological advances over the past 4 decades have negatively affected the sustainability of performing arts programs (Novick, 2011). In addition, there is nationwide concern over the effect that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has had on the performing arts education of millions of children. Arts programs across the country were cut or eliminated, and America’s youth has suffered because of it (Holcomb, 2007). As a result, this generation of children might not develop an
appreciation for the arts, which could negatively affect support of theater arts in the future. For the past 2 decades, it has become increasingly difficult to interest children in becoming involved with community theater (N. Edwards, personal communication, September 6, 2015).

Most community theater programs are nonprofit organizations, and many studies have been conducted on the sustainability of nonprofit organizations (Collins, 2005; Quinn & Norton, 2004; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014; Stirling, Kilpatrick, & Orpin, 2011; Yates, 2012). While some of this research can be applied to community theater thanks to its nonprofit structure, standalone studies specifically on community theater are sorely lacking. Further, after an extensive review of the literature, a gap in research on community theater sustainability exists. Only one study on sustainability theory and the theater was found (C. Johnson, 2009). Calder Johnson (2009) reviewed three major factors of sustainability theory: economic, environmental, and social factors, and applied the theory to community theater. C. Johnson suggested further research in how community theater programs meet the needs of the community stakeholders that they serve. C. Johnson’s research suggested that when the needs of the stakeholders are met, the program would be sustained. He also recommended further study on collaboration among members of the community theater team. Successful teams today are those that work together (Jordan, Averett, Elder, Orozco, & Rudo, 2000). Continued research in sustainability of community theater is recommended.

Business and financial operations play an important role in the sustainability of community theater (Brass, 2014; Byrnes, 2003; R. Cohen, 2014; Dreeszen, 2003; Mulcahy, 2011; Novick, 2011). There is a second gap in existing research regarding
business operations. These include fundraising, budgeting, training, communication, decision making, networking, and publicity. A clear and concise description of factors that relate to sustainability of business operations is not included in existing studies. Mulcahy (2011) asserted, “One of the toughest lessons any theater has to learn is that art and commerce walk hand in hand. Focusing your attention solely on the fun and fascinating creative aspects of your company will mean you don’t survive” (p. 101).

Examining the business operations of the Barn Theater may help other theaters improve their business operations, which will increase their chances for sustainability.

Leadership is a major component in sustainability of community theater (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). In all endeavors, leadership has been a major topic of research in psychology for almost a century and has spawned thousands of empirical and conceptual studies (McMurray, Pirola-Merlo, Sarros, & Islam, 2010). However, Hollister (1993) suggested that leadership research has been a neglected area in nonprofit studies, including community theater. Explaining the style and roles of the leadership team at the Barn Theater will provide a model for other similar programs.

Preserving the arts is important to ensure live storytelling for future generations. Community theater fosters creativity, goodness, and beauty. The arts spark innovation. According to R. Cohen (2014), “Creativity is among the top 5 applied skills sought by business leaders…the arts—music, creative writing, drawing, dance—provide skills sought by employers of the 3rd millennium” (p. 2). Understanding factors that have led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater will create a focus on the arts and help lead other struggling community theaters nationwide. The benefits to sustaining community theaters nationwide are meaningful. Duncan Webb (2004) stated,
At the individual level, the arts promote openness to new ideas and creativity, as well as competence at school and work. At the community level, they provide economic and social benefits such as increasing economic activity, creating a more livable environment, and promoting a sense of community pride. At the broadest level, they promote an understanding of diversity and pluralism; they also reinforce national identity of the nation’s culture. (p. 6)

However, community theater faces many modern challenges. Lack of interest and lack of research are challenges community theater must overcome if it is to be preserved for future generations. These obstacles can be surmounted, and this research seeks not only to understand how by looking at the successes of the Barn Theater, but also to guide other community theaters in implementing such improvements.

**Definitions**

**Board of directors.** A group of individuals that are elected as, or elected to act as, representatives of the stockholders to establish overall management-related policies and to make decisions on major organizational issues (Institute on Governance [IOG], 2013).

**Community theater.** Theater made by and intended for members of a community with local directors and actors; a training ground for actors who need more experience before becoming professional actors; an educational center that provides performing arts programs for children (Thompson, 2012).

**Community theory.** According to D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986), “Principles that explain the feeling that members have of belonging, that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9).
Leadership theory. Principles that explain exactly how and why certain people become great leaders. There are numerous major theories of leadership, including “great man,” trait, contingency, situational, participative, management, and relationship theories (Cherry, 2010).

Nonprofit organizations. According to Salamon (1992), [Nonprofit organizations are] dedicated to generating profits for their owners. If a profit is generated it must be reinvested in the basic mission of the agency. This differentiates nonprofit organizations from the other component of the private sector. (p. 6)

Organizational culture. The culture of an organization is the system of common views, ethics, and norms that assist people in an organization to accomplish goals within the structure of that organization (Walter, 1985).

Sustainability. The endurance of systems and processes within an organization, including internal mechanisms that promote the longevity of the organization (International Institute for Sustainable Development [IISD], 2013).

Theater arts. Theater arts is a means of telling stories about people and events, either actual occurrences or fictional stories. The actors on stage communicate to the audience who then responds. Theater, therefore, is the interaction of the actors and audience (AACT, n.d.; Cermatori et al., 2014; R. Cohen, 2014; DiMaggio, 1978; Moats, 2014; Van Erven, 2001). The performers may communicate this experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech, song, music, and dance.
Delimitations

This study was delimited to the board of directors, historical artifacts, and selected supporters of a small town, rural community theater program in California that has been governed by a board of directors between the years 1947 and 2015. Furthermore, it is a nonprofit organization. Since this is a phenomenological study that seeks to help the reader understand how the theater has continued as a viable organization for 68 years, the reader may learn about sustainability of similar nonprofit community theater programs.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study consists of four chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter II presents an extensive review of all previous research completed on the sustainability of nonprofit community theaters during times of success and crisis and includes information about leadership, internal functioning of the board of directors, and external cultural conditions that affect the sustainability of the organization. It also reviews research on organizational culture, leadership, and community theories and how they overlap with sustainability theory. Chapter III describes the qualitative research design and methodology used for the study. It includes information about the population, sample, and data gathering procedures as well as the data analysis process utilized. Chapter IV presents, analyzes, and provides a discussion of the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter V contains the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action and further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There were several major elements focused upon while compiling this literature review. First, theater is defined and discussed from a global perspective, beginning with early prehistoric man and moving through its development as an art form in 17th century Europe. Second, theater is examined as it transpired in America. Third, the emergence of community theater as a phenomenon is defined and reviewed as a part of American culture beginning in the 20th century. Fourth, the development of community theater in California is supported through evidence found in related research literature. The history of the Barn Theater is the fifth section of the research, where an in-depth account of the founding and operation of the theater from 1948 to the present is described. Finally, theories of sustainability, organizations, leadership, culture, and community related to community theater are explored as theoretical frameworks to determine factors that have contributed to the sustainability of the phenomenon of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California.

Phenomenon of Theater Arts

By definition, theater arts is a mechanism for sharing chronicles about people and events. They can be either true occurrences or fictional stories. The thespians on stage communicate to the spectators who then respond. Theater therefore is the interaction of the actors and audience (AACT, n.d.; Cermatori et al., 2014; R. Cohen, 2014; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Moats, 2014; Van Erven, 2001). The performers communicate this experience with the audience through combinations of body language, speaking, singing, musical composition, and dance choreography.
It is the communication through body language, acting, singing, music, and choreography that creates the phenomenon of theater. The connection of everything occurring onstage impacts the audience’s response, while the audience’s feedback creates the synergy that is the essence of live theater. Bruch (1990) suggested that theater helps the actors and spectators discover themselves and their relationship with the world, others, and with God. She added that it is part of human nature to explore the self and its relationship to life and to create. Theater helps both the actor and audience member develop communication skills that are both verbal and nonverbal. It teaches the audience about history and reminds society that at the center of all is the human being. Since theater arts exist globally, audience members have the opportunity to learn and be more accepting of other cultures. It can be used as a means to inspire social change, and it helps all involved develop creativity (K. Brown, 2014).

Historically, this form of creativity was seen within the culture of ancient Greece. The Greek word for theater means “a place for seeing.” This basic definition of theater is all at once apt yet lacking. Theaters offer more than just the chance to watch a spectacle and stands as more than a mere building where plays are produced. It is where playwrights produce what they write, directors conduct rehearsals, set designers and technical crew work to provide skilled assistance, and the actors perform on stage. All of these individuals have an important role in the theater, yet it is not true theater until an audience is there to experience it (Brockett & Ball, 2013; Gascoigne, 2001; Turnbull, 2007). Wilson and Goldfarb (2011) concurred, stating,

Despite challenges from movies, radio, and television, theater has continued to thrive in the twentieth century. Perhaps this is so because of the “live” nature of
theater, for theater is an event in which the performers are in the presence of the audience. This creates a circular flow of energy, as performer affects audience and audience affects performer. (p. 529)

The phenomenon of theater is a powerful force for those who participate. It exists in countries around the world and focuses on expressions of self and relationships and uses the medium of creativity to impact audiences. This art form can also be used to inspire social and political change. The connection between what happens on a theatrical stage and the audience is the electricity coursing through this phenomenon.

**History of Theater**

The exact birth of theater during prehistoric times remains a mystery to researchers. However, drama of a sort is apparent in the ceremonies of primitive tribes as far back as 8500 B.C. Based on paintings, or pictographs, in the caves of early prehistoric man there was evidence of musical instruments that may have provided a rhythm, while men and women of the tribe joined in a communal dance. Often in these paintings, there is a particular figure that is the center of attention. In mask and costume, an actor poses as a spirit that can either harm or help the tribe. This encounter appears to be a form of dramatic presentation (Gascoigne, 2001).

In 3100 B.C., the Egyptians engaged in theatrical events. They celebrated coronations and other rituals with a type of grand production, which included many features of theater, such as masks, movement, and storytelling. In addition, there were festivals that involved a ritual mock battle. Records indicated that performances included a storyline, props, costumes, and scripts. Details of these performances have been found carved into temple walls (Robinson, 2010). Evidence also shows that these productions
were followed by a lamplighting practice where everyone in the city illuminated the night in honor of the festival (Damen, 2012). It is believed that these plays preceded and led to theater in ancient Greece, as the Greeks and Egyptians intermingled.

The first recorded form of a Western European theatrical culture began in ancient Greece around 600 B.C. with a religious festival to honor Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility (Brockett & Ball, 2013; Vince, 1984). Aristotle, as a secondary source, documented the onset of Greek theater with the Dionysus festival. Thespis became the first playwright and actor, and he depicted the comedy and tragedy of life throughout his work. Initially, Greek plays were inspired by the tragedies that occurred in Greek myths and included choral performers. The comedies originated from phallic rituals and often dealt with sexual themes. Their plots revolved around everyday life in Athens (Norton, 2015).

Greek culture supported theater arts. The Athenians built massive theaters for up to 17,000 viewers, such as the Acropolis, and the government paid the playwrights and actors, though theater was also financed by rich aristocrats who paid for chorus members. They also subsidized the poor so that they could also attend the productions (Ley, 2006; Norton, 2015). Popular themes such as religion and everyday life were of interest to the population. Theater arts permeated the culture because of the commitment and financial investment of the government and because of the massive size of the theaters. Its decline coincided with the decline of the Athenian democratic government and the rise of conflict with the upstart Roman Empire. The decline of Greek theater, therefore, occurred in conjunction with the decline of the democratic government in ancient Athens. The Romans, victors of the Peloponnesian War, became rulers of Greece and her
Mediterranean colonies. This relationship would become fundamental to the growing Roman identity as Rome became wild for all things Greek, including theater arts (Norton, 2015).

In 300 B.C., Romans, inspired by Greek culture and theater, wrote Latin versions of Greek plays. Their interest in theater arts was also influenced by their Etruscan background, which focused on religious enactments (T. Moore, 2012). Roman adaptations of Etruscan and Greek material mirrored the political and religious activity in their empire (T. Moore, 2012). However, overall, Roman plays developed more so from the comedy in life, a popular theme, and were less philosophical in nature than their Greek counterparts (Robinson, 2010). Productions included acrobatics, gladiators, jugglers, and athletics and were created as an additional form of entertainment. Romans also introduced pantomime and dance into their productions with scenes taking place in the streets (Beacham, 1991; T. Moore, 2012).

For the next 2 centuries, Romans built about 125 theaters and other performance venues. The theaters themselves consisted of a large stage, which was five feet off the ground, with dressing rooms on the sides. They were connected to the audience section of the theater where the comfort of the spectators was important. The seating area was protected from the sun by awnings. Additionally, a cooling system was devised where air blowing over water would cool the onlookers. The most famous theater structure, the Colosseum, could accommodate 50,000 people (Turnbull, 2007). Roman theaters were constructed differently than Greek theaters. In Greece, the theaters were semicircular whereas in Rome they were built as amphitheatres, or two theaters put together in a tall oval-shaped structure. The differences between Greek and Roman theaters were
politically and socially driven. In Greece, the theaters were available to all. In Rome, the theaters were enclosed and sections were delineated according to socioeconomic stigma attached to audience members (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-2015).

With the decline of the Roman Empire came the decline of Roman theater. As theater evolved in the Roman Empire, it focused on sensuality, immorality, and stage violence (Beacham, 1991; T. Moore, 2012). Immoral themes depicted included murder and adultery. Such themes were thought to reflect on both the declining integrity and power of the Empire. With this decline, the Roman world began to shift in many ways, perhaps most significantly with the rise of Christianity. Early Christians were opposed to the immorality showcased on stage and legally closed all of the theater (Banham, 1988; Brockett & Ball, 2013; Vince, 1984). The year, 533 A.D. is the last record of a theatrical performance in the Roman Empire (Turnbull, 2007). The onset of medieval times, or the Dark Ages, emerged.

From 800 to 1100 A.D., traveling players, known as minstrels, kept the theater alive along with acrobats, puppeteers, jugglers, and storytellers. They created a stage by raising a simple platform wherever they performed in halls, marketplaces, and at festivals. In response, Christians started their own kind of theater, putting on religious plays that explained the meaning of holy days to people who could not read. These “miracle plays” became so popular that there was not enough room to perform in the church and they moved outside. They were still considered religious events and not entertainment (Brockett & Ball, 2013).

Wickham (1987) asserted that there were three major factors that affected medieval drama: religion, recreation, and commerce. Religious influences produced the
liturgical “miracle plays” within the Catholic Church, which were then adopted throughout Europe (Matthews, 1912). Moralities presented in this drama centered on the humanity of Christ. The importance of recreation prompted nonspiritual theaters. These productions focused on depicting life in the villages, including their games and dances. Jugglers, puppeteers, and acrobats returned as entertainers. Theater for nobility concentrated on more sophisticated sex and war games. Religious, political, and moral values interrupted the sustainability of theater arts during the Roman Empire and Medieval period in history.

Toward the end of the 15th century, the subject of commerce was often considered, as the growing interest in drama led to questions of funding and management. This resulted in the replacement of amateur theater with guilds of professional actors and directors during the early 16th century. As the political climate in Europe shifted away from the staunch rules of Catholicism with the Reformation, the medieval form of theater disappeared as well (Matthews, 1912; Wickham, 1987).

In the Renaissance period, from the 14th to the 17th centuries, an interest in classical Greek and Roman art, culture, and theater was reborn. It coincided with the demise of feudal Europe and a shift of focus away from the strict doctrines of the Catholic Church. The invention of the printing press facilitated the communication of new ideas throughout Europe and resulted in renewed interest in theater arts. Classic plays were available not only to the clergy and the rich but also to the middle and lower classes (Brockett & Ball, 2013). Transformational thinking occurred throughout the population as they learned more. Western Europe was gaining a literate society, and educated people of all classes attended theatrical performances (Brockett & Ball, 2013).
During the Renaissance in England, theater also began in the streets of estates and towns. Minstrels, or traveling performers, moved from one town to another performing for all audiences. As the minstrels became more popular, theaters were built in cities such as London to house their performances. As time passed, amphitheaters were built, similar in style to Roman theaters, which housed up to 3,000 people. This was the beginning of Elizabethan Theater in England, promoted by Queen Elizabeth I’s support of theater culture. Attending Elizabethan theater became a very popular form of entertainment (H. Brown, 2012). Unfortunately, an attack of the plague often forced the closing of theaters within the city of London. The problem was exacerbated because the Church of England was vehemently opposed to the content of theatrical productions and to the popularity of the art among rowdy crowds of common people. There was mounting pressure from the Church to close the theaters.

In order for theater to survive in England, theater troupes, such as Shakespeare’s the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, built playhouses on the outskirts of London, where it was harder for the Puritan government to interfere with them. On the outskirts, in virtual red-light districts, plays and other forms of entertainment, considered antireligious by the Church, could flourish. In this red-light district, across the River Thames from London, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men built the famous Globe Theater (Marracco, 2014). The Globe Theater was a huge success thanks to the plays Shakespeare wrote for his company to perform. Included in their repertoire were *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet,* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* His plays were important because they reflected a wide range of human emotions—emotions that could be understood in formal theaters and in small communities of England (Rackin, 1990). Traveling companies took his work out
on the road to small towns and were performed in makeshift theaters. These were
glimpses into what would later be considered community theater (Mabillard, 2000).
Unfortunately, more difficulties with the plague, fires, and opposition from the Puritan
Church in England forced the closing of all theaters in 1665 and 1666 (Marracco, 2014).
It was during this time period that the Puritans began their migration to the New World,
carrying with them their intolerance of theatrical performances.

The research about the development of theater from prehistoric times to the 17th
century in Europe revealed that this art form was valued by many cultures and seen by
numerous countries as a way to communicate about a variety of subjects such as religion,
politics, everyday life, comedy, and tragedy through an entertaining medium. Theater
was supported by the powerful and wealthy and performed for all. It was sustained for
long periods of time within each culture, but when the cultures died, in many ways so too
did its theater. Theater arts also faced challenges from religious forces, who sought to
close playhouses and theater. Despite these obstacles, theater never truly died out, as a
review of its history proves. With each new culture came a new chapter in theater’s
history, all moving toward the theater we know today.

**History of Theater in America**

Opposition to theater was carried from England to the New World with the
Puritans when they arrived in the New World to establish a colony. These immigrants
wanted to freely practice their religious beliefs, which deviated from the official Church
of England. The first Puritan settlement was the Massachusetts Bay Colony in
northeastern America. As part of their religious beliefs, the Puritans would not allow
theatrical productions of any sort to take place in their newly founded settlement. Laws
were passed in several northern colonies forbidding stage plays and theatrical
entertainment of any kind (Hornblow, 1919). Secretly, however, handbills were
distributed throughout villages to colonists who were interested in attending underground
theatrical productions. Therefore, the early history of theater in America had limited
documentation; however, it is evident that the colonists were willing to take risks in order
to continue participation in theater arts. This passion led to the sustainability of theater
arts in America.

After 1650, despite the strict rules of the Puritans, historians believe that theatrical
events began in America (Hornblow, 1919). The first official theaters were established in
Williamsburg in 1716, New York in 1732, and Charleston in 1736. All three theaters
were closed within a short time because harsh religious advocates enforced the laws
against dramatic productions (Dunlap, 1832). People feared repercussions if they
attended any performances. The theater in Williamsburg failed and its mortgage was
foreclosed (Hornblow, 1919). Fortunately, it reopened at a later date. Supporters of
theater in New York and Philadelphia worked to strengthen theatrical events while
Puritan leaders fought to abolish them (Blum, 1986; Crawford, 1940).

In the southern colonies, there were fewer religious restrictions against theater,
and therefore the southern colonists could indulge their fondness for drama. After the
reopening of the theater in Williamsburg, it became the southern center for theater in
America, and several troupes came from England to perform Shakespearean plays in
Williamsburg. Williamsburg also had a growing middle class who aspired to attend the
theater in order to demonstrate their rise from poverty. However, financial support for
theater was a concern. Either managers embezzled funds from the theater companies, or
the box office profits were inadequate to pay the actors. Growing unrest between the Colonies and England shifted the priorities of the wealthy and politicians, culminating in the American Revolution in 1776. Theaters were either closed or taken over by the British military and used to present shows for the garrisons (Blum, 1986; Crawford, 1940; Hornblow, 1919). Once again, interference from religious and political forces caused the closing of theater.

After the Revolutionary War, the new American government, led by George Washington, brought a new unity to the states, and American theater was reestablished. Washington’s passion for theater was contagious and inspired many Americans to attend the theater. O. Johnson (2000) reported,

A famously avid theater-goer, Washington’s highly detailed record-keeping provides valuable information about the movement of acting companies throughout the region, and the types of performances offered. These accounts indicate that not only was Washington a devotee of staged entertainments, but his diary entries in some cases are the only record of a professional theater in colonial America. (p. 140)

Washington’s recordkeeping provides historical documentation for the development of theater in early America.

With America’s victory over England in the American Revolution, more peaceful relations were established between the two countries again, and British actors began to make the journey to America in order to perform at some of the newly built, lavish theaters in Baltimore, Washington D.C., and even Boston, the capital of the most puritanical of the early colonies. Theater arts also began to thrive in New York City and
Philadelphia, where plays produced by Shakespeare and other European playwrights were performed by newly arrived British actors (Blum, 1986; Crawford, 1940).

New York, home of the American Company, quickly became the leading center for the theatrical arts on the North American continent (Blum, 1986; Crawford, 1940). After a period of unity and prosperity, the American Company experienced difficulty with leadership and management that resulted in financial problems. Factions within the group made it difficult to maintain discipline and achieve high artistic standards (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Travel expenses and competition with other acting companies added to its financial problems. Leadership of the company changed in the early 1800s, and the theater became profitable again. The touring aspect of the company was discontinued and productions took place solely in New York City.

The first theater opened in Boston in the 1790s. Puritan laws against theater were rescinded in 1793, and the Federal Street Theater was built with its own company of actors. The quality of its acting company was inferior, and management was unstable and ineffective. It took several years before a strong manager took control and high quality actors were hired before the theater became prosperous. Boston’s theater program toured throughout New England (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). As a result of the freedom achieved by the American Revolution, theatrical productions were abundant and enjoyed by audiences across eastern America (Turnbull, 2007). Theater was firmly established among the nation’s concentration of 4,000,000 inhabitants.

By the turn of the century, theater arts grew in other major cities on the East Coast as well as in the Midwest, in New Orleans, Kentucky, St. Louis, and Chicago (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Several powerful managers, including Samuel Drake, James Caldwell,
Noah Ludlow, and Solomon Smith dominated professional theater in the Mississippi Valley. They established travelling companies with a small troupe of about 10 actors and adjustable and portable scenery that could be set up in many locations. They travelled by boat up and down rivers and around lakes. As the population in each city grew, stationary theaters were built and the troupes settled in a particular city or town. This form of entertainment was referred to as “frontier theater” (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Showboats also emerged as travelling venues for theatrical productions. They were very practical because the theatrical equipment could be set up on boats, yet the boat was able to move from city to city. Performances could be held while the boats were travelling and they could serve as theaters in cities as well.

Between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, there was rapid expansion of the theater in America. Due to competition for audiences and fluctuating economic conditions in the country, theaters experienced financial difficulties at times. Further, the cost of hiring quality performers escalated, and often the quality of the performances suffered because affordable actors were hired. Repertory was another factor that influenced financial stability. A variety of genres were needed to meet the varying tastes of the paying customers. This resulted in frequent change of management and/or bankruptcy for theater companies (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Economic, artistic, and variety of audience preferences became factors that were addressed in order to sustain theater.

Gold was discovered in California in 1848, and the Gold Rush brought thousands of prospectors to this wilderness. Actors followed and set up makeshift theaters in the mining camps and small towns in search of opportunity and experience as performers.
With a confined audience of restless miners with a pinch of gold dust in their pockets, any kind of entertainment thrived. Makeshift theaters drew large audiences wherever they went. The Eagle Theater, near the river in the city of Sacramento, was the first of its kind (Sederquist, 2015).

Professional theaters in Sacramento and San Francisco were soon established and later became the heart of theater in the west. New mining booms in the West facilitated the founding of more theaters in Nevada, Colorado, and Montana. The popularity of theater grew, and more theaters were formed in Utah, Washington, and Oregon. The number of American theaters increased from 35 to 50 between 1850 and 1870 (Brockett & Hildy, 2008).

With the onset of the Civil War, a depression took over the theater community, and there was a temporary moratorium placed on production. However, a quick recovery ensued when the people attended theater as a distraction from the devastation and heartbreak of war (Gillan, 2007). American and English actors worked in the theater industry as one, during the post-Civil War era. Frequent trans-Atlantic trips on large, luxurious ocean liners took actors back and forth and contributed to the fame of both countries’ artists on both continents. This collaboration helped actors learn from each other and added legitimacy to American Theater (Gillan, 2007).

In the late 1800s, with the building of the transcontinental railroad, traveling theater companies performed in temporary outdoor theaters all over the nation. Western American territories embraced dramatic productions as a desirable form of entertainment in part thanks to the new railroads providing easy access between coasts. In an essay entitled “19th Century American Theatre” (n.d.), the following was noted:
The expanding transportation system in the United States allowed actors and actresses to tour the country, bringing professional theater to many towns and cities that had never before experienced it. As the population of the country grew rapidly, the number of theaters in large and mid-size cities grew as well. From the 1850s until the turn of the century, thousands of new theaters were built.

(para. 1)

Vaudeville emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a popular form of theater entertainment. Vaudeville routines were utilized during World War I and World War II to entertain U.S. troops around the world. Elsie Janis and her fellow actors toured and performed worldwide for troops during World War I. Hope for America was a performing group formed by actor Bob Hope in May 1941, and their performances took place at military bases in the United States and abroad (“Hope for America,” 2010).

Later, musical revues became popular. A musical revue is a multi-act production that includes song, dance, and sketches centered on a theme. The revue was pioneered by Florenz Ziegfeld and his elegant “Follies” during the Roaring Twenties (Maslon, 2015). Musical playwrights, such as Rodgers and Hammerstein, added a narrative storyline to the concept of the musical revues, and this led to Broadway musicals. Broadway musicals, such as Oklahoma, Music Man, and The Sound of Music, flourished across the county for decades. As they evolved, political controversies emerged during the 20th-century Broadway productions and served as a means to influence public opinion on important political issues. Hair, Victor-Victoria, and Avenue Q focused on contemporary concerns such as racism, sexism, and war (L. Perry, 2009). Due to widespread popularity of a variety of genres of dramatic arts, opportunities in professional theater became more
competitive, and amateur actors wanted to find venues for training and performance. As a result, community theaters began to emerge around the country (Hughes, 1951).

**Community Theater in America**

The community theater movement, or “Little Theater Movement” in the United States, began in the early 20th century as a means for playwrights and artists to produce significant and inspiring plays, often politically based, while reaching a large number of participants from local areas. Experimentation was the primary goal of the movement (MacKay, 1917). They also served as a venue for social bonding and peer support and provided an opportunity for actors to experience performing live (Chansky, 2008; Gard & Burley, 1975; Hornblow, 1919; Kramer, 2005; MacKay, 1917). Building a sense of community with social connections within the venue assisted in the sustainability of community theater.

The Little Theater Movement began in Europe but came to America as a rapidly growing force. In 1911, the community-based Abbey Theater Troupe, a group of Irish players who traveled to America, spurred the imaginations of audiences around the country. With enthusiasm, American theater innovators moved away from commercial drama that seemed to be stagnant, and many new dramatic groups took root all over America to carry on this new form of theater (Gard & Burley, 1975). Based upon these influences from Europe, community theaters were primarily interested in promoting artistic excellence rather than financial attainment (Brockett, 1964; Chansky, 2008). MacKay (1917) stated,

[The Little Theatre] at once calls to mind an intimate stage and auditorium where players and audience can be brought into close accord: a theatre where unusual
non-commercial plays are given, a theatre where the repertory and subscription
system prevails; where scenic experimentation is rife; where “How Much Can We
Make?” is not the dominating factor. (p. 1)

This mindset laid the groundwork for the concept of nonprofit organizations that emerged
later in history (Chansky, 2008).

Gard and Burley (1975) indicated that community theater had an important
position in American theater because it engaged more people in theatrical activity than all
other forms of theater. Early community theaters focused on plays that depicted the lives
of natives and pioneers—stories that connected with the daily lives of its participants
(AACT, n.d.). Little Theaters in America were as diverse as the population. They had to
be flexible and cater to the needs of community members in order to make the desired
intimate connection with local audiences. With limited resources, directors chose one-act
plays that were appropriate for their audiences and produced them on a limited budget.
This mindset shift set Little Theaters apart from traditional theater. Collaboration
between community theaters and their audiences helped maintain a balance between
artistic freedom and financial success. Maintaining communication with audiences and
balancing artistic freedom with financial success may be factors that led to the
sustainability of community theater over time.

The Footlight Club, founded in 1877, is the oldest community theater in the
country and makes its home in Boston, Massachusetts (AACT, n.d.). Its mission was to
present the best in nonprofessional theater to a broad-based audience. It experienced
struggles along the way. Recruitment of volunteers to serve on the board of directors was
a significant problem for the Footlight Club (Gallagher, 2006). Other Little Theaters
such as the Washington Square Player in New York, the Provincetown Players in Massachusetts, and Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit were established from 1912-1918. The theaters were staffed with full-time directors but relied on amateur actors, designers, and staff. Their mission was to build a new audience base with innovative drama and production methods. They felt that the amateur performers were more willing to try new approaches to theater than the professionals who were used to more traditional styles of performance (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Innovative ideas in theater arts can lead to sustainability of nonprofit theater groups (Louloudes & Haun, n.d.).

The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, a major force in American theater and theater education since its inception, was founded in 1915. One of the first off-Broadway theaters, the Playhouse was committed to community and devoted to renewing the roots of drama, mounting works both classic and modern. This group also faced challenges to sustainability. Harrington (2007) indicated that the playhouse did not have a sustainable plan for financial solvency. They relied on the gift of a single donor. In addition, confusion existed regarding internal financial issues, and there were questions about the competence of the theater’s director. The theater was known for not compromising artistic and altruistic quality for profit (MacKay, 1917). Therefore, it is apparent that one important issue, when considering sustainability, is financial solvency.

During this historical period, there were two major challenges to the early community theater movement when it emerged as its own entity and sought to create a theater “of the people, by the people and for the people” (Millennium Theatres, 2004). First, community theater expanded rapidly with as many as 400 travelling “tent” theaters drawing audiences in over 16,000 cities nationwide in the 1920s. By 1920, nearly 2,000
community theaters were affiliated with the Drama League of America. This agency supported participation in theater by local residents (Banham, 1988; Brockett, 1964). Second, *The Theatre Arts Magazine*, published in Detroit, informed its readers of new ideas and concepts regarding theater and came to influence American theater ideas, especially in relation to set design and innovation (Brockett, 1964).

Few of the remaining companies survived the Great Depression in the 1930s, and difficulties with audience appreciation, support, and poor planning caused theaters to close not long after they opened (MacKay, 1917). Another challenge for community theater came when colleges and universities around the country established drama programs during the early 20th century. Columbia University, Radcliff College, Harvard University, and Yale University were some of the first. They attracted famous playwrights and actors such as Eugene O’Neill, who inspired high standards in students, which in turn elevated the quality of their productions. By 1940, higher education in the discipline of theater became standard practice for most universities in the country (Brockett & Hildy, 2008). Competition with college university theater programs developed as a challenge for the sustainability of community theater.

Between 1923 and 1943, over 100 community theaters were founded (AACT, n.d.). The theaters represented a variety of people who in turn represented the heart of the community. In 1939, Albert McCleery and Carl Glick wrote, “Five hundred thousand to a million workers are involved in Community Theater and close to fifteen million persons attend their plays!” (p. 323). Unfortunately, interest in community theater waned during the Great Depression and World War II; but after the war there was a renewed interest, and many new theaters opened all over the country. In 1975, Gard and Burley
estimated there were about 3,500 full-scale community theaters in the United States, producing on a continuing basis. Many of these theaters were producing quality dramatic performances and were able to adequately sustain their organizations (Gard & Burley, 1975).

Community theater programs across the country carried the responsibility of impacting communities with theater as an art form, not merely for recreational purposes. The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) was formed to help monitor the quality of productions. They were organized to guide, teach, and challenge community theaters to do their best to grow in skill and creativity. AACT indicated the following:

A people’s theatre must be a forum which is capable of providing the opportunity for the expression of the greatest diversity of opinion on social, economic, political, religious, and aesthetic issues. The amateur theatre is capable of providing this forum. (Millennium Theatres, 2004, p. IV)

The formation of AACT was a formal means of promoting the sustainability of community theaters across America. It developed recommendations for sustained community theater practices, including acquisition of financial resources, opportunities for networking, and the establishment of festivals that promote quality among community theater programs. It also provided resources and support for struggling community theaters.

**Community Theaters in California**

The community theater movement took hold in California in 1917 with the opening of the Pasadena Playhouse, located in Pasadena, California, by Gilmour Brown.
Its nonprofessional, community beginnings and the tremendous amount of local volunteer support for the project launched this little theater into early success. It grew rapidly, opening its own school, training such notable actors as Raymond Burr, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman, and Sally Struthers. At its zenith, the theater operated five individual stages at a given time. George Bernard Shaw labeled it “the Athens of the West.” It was so successful that the California legislature voted it the official State Theatre in 1937. It attracted playwrights and actors from across the country. One of the first companies to experiment with various styles of stages, it designed a theatre-in-the-round. It also established one of the first television studios in southern California and broadcast as KTTV (California State Theatre, n.d.).

Unfortunately, success was not sustained. The School of Theatre Arts shut down in 1969 due to competition from other drama schools and universities. After the death of its founder the same year, the theater itself went bankrupt. It reopened several years later, but it has continued to struggle financially. It again filed for bankruptcy in 2010. Later it received a multimillion dollar anonymous grant and is slowly trying to gain financial solvency (Banham, 1988; California State Theatre, n.d.; Pasadena Playhouse, n.d.).

In San Diego County, the Lamplighters Community Theatre opened with a group of amateur actors who were passionate about performing live theater. It was founded in June of 1937 as The La Mesa Little Theatre and incorporated as The Lamplighters Community Theater on November 1, 1976. It had continuous productions in La Mesa for 65 years. According to Katherine Faulconer (1982), for 2 decades, 1937 to 1957, there was an ebb and flow to the various productions held at the theater with small audiences
and limited financial support. Two more decades passed before the theater began to show some promise of financial success.

Finally, the group took a long, hard look at themselves. The directors began to pay closer attention to the quality of selections. The goals and mission of the theater program were revisited. In addition, they joined the American Community Theatre Association (ACTA) and researched suggestions for organizing and delegating theater responsibilities. ACTA recommended a delineation of roles and responsibilities to and for the community theater, and the members of the Lamplighter began to become more organized and responsible as a team. Finally, they began new marketing techniques. The theater took show previews on the road so that local civic organizations could take a sneak peak of the upcoming shows. This campaign was very successful (Faulconer, 1982). It appeared to be a turning point for the organization. The city of La Mesa took notice of the theater program, and cooperation began between the two entities. Future planning was set in motion, and the Lamplighters continued as a thriving performing arts program.

Over the past 30 years, 1985-2015, many community theater programs have been established as nonprofit organizations to encourage arts created by Californian artists and to provide educational programs for youth so that the tradition of performing arts continues. However, community theater struggles to sustain itself in California. Common themes among those who have survived are quality performances that are of interest to local audiences, educational programs that encourage youth participation, a process of self-evaluation where theater programs examine their financial situation and
develop a plan for increased revenue, and successful collaboration among the theater members and with outside agencies.

**Community Theaters in Central California**

For the purpose of this research, Central California is defined as the 11 cities in the San Joaquin Region of California with a population of 50,000 or more. They are Fresno, Modesto, Salinas, Visalia, Clovis, Merced, Turlock, Madera, Tulare, Hanford, and Porterville. All of these cities have active community theater programs except Madera. Porterville’s Barn Theater has been in operation from 1948 to 2016, making it the longest continuously operating community theater in Central California.

Fresno, California became the home to the Good Company Players in 1973. It merged with a restaurant and became a dinner theater program that has grown into a major attraction in Fresno, known as the Roger Rocka’s Dinner Theater in 1978. Both the Good Company Players and the Dinner Theater are for-profit businesses whose incomes pay for all expenses. The Roger Rocka’s Junior Company was also established in 1978. It is a separate nonprofit entity that works with the program to train children in the specifics of performing arts, including acting, singing, and dance. Many of the junior company members become adult actors in the company. In 1982, the Good Company Players opened a Second Stage Theater for smaller, more intimate presentations. They have the common goal of promoting positive values and the understanding of humanity. Dan Pessano (personal communication, July 21, 2015), founder of the Good Company Players, attributed the success of the venture to strong work ethics and high expectations that are driven by pride and passion for excellence.
Modesto hosts the Prospect Theater, formed in 1999. It is a nonprofit organization funded solely from grants, donations, and box office receipts. It is referred to as the “Little Theater with the Edge” because of its goal to present innovative theater (Prospect Theater, n.d.). The Modesto Performing Arts Community Theater was established in 1970 by a group of theater supporters who wanted to bring the very best musicals and entertainment to Modesto, under the direction of Paul Tischer, as a nonprofit organization (Modesto Performing Arts, n.d.). The Gallo Center for the Arts was built in 2007 after endowments were set up by the Gallo Family and the Mary Stuart Rogers Foundation, with the aim to promote the arts and help organizations dedicated to the furthering of arts education in the area. They wanted to bring affordable arts to Modesto (Gallo Center, n.d.).

In Salinas, the Western Stage was founded in 1974. It received support from the National Endowment for the Arts. They were interested in promoting new works that exemplify the culture of the Salinas Valley. The Western Stage also established a Youth Company in partnership with nearby Hartnell College and continued to develop means of reaching the community audience base and foster community participation in the program (Western Stage, n.d.).

Visalia established the Visalia Players at the Ice House Theatre in 1957 and mixed serious drama, comedy, and musicals in each season. Their goal is to encourage a variety of audience members in their community to participate by offering a variety of genre performances. They secured nonprofit status, operated with a volunteer staff, and maintained their financial assets through ticket sales and donations from the community (Visalia Players, 2015). The Enchanted Playhouse Theatre Company was founded in
1992 with a mission to create and present family-oriented stage entertainment. They wanted to promote classic children’s fables, fairytales, and novels through theatrical productions. They received nonprofit status and operated with a volunteer staff of residents from all over Tulare County (Enchanted Playhouse, n.d.).

Playhouse Merced opened in 1994 as the Center for the Performing Arts in Merced. It presents as many as 12 shows or special events each year. Their focus is to produce quality performances to audiences from all over the Central Valley with both professional and amateur actors. It began an outreach program for the schools and hosted summer camps for the youth of Merced. Financially stable, they report a budget that adequately supports the program thanks to its emphasis on cultural tourism. They consider cultural tourism to be an essential component of their success (Playhouse Merced, n.d.)

The Encore Theater in Tulare, California began in 1979. It has expanded over the years due to generous patrons; however, the theater’s financial statements indicate that the theater’s expenses are almost as large as its income, with a net profit of $7,000 per year based on a 2013 financial report. It established an active youth program entitled Encore Kids, which is a training and performing opportunity for the children of Tulare. Their venue was created as an intimate setting, holding only 100 guests; however, the Cabaret style of service is popular among its patrons (Encore Theater, n.d.).

Community theater in the Central Valley of California, historically, has a strong presence as evidenced by the many nonprofit and for-profit organizations that have been established in this geographical area. Each program has maintained a balance between achieving the desired community impact and maintaining strategies for financial stability.
The balance of impact and financial matters in nonprofit organizations leads to sustainability (J. Bell, Masoka, & Zimmerman, 2010). Additionally, Central Valley community theater depends upon volunteers who are passionate about providing live entertainment to local areas. Dedicated and well-trained volunteers contribute to sustainability in the nonprofit sector (Drucker, 1990).

**The Barn Theater, Porterville, California**

The Barn Theater in Porterville, which opened its doors in 1948, has sustained its program for 68 years. Why is it the longest running community theater program in rural Central California? The Barn Theater, like most other community theaters in California, is a nonprofit organization that struggles with sustainability issues such as leadership, organizational culture, and building a sense of community. Unlike the other theaters, however, the Barn Theater has continued to meet the challenges of sustainability over a longer period of time.

**Founding of the Barn Theater.** The Barn Theater in Porterville was established by Peter Tewksbury in 1948. Merryman (1984) reported,

> Tewksbury’s dream was to establish a little theatre based upon the New England summer theatres; a place where professionals and amateurs worked together to produce quality theatre. He had hopes of forming a nucleus of professional and semiprofessional theater people around which local talent could work. (p. 3)

After a successful first summer season, Tewksbury and his leadership team saw no reason why the Barn could not become a permanent theater. According to Tewksbury (1984), “Before embarking on this more permanent course, I decided that it would be smart if I studied up on what other permanent semi-professional theatres were doing and how they
were organized” (p. 17). He set about visiting community theaters all over the country. He and his family traveled over 10,000 miles and visited 30 community, regional, and little theaters (Rodgers, 1948). It was during this trip that Tewksbury began networking with successful actors such as Ann B. Davis and Richard Deacon. After returning to Porterville, the Barn Theater applied for nonprofit status and set up an official board of directors, established a location for productions, and wrote bylaws for the operation of the program. Based on information gathered from his tour, Tewksbury recommended that season tickets be sold. With the purchase of a season ticket, the holder of the ticket was entitled to become a voting member of the Barn Theater.

Work committees and accountability structures were established as a means of handling the many jobs required by each play. Committee chair people were elected to oversee the work teams and to ensure responsibility. Work distribution was divided into the following categories: casting, box office, play reading, membership, budget, entertainment, properties, publicity, set painting, construction and maintenance, and improvements (“The Barn Theater Said Hello,” 1953).

**Expansion of the Barn Theater.** During the winter season of 1948, the Barn Theater became a traveling company, performing in surrounding valley towns including Taft, Shafter, Hanford, Delano, Exeter, Visalia, Tulare, and Fresno. This traveling company spread the reputation of the Barn Theater to a much larger casting base and audience (Merryman, 1984). To further extend the fame of the theater, it worked with KTIP radio station and produced a series of programs entitled *Barn Theater on the Air.* Later, a subsequent radio show, *Curtain Time,* was formatted to include discussions of future activities, interviews with the actors, and previews of upcoming plays (Hunt, 1949,
Use of radio as a medium to advertise upcoming performances was an innovative approach leading to sustainability and is still used as a marketing tool today.

The Barn Theater, within a short 2-year period, had developed into an organized, efficient theater recognized by professionals. According to Merryman (1984), “It had experimented with new plays, radio show, touring and semiprofessional actors. The ideas Tewksbury had brought back with him from his tour of American theatres would provide the Barn Theatre with a solid base of operation” with structures to ensure sustainability (p. 108).

**Diversification of the Barn Theater.** Within a few years, the Barn Theater organization developed. Actors such as Ann B. Davis (Alice on *The Brady Bunch*) and Richard Deacon (Mel Cooley on the *Dick Van Dyke Show*) performed at the Barn Theater alongside local actors. The Barn organized many community events that incorporated other performing arts groups such as the Porterville Community Chorus and the Porterville Community Fair Board (*Farm Tribune*, 1962). Other efforts at diversification included setting up a partnership with the local pool, whereby season ticket holders could swim at the pool all summer with no charge, and establishing a Children’s School of Drama (Hunt, 1950). Drama classes were also offered to young adults through Porterville High School. An annual celebration program at the end of every season, the Hossars, was also implemented and continues to exist to this day. By 1952, the Barn Theater Touring Company had gained statewide recognition for outstanding productions and established itself as the only full-time professional touring company in California (Hunt, 1953).
The board of directors, under Tewksbury’s direction, embarked upon a new adventure. They established a building fund and began plans to raise a new, permanent Barn Theater. Groundbreaking for the new building began in 1953, and the first production in the new building opened a few months later. An article in the *Porterville Recorder* reported, “The Barn Theatre Said Hello To Its New and Permanent Home Friday Night With a Presentation of George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion” (1953).

**Years with lack of leadership.** With the initial success and expansion of the Barn Theater program, some of the strong members of the board received opportunities to move up in the performing arts world and left Porterville. There was an insufficient workforce to carry out the daily functions of the theater. The program began to suffer, and financial struggles ensued. Peter Tewksbury was forced to carry the work load and financial burden of the Barn Theater on his shoulders. He ultimately made the decision to leave Porterville. He moved to Hollywood, where he became famous as the director of such television shows as *Father Knows Best* and *My Three Sons*. However, he never abandoned the Barn Theater completely, coming back multiple times to help the ailing theater.

With Tewksbury’s departure, lack of leadership became a significant problem. The Barn Theater struggled for survival from 1954 to 1961. During this time, there were several occasions where the board almost closed the theater. Even though they were discouraged, none of the board members were willing to abandon their mission, and a “Save the Barn” campaign was established. Ann B. Davis, a former resident of Porterville who had acted in its plays and had gone on to become famous as “Schultzy” on the *Bob Cummings Show*, heard of the financial struggles of the theater and came to
the rescue. She brought her fellow actors from Pasadena and produced a benefit show for the Barn which sold out. The Save the Barn campaign was a success, and more productions were planned for the next season. According to Merryman (1984), the Barn Theater appeared to be moving again, and it seemed to be stronger and more self-reliant for having gone through the experience. Some important lessons were learned. The people involved needed to work together toward the common goal of directing and producing quality theater.

**Ongoing cycle of progress to sustain theater.** During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of experienced, high-energy theater directors took over the play selection process, and the lineup of shows each season were appealing to a broad audience base. Performances were sold out, especially for musical productions. A children’s theater program was established, which brought many new families into the Barn Theater fold.

With the emphasis on technology and social media during the early 21st century, the Barn Theater saw another decline in community involvement in the program. Several of the popular directors either passed away or moved, and the popularity of shows around the community faltered. The children’s theater program ceased due to lack of leadership. The building itself needed repairs, and the board of directors chose to limit the 2001-2002 season to one performance so the building could be brought up to fire safety standards. This was a difficult decision but proved to move the Barn Theater into a more positive direction. More care was taken to ensure both the quality of the theater itself and of productions. The board of directors voted to diversify the income base of the theater by adding a food service program. Renting out the space for banquets and meetings brought in much needed income. Another boost to the Barn Theater was the donation of
$140,000 by an ailing supporter of the Barn Theater. This money went into the savings account and provided more financial security for the program. In addition, another donation of $10,000 was used to replace the roof. The Eagle Scouts built an outside stage, and more summer shows were added to the performance season.

In 2014, the board of directors voted to apply for status as a historic landmark. Several new volunteers emerged as leaders in this quest, and a renewed energy pervaded board meetings. While in the process of preparing the application for historic status, the accomplishments of the Barn Theater, over its 68 years in existence, were revisited and documented on the application. It was clear that the theater helped launch hundreds of people into the performing arts world and that the collaboration between the Barn Theater and the community was iconic and strong.

In 2015, a children’s program was reinstituted and named the Barn Theater Junior Company. The children perform before each opening night throughout the season and produced a junior version of Peter Pan in March of 2016. The Barn board hopes that this will bring more families into the Barn Theater fold and will produce a new generation of Barn Theater supporters.

As the years have passed at the Barn Theater, it seems that the pattern of the theater experiencing prosperity, then distress, followed by the emergence of a new wave of energy and dedication for sustainability has been repeated many times. Merryman (1984) stated, “But the key to the Barn’s survival has always been people. As long as there have been a few individuals who were willing to put forth an effort to direct a play, the Barn has survived” (p. 110).
Related Theoretical Frameworks

Connecting Theater Arts to Theoretical Frameworks

Sustainability of nonprofit community theaters is important in order to ensure that interest in the performing arts continues. Lack of leadership, failing community support, financial distress, and poor service are some of the key threats to nonprofit sustainability (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014). The founder of the Barn Theater, Peter Tewksbury, was zealous about establishing a sustainable community theater in Porterville, California. He wanted the program to continue over time and clearly addressed sustainability concerns during the research and planning phase of the project. A series of systems were established that were designed to foster sustainability. First, bylaws were written in order to ensure that procedures were in place to regularly review the effectiveness of the program’s daily operations. Second, a system of checks and balances were designed to maintain financial accountability. Third, a director’s guide was written to establish a mentoring program where new directors were supervised by experienced directors. Finally, emphasis on quality control was also evident in the initial planning of the Barn Theater when a play-reading committee was established to choose scripts with social or political value. Tewksbury believed these systems would lead to sustainability.

The historical and current practices of the Barn Theater relate to four theoretical contexts. Sustainability theory is the umbrella theory that provides the overall picture of the Barn Theater’s journey. Sustainability theory explains how organizations meet the needs of the current state of the organization and also provide systems that allow the program to thrive in the future (Helm, 2008; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Supporting sustainability theory are leadership theory,
organizational culture, and community theory. These supporting theories are included as a means to more deeply understand operational factors of sustainability. Leadership theory identifies characteristics of leaders who are able to inspire organizations to move toward common goals. Organizational culture addresses common practices, values, and beliefs that control how the team members behave with one another. Community theory describes the sense of belonging that individuals enjoy through their involvement with an organization. Applying these theories to the Barn Theater will help describe and explain factors that have contributed to its sustainability.

**Sustainability Theories of Nonprofit Organizations**

**Introduction.** Sustaining nonprofit organizations is important in the 21st century because of the valuable social contributions they make. Nonprofit organizations serve the community and provide services, based upon their mission, which adds to the quality of life within their communities. There is much research activity focusing on sustainability because of the increasing challenges nonprofits face in maintaining their mission and remaining financially solvent. Nonprofits obtain the majority of their income from donations and gauge effectiveness of their actions in their success at realizing their social mission, which is their essential goal (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014). Therefore, the goal and quest for sustainability of nonprofit organizations is twofold. First they must operate in a financially responsible manner, and second they must accomplish their mission.

**Definition of sustainability.** There are many definitions of sustainability, but the most widely accepted definition is from the Brundtland Commission report. It stated that sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of
future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 16). Helm (2008) indicated that the definition of sustainability is “to support, hold, or bear up from below; bear the weight of, as a structure” (p. 11). She also referred to other definitions of sustainability that alluded to its connection with the idea of endurance and inferred that the concept is not linear but it is cyclical. Harris (2003) importantly added that there are three aspects of sustainability, including economic, environmental, and social aspects.

**Economic sustainability.** When an organization maintains economic sustainability, it creates goods and services continually without debt and without harm to the environment. It maximizes the welfare of the organization over time. In order to accomplish this, an organization’s budget or allocation of funds must show a continuous profit over several time periods. El Serafy (1997) indicated that budgets must be documented carefully and that accountability is stressed when reviewing economic matters. Conservation of capital, or raising and managing income, is suggested by Costanza and Daly (1992). Conservation and management also include environmental factors such as renewable resources and nonrenewable resources.

**Environmental sustainability.** Environmental sustainability leads to preservation of an organization’s established resource base without misusing resources that support its operation. According to Sutton (2004), environmental sustainability includes actions devised to limit the use of physical resources and at the same time prevent the use of toxic elements that could damage those resources. Recycling is one way to keep the environment viable. Environmental concerns overlap with economic and social aspects
of sustainability. Being conscious of environmental concerns and utilization of recycling programs supports economic sustainability as well.

**Social sustainability.** Social sustainability or a human development approach to interaction within an organization emphasizes the basic needs of the human beings in an organization (Harris, 2003). Sutton (2004) suggested that preservation of the quality of human life, the functioning of society, and the livability and beauty of the environment are all important aspects of social sustainability. Fullan (2008) recommended pursuing eight elements of social sustainability. He suggested that it is important to provide a service with a moral purpose; create a community with positive beliefs; network with other people and organizations; emphasize accountability; inspire deep learning, keeping a balance between short- and long-term goals; manage energy instead of time; and maintain good leadership. In addition, social sustainability promotes fairness in opportunity across gender, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups. A balance among these three aspects of sustainability is essential for the overall health of a system (Harris, 2003).

There has been more research conducted on environmental and economic sustainability, while sustainability of social systems has been limited (Hutchins, Gierke, & Sutherland, 2009). Figure 1 represents the overlapping factors of economic, environmental, and social issues that, when in balance, lead to a sustainable system.

**Nonprofit sustainability.** The model for nonprofit sustainability is somewhat different than the model for general organizational sustainability. A nonprofit is concerned with both profitability and social mission (J. Bell et al., 2010). It is the nonprofit’s mission to transform individuals and society and to serve the community (Drucker, 1990).
Figure 1. The three pillars of sustainability. Model from *Green Box Systems Project*, by J. Caeiro, M. Pettigrew, J. Simmons, & N. Tzelepi, 2000, Glasgow, Scotland: University of Strathclyde (based on *Our Common Future* [Brundtland Report], by World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

J. Bell et al. (2010) indicated that the two factors go hand in hand: “It is not enough [for nonprofits] to have a high-impact program if there’s no effective strategy for sustaining the organization’s finances, neither is it enough to be financially stable” (p. 3). Figure 2 shows that the strategies of nonprofit organizations toward their goals must be balanced with their financial stability. Social and economic factors of nonprofit organizations overlap, and both are essential for sustainability. Using volunteers in nonprofit organizations is a practice that promotes financial sustainability but also adds to the human value of the programs.

Many nonprofit organizations have been successful over the past 50 years, because essential human values were the basis for participation. Nonprofits depend upon volunteers to carry out their mission. Quality of life, need for personal involvement, desire to serve society, and aspiration to make a difference in the world contributes to volunteerism in the social sector and brings meaningful contributions to America.
Commitment and competence of volunteers lead to sustainability in the nonprofit sector.

Figure 2. Nonprofit sustainability model. Model presented by K. Rhim at the Human Services Coalition Training program, Prince George’s County, Maryland, November 2014, retrieved from http://hsctc.org/index.php?page=capacity-building-templates-and-links

According to the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole New Level Group, there are five additional elements of nonprofit sustainability: having a clear and compelling vision; a passionate and engaged board of directors; a strategic approach to fund development; effective communication and marketing; and motivated, professional staff.

**Clear and compelling vision.** One of the first activities for a nonprofit organization, including community theaters, when striving toward sustainability is the crafting of a mission statement (Drucker, 1990; Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). The mission statement of community theaters focuses on what the organization really tries to do and is written in clear, easy to understand language. The mission statement needs to include the intention of transformation, as audience members are intended to leave the theater having gained a new or different perspective. The mission statement is like a guideline that provides guidance for the life of the program (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). The organization needs to be committed to the mission statement; each member of the team needs to have personal buy-in to the statement so
that when difficult situations emerge, the team will join together as one to protect it (Drucker, 1990). Stern (1999) suggested that the mission statement be revisited periodically during a process of self-examination to ensure that it is still relevant and reflective of the goals of the organization. He also refined the concept of mission by delineating the vision statement, followed by the mission statement and the goals statements.

Peter Tewksbury’s vision to establish a sustainable community theater program in Porterville, California was developed after traveling 10,000 miles across the United States, visiting community theater programs to determine what factors would contribute to a successful program in Porterville. Originally, the Barn Theater opened its curtains in an outdoor barn area where dinner was served and shows were performed. Tewksbury’s vision grew, and the Barn Theater established a traveling company that performed in many locations in Central California. The program captured the hearts of many theater lovers, and the Barn Theater received financial support from many wealthy residents in the area. Quality and innovation were the trademarks of the program. The mission of the Barn Theater evolved as the program grew.

**Passionate and engaged board of directors.** Nonprofit organizations, by law, are required to have a board of directors to make leadership decisions for the benefit of the organization. Selecting members for this group is critical. Some important criteria for selecting a board member include demonstration of shared interests and values, recognition as a community leader, prior experience on a nonprofit board, knowledge of nonprofit fundraising, good communications and interpersonal relationship skills, and the ability to engage in positive conflict resolution. In addition, a board of directors needs to
have a varied membership. Members need to be identified for their specific areas of expertise. They should also be representative of the organization’s demographics. Care needs to be taken to have a variety of ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds on the board (New Level Group, 2006). Selection criteria for board members are not enough to ensure sustainability. Board members need to learn about the organization and develop skills that will promote its sustainability.

In order to create a smooth entry into the organization, orientation and training is needed for the members of the board of directors. Responsibilities need to be clearly stated and agreed upon in writing. The issue of legal liability needs to be understood. A manual that includes descriptions of the current program, a list of board members, budget and funding information, bylaws, and personnel policies must be available to board members. Continued training needs to be available to board members in order to increase the skills needed to fulfill their board responsibilities (New Level Group, 2006).

Of particular importance to the board of directors is the skill needed for decision making and conflict resolution. In order for a board to successfully make decisions and resolve conflicts, it needs a high morale and trust among the members. For this to occur, strong interpersonal relationships must be built. Team-building activities and conflict resolution skills are necessary for leaders to facilitate crucial conversations and decisions (York, n.d.). Drucker (1990) concurred, stating, “It’s in the decision that everything comes together. That is the make or break point of the organization” (p. 121). Drucker also recommended that board members weigh the opportunities that may result from a particular decision with the risks involved. Board members need time to research and reflect upon important decisions before they are finalized. If all members are initially in
agreement with a decision, it may be necessary to postpone the vote to ensure that opposing thoughts be expressed as well. Resulting conflict resolution can be approached from different perspectives (Drucker, 1990). It is important for board members to be trained in problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. In addition, experience in fund development is important for board members. Training programs can include these skills as well.

**Strategic approach to fund development.** Fundraising ability is another critical skill needed in nonprofits, along with implementing strategic planning in order to meet financial goals. Strategic planners facilitate the process of converting the plan into action (Drucker, 1990; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Any such plan needs to encompass assessable goals, details of how those objectives will be accomplished, explanations of the duties involved, the anticipated dollar amount for each task, and timelines for completing the responsibilities and goals. Further, a thorough strategic plan should include competitive pricing for all goods and services. It is important to build positive and appreciative relationships with investors, as financial sustainability is important. R. Nelson and Schwimmer (2010) indicated that when addressing potential donors, passion, professionalism, and excitement about one’s project should be evident.

**Effective communication and marketing.** Marketing must be incorporated into the overall plan of the nonprofit in order to make it successful (Drucker, 1990). Many nonprofit organizations develop flexible marketing plans as they strive to meet the needs of the consumers or customers who are spending money on that nonprofit. Therefore, a good marketing plan needs to begin with an external scan or review of the potential theater goers. Nonprofits need to know their customers and connect with their values.
They need to answer the question of how can they be reached (Drucker, 1990). In the beginning stages, a nonprofit relies on free advertisement through public service announcements on TV and radio, free ads in free newspapers, and grass roots poster hanging in the community. These are basic strategies for beginning marketing (Mulcahy, 2011). As a nonprofit grows, more assets can be invested in marketing. Nancy Schwartz (2015) recommended identifying those who are most likely to become audience members and then get personal with them, understanding their interests and preferences. Effective marketing representatives connect with as many potential audience members as possible via cell phone, text, or visit. In addition, they should develop an attractive, user-friendly website and utilize social media to impact their target audience. Websites help provide information about community theaters nationwide.

With community theaters in virtually every region in the United States, theories have emerged that have explored their marketing and growth. One such challenge is sustainability during times of economic downturns (United Nations, 2013). Between 1990 and 2005, nonprofit theater revenues fluctuated with business cycles in the U.S. economy. Both ticket sales and contributions fell sharply. Developing a strategic plan for marketing and fundraising during difficult economic times is especially important in order to ensure sustainability. In his 2005 report entitled *Building Sustainability for Nonprofit Organizations*, Jim Collins agreed: “While there is no one formula for building a high-performance social sector organization, there are elements and processes that effective nonprofit organizations have in common” (p. 4). Collins concurred that nonprofits need a clear and compelling vision, a passionate and engaged board of directors, a strategic approach to fund development, effective communications and
marketing, and a motivated professional staff in order to continue to operate, especially during times of economic turndown.

**Motivated, professional staff.** In order to maintain a motivated, professional staff, staff development must be conducted in a professional manner. There must be clearly defined roles and expectations among staff members, and the skills and experiences of the staff must match the needs of the organization. A respectful and supportive work environment must be maintained where trust among members is evident and regular feedback is given for support and improvement. Finally, the staff must have the needed resources available in order for projects to be successful (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010).

Other researchers in the area of nonprofit sustainability identified additional factors that affect sustainability. They are as follows.

**Leadership.** The New Level Group, directed by John Heyman, and TCC Group, directed by Richard Mittenthal, published work on nonprofit sustainability through their respective websites. They indicated that leadership is a critical component of nonprofit sustainability. Additionally, York (n.d.) from the TCC group stated, “Sustainable organizations exhibit leadership that is visionary, strategic, inclusive, decisive, inspirational, motivational, and accountable” (p. 3). A leader must be a strategist, thinking ahead to predict problems that might occur and then be able to work with the leadership team to address problematic issues before they happen. Drucker (1990) called this innovation a new way to look at a problem. Strategists need to work with necessary stakeholders so that the big picture of the situation can be clearly perceived. Some innovative measures can be achieved through securing grants. Effective leaders are
aware of grant resources. R. Nelson and Schwimmer (2010) indicated that although grants are available to nonprofit organizations, they are not to be relied upon as a sole source of income. Grants are great for start-up plans or for special projects as determined by the leadership team.

Grants. In sustainable organizations most money is secured from granting foundations, corporations, or government agencies. A realistic budget is necessary for this process. It should include a breakdown of all the costs that may be incurred annually. The organization should use networking skills to contact potential donors in order to achieve their financial goals (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Concurrently, grant writing is an important and necessary skill for nonprofit organizations. There are various sources of grant money, including foundations, public and private institutions, and the government. Mulcahy (2011) recommended that small theaters apply to the National Endowment for the Arts for assistance during times of economic prosperity. However, during harder times, they are not apt to fund small theater companies.

Depending heavily upon outside sources of funding, such as grants, is not prudent. Additionally, ignoring branding considerations is not a wise idea. An organizational brand tells the story of the organization and why it matters. It elicits interest in the cause of the nonprofit and touches the humanistic goals of the nonprofit organization. It helps make a connection between the nonprofit and the public. Another frequent concern is that nonprofits do not adequately communicate information about their programs and financial status with contributors. In low-income areas, there are limited possibilities for donations to be made (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014). Grant money should be used wisely and carefully, taking care to communicate effectively with
agencies that supply funds to the organization. It is also important for the nonprofit to create an identifiable brand that the public will support. These recommendations assist with the sustainability of nonprofit organizations.

**Specialized training.** Theater management programs and business degrees are two recommended areas for specialized training within the board of directors (R. Nelson and Schwimmer, 2010). Nelson delineated several roles within a theater company that would benefit from specialized training. These roles include the production manager, who is responsible for organizational and fiscal matters; the director of arts in education, who is responsible for creating and maintaining an artistic relationship among local schools and agencies that work with children; and the literary manager, who looks at play selections and is trained to merge audience needs and desires with the programs presented at the theater. Additionally, these directors need to have frequent and effective lines of communication among themselves in order for this essential team to be effective (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Essential to management and training is planned succession, or passing of a set of responsibilities from the old director to a new director, in order to ensure sustainability.

**Succession or mentoring practices.** Matan (2010) described succession planning as the continuing process of analytically discovering, evaluating, and mentoring talented employees to assume leadership positions for continuity in all key positions. Smaller nonprofit organizations have a tendency to ignore the process of succession planning, but it should be included in the organization’s strategic plan and become a blueprint for the future (Matan, 2010). Succession should resemble a seamless flow of events that occurs over time by creating a culture of evaluation and planning for the transfer of knowledge.
(Fisher, 2010; Liteman, 2003). It is important that leaders-in-training have a good understanding of the systems that are in place within the organization and that training should simplify the process for new leaders. For smooth transitions, it is important that staff work closely together to train new leaders in the true spirit of collaboration (Matan, 2010).

Production managers, directors of arts education, and literary managers are essential for the sustainability of nonprofit community theater programs; and therefore, it is important to plan for smooth transitions when new directors assume the roles and responsibilities within the organization. Being a director requires collaborative skills in order to effectively work with the other staff, including the music director, choreographer, stage manager, props consultant, and marketing director. Clearly defined director’s job descriptions and training are needed in order to maintain excellence in theatrical productions (AACT, n.d.; Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). A systematic approach to transitioning from an outgoing director to a new director will assist with the succession and sustainability of community theater.

Succession and mentoring processes for new directors at the Barn Theater was developed under Tewksbury’s leadership and continues as part of the bylaws of the organization. If a potential director wants to be the director of a production, he or she must have experience as an actor, assistant director, and set or lighting assistant at the Barn Theater. In addition, an experienced director is assigned to codirect and guide the new director through the process before he or she is given the green light to direct alone. This process, which was included in the original strategic plan of the Barn Theater, is
designed to help maintain the values of the organization, especially that of high-quality productions.

**Strategic planning, process monitoring, and accountability.** Strategic planning is a process whereby organizations set priorities, focus energy, strengthen operations, build a sense of community, and monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the organization’s activities (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2015). W. J. Cook (1990) stated, “Strategic planning is the means by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose” (p. 74) and clarified that strategic organizations are accountable for delivering the vision, values, and leadership that regulates, directs, and supports everyone who is a part of the organization. Generally, there is a defined process for strategic planning that includes process monitoring and accountability. First, an assessment takes place that describes the current condition of the organization, both internally and externally. Second, a high-level strategy is developed and the plan for implementation is documented. Third, the plan is launched and executed. Fourth, the results are monitored, documented, and evaluated for accountability and success. Process monitoring involves a predictable and methodical gathering of information of the systematic procedures implemented and is compared with the expected outcomes in the strategic plan. Information is accumulated about events, behaviors, accomplishments, and problems that occurred. Evidence is also gathered about the products or services consumed by the public or about external circumstances that may have affected the organization or project. According to McNERNEY, Perri, and Reid (2013), “Highly successful nonprofits credit strategic planning and management to their overall success” (p. 1).
Evaluation is an integral part of process monitoring. When a strategic plan is evaluated, judgments are made about the importance of any element of the products or services or about the organization as a whole. The Colorado Nonprofit Association P & P Evaluation Toolkit (2011) stated, “Nonprofits offer valuable programs and services to citizens, and have a responsibility to assess the impact of their programs and to act upon the information they gather” (p. 30). Evaluation is part of a cycle to ensure that the best possible programs and services are employed toward their vision and mission. Charities Evaluation Services (CES) described evaluation as an in-depth study, taking place at specific points in the life of an organization, project, or program. Evaluation is only successful when quality control guidelines have been established.

Figure 3 depicts the process of strategic planning. Setting goals and desired outcomes is the first step in the process. Strategies need to be determined that will help realize the goals and desired outcomes. A method for evaluation needs to be developed with results being determined through the evaluation process. New goals can be set when results are determined, and the process will repeat itself.

**Quality control guidelines.** The quality of theatrical performances at the community theater level is an important factor to consider when examining the issue of sustainability. Over the years, the quality of theatrical productions at the Barn Theater has fluctuated, depending on the respective directors’ skill, training, and ability to work with others (N. Edwards, personal communication, July 11, 2015). First, a quality theatrical production must have audience appeal, because customer satisfaction is a primary objective of nonprofit organizations (Grobman, 1999; Walters, 2007). Second, audiences must be able to connect with performances on an emotional or intellectual
The audience must also be able to appreciate the content of a show and the language used to tell the story, while being entertained by the nuances of the performance (Walters, 2007). Third, directors must be skilled in fusing the script, set, and acting within the production. Walters (2007) suggested that if these foundations (script, acting, and set) are rigorous and well balanced within the production, the audience will view the experience as believable. Finally, mentoring, ongoing training, and constructive feedback must be available to directors in a systematic manner in order to sustain quality throughout the process of implementing a theatrical production. Schwartz (2015) stated, If you’re not actively working to get better at what you do, there’s a good chance you’re getting worse, no matter what the quality of your initial training and in some cases, diminished performance is simply the result of a failure to keep up the advances in a given field. (p. 19)
Directing a theatrical production is a complex process (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Working with stage managers, costume designers, set designers and builders, lighting technicians, and publicity agents demands great communication and organizational skills of directors. Preserving the quality of a show depends upon the effectiveness of each person involved, but the role of the director is the key to quality. It is the director’s job to form the leadership team for the production and provide the vision and resources necessary for a positive outcome. Selecting passionate, talented, trained, and responsible individuals sets the stage for a quality performance. The director is also responsible for holding auditions and casting the show. Choosing the right actor for each part is also very important to the quality of the performance. Rehearsals need to be organized in an effective manner, with emphasis being placed both on bringing out the best from each person involved and teamwork. Finally, the performances themselves need to be evaluated for quality. Many stakeholders should be involved in the process. Mulcahy (2011) validated this process when she stated, “Preparation, production, and rehearsal is certainly a key to whether your show develops a decent reputation in the community” (p. 71).

Not only is the artistic aspect of a show important, but also the financial viewpoint is vital for sustainability. Each production needs to be assessed to determine its financial success. Dan Abbate, Manager of the Gorilla Tango Theatre in Chicago, focuses on a for-profit business model that is based on profitability and sustainability. His leadership team focuses on “product, volume, quantity, diversity, and maximizing capacity” (Mulcahy, 2011, p. 2). Abbate (2013) also suggested that the total cost of each production needs to be calculated correctly and a cost per show needs to be determined.
After each performance, the business manager should compare the cost per show with the revenue collected at the box office to determine how much of a profit was earned on that show. Over time, a baseline to determine financial sustainability of the theater will be established.

Overall, a balance between artistic and financial quality is needed in order to sustain a community theater program (Mulcahy, 2011). The Barn Theater has struggled with both criteria at one point or another; however, the foresight of the board of directors and the passion and commitment of the volunteers who work with the program have found ways to overcome the struggles and pull the quality of the theater’s operations back on track. Gil Cates (2015), founder of the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, supported this point of view in his statement, “The main ingredient of any theater company, more than money, more than knowledge, more than connections, is passion. You need to have that extraordinary desire to help you face down tremendous obstacles” (p. 7).

**Organizational Leadership Theory**

The leadership of the Barn Theater is an area that needs to be explained based on leadership theories that evolved during the 20th and 21st centuries. Organizational leadership models have been the focus of many research studies. First, the great man theory, posed in the mid-1850s, asserted that the qualities of a great leader are inherent, not learned, and that they will appear as the situation presents itself (Carlyle, 1841). It was followed by the trait theory in the 1860s, which suggested that leaders are born with the intelligence, sense of responsibility, and creativity that will lead them to excel at leadership (Zacarro, 2007). During the first half of the 20th century, trait theory began to separate leadership and nonleadership qualities. Bird’s (1940) summary of leaders’ traits
included precision in work, familiarity with human nature, and principled habits.

Stogdill’s (1948) review of trait theory cited firmness in judgment, speech eloquence, interpersonal skills, and managerial abilities as stable leadership qualities.

During the mid-20th century, behavioral theories of leadership offered an alternative perspective on leadership. Researchers began to research leadership as a set of behaviors. They assessed what effective leaders did, developed a classification of actions, and identified broad patterns that indicated different leadership styles. They ascertained that a leader must possess self-confidence and a strong ego. Additionally, Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) identified three types of participatory leaders based on their behaviors: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Autocratic leadership skills are required when leaders need to make quick, decisive decisions in order to address crucial issues. Democratic leaders include input from others before making decisions. Laissez-faire leaders allow others to share the leadership, providing little direction. This works best with highly motivated and capable members of the leadership team.

The contingency theory of leadership developed in the 1960s. This theory held that leadership was situational. Fiedler’s (1964) contingency theory asserted that important leadership characteristics included open and respectful relationships, goal orientation, and utilization of power or authority in the organization. The most effective leaders know their own style and are selected for positions depending on their leadership style. In certain situations, leaders who are strong in building trust and achieving positive relationships with others are needed. In other situations it is more effective for task-oriented leaders to focus on achieving the goals set within the organization. The
weakness of the contingency model is that flexibility within styles is not addressed (Fiedler, 1964).

Transactional leadership theory was developed in the 1970s. In this theory of leadership, employee motivation was an important factor. Employees were rewarded and punished based upon their organizational behavior. Rewards and punishments were developed to shape the organization, based upon individual interests rather than overall organizational interests. Leaders were responsive rather than proactive, working within the organizational culture rather than attempting to improve cultural expectations. The theory was based on the need for a mutually beneficial relationship between the leader and follower (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The weakness of this theory is that the goals were limited and short termed (Bass, 1985; Weber, 1967).

In the early 1980s, the next leadership theory featured prominently in the literature was called the new leadership approach. This leadership theory incorporated contingency approach and enhanced it with the leadership qualities of vision and charisma. It stressed the idea of a leader as an imaginative and creative force, able to envision future accomplishments (James, 2011). This approach bridged the gap between early theories of leadership and transformational leadership.

Bass and Bass (2008) created the following continuum of leadership definitions that emerged during the 20th century. Their definitions summarize the primary understandings about leadership as the respective theories were molded and modified:

- **1920s**—Leaders imposed their ideas on followers by requiring submissiveness, loyalty, and support.
- **1930s**—Leadership was believed to be a way used to bring together a team so they followed the path controlled by the leader.

- **1940s**—Leadership was thought to be the ability of one person to inspire and motivate, despite the effects of their power or position.

- **1950s**—Leadership was determined by how leaders asserted themselves in group interaction and the power given them by group members.

- **1960s**—Leadership was described as the leader’s capability to persuade others to move in a shared direction.

- **1970s**—The leader’s effect on others was shown as malleable and moved from one member to another.

- **1980s**—A leader was believed to have the ability to excite others so they were able to travel a fixated path.

- **1990s**—New leadership was outlined by the goal of both the leader and followers’ shared objective in progressing the group toward desired changes.

- Leadership is no longer the exclusive domain of the top boss.

- Leadership accelerates brilliance in others.

- Leadership is different than management.

- Leaders need to use a variety of qualities, skills, and capabilities in their positions.

- Leadership is the mastery of foreseeing, introducing, and realizing changes.

As evidenced in Bass’s timeline, during the 1980s and 1990s, a shift in leadership emerged. Leaders began to broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, by inspiring a shared vision and mission for the group. Team members began to look beyond their own personal agendas and acted for the good of the group (Bass & Bass,
This was the onset of transformational leadership. Transformation leadership asserts that leaders are charismatic and able to build positive, trusting relationships with stakeholders, which results in the organization accomplishing mindset changes that benefit the organization as a whole (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Warrilow (2012) identified four important traits of transformational leaders: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal and individual attention.

There are a number of fundamental elements included in transformational leadership theory. Larick and White (2012) identified 10 fundamentals that offer an all-inclusive perspective of this theory. Based on the fundamental elements, precise skills can be ascertained and supported:

**Character and integrity.** Building trust and respect within an organization is a specialty of the transformational leader. Behaving as role models, these leaders inspire confidence and support for their vision and values from all organizational members (Sayeed & Shanker, 2009). Further, Sayeed and Shanker (2009) asserted that transformational leaders are seen as trustworthy and available for authentic discussion. Stewart (2006) concurred when he indicated that organizational members identify with the character and integrity of transformational leaders and strive to model themselves after them. Finally, demonstrating high ethical values in daily decision making is very important for transformational leaders (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

**Collaboration.** Participation from all appropriate levels in decision making is fostered by the transformational leader in order to allow for open inquiry and improvement across the organization, and team members share leadership roles (Fullan, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leaders create consistent operations
within the organization that provides for staff collaboration and staff development so that members can develop skills that will ultimately be productive for both the member and the organization (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

**Communication.** Transformational leaders provide a path for their organizations by communicating mutual goals and the vision of the organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). They also foster open, nonpunitive conversation with followers. Open discourse is valued among all levels of employees. This results in support from all stakeholders (Sayeed & Shanker, 2009). The goal of the transformational leader is to instill passion and commitment to mutually agreed-upon changes in the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

**Creativity and sustained innovation.** Transformational leaders emphasize expanding the innovative power of their organizations by linking their members to a mutual vision and decreasing their attention on control-and-command leadership (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). They set high expectations and encourage their members to think outside the box, experiment, and create new concepts that will enhance the productivity and success of the organization (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010).

**Diversity.** Respect for cultural differences among members of the organization is fostered, with an emphasis on ethical responsibility (Larick & White, 2012; Stewart, 2006). Awareness of cultural differences and aspirations take precedence in decision making that may affect the population that they are serving (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Care is taken to ensure that all cultures have the opportunity to serve in leadership roles.

**Personal and interpersonal skills.** Through self-awareness, the transformational leader understands how emotions can be effectively used to inspire and build enthusiasm
for the momentum of the organization (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Further, they use emotional intelligence to motivate change within the organization (Moolenaar et al., 2010). They are active mentors with their employees but also continue to learn through their experience, demonstrating flexibility and willingness to make changes based upon their own personal learning (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

**Political intelligence.** Transformational leaders possess political intelligence, or the ability to understand and maneuver the complexities of an organizational system. They understand and can leverage leadership throughout the organization and maintain their impact upon the people and structures within the organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

**Problem solving and decision making.** Shared decision making is emphasized by the transformational leader (Moolenaar et al., 2010; Stewart, 2006). Decision-making practices are organized in such a manner that all are able to participate in the process. The transformational leader is continually seeking new and better ways to solve day-to-day and long-term problems within a collaborative process with their followers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

**Team building.** Transformational leaders place a great deal of importance on team membership in the organization (Sayeed & Shanker, 2009). Teams go through a process of joining together and committing to organizational goals with the encouragement of the transformational leader. Once a team has become productive, the transformational leader empowers members to make agreed-upon changes. This builds a sense of ownership in the organization (Retna & Ng, 2009). Social networks support the vision and goals of the organization and are a valuable tool to maintaining the team.
They do this by generating a tradition of collaboration, focusing on the needs of individuals, and offering an intellectually inspiring work environment (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

**Visionary leadership.** Goleman (2000) indicated that transformational leaders are skilled at creating an organizational vision by paying attention to the ideas and opinions of those whom they lead and motivating them toward accomplishing their dream. This process produces a strong sense of shared ownership of the vision. In order to accomplish this, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) added that transformational leaders construct a unified organizational culture that revolves around shared norms, values, and beliefs, which in turn support and are uniform with the organization’s visualization. They are experts at helping followers find the common purpose and setting high expectations and tackling challenging goals (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Based upon the research included in a previous section on sustainability theory and this research on transformational leadership, there appear to be some commonalities. Both indicate the need for visionary leadership with the ability to communicate effectively across groups of people. In addition, passion and inspiration seem to be common themes connecting the two theories. Finally, strategic and structured planning appears in both frameworks.

**Organizational Culture**

In addition to leadership theory, understanding organizational culture theory provided an additional perspective to explain the Barn Theater’s sustainability. Louis (1980) explained that organizational culture is a list of acceptable and functional behaviors for making decisions, taking action, and using language and symbols for
sharing understandings within a group. Similarly, Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Peters and Waterman (1982) agreed that organizational culture is a complicated group of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that create the way in which an organization manages its day-to-day operations. Comparably, Schein (2004) explained organizational culture in depth. He defined it as follows:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valued and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

Numerous definitions of organizational culture have been identified; however, Alvesson (2002); Ehrhart, Schneider, and Macey (2014); Martin (2002); Ott (1989); Schein (1991, 2010); and Trice and Beyer (1993) all identified the most frequently acknowledged qualities and functions of organizational culture:

- Organizational culture is shared.
- Organizational culture is stable.
- Organizational culture has depth.
- Organizational culture is symbolic, expressive, and subjective.
- Organizational culture is grounding in history and tradition.
- Organizational culture is transmitted to new members.
- Organizational culture provides order and rules to organizational existence.
- Organizational culture has breadth.
- Organizational culture is a source of collective identity and commitment.
- Organizational culture is unique.
Based on this overview of organizational cultural definitions, the impact of an organization’s culture has widespread effects on its functioning, because culture not only describes who its pertinent staff, patrons, providers, and opponents are, but it also defines how the organization will relate with these crucial actors (Louis, 1980). The underlying rules of communication and decision making that define an organization are part of its culture and affect the actors within the group. Schein, (2004, 2010) recognized three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions. Artifacts are features that are observable by outside viewers such as how people dress, the organization of the workspace, stories told about experiences within the organization, language used, and celebrations that took place. After observing the artifacts of an organization, it is important to study the significance and the story that exists beneath the visible artifact. Looking at artifacts in isolation can be misleading, and care should be taken to determine the value and meaning of the examined artifacts.

Additionally, the espoused values of the organization are the publically identified values of the organization that may be located in the mission statements and bylaws of the organization. The stated values may or may not be practiced by the members of the organization. Katz and Kahn (1966) said,

The stated purposes of an organization as given by its by-laws or in the reports of its leaders can be misleading. Such statements of objectives may idealize, rationalize, distort, omit, or even conceal some essential aspects of the functioning of the organization. (p. 15)

This idealized view of an organization’s purpose statement sets the tone for the functioning of its members. However, it is important to be certain that the purpose
statement is implemented and effectively reflects the day-to-day decision making and behavioral expectations of the organization.

The third and perhaps most significant of Schein’s (2010) presentation is the concept of underlying assumptions, which he refers to as the deepest level of the culture. This dictates how the members go about their work lives on a daily basis. Usually, these structures are not followed on a conscious basis and include decisions and behaviors that have become automatic. Schein (2010) referred to this as the real culture of the organization. He stated, “The essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions” (p. 32). The underlying systems and practices that dictate the daily functioning of the organization are the heart of its culture.

Organizational founders affect organizational culture when they convey their assumptions, values, and beliefs about how the organization should run while in the process of launching their new ventures. According to Ehrhart et al. (2014),

They communicate those assumptions and beliefs, through primary embedding mechanisms, which include what they pay attention to and measure, how they react to crises, how they allocate resources, the behaviors they role model, what behaviors they reward, and the criteria they use for selection and promotion. (p. 130)

Over time, these patterns are reinforced by decisions made within the organizational structure and ultimately become the norms for behavior within the group.

Another factor that may affect organizational culture is the learning process that takes place within the organization (Schein, 2010). When the organization is successful, employees learn that success is rewarded, and this supports and strengthens the current
set of cultural norms. For example, positive feelings that are associated with success reinforce the members’ confidence that they are moving in the right direction, both internally and externally. This propels them to continue operating in the same manner. Similarly, recruiting efforts, hiring, and promotion practices can affect the organizational culture. Promotion from within strengthens cultural norms, whereas hiring from the outside may cause employees to question the cultural norms. Employees learn to maneuver the cultural structure based upon decisions that are made within the organization. Ehrhart et al. (2014) stated, “So many factors influencing culture through such various mechanisms, there is no doubt that the development of culture is complex and should be treated as such” (p. 133).

Organizational culture is a balance of product as well as a process of learning (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Schein, 2010). The cultural actions can be seen as a product when organizational members combine knowledge and good sense from those who came before them (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Schein, 2010). As a process, a culture is repeated when members share the internal structures with new members, enabling them to actively participate in the organization. The receiving of new members not only affords an opportunity to maintain the organizational culture but also operates as a channel for cultural change and introduction of new belief systems (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Schein, 2010; White, Harvey, & Kemper, 2007). A continual change in an organization’s membership affects its distinctive culture. Schein (2010) discussed this in the following way:

Group and organizational theories distinguish two major sets of problems that all groups, no matter what their size, must deal with: (1) Survival, growth, and
adaptation in their environment; and (2) internal integration that permits daily functioning and the ability to adapt and learn. (p. 18)

It can be surmised from the documented research that organizational culture is always evolving as membership in the organization changes. New members bring new beliefs, which they share with the group, eventually modifying the cultural norms.

Based on the limited research available, the organizational culture of the Barn Theater is understandably complex. Members of the theater are committed individuals from a variety of generations and professions. They come together because they have a passion for theater arts and for the Barn Theater in particular. They work closely together in order to complete many projects, including building maintenance and renovation, artistic projects, and financial endeavors. Each member of the team has an area of emphasis—an area in which they have expertise or a job that they particularly enjoy doing. Job responsibilities are given out at the monthly board meetings, where members are given an opportunity to volunteer to complete tasks. However, many interactions and some decisions take place outside of the board meetings on an informal basis based on alliances and friendships that exist among members of the group. In general, the members work well together and value friendliness, creativity, loyalty, honesty, and cooperation.

Hard work is a prevalent norm at the Barn Theater. Respected members of the board, directors, and other volunteers have a strong work ethic, spending many hours at the theater engaged in a variety of projects. Responsibility is another valued norm at the theater. Over time, people who follow through with commitments and are accountable for their responsibilities earn trust from the core group of board members and are allowed
more influence over group decision making. Similarly, members who respectfully disagree with each other and work toward compromise are valued in the group, unlike members who are not team players. There also seems to be a prevailing concern among board members to protect each individual’s boundaries so that no one becomes overextended. Unfortunately, the group is somewhat divided between those who want to maintain the past culture of the group and those who would like the culture to evolve with new members. The norm, therefore, would be that the board of directors must keep the past in mind while slowly evolving toward the future. Finally, the Barn Theater members are very welcoming to new people who come to the Barn and are willing to volunteer. They go out of their way to make everyone feel welcome and appreciated, in hopes of building a broader base of support that will enhance the sustainability of the Barn Theater for many years to come.

**Community Theory**

Enveloped within organizational culture, community theory provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of community theater. Community theory has accumulated an impressive body of literature with a variety of definitions. C. Bell and Newby (1971) stated that community theory has to do with “the study of the interrelationships of social institutions in a locality” (p. 1). Tamas (1987, 2000) stated, “Community development is a very complex activity. . . . Key concerns in community development are assessing power and influence, understanding the dynamics of inter-group relationships, and considering the changes involved in planning development activities” (p. 1). Further, according to research conducted by the Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations (n.d.), components of community organization include the following:

1) Preparation of core groups and leaders, assessing the conditions of the project, and determine the mission of the group. 2) Self-identification of project leaders with such characteristics as being adventurous; ability to dream and envision the future; ability to form positive relationships and mentor others; and having an open attitude toward criticism. 3) Gather the support of the community by conducting meetings to discuss the mission of the project, begin community networking, and ensure sustainability of the project. 4) Engage in self-evaluation. Evaluation should move the project to improvements and greater heights. (p. 123)

From a different perspective, the sense of community theory was studied by Doolittle and MacDonald (1978) in order to “determine communicative behaviors and attitudes at the community or neighborhood level of social organization” (p. 6). There are several basic components that underlie this eclectic approach.

The first component of the sense of community theory is membership. Membership was defined by D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) as “a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong” (p. 9). Membership includes boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging, personal investment, and a common symbol system. Boundaries are important because they determine who is included and excluded from a community (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The second component of this theory is influence. Members of a community need to feel that they are having a positive impact on their external environment and also that
members have influence over the group’s members (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Those who are too aggressive and try to dominate others are the least powerful members of the community. Further, D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated, “There is a significant positive relationship between cohesiveness and a community’s influence on its members to conform so that both conformity and community influence indicate the strength of the bond” (p. 12). Therefore, the issues of influence and conformity play a major role in the cohesiveness of group members.

The third component of sense of community theory is integration into the community, which results in fulfillment of needs. When a member has been assimilated as a member and has influence over decision making in the group, reinforcement of his or her behavior is experienced. Reinforcement is another term that helps explain integration and fulfillment of needs. D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated, “Reinforcement as a motivator of behavior is a cornerstone in behavioral research, and it is obvious that for any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual–group association must be rewarding for its members” (p. 13). In subsequent research, D. W. McMillan (1996) coined the phrase “economy of social trade” to explain that there was an interdependence among the members of the community group, whereby group members shared values and achieved a balance between what they gave to the group and what they received as a result of their participation in the community effort.

Finally, the fourth element of the psychological sense of community is shared emotional connection. According to D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986), there are seven aspects of shared emotional connection, including interpersonal contact, quality interactions, closure to events, sharing of events, investment of time and energy, feeling
honored by the community rather than humiliated, and having a spiritual bond with the organization. The more people interact, the more likely they are to become close (Allan & Allan, 1971). Further, the more positive the interaction among group members, the greater the closeness among them. This leads to greater cohesion (S. W. Cook, 1970). Finally, successful communities need to resolve concerns among themselves, find ways to honor their members, and spiritually bond with other members of the group (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Members of the Barn Theater form a sense of community as they engage in the day-to-day activities of the Barn Theater’s operations. Membership in the organization is obtained through participation. According to the bylaws, a volunteer becomes a member after serving the theater for 18 hours each year. New members are welcomed into the fold and are taught some of the basic roles and responsibilities needed for the operation of the theater. Cleaning, painting, participation in shows, building sets, or helping with lighting are important functions at the theater. Once a volunteer becomes a member of the team, they gain credibility for their areas of expertise and for their professionalism and ethics. After a time, they are able to informally influence the decision-making process at the theater. A personal sense of satisfaction or reward is experienced by many members as they see positive results for their efforts. For example, after countless hours of rehearsal and preparation, many members enjoy the opportunity to perform for a live audience and are reinforced by the praise they receive from other members, their families, and from the audience. Finally, many members feel that the Barn Theater is their home away from home. They are an integral part of the Barn Theater’s culture and community. Sustainability theory, leadership theory, organizational culture theory, and
community theory are the four major areas that have led to the ability of the Barn Theater to operate continuously for over 68 years.

**Summary**

Theater arts emerged long ago and has developed over centuries into a sophisticated form of entertainment with many complexities. Community theater began in the early 20th century, as a social force, when people in local communities wanted the opportunity to share their stories and affect the people around them through theater arts (MacKay, 1917). Community theater programs also provided a means for social bonding and peer support to occur as well as an opportunity for actors to experience live performing (Chansky, 2008; Gard & Burley, 1975).

As the lens of community theater was focused more specifically on particular theatrical companies, it was again apparent that social, environmental, and economic factors influenced their sustainability. In many cases, poor economic conditions forced the closing of many community theaters throughout history in America (AACT, n.d.; Brass, 2014; Byrnes, 2003; Chansky, 2008; G. Cohen, 2003; Farber, 2006; Holahan, 2009; MacKay, 1917; Miller, 1997; Mulcahy, 2011; C. Waters, 2013). Further, factors from leadership, culture, and community theories as they relate to organizations overlap with sustainability theory and add rigor to the premise that social, environmental, and economic factors need to remain in balance in order for sustainability to occur. First, social factors are explained through community and culture theory. They both emphasize positive relationships, an emotional connection to others within the organization. Similarly, they both result in a sense of collective identity and commitment that creates an emotional connection or social bond to the theater group. Second, environmental
factors are included through the application of leadership theory. It is the leader’s responsibility to engage in environmental scans and determine factors that are helpful and that many hinder sustainability. This process leads to strategic planning for the organization. Finally, economic factors are influenced through strategic planning, process evaluation, and accountability. The more stable a financial system is the more sustainable is its economic growth (Dudley, 2011).

In California, community theaters that survived had a balance between economic, environmental, and social components of operation. Programs that struggled or closed failed to have economic support due to a poor economy, lack of political support, lack of vision and leadership, or focus on the quality of productions. The Pasadena Playhouse was an example of a community theater program that was not able to sustain itself for these reasons (Banham, 1988; California State Theatre, n.d.; Pasadena Playhouse, n.d.). More recently, the Bakersfield Community Theatre is in danger due to environmental imbalance. The theater has been vandalized three times because of its location in a high crime area. The morale of the directors has been seriously compromised; therefore, leadership has been affected (Dias, 2015).

This literature review supports the investigation of how organizational, community, culture, and leadership theories relate to the sustainability of the Barn Theater. There is an overlap among these theories that contribute to the social, environmental, and economic balance that has kept the Barn Theater operational for over 68 years.
Synthesis Matrix

In order to classify information for this review of literature, the researcher used a synthesis matrix as a way to visually organize the major themes that support this study. This synthesis matrix was organized by central themes of the literature and sources that were used to support each theme. The synthesis matrix was updated from its initial form in order to be easily viewed in the appendices. This modified version can be found in Appendix A.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The methodology chapter was defined by Carol M. Roberts (2010) in The Dissertation Journey as the “section that describes in detail how the study was conducted” (p. 25). The current qualitative phenomenological study allowed the lives of the participants to be explored in order to determine what themes or patterns within organizational culture, leadership, and community factors contributed to the sustainability of the Barn Theater. In this chapter the purpose and research questions for this investigation are stated. This chapter also examines the rationale for using the research design and the population, sample, instrumentation, and data collection, including interviews, artifacts, and systematic procedures employed. Additionally, this chapter includes the limitations of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the Barn Theater stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?
Subquestions

1. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

2. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

3. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Research Design

As described by Creswell and Clark (2008), “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). Additionally, according to J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative research consists of nine key characteristics: “Natural settings, context sensitivity, direct data collection rich narrative description, process orientation, inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, emergent design, and complexity of understanding and explanation” (p. 321). The best fit for the purpose of this study is to address these nine key characteristics of qualitative research.

Further, this research used a nonexperimental and descriptive methodology. J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described how nonexperimental research differs from an experimental approach: “Non-experimental research designs describe the phenomena and examine the relationship between different phenomena without any direct manipulation of conditions that are experienced” (p. 22).
More specifically, a qualitative, phenomenological study was the best format for this study because, according to J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a phenomenological study “describes the meanings of lived experience” (p. 24). Patton (2002), too, indicated that the goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to describe the individual experiences of people or the “lived experience” of the phenomenon and to make sense of it (p. 446). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined it as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. . . . It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible” (p. 2). Additionally, J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, using a phenomenological methodology permits the researcher to “describe the achievement, attitudes, behaviors, or other traits of a group or subject” (p. 217). A phenomenological research design usually involves lengthy, in-depth interviews with subjects’ and participants’ written self-report or even their aesthetic expressions (J. Waters, 2013). These interviews relate the intricate details of the interviewees’ lived experiences in their own words. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) indicated, in more detail, that some of the methods used in qualitative research include case studies, personal experiences, introspections, interviews, life stories, artifacts, cultural text, and observation. This type of research can allow for intricacies and complications that may be unnoticed in other types of research. It is a form of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a blossoming methodology in research, and is referred to as a “socially constrained form of action, socially situated performance and a way of acting in and making sense of the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 641). It is difficult to replicate a phenomenological study because of the uniqueness of each researcher, and the
analysis of data involves a set of factors that are unique to the situation. The strength of a qualitative research study depends upon the skills of the researcher.

**Population**

The population is defined as the group of individuals having at least one characteristic that the researcher identifies as compatible toward the research purpose or goals (Creswell, 2014; D. W. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Additionally, Krathwohl (2009) described population selection as “ways of selecting a small number of units from a population to enable researchers to make reliable inferences about the nature of that population” (p. 160). These authors also indicated that a population has important qualities that can be used as the basis of a research study (J. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Nastasi (n.d.) stated, “Qualitative research . . . typically starts with a specific group, type of individual, event, or process. . . . You would choose your sample very purposefully and include in your study only those with this particular experience” (para. 3). The goal of qualitative research can be stated as “in-depth understanding.”

In the United States there are over 7,000 community theaters. California has 80 community theaters and within this, Central California has 15 community theaters (AACT, n.d.). The population for this study is the 80 community theaters that exist in California and are registered with AACT. Krathwohl (2009) described the piece of the world one wishes to generalize in the sampling as the population of the universe. Populations and universes are made up of units, and in the case of this study that would be people. The characteristics of the population define the group to whom the study’s results may be expected to transfer.
The target population for this study was the 15 community theater programs that exist in cities of over 50,000 people in Central California. The target population is the entire group of people, within a geographical area, to which the researcher wishes to generalize the study findings. Central California, the target population, is defined as areas south of Stockton (but not including Stockton) and north of Bakersfield (but not including Bakersfield). The eastern boundary is the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the western border is the Coastal Ranges. It is considered to be the middle third of the state. The cities are (from north to south) Modesto, Turlock, Merced, Madera, Salinas, Fresno, Clovis, Hanford, Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville. Of the 15 community theaters included in the population, all have websites where they publish information about their programs. All have established nonprofit status for at least one component of their program. Six of the theaters are registered with AACT. One theater, Roger Rocka’s Dinner Theater in Fresno, is a community theater program, but the Good Company Players (partnered with the restaurant) is registered as a for-profit business. However, its junior company is a nonprofit organization. The Turlock Community Theater opened in 1925, but after 45 years of operation, it closed. A recent program to open was the Prospect Theater in Modesto, which opened in 1999; however, the Gallo Center for the Arts in Modesto opened later in 2007. It serves as a venue for some of the other community theaters in Modesto. The Barn Theater opened in 1948 and has been in operation the longest, for over 68 years. The rationale for selecting this community theater is that it is the longest continuously running community theater in the Central Valley of California. Describing the factors that led to this phenomenon is the goal of this study.
Sample

J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a sample as the “group of individuals from whom data are collected from within the target population” (p. 129). Creswell (2014) added that the target population, or sampling frame, is the actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected. This is the group of participants in the study selected from the target population. Sampling can be conducted in a multitude of ways. Random sampling, systematic sampling, proportional sampling, cluster sampling, convenience sampling, purposeful sampling (also known as purposive sampling), and quota sampling are all methods of sampling (J. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, purposive sampling was selected based on “selecting subjects with certain criteria” (J. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 137-138). In addition, snowball sampling was also used. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances (D. Morgan, 2008). Snowball sampling was utilized in order to obtain the lived experiences of members of the cast of the first productions of the Barn Theater in 1948. Although snowball sampling is one of the weakest forms of sampling, it was needed in this research in order to include information about the historical background of the Barn Theater from primary sources.

A subgroup or sampling unit, consisting of at least 12 representatives from various aspects in the Barn Theater organization, was purposively selected as the sample group for this research. According to Creswell (2014), in qualitative inquiry and research design, when choosing among five traditions, an appropriate size for qualitative phenomenological study is five to 25 participants. The size of this sample population
was determined to be 12 to 25. They included representatives from the founders, sponsors, board of directors, lifetime members, play directors, actors, award winners, and delegates to the Porterville Chamber of Commerce. Purposive sampling methods group participants based on preselected criteria pertinent to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interviewees already function in numerous corresponding clusters, increasing the likelihood of their in-depth knowledge of the Barn Theater’s history and operation.

The requirements for inclusion in the purposive sampling were the following:

1. Listing in the archives of the Barn Theater website
2. Active participation for multiple seasons
3. Expert knowledge of at least one area of the Barn Theater’s operations
4. Representation from various age groups from 18 through 99
5. Recognition by peers involved in community theater

According to Patton (2002), “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich and illuminative qualitative data. . . . They offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 40). In addition, using purposeful sampling permits the researcher to “capture and describe central themes,” offering the researcher valuable information about the phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 234). By outlining specific criteria for selection, the researcher was able to gather more detailed and in-depth understanding of the intricacies and complexities of the Barn Theater operation.

Based upon recommendations from the purposively selected research participants, snowball sampling was also used to include members of the original founding group of
the Barn Theater in the research project. Once selected for the study, voluntary consent was secured by presenting each of the prospective interviewees with informed consent forms (see Appendix B) that had been approved by Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C). Participants were provided with a description of the research, advantages and possible positive outcomes of the study, and potential concerns related to the study at an introductory meeting before scheduling and conducting the interview sessions.

All of the information and data collected by the researcher was kept confidential. Participants were allowed to dismiss themselves from the study at any time. Additionally, participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses and strict confidentiality. According to J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), anonymity means the “researcher cannot identify the participants from information that has been gathered” (p. 121). This helped to ensure trust between the interviewer and subject and would result in full and accurate data.

Instrumentation

During the review of the literature, the researcher reviewed assessment materials on nonprofit sustainability, including materials that related to organizational culture, leadership, and community factors, and used those tools to generate a list of open-ended interview questions designed to tell the story of the Barn Theater. Themes were identified using proficient prototypes that provided a framework for the factors in nonprofit organizations that lead to sustainability. Self-assessment, internal and external environmental scanning, leadership, governance, and physical and financial resources were identified as key components in sustainability practices (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson
& Schwimmer, 2010; New Level Group, 2006; Stern, 1999). The first question on the survey (see Appendix D) addresses issues of self-assessment (see Table 1). The second, third, and fourth interview questions refer to the themes of internal and external environmental scanning (Stern, 1999). Additionally, leadership is addressed in Question 5. Question 6 helped to determine the governance and decision-making process of the Barn Theater. R. Nelson & Schwimmer (2010) and Mulcahy (2011) stressed the need for theaters to effectively manage the physical and financial resources of their nonprofit organizations in order to be sustainable. Questions 7 and 8 looked at physical and financial resources available to the Barn Theater, both past and present.

The last two questions were general questions designed to look at the overall function of the theater and provided the interviewees the opportunity to expand upon their shared stories and personal experiences as members of the Barn Theater. Using these themes as a benchmark, these open-ended questions were designed to provide a framework for the interviewer to collect in-depth information of the “lived experiences” of the interviewees. Patton (2002) stated, “The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order, and questions are worded in a completely open-ended format” (p. 349).

**Relationship of Research Questions to the Themes**

An expert panel was assembled to evaluate the questions and provide feedback on their construction and content. The panel consisted of knowledgeable professionals and volunteers in the area of community theater as well as a university professor who teaches graduate-level classes in qualitative research. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were open ended and would allow the participants the opportunity to respond freely while
Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions With Interview Questions

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<tr>
<th>Research subquestion</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?</td>
<td>How has the organizational culture of the Barn Theater helped you grow as a person and performing artist while at the Barn Theater?</td>
<td>What is the organizational culture?</td>
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<td>How do members develop self-awareness and growth?</td>
<td>How do members develop self-awareness and growth?</td>
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<td>What are some of the personal motivations among group members?</td>
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<td>What are the members’ future goals in community theater?</td>
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<td>What is your perspective on how the Barn Theater has functioned as an organization in the past and present?</td>
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<td>What is the organizational structure of the theater?</td>
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<td>What is the role of the board of directors?</td>
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<td>How are goals set and accomplished at the theater?</td>
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<td>What are the behavioral norms within the group?</td>
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<td>How have the bylaws contributed to the sustainability of the organization?</td>
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<td>How is mentoring conducted at the theater?</td>
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<td>What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?</td>
<td>What is your perspective on the leadership at the Barn Theater?</td>
<td>What are some of the good leadership qualities that have helped at the theater?</td>
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<td>What are some of the good leadership qualities that have helped at the theater?</td>
<td>Who are the key influencers and how do they function?</td>
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<td>Who are the key influencers and how do they function?</td>
<td>How is leadership shared?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does leadership develop fundraising activities for the theater?</td>
<td>How does leadership develop fundraising activities for the theater?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are financial matters accounted for?</td>
<td>How are financial matters accounted for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have financial struggles in the past been overcome?</td>
<td>How have financial struggles in the past been overcome?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research subquestion</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn theater’s sustainability?</td>
<td>How does the Barn Theater motivate community volunteers to become involved with the program?</td>
<td>Describe the sense of community within the theater? How is volunteerism encouraged by the theater? How is the theater important to the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your perspective on the value of the Barn Theater to the community?</td>
<td>Describe the sense of community that has developed between the Theater and the city of Porterville.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the facilities, resources, and finances at the theater?</td>
<td>What is special about the facility and how has it been maintained over the years? How are new resources acquired for the theater?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...telling their personal story of the Barn Theater. In addition, the vocabulary used in the questions was discussed by the experts and clearly defined to avoid multiple-meaning words. Probing responses were also established. Patton (2002) indicated that “probes are used to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired” (p. 372). Questions that were found to be poorly written or ineffective were revised in order to meet the specifications of the expert panel.

**Reliability and Validity**

Validity and reliability are important criteria that ensure the quality of a measuring instrument, specifically, the interview questions developed for this study. In a qualitative research study, the instrument is the researcher; and according to Patton (2002), “The credibility of quality methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the
skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork” (p. 14). Further, because the researcher is the instrument in a qualitative study, Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Milller-Day (2012) contended that the unique personality, characteristics, and interview techniques of the researcher may influence how the data are collected. As a result, the study may contain some biases based on how the researcher influenced the interviewee during the qualitative interview sessions. For this study, the researcher was involved in performing arts activities. As a result the researcher brought a potential bias to the study based on personal experiences in a similar setting to those which were studied.

Reliability is an important concern in qualitative research. According to Trochim (2006), “Reliability has to do with the quality of measurement. In its everyday sense, reliability is the ‘consistency’ or ‘repeatability’ of your measures” (p. 1). It was therefore important for this study’s interview questions to be written and delivered by the researcher to obtain consistency in the question and answer process. Field-testing contributed to this consistency.

According to Esposito (2010), “Field tests are complex, resource-intensive, collaborative operations that draw upon the knowledge possessed by various sources . . . to optimize questionnaire design for the ultimate purpose of gathering high-quality data about a particular domain-of-interest” (p. 1). As a result of field-testing of the interview questions in this study, consistency among the interviewers was analyzed and research questions were modified to eliminate potential threats to validity and reliability. The consistency of data is achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (D. T. Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Data were thoroughly discussed by the expert panel, and a
protocol for establishing consistency was established. Trustworthiness of a research report is at the heart and is crucial to qualitative research since the research involves the human factor.

Practice interviews were conducted whereby the interview questions were field-tested by several interviewers. The purpose of field-testing was to ensure that the interview process would be conducted with as much consistency as humanly possible. Each interviewer used the same questions with the same respondents and recorded notes on the information obtained. The interviewers then compared notes to determine how to correct any problems with consistency. This form of interview field-testing adds strength to the overall reliability of the study. There is general agreement among qualitative researchers that taking precise steps to increase rater uniformity has methodological advantages and increases the systematic reliability of a study (Creswell, 2003). J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also agreed with the importance of this step to confirm that any discrepancies, vagueness, or awkward wording of the questions could be addressed before the actual interview process began.

In qualitative research, Patton (2002) stated, validity “depends on careful instrument construction to ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (p. 14). J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) concurred, stating, “Validity, in qualitative research refers to the degree of congruence between the explanation of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (p. 330). Further, they also noted the worth of validity in qualitative research by discussing the validity of the qualitative designs “as the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and researcher” (p. 330). The information provided to the researcher must be recorded and
understood accurately in its scope and intent in order for the research to be valid. Creswell and Miller (2000) inferred that the validity is marked by the researcher’s view of validity in the study and his or her selection of theoretical beliefs. Every effort was taken to ensure that the researcher remained objective and unbiased while carrying out the research design. This study benefited from three of the validity-enriching approaches proposed by J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010): “(1) Triangulation in data collection and analysis, (2) Use of audio recordings to accurately document statements made by the participants, and (3) Participants’ review of researcher’s synthesis of interview data” (p. 330).

Triangulation of data derived from numerous interviews and artifacts sustained the validity of this study. J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified triangulation as the “cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods, and theoretical schemes. The purpose of triangulation is to find regularities in the data; the researcher compares different sources, situations, and methods, to see where same pattern keeps recurring” (p. 379). In addition, Golafshani (2003) indicated that triangulation is a method for improving the validity and reliability of a qualitative research study and aids the researcher in the coding evaluation of findings. In this study, data were collected from three sources that included interviews, artifacts, and observations. Beck, Keddy, and Cohen (1994) stated, “Cross-paradigmatic communication can result in difficulties because the same words may have different meanings. It cannot be assumed that reliability and validity have the same meaning in logical empiricism and phenomenology” (p. 262). The instrument (interview questions) developed for this research study was reviewed for consistent vocabularic meaning and intent by the expert
Patton (2002) described this process as “developing some manageable classification or coding scheme . . . to recognize the patterns into meaningful categories and schemes” (p. 463). With the expert panel’s clear understanding of the vocabulary used in the interview questions and responses, every effort was made to minimize misunderstanding of communication.

**Data Collection**

The data collection process began several months prior to the onset of the study, when the researcher asked the board of directors at the Barn Theater if they would be willing to participate in the study. At that point, a brief explanation was given to the board members at their monthly meeting regarding the scope of the study. The general purpose of the study was explained, and the board was told that data would be collected through an interview process and by reviewing artifacts maintained by the Barn Theater organization. All of the board members indicated a willingness to participate in the study.

Using purposeful sampling, present or past members of the board were invited to participate in the study based upon preset criteria. They were selected because they have extensive experience working with various components of the Barn Theater’s operations and would be able to provide full and rich insight to the workings of the organization. Care was taken to ensure that stakeholders from a variety of components of the program were included in the sampling procedure. In addition, the president of the board of directors of the Barn Theater assisted with snowball sampling when she recommended several possible interview candidates.
Prior to the scheduling of interviews, a meeting was held with the interview candidates to explain in more depth the purpose and process of the research study. An introductory letter was distributed at this meeting. In addition, all participants were required to read and sign an agreement indicating that they were aware of the requirements for participation in the study and that they were willing to participate in the interview process. Participants’ rights were protected by following the procedures outlined through Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). They were protected from “undue risk.”

The interview process was field-tested prior to beginning actual interviews. Mock interviews were held to determine the effectiveness of the interview process and schedule. Based on the results of the field-test, an interview schedule was arranged and participants were notified of the time and duration of the interviews. Each interviewee voluntarily attended a one-to-one interview with the researcher.

In addition to the described interview process, the researcher reviewed Barn Theater artifacts and observed board meetings and rehearsals. For triangulation purposes, information collected from artifacts and observation were summarized to support the results of the interview coding process. All of the interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. The interviews were scheduled in 1-hour increments. Follow-up interviews were scheduled as needed.

**Data Analysis and Coding**

Transcribing, or organizing the interview data into a system that will enable analysis is the first step in analyzing the data collected through the interview process, review of artifacts, and observations of meetings and rehearsals. The next step is to code
the data. In order to code the data, it is important for the researcher to identify themes and patterns in the data (see Figure 4). J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) contended, “An essential early step in analysis is to organize the large amount of data so that coding is facilitated” (p. 369). Patton (2002) asserted that data analysis “involves creativity, intellectual discipline, analytical rigor, and a great deal of hard work” (p. 442). Summarizing the data to include words, phrases, or concepts that are repeated was the subsequent step in analyzing the data.

Figure 4. Flow chart for coding process. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), Jonathan Smith, Professor of Psychology, Birkbeck University of London, retrieved from http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk/

Coding the data began when the researcher met with two peer-researchers. Each reviewed the same two out of 14 interview transcripts, independently, and coded the
transcripts. The researcher and two peer-researchers calibrated their coding to ensure there was agreement. There was 92.7% agreement on the themes selected and 83.1% agreement of the data coded. The researchers utilized rigorous methods to systematically analyze data in a credible manner, being careful to understand the intent of the interview responses using a clear sense of the vocabulary. Therefore, the findings derived from the coding process reflected the actual information gathered through the research process.

In order to make more sense of the data, a computer program entitled NVivo was used. Gibbs (2012) suggested the use of NVivo, a powerful computer package that provides the researcher with software that supported standard qualitative analysis techniques such as coding and theme building. Morison and Moir (1998) and Richards and Richards (1994) suggested that researchers use computer software to assist them in coding data because it helps to simplify the process of acquiring truthful and understandable data. It is also an easy way of counting the similar comments made by interviewees, which in turn provides a general, yet reliable picture of the data. With the NVivo software, the researcher is able to produce data charts that display the results of the research process. This information is presented in Chapter IV. It has been argued that using NVivo increases the reliability and validity of the study. References to the review of the literature were related to the results of the data analysis.

**Limitations**

This study is limited by areas that are not controlled by the researcher. Some possible limitation areas are size of the sample, limitations imposed by the methodology, span of the study, and rate of response (Roberts, 2010). This study is limited to stakeholders of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California who participated in the study.
They represented a sampling of all the people throughout the 68 years of operation who have participated in the community theater program. There is no way to ascertain the veracity of the information provided by the participants. Interviewees may have hidden information that they found too uncomfortable to disclose.

The sample size of this study was also small and thus limits the generalizability of the study. In addition, during the analysis phase of the study, the themes presented may not be indicative of other community theater programs.

Further, the information gathered for board members is self-reported and therefore may be biased. It was presumed that the participants offered a full, honest account of their lived experiences at the Barn Theater in response to the interview questions. Care was taken by the researcher to follow up and clarify any statements that could be confusing or misleading throughout the interview process. This helped the data accurately reflect the perceptions of the interviewees.

Finally, there is the possibility that any researcher has certain biases that may affect the collection and analysis of data. Care was taken by this researcher to limit bias by including several interviewers in the process. Prior to the actual data collection process, multiple researchers posed the same interview questions in mock situations to ascertain that the questions were posed in an unbiased manner. After the data were collected, video recordings allowed for full and accurate transcription. The researcher took care to view the recordings with an objective lens and kept a watchful eye for any hint of bias.
Summary

This chapter described the qualitative research methodology used in the study. The study began with the development of interview questions whereby the lived experience of the stakeholders of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California were explored as they shared their perceptions of the program. Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders, including an original member of the team that founded the Barn Theater, sponsors, members of the board of directors, lifetime members, play directors, actors, chamber of commerce representatives, and award winners. In addition, appropriate artifacts were reviewed and meetings were observed. The interviews were coded and analyzed using NVivo software. The findings of this analysis are presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative, phenomenological study allowed the lived experiences of the study’s participants to be explored in order to determine the themes and patterns of stakeholders of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California, a community theater, as they related to the sustainability of this nonprofit theater for over 68 years. The themes of leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure and decision making, relationships, resources, facilities, finances, and finally the sense of community appear to exist at the Barn Theater. In this chapter, the purpose and research questions for this investigation are stated, along with a discussion of the research methods and data collection procedures. This chapter also explains the population, sample and target sample, and the demographic data of the interviewees. A report and analysis of the data are also included in this chapter. A summary of the information concludes the chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the Barn Theater stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?
Subquestions

1. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

2. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

3. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological, research design that utilized personal interviews via a set of scripted interview questions. Stakeholders of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California were purposively selected to participate based on preset criteria. In addition, snowball sampling was used as additional participants were identified by stakeholders. The primary data collection was anecdotal data from scripted interview questions. Fourteen separate interviews with stakeholders of the Barn Theater were conducted. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recording device, and the recordings were transcribed and coded.

Interview Data Collection

Each participant was asked the same general script questions for each of the themes of the study. Prior to the first interview, a panel of experts observed the interview process with an additional Barn Theater stakeholder to insure that the method of interviewing minimized bias. The themes were leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure and decision making, relationships, resources, facilities, finances, and finally, sense of community. During the initial interview process, probing questions
were asked, as needed, from the probing questions in Appendix D. All responses were audio-recorded using a digital portable recording device. These audio-recorded statements were then transcribed and coded for emergent themes.

**Observation Data Collection**

The researcher attended board meetings as an observer, and noticed interactions among stakeholders where leadership, organizational culture, and community factors were perceived. The researcher established a relationship with numerous stakeholders prior to the interview process in order to establish a trusting relationship. All interviewees eagerly shared information about themselves and their lived experiences at the Barn Theater. Observations were made of the box office procedures, publicity protocols, the decision-making process, and conflict resolution strategies utilized at the Barn Theater. Observations were also made regarding the process of recruiting and valuing the volunteers who are the manpower of the theater. The researcher also attended a variety of events sponsored by the Barn Theater. Information gathered through observation were not coded but are discussed in the summary section of this chapter.

**Artifact Data Collection**

Supporting artifacts were obtained from stakeholders, from meeting agendas, newspaper articles, posters, website information, handbooks, videos of the some of the original participants in the Barn Theater, and photos of early productions. These artifacts were used to support the findings from the interviews and provided first-hand quotations that address the research questions of this study.
Population

In the United States there are over 7,000 community theaters. California has 80 community theaters and within this, Central California has 15 community theaters (AACT, n.d.). The population for this study is the 80 community theaters that exist in California and are registered with AACT. Krathwohl (2009) described the piece of the world one wishes to generalize in the sampling as the population of the universe. Populations and universes are made up of units, and in the case of this study that would be people. The characteristics of the population define the group to whom the study’s results may be expected to transfer.

The target population for this study was the 15 community theater programs that exist in cities of over 50,000 people in Central California. The target population is the entire group of people, within a geographical area, to which the researcher wishes to generalize the study findings. Central California, the target population, is defined as areas south of Stockton (but not including Stockton) and north of Bakersfield (but not including Bakersfield). The eastern boundary is the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Western border is the Coastal Ranges. It is considered to be the middle third of the state. The cities are (from north to south) Modesto, Turlock, Merced, Madera, Salinas, Fresno, Clovis, Hanford, Visalia, Tulare and Porterville. Of the 15 community theaters included in the population, all have websites where they publish information about their programs. They all have established nonprofit status for at least one component of their program. Six of the theaters are registered with AACT. One theater, Roger Rocka’s Dinner Theater in Fresno, is a community theater program; but the Good Company Players (partnered with the restaurant) is registered as a for-profit business. However, its junior
company is a nonprofit organization. The Turlock Community Theater opened in 1925 but closed after 45 years of operation. The Barn Theater opened in 1948 and has been in operation the longest, for over 68 years. The most recent program opened in 1999 was the Prospect Theater in Modesto; however, the Gallo Center for the Arts in Modesto opened in 2007. It serves as a venue for some of the other community theaters in Modesto.

Sample

The sample population for this study included 14 representatives from the Barn Theater: original participants in the Barn Theater, members of the board of directors, lifetime members, play directors, actors, award winners, a newspaper reporter, and a delegate to the Porterville Chamber of Commerce. Purposive sampling methods groups participants based on preselected criteria pertinent to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interviewees already function in numerous corresponding clusters, increasing the likelihood of their in-depth knowledge of the Barn Theater’s history and operation.

The requirements for inclusion in the purposive sampling were the following:

1. Listing in the archives of the Barn Theater website
2. Active participation for more than five seasons
3. Expert knowledge of at least one area of the Barn Theater’s operations
4. Representation from various age groups from 18 to 65
5. Recognition by peers involved in community theater

According to Patton (2002), “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich and illuminative qualitative data. . . . They offer useful
manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 40). In addition, using purposeful sampling permits the researcher to “capture and describe central themes,” offering the researcher with valuable information about the phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 234). By outlining specific criteria for selection, the researcher was able to gather more detailed and in-depth understanding of the intricacies and complexities of the Barn Theater operation.

Snowball sampling was also used. Atkinson and Flint (2004) stated, Snowball sampling may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open possibilities for an expanding web of contact and inquiry. (para. 1)

During the process of identifying candidates for the study, various members recommended others who had particular knowledge in certain areas of the theater’s history or operation. J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), stated, “This will provide the best chance that every member of the target population will be presented in the research study to yield unbiased results” (p. 131).

Once selected for the study, voluntary consent was secured by presenting each of the prospective interviewees with informed consent forms (see Appendix B) that had been approved by Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board. Participants were provided with a description of the research, advantages and possible positive outcomes of the study, and potential concerns related to the study at an introductory meeting before scheduling and conducting the interview sessions.
All of the information and data collected by the researcher were kept confidential. Participants were allowed to dismiss themselves from the study at any time. Additionally, participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses and strict confidentiality. Each was assigned a unique identifying letter. According to J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), anonymity means the “researcher cannot identify the participants from information that has been gathered” (p. 121). This helped to ensure trust between the interviewer and subject and would result in full and accurate data (see Table 2).

The participants in this study had 6 or more years of experience as volunteers at the Barn Theater in Porterville, California. All of the participants were currently providing service at the Barn Theater. In addition, all were experts at some area of theater arts and demonstrated their expertise multiple times. They are all recognized by their peers as valued and influential volunteers. All were listed on the theater’s website archives in a variety of capacities. The range of ages of the interviewees was 28 to over 65, and the average number of years of volunteer service at the Barn Theater was 28.9 years. One interviewee was an actor in the very first production of the Barn Theater in 1948. She was identified through snowball sampling and is well over the age of 65. The information that she shared about the early history and operation of the theater added a deep and rich understanding of the themes described in this chapter. The interviewees were identified by their unique letter only in order to protect their anonymity.
### Table 2

**Demographic Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Role in Barn Theater</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Approximate number of years at Barn Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Director, actor,</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Member of board, actor, lifetime member</td>
<td>Retired speech therapist</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>President of board, director, actor</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Board member, director, actor</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Historical status committee, actor</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Original participant in Barn Theater, award winner</td>
<td>Radio announcer</td>
<td>65+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Member of board, director, actor, publicity</td>
<td>Retired newspaper marketing director</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Board officer, kitchen, supervisory, director, actor, set design</td>
<td>Homemaker and member of several community service organizations</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Actor, donor, award winner</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Season ticket holder</td>
<td>Newspaper reporter</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Board member, chair of committee for historical status</td>
<td>Retired educator</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Board member, kitchen supervisor, director</td>
<td>Chef and member of chamber of commerce</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Board officer, actor, director, award winner,</td>
<td>Educator and business owner</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Board member, box office manager, actor, director</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data and analysis reported and discussed in this chapter were obtained using anecdotal descriptions of the lived experiences of the stakeholders interviewed when they responded to scripted questions presented during personal interviews and triangulation of those shared experiences with artifacts and observations. The findings in this chapter were reported based on the relationship to the central research question and research subquestions.

Interview Process and Procedures

Data collection began with identifying and contacting 15 members of the Barn Theater board of directors from the original target population of active stakeholders in the Barn Theater. Board members were given a brief overview of the research at a monthly board of directors meeting and then approached individually to see if they would become willing participants in the study. Eleven out of the 15 board members immediately signed up for an interview time slot. The other three members were willing to participate in the study; however, they were unable to commit to a time slot at that particular moment. The researcher wanted to include a variety of stakeholders in the research and approached a newspaper reporter who has also been a donor to the theater, and the reporter agreed to participate. The other two participants were obtained through snowball sampling. The president of the board of directors suggested contacting an actor who had been in many shows in the past and had knowledge of some of the early happenings at the theater. The researcher contacted him by telephone, and he also agreed to participate and scheduled an interview. In addition, he suggested one of the original actors, a woman, who had been in the very first production of the Barn Theater because he thought
that she would have a wealth of valuable and rich information that would give more depth to the study. He made arrangements for the researcher to meet with the original cast member as well.

Each of the participants was provided with an informed consent, research participant bill of rights, and a list of questions for the interview. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to read and sign the required documents, and they were then provided copies of them. The questions regarding demographics were asked and confidentiality was stressed and agreed upon through verbal discussion. Participants were then asked the scripted questions that focused on answering the research questions, and all interview material was recorded on a digital recorder and subsequently transcribed. Interview questions can focus on experiences or behaviors, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge sensory perceptions, and the individual’s background or demographic information” (J. McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 356-357).

**Observation Process and Procedures**

Over the course of about one year prior to beginning this research project, the researcher informally attended board of directors meetings, observed rehearsals, and noticed interaction patterns among the volunteers at the Barn Theater. In addition, the researcher made an effort to establish relationships with the volunteers prior to the study, in hopes of establishing a trust so that data collected during the interviews would be in-depth and rich with their lived experiences. Leadership behaviors were noted, decision-making strategies and conflict resolution processes were witnessed, and cultural components within the organization were also observed. Finally, it was apparent that the
volunteers at the Barn Theater had established a strong sense of community and that they were well respected by the community of Porterville. The information gathered through observation was used to support the data collected through the interviews. Quotations were added that provide examples of the themes that appeared through the process of coding the data. Patton (2002) stated, “To understand fully the complexity of many situations, direct participation and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method” (p. 23).

**Collection of Artifacts**

Artifacts were examined that told the history of the Barn Theater. The artifacts consisted of photographs; letters; board meeting minutes (Appendix E); programs; newspaper articles; guide books for the actors, directors, and board members; and the bylaws of the organization. These artifacts were located during the 1-year observation experience of the researcher. Many of the photos, newspaper articles, and memorabilia were on display in the lobby of the theater. Other artifacts were acquired from the committee that is currently working on having the Barn Theater declared a historical landmark. According to J. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Artifacts are tangible manifestations that describe people’s experience, knowledge, actions, and values” (p. 361).

**Intercoder Reliability**

The researcher is the tool utilized to acquire data in a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). Therefore coded data may be influenced by the biases of the researcher. Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2004) stated, “Inter-coder reliability is the widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a
message or artifact and reach the same conclusion” (p. 588). Intercoder reliability was used to offset the possibility of bias on the part of the researcher.

For this phenomenological study, two peer-researchers were chosen to check the coding and interpretation of the data collected from the interviews to confirm the accuracy of the themes derived from the coding. The researcher met on different occasions with each of the peer-researchers to double-code one of the transcribed interviews. Each peer-researcher double coded a different interview, so two out of the 14 interviews were double coded (14.28%) with a 92.7% agreement on the themes selected for the research and 83.1% agreement of the data coded in the same manner between the primary researcher and the peer-researchers.

**Overview of Findings**

*Central question: What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?*

After all of the interviews were transcribed and coded, several overarching themes emerged to answer this central question. Three primary themes were identified to examine stakeholders’ perceptions including organizational culture, leadership, and community factors.

After coding the transcripts of all 14 interviews, 1,201 out of 2,160 (55.6%) phrases emerged in one of the parent themes of organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community. Organizational culture was the most frequently mentioned theme with 38.72% of the phrases related to areas of organizational culture. Second, sense of community received 31.14% of the coded phrases. Leadership was mentioned in 30.14%
of the coded phrases as contributing to the sustainability of the Barn Theater. Figure 5 represents these findings. (Values were rounded for the purpose of displaying the graph.)

![Themes Contributing to Sustainability](image)

*Figure 5. Themes contributing to Barn Theater sustainability according to stakeholders.*

**Findings for Research Subquestion 1**

*What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?*

**Connection of subtheme to the literature review.** Organizational culture is an essential factor that contributes to the sustainability of organizations. Fullan (2008) identified several components of organizational culture that lead to sustainability of an organization, including service with a moral purpose, positive beliefs, networking, accountability, and mentoring or inspiration of deep learning. Drucker (1990) concluded that volunteers are essential for nonprofit organizations to carry out their mission. He
indicated that the commitment and competence of volunteers lead to sustainability in the nonprofit sector. In addition, Stern (1999) recommended that the organizational culture of nonprofit organizations include a structure within the organization whereby decisions were made in a fair and equitable manner, with clearly defined rules and structures for accomplishing the goals of the organization. Further researchers have identified several qualities or functions of organizational culture that lead to sustainability. They are organizational history and tradition, mentoring or transmitting of organizational protocol to new members, providing order and rules, and instilling a sense of collective identity and commitment to the organization.

All of the participants were asked the general interview question, “How has the organizational culture of the Barn Theater helped you grow as a person and as a performing artist? All 14 (100%) of the interviewees responded to this question and mentioned a variety of ways in which the culture of the Barn Theater has helped them grow. Organizational culture was defined as a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the way in which an organization conducts its business (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Numerous definitions of organizational culture have been identified; however, Alvesson (2002), Ehrhart et al. (2014), Martin (2002), Ott (1989), Schein (1991, 2004, 2010), and Trice and Beyer (1993) all identified the most frequently acknowledged qualities and functions of organizational culture:

- Organizational culture is shared.
- Organizational culture is stable.
- Organizational culture has depth.
• Organizational culture is symbolic, expressive, and subjective.
• Organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition.
• Organizational culture is transmitted to new members.
• Organizational culture provided order and rules to organizational existence.
• Organizational culture has breadth.
• Organizational culture is a source of collective identity and commitment.
• Organizational culture is unique.

In addition, Schein (2004, 2010) recognized three levels of organizational culture:

• Artifacts
• Espoused values and beliefs
• Underlying assumptions

These bulleted descriptions of organizational culture were used to connect the data points identified through the coding process with the existing literature on organizational culture.

Table 3 demonstrates the organizational culture subthemes that emerged from coding the stakeholders’ interviews. It also identifies the number of respondents who identified each subtheme, the number of phrases coded, and the percentage of times identified in the area of organizational culture.

Organizational culture is transmitted to new members. Mentoring is an important process whereby an organization’s culture is transmitted to new members of an organization (see Table 3, Section 3.1). It was most frequently mentioned by the research participants as a reason for growth as an individual and as a performing artist at the Barn Theater. Mentoring practices were defined by the American Society of Association
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme from literature review*</th>
<th>Data point</th>
<th>Number of sources (total possible 14)</th>
<th>Number of references (total possible 465)</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Organizational culture is transmitted to new members.</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Organizational culture is a source of collective identity and commitment.</td>
<td>Volunteers are actively recruited and valued at the theater</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition.</td>
<td>Volunteers are hardworking and committed because they “love” the Barn Theater</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Organizational culture is symbolic, expressive, and subjective.</td>
<td>Volunteers are passionate and heartfelt</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Artifacts documented by stories told about experiences within the organization and celebrations that took place.</td>
<td>Praise, encouragement, appreciation expressed to volunteers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Organizational culture has depth and breadth.</td>
<td>Volunteers are the strength and backbone of the Barn Theater</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition.</td>
<td>Barn Theater is a possible stepping stone for future career</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme from literature review</th>
<th>Data point</th>
<th>Number of sources (total possible 14)</th>
<th>Number of references (total possible 465)</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Concept of underlying assumptions</td>
<td>Volunteers work as a team</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Organizational culture provided order and rules to organizational existence.</td>
<td>Voting, bylaws, directors guides, and other structures of operation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 Espoused values of organization</td>
<td>Small budget requires frugality</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11 Espoused values of the organization</td>
<td>Polarization of money management styles</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Executives as “the ongoing process of systematically identifying, assessing, and developing talent to ensure continuity for all key positions.” Schein (2010) indicated that organizational culture may be affected by influences and dynamics within the learning process that occurs in organizations. The cultural actions can be seen when organizational members combine knowledge and good sense from those who came before them (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Schein, 2010).
Thirteen interviewees accredited mentors with their growth. The number of references to mentoring was 75 out of 465 or 16.13%. The consensus of the participants was that mentors helped teach new volunteers the skills necessary to be successful at the Barn Theater. Some of these skills were acting, stage presence, set building, lighting, and costuming. Additionally skills in directing, stage managing, and other leadership roles were taught as new volunteers gained experience. More importantly, the comments made by the majority of the interviewees was that veteran Barn Theater members were eager to mentor and very responsive when a new volunteer expressed an interest in a particular area. It was also mentioned that there were experts in each area of the theater and that they could be called upon to mentor new volunteers whenever needed. Participant F stated,

Every play that I was in with (director’s name), I learned a lot. He insisted on putting feeling in the parts. He also insisted on projection. He would sit in the very back of the theater and if you did not speak up where he could hear you, he got very upset and he would say, “Do it again! Do it again!”

Participant H commented, “I like bringing in new volunteers and encouraging them the way that I was encouraged. I like helping people be the best that they can!” Participant C said,

We have had people come in that have wanted to learn to build set. So we say, come down on Saturday morning at 8 o’clock and we will show you! And you have to show them all the different aspects of it. . . . I have learned so much from (director)—from being on stage and about set building from him.
She added, “So you know it’s really good that you learn from these people who are mentoring you even though you don’t realize they are.”

Mentoring is an important part of organizational culture and leads to sustainability in organizations. It is important that new members of an organization have a good understanding of the skills, practices, and systems that are in place and are needed to ensure the continuation of the organization. For smooth transitions, it is important that staff work closely together to train new leaders (Matan, 2010).

**Organizational culture is a source of collective identity and commitment.** Another question asked during the interviews was, “How does the Barn Theater recruit and keep volunteers involved?” The recruitment and human value of the volunteers who were involved at the theater was an example of the collective identity and commitment that the organizational culture at the Barn Theater supported (see Table 3, Section 3.2). The volunteers collectively joined together and committed to further the vision of the Barn Theater, while at the same time they sought to improve the quality of their own lives. The quality of life, need for personal involvement, desire to serve society, and aspiration to make a difference in the world contributes to volunteerism in the social sector and brings meaningful contributions to America (Drucker, 1990).

The Barn Theater is strictly a volunteer organization, which is true of many nonprofit organizations. Volunteers are needed to perform every job in order to maintain the organization. It is important to create a culture of inclusion and engagement of volunteers within an organization in order to sustain the organization (Bennett, 2016). This culture is needed in order to maintain the workforce of the program and to continue
to provide opportunities for self-expression and creativity through the medium of theater arts.

All of the interviewees felt that volunteers were essential to the functioning of the Barn Theater and that they were actively recruited through word of mouth, as a result of friendships with other volunteers, or because they were attracted by publicity in the media. Thirteen out of 14 interviewees mentioned this area as being an important cultural component of the Barn Theater with 73 out of 465 references to this category (15.7%).

Participant L stated, “That’s the philosophy—we need you! We want you and we are not going to try to change you. The Barn Theater finds where your talents are and it encourages you to use your talents to their fullest.” Participant K added,

It seems to be a lot of people coming to the theater and then the board members approach them about getting involved with the Barn. It’s more like an inward, enclosed, internal process—not so much going outside the Barn to get people.

Participant E mentioned, “Somebody noticed that another person has a specific quality or skill that would be valuable at the Barn and invited them in.”

Several participants noted that the number of volunteers had decreased over the years. Participant N commented,

When I was younger, in the early-mid 80s—early 90s—we had a huge amount of participation with the theater and you always had a large rotation of actors all the time—and directors—and there were a lot of people around here all the time. And then for a while it seemed to wane and the group got smaller. I am noticing that now our group is starting to enlarge again.
Participant B believed that “almost every director is keyed into not only using ongoing talent—people you know are good—but also recruiting someone who has never been in a play before.” Participant M felt that “it was important to encourage people who have never been to the theater to walk through the doors.” Participant L added, “I will give them a tour and talk about the different things and tell them how to get involved and invite them to whatever is the next thing!” Participant H also thought it was important for volunteers to be encouraged, stating, “You have to make them feel welcome here. You have to just keep inviting them in!” For some people it is just the love of performing that is the reward. Participant D stated, “I got a bit part and that turned into a solo and then the audience clapped and cheered for me and I was bit by the acting bug.”

Organizational culture is a source of collective identity whereby volunteers’ participation in the Barn Theater results in a commitment to further the goals of the organization. In addition, the positive feelings that are associated with success serve to reinforce the members so that they feel confident that they are moving in the right direction (Schein, 2010).

**Organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition.** During the course of the interviews, the daily work environment was addressed in response to the question, “What is your perspective on how the Barn Theater has functioned on a daily basis as an organization in the past and the present?” Schein’s (2010) concept of underlying assumptions relates to how the volunteers go about their work on a daily basis. Daily behaviors demonstrated the level of commitment and attention to detail that is critical for sustainability. The daily functioning of an organization is the heart of its culture and has been embedded into its tradition and history (see Table 3, Section 3.3).
It was noted by 13 out of 14 (92.89%) interviewees that the volunteers at the Barn Theater are committed and very hardworking. There were 38 out of 465 phrases coded into this subtheme (13.33%). Participant J stated, “I think the dedication of these people at the theater is truly unbelievable. They volunteer a lot of time and energy.” Participant A revealed, “I was very diligent and I wanted to make sure that things were done correctly.” It was Participant G’s observation that “the volunteers at the Barn Theater are hardworking! If you are going to be a part of it you have to exhibit that your actions, your thought, and your conversations show commitment to the Barn Theater.” Participant C concurred: “They have to be really committed!” She also shared that it was such an enormous job attending to all the details at the Barn Theater that, “It’s wearing me out!” Several participants agreed that it is difficult to keep the Barn Theater going when there are just a handful of committed and hardworking volunteers involved. Concern for burn out was mentioned, and several participants had taken hiatuses over the course of their tenure at the Barn Theater in order to rejuvenate themselves. Having an ample number of hardworking and committed volunteers who perform the necessary day-to-day activities is essential to the sustainability of the Barn Theater, because it depends strictly upon volunteers for its workforce. The culture of an organization provides the members with a sense of identity and generates a commitment toward common goals and its daily operation (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

Participants shared stories about the love they feel for the Barn Theater. Not only are volunteers at the theater valued, passionate, heartfelt, hardworking and committed, but they also love the theater and all that it represents to the volunteers and audience members. It is important to study the significance and the story that exists beneath the
visible behaviors in an organization. These stories tell about the cultural network (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Understanding the volunteers’ love for the Barn Theater is a cultural phenomenon. The Barn Theater is an icon in the community, and a phenomenon of the culture that exists within the theater was demonstrated by actions, feelings, and beliefs of many volunteers that they love the theater and all that is involved in its sustainability.

Participant A summed it up when she said, “I hope that the Barn Theater will last forever!” Participant L shared during the interview,

I have one daughter who accuses me of living here (Laugh)! It is only my second home. I do a lot of things here because things need to be done and people basically appreciate having it done. . . . I love to cook—so I cook. I love to garden, so I garden! I helped build this lobby! See that wall over there, I put that up! As far as the plays go, I love the creation of the feelings on stage and bringing people into the story—those are the things that I love about the Barn Theater!

Participant I added, “There were periods in my life where I lived and breathed the Barn Theater! It is part of my soul!” There appears to be something magical that occurs when volunteers enter the Barn Theater and many develop an undying love for it. Deal and Kennedy (1982) referred to the relationship of the organizational culture and [volunteers] in an organization in the following manner: “Underneath the rational veneer of the workplace lurks a primordial essence of human spirit that neither technology nor willfulness can ever fully replace.” The history and tradition of the Barn Theater set the stage for the engaged and passionate members who work toward organizational sustainability.
Organizational culture is symbolic, expressive, and subjective. Passion for the performing arts is a subjective and expressive mindset that emerged from the coded data of the research interviews conducted at the Barn Theater (see Table 3, Section 3.4). Schein (2010) included emotional displays as part of organizational culture. Behavior that is heartfelt is emotionally displayed as well. Volunteers displaying passion for performing arts and behaving in an emotional, heartfelt manner was another data point that emerged from the interview coding process. It is symbolic, expressive, and quite subjective. Thirteen out of 14 of the interviewees agreed and commented on this area of organizational culture. There were 50 out of 465 phrases coded into this theme (10.75%). The participants stated that most of the volunteers who come to the Barn Theater come because they love the performing arts and they genuinely want to help out. Some come because they want to become actors, others come because they want to find people with common interests, and still others come because they want to learn something new. Participant L stated, “I believe in the arts. I believe in entertainment in a very real sense. I love the creation of the feeling and bringing people into the story—that is what I love.” Participant G added,

The first play I was in with him at the Barn Theater was a little thing—a Neil Simon play, called Rumors. I played a very bit part. I played a cop. And I kind of got the bug. I kind of liked it. I wanted to learn more about it. Then I auditioned again and I got the bug again—I said “WOW,” I’ve got to get back on the stage again.

Participant N agreed:
I really wanted to be on stage and auditioned at the Barn Theater. I got the lead role—and that was my first experience here and it was fabulous? That was it—the bug hit and I have been hooked ever since.

Participant B said, “There is always that satisfaction of taking part in a play—there is nothing like it—a love of theater that has to be it first!” The passion carries over from generation to generation of volunteers at the Barn Theater. Participant N added,

All those people who have been here this whole time from the beginning are always watching over, making sure that everything is good and that you know that they are supporting everything you are doing—no matter what! So even when you screw up—they are there in the aisles laughing with you! I think that is what makes this place so fantastically awesome!

Passion and heart was an important subtheme of organizational culture at the Barn Theater. Beliefs, values, and feelings within an organization are an important part of organizational culture (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Participants believe in the unique culture of the Barn Theater and expressed value in its day to day activities. They are passionate about sharing their love of the arts with each other and with their audiences. Organizational culture acts as a motivator that guides and controls the volunteers, resulting in inspired, passionate, and enthusiastic volunteers (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Passionate volunteers, who are emotionally expressive in a positive manner, motivate a nonprofit organization toward sustainability.

Organizational culture artifacts include stakeholders’ stories about experiences and celebrations. Participants offered great stories about the kinds of rewards and celebrations that occur on a regular basis at the Barn Theater (see Table 3,
A reward system is a key aspect of the concept of sense of worth in cultural behavior and exists in the form of social recognition (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). Social recognition includes public praise, gifts, and celebrations.

Praise, encouragement, and appreciation are actively expressed at the Barn Theater according to 13 out of the 14 interviewees. There were 45 references to this subtheme out of 465 (8.4%). The consensus from all the participants was that volunteers needed to be complimented on their talents and given verbal praise for their accomplishments at the Barn Theater. Volunteers are essential to the program and in order to keep volunteers, the board members and directors realized that they need to give praise, encouragement, and appreciation in an active manner. For some people it is just the love of performing that is the reward. Participant D stated, “I got a bit part and that turned into a solo and then the audience clapped and cheered for me and I was bit by the acting bug.” The part of organizational culture that relates to volunteers’ participation in the Barn Theater is the positive feelings that are associated with success which serve to reinforce the members so that they feel confident that they are moving in the right direction (Schein, 2010).

In addition, the Barn Theater annual program includes an award ceremony called the Hosscars, similar to the Oscars, whereby the talents of the volunteers are celebrated and awards are given for excellence in many categories. Thirteen out of the 14 interviewees have received awards at one or more of the annual award ceremonies. Rituals and ceremonies are effective means to support a healthy organizational culture (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). Further, a healthy organizational culture can support sustainability in an organization.
Participants E and N both indicated that it was important to support and encourage all volunteers no matter what. Participant B said, “And it’s just a matter of finding that little niche to where you can participate and be appreciated and have that self-appreciation as well.” Participants D, H, and J stated that at the time they became involved at the Barn Theater, they were really struggling with their sense of self-worth. Being involved at the Barn Theater and receiving “pats on the back” really helped them develop more self-esteem. Participants H and D said that acting and becoming involved at the Barn Theater gave her a purpose when they were at their lowest point in life. The director told us, “You’d be perfect and he really encouraged us!” Participant H stated, “I won an award for my part in the play and I ate that right up. Every time I received a compliment, I felt a little better about myself and I started to stand up for myself as well!” Participant J indicated that she made friends, and their praise and encouragement helped her during a very difficult period of her life.” The awards really seemed to make a big difference in several interviewees’ perceptions of the Barn Theater. Participant I stated, “I got critical acclaim! I have 11 Awards!” Participant G said that he got a couple of awards and that fueled him to want more and to do more at the Barn Theater. Participant F said that she had been in many plays and had won many Hossars. She was very proud of the fact that to date, she has won more Hossars than anyone else. Participant L said, 

We also have our Hossars—our annual celebration—I love it! We celebrate the talent that we have. They may not be celebrating themselves but they are helping their friends celebrate! We are happy for each other even if we don’t win.

Praise, encouragement, and appreciation were viewed by 13 out of 14 interviewees (92.89%) as an important factor in keeping volunteers involved at the Barn Theater. In a
healthy organization, according to Smith (2013), “The potential for enhanced individual and organizational effectiveness is unlimited because [volunteers] can use their self-assurance, self-worth and opportunity for their personal benefit as well as to help the organization become more effective” (p. 3). Effectiveness promotes sustainability.

Organizational culture has depth and breadth. In relation to the question, “What is your perspective on how the Barn Theater has functioned as an organization in the past and the present?” participants also discussed the strength of the volunteers and their importance to the theater (see Table 3, Section 3.6). Since its onset in 1948, the Barn Theater has valued and believed that the volunteers were the strength and backbone of the theater. They communicated those assumptions and beliefs, through explicit and implicit attitudinal and behavioral norms that were communicated across the spectrum of volunteers and were ingrained deeply in the culture. A sense of pride existed in the volunteerism at the theater. Members emphasized that they were there because they felt they are the strength of the theater and this allowed them to take ownership and contribute to its sustainability in a unique manner.

Thirteen out of 14 participants (92.85%) indicated that the volunteers are the strength and the backbone of the Barn Theater with 38 out of 536 phrases being coded into this subtheme (7.09%). Since this nonprofit organization is strictly a volunteer organization, it is obvious that the volunteers are the strength and backbone of the organization; but several participants said that the strength of the organization and the reason for its sustainability over 68 years is the “people.” Participant D added that the volunteers do everything at the theater: “The volunteers do the entire thing.” She added, “[I] could spend hours down here and I have, but I could spend more just cleaning and
fixing and doing things—for me the strengths are the people!” Finally, Participant L summed it up when she stated, “The volunteers ARE the organization. Without the volunteers we have nothing.” Embedded in the culture of the Barn Theater is the notion that the Barn Theater is a unique icon in the community that was founded by an exceptional group of creative volunteers who loved live theater and wanted to share their love with audiences in the area. The Barn Theater was built through strength and fortitude of the volunteers. This aspect of the culture is embedded across and deeply into the fiber of the organization (Merryman, 1984).

Organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition. Participants in the interview process expressed pride in the fact that, historically, a number of their volunteers went on to have successful careers in performing arts as they discussed the organizational culture of the theater (see Table 3, Section 3.7). This data point examined the concept that some volunteers used their experiences at the Barn Theater as a stepping stone into a future career in performing arts—that the Barn Theater was a training ground for would-be performing artists. Historically, early community theaters were developed to pair professional actors with amateurs to give them the training needed to enter the professional world of performing arts (Brockett, 1964). Since organizational culture is grounded in history and tradition (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Schein, 1991, 2010) amateur actors were mentored and gained experience and confidence at the community theater level, and some were launched into professional careers in performing arts.

Based upon the interviews conducted for this study, eight out of 14 interviewees mentioned this data point in relation to the Barn Theater (57.14%). There were eight comments out of 536 (1.49%) that supported this fact. The Barn Theater has had some
success at producing professional performing arts. In fact, its founder Peter Tewksbury went on to become a famous Hollywood television director. Participant J stated,

Barn Theater is a nice place for people to start learning. And then they can go on from there. I mean many people have pursued, further, they have pursued a theatrical education and they started at the Barn. There are some incredibly successful people!

Participant K was working on the homecoming event planned for August 13, 2016. She explained,

It’s going to involve getting 20 of our previous actors and participants in the Barn who had come through the Barn in their young years, their school years, and have gone on to become professionals. We have had a very positive response; those people have been EXCITED about the prospects of doing it! It is quite obvious that they had very good memories of their time at the Barn and what it meant to them and how it kick-started them into what they are doing now. These people are very successful in multiple areas!

The individuals responsible for planning this homecoming event were working on establishing the Barn Theater as a historical landmark. Participant K stated,

I am involved in the nomination of the Barn Theater for the National Historical Registry. It would be an advantage to receive historical landmark status for many reasons and the Homecoming event will be evidence to the granting agency that history of the theater warrants this special honor. Receiving historical recognition would help protect the Barn Theater for generations to come.
The children of Porterville will have the opportunity to learn about performing arts through their experiences at the Barn Theater. Participant B was excited about the new children’s group that performs at the Barn Theater. He stated, “The children can use the opportunities here as a spring board to go on to greater opportunities. I would be willing to swear that someone from the children’s group will someday become a celebrity!”

The historical committee at the Barn Theater has documented through their research that involvement in this theater can be a springboard for success as a professional performing artist. Schein (2010) referred to the historical committee’s documents as artifacts that share stories about cultural experiences within the organization. The former Barn Theater volunteers who have gone on to become professionals in the performing arts industry are role models and symbols of hope for those who would like the Barn Theater to be a springboard for their success in the industry. This cultural accomplishment added value to the organization and moved it toward sustainability.

**Schein’s concept of underlying assumptions.** Schein’s (2010) concept of underlying assumptions expresses the idea that fundamental beliefs are often underlying an organization’s mindset, thought procedures, and proceedings (see Table 3, Section 3.8). Schein believed that these assumptions were central to its culture. Attitudes and behaviors that gained long-standing acceptance often became so deep-seated that individuals were usually unmindful of their power. This was true of the assumption that prevailed at the Barn Theater—that volunteers must work together as a team. Jill Leviticus (2016) encouraged organizations to build teamwork into their organizational culture. She indicated that when people work together in a cooperative nature, pooling
their skills, knowledge, and talent, the results will far surpass any individual effort. Organizations will function more effectively with an organizational culture that promotes and rewards teamwork (Berry, 2014).

When participants were asked the probing question, “What are some of the behavioral norms that either help or hinder sustainability of the Barn Theater?” there were 10 out of the 14 participants who commented on the teamwork necessary to keep the theater functioning (71.42%). There were 30 phrases coded into this subtheme out of 465 (6.45%). Participant G summarized his perspective on teamwork when he stated,

What the Barn is looking for is people who are looking to more than just a part of themselves. They are looking for the overall aspect of it. When you become a member of the Barn—your nucleus is not just yourself anymore—it becomes the whole organization.

Participant D shared her perspective on teamwork when she mentioned all the groups at the Barn Theater that need to work together in order to make a production happen. There are the actors, directors, stage managers, lighting people, sound people, set construction individuals, props designers, publicity and kitchen helpers as well as box office personnel. She emphasized the need to be knowledgeable about all of these roles:

I think you really have to be involved with all of it—lobby, clean up, or when we have done clean up in the light booth or working in the kitchen or repainting the bathrooms or there are so many different aspects that they have to tie together!

It’s not just work on stage!
Participant A added,

I work with a group or in a group pretty much every time I am involved in a show at the Barn Theater. It has helped me grow and learn how to work with other people and deal with different situations. So it is not just you, you, me, me, I, and I. It is the whole entire group working together as a team that makes productions the best they can be.

Participant L reflected on teamwork in her comment, “It takes communication and respect to build an effective team. We really try to listen to each other here and focus on what is best for the theater—we all have the same goals!” It is important to incorporate teamwork into your organization’s core values. In order to accomplish this team members must be trained and be provided with role models. They should also be given the freedom to proceed in the best way that they can, keeping in mind that they are accountable for the results. Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision and the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results (Carnegie, n.d.).

**Organizational culture provided order and rules to organizational existence.**

Organizational structure is an important factor that influenced the sustainability of organizations (Schein, 2010). Alvesson (2002), Ehrhart et al. (2014), Ott (1989), Schein (1991, 2010), and Trice and Beyer (1993) suggested that order and rules contribute to the cultural existence of an organization (see Table 3, Section 3.9). Further, Louis (1980) asserted that “the underlying rules of communication and decision making that define an organization are part of its culture and affect the actors within the group” (p. 162). Rules
and procedures—systems of operation—provide structure to the functioning of organizations (Schein, 2010). This research pertained to the comments made by the research participants in this study.

Participants expanded upon the question, “What is your perspective on how the Barn Theater has functioned as an organization in the past and the present?” Based upon the comments of the interviewees regarding their bylaws and the way in which meetings are conducted, there are rules of communication and decision making in existence at the Barn Theater. There were eight out 14 participants who commented on this area. (57.14%) There were 24 out of 465 phrases that emerged in this category (5.38%).

Participant M stated,

The way it’s organized now is fairly typical for community organization. You have the board and the common membership. We have elections every 2 years, and we do rotate people in and out. I think that overall, the goal of the decision making is to make the theater successful. We follow the organizational rules and come to a common agreement on how those rules should be enacted and how you spread the work to all volunteers. We have committees to research and discuss pros and cons of various issues and then the committee makes recommendations to the board, and that is how the system works.

Participant N added, “We discuss things in board meetings and we make decisions together. We come to a consensus and I think that it is done fairly.” Participant K commented, “We have bylaws that provide structure for our functions and meetings. The bylaws were established in 1948 and are updated every 5 years by consensus of the board of directors. We use Robert’s Rules of Order to conduct meetings.” Participant B also
mentioned the director’s handbook. He said, “The director’s handbook is really useful because it can help a first-time director. It lists and discusses all the things that you really need to be cognizant of.” The rules of order and communication are set forth in the bylaws and business is conducted using Robert’s Rules of Order. The participants emphasized the need for decisions to be made for the betterment of the theater. The communication and decision-making structure of the organization is embedded into its culture, and with this dependability the members can make decisions that will support its sustainability.

In response to the question, “What is your perspective on the decision-making process at the Barn Theater?” Participants responded from various perspectives. The organizational culture can have a strong impact on the decision-making process. This culture consists of norms, values, and beliefs that guide member behavior, while focusing what is perceived to be right and wrong (Hutton, 2014). Decision making at the Barn Theater has been easy at times or with conflict during heated or even volatile discussions at times, depending on what the members each feel is right or wrong regarding the topic. Easy decisions are made by consensus and compromise. Participant F simply stated, “The board votes and makes decisions if something gets brought up—like we need this and somebody will second it and then vote on it and if we have the money for it, it is approved.” Participant M shared, “I think that if a problem is easy to resolve, then a decision can be facilitated quickly with a consensus vote.” Participant K added, “I have appreciated the discussion that has occurred and the questions that have been asked and the order that is kept at the board meetings. This really helps our decision making.”
Participant N really likes using committees to assist the decision-making process. She stated,

All committees would meet once a month and we’d all come together on the same night and we would all sit down at different tables. There would be a committee at each table, and everyone would be in the same room having our meetings. If you were on three committees—you would just bounce from table to table making sure you hit your committees. That way your committee met and you were making sure that things happened.

Participant L concluded by saying, “Some of the board members are very firm in their beliefs that it should be a certain way but in the end there is always compromise. Consensus comes from continually keeping the dialogue open.”

Other decisions are not made so easily. Participant D indicated that board members have very different opinions. She stated, “Sometimes people argue—we have had board meetings that are 3 hours long. We hash it out and try to come to an agreement, but sometimes there is no agreement reached.” Participant K discussed heated discussions. She said, “If there is a flare up it doesn’t last very long. But when the discussion is finished—order is kept—you vote and everybody is good.” Participant N added, “There used to be major head butting—I mean we had a time period where there was knock-down, drag out, horrible, horrible board meetings that lasted 4 or 5 hours—terrible, terrible!” Participant E concurred, “I remember the 70s particularly—we had some really strong personalities—they would just go at each other like some of the things that I have seen at this campaign—and it was not all pleasant.” Participant A contributed her thoughts on conflicts:
There are people who need to back off on some of the changes that they want to make. There are just as many if not more who need to be open minded about things that do need to be changed or fixed.

With the most difficult decisions, some board members took it upon themselves to get information and to research the problem in hopes of gaining support from the board. Participant D stated,

And so two of us took it upon ourselves to get information on it and find out the pricing on it and presented it to the board and it was really hard for some of the older people to understand that we really needed that even though it was so expensive.

Schein’s espoused values of the organization. There were two data points that related to the espoused values of the organization (see Table 3, Section 3.10). The members pride themselves on being able to operate with a mindset of frugality. They developed this attitude during times when the Barn Theater struggled to have the money to keep in operation. There were 20 phrases coded into this area out of 465 with the value of frugality in mind (4.3%). In addition, there were 16 out of 465 phrases coded into the data point of polarization of money management styles. The two data points are different but related. The board members who have seen the Barn Theater struggle for existence do not want to spend the money to make large purchases. They would rather fix what they have. They work to have needed materials donated, and then they perform the work themselves. For example, there was a need to install central air conditioning at the theater. Traditionally, the theater has had the mindset of frugality. Participant H said, “You have to make your money stretch and make do with what you have.” Participant K
agreed: “We don’t want to drain too far down (savings) before we start building back up.”

The Barn Theater was bequeathed a sizable inheritance a few years ago, and this money is in a savings account and is protected by the older, more conservative board members. Participant M stated, “It’s a big seed and we are able to now do some of the projects that we had on our wish list.” Several board members see central air conditioning as an essential investment which would allow for more summer productions. Participant D stated, “It is important that we get the air conditioning upgraded. I think we need a new air conditioning unit here.” Participants A, C, D, L, M, and N all favor the purchase of central air. Others do not want to spend the inheritance, preferring to save the money for emergencies. Participants B, E, F, and H preferred to continue to invest money into the existing swamp cooler that frequently needs repair. Parts have to be fabricated to fix the cooler, because they are out of date and not available for purchase. Participant H stated, “Sure air conditioning would be great, but it is too expensive. We need to keep conservative. Fixing the swamp cooler is better.” This conflict is an example of how numerous conflicts have gone unresolved for years because of the polarization of the board members’ mindsets about spending money. In the end, the frugality of the board of directors has allowed the theater to make basic emergency improvements in the theater while at the same time preserving its financial solvency. Both mindsets are needed for sustainability of the program. There are times when it is better to fix what you have as cheaply as possible and there are other times when, in the long run, the payoff is better when you invest your money in a more expensive item. The
key here is communication and conflict resolution. There has to be a compromise when all parties can agree on the best solution.

The first research subquestion of this study was, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” In summary, the data collected from 14 interviews of stakeholders at the Barn Theater indicated that organizational culture is the strongest factor that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater (38.71%). Within organizational culture, mentoring and the attributes of the volunteers were mentioned as most contributing to the organizational culture of the theater. The structure, daily functioning, and decision making of the theater were also contributing factors. Finally, the mindset of the volunteers who are frugal provided the manpower for them to maintain the physical structure and work toward the common goal of sustaining live theater at the Barn Theater in Porterville.

Findings for Research Subquestion 2

What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Connection of subtheme to the literature review. Leadership is a critical component of nonprofit sustainability (New Level Group, 2006). In addition, York (n.d.) from the TCC group stated, “Sustainable organizations exhibit leadership that is visionary, strategic, inclusive, decisive, inspirational, motivational, and accountable” (p. 3). Further, Drucker (1990) suggested that leadership must be innovative in a sustainable organization. Leaders must think ahead and look at potential problems from a new
perspective, keeping the big picture in mind. Because of the research available on leadership and sustainability of an organization, it was included as a factor in this study.

The second subquestion included in this research project was, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors, which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” According to the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole New Level Group directed by John Heyman, and the TCC Group, directed by Richard Mittenthal, leadership is one of the critical elements of nonprofit sustainability. Leaders need to attend to two factors that go hand in hand to support sustainability, quality program delivery, and financial matters. According to J. Bell et al. (2010), “It is not enough [for nonprofits] to have a high-impact program if there’s no effective strategy for sustaining the organization’s finances, neither is it enough to only be financially stable” (p. 3). Leaders must attend to both factors in a balanced manner. Additionally, York (n.d.) from the TCC group stated, “Sustainable organizations exhibit leadership that is visionary, strategic, inclusive, decisive, inspirational, motivational, and accountable” (p. 3).

Similarly, based upon transformational leadership theory, there are 10 fundamental elements of effective leaders (Larick & White, 2012).

- Character and integrity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity and sustained innovation
- Diversity
- Personal and interpersonal skills
- Emotional intelligence
Leadership in nonprofit organizations is complex and requires many skills in order to build sustainable organizations. Vision, relationships, knowledge of strategic planning, and ability to manage finances are all important. Drucker (1990) indicated that commitment and competence of leaders result in sustainability in the nonprofit sector. The skills and qualities suggested by York, Larick, White, and Drucker were used as references from the literature to ground the data points found in theory.

During the interviews conducted as part of this research study, the participants were asked, “What is your perspective on the leadership at the Barn Theater?” All of the participants responded to this question (100%). There were a total of 362 out of 1,201 coded phrases in the area of leadership (30.14%). The data points that emerged, in order from greatest to least, were shared leadership and diverse roles (20.44%), relationships established at the Barn Theater (19.61%), income from a variety of sources (17.13%), hardworking board of directors (9.39%), goal setting and prioritizing (7.46%), selection and profitability of productions (6.91%), networking skills with the community (6.35%), organization of leaders (5.25%), good communication skills (4.70%), and providing vision for the future development of the theater (2.76%; see Table 4).

**Collaboration.** The most frequently mentioned leadership data point indicated that leadership was shared among members of the board of directors, requiring a collaborative leadership policy, at the Barn Theater (see Table 4, Section 4.1).
Table 4

Leadership Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme from literature review* (see Table 3.1)</th>
<th>Data point</th>
<th>Number of sources (total possible 14)</th>
<th>Number of references (total possible 362)</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Collaboration</td>
<td>Shared leadership and diverse roles</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Personal and interpersonal skills/emotional intelligence</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Creativity and sustained innovation</td>
<td>Income from a variety of sources</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Character and integrity/commitment</td>
<td>Hardworking board of directors</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Strategic planning</td>
<td>Goal setting and prioritizing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Accountability/decision making</td>
<td>Selection and profitability of productions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Political intelligence/collaboration</td>
<td>Community networking skills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Competence/strategic planning</td>
<td>Organizational skills of leaders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Communication</td>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 Visionary leadership</td>
<td>Visionary leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Participants revealed that in their opinion, shared, collaborative leadership led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater. During the 1980s and 1990s, leadership theory began to include the concept that leadership could be shared. Teams were formed in organizations with participants from all appropriate levels in the decision-making
process. Team members share leadership roles (Fullan, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003). Team members looked beyond their own personal agendas and acted for the good of the group (Bass, 1985). Additionally, since the 1990s, transformational leadership theory has evolved where organizational leaders work together with the common goal to create positive changes that benefit the organization as a whole (Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

Shared leadership was defined as a dynamic, collaborative process (Conger & Pearce, 2003) whereby influence was distributed among a team of individuals for the purpose of the helping a team achieve a common goal for the betterment of the organization. The characteristics of shared leadership included dispersed interaction, collective duty completion, mutual support, and skill expansion (Wood, 2005). It also involved a shared purpose and a cohesive voice, all heightened by social communication that involved mutual accountability, partnership, equity, and ownership (Jackson, 2000). Finally, shared leadership emerged as a means to help organizations work toward a common purpose, set high expectations, and tackle challenging goals (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

At the Barn Theater shared leadership began because of the diverse roles needed in order for the theater to function. There were many areas where leadership is needed, including directors, stage managers, producers, lights, sound, music, set design, and construction to name a few. Becoming an expert at one or more areas at the theater placed that expert in a leadership role with influence over the day-to-day activities at the theater. Over time, these leaders were recruited to serve on the board of directors. There the experts had voting rights and more influence over the decision making at the theater.
The board of directors served as a leadership team and individuals on the board usually represented an area of expertise required for the theater. In addition, the president of the board took the role of organizing meetings, keeping meetings on track, and making sure that positive lines of communication were open among the leadership team members. The president was a key player but not the only leader. Her role included visibility at all activities, since she represented the Barn Theater to the public. She also needed to respect the authority of the other leaders and allow them the freedom to carry on their planning and day-to-day activities, while ensuring communication among all team members. With shared leadership, the role of the president was modified.

In this study, 13 out of the 14 participants commented on shared leadership during the interview process (92.86%). There were 74 phrases out of 465 coded into this data point (20.44%). Participants in the study said that there were 15 members of the board of directors who served on the leadership team. Participant G explained how he became a member of the leadership team:

I started learning more aspects and started applying more musical background and my artistic background—doing set design, set construction, décor and things like that. I mean there are so many things involved, and I’m glad that I am able to do so many of those things. You know—put myself out there for the good of the whole.

Participant L said, “There are so many areas where you can excel as a leader at the Barn—and we will help you find your niche.” Participants H and L became leaders in the kitchen and do most of the organizing, planning, and cooking for all events that
require food. Participant A liked having someone in charge of the different areas. She stated, “There is a separate group for dinners. You know who to go to for help.”

There were two board members who were considered experts at lights and sound. Participant H agreed, stating, “We have people that are really good at lights and so they lead that area.” Participant M agreed: “They are very excellent with lights and they are up to date on equipment—both sound and lighting equipment and I think we are very strong in that department.” Participants G, H, and L love to create scenery. Participant L stated, “I love being able to create the scene and then to step back and look at it and watch other people as they are drawn into it!” Participant G is also good at publicity and takes charge of all of the newspaper ads, flyers, and media advertisement. Participant N said that she loved history so she kept track of all of the memorabilia and artifacts that document the history of the Barn Theater. She also loved to be in charge of the box office, and she kept the costumes clean and organized. She stated, “The history is important; doing the reservations and the box office are important to me and you know I take care of the costumes, too.” Participants E and K were involved in a project to have the Barn Theater declared a historical landmark. They have been working on this project for over 6 years. If they are successful, the Barn Theater’s sustainability will be protected for generations to come, and it will also be eligible for state and federal grants that support the arts. Participant M was known for his directing abilities and the fact that his shows made a substantial profit. In addition, he was knowledgeable about the physical structure of the theater and improvements that need to be made to the building itself. Other board members who were not participants in the study were also leaders in the area of building maintenance. Participant D liked to clean and fix things up. She said
that her leadership role was from “cleaning the warehouse, mending the costumes, cleaning the bathrooms, and keeping the stage floor mopped. You do need to be aware of how everything flows. My favorite thing about this is that you’re not kept in one area.” Finally, Participant E summed it up: “There is enough room for a variety of activities.”

Participants in the study also revealed through the interviews that they believe that the leaders at the Barn Theater had longevity in their diverse roles and their wisdom and experience have helped to sustain the theater. In his book, *Creating Your Business Vision* (2013), Nichols stated, “Organizations and teams can benefit significantly from a leader who communicates and implements bold, compelling vision through changing seasons over a long period of time” (p. 11). The advantages stated by Nichols regarding long-term leadership, were knowledge of the organization and trust in the leader, and predictability, which led to stability within the organization. Longevity also provided a leader time to share his or her compelling vision with other members of the team and work with them toward realizing their mutual vision.

In general, it seemed that the participants felt that the longevity of the diverse leadership at the Barn Theater was an advantage. Participant G stated, “The uniqueness of the Barn Theater is its nucleus of veterans. They are very influential and powerful, especially our current president.” Participant B said, “I have been on the board off and on for years now. I will continue to participate as long as I can.” Participant J added, “I mean most of them have been dedicated, I mean, 40-50 years of their lives!” Participant F said,

I got started back in 1948, just after they got started and I have been president for several terms. That was a long time ago, but I am still involved as a lifetime
member. People still come to me for advice and feedback. My experience helped directors and other leaders because I had so much knowledge in the different areas.

Participant M was not sure that leadership longevity was effective. He said, “It does tend to be the same people over and over again and it’s tough to make changes when we have the same leaders.” Participant L agreed stating, “I have been on the board for three terms and I have taken breaks from the theater because sometimes it takes so much from you that you have to step back and take a sabbatical just to renew yourself.”

Overall, long-term participation in diverse leadership roles at the Barn Theater has helped with continuity and has helped sustainability through the sharing of knowledge to newer members. Participant C summed it up: “It seems like we have always had leaders in all facets of the Barn Theater that stepped up right when we needed them!” The Barn Theater relied on tradition and experience of their leaders for guidance over the years. New people coming in have to build credibility over time before they can influence the change process.

All of these leaders needed to work together for the common goal of keeping the theater open and “the best it can be.” Some of the communication between leaders took place informally in social situations and some in committees, and final discussions and decisions were made at the monthly board of directors meetings. The fact that all leaders had a passion for a common goal kept them working together as a team. Goleman (2000) indicated that leaders needed to be motivated toward accomplishing their dream, and this motivation resulted in a strong sense of shared leadership where all were held accountable for the outcome of the organization. Shared leadership within the
organization was a way to involve people with many talents and skills in leadership roles. In order for shared leadership to lead to sustainability, communication and collaboration are needed.

**Interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.** The data point of relationships was connected to the leadership concepts of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence (see Table 4, Section 4.2). Interpersonal relationships refer to a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization for the betterment of that organization. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to recognize, understand, and manage his or her own emotions. It also involves recognizing, understanding, and influencing the emotions of others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

Healthy interpersonal relationships that consist of open communication and constructive feedback result in people feeling supported and appreciated by their colleagues. It is important to have trustworthy team members available who can provide honest feedback in a helpful and sincere manner. In addition, it is important that the goals for the organization receive support from all leaders. When members of an organization possess emotional intelligence, they use effective communication skills and are able to be aware of their own feelings in a particular situation and also understand and respect the feelings and opinions of others. Leaders who possess emotional intelligence tend to have more self-confidence. Emotional intelligence is an important organizational component that is needed for effectiveness and sustainability.

During the interview process, 10 out of 14 participants commented on their experiences with nurturing, supportive relationships at the theater (71.43%). There were
71 out of 465 phrases coded into this subtheme (15.27%). Relationships were described as close, lifelong friendships where trust had been established. Stronger self-confidence was identified as a result of these friendships.

Participant M stated, “It is important to build friendships at the Barn Theater. I believe that many friendships have begun here. I met a lot of friends and it altered the course of my life in a very positive way.” Participant N added,

We really care about each other here. People come and check on you just because they want to know that you are alright. These are the only people that I trust. I have made the most amazing friends and connections here.

Participant D agreed: “We all become very close with one another.” Participant J added, “I really, really like the people at the theater! It’s a good support network.” In addition, Participant I said, “The people who are on the board are real close.”

Friendships are formed when people have common interests and respect each other’s abilities.

Several participants indicated that they have grown in self-confidence as a result of the organizational culture at the Barn Theater. Participant H shared, “I have grown a lot and I kind of did not have much self-confidence. I learned to stand up for myself.” Participant D agreed: “I was meek and very quiet when I first came in, but then you gain confidence from all these people that you work with. I have become more secure as a person.” Participant J said,

The people at the Barn Theater helped me. I gained confidence. I had gone through a very difficult time with my family, but the relationships I formed with
the people from the Barn Theater really helped and now I volunteer many extra hours.

Participant A added, “If it were not for the people at the Barn Theater, I would not have the strength to get up on the stage. I also learned to work with groups when I started directing.” Participants E also said she had gained confidence because of the friendships that she made. She was mute at an early age, and being with the people from the Barn Theater gave her the confidence to start speaking on stage. Confident people, who respect each other, work together to form effective leadership teams.

Several participants focused on their personal belief that it is important to be honest within their relationships at the Barn Theater. Participant H said,

I never lie to anybody. If you don’t want the truth from me then don’t ask for feedback. You have to be truthful in theater because there is just too much “bullshit” out there. People have to be honest or it will show in your production!

Participant G also stated, “And that’s one thing about [volunteer] is that she may be blunt but she’s plain spoken and she tells the truth. She speaks what’s on her mind and I think you have to do that in any organization.” Participant C added, “Trust forms when people are authentic.”

Effective interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence are an important aspect of healthy organizations. In an organization where people feel free to give their input and ideas, information is shared freely, conflicts are openly discussed and worked through, and people are more willing to express innovative ideas and to take risks (Stark & Kelly, 2016). Open communication is a criteria needed for organizational sustainability.
Creativity and sustained innovation. The third most frequently coded data point was that Barn Theater leadership produced income from a variety of sources (see Table 4, Section 4.3). Many nonprofit organizations, specifically community theater, rely on donations and grants for the finances needed to operate (Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). In many cases income from ticket sales for each production is not enough to pay all the bills. Creative and innovative community theater programs have diversified their fundraising activities in order to maintain financial solvency (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014).

According to the data collected from 10 out of the 14 participants in this study (71.43%), the Barn Theater maintains economic sustainability because they obtain income from a variety of sources (see Appendix E). Participant M indicated that the Barn Theater on occasion receives large donations: “Fortunately for us a woman passed away and left a significant amount of money to the Barn Theater. I think it was $140,000. So we have a lot of seed money.” Participant C said, “We have been lucky to have some gifts. The gifts or inheritances have helped us update the building.”

Participant F said that another source of income was through the sale of sponsorships: “There are Barn Theater Angels—donors—Angel and Golden Horseshoe—$100 a year and Silver Angels—$50 a year—that is where we get a lot of our money.” Participant I added,

Some of our directors have been really good at getting donations for the Barn. Beverly Rose was great at getting money. She would ask everyone she knew for donations of whatever they had. She got us all kinds of stuff.
Participant L shared, “[Board member] also donates money to the Barn—a lot of people don’t know how much he helps out.”

Ticket sales for season productions are another form of income mentioned by Participants D, K, and N. However they all indicated that ticket sales themselves were not usually enough to sustain the Barn Theater. Participant C added, “We have had some really good runs in the last 6 months.” Participant B suggested beefing up the season productions and appealing more to audience preferences in order to keep ticket sales strong and Participant F indicated that season tickets are a potential source of income that could be improved upon.

Participant L is very proud of the kitchen that was added on when the theater lobby was built in 1984. She stated, “When we built this lobby, we had them build a kitchen and we started doing parties. There have been a lot of times that it has been the kitchen keeps us open.” Participant F concurred, “We were so good at getting people to rent the Barn for a dinner and gosh I think almost every weekend there were dinners that made extra money.” Participant D added that the Sunday brunch, started by the kitchen volunteers, was a money maker. Participant I said, “Christmas is a great time for the kitchen. They book parties to all kinds of groups who want to have a catered Christmas party.”

Working with the community has been another way in which the leadership at the Barn Theater has created opportunities for income. Participant G said, “We are also able to have some of our school groups come in and fill in the areas in between plays.” Participant H stated, “Working with the school districts has added to our income for the past several years.” Participant E added, “We made almost $3,000 from Bellevue
Elementary School’s Peter Pan production, this year.” Participant D stated, “We also work with Burton every year and the extra money really helps out.”

The Barn Theater has also hosted events for the city of Porterville. “The chamber of commerce had a meet-and-greet here,” said Participant L. “Our newly acquired beer and wine license helped make us some money at that event.” Participant D concurred: “We obtained our liquor license so we could serve beer and wine. That also helps with the revenue.” She added, “We have hosted some other events as well. We hosted a viewing of a documentary on the drought conditions in Porterville. There was no admission, but we did sell some alcoholic beverages and that helped us make money.”

Other sources of income include special events that are conducted by the volunteers at the Barn Theater. “We hosted Luna Fest and brought a lot of the LBGT community into the theater,” commented Participant D. Participant L supported the fundraising events sponsored by leadership at the Barn:

The Buzzard Fest started as an idea, and it is a money maker. We have also had Blues and Brews for a couple of years. The Elvis impersonator fundraiser is always a hit! We have also had magic shows and symphony groups and singers in the past.

Participant G started the adult comedy night activity this year. “Adults only—open mic—comedy night deal at the Barn for 21 and over. We cleared over $1,000 in only 2 and a half hours.” Participant G was also proud of the annual summer follies and melodrama program that he helped direct: “We are trying other genres of entertainment—diversity helps!”
According to the participants in this study, the Barn Theater has been able to pay its bills, month after month, because of the creative and innovative fundraisers that they conduct over the course of the year, since the income from the season’s regular performances do not generate enough money to sustain the program. Large donations are used for building renovation and repairs. Creativity and innovation are important characteristics for Barn Theater leaders to possess in order to be sustainable.

**Character and integrity/commitment.** Leadership elements of character, integrity, and commitment are fundamental for effectiveness (see Table 4, Section 4.4; Larick & White, 2012). Building trust and respect within an organization is an important aspect of leadership. Sayeed and Shanker (2009) asserted that leaders are seen as trustworthy and available for authentic discussion. Additionally, making decisions based upon ethics can be a difficult task, and a leader with integrity will make the decision based upon the ethical values of the organization. Demonstrating high ethical values in daily decision making is very important for leaders (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Commitment is also an important aspect of character and integrity. An effective leader must demonstrate consistency between making a verbal commitment and the behavior completed to fulfill the commitment. Further, when a leader is passionate about his or her work, the commitment to success is greater (Goleman, 2012). The concept of a commitment means it shows up in action, not just words. This can be the difference between the “talk” and the “walk.” When leaders model passion and hard work and demonstrate character, integrity, and commitment to fulfilling responsibilities, others follow their lead.
The next important data point is that the Barn Theater has a hardworking and passionate board of directors. The participants were asked the probing question, “What qualities do the members of the board of directors demonstrate?” Eleven out of 14 commented that the hardworking, committed board of directors controlled the Barn Theater (78.57%). Research participants described these leaders as truly passionate about their work at the theater and commented on how many dutiful hours they spent on Barn Theater activities. They also commented that these leaders were the driving force behind the sustainability of the theater.

The board of directors was established when the Barn Theater gained nonprofit status shortly after its founding. Nonprofits, by law, are required to have a board of directors to make leadership decisions for the benefit of the organization (New Level Group, 2006). Some important criteria for selecting a board member are interest in the purpose and goals of the organization, leadership experience, interpersonal and communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and a desire to learn more about the functioning of the organization (York, n.d.).

Of particular importance to the board of directors is the skill needed for decision making and conflict resolution. There needs to be high morale and trust among members. Strong interpersonal relationships must be built, and these can be assisted by team-building activities and training in conflict resolution skills that are necessary to facilitate crucial conversations and decisions (York, n.d.).

Most importantly, a board of directors must be passionate and engaged in the activities of the nonprofit organization (Drucker, 1990; New Level Group, 2006; York, n.d.). In addition, specialized training for members of the board may be indicated (R.
Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Training in the areas of play selection, children’s theater and networking with schools, and finally fiscal matters that affect the budgetary issues of the theater are recommended (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Without hardworking and passionate members of the board of directors, the theater program would be at risk and have difficulty with sustainability.

According to Participant M, the board of directors at the Barn Theater is a “strong board with a passionate membership. It helps that we all have a love of live theater which is our common ground.” Participant I added that the “people on the board of directors really want to be there. We usually have a passionate group of board members, I will tell you that!” Participant D shared her personal story: “I love being on the board. I love being able to help and give my opinion. I think that our theater runs as smoothly as it does because we have such a hardworking, supportive board.”

Participant G was concerned with engagement of the board of directors in the daily operation of the theater. He stated,

The board has to be active, participate, express opinions, and really be engaged. If you are engaged then you will be invited back over and over again. If you want to be on the board it takes a year or two. You have to show that you are watchful, helping, have a good attitude, be willing to jump in, and you have to show that you are responsible and will fulfill your obligations to the theater.

Participant B summed it up when he shared, “I think serving on the board was a good experience as far as the planning of the season and the expenses—what we can do to help the Barn Theater’s image and things like that!”
As far as engagement in conflict resolution, the participants had strong opinions. Participant M said, “As I got on the board I realized that it is tough to try to change people’s opinion and to promote good will instead of ill will. It can be very political when you don’t agree.” Participant G agreed: “We rarely see eye to eye.” Participant C concurred, “It is a hard board to govern.”

Participant L addressed the issue of hurt feelings when she added, “The board generally gets together at the end of a heated discussion and if you are going to get your feelings hurt because they vote against something you want, you really don’t belong there.” Participant A could see both sides to the notion of conflict resolution. She stated, “There are people who need to back off on some of the changes that they want to make. There are just as many if not more who need to be open minded about things that do need to be changed or fixed.” Participant K, a newer member of the board, had a more positive opinion of the process of conflict resolution, stating, “I have appreciated the discussion that has occurred and the questions that have been asked and the order that is kept at the board meetings and—there haven’t been very many at all what I would term a heated discussion, and if there is a flare up it doesn’t last very long. But when the discussion is finished—order is kept—you do the vote and everybody is good.”

Finally, Participant N stated that she liked to divide into committees to do research and make decisions. She felt that it was easier and more productive to come to a resolution of an issue in a smaller group. She stated, “That way your committee met and you were making decisions to ensure that progress was being made.”

There was no mention made of team-building activities or training for board members. The board relied on the skills that each board member had when they were
elected to serve. There was no evidence to support the use of training in the areas of team building, interpersonal relationships, networking skills with the youth or schools, or of training in conflict resolution. Specialized leadership training in nonprofit organizations could help lead to sustainability (New Level Group, 2006).

Overall, the research participants indicated that the board of directors was hardworking and passionate. They displayed character, integrity, and commitment in their work at the Barn Theater. The participants felt that these leadership qualities were important for the sustainability of the organization. The board of directors’ work ethics keep the theater open.

**Strategic planning.** Goal setting and prioritizing, a form of strategic planning, was identified by the participants in this research study as a mean of helping sustain the Barn Theater (see Table 4, Section 4.5). Eight out of 14 stakeholders mentioned this existing practice at the theater (57.14%). There were 27 out of 291 phrases coded into this area (9.28%). Strategic planning is a process whereby organizations set priorities, focus energy, strengthen operations, build a sense of community, and monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the organization’s activities (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2015). Generally, there is a defined process for strategic planning that includes process monitoring and accountability. First, there is an assessment of current conditions. Second, a plan for implementation is developed. Third, the plan is carried out. Fourth, the results are monitored for success. According to McNerney et al. (2013), “Highly successful nonprofits credit strategic planning and management to their overall success” (p. 1).
During one of the board meetings observed by the researcher prior to the interviews, it was mentioned that several years ago one of the board members, who did not participate in this study, carried out an assessment and prioritizing activity where board members assessed the condition of the physical structure of the Barn Theater and made a list of all the needs, wants, and wishes for the theater. During a board meeting, the group discussed the list of improvements suggested and tweaked it based upon their discussion. Then the group split into smaller groups, and each small group ranked the concerns and placed them into categories of needs (must do), wants, and wishes. Then the entire group met again and discussed all input and devised an overall plan and voted to execute that plan. Since then several items on the needs list have been accomplished and the group is moving toward the wants list. The eight research participants who commented on this process believed that it would promote the theater’s sustainability.

Participant L stated,

(Board member) did something that is really good—he built a sheet where we colored the importance of each problem with the building. With (board member) putting it down on paper and making us look at it—it was good. So we have all taken to it, and we do little things with it so we can cross things off the list. We are much more organized in how we take care of the theater.

Participant C agreed: “They made a list of things and we got them all checked off—at least the major ones. Now we can work on our wants.” Participant N clarified the process:

We have a spreadsheet that a group of our members sat down together—we had a committee—we actually did have a really good committee. And made a list of
wants, needs, and some wishes of what the theater needed—or could have—or should have and they made a list and prioritized that list and they came to the board and we went through the list again and we re-prioritized what we felt was necessary, and we periodically go through it and we decided to take care of this now and this needs to be moved to the top now. The priority things have been whittled down quite a bit, but the wishes are quite huge because there are things that we would like to do to modernize our building and a lot of things that we would like to make things more comfortable for the people that come in and volunteer in our theater.

Participant M was more philosophical in his response:

Aside from the prioritizing activity, I think overall, the goal is “Let’s make the theater very successful, let’s follow the organizational rules, and the goal would be to get along and come to a common agreement on how those rules should be enacted and how you spread the word to non-board members and theater participants and that’s how the system works. We have to always keep the common goal in mind.”

Based upon research conducted by the New Level Group (2006), leaders should be engaged in goal setting and other methods of strategic planning so their opportunities for sustainability are improved.

The quality of theatrical performances at the community theater level is an important factor to consider when examining the issue of sustainability. The subthemes of play selection and profitability are related to the quality of performances at the Barn Theater and are considered to be a function of the leadership team. Quality theatrical
productions must have audience appeal, because customer satisfaction is a primary objective of nonprofit organizations (Grobman, 1999; Walters, 2007). Another consideration is that the productions must connect with the audiences on an emotional or an intellectual level in order to be artistically and financially successful. The audience must be able to appreciate the content of a show and the language used to tell the story while being entertained by the nuances of the performance (Walters, 2007).

Accountability and decision making. Leadership of a theatrical organization has the responsibility for selecting plays that have audience appeal and that are prone to be well attended by the public. This results in profitability for theater (Mulcahy, 2011). Leaders need to be concerned not only with the artistic aspect of a show but also the financial viewpoint vital for sustainability (see Table 4, Section 4.6). Abbate (2013), Manager of the Gorilla Tango Theatre in Chicago, suggested that leaders should calculate the total cost of each production. This number is used to determine how much of a profit/loss resulted from the show. Profitability in the long run is necessary in order for a theater to be sustainable (R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010).

Eleven out of 14 participants in this study commented on play selection and/or profitability (78.57%). There were 25 phrases out of 291 coded that were related to this subtheme (8.59%). Plays are selected at the Barn Theater, as a leadership function, once a year by a play-reading committee composed of interested board members. Members of the Barn Theater are welcome to submit scripts of any plays that they would like to see produced at the theater. The play-reading committee reads each script and chooses what they think will be successful. The list of shows proposed by the committee is then voted upon by the board of directors, who may make changes as needed.
Based upon comments heard at board meetings by the researcher, much of the
decision is made based upon the committee’s recommendations and the availability and
interest of the theater’s directors (Personal observation, 2016). There is little
conversation about how appealing the show would be to the general audience base or on
how much money the show would profit.

Overall, the criteria for play selection has changed over the years. Participants L
and M said, “Things are changing—some people want comedies all the time. They don’t
want the serious things.” Participant J agreed:

They like the lighthearted fun things. I’ve noticed that people really love to be
entertained, and in the past some of the plays were very good but they were not
exactly entertaining. The attendance was not as good. The Barn needs to do
every kind of play possible, but I think they need to look at more lighthearted,
entertaining plays. There was a play earlier this season which was a melodrama
and it incorporated over two dozen actors and actresses from throughout the
community. I think they were sold out practically every performance—and I
think musicals and melodramas seem to draw more people.

Participant G was interested in having the play-reading committee select shows for
audiences of all ages. He said, “I wish the play-reading committee at the Barn Theater
would pay more attention to—Is this going to be a more family oriented production?”
Participant N was satisfied with the play selection process. She stated, “I think that the
more diverse we have of productions—I think that also brings in a diverse audience and
brings people in that have never stepped foot in the Barn. We have done some very
wonderful, powerful shows.”
Participant B commented on the fact that unusual plays can be selected. He stated,

The play-reading committee is rather unique because it can be the original starting point for, let’s say, a play that is not well known—almost obscure or new. The play-reading committee can read it, recommend it, and the board can accept it and it will run the next season.

The financial aspect of selecting and producing plays was equally important (Mulcahy, 2011). Participant L said, “I do think the only problem has been when the plays that we have done have not been well received. Therefore the income doesn’t come in and we have had problems with money.” Based upon treasurer reports, the income from the season’s shows does not pay for all the bills. Season ticket sales are also down. Another concern mentioned during the play selection process was cost of royalties. Participant L commented, “The hardest part is that there are things that we would like to do but the royalties are out of our financial standards that we have set.”

Participant N used creative marketing in order to boost audience numbers. She stated, “We had our playwright come this last weekend to see our show which was the most amazing thing. She brought an entourage of about 20 people with her from Mariposa. They want to come back to the Barn Theater again!” Additionally, Participant M relied on social media to spread the word about his production, and the show made a substantial profit. Participant G added, “Having children’s theater has allowed many of the children that we have in our community the opportunity to see a live theater production of high quality. The children’s show also made an unexpected profit.”
Through observation by the researcher at board meetings during the annual season, more attention is paid to the directors’ and actors’ experiences regarding the show than whether or not the show turns a profit (see Table 5). Treasurer’s reports during the 2015-2016 season reflected this income and profit for the productions that occurred at the theater (see Appendix E).

Table 5

Summary of Production Income and Profit, 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Profit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October, 2015</td>
<td>Dracula</td>
<td>$2,189.71</td>
<td>$1,665.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November, 2015</td>
<td>No productions</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2015</td>
<td>Dracula, Hobbit</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$80.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,534.18</td>
<td>$2,187.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 2016</td>
<td>Ten Nights in a Bar Room</td>
<td>$1,746.16</td>
<td>$1,246.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2016</td>
<td>Ten Nights in a Bar Room</td>
<td>$6,011.91</td>
<td>$6,011.91*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2016</td>
<td>Peter Pan Children’s Musical</td>
<td>$2,969.00</td>
<td>$2,969.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2016</td>
<td>Psycho Night at the Paradise Lounge</td>
<td>$2,841.00</td>
<td>$1,879.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2016</td>
<td>Mousetrap</td>
<td>$1,963.46</td>
<td>$1,332.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>5 productions plus one children’s musical</td>
<td>$21,335.42</td>
<td>$17,371.99*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *These amounts do not reflect costs of utilities, insurance, or building maintenance costs that occurred during the run of the production. Overall, during the 2015-2016 season, the Barn Theater lost $6,875.81. To pay for these expenditures, the withdrawals were made from the theater’s savings account. The savings account has a balance of about $84,000 that was acquired through large donations over the past 3 years.

In summary, concern was expressed regarding the play selection process and profitability of the season’s shows by a number of participants. They would like to see the leadership of the Barn Theater select a season of plays that is diverse but that also
appeals to the general audience base in Porterville. They would like to increase ticket sales and show more of a profit on each show.

**Political intelligence/collaboration.** Networking with the community was the next subtheme mentioned by the participants under the theme of leadership (see Table 4, Section 4.7). Eight out of 14 participants mentioned this subtheme during the interviews (57.14%). There were 23 out of 291 phrases coded into this subtheme (7.9%).

Networking is important for nonprofit leaders. Hennigan (2014) embraced the idea of networking. He suggested that this deliberate activity to build, reinforce, and maintain relationships of trust with other people will further an organization’s goals. Sherman (2012) also recommended that leaders engage in effective networking. Organizations where networking occurs will acquire information at a rapid pace, and their organizations can work together for mutual benefit. This can save time and energy for organizational leaders. Networking for nonprofit organizations begins with supportive relationships that occur among people in organizations. Networking is helpful, because when leaders of nonprofit organizations support each other, it is possible to share resources and cut costs while promoting both agencies.

In the area of leadership at the Barn Theater, eight out of 14 participants (57.14%) mentioned networking skills with the community as being important for sustainability of the theater. There were 23 out of 291 coded phrases in this area (7.9%). Based upon the comments made by all of the participants, networking occurred between the Barn Theater and the schools, the city council, the chamber of commerce, the newspaper, the arts commission, and the Boy Scouts. Participant E looked at networking as being valuable to the theater:
The two people that I am thinking about (board members) have been so aware of our community because they have been very active with the community and among the community. They realize that we are not an entity unto ourselves; we are not alone.

It is especially important for the Barn Theater to network with the city council, since the city of Porterville holds the lease to the Barn Theater. Participant M stated, The city—whether they like it or not has to deal with us and I think that we are in good stead with the city council at this point. Strong voices and good connections are keeping us bonded and pretty healthy.

Participant L feels it is really important to keep connected to the community. She stated, “You go to the City Council and you talk to them. It is important.”

Participant G actively networks. He stated, I am working with the arts commissions through the city of Porterville, and I am heading up a program to bring children in and recruit them in open mic comedy, because one thing that comedy does is it promotes confidence. It promotes reading, learning; it promotes public speaking, so there are a lot of different aspects of comedy that can be presented in that case.

Others are connected to the school district. Participant M worked with the local performing arts high school in a collaborative way: “We are having new flats built in conjunction with the academy, in their fine arts pathway.” He added, “Behind the Barn Theater, my son with his Boy Scout—Eagle Scout Project—we built an outdoor stage.” The outdoor stage has really helped the Barn provide a different type of entertainment to the community.
Participant L is also involved with the chamber of commerce: “I have been active in the chamber of commerce for so long that everybody knows me. That connection has helped the Barn make connections with businesses all over Porterville.”

Participant I stated,

I remember when we got the green room and the lobby. Nancy Coon was at the Barn. She was always promoting the thing. We got the lounge (green room). Somebody had enough guts to do something about it and Nancy had a lot of influence in getting that lobby put in there. She would ask everyone she knew for donations of whatever they had. She got us all kinds of stuff.

Participant C looked at networking from a different perspective: “I’ve been trying really hard to get to have people sign up on the mailing list so we can let people know what’s going on here. The more contacts we have, the bigger our network grows.”

To enhance an organization’s network, it is also important to have a diverse group of board members (New Level Group, 2006). Some Barn Theater board members work with the school district and have connections with supporters of performing arts programs in the schools. Others are business owners and are willing to promote the Barn Theater through their businesses. Still others belong to many civic organizations and spread the word of the program at their regular meetings. Networking also occurs with the Porterville Museum. Community ties help build sustainability (New Level Group, 2006).

All of the participants agreed that more work needs to happen with networking. Participant C stated, “It’s a matter of time. I am getting older and I get tired more quickly. I don’t have the time or energy to do as much networking as I know we need.”

Participant G said that using social media—Facebook—is a good way to build a stronger
network: “We need to get some more young people in here who are savvy at social media and they can help us expand our networking.” Kanter (2012) recommended the use of social media to assist nonprofit organizations: “The social web lets people who work in non-profit organizations connect and collaborate informally across institutional boundaries quickly and inexpensively. Non-profit organizations are also collaborating with their supporters by crowdsourcing ideas, feedback, and content for programs” (p. 1). Participant G summed it up: “Social media is the wave of the future. We had better start riding that wave!” The connection of leaders with similar organizations is a way to share information and resources that can lead to sustainability.

**Competence/strategic planning.** Another subtheme in the area of leadership was organization (see Table 4, Section 4.8). Nine out of the 14 participants mentioned this subtheme during their respective interviews (64.29%). There were 19 out of 291 phrases coded into this area (6.53%). The participants who mentioned the leader’s organizational skills thought that organization was very important as a means of helping the Barn Theater with sustainability. One aspect of good leadership that sometimes gets overlooked is the importance of organizational skills. An organization is made up of many different levels and layers. The word organization refers to the act or process of putting the different parts of something in a certain order so that they can be found or used easily. According to Webster’s Dictionary, it also means “the act or process of planning and arranging the different parts of an event or activity.” Both of these definitions describe the skills needed by a leader in order to help an organization run smoothly.
Most of the participants’ comments about organizational skills related to the current president of the organization. They feel that her organizational skills at this point in time are exactly what the Barn Theater needs in order to be sustained. Participants A, C, D, E, G, H, K, L, and M all believe the president’s organizational skills are excellent. Participant L stated, “She is just absolutely organization to perfection!” Participant H added, “Right now, at this time—that is what we need to keep going.” Participant D agreed, “How it works best is to keep it all organized and flowing really well.”

More specifically, the participants like the way that the president makes the agenda, communicates it to the board members, and adheres to it at the meetings. Participant G stated, “(President’s) agenda keeps the meeting going—keeps it in order—she does some good advancements—like some e-mails sent out to everyone—I’m putting out the agenda—is there anything that anyone wants to add? She is very thorough.” This participant felt that the president’s skills have helped the Barn Theater attract newcomers, maintain the flow of communication, and resolve important issues and concerns at the monthly meetings. Marc Epstein (2008) in his book, *Making Sustainability Work*, indicated that an organization’s ability to be systematized and structured was fundamental to running a prosperous business. Epstein believed that organizations can make the difference between being reactive or preemptive when opportunities occur. Organized leaders are important to the functioning of sustainable nonprofit organizations.

**Communication.** Communication is needed within an organization, and good communication helps to build sustainability (see Table 4, Section 4.9; Wadud, 2016). The next subtheme mentioned by the participants in this study was good communication
skills among members of the Barn Theater. Seven out of 14 participants (50%) commented on this area when asked, “What is your perspective on the leadership at the Barn Theater?” There were 17 out of 291 phrases coded into this area (5.84%).

Participant H thought that good communication skills began with good listening skills. She stated, “You have to listen to other people—conversation is where it is at.” Participant E added, “I think communication is respecting differences and tolerating and listening-listening-communication.” Participant G agreed:

I believe that listening to one another helps. (President) is one of those types that listens but is firm. She may be blunt, but she’s plain spoken and she tells the truth. She speaks what’s on her mind and I think you kind of have to have that in any organization.

Participants D and M thought that communication could be improved upon at the Barn Theater. Participant D stated, “We do support each other, but communication is probably one of our weaknesses! When it comes to board meeting time, though, it is usually hashed out!” Participant M thought that in order to get along with people, good communication skills were needed. He stated, “I think it’s a very difficult thing to keep a happy face when someone is constantly attacking ideas or new concepts. Better communication would keep members working together more effectively.” Participant D summed it up: “We need to stick together and try to communicate better!” In order to promote organizational effectiveness, Wadud (2016) recommended training in communication and problem-solving skills so that unresolved conflicts hinder the productivity of the organization or community. Effective organizations involve members
who do communicate well, build honest and supportive relationships with each other, and are able to resolve conflicts.

**Visionary leadership.** “Are the leaders at the Barn Theater visionary?” (see Table 4, Section 4.10). This was the last probing question regarding the theme of leadership posed to the participants in this research study. According to the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole New Level Group (2006), leaders must have a clear and compelling vision for their nonprofit organization in order to foster sustainability. A primary undertaking for a nonprofit establishment, when working toward sustainability, is the creation of a mission and vision statement (Drucker, 1990; Mulcahy, 2011; R. Nelson & Schwimmer, 2010). Further visionary leadership is a quality exhibited by transformational leaders. Goleman (2000) indicated that transformational leaders are skilled at creating an organizational vision by paying attention to the ideas and opinions of those whom they lead and motivating them toward accomplishing their dream. This process produces a strong sense of shared ownership of the vision. It is important for leaders of a nonprofit organization to know where the organization is going so that actions and decisions made can help the organization become what it envisions.

Nine out of 14 participants commented on visionary leadership (64.29%). There were 10 out of 291 comments coded into this subtheme (3.44%). The response consensus in this subtheme was that there is not a set vision for the theater that all of the leaders agree upon.

Participant L summed it up: “A leader has to be someone who can SEE what needs to be done and you have to have a vision for the theater and where you want it to be!” Participant D said, “Everyone has their own vision here at the Barn.” Finally,
Participant E said, “I am not sure if we have management, leadership or any vision. We just try to keep the doors open.” It appeared that visionary leadership is not a strength at the Barn Theater.

Based upon the qualitative data collected to answer the research subquestion, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” leadership’s dedication to finding income for the Barn Theater from a variety of sources, the existence of supportive interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence, and shared leadership among members with diverse roles were the most important leadership factors that contributed to the theater’s sustainability. Other factors that tied the theme of leadership to sustainability were character and integrity, commitment, strategic planning, political intelligence, and collaboration. Leadership theory supported the coded data presented for this theme.

Findings for Research Subquestion 3

What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Connection of subtheme to the literature review. The sense of community within an organization was another factor that research studies connected with sustainability (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2014). In a volunteer-based organization, there are a variety of motives for participation, including the need for membership, influence, integration, and a shared emotional connection with the group’s people and activities (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In order for volunteers to be sustained in an organization, their needs must be met. Quality of life, need for personal involvement, desire to serve society, and aspiration to make a difference in the world contributes to
volunteerism in the social sector (Drucker, 1990). The existence of a strong sense of community within an organization leads to sustainability in the nonprofit sector. This subtheme coincides with the third and final theme that emerged from the interview coding process, sense of community (see Table 6).

Sense of community originated from the research of Sarason (1974) when he coined the phrase and defined psychological sense of community:

The perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure. (p. 157)

Later, D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 2). In addition, sense of community involves communicative behaviors and attitudes at the community or neighborhood level of a social organization. Its important criteria are membership, influence, reinforcement of needs, and shared emotional connection (Allan & Allan, 1971; Aronson & Mills, 1959; Buss & Portnoy, 1967; S. W. Cook, 1970; Doolittle & MacDonald, 1978; D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

During the interview process, participants were asked the question, “How do you believe a sense of community is developed with the volunteers at the Barn Theater?” Thirteen out of 14 participants directly responded to this question (92%) with 391 phrases coded into this theme. Eleven subthemes were identified.
Table 6

*Sense of Community Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme from literature review *</th>
<th>Data point</th>
<th>Number of sources (total possible 14)</th>
<th>Number of references (total possible 374)</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Influence and fulfillment of needs</td>
<td>Community values Barn Theater</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Membership and influence</td>
<td>Bring in youth from community</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Influence</td>
<td>Community support for facility improvement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Fulfillment of needs</td>
<td>High-caliber, creative volunteers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Influence</td>
<td>Networking with community</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Shared emotional connection</td>
<td>Feeling of family</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Shared emotional connection/membership</td>
<td>Welcoming community</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Shared emotional connection</td>
<td>Live theater connects with audience</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Fulfillment of needs</td>
<td>Like-minded people work together toward common goal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10 Influence</td>
<td>Application for historical landmark status</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11 Shared emotional connection</td>
<td>Intimacy of small theater is valuable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Influence and fulfillment of needs.** The first data point that emerged in the area of community factors in response to the question, “What is your perspective on the value of the Barn Theater to the community?” were the value of belonging and the ability to have an impact on the community (see Table 6, Section 6.1). Cash (2012), in his article, “The Value of Community Theater” stated,

Community Theatre often serves as a worthwhile creative outlet for those who pursue a career in other fields, and its biggest asset is in the title—that feeling of belonging to a genuine community with a common interest and common set of goals. (p. 1)

In sense of community theory, the feeling of belonging relates to the criteria of integration into the community. When an organization is integrated into a community, fulfillment of needs occurs and participation is reinforced. There is an interrelationship with the Barn Theater’s value to the community, because the theater provides an outlet for members of the community with shared interests.

Participants were asked the question, “What is your perspective on the value of the Barn Theater to the community of Porterville and its surrounding areas?” Thirteen out of 14 participants in the study mentioned this subtheme in their comments about the Barn Theater (92%). There were 50 phrases coded into this area out of 374 or 13.37%. Participant H stated,

I feel sorry for communities that don’t have a community theater because it helps bring people together. People need an outlet and the theater gives them an outlet to express themselves. There is no place else in Porterville that you can get that—except here!
Participant L added, “What the theater has done is offered a different perspective, because plays are so different. It has offered different lifestyles—different perspectives on things. It introduces so many ideas to people and it allows people to participate.”

Participant I said, “There are a lot of people down there in the Barn that enjoy getting up in front of people. Entertainment is a big part of this community, and the Barn provides that.” Finally, Participant G stated,

Without the fine arts we become—gosh I hate to use this word—dead! There’s nothing wrong with imagination, and fine arts kindle imagination! Without imagination and fine arts, we become a lifeless society! Live theater—bringing it to the community, educating people to the wonders of the imagination and of acting, you know and being able to step outside reality for just a brief 2 hours.

I think it means so much.

Participant E summed it up: “I think the Barn Theater is a mega-partner to the rest of the community. We are not only involved in every aspect of what goes on in our community, be we enthusiastically enjoy helping others.” Participant B agreed: “I think it’s probably the number one cultural medium that is in operation year around. I think it is important to spread culture throughout the community.”

According to the stakeholders, the Barn Theater is an important part of the community, because it supports the arts and provides an outlet for volunteers to share common interests and goals while supporting the arts throughout the community. People with common interests and goals feel fulfilled while working together, which helps them join together with creative energy to accomplish their goals. The sense of community is both internal—among volunteers, and external—throughout the community.
**Membership and influence.** Sense of community theory includes the components of membership and influence (see Table 6, Section 6.2; D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986). When asked the probing question, “How does the Barn Theater meet the needs of the community?” participants in the study expressed the desire to provide training and education in the arts to the youth and to influence and provide them with opportunities to become members of the Barn Theater. By bringing youth into the organization, there is a better chance that it will be sustained for generations to come.

D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined membership as “a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong” (p. 9). In addition, influence means that members of a community feel that they are having a positive impact on their external environment and also that they have influence over the group’s members (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In order to successfully bring youth into the community of the Barn Theater, young members will have to feel that they belong to a group of peers who are positively contributing to the community as a whole.

Thirteen out of 14 participants responded directly to this question (92%). There were 50 phrases out of 374 coded into this component (13.37%). Participant F was very direct in her response: “We need to involve the young people so that when they grow up, they can take over at the Barn.” Participants A, C, D, E, H, I, M, and L agreed: “I think that children need to be exposed to the theater. I think that is the only way that we are going to continue—the younger the better!” Participant G added, “We need to bring the interest of the children back into their minds and imagination. The fact is that children are our future.”
In order for the youth to contribute, according to sense of community theory, they have to become invested as members of the Barn Theater community. Those working with the children have to reinforce their talent and value to the program. In addition, the youth need to feel that their efforts are valuable to the Barn Theater community and to the community of Porterville at large.

**Influence.** The third data point in community factors was identified as community support for the improvement and growth of the Barn Theater’s facilities (see Table 6, Section 6.3). Sense of community referred to support received by the community of Porterville and by the membership of the Barn Theater who worked together to gain resources for improvement and growth of the theater. Under sense of community theory, it took influence to garnish the support, internally and externally, for the advancement of the facilities. Members of a community need to feel that they have a positive impact on their external environment and also that members have influence over the group’s members. D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) pointed out,

Influence in a community is bidirectional: members of a group must feel empowered to have influence over what a group does (otherwise they would not be motivated to participate), and group cohesiveness depends upon the group having some influence over its members. (p. 2)

The membership of the Barn Theater worked together to accomplish its facility improvement and growth.

During the interview process, 12 out of 14 participants commented on the community support for growth and improvement of the Barn Theater’s facilities (86%) and felt that it related to the sustainability of the theater. The coding process revealed
that 50 phrases out of 394 were linked to community factors and had to do with how people worked together with the community to improve and expand the Barn Theater’s facilities (13.37%). The Barn Theater started in 1948 in an old barn owned by Annie Smith, then moved to a turkey shed on the outskirts of town. It was not until 1953 that the current structure was open for business. The money for the building of the theater was donated as an interest-free loan by an influential community member. Later the stage was expanded, an outdoor theater was built, and a lobby and kitchen were also added. Members worked together to secure donations from the community for all of these projects and provided the majority of the labor. Participant E commented,

The red barn—is an iconic American building and I think that somehow within our rural area, that fit well to what the construction would be for the theater. The community got behind the project. I think that everything we have done for a permanent structure has been amazing. I cannot believe how much people have done and built and even our green room—having someone volunteer to haul Alta’s Café from Olive Street over to here. Alta sold it to us for a few hundred dollars—so that is amazing—all that is done.

Participant I added,

I was involved in adding the Green Room. The green room replaced a tin shed dressing room out back. Bill Akins, one of our members, was very good at construction, and he remodeled and set it up and we went down there and put it together. It went in there really easy. He had some friends in the cement business and they brought over a couple of deals of cement and laid out those stairs there. We connected it to the back stage area and built a make-up room in between. It
was a lot of work, but with all the community support, we all pitched in to get the job done.

Another improvement was the expansion of the stage area. Participant K stated, “The stage has been added onto, there has been an apron added to the front and some added to the back. Only part of it is the original stage.” An outdoor stage was also added. Participant L commented,

Years ago, before I got involved, the Barn Theater, the back end of the stage opened up out there and they would do shows and people would watch it on the hill and we started wanting to do more of that because we thought it was fun. Participant M said,

Behind the Barn Theater, my son—for his Eagle Scout Project—we built an outdoor stage and now the outdoor committee is in the process of building some permanent terracing and lighting. We do extra performances, fundraisers, out there and the outdoor stage has added a lot to our theater.

Other improvements were expansion of the warehouse, construction of the costume loft, and the replacement of the curtain. Participant A stated, “They are doing a really good job of keeping these things up and making them very nice for people. We bought a new curtain about two years ago—I think the money came from a donation.” Participant C agreed, “The gifts or inheritances from our community have helped us update the facility.”

In 1986, the Barn Theater added a lobby and a kitchen. Participant K shared, The lobby area was built on by the members with the support of the community, because people were getting rained on. The ticket booth was a separate
structure—outside. People were getting wet! We really needed to have lobby area where our patrons could come inside. It was about improving the theatrical experience for our patrons and our actors.

Participants A, B, F, G, I, K, and N all thought that the addition of the lobby and the kitchen helped the Barn provide more comfort and service for its patrons. Participant N said, “We have a wonderful lobby and kitchen, and we are able to serve dinners and luncheons and brunches which most places cannot do.” Participant F was involved with the board of directors at the time the lobby was built. She shared, “We added on the lobby and it is very, very good.” Participant I added, “With the lobby and the bathroom addition—without all that I don’t know how the Barn Theater could manage!”

Participant K was enthralled with the kitchen and stated,

That kitchen just amazes me! You would not even know that there was anywhere near the lobby area. It’s like this hidden room back there and it is just so perfectly put together. So space designed and everything fits and it’s functional!

Participant F added, “Nancy Coon was a member at the time the lobby was built, and she worked with the other members and the community to make that project happen! She got donations from just about everyone that she knew!”

The data point of community support for growth and improvement of facilities in part answered the research question, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” The fact that the theater has improved and grown since its opening in 1948 supported the sustainability of the theater. The sense of community, both internally and externally, has, therefore, helped sustainability because the membership has influenced each other and the
community in a positive way. The members worked together and achieved growth and improvement.

**Reinforcement of needs.** The fourth data point was that the membership consists of high-caliber, creative volunteers (see Table 6, Section 6.4). This data point is embedded into sense of community theory. According to the Small and Hoekstra (2015), project leaders with such characteristics as being creative and adventurous and having an ability to dream and envision the future are needed in an organization in order to build a sense of community. These volunteers need to be members of a creative group, and their behavior is reinforced by participation in shared work with others toward common goals. D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated, “Reinforcement as a motivator of behavior is a cornerstone in behavioral research, and it is obvious that for any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members” (p. 11).

When asked the probing question, “What are some stories that you have heard about the Barn Theater’s impact on volunteers, audience members, and the community as a whole?” nine out of 14 mentioned creative and high-caliber volunteers had an impact on other volunteers, the audience, and the community (64%). There were 47 out of 374 phrases coded into this subtheme (12.57%). Participants’ comments told the story. Participant L stated,

The personality of the Barn has always been very creative. We have been blessed with so much talent that it’s just unreal when you are involved in it. I mean we have had so many talented artists—some of the sets we have done, I have just cried when we have torn them down
Participant K added, “There are differences and different opinions at times, but there is going to be that in any organization, but especially when you get artistic people together! But that makes our productions so much better in the end!” Participant G said, “There is such a history of people at the Barn Theater and their backgrounds—you are looking at such wealth of creativity and talent. We have almost all educated people.” Participant C agreed: “We have creative people who enjoy meeting the most interesting people. They find a bond with each other that cannot be broken!” Participant B was impressed with the uniqueness of the people. He commented,

It is unique in that we have the ability to use new talent including playwrights. Our very own (playwright) wrote musicals for the Barn Theater. He wrote the follies that one year. Then he wrote one of the musicals that we have performed a couple of times with great success! He is such a talented musician as well!

Participant M added that working together as a community, the Barn Theater is able to help members find their own creative skills: “We are great at helping members be the best that they can be!”

When an organization has high-caliber, creative members, they reinforce each other and help bring out the best from each of them. Further, they find a common bond among themselves that fosters higher levels of creativity, which leads to success and sustainability. According to the participants in this study, it was because of the sense of community offered at the theater that high-caliber, creative people were attracted to become members, and this helped the Barn Theater maintain operation since 1948.

**Influence.** The next data point for the theme of community factors was networking and outreach with the community (see Table 6, Section 6.5). With
networking and outreach, the sense of community that enveloped the Barn Theater was widened, and the Barn Theater has had a stronger opportunity for sustainability. The data point of networking and outreach was connected to the element of influence defined within the sense of community theory. The element of influence was described in the following manner: “Members who are influential find it important to fit into the community.” Networking and outreach bonds help to reinforce the sense that members fit into a particular community. When members participate in networking and outreach, they feel that they have influenced others. Additionally, members who solve problems and answer questions while communicating with other organizations feel that they are influential (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008). Networking and outreach are included in community theory.

During the interview process, 12 participants out of 14 commented that networking and outreach was important and should continue in order for sustainability to occur (85.71%). They also thought that through networking and outreach, the sense of community both internally and externally was enhanced. There were 47 out of 374 phrases that fell into this subtheme (12.57%). Participant E felt strongly about the need for networking and outreach in order to build a sense of community. She stated, “I think that any kind of organization who moves comfortably throughout their own community and that is fluid, I think in that case you have got a sustained institution with a strong bond among members.” Participant D added,

When we network with the schools, we have attracted some local politicians whose children or grandchildren are in the shows. The school shows have also attracted other influential community members. The Barn Theater benefited from
that and the members felt that their work was appreciated by the community. It helped pull us all together when we felt good about our work.

Participants B, C, D, E, F, G, H, L, M, and N all mentioned specific organizations that have been included in the overall network of the Barn Theater. They included the city council, chamber of commerce, Porterville and Burton schools, the Scouts, the Porterville Museum, the 20 Ands, Zonta Club, Lunafest, Porterville Art Association, Hispanic community, religious groups, and KTIP radio station. Participant D also commented, “Now with social media we are really able to do more outreach. But still, I wish we could do more community outreach.” Participant N summed it up when she stated,

We actively promote the theater when we are out there. We try to work with many groups and share our absolutely wonderful facility here that lends us not only to stage productions but we are able to meet the gathering needs of many community organizations. It is a great feeling to work together with other organizations so that we can mutually promote each other.

D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) discussed the concept that influence is an important aspect of sense of community. Influence is based upon trusting relationships and leads to group cohesiveness. D. W. McMillan and Chavis stated, “Participation in voluntary associations yields a sharing of power that leads to greater ‘ownership’ of the community by participants, greater satisfaction, and greater cohesion” (p. 10). These are community factors that contribute to organizational sustainability.

Shared emotional connection. The data point of “feeling of family” was also identified by the research participants through the interview process when they discussed community factors at the Barn Theater. Feeling of family best connects with the element
of shared emotional connection under sense of community theory (see Table 6, Section 6.6). Families are bonded together through sentiment, emotion, and love. Members of a family have an unconditional love for each other that binds them, because they are biologically connected. Other institutions and organizations can mimic this sense of family by creating a sense of respect, acceptance, caring, and belonging. When social relationships provide a sense of belonging, people feel life has more meaning. It is more than just bonding. It is really feeling like you fit in with others and are associated with higher levels of meaningfulness (N. M. Lambert et al., 2013). Further, N. M. Lambert et al. (2013) suggested that when members of an organization fit in and believe in the greater good of the organization, there is a better chance that the organization will be sustained.

When asked the probing question, “How do you believe a “sense of community” is developed within the volunteers at the Barn Theater?” 10 out of 14 participants mentioned the feeling of family that they perceive existed within the theater community (71.43%). There were 33 phrases out of 374 coded into this subtheme (8.82%). Participant N was passionate about the Barn Theater being her family:

The family—and I am sorry—I am tearing!! It is the family—this is and we say it so often—this is home. This is our family. We can walk away for 5 years and then come back and it is still the same family. We have got new people in this show and we have only been together for 3 months, but they are going to be a part of my life—the rest of my life!

Participants D, E, H, and L all felt the same way. They regard the Barn Theater as their family and their home away from home. Participant D said,
I enjoy the family part of the Barn Theater. Everyone is eager to help because we are so much of a family here. It’s like we have chores here in this family just like you do at home—just like you do with your family! We are not negative with others—we do not push them away or turn them away—I think that is what makes it more like a community. There has been a lot of respect and a lot of complaining like within any family—people complain about each other. When we come to the board of directors meetings—we hash it out and decide—like a family.

Participant L agreed,

I am going to say that we are like a family. There is sibling rivalry and there are knock-down, drag out verbal disagreements, but the people are very protective of each other. They take care of each other—like a family—and we are a family.

Participants E and J had a slightly different perspective on family. They see the Barn Theater as a place where you come with your family to enjoy the entertainment.

Participant E shared,

I was born into a family of actors. You know—our parents and our grandparents still talked about this theater even after they were no longer involved—there was really something about this place. We came together here at the Barn Theater for many occasions.

Participant J added,

I went to the Barn Theater with my whole family which was wonderful! My parents were both still alive and that was one of my father’s favorite plays—
Music Man. So my sister put us all in her vehicle and we all went down together and it was just such a joy.

The sense of community at the Barn Theater included the notion that the theater has a family feeling within the organization. Members are caring, affectionate, respectful, and accepting of others including their differences. Problems are discussed and resolved. They work together toward a common goal and everyone does their part to make the organization sustainable.

**Shared emotional connection and membership.** The next data point identified under community factors was the perception that the Barn Theater has a welcoming community, which attracts volunteers and helps build and sustain the sense of community among the membership (see Table 6, Section 6.7). This data point is connected to the elements of membership and shared emotional connection within sense of community theory. Participants felt that members were welcomed and recognized by each other, that being a part of this community was a part of their identity, and that they spent a lot of time and effort being part of the community (Chavis et al., 2008). The element of shared emotional connection also described the data point of welcoming community. The members of an emotionally connected community enjoy spending time together, expect to be a part of the community for a long time, have shared many important events together, and genuinely care about each other. The comments made by participants describing the Barn Theater as a welcoming community relate to these elements.

According to Participant D, “The Barn Theater brings people in off the street and welcomes them. They are greeted and embraced here and everyone that I have ever been embraced by here has always been open arms!” Participant H agreed, “You have to make
people feel good to start with. Just make them feel welcome. We give them tours and introduce them to other members and try to get to know them as people.”

Participant L shared her personal story. She said,

I was welcomed so thoroughly. The people were all so wonderful. I knew this was a place that I could be myself and find things to do where I would be appreciated. The more welcoming everyone was, the more I learned and the more I wanted to do.

Participant J also shared her personal story:

They helped me at a difficult point in my life and I got involved with them. I had been through a lot of personal adjustment, and the people at the Barn Theater welcomed me into their group, and I knew that they genuinely cared about me. I became more confident in my new life. Now I volunteer all kinds of extra time at the theater. I go out of my way to talk to Barn Theater people wherever I see them.

Participant N concurred:

We try to make new people feel welcome the minute they walk in. We really try. We immediately start to introduce them to others all around or we do Art Walk downtown and we invite them to join us. We try to encourage people to not only meet us here but meet us out there so that they can see that we genuinely want to be friends.

Participant L summed it up: “The personality of the Barn has always been very welcoming.”
The participants in this study supported the sense of community elements of membership and shared emotional connection with their interview responses. According to D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986),

Membership includes boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging, personal investment, and a common symbol system. Shared emotional connection also includes interpersonal contact, quality interactions, sharing of events, investment of time and energy and a feeling of being honored by the members of the group. (p. 9)

The participants’ comments supported these criteria.

**Shared emotional connection.** The next data point discussed by the participants during the interview process was the belief that live theater connects with the audience and brings people together (see Table 6, Section 6.8). The element in sense of community theory that closely aligns itself to this belief is shared emotional connection. The participants wanted to make sure that their audiences experienced quality acting and were impacted with the feelings that were being expressed on the stage. They wanted their audience members to have an emotional and spiritual bond with the actors so that when they left the theater, they felt that they have become a part of the community theater program. D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) included the factors of quality interactions and emotional and spiritual bonding as part of their description of shared emotional connection.

There were seven out of 14 interview participants who mentioned the connection that live theater can make with the audience and how that builds a strong sense of community between the actors and the audience, which encourages more participation in
the theatrical experience for both groups (50%). There were 25 phrases out of 374 coded into this subtheme (6.68%). Sustainability is in part dependent upon the quality of the theatrical experience and the connection that audience members make to the story being told on stage.

Participant M provided a comment that helped explain how the theater created an emotional and spiritual bond with the audience: “Live theater is really a very invigorating, soul-soul affecting—affective media.” Participant L explained further:

I have watched sometimes when the audience just gets so involved—we have done some very, very, serious plays, and at the end of the play, because the hero or heroine has died, tragically, people will just have tears streaming down their faces—they get so involve with it.

Participant N had a similar experience:

I think that when you are totally immersed in what they are showing you up there.

I have been at shows where there have been biker dudes in the audience in tears—because they are so moved by what is going on—on the stage! That is profound!

Participant G attributed some of the emotional connection to the physical features of the theater: “The fact that the actors are just a few meters of distance away from the audience—it makes the interaction between the stage and the audience unique.”

Participant N compared live theater to movies:

You got your audience standing up clapping and cheering for you because they are just so excited about what is happening. You can’t do that in a movie theater!

Like Nunsense—you are able to get down there in the audience and talk to your
audience and get them to join you in what is happening. To me that passion gets across so much more! You know—those expressions—the story is richer!

Sharing an emotional connection between the actors and audience at a small theater helps build a stronger sense of community among the extended participants in the experience. It is the goal of live theater to connect with their audience, and it is what makes live theater meaningful and unique.

**Fulfillment of needs.** The next data point under the umbrella of community factors is that like-minded people work together toward a common goal (see Table 6, Section 6.9). People who are like minded feel reinforced through interactions with people who have similar ideas. Members’ needs are reinforced by a specific community because they value the same activity and have the same priorities and goals. Participation in that community activity makes them feel good about themselves because they share experiences with the other members who are similar. This affirms and reinforces their self-worth. The community members work together in order to ensure that problems are resolved and the majority of the members’ needs are being met (Chavis et al., 2008).

Passion for live theater is an emotion that the members of the Barn Theater share. Their common goal is to produce quality entertainment, to promote the theater throughout the community, and make sure that it will be sustained for generations to come. To this end, the members have developed a sense of community that reinforces their needs and which in the long run may lead to sustainability of the theater.

There were nine out of 14 participants in this study who responded to the probing question, “How do you believe a ‘sense of community’ is developed within the volunteers at the Barn Theater?” with comments made about like-minded people working
together toward a common goal (65%). There were 23 out of 374 phrases coded into this subtheme (6.15%). Their comments related to the members’ need to be reinforced within the community.

Participant D summed up the common goal of the members of the Barn Theater with her statement, “I just naturally fit in when I started because I love acting. I think when we all pull together—everyone wants what is best for the theater! The whole entire community has to work together!” Participant J added, “The members share the passion for live performing arts and they work very cohesively together.” Participant N said, I appreciate the passion that I see in our members because it is the same passion that I have. I feel good about myself when I work with people who are like me and show appreciation for the effort that I put into accomplishing the goals that we set.

Participant C shared her perspective:

We all love the Barn Theater because it provides an opportunity for us to share our passion for live performing arts with our community. Like-minded people have to reinforce each other’s needs in order to achieve our goals and keep our doors open. We have to set priorities and goals that we all buy into and work together to accomplish them.

Sense of community theory includes the element of fulfillment of needs. The subtheme of like-minded people who work together toward a common goal fits into this element because like-minded people connect to each other’s passion and positive feelings. The Barn Theater volunteers who are similar in thoughts about live theater labor together to keep its doors open for generations to come.
**Influence.** The next data point that five out of 14 participants discussed was the Barn Theater’s application for historical status (3.48%; see Table 6, Section 6.10). Participants saw the application for historical status as an opportunity for the Barn Theater to celebrate the community of people who have been members between 1948 and 2016. The fact that historical status is being sought is also a potential boon for the community because of the publicity that historical status can generate. The sense of community element that this data point falls under is influence. Influential Barn Theater members have worked diligently with the community and the granting government agencies while in the process of completing the application. A bond and sense of pride has been generated as the members of the Barn Theater reflect on their accomplishments and identify reasons for the theater to receive the status. The element of fulfillment of needs also related to this data point, since it was very affirming to the members to see on paper all that they have accomplished together as a community over the past 68 years. Interview participants also felt that by obtaining historical status, the Barn Theater’s sustainability would be preserved.

Participant F stated, “I hope we get historical landmark status for the Barn—so that it will be here forever!” Participant K added,

I am involved in the nomination of the Barn Theater for the National Historical Registry. We have been working on the application for over 6 years now. We are planning a homecoming event to celebrate all the people who have come through the Barn Theater and are now working as professionals in the performing arts industry. It was very rewarding to realize the influence that the Barn Theater has had over these individual’s lives. Personally, I would like to see it get on the
registry because it would get more publicity for the Barn Theater. We would become a point of interest and put in the AAA book under the city of Porterville as a place to see. I see that as an advantage and I believe it would be a boon for the Barn.

Participant B summed it up:

I think that the Barn Theater is here to stay and the closer we get to being her for 100 years, the better chances we have of being designated a historical landmark! Being a historical landmark will help our sustainability because we will be eligible to apply for federal and state grants. We need money to keep the doors open.

Influence and fulfillment of needs are the elements of sense of community that relate to the Barn Theater’s application for historical status. The sense of pride in the theater has grown through all the work that the members have done to complete the application. The members feel influential and appreciate the support they have given each other during this journey.

**Shared emotional connection.** The final data point that was identified from the coding process of the interviews was the value of the intimacy of the small theater. This data point is related to the sense of community element of shared emotional connection (see Table 6, Section 6.11). With a small community theater, there is a better chance of interpersonal contact, especially when the community members have relationships outside of the theater. In addition, the sharing of the story communicated in live theater can enhance the emotional connection, especially when the stage is physically close to
the audience. The closer people interact, the more likely they are to be emotionally connected (Allan & Allan, 1971).

There were five out of 14 participants who commented on the value of a small intimate theater (35.71%). Eight out of 374 phrases were coded into this subtheme (2.14%). This data point fits into the sense of community subtheme of shared emotional connection. The comments that supported this subtheme were made by Participants A, B, C, G, M, and N. Participant A said, “The audience is so close to the actors that when you are on stage, you feel you can reach out and touch them. It is easier to connect with your audience.” Participant B said that he liked acting in a small, intimate theater because, “I can project my voice loudly and people can actually hear what I am saying without a microphone. It’s more real that way.” Participant C shared that when she is directing a show, “I use the theater as part of the stage. It is small and the actors can go out in the audience and bring the magic of the show to them.” Participants G and M both felt that with a small theater it is possible to involve the audience more in the productions. They have invited audience members up on stage to become part of the play. Finally, Participant N shared that when she directs a show, “The audience is part of the play.” She likes to create the mood of the show by adding props, scenery, and acting that draw the audience into the storyline and make it more real for them: “You can only do that in a small theater.”

The intimacy of the Barn Theater, according to the participants, adds to the sense of community of the theater because it helps to draw the audience and the actors together, making an emotional connection between them. They felt that the quality of the shows at the theater was enhanced by the intimacy of the theater. Participant G summed it up
when he shared, “People will come back again and again when they have made a connection with a live theatrical production. It tugs at their heart strings and they are drawn into the community of the theater. When the next show comes along, they want to have that feeling again, so they return.” Sustainability is enhanced when audience members return time and again to see the productions at the Barn Theater.

There were two general questions that were asked of all of the participants at the end of each interview.

Question: “What do you believe have been the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the Barn Theater?

All of the participants, 14 out of 14 responded to this question (100%). The general consensus based upon all of their comments was that the volunteers were the number one strength of the Barn Theater. It is the volunteers’ ability to diligently work together to produce live entertainment that attracts audience members to the theater. The other strength identified by participants was the facility itself. It has been improved and grown over the years, and this has allowed the Barn Theater to diversify programs and sources of income as part of its sustainability plan.

Participant G stated,

The greatest strength is being able to bring live entertainment for so long. We’ve had 68 consecutive seasons of bringing it to the community, educating people to the wonders of the imagination and acting, you know and being able to step outside reality for just a brief 2 hours. I think it means so much.

Participant C concurred:
The strength is probably in attracting a high caliber of people—you know we get the people who are intelligent, who are well read, and who are drawn to the arts. We are also great at building relationships with people. (Volunteer) is really good at that—she is open to having new people who have never been on stage before! She gets good performances out of them. They get the “bug” and then they stay with us and become regulars.

Participant I saw people as the biggest asset to the Barn Theater as well:

The strength of the Barn is probably the people who come down here. They want to do something. The people who stay in there really want to make it work. They believe that you always should put your best foot forward when you go on stage. The facilities are also a strength, according to the research participants. The volunteers have worked diligently over the years to add to and improve the building and its equipment. Participant M stated,

Fortunately for us a woman passed away and left a significant amount of money to the Barn Theater. So we have a lot of seed money. We are able to now do some of the projects that we had on our wish list. From where we started to where we are now is a huge improvement. We have added the green room, the warehouse, the lobby, the outdoor stage and the kitchen. We painted the building, fixed up the bathrooms, added crown molding, and put in a brand new electrical curtain. If you go to some of the other local community theaters you will see them in disrepair, but our building is well kept!

Participant K summed it up: “The Barn Theater is an icon in the community! Its look really appeals to this rural Central California population.”
The two major weaknesses that were mentioned by the participants in this study were, first, a reduced audience base caused by changes in the culture since television, movies, and other forms of electronic media have entered our culture; and second, concern about the lease for the Barn Theater with the city of Porterville. Participant M stated,

You kind of have to drag people to the theater because, from my perspective, theater is not a thriving business any longer and so therefore theaters have to work, including professional theater like the Amundson and the Pantages. We really have to work to keep the membership strong and to encourage people who have never been to the theater to walk through the doors.

Participant L added,

Changes in the culture have reduced our audience base. I think there is a problem when a play does not produce enough income and we have money issues. It is because of the changing thing—some people want comedies all the time. Some people don’t want the serious things.

Participant G added, “Getting the word out to the community has also reduced our audience base. We need to use social media to our advantage in order to keep the word out there.” Participants C and L mentioned another weakness. Participant L shared,

The biggest weakness in the facility is that the city decided not to give us a long-term lease anymore and what has happened is—you get afraid. When you get a 5-year lease and you have always had a 25-year lease, you hesitate to do things.

Participant C tied the two weaknesses together:
The problem is that people say that one of the things is that we have to fight the city all the time about the lease. We can’t get the city to give us a 10-year lease even! We used to have a 50-year lease! We can’t get them to do a 10-year lease and so sometimes people on the board will get paranoid and say, “Oh No! They are going to shut the Barn down.” I say, “No.” They are not going to shut us down! They wouldn’t have the guts to shut us down! What is going to shut us down is not enough people on the stage, and not enough people in the seats! That’s the only thing that is going to shut us down!

The final question asked of all participants in the study was “What do you believe has allowed the Barn Theater to sustain itself for 68 years?”

The majority of the responses to this question attributed the sustainability of the Barn Theater to the volunteers who work so diligently to keep the doors open.

Participant C stated,

It’s amazing! I think we somehow just attract the right people at the right time. It has to be divine intervention! There really is a vortex of power and energy here that attracts very creative people. Somehow they show up at the right time and I think we have a lot of luck and good fortune. It’s just the right people at the right time.

Participant M agreed: “I think it is strong membership and a strong board. We also have connections with City council. I think we have a lot of strong voices and good connections that are keeping us bonded together and in healthy condition.” Participants H and N added, “It is the people. We are like a family. That is what keeps us going.”
Artifacts and observations. For the purpose of data triangulation, a review of artifacts and observations was completed in order to affirm that the participants accurately reported the data collected in the areas of organizational culture, leadership, and community factors. Artifacts that were examined by the researcher include the Barn Theater’s website, the play programs, and minutes of the board meetings. In the area of organizational culture, all three types of artifacts affirmed that volunteers are the heart and backbone of the organization, shown by the amount of creativity, hard work, time, and energy the volunteers consistently invest in various projects at the theater. Their names are listed on the website, in the programs, and on the minutes of the board meetings. In addition, it was clear that the same people consistently participate in a variety of projects at the theater. The expectation is clearly stated in the minutes of the board meetings that volunteers attend functions and share their expertise in order to sustain the activities at the theater. Through the artifacts it is also clear that volunteers are praised, encouraged, and appreciated for their efforts. Comments of appreciation are made at the board meetings and written in the minutes. The website includes an extensive list of volunteers who have donated their time or money to the Barn and to those who have received awards throughout the years. The board meeting minutes reflect the democratic process by which decisions are made and money is spent. Artifacts therefore support the research participants’ perspectives on sustainability and the organizational culture at the Barn Theater.

Observation by the researcher at board meetings and rehearsals also supported the organizational culture factors that were needed for sustainability of the Barn Theater. Interpersonal relationships appeared to be valued, with boundaries clearly set between the
various segments of Barn Theater operations. Volunteers worked on their projects with collaboration and cooperation. This was observed at the monthly board meetings as volunteers reported on their projects and resolved issues of concern. It was also observed while volunteers were preparing and rehearsing for productions. It was clear to the researcher that volunteers had established close relationships with each other and that the relationships supported the goal of the Barn Theater to sustain live theatrical performances at their home—The Barn Theater.

It was also noted by the researcher that it was very difficult for the volunteers to agree on sizable expenditures, like the purchase of a new air conditioner. There was a group of conservative volunteers who did not want to invest money in air conditioning, and there was a group of more liberal volunteers who advocated that air conditioning would result in more income in the future. The polarization of money management styles was noticeable by the researcher at board meetings. It was also documented in the minutes, as major expenditures were rarely approved at the meetings. Overall, the artifacts and observations reviewed by the researcher affirmed the data analyzed through the interview and coding process on organizational culture.

In order to address the second research subquestion, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” artifacts were reviewed and observations made on leadership at the Barn Theater. They affirmed the results of the interview and coding portion of this study. The strongest asset of leadership according to the interview data was the fact that leadership managed a variety of activities that bring income into the theater. The income of the Barn Theater was substantially increased with diversified sources of income. According
to the treasurer’s reports and minutes of the board meetings, income comes from the lobby and kitchen activities, extra fundraisers, and donations. The lobby and kitchen activities included hosting dinner meetings and catering parties in addition to the regular performing arts activities of the theater. Extra fundraisers included income from special performances, guest artists, and through collaboration with the local school districts. Donations are accepted throughout the season, and program advertisements help supplement the income of the theater from performances. In addition, the Barn Theater recently obtained a liquor license which has allowed them to make a profit from the sale of beer and wine. These activities are all documented on the treasurer’s reports and the minutes of the monthly meetings. The leaders of the Barn included that diversification of income sources as a strategy to help the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

The second most frequently mentioned data point was the sharing of leadership roles among the volunteers. Board members and directors each have their own unique skills to add to the overall functioning of the theater. This is witnessed at the board meetings and reflected in the minutes. There are committee reports given at each meeting by the member who has expertise in that particular area. For example, (volunteer) has knowledge of lights and sound. He gave a report to the board that the light and soundboard had been updated with state-of-the-art equipment. Another volunteer gave a report on the condition of the outdoor stage and work that was needed to secure the area. He was an expert on building and construction.

The researcher observed the third strength of the leadership at the Barn. The board of directors is hardworking, and their efforts control the activities at the Barn Theater. Board members were observed at the theater at every event and frequently
present at other times, working on special projects. The amount of time and energy that
the leaders at the Barn Theater invest in the management of the program is extensive.
The board members organized cleaning days where the entire board cleaned and
organized a particular section of the theater. Other days were scheduled where the
theater was painted and crown molding was installed. These activities were also
documented on the minutes of the board of directors meetings. It was clear to the
researcher that the board of directors controls the activities at the theater. There is a
strong board, and the members demand communication and accountability for all those
who volunteer at the theater. The president of the board kept track of details and
followed through on all questions, conversations, and plans. She was not afraid to
address difficult challenges and entered into crucial conversations with other leaders as
needed. The researcher observed crucial conversations between the president and other
volunteers on two occasions. Based upon review of artifacts and researcher observation,
diversification of income sources, strong leadership with shared roles, and hard work and
accountability led to the sustainability of the theater.

The third subquestion for this study was, “What do Barn Theater stakeholders
describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?” Artifacts
and observations were reviewed regarding community factors that related to the theater’s
sustainability by the researcher. Minutes of the board of directors meetings supported the
three subthemes that were mentioned most frequently by the researched participants in
the area of community factors. The three data points were (a) The community values the
Barn Theater, (b) The Barn Theater wanted to bring in more youth, and (c) The facilities
have grown and improved over the years. All of these data points are related to sense of
community theory element of influence. The people, their relationships, and the quality of the program yielded influence over the community, drew in youth, and brought in support from the community in order to improve the facility. There were in-kind and cash donations made to the Barn Theater by local organizations, which were included in the treasurer’s report and the minutes of the meetings. These donations represented the trust and faith that the community had in the theater program. There were two school districts that brought productions into the Barn Theater, and the profits from the shows were documented in the monthly minutes. In addition, the researcher observed various community representatives make collaborative proposals to the board of directors that represented the value and trust that the community has in the program. Through its longevity and integrity, the Barn Theater has influenced the community in a positive manner, which has expanded the sense of community, both internally and externally. The sense of community has drawn the volunteers together and influenced the community to work with them.

**Summary**

The data presented in this chapter addressed the purpose, research question, and the methodology proposed and approved for study by Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board. The data collection methods described in Chapter III were utilized and subsequently produced qualitative data in the form of anecdotal accounts from 14 stakeholders at the Barn Theater in Porterville, California. During interviews, the stakeholders were asked to share their personal lived stories of the Barn Theater by responding to a predetermined set of 10 questions that focused on the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that contributed to the sustainability of the
Barn Theater. There were several probing questions that were added during the interviews on an as-needed basis.

The interviews were transcribed and coded, using NVivo software, into three themes that emerged from the data. The three themes were organizational culture, leadership, and community factors (see Table 7). Additionally, there were a total of 37 data points discovered and described throughout the three themes. The data points reflected factors about organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community that contributed to the sustainability of the Barn Theater over a 68-year period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major theme</th>
<th>Number of sources</th>
<th>Number of references</th>
<th>% of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational culture</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>38.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>30.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>31.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Sources include transcribed interviews, observation, or artifacts.

Major findings revealed that organizational culture was the most frequently mentioned contributor to sustainability by the research participants: (a) mentoring was the most widely represented data point, (b) volunteer recruiting practices of the theater, (c) the positive treatment of volunteers, and (d) the passion of the volunteers for performing arts. These data points all described the elements of organizational culture that led the Barn Theater to sustainability.

In the theme of leadership, 11 data points emerged that assisted the theater in remaining open. The most frequently mentioned data points were (a) diversification of
income sources, (b) the interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence of the leaders, and (c) the ability of the leaders to share leadership roles. The fact that the board of directors was a dedicated group of volunteers has contributed to the sustainability of the theater as well.

Community factors were also linked to sustainability by the research participants. There were 11 data points under the umbrella of community factors. Sense of community theory was used to explain the impact of these themes on the sustainability of the theater. The three most frequently mentioned data points were (a) the value of the Barn Theater to the community, (b) the fact that more youth are being recruited at the theater, and (c) the fact that the facilities at the theater have grown over the years. All three were discussed in relations to sense of community theory and the sustainability of the theater.

Finally, a review of artifacts and observations made by the researcher over a year-long time period supported the data collected through the interviews. Based upon the findings from this study, organizational culture, leadership, and community factors have contributed to the sustainability of the Barn Theater for over 68 years.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the Barn Theater stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater's sustainability. Chapter V presents a final summary of the study, including major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions. These are followed by implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections of the researcher.
CHAPTER V: FINDING, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter V begins with a summary of the study, including the purpose, research questions, methodology, and population and sample. It lists key findings from the study and conclusions drawn from those findings. The chapter outlines implications for action and recommendations for further research surrounding this topic. This chapter ends with final comments.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the Barn Theater stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?

Subquestions

1. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

2. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

3. What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?
Methods

This qualitative study utilized an interview format consisting of 10 open-ended questions that elicited answers to the central and three subquestions. Open-ended interview questions are customary in qualitative research, because they encourage the participants to communicate their thoughts, viewpoints, and perceptions without restrictions (Doody & Noonan, 2016). The 14 participants were given a copy of the open-ended questions at the time of the interview and provided with time to think about their responses before answering. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript of their interviews for accuracy and clarity.

After conducting the interviews, the researcher used NVivo software to help with categorizing and coding the data by finding key words or phrases in the individual interviews that conveyed common collective themes and subthemes among the responses of the participants. The researcher explored the interviewee’s responses individually and collectively for common and subthemes to determine the participants’ perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater.

Population and Sample

The population for this study is the 80 community theaters that exist in California and are registered with AACT. Krathwohl (2009) described the piece of the world one wishes to generalize in the sampling as the population of the universe. Populations and universes are made up of units, and in the case of this study that would be people. The characteristics of the population define the group to whom the study’s results may be
expected to transfer. The target population for this study was the 15 community theater programs that exist in cities of over 50,000 people in Central California.

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to select the sample population for this study, which included 14 representatives from the Barn Theater. Participants were selected based on preselected criteria pertinent to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interviewees already functioned in numerous corresponding clusters, increasing the likelihood of their in-depth knowledge of the Barn Theater’s history and operation. The requirements for inclusion in the purposive sampling were the following:

1. Listing in the archives of the Barn Theater website
2. Active participation for more than five seasons
3. Expert knowledge of at least one area of the Barn Theater’s operations
4. Representation from various age groups from 18 to 65
5. Recognition by peers involved in community theater

Two participants were included in the study through snowball sampling. They were recommended for participation in the study by other research participants.

**Major Findings**

The major findings of this study are organized by research question. Since the subquestions are each included in the central question, major findings regarding the subquestions are discussed first. Major findings regarding the central question are discussed at the end of this section.
Subquestion 1

What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as the organizational culture factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

**Major finding 1.** According to this research, the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the volunteers at the Barn Theater led to its sustainability. Eight out of the 11 subthemes in the area of organizational culture were related to the values, beliefs, and feelings of the volunteers who worked at the theater (93.2%). The volunteer-related subthemes include praise and celebration of volunteer success, passion for performing arts, strong work ethics, and engagement in teamwork. According to the stakeholders of the research study, the values and beliefs of the volunteers impacted the organizational culture of the theater and assisted in the sustainability of the organization. Fullan (2008) recommended pursuing several elements of sustainability. He suggested that it is important to create a community with positive beliefs, emphasize accountability, inspire deep learning, and manage energy instead of time. The research participants identified the similar elements such as emphasis on learning through mentorship, positive energy created by praise and celebrations, positive use of energy through work ethics, and teamwork and accountability.

**Major finding 2.** Mentoring was an important part of the organizational culture of the Barn Theater, and participants in the study believed that the mindset of mentoring others helped the Barn Theater with sustainability. According to AACT (n.d.), mentoring and succession planning are important to the sustainability of nonprofit community theater programs. Within the area of organizational culture, comments about mentoring were mentioned most often (75 out of 536 phrases—almost 14%). The research
participants felt that the experienced volunteers at the Barn Theater eagerly offered help to each other and specifically offered assistance to new volunteers. Succession should resemble a seamless flow of events that occurs over time by creating a culture of evaluation and planning for the transfer of knowledge (Fisher, 2010; Liteman, 2003). Each of the experienced volunteers at the theater had unique qualities and areas of expertise and was eager to share his or her knowledge with others who asked for assistance. In addition, there is a director’s handbook that provided new directors with step-by-step strategies and lists of resources that would be helpful.

**Major finding 3.** The value placed on volunteers was essential to the sustainability of the organization. Nonprofits depend upon volunteers to carry out their mission. Quality of life, need for personal involvement, desire to serve society, and aspiration to make a difference in the world contributes to volunteerism in the social sector and brings meaningful contributions to America. Commitment and competence of volunteers lead to sustainability in the nonprofit sector (Drucker, 1990).

The volunteers of the Barn Theater were actively recruited from the surrounding community. The theater operated completely with volunteers, so members of the theater continuously looked for others who had passion for the performing arts and encouraged them to volunteer. Volunteers were clearly valued. They served on the board of directors, worked on committees, and were the directors and actors. They worked behind the scenes to produce each performance at the theater. Without volunteers, there would be no Barn Theater. There were 73 out of 536 phrases coded into this area (13.62%). A significant part of the organizational culture of the Barn Theater was that volunteers were needed, actively recruited, and valued.
**Major finding 4.** Passion for the performing arts is a bonding force that unites the volunteers into a sense of community. The fourth major finding under the theme of organizational culture was that Barn Theater volunteers were passionate and heartfelt about their work at the theater. There were 50 coded phrases out 536 (9.33%) that described the feelings and passion that the volunteers have about their work at the theater. Volunteers who expressed deep overwhelming feelings from their heart while engaged in performing arts activities at the Barn Theater contributed to the sustainability of the theater. M. Campbell (2014) stated,

A love of the theater is the force behind filling those long hours. Performers sacrifice time, energy, and sometimes money to be on the stage as a performer. It is because of the passion for performance by volunteers that Community Theater thrives. (p. 1)

**Subquestion 2**

*What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as leadership factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?*

**Major finding 1.** Nonprofit theaters have remained open during difficult economic conditions because they had visionary leaders who created diverse sources of income for the organization. Stakeholders at the Barn Theater perceived that leadership supported sustainability through the establishment of a variety of income sources for the theater. There were 62 out of 291 comments coded into this area (21.3%). Income from kitchen activities, special events, and renting out the facility to other groups helped the theater pay its bills when the profits from their productions fell short.
Board members frequently discussed possible fundraisers that would help the Barn Theater keep its doors open, and the leaders of the Barn volunteered to spearhead the fundraisers as special projects that not only helped the Barn Theater but also added community awareness to special causes.

Leaders of the theater believed that by offering a variety of fundraisers, different cultural groups would be attracted to attend and thus the audience base of the theater would grow. Sustainability of this community theater is directly impacted by the size of its audience base.

According to research conducted by the National Endowment of the Arts in 2008, nonprofit theaters have remained open, even in times of economic turndown, because they had visionary leaders who diversified their funding sources. Theaters that primarily relied on donations and ticket sales were not able to meet their expenses and closed their doors.

**Major finding 2.** The interview participants remarked that the interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence of the leaders at the Barn Theater contributed to its sustainability. There were 71 out of 362 leadership phrases coded into this data point (19.61%). The interview participants commented that the theater’s leaders were warm and friendly to each other and to newcomers at the theater. They were very appreciative and complimentary to the volunteers who work in various aspects of the theater’s programming. They also approached all conversations with the idea that the goals of theater sustainability were a priority. Honesty among the leaders and with other volunteers was valued. There is a prevalent feeling that honest, constructive interactions will improve the quality of the service and performances at the theater. Effective
interpersonal relationship skills are important for leaders to possess. Sayeed and Shanker (2009) indicated that successful leaders foster open, nonpunitive conversations with their followers. Open discourse needs to be valued among all levels of employees, which results in support from all stakeholders.

The leaders at the Barn Theater appear to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, are introspective and reflective, and frequently mention ways in which they could improve relationships with others. They have a good sense of how to approach difficult interpersonal situations so that the outcome is positive. These are signs of leaders who have high levels of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to recognize, understand, and manage his or her own emotions. It also involves recognizing, understanding, and influencing the emotions of others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). When leaders meet to reflect and evaluate the progress of the theater company, it is important for them to be honest and truthful and yet to listen respectfully and try to understand all points of view being expressed by the other leaders. This process will lead to sustainability of a successful theater company (Mulcahy, 2011).

**Major finding 3.** Stakeholders perceived that shared leadership positively impacted the theater’s sustainability. There were 54 out of 291 phrases coded into this subtheme (18.56%). The leadership at the Barn Theater comprised a diverse group of individuals with the common goal of supporting the Barn Theater’s sustainability; however, each individual had his or her own unique talents and interests that added to the overall leadership package. There were individuals who were strong in business affairs, networking skills with the community, and training in performing arts. Others were
strong in acting, directing, set design, lighting and sound, and costuming. Leaders were needed in all of these areas; and by sharing leadership, the quality of the outcome was greatly increased, since the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Sustainability was positively impacted by sharing the leadership roles at the Barn Theater.

According to Kocolowski (2010), leaders of community organizations can build broad engagement in stakeholders by encouraging shared leadership. A balance of power among leaders, with clear boundaries of authority, is needed when all are working toward a common goal. Equal responsibility and accountability among stakeholders with diverse perspectives are important criteria of shared leadership. Finally, in order for shared leadership to lead toward sustainability, it is important to value inner strength in all participants in shared leadership.

**Major finding 4.** The fourth most important finding of this study was the perception of the stakeholders that the hardworking board of directors of the Barn Theater was in control of its day-to-day, month-to-month, and year-to-year happenings. Their energy and commitment to the theater kept it on a positive path to sustainability. There were 34 out of 291 phrases coded into this subtheme (11.68%).

Their hard work and dedication was frequently noted. Board members spent countless hours at the theater engaged in a variety of activities related to performances, fundraising, building maintenance, and cleaning, in addition to the monthly board meetings. They also spent countless hours establishing relationships with other community organizations and businesses that supported the theater. In addition, they frequently were found looking for the most cost-effective solution to managing the problems that arose within the theater. For example, when the door would not lock
properly, board members searched until they found someone who was competent and willing to fix the door for little or no money. When the trees around the building needed to be pruned, leadership went out into the community over the period of several months and found the best service for the least cost. The hardworking and committed board of directors of the Barn Theater supported its sustainability by their zealous effort to contribute their expertise and time to find the best and most cost-effective solutions to a variety of types of problems. Greenblat (2014) stated, “An exceptional leader is one who pursues goals with conviction and one who resolves conflicts rather than avoiding them. Without strong leadership, organizational destruction occurs” (p. 2).

Subquestion 3

What do Barn Theater stakeholders describe as community factors which led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability?

Major finding 1. With the establishment of a sense of community, the program will generate a momentum of its own and will draw other like-minded people or organizations. There were three subthemes under the theme of community factors that were mentioned by research participants an equal number of times. They were mentioned in 50 out of 374 phrases coded into this area. The three subthemes were (a) The community values the Barn Theater because it provides a unique opportunity for individuals with an interest in live performing arts (13.37%); (b) Sustainability will be increased by bringing more youth into the Barn Theater; it will increase because new generations of performing arts enthusiasts will be able continue the work of the theater (13.37%); and (c) Due to community support and collaboration, the Barn Theater’s facilities have been improved and have grown over time. The improvements and
additions to the theater have made it more able to serve the diverse needs of the community, which will increase the likelihood of sustainability (13.37%). The New Level Group (2006) discussed the elements of membership, influence, and shared emotional connection in their recommendations for the sustainability of nonprofit organizations. Once a clear organizational vision was established and roles defined, members identified with the organization and its goals. The organization began to fill the needs of its members. Members identified with each other, and a sense of community was established. Members felt that they fit in. Once that sense of community was formed, the members became influential as they communicated with themselves and with other outside organizations. With the establishment of a sense of community, the program will generate a momentum of its own and will draw other like-minded people or organizations.

**Major finding 2.** The Barn Theater must network and engage in outreach activities. Networking and outreach with the community helped to gain support in multiple ways. Members of the Barn Theater established relationships with the city of Porterville, Porterville School Districts, and community agencies in an effort to garner support for their goal of preserving the Barn Theater for generations to come. Support was offered through financial and in-kind donations, an increase in volunteerism, and extended publicity. In turn, the Barn Theater was able to give back by partnering with such groups as the chamber of commerce and the Porterville Museum when they cosponsored events with these groups. Continued networking and outreach will help the theater with its goal of sustaining live theater in the community for generations to come. Sontag-Padilla et al. (2014) concurred that networking with other similar community
agencies helped build a stronger sense of community among them, which resulted in a pooling of resources and collaboration and created a shared emotional connection among the members of the respective groups.

**Major finding 3.** According to the research participants, the Barn Theater attracts high-caliber, educated, and creative volunteers whose sense of community is strong. These volunteers liked being associated with other people who have common interests and capabilities. The resulting feeling of membership reinforced their self-confidence and helped them take risks and learn more about themselves and about live performing arts. The combination of unique and talented volunteers who were creative and educated added depth to the artistic aspects of live theater, making the performances attractive to the community and reaching a variety of audiences. The increased audience base lends itself to future sustainability. According to Small and Hoekstra (2015), core groups and leaders of nonprofit organizations should have such characteristics as the ability to be creative and dream and envision the future, a sense of adventure, the ability to form positive relationships with others, and being of high ethical and moral values.

**Major finding 4.** The fourth subtheme related to sense of community was the feeling of family that pervades the volunteers at the Barn Theater. There were 33 out of 374 phrases coded into this subtheme (8.82%). As an observer of the Barn Theater over a period of a year, the researcher sensed the feeling of family immediately upon entering the doors of the Barn Theater. There was a warm, welcoming atmosphere with greetings from several people who obviously knew each other well and who had strong family-like relationships. Participants in the study consider each other to be like family. Volunteers help each other with personal concerns as well as with problems that occur at the theater.
They go above and beyond to offer emotional and financial support to other volunteers who are in need. An example of this occurred in June 2016. A volunteer’s home had been vandalized, and his money was stolen. Immediately, another Barn member went on Facebook and reached out to the Barn Theater community for financial donations. By the end of the week, Barn volunteers had pulled $1,000 together to help the victim pay his rent and utilities for the month. This kind of support occurs within families and is highly unusual with other types of relationships. A feeling of family was identified as a contributor to the sustainability of the Barn Theater by 10 out of the 14 participants in the research study. The feeling of family among Barn Theater members is taking the sense of community element of membership to a higher level. Not only do members feel emotionally safe, make a personal investment, and feel that they fit in, there is an unconditional trust that is established that underlies this feeling of family (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Buss & Portnoy, 1967).

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the Barn Theater’s stakeholders and their perceptions of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that led to the sustainability of the Barn Theater?

Major finding 1. The most important finding was that the factors of organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community were perceived by the stakeholders to have an impact on the sustainability of the Barn Theater. Organizational culture factors were mentioned the most frequently. There were 536 out of 1,201 phrases coded into this area (44.63%). The second most mentioned factor was the sense of community. There were 374 phrases coded into this theme (31.13%). Leadership was
also mentioned in comments by the research participants 291 times out of 1,201 (24.23%). New Level Group (2006) advocated that nonprofit organizations that seek sustainability over a long period of time should establish a strong supportive culture that has been openly addressed and agreed upon by all members, a strong visionary and strategic leadership, and a sense of purpose that unites all members toward a common cause with a strong sense of community.

**Major finding 2.** Organizational culture was identified through this study as having the greatest impact on the sustainability of the Barn Theater. Mentoring, the values and beliefs of the volunteers, the formation of trusting relationships, and the organizational structure provided the Barn Theater with the culture to sustain its program since 1948. The stakeholders of the Barn Theater perceived that the organizational culture of the theater was the strongest component that has kept the theater sustained. Schein (2004) looked at organizational culture in depth. He defined it as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group used to solve its problems of external and internal functioning. It provided the rules and the order by which the day-to-day operation of an organization conducts business. It is the backbone of the organization, holding it erect and sturdy.

**Major finding 3.** Community factors were ranked as the second most important contributor to the Barn Theater’s sustainability. There were 374 out of 1,201 phrases coded into this theme (31.14%). Membership, need for reinforcement, influence, and sense of emotional connection are four elements of sense of community. These elements were apparent both among the volunteers at the Barn Theater and between the Barn Theater and the rest of its surrounding community. Participants strongly identified with
the mission of the theater, were proud to be members of the program, and definitely felt an emotional connection to each other. D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated, “Reinforcement as a motivator of behavior is a cornerstone in behavioral research and it is obvious that for any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual association must be rewarding for its members” (p. 11). Membership and shared emotional energy are the two strongest aspects of sense of community theory.

**Major finding 4.** Leadership was ranked third out of three themes, with 24.23% of the coded phrases falling under this theme. Therefore, stakeholders perceived that organizational culture and community factors are more directly related to the sustainability of the Barn Theater than its leadership.

New Level Group (2006) recommended that leaders in nonprofit organizations possess good communication skills; are visionary, creative, and innovative; and have strong interpersonal skills and the ability to develop strategic plans for sustainability. The interview participants in this study were primarily concerned with the ability of the leadership to develop diverse sources of income and to share leadership roles at the theater. Few comments were made about leaders being visionary and innovative. Some of the participants felt that communication was an area for improvement. The participants mentioned a strategic planning exercise introduced by one of the leaders where the needs and wants of the theater were identified and prioritized. They indicated that this exercise was valuable and that it has helped them to organize their efforts at the theater.

Decision making and conflict resolution are critical skills for nonprofit leaders. Drucker (1990) indicated that decision making is the breaking point of an organization.
Leaders need to have time to research and reflect upon important decisions. Conflicts should be approached from different perspectives. Drucker (1990) advocated that leaders be trained in problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Research participants in this study did not mention training opportunities for the leaders in the area of conflict management. They did state on numerous occasions that leaders rarely agreed on important matters and that much discussion, research, and time was needed to resolve differences. They mentioned that compromise was reached and that once a decision was made, the leaders were supportive of the decision.

**Unexpected Findings**

There were three unexpected findings identified by the researcher as she moved through the process of collecting and analyzing data.

**Unexpected Finding 1**

Based upon observations that the researcher made through the year of attending board meetings and informally observing interactions among members of the theater, the researcher expected that stakeholders would perceive that the relationships among Barn Theater members was the most important factor that propelled the Barn Theater to sustainability. This expectation was based upon the amount of time that members spent together and the amount of genuine concern that members expressed for each other both regarding Barn Theater matters and personal matters. The data revealed that the organizational culture was the most powerful component that propelled the theater to sustainability, and the process of mentoring was viewed as the most important component leading to sustainability. The data revealed that relationships were a part of the
organizational culture but that they were not the most important of the 11 subthemes that emerged from the coding process under the theme of organizational culture.

**Unexpected Finding 2**

During the interview process, the researcher found that the participants in the study were eager to expand upon and embellish the answers to the scripted questions. Oftentimes, the participants moved through the list of scripted questions without having to be asked. Participants were knowledgeable and generous with their information. The stories that they told of their lived experiences at the Barn Theater were rich with detailed information and examples. The vocabulary used to share the stories was specific and clearly painted a picture of their lives at the Barn Theater. As a result, each interview was unique and flowed according to the order and timing of the participants’ stories. The goal of qualitative, phenomenological research is to describe the lived experiences of the participants in an open-ended format, and this study met those criteria.

**Unexpected Finding 3**

The current president of the board of directors has a limited vision for the Barn Theater. She stated, “I just want to see the doors stay open.” However, the participants in the research study viewed her as a highly effective leader because of her organizational management and attention to detail skills. Visionary leadership is a strong emphasis in leadership theory; but at this time, the participants did not seem to mind that the current president was not a visionary.
Conclusions

The researcher used the key findings to draw relevant conclusions from the data to answer the research questions. The conclusions are listed in order of the research questions that they answer.

Organizational Culture Conclusion 1

The members of the Barn Theater identified organizational culture as important; therefore, organizations looking for long-term sustainability must address organizational culture, including mentoring, passion for live theater, and a strong work ethic within their program.

Based on the findings of this study and the literature, it is concluded that multiple factors of organizational culture are linked to organizational sustainability. It is therefore concluded that an organization with mentoring, strong volunteer passion for theater arts, and a commitment to the vision and goals of the organization are necessary in order to sustain organizations.

This conclusion is supported by the literature. The impact of an organization’s culture has widespread effects on its functioning, because culture not only describes who its pertinent staff, patron, providers, and opponents are, but it also defines how the organization will relate with these crucial actors (Louis, 1980). In addition, Katz and Kahn (1966) tied the importance of organizational culture to sustainability. They indicated that it is important to align the purpose statement of an organization with the day-to-day decision making and behavioral expectations of the organization in order for the organization to function effectively over a long period of time.
Organizational Culture Conclusion 2

Organizations that are seeking long-term sustainability must include mentoring as a crucial aspect of their organizational culture. Mentoring is highly valued as an aspect of the Barn Theater’s culture. Guidance and training is readily available by experienced volunteers in all aspects of the theater’s operations from set design, to publicity, to maintenance, acting, and directing.

Based on the findings of this study and the literature, it is concluded that mentorship is important for sustainability in all organizations. It is important that the new leaders-in-training have a good understanding of the systems that are in place within the organization and that training should simplify the process for new leaders. This conclusion is supported by Matan (2010) and Drucker (1990). They recommended that in order to promote sustainability, it is important that staff work closely together to train new leaders, in the true spirit of collaboration.

Organizational Culture Conclusion 3

Organizations that seek long-term sustainability must recruit high-caliber volunteers who are committed to the goals of the organization. Based on the findings of this study and the literature, it is concluded that in a volunteer-based nonprofit organization, volunteers are the key to sustainability. Volunteers who are passionate and love the theater are likely to work diligently at whatever tasks are needed to promote the organization’s sustainability.

This conclusion is supported by Dreger (2012): Volunteers are of huge value to nonprofit organizations. Recent studies estimate that about a hundred million people volunteer each year with an annual value in
the range of $150 billion. Not only do volunteers help to save money, but they can provide better service to organizations, increase contact with the greater community, make available better expertise, and reduce costs of services. (p. 1)

In addition, Tishman (2013) mentioned that it is important for volunteers to feel recognized and appreciated through public praise, extra activities that are fun and help with team building, and providing organizational attire. Volunteer praise and appreciation helped to keep the workforce of a nonprofit organization actively engaged in the important day-to-day functions that assist an organization toward sustainability.

**Organizational Culture Conclusion 4**

*Organizations that seek long-term sustainability must develop an effective organizational structure that delineates processes for strategic planning, decision making, conflict management, and day-to-day operation for the organization.* Based on the findings of this study and the literature, it is concluded that organizational structure, determined through bylaws and formal operational guidelines, is essential for sustainability in organizations. This conclusion is supported by McNerney et al. (2013), who stated that “Highly successful nonprofits credit strategic planning and management to their overall success” (p. 1).

**Leadership Conclusion 1**

*Organizations that seek long-term sustainability must have strong leadership.*

Strong leadership is important to the sustainability of organizations, based on the findings of the study and the literature. Characteristics of strong leaders include the ability to share leadership, create diverse sources of income for the organization, maintain positive relationships with other volunteers, have high emotional intelligence, and effectively
network with the community. They also work to maintain a balance between artistic and financial efforts. This conclusion is supported by J. Bell et al. (2010) who embraced the concept that in order to be sustainable, a nonprofit organization needs to balance artistic vision with financial stability.

Additionally, transformational leadership theory supported this conclusion. It asserts that leaders are charismatic and able to build positive, trusting relationships with stakeholders, which results in the organization accomplishing mindset changes that benefit the organization as a whole (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The transformational leader is continually seeking new and better ways to solve day-to-day and long-term problems within a collaborative process (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

**Leadership Conclusion 2**

*Organizations that seek long-term sustainability must utilize a shared leadership structure.* Based upon the results of this study, shared leadership makes it possible for volunteers to focus their attention on a particular area of need. When a leader’s focus has boundaries, volunteers are able to manage their time and efforts more effectively and do not feel overwhelmed and overcommitted. Burnout in volunteer-based organizations can hinder sustainability. Shared leadership can limit burnout.

This conclusion is supported by York (n.d.). York’s research indicated that organizational theories have encouraged shared leadership since the 1980s; however, the traditional hierarchical forms of leadership have prevailed in nonprofit organizations. With shared leadership, there are many leaders who work collaboratively together to sustain an organization, and this can prevent burnout (Allison, Misra, & Perry, 2011).
Community Factors Conclusion 1

Organizations that seek long-term sustainability must develop a strong sense of community among its members and the community they serve. Based on the findings of this study and the literature, it is concluded that the sense of community elements of belonging, influence, shared emotional connections, and a personal fulfilment of needs should be supported by the organization.

This conclusion is supported by the sense of community theory (D. W. McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Members of an organization need to feel that they belong to the group and that their personal needs are being met. Additionally, D. W. McMillan and Chavis, (1986) indicated that members feel that they have a right to belong because they are invested in the common goal of the organization. A member of an organization experiences a sense of emotional safety because boundaries are determined for members of the community.

Community Factors Conclusion 2

In order to be sustainable, an organization’s members must make an emotional connection to each other and to the goals of the program. There needs to be an emotional connection among members of an organization, because they are like-minded people drawn together with a common passion and common goals. This conclusion is supported by D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) who indicated that there are seven aspects of shared emotional connection, including interpersonal contact, quality interactions, sharing and closure of events, investment of time and energy, feeling honored by the community rather than humiliated, and having a spiritual bond with the organization. These aspects lead to organizational sustainability.
Community Factors Conclusion 3

Members of a sustainable organization must feel that they influence the decision making of the organization and that their opinions matter. The decision-making process should include members at all levels of the organization. This conclusion is supported by D. W. McMillan and Chavis (1986) who indicated that members of a community need to feel that they are having a positive impact on their external environment and also that members have influence over the group’s members. The sustainability of an organization is dependent upon the members’ sense of community that includes their ability to positively influence the activities of the organization.

Overall Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study as supported by the literature, it is concluded that the factors of organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community are the three most important factors that contribute to the sustainability of organizations. In addition, mentoring, shared leadership, and a strong sense of belonging are powerful contributors to sustainability. These factors should be the focus of all organizations seeking long-term sustainability. All of the findings were consistent with research conducted by the National Endowment of the Arts, RAND Corporation, New Level Group, and TCC. They specifically associated sustainability of organizations to the areas of organizational culture, sense of community, and leadership factors.

Implications for Action

The conclusions suggest several implications for action. These are the researcher’s recommendations to address the conclusions. The group or organization responsible for implementing each implication is designated.
Implication for Action 1

*Leadership training is needed for all board members and directors.* Based on the qualitative data reported in this research study, all organizations must strategically plan to recruit experienced members who have knowledge of and practice theories of organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community. An extensive training program for members, especially in the areas of communication skills, problem solving, and conflict management and mentorship must be developed. Presidents of the boards of directors must arrange for leadership training by an expert in the field to set up a training program specifically geared toward helping to orient and train the new members of the board of directors. Activities in communication skills, team building, and accountability should be included. Further, organizations must promote a culture with positive, yet honest feedback among members, teamwork, and structures for the day-to-day work activities.

In addition, the expert consultant should provide training in problem solving and conflict management. This process would help to integrate new board members into the fold and would give them the skills needed to influence decision making in the future.

Mentorship, part of organizational culture, was identified as a strength of the Barn Theater. Experienced volunteers should work one-on-one with those new volunteers who have an interest in learning more about their respective areas. In addition, production directors rely on a director’s handbook that includes specific information and criteria meant to be a guide for success. There is also a training period whereby a potential director works as an assistant director and also gains experience by assisting back stage with costumes, lighting, and sound. The handbook also includes rules and regulations for
each director to follow so that as a director begins work on a play, the theater is physically prepared for the new production. This form of mentorship helps maintain the quality of the theater’s productions.

**Implication for Action 2**

*Strategic planning is needed to carry out short- and long-term plans for the organization.* Organizations need to engage in extensive strategic planning activities in order to implement the vision and mission of the program, establish a broader recruitment process for members, and assure that there is a balance between the artistic and the financial aspects of the program. Members must meet regularly to discuss their mission and vision for the theater and decide upon goals, desired outcomes, strategies, measures, and results. Setting goals and desired outcomes is the first step in the process. Strategies must be determined that will help realize the goals and desired outcomes. A method for evaluation must be developed with results being determined through the evaluation process. New goals must be set when results are determined, and the process will repeat itself.

**Implication for Action 3**

*A formal outreach program must be established to encourage community participation, especially from the youth population, in live performing arts.* Performing arts organizations must establish a formal outreach program to recruit youth to become members of the performing arts community. An aggressive campaign must be developed to promote relationships with the school districts, private schools, children’s library program, the city recreation program, and church programs and need to be strengthened. Current members of the youth program must actively engage in outreach performances
for all these groups. With the availability of 21st-century technology, social media must be used to communicate with the community about the youth program at the Barn Theater.

**Implication for Action 4**

*Diverse organizational income sources are needed to support live performing arts.* The boards of directors at all community theater programs must continue to develop diverse income sources. Members must use creativity and strategic planning and thinking out of the box to envision innovative means to increase the theater’s income. Professional touring companies must be invited to perform contemporary Broadway shows at community theaters in order to bring in a broader audience base.

A marketing and branding consultant must be hired to expand use of social media and advertise events that attract all cultural populations. Attracting all cultural and religious groups to community theaters would really boost its audience base. The consultant must work very closely with the boards of directors in order to ensure that the integrity of the theater’s mission is kept intact.

**Implication for Action 5**

*Public recognition for the historical integrity of theater and its programming must be an additional focus of a publicity campaign.* Historical landmark status must be sought for theaters that have been sustained for long periods of time. With historical landmark status, theaters will be eligible to apply for federal grants. The vision and programming and sustainability will be greatly enhanced through money granted from such agencies as the National Endowment for the Arts Association.
Recommendations for Further Research

Few studies have evaluated the factors that contribute to community theater sustainability. There are references to successful community theater practices in the literature, and there have been books written to guide community theater programs to success. In addition, the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) has a website designed to assist community theater programs with programing, marketing, leadership, and volunteerism. Membership in this organization provides valuable resources to community theater programs. However, the Barn Theater has a unique history, and the phenomena that have contributed to its sustainability are inherent in their history as factors of organizational culture, leadership, and community have influenced its sustainability.

1. This researcher recommends that a study of other community theaters be conducted to answer this question: “What components of organizational culture, leadership, and community factors are most powerful indicators of sustainability in community theater?” Since the Barn Theater is unique and has its own lived story, do these factors contribute to sustainability in other similar community theater programs? In order to strengthen the findings of this study, other community theaters should also be evaluated.

2. Another research question that should be posed is as follows: “What is the effectiveness of problem solving and conflict resolution training of nonprofit board of directors’ ability to accomplish the mission of their organization?” Conducting research in this area would follow up one of the implications for action in this study. Drucker (1990) recommended training in problem solving and conflict resolution for
the board of directors in all nonprofit organizations. If the Barn Theater’s board of directors received this training, would they be more capable of achieving their mission and goal toward sustainability?

3. There is also a need to observe how strategic planning can assist a community theater program toward achieving its goals, utilizing the research question, “How effective is strategic planning for nonprofit community theaters toward accomplishing a balance between their social mission and their finances?” According to J. Bell et al. (2010), a nonprofit is concerned with both profitability and social mission. The two factors go hand in hand: “It is not enough [for nonprofits] to have a high-impact program if there is no effective strategy for sustaining the organization’s finances, neither is it enough to be financially stable” (p. 3). Comparing organizations with strategic planning and those without could answer this important question.

4. The researcher believes there would be great value in a study that answered the question, “What types of outreach are most effective in bringing youth into community theater programs?” Children are the future members of community theater organizations. How can children be found and incorporated into community programs? In addition, how can they be encouraged to stay involved as adults? How do organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community factors affect children at the community theater level? These are important research questions to answer.

5. Finally, it might be helpful for other community theater programs that are interested in establishing historical landmark status to know: “What impact does historical landmark status have on the sustainability of community theater programs?” Considerable time and effort has been put into the Barn Theater’s application for the
National Registry of Historical Landmarks. Have there been other theaters who have qualified? If so, was it valuable to their sustainability? Answering these questions would help other community theaters and nonprofit organizations that were considering applying for the same status. Any of these studies would add to the body of knowledge on factors that contribute to the sustainability of community theater programs and would ultimately improve the sustainability of this valued form of artistic expression.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

The results of this study are important because they add to the small body of research on the sustainability of community theaters. The study provided data that identified organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have promoted the sustainability of the Barn Theater in Porterville for over 68 years. Mentoring, high-caliber and passionate volunteers, organizational structure, shared leadership, diverse sources of income, and feelings of membership and influence were identified as contributors to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

The researcher has 15 years of experience working with youth who have an interest in learning about performing arts. She has been involved in their vocal, dancing, and acting training. She has also taught students performing skills and has encouraged their self-confidence. It is her mission to encourage all students to demonstrate qualities of good character, such as responsibility, honesty, commitment, and caring. Equally important, she wants them to learn to present themselves in a public setting. She also gives children the opportunity to function as leaders and to be part of a team who accomplishes their goals. She wants to reinforce youth who are expressive and creative
and have great imaginations. She believes that students who are engaged in performing arts will learn the necessary life skills needed for success as adults.

This study evolved into a much different, more meaningful study than it was at its inception. In reviewing the literature, this researcher developed a much deeper understanding of the history of community theater and factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and community that influenced the sustainability of the Barn Theater. She learned the value of mentoring, strategic planning, teamwork, networking, and conflict management as they relate to nonprofit sustainability. She also learned the importance of balancing the artistic aspects of theater with the financial profitability of any performing arts program. This new knowledge has deepened her commitment to the sustainability of the Barn Theater, and she seeks to bring more youth into the Barn Theater and preserve this iconic program for generations to come.

While engaged in this study, the researcher has made contacts and has established relationships with many high-caliber, creative individuals who share her passion for the arts. She was recently elected to the board of directors of the theater. She also made contact with directors of other community theaters in the Central Valley of California and learned valuable information about their programs. She also made contact with the AACT and learned about the resources they have available to their members in an effort to preserve community theaters across America. It is her hope that she will be able to publish some of the results of this study on their website so that other community theaters can benefit from the knowledge gained through this study. Thus, the benefits of this study go beyond just providing data; hopefully it will have a positive impact on other community theater programs that may be struggling with sustainability.
The researcher believes that the main conclusion drawn from this study, that organizational culture, leadership, and community factors have influenced the sustainability of the Barn Theater should be examined by all nonprofit organizations struggling with sustainability. This researcher hopes that this research will inspire further studies that will continue to build the body of knowledge on factors of organizational culture, leadership, and sense of community and the impact they have in community theater sustainability.

The researcher intends to continue working with the Barn Theater and assist them with carrying out the implications for action covered in this study. She believes that completing the action plans will make a difference in the organization and help to expand its volunteer and audience bases and profitability and help it become more influential in the community.
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## Appendix A

### Synthesis Matrix

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Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Purpose of the Study:
This is a study being conducted by Mary Shaw, a doctoral student at Brandman University, Visalia, California and her expert panel of researchers. The purpose of this study is to discover and describe Porterville’s Barn Theater stakeholders’ perception of the organizational culture, leadership, and community factors that have led to the Barn Theater’s sustainability.

What will be done?
You will participate in an interview conducted Mary Shaw, which will take 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be video recorded to insure that the information that you provide is recorded and coded accurately during the data analysis process. Only Mrs. Shaw and her expert panel will have access to the video recordings. The videos will be secured in a locked file cabinet until the study is complete. Then they will be returned to you or destroyed to protect your confidential responses. We also will ask for some demographic information (e.g., sex, ethnicity) so that we can accurately describe the general traits of the group of those who participate in the study.

Benefits of this Study:
You will be contributing to knowledge of those who participate and work toward sustaining community theater programs. After participating in the interview, you will be entered into a drawing to win a gift certificate for dinner and a show at Roger Rocka’s Dinner Theater in Fresno, CA. After I have finished data collection, I will conduct the drawing. The winner will receive the gift certificate at a Board Meeting of the Barn Theater. After the researchers have finished data collection, you will be provided with more detailed information about the purposes of the study and the research findings.

Risks or discomforts:
No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the interview, your answers will NOT be recorded.

Confidentiality:
Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Only Mrs. Shaw and the researchers will have access to the video recording of your interview for the sole purpose of analyzing factors that have help sustain the Barn Theater. For the duration of the research, all videos will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After we have finished data collection, analyzed the results, and have sent you a copy of the results of the study, we will destroy the videos or return them to you.
Decision to quit at any time:
Your participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave the interview. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. The number of questions you answer will not affect your chances of winning the gift certificate.

How the findings will be used:
The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings and at professional conferences, and the results might be published in a professional journal.

Contact information:
If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Mary Shaw at xxxxx@xxxx.xxxxxxxxx.xxx. You may also contact Dr. Linda Williams at xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx

By attending the interview, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.
Appendix C
Brandman University IRB

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
IRB Application Action – Approval

Date: March 15, 2016

Name of Investigator/Researcher: Mary Shaw

Faculty or Student ID Number: BU00448421

Title of Research Project:

Stakeholders' Perception of the Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Community Factors that have led to the Sustainability of the Barn Theater in Porterville, California

Project Type: ☑ New ☐ Continuation ☐ Resubmission

Category that applies to your research:

☑ Doctoral Dissertation EdD
☐ DNP Clinical Project
☐ Masters' Thesis
☐ Course Project
☐ Faculty Professional/Academic Research
☐ Other:

Funded: ☑ No ☐ Yes

Project Duration (cannot exceed 1 year): March - July 2018

Principal Investigator's Address: 593 N. Christopher Dr. Porterville, CA

Email Address: mshaw@mail.brandman.edu Telephone Number: 559-353-1698

Faculty Advisor/Sponsor/Chair Name: Dr. Linda Williams

Email Address: lwilli5@brandman.edu Telephone Number: 916-225-4688

Category of Review:

☐ Exempt Review ☑ Expedited Review ☐ Standard Review
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
IRB APPLICATION ACTION – APPROVAL
COMPLETED BY BUIRB

IRB ACTION/APPROVAL

Name of Investigator/Researcher: Mary Shaw

☐ Returned without review. Insufficient detail to adequately assess risks, protections and benefits.
☐ Approved/Certified as Exempt form IRB Review.
☐ Approved as submitted.
☑ Approved, contingent on minor revisions (see attached)
☐ Requires significant modifications of the protocol before approval. Research must resubmit with modifications (see attached)
☐ Researcher must contact IRB member and discuss revisions to research proposal and protocol.

Level of Risk: ☐ No Risk ☑ Minimal Risk ☐ More than Minimal Risk

IRB Comments:
1) add the Participant Bill of Rights to the application as part of Informed Consent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Dr. Jalin Johnson

Telephone: ______________________ Email: jbrooks@brandman.edu

BUIRB Chair: DeVore

Date: 3/31/16

REVISED IRB Application ☑ Approved ☐ Returned

Name: Doug DeVore

Telephone: 623-293-2421 Email: ddevore@brandman.edu Date: 3-31-16

BUIRB Chair: ______________________

Brandman University IRB Rev. 11.14.14 Adopted November 2014

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Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. How has the organizational culture of the Barn Theater helped you grow as a person and performing artist while at the Barn Theater?
   a. Probe: How has the culture of the Barn Theater helped you grow as a person, over time?
   b. Probe: How has the culture of the Barn Theater helped you grow as an actor, director, and/or technical support person, overtime?
   c. Probe: What else would you like to learn from your experiences at the Barn Theater?

2. How does the Barn Theater motivate community volunteers to become involved with the program?
   a. Probe: How does the Barn Theater’s reputation encourage volunteers to become and stay involved?
   b. Probe: What are some stories that you have heard about the Barn Theater’s way of involving the community in the program on a long-term basis?
   c. Probe: What are some stories that you have heard about the Barn Theater’s impact on the volunteers, audience members, and the community as a whole?
   d. Probe: How do you believe a “sense of community” is developed within the volunteers at the Barn Theater?

3. What is your perspective on the value of the Barn Theater to the community?
   a. Probe: How is the Barn Theater unique to Porterville?
   b. Probe: How does it work with the community?
   c. Probe: How does it meet the needs of the community?

4. What is your perspective how the Barn Theater has functioned as an organization in the past and the present?
   a. Probe: How do people become members of the Board of Directors?
   b. Probe: What motivates people to become part of the Board of Directors?
   c. Probe: What are some stories that you have heard about how the Barn Theater functions as an organization?
   d. Probe: How are new volunteers assimilated into the organization?
   e. Probe: What are some of the behavioral norms (how things get done) that either help or hinder sustainability of the Barn Theater?
   f. Probe: What part do the bylaws play in the sustainability of the organization?
   g. Probe: How do the experienced members of the Barn Community mentor or provide training to new members?
   h. Probe: What is the work environment like?
5. What is your perspective on the leadership at the Barn Theater?
   a. Probe: Who have been the key influencers of the Barn Theater?
   b. Probe: What is your perspective on the ability of volunteers to share leadership?
   c. Probe: What is your perspective on the direction that the leadership at the Barn Theater has taken over time?
   d. Probe: What qualities have good leaders at the Barn Theater demonstrated in the past and the present?

6. What is your perspective on the decision-making process at the Barn Theater?
   a. How are decisions made at the Barn Theater?
   b. How are volunteers included in the ongoing decision-making process?
   c. What happens when the decision makers do not agree on a course of action?
   d. How are conflicts resolved?

7. What is your perspective on the facilities and resources available at the Barn Theater?
   a. What is special about the building and its resources?
   b. How have the facilities and resources grown over the years?
   c. How are the facilities and resources maintained or improved upon?

8. What are the financial strengths of the Barn Theater?
   a. What do you believe helps the Barn Theater continue to have the money to stay in operation?
   b. How has the Barn Theater historically faced financial challenges? (Past and present)
   c. What is the long and short term plan to maintain the financial sustainability of the organization?

9. What do you believe have been the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the Barn Theater?

10. What do you believe has allowed the Barn Theater to sustain itself for 68 years?
Appendix E

Minutes and Treasurers Reports from the Barn Theater 2015-2016

BARN THEATER

Minutes

Board of Directors

Meeting Date: July 13th, 2015

Date of Approval: ________________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on July 13th, 2015 and called to order at 7:08 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: John Burkey, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Wesley Cox, Bob Merzian, Edith LaVonne, Richard Boyd, Wendy Paisted, Steve Ross, Denise Everhart, and our two new members - Kim Day and Jeannette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Corey Barnes and Ralph Bourne. Also present were Sara Lee Gershon, Elizabeth Gentry and Mary Shaw.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of June 8th, 2015 were amended due to an incorrect report on a P & L statement (there wasn’t one available for May) and moved for approval by Edith LaVonne, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statements for May and June were reviewed. May showed a total income of $1,940.00 and total expenses of $4,883.18 ending in a net income of -$2,943.11. Building insurance, labor and maintenance showing the largest expense. June’s P & L showed a much larger total income of $4,173.92 and a larger total expenses of $5,197.69 ending in another negative net income of -$1,023.77. Building insurance and maintenance along with utilities eating up most of the expenses.

As Corresponding Secretary, Wesley Cox had nothing to report this meeting, however there were a couple of birthdays that were recognized including that of Steve Ross.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for the annual HossCar Awards Show is being finalized and approved through Denise Everhart, director.

Programs are going smoothly and Edith LaVonne is out searching for more advertisers for the program and has added some new sponsors to take up some of some of our drop-outs. “This Girl is on Fire!”

Denise Everhart asked for some volunteers at the box office and bar for the HossCar Show on July 25th.

The oven hood in the kitchen has been steam-cleaned along with the vents. Edith and Richard both cleaned and organized the kitchen as well. Discussions for changing the cost of future Sunday Brunches to $15 per person were tabled until the August meeting.

Wendy Paisted called for a Director’s meeting for August 31st at 5:00 PM. One thing that needs to be confirmed is the specific amounts budgeted for each type of play. Mel has nothing in his past records to indicate any budgets, but has volunteered to get past records from Sharon Hall (former Secretary) and see if anything might turn up on that end. At present, budgets range from $450 for a regular play; $700, periodical; $750, musical; $300, lobby show; $500, dinner theater (including cost of the food).

(i)
OLD BUSINESS

Ballots for the Barn Theater Board of Directors were disclosed from the Annual Membership Meeting of June 28th, 2015 and we are happy to welcome our two new members, Kim Day and Jeannette Jameson to the Board. Both of these members were elected to a one year term. All incumbents (Richard Boyd, John Burkey, Wesley Cox, Nicki Edwards, Mel Gosage, Edie LaVonne, Wendy Plaisted, and Steve Ross) were re-elected to the Board as well - serving two year terms 2015-17. Bob Merzian, Ralph Bourne, Caroline Harris, Denise Everhart and Corey Barnes are still serving their two year terms from 2014-16. Congratulations to all!

Election of officers took place next and with no opposition, Wendy Plaisted moved that the Board accept Mel Gosage as Secretary of Minutes, Caroline Harris as Treasurer and Wesley Cox as Corresponding Secretary. This was seconded and passed. John Burkey declined another term for the office of Vice President and Steve Ross nominated Bob Merzian for the office, was seconded and unanimously passed. Two nominations were offered for the office of President - Nicki Edwards by Caroline Harris; and Wendy Plaisted by Steve Ross. Secret ballots were tallied and Nicki Edwards won by one vote.

Sara Lee Geshon and Jeannette Jameson stated that they are still waiting to meet with Chris Brewer from Visalia to go through the correct wording and hope to have it finalized by the end of the year. On a special note, Sara mentioned that the correct spelling for theater is “ER” when referring to the venue, and “RE” when referring to the art. She went on to say that the historical status of the Barn Theater is about the organization - not the building.

Wendy Plaisted said that a special meeting will be held for the Barn members to vote on the revised By-Laws on Sunday, August 9th at 2:00 PM. Reminder letters will be going out no later than Wed., July 22nd.

Bob Merzian gave an update on the Outdoor Stage area and had talked to Mr. Vollmer regarding construction of three-tiered levels in the seating area complete with rebar and stairs at an estimated cost of $3,500. The discussion was tabled until the August meeting.

Richard Boyd is still looking to find a cover to protect the upright piano.

Plans are currently underway to produce a combined Summer Follies and Melodrama on the outdoor stage with dates set for two evening performances on Fri. and Sat., Aug. 21 and 22 at 8 PM. Planning meetings and auditions are underway. Mel Gosage will be directing the Follies with Ralph Bourne and Caroline Harris directing the Melodrama.

John Burkey and Bob Merzian are working with Joel Buringrud from Harmony on the new flats that they will be building for their Performing Arts division. John and Bob took inventory of all of our old flats to better get an idea of what we can still use in part or whole and to determine the number of new flats that need to be constructed probably during the first three weeks in September. Also brought up was the possibility of constructing a semi-permanent flat that would stay erected at all times unless by special arrangement from the current director of a play. This would allow a discreet “hiding” walkway for cast and crew. Kim Day interjected that through hers and Gene’s business - Sierra Exterminators - they would like to possibly donate a canvas roll-up backdrop to allow for better scene changes. Thank you Dais!!!

Report on Death of a Salesman was troubling as far as revenue and attendance, however the responses were very positive regarding the acting, set, and period costuming.

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(continued)

Denise Everhart reported that the Hosscar Awards Show “Shake it Off!” is ready to go and should be fun!

John Burkey said that the movie “As The River Goes” directed by Porterville’s own Katie Espejo, a USC student, was a big success with 121 people attending and donating a huge supply of drinking water as well as various paper & plastic eating utensils. John also mentioned that Katie donated $300 of her own money to the PACC. We were proud to donate the facilities and time to help out her cause. Get lots of publicity, too.

Mel Gosage was given the go-ahead to prepare 50 calendars to sell at the Hosscars at $15 per calendar.

NEW BUSINESS

Edie LaVonne and Rosie (City of Porterville) came down on a Sunday and watered and flushed out the irrigation hoses. Also, LC Kaylor presented an overall estimate on twelve different projects amounting to several thousand dollars. Caroline Harris moved that we cover four of those (repair existing sprinkler system/remove all shrubs/re-grade/remove excess dirt) at an estimated cost of $1,550. It was seconded and passed.

Extending the wrought iron fence around to the green room exterior door could be completed by Chiapa for an estimated $2,400.00, but must be approved by City Council. Repair or replacement of the wooden barrier outside the green room was tabled to August meeting.

Auditions for Annie, the Musical are set for Oct. 26 and 27 at 6 PM. Bob said that Janie Dignam will be musical director and Elizabeth Gentry, the choreographer. Mary Shaw will take care of obtaining the scripts.

OTHER ITEMS (not on Agenda)

Wendy Flaisted brought up painting the lobby and said she will schedule a time that would be suitable for all activities. She also moved that we get estimates on electrical work/lights. It was seconded and passed. Wendy also mentioned that “clean-up” day (bullpen cleaning) went well. Thanks to all that helped.

Denise made a motion to replace the garland in the lobby with molding. It was seconded and passed. Denise volunteered to produce some molding samples for us to look at. Denise also requested that we purchase tubs for storing historical and other items in the wardrobe department.

Steve Ross produced some estimates for folding 60” round tables and will continue to look for others.

Wesley Cox shared two copies of the Porterville Recorder’s “Fifty Plus” inserts featuring cover photos of both Bob Merzian and Ralph & Pam Bourne. Congrats to our celebrities!

Mary Shaw proposed that her Barn Theater Junior Company, comprised of a dozen - plus young students from Belleview School be allowed to perform a musical number appropriate to the show’s theme on the opening night of each play scheduled for this season. The Board agreed to consider this and it was tabled to next month’s meeting. Caroline Harris also moved that the Barn purchase T-Shirts for the students, incl-
(continued)

Making a T-Shirt for Mary as well. It was seconded and passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM. Next meeting is scheduled for August 10th, 2015 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: August 10th, 2015
Date of Approval: ____________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater
Lobby, Porterville, CA, on August 10th, 2015 and called to order at 7:05 PM by President Nicki Edwards.
Members of the Board in attendance were: John Burkey, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage,
Bob Merzian, Edith LaVonne, Wendy Flaisted, Steve Ross, Denise Everhart, Ralph Bourne, Kim Day and
Jeanette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Wesley Cox (injury) and Richard Boyd. Also present
were Sara Lee Gershon, Mike Proctor, Jane Dignam, Mary Shaw, and Dick Eckhoff.

Amended Minutes of the last Board meeting of July 13th, 2015 were moved for approval by Steve Ross,
seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for July showed a total net income of $1,01 with expenses of $6,692.50
and income of $6,660.51. Big income sources due to a $3,000 saving account transfer and season ticket
sales of $2,900. Biggest expenses being building and kitchen maintenance and utilities.

Corresponding Secretary, Wesley Cox hurt his back and was unable to be at tonight’s meeting. Get well
soon Wesley. You are in all of our thoughts.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for the annual Fossca Award Show
was on budget and that we received some great front page coverage of the show. Publicity and Ads
for the upcoming Follies and Melodrama is currently underway and scheduled.

Program Advertising deadline is coming up soon and in spite of losing some of the advertisers from past
seasons, the programs are filling up with some old stand-bys as well as some new ones due mostly in part
to Edith’s “pavement pounding”.

Volunteers for ticket sales and drink/food sales were asked for the upcoming Follies/Melodrama. Prices
and items for sale were kept to a simple and limited number.

Edith LaVonne asked that we keep all non-food related items out of the kitchen and that if any of us bring any
dishes or utensils into the kitchen, please wash them - don’t just leave in the sink (dirty).

A reminder that Wendy Flaisted has called for a Director’s meeting for August 31st at 5:00 PM. Annie
has indeed been cancelled for this season. Mel is still trying to find any account from Sharon Hall’s pre-
vious seasons’ minutes as to budget allowances for plays. As mentioned before, budgets range from $450
for a regular play; $700, periodical; $750, musical; $300, lobby show; $500, dinner theater (including cost
of the food). Mel will continue to go through the bin of “minutes past” to uncover any mention of budgets.
OLD BUSINESS

Sara Lee Gershon and Jeanette Jameson stated that Chris Brewer is still working on the status of the Barn that we need the building as an entity and that they are still waiting to learn about the heir transfer deeds. Sara said that George Murray has a valid interest in the Barn and is the probable heir. Chris emphasized that we get the lease now.

Wendy Pfaihted had previously set a special meeting for the Barn members to vote on the revised By-Laws on Sunday, August 9th at 2:00 PM. Reminder letters went out to be received by Wed., July 22nd. The meeting on August 9th had seven members present: Nicki Edwards, John Burke, Ralph Bourne, Mel Gosage, Caroline Harris, Edith LaVonne and Dick Eckhoff. Dick found some discrepancies in the revised By-Laws and with a motion by Caroline Harris and a second by John Burke, the revised By-laws were opposed and sent back to the committee with Dick Eckhoff being a part of that committee. Next meeting set for Sept. 14th at 6 PM right before the regularly scheduled board meeting at 7 PM.

Bob Merzoian and Dick Jameson couldn’t get together to go over outdoor stage refurbishing so that meeting was tabled to a future date.

Bob Merzoian was originally looking at “Grease” to replace “Annie”, but felt that it would be too difficult to get a cast and opted for the melodrama “Ten Nights In A Barroom” with 8 shows, and since this is director’s discretion, the Board approved.

Richard Boyd was not present to discuss a cover to protect the upright piano.

Plans are currently underway for the combined Summer Follies and Melodrama on the outdoor stage. Ticket Sales and refreshments were discussed. All ads and publicity are on schedule.

John Burke and Bob Merzoian are working with Joel Baringrud from Harmony on the new flats that they will be building for their Performing Arts Division. John produced a Flat Evaluation List of all flats and the recommendations as well. This included 2x8, 3x8, 4x8, 2x10, 3x10, 4x10 pockets. It was also recommended that a play involving additional flats or building constructed of solid materials be required to get Board approval in advance. Bob moved that we install a semi-permanent back hanging wall for all most plays and it was approved with 8 yes votes and 2 no votes. General consensus to a pull-down canvas roll for quick scene changes, was met with mixed views.

Denise Everhart reported that the 67th Hoscar Awards Show was awesome. She also mentioned that she would like to see us build a shadow box to house an original Hoscar statuette in the freshly painted lobby. Wendy also mentioned that it would be good to extend the budget for the Hoscars over the year - it was tabled to next month’s meeting.

Nicki Edwards said that Kaylor Landscaping will be starting on the irrigation/landscaping project in mid August. Ralph moved that we extend Kaylor’s project budget up to $2,000. Seconded and approved.

Securing of privacy fence was tabled to September’s meeting.

Regarding the extension of the wrought iron fence, ABC states that we can avoid any penalties/problems by adding to the existing space, but not extending the area.

Replacing or repairs to the wooden barrier outside the green room were tabled to September’s meeting.
With paint colors approved, the Board set aside three consecutive weekends in September beginning Saturday, Sept. 12th at 9 AM to paint the lobby.

Mary Shaw showed off the new Barn Theater Junior Company T-Shirts that the Barn purchased for her young group. They will be showing them off at the upcoming Follies and Melodrama for the first time. Mary also mentioned that the young ensemble is ready for opening night of "Dracula, the Musical". Mary requested for her performers to be included on the Barn's website.

NEW BUSINESS

Mel Gosage brought up a fund-raising idea for the month of November in the form of a stand-up comedy night for adults only. Ralph moved that we go ahead with it and it was passed. Date and prices to be determined at September's meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM. Next Board meeting scheduled for September 14th at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: September 14th, 2015
Date of Approval: ________________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on September 14th, 2015 and called to order at 7:02 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: John Burkey, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Bob Merzouk, Edith LaVonne, Wendy Plaisted, Steve Ross (late due to Dracula rehearsal), Ralph Bourne, Wesley Cox, Richard Boyd and Jeanette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Kim Day and Denise Everhart (illness). Also present were Sara Lee Gershon, Mary Shaw, and Dick Eckhoff.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of August 10th, 2015 were moved for approval by Wendy Plaisted, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for August 2015 showed a net income of -$1,009.15 with expenses of $3,450.15 and income of $2,441.00. Income sources included Season ticket sales, kitchen production and the Follies/Melodrama. Biggest expenses being building maintenance, utilities and Dracula scripts/royalties.

Corresponding Secretary, Wesley Cox shared some positive newspaper articles on recent Barn activities.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for the Follies and Melodrama were on budget. Buzzardfest advertising and publicity were in progress as well as future plans for Dracula. It was determined that prices of the Buzzardfest would be increased this year from $6 admission to $10.

Program Advertising and play information for Dracula were on schedule.

Volunteers for Box Office and bar for Dracula were signed up during the meeting. We would like to have more volunteers offer their help instead of the same ones for each play. Cast members excluded.

Caroline will need some extra help for serving and kitchen duty for the Dracula and Sunday Brunch.

Wendy Plaisted said that Directors’ application deadline for the 2016-17 Season is October 31st.

OLD BUSINESS

Sara Lee Gershon stated that the nominating process has still been delayed since Chris Brewer hasn’t heard back from his contacting office. Jeanette Jameson has done some remarkable work on the genealogy of the George G. Murry family and presented the board with a terrific graphic chart of the Murry Family Tree, which, along with the current family’s blessings will expedite our historical status.
Wendy Plaisted resigned her position as chairwoman of the By-Laws Committee. Further discussion on the By-Laws were tabled to next month's meeting.

Bob Merzian suggested that to save money, perhaps we could get a hold of someone with a tractor to help in the outdoor stage area regarding the terracing. Edie LaVonne volunteered to contact an acquaintance in Terra Bella regarding railroad ties and see what kind of deals could be made.

Richard Boyd still has not heard back from Marty's Upholstery regarding the piano cover.

Mel Gosage, on behalf of Ralph Bourne and Caroline Harris reported a medium sized crowd both nights of the Folies/Melodrama production and that, despite the warm weather, the audience seemed to enjoy the fun evenings. Caroline stated that we netted close to $900 and that rather than send a check for $88 (10% pledge) to DAV, that we round it up to $100. The Board agreed. A certain angel with the initials of Wesley Cox offered to match that total. Bless you, WC! That means that a great organization will be receiving a check for $200.

John Burkey and Bob Merzian gave a report on the flats progress in conjunction with Joel Baringrud at Harmony and John printed out a chart showing the current Barn's inventory and evaluation, the recommendations and the materials needed as well as their cost ($1,006.86) and source ((Loew's/Norcosco). Edith LaVonne made a motion to authorize funds for the flats, it was seconded and passed.

With Denise Everhart's absence, the report of the securing of the privacy fence and the extension of the wrought iron fence was tabled to next month's meeting.

Wendy Plaisted reported that the painting of the lobby went very good and a lot of people turned out to help. Corey Barnes not only helped out with the painting, but came back and worked successive days to install the molding as well. Denise took the initiative to mount many of the paintings and photographs in lovely groupings that are very eye-appealing.

Edie LaVonne gave a report on the progress of the landscaping and irrigation project from Kaylor Landscaping. Everything seems to be working nicely and the key to the tamper-proof faucet is in the broom closet.

Mary Shaw gave an update on the Barn Theater's Junior Company and said that they are ready for their debut performance at the opening night of Dracula. She is also considering starting a "B" group of young performers after Christmas.

Dracula rehearsals are going well. Katie Blevins, director, decided to go with canned music. Also, our very talented Ginger Pierse will be assisting Charles Hickinbotham in the musical direction.

NEW BUSINESS

Because many theatre patrons were receiving refreshments and drinks (non-alcoholic) and not leaving anything in the way of donations, that we should perhaps charge for the sodas. The subject was tabled to October's meeting.

Ralph Bourne gave a report on the upcoming Bluegrass Buzzardfest for Sept. 26th. Lots of musicians lined up including Grass Less Traveled with Michael McDonald. Ralph said that we would need $300
(continued)

to acquire his talents. Wendy Plaisted moved that we write a check, it was seconded and passed.

Corey Barnes has requested to rent the Barn's lobby on behalf of his sister on Saturday, September 19th for a glamour/make-up program. Steve Ross made a motion to rent it to her for $125. It was seconded and passed.

Jeanette Jameson and Sara Gershon came up with an outreach plan directed at bridging the gap between the Barn and Porterville City Leaders including short and long term goals for both city leaders and the community in general. Some legal concerns arose in the course of the presentation and it was determined that perhaps there could be some similar methods used to reach the same goal. Jeanette and Sara said that they would research it further. Some great ideas, ladies! We appreciate the efforts.

A leak was discovered in the cooler in the auditorium which ended up being a broken hose and was re-placed by our valient Barn work horses. Corey Barnes and, speaking on her behalf, Denise Everhart - felt that the heating & cooling circulation might be more effective in the auditorium if the vents going to the lobby (walls) were closed up. Edie LaVonne moved that we temporarily close the vents and see if there is a difference, after which they could be permanently closed, patched-up and painted. Seconded and passed.

The Comedy Show being arranged by Mel Gosage was scheduled for Saturday, November 21st and deemed an "Adults Only" event, with ticket prices at $20 per person which would include two "drinks".

Mary Shaw and her husband donated a nice air conditioning unit to the Barn valued at $500. Originally intended to be used in the lobby, Corey felt that due to the lobby's size, it might best be suited to use in the green room and moving the current window AC to the kitchen. Food for thought. Thank you, Mary!

Patti Torrey - long-time friend and supporter of the Barn and most of the Central Valley as well - was represented by her husband, Jared at tonight's meeting. Jared would like to put on a dinner & concert on Saturday, Nov. 7th themed "Patti Torrey & Friends". He gave us an offer we couldn't refuse with free grass-fed Angus beef and we keep all the receipts of the dinner. In exchange, he suggested that we could offer the auditorium, rent-free, and Patti keep the funds for that. Wendy Plaisted moved that we donate the house/concert to Patti rent-free and Jared furnish the beef. Seconded and passed. A committee, headed up by Edith LaVonne, was formed to fine-tune the promotion.

Upcoming events: Nov thru Oct. 25th - Dracula; Nov. 7th - Patti Torrey Dinner/Concert; Nov. 21st - Comedy Show; Nov. 27th & 28th - Piano Concert with Bob Melne; Dec. 4th - 14th - The Hobbit.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:26 PM. Next Board meeting scheduled for November 9th at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: November 9th, 2015
Date of Approval: 

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on November 9th, 2015 and called to order at 7:09 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Bob Merzolian, Edith LaVonne, Wendy Plaisted, Denise Everhart, Wesley Cox, John Burkey, Jeanette Jameson, Kim Day and Ralph Bourne. Members not in attendance were: Corey Barnes, Steve Ross and Richard Boyd. Also present was Mary Shaw.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of October 12th, 2015 were moved for approval by John Burkey, seconded and passed.

Treasure’s Profit & Loss Statement for October 2015 showed a net income of $1,059.34 thanks largely to income from the Dracula production, kitchen production and season ticket sales with a total income of $5,187.71. Expenses totaled $4,134.37 with utilities topping the expense list. Bob Merzolian moved to accept the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary, Wesley Cox had nothing to report this month.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for Dracula was on schedule and on budget. Comedy night publicity and ad line-ups are being prepared. Hobbit publicity information is in the process of being collected and the ads and flyers prepared.

Box office volunteers for the Comedy Night have been taken care of, but volunteers are needed for the Hobbit according to Wendy Plaisted.

Caroline Harris reminded the Board that there are a lot of functions going on from the kitchen department. Help is greatly needed in prepping, serving and washing for several dinners, holiday programs and luncheons. Check with her if you can offer assistance.

Wendy Plaisted said that Directors’ application deadline for the 2016-17 Season has been extended to Nov. 16th as there were only 3 plays submitted by the original deadline of Oct. 31st.

OLD BUSINESS

Jeanette Jameson reported for the Historical Status Committee and said that Chris Brewer from Visalia should be prepared to put the finishing touches on the report by month’s end. Also, Jeanette and Sara Gershom met with Claire Kelly at Harmony to work on some voice-overs for the Historical video.
(continued)

John Burkey may volunteer to head up the By-Laws committee after the first of the year. It was tabled to January 2016 Board Meeting.

Bob Merzian said that the outdoor stage renovation plans will continue after the rainy season.

Edie LaVonne, speaking on behalf of Richard Boyd (absent), said that the piano cover was almost finished. It was suggested that we search for a location (warehouse?) to store the upright piano.

Bob Merzian and John Burkey gave a report on the flats progress in conjunction with Joel Buergerud at Harmony and stated that construction would begin on Nov. 23rd and should be completed in January.

Denise Everhart reported that she is still waiting on blueprints regarding the building of a privacy fence and the extension of the wrought iron fence out back.

Corey Barnes volunteered to build the wooden barrier separating the lobby and the green room and the Board is still awaiting his report.

Mary Shaw gave an update on the Barn Theater's Junior Company. She mentioned that they will be performing a pre-show routine for the first and second nights of the Hobbit's opening. They delighted the audiences with their "Monster Mash" routine for Dracula. Kudos to Mary and Company.

Katie Blevins gave a report on her three weekend run of Dracula with nothing but good to say about the audiences, the cast and crew and a big congratulations to the newcomers as well.

Denise reminded the Board that the heaters were in good shape according to her "guys". She also said that the coolers might survive another season with maintenance. No word yet on vent removals separating the auditorium and the lobby.

Nicki gave a report on Harmony career day and mentioned that it went well with various Barn vets giving instructional tours in all departments to over 20 students.

Mel gave a report regarding Comedy Night scheduled for Sat., Nov. 21st. All is going well and hope to have a good crowd.

Edie LaVonne said that rehearsals are going fine and that the kids are bonding and becoming a "family". Nice to have the new young faces on the stage. Edith is hoping to get her set constructed soon so that the decor can be brought into place.

Edith also mentioned that FECO has fixed the outdoor parking lamp. She will also contact the city and see if something can be done regarding the parking lot and the tire curbs that are in such poor condition.

Denise stated that she has still not been able to find a door contractor regarding the gap in the lobby door.

NEW BUSINESS

The Barn's liability insurance has been increased from 1.6 million to 2 million dollars and personal items and fixtures has been increased from $100,000 to $150,000 which will give the Barn an annual...
premium of $4,600 which is approximately a $40 increase per month.

Nicki brought a box of historical photos of historical Barn moments that her uncle, Jeff Edwards had taken. Edie LaVonne moved that we pay Jeff $500 for the treasure. It was seconded and passed.

Bob Milne is set to perform on two different days, Nov. 28th at 7:30 PM and Nov. 29th at 2:15 PM. All is on schedule.

Headset mikes from Lindsay Community Theater were given the responsibility as borrower/intermediary in the form of Richard Boyd.

Denise made a request on behalf of the Hosscars and directors of plays that occasionally there are "seasonal" bargains when using monies that are budgeted for specific time slots and that it might be in the Barn's best interest to be flexible when the forsite is recognized. In Denise's case - tree lights for Hosscar night in July. Makes perfect sense.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM. Next Board meeting scheduled for January 18th, 2016 at 7:00 PM. Merry Christmas to all!

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on October 14th, 2015 and called to order at 7:02 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Edith LaVonne, Wendy Plaisted, Steve Ross, Kim Day, Jeanette Jameson, Denise Everhart, Ralph Bourne (late, due to rehearsal) and Wesley Cox. Members not in attendance were: John Burk, Bob Mezoian (rehearsal), Corey Barnes and Richard Boyd. Also present was Mike Proctor.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of November 9th, 2015 were moved for approval after an amendment setting the directors' application deadline to Dec. 14th, 2015 (instead of Nov. 14th) by Steve Ross, seconded and passed.

Treasurer's Profit & Loss Statement for November 2015 showed a net income of -$2,308.25 with expenses of $5,008.32 and income of $2,700.07. Wendy Plaisted moved to accept the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary, Wesley Cox shared the loss of two of our long-time friends of the Barn who have recently departed: Alice Pexler and Joseph Telle's mom (who spoke so fondly of the recent production of the Hobbit and the children on stage).

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for The Hobbit went smoothly and under-budget due to the limited number of performances.

Wendy Plaisted stated that more volunteers are needed for box office duty.

Edith and Caroline reported that the health inspector gave the kitchen staff a rating of 99 (out of 100). Congratulations. Acknowledgements went to Steve Ross for all his contributions in helping out at the various scheduled parties and dinners/luncheons. Lots of events planned for December. Please volunteer.

Wendy Plaisted said that as of today's meeting, six plays have been submitted. Next meeting is scheduled for the play reading committee on Jan. 11th at 6 PM.

OLD BUSINESS

Wendy Plaisted's replacement to chair the By-Laws committee will be John Burk after the first of next year. Thank you, John.

Jeannette Jameson relayed her Historical Committee report by saying that no word has passed from Chris
(continued)

Brewer, but that should change after the holidays. Jeanette also received responses from two of the surviving grandsons and they were positive and appreciative of the efforts of the Historical Committee as well as the Barn Theater in general. Good work!

Edie LaVonne, speaking on behalf of Richard Boyd (absent), said that the piano cover from Marty's Upholstery was still unfinished.

John Burkey had sent an email stating that he would handle the deliveries of the new flats from Harmony.

Denise Everhart reported that Art Chiapa will be coming back out to do a measurement and new blue prints of the security/privacy and extended fence cut back of the Barn.

Corey Barnes has bought the materials for the replacing and repairing of the privacy barrier. Since he has had no time to build it, the idea of having Caroline's son (Kenneth) build it. No further discussion on this.

Mary Shaw's Barn Theater's Junior Company was discussed and it was brought up about having the children supervised a little better and perhaps the parents of the company could help with that. Mel volunteered to talk to Mary about the problem.

Mel Gosage gave a report on Comedy Night and due to the response and the success of the show, it was voted on by the Board to schedule another one in the spring for April 2nd. Mel volunteered to produce it again, but would like new faces involved such as the emcee.

Edie LaVonne said that The Hobbit was very successful and that she estimated over 550 attendees over the six-performance schedule. The cast was great and well behaved. Her only disappointment was the lack of communication during her rehearsal times. Interference (noise primarily) from the Comedy group and the Ten Nights cast rehearsals were very distracting. She is hoping that that can be remedied.

Bob Milna's concert was a little disappointing as there were only a total of 55 people over the two days of concerts. This was the Thanksgiving weekend, but were the dates he reserved.

John Burkey asked that we consider offering special afternoon admissions for Burton's February daytime performances. It was tabled to January's meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Caroline Harris has been working with Sheila from the museum to arrange packages that would be open to the public in regards to a fund-raising trip to Eagle Mountain Casino on a monthly basis. All money collected would be 100% profit. She will report more on this at January's meeting.

Mike Proctor has brought up the need for a new light board in the past and Edie LaVonne moved that we set aside $2,000.00 for the expenditure. It was seconded and passed.

The gutters around the Barn are in need of repair as there are places that are bent and crushed. Discussion to continue at next month's meeting.

The date of May 21st has been set aside for the 2nd annual Blues & Brews Festival. Ralph Bourne to produce this event again.
Call to Order. A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on February 8th, 2016 and called to order at 7:03 PM by Vice President Bob Merzian. Members of the Board in attendance were: Bob Merzian, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Edith LaVonne, John Burkey, Wendy Plaisted, Steve Ross, Kim Day (late due to rehearsal), Denise Everhart (late due to rehearsal), Ralph Bourne, Corey Barnes and Jeanette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Nicki Edwards (excused), Wesley Cox (vacation) and Richard Boyd (work-related). Also present were Mary Shaw, Sara Gershon, Leslie Woudstra, Mike Proctor and Vince Black.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of January 11th, 2015 were moved for approval by Wendy Plaisted, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for January 2016 showed a net income of -$2,286.23 with expenses of $4,362.39 (administration and utilities being the largest) and income of $2,076.16 (thanks to the first wave of Ten Nights in a Bar Room). Edie LaVonne moved to approve the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary Wesley Cox is on vacation.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for Ten Nights In A Bar Room was on schedule and slightly under-budget due to only two Sunday matinees. Jane Shimura really raised the bar when it came to her FB posts and proved how invaluable that media can be!

Denise Everhart stated that when making reservations for multiple seats, to be sure take charge of those individuals so that they know whose name they’re under, thus ending confusion. Communication is the key! Also, box office volunteers are needed for the upcoming Burton “Peter Pan” production schedule.

Edith LaVonne booked a party for Saturday, Feb. 13th, Caroline Harris booked a Class of ‘49 reunion for Sat., Oct. 15th as well as a 50th birthday party for Sat., March 12th which unfortunately overlapped the Lumafest program for the same day.

OLD BUSINESS

Sara Gershon and Jeanette Jameson reported that things are starting to clear up for Chris Brewer and that they would be getting together with Kelly from SHIPPO for a consultation on Thurs., Feb. 11th at 2 PM to have everything backed up. Looks like the Barn Theater’s Historical Status should become a reality before the end of this year if all goes as planned.

Caroline Harris reported that Wesley Cox has several usable RR ties that can go a long way in structuring the terracing and stairs in the outdoor stage area. It was suggested that we designate a work day to work
on the outdoor stage area. Bob said that we could select a day after the rainy season and that it would be good to have schematics drawn up. Bob and Ralph volunteered to spray for weeds this coming weekend.

Bob also found the original cover for the upright piano so we won’t have to go through Marty’s.

John Burkey told the Board that the 8’ flats will be ready to pick up from Harmony Academy on Thursday and that the 10’ flats would be ready at a later date.

Denise said that Art Chiapa will have the information on the wrought iron extension for the outdoor stage area available Tuesday and that she will email that info to us.

Corey Barnes has most of the privacy barrier outside the green room completed.

Mary Shaw’s Belleview students are ready for the week’s performances of Peter Pan. Also, the Junior Company is rehearsing for their opening night performance of Copa Cabana for Paradise Lounge. Mary also announced that she has decided to retire from Belleview after this school year. We wish her the best!

Bob and Janie’s Tea Nights was a huge success and entertained hundreds of people - both old and new - and the great thing about this cast - 2/3 of the members were first-timers! Kudos!

John Burkey unclogged the gutter downspouts and Edie said that she will give a report of the gutters’ results after the next rain.

Sara’s and Jeanette’s Barn Reunion was given potential dates of Aug. 12, 13 or 14 for the event.

Wendy Plaisted still needs items for the silent auction as well as volunteers for the Lunafest set for Saturday, March 12th. Doors open at 7 with show at 7:30 PM and hors d’oeuvres served at intermission.

Love Letters lobby show has been postponed to a future time.

Bob suggested that Jeanette Jameson head the committee to oversee the re-forming of the Barn Guild. She said that she would get back to us by next month’s meeting. The Barn Guild would be organized and run by patrons of the Barn to provide funds for additions and improvements to the Barn.

Regarding the plays for the 2016-17 season, Nicki Edwards left a letter to be read aloud giving her opinion on the current play list. Bob read the letter stating her objections to the exclusion of Greater Tuna Christmas. Wendy apologized for the oversight on the use of more than two actors, but also defended her decision on the use of racism and other “politically incorrect” dialogue. Steve Ross moved that we replace Caroline Harris’s Radio Hour Christmas Carol with Bob’s Greater-Tuna Christmas. It was seconded and passed with a majority show of hands.

Ralph Bourne is ready for the Blues & Brews Festival on Sat., May 21st. He says that at least 2/3 of the music is dedicated to “blues.” With Ralph’s potential line-up, Edie suggested that the board set aside a $500 budget to help get a headlining band. It was seconded and passed. Bob stated that this would be an ideal venue to have the grand opening of the outdoor stage. Ralph also brought up the possibilities of the addition of a sliding door from the east side of the Barn in which to move the piano and equipment in/out.

Denise went through the green room and cleaned it up
NEW BUSINESS

Caroline looked into prices for a new covering for the warehouse metal door and said that the $3,000 quote was very high. It was suggested that we use a possible insulator on the inside of the door instead. This was tabled to the next meeting.

Jeanette brought up the subject of allowing drinks in the auditorium during performances. It was tabled to next month’s meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM. Next Board meeting is scheduled for March 14th, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: March 14th, 2016
Date of Approval:_____________________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on March 14th, 2016 and called to order at 7:03 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: Bob Merzian, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Wesley Cox, Edith LaVonne, Wendy Plaisted, Steve Ross, Kim Day, Denise Everhart, Ralph Bourne, and Jeanette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Richard Boyd, Cory Barnes and John Burkey (illness). Also present were Mary Shaw, Sam Lee Gershon and Leslie Woudstra.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of February 8th, 2015 were moved for approval by Steve Ross, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for February 2016 showed a net income of $4,695.69 with expenses of $4,249.22 (building insurance, maintenance & supplies and utilities being the largest) and income of $8,944.91 (thanks to Burton’s Peter Pan and a whopping six grand plus from Bob and Janie’s Ten Nights in a Bar room). Wendy Plaisted moved to approve the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary Wesley Cox informed the Board that Maurine Hamilton is in ICU and that Glenn Edwards is having health problems and in and out of emergency room with upcoming surgery expected. Our thoughts and prayers go with them.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for Ten Nights In A Bar-room was slightly under-budget and that the ad for the Comedy Night produced no results.

Edie LaVonne asked if we were going to keep the prices of program ads the same. The Board agreed that we should keep them the same. Edie also mentioned that with all her activities that she could use some more help in the selling of ads. Since Mel will be stepping down from the Secretary position at next election, that he would have time to help with sales.

A sheet was passed around for sign-ups regarding box office volunteers as well as bartending. Nicki stressed the fact that if we don’t have more volunteers from official ABC documented Barn members, that we may have to risk being fined by using non-documented volunteers serving alcohol.

Caroline mentioned that she has a 20 Anns dinner/meeting scheduled for March 24th. Volunteers are needed.

Wendy assigned dates for the Barn’s plays of the 2016-17 season. They are as follows: Rocky Horror - Oct. 7-22; A Tuna Christmas - Jan. 13-29; Cockin’ With Gus - Mar. 24-Apr. 9; Is He Dead? - May 19 - June 4th; and Blythe Spirit - July 14 - 30th. Other events were also included on the calendar which in-
OLD BUSINESS

Sara and Jeanette reported that application process is still underway with Chris Brewer from Visalia. Chris said that criteria for Historical Status is changing all the time, but that the Barn Theater is still looking good for receiving it by year's end.

Due to John’s health limitations, Bob may be needing some help in transporting the remaining flats from Harmony. If you can help, please contact Bob.

Denise reported that Art Chiapa is still working on the extension of the wrought iron fence in back.

Caroline Harris said that she would contact Corey as far as reinforcing the privacy barrier responding to a comment from Kim that she felt it wouldn't be sturdy enough in the event of a storm.

Mary Shaw reported that the Junior Company is ready for opening night of Paradise Lounge. Mary will also be holding auditions for the next Junior Company on Sat., April 9th. For the ones selected, there will be workshops in April and May with a 3 day “boot camp” this summer.

Sara’s and Jeanette’s Barn Reunion on Aug. 13th is underway. A letter has been sent to Peter Tewksbury’s daughter with anticipation of a response. Many of the celebrities will be sending videos if unable to attend. Shirley Hughes and Patti Torrey will be singing a “welcome” duet at the beginning of the program.

Wendy Plaid reported that the LunaFest was a success in spite of the small turn-out. Communications were a problem from the organizers, but they promised to remedy that by next year.

Formation & Development of the proposed Barn Guild is still ongoing.

Burton’s recent production brought in $1,550. Bob moved that we donate $100 for the group to attend a professional theater. It was seconded and passed.

Mary Shaw reported that her Bellevue production of Peter Pan was a great experience for everyone and was pleased with the results.

Ralph Bourne is ready for the Blues & Brews Festival on Sat., May 21st. He says that at least 2/3 of the music is dedicated to “blues”. We will be needing volunteers for this event, so mark your calendars.

NEW BUSINESS

Edie brought up the point about usage of the vacuum cleaner. Anyone using it, please clean it after each time and never use it to vacuum the warehouse.

Mel brought up the subject of purchasing a portable PA system to be used for lobby events and outdoor stage events. The board suggested that he get estimates and present them at the next meeting.
Dates were requested for Mel's upcoming Follies/Melodrama and Comedy Night. The Follies/Melodrama was slotted for Fri. and Sat., Sept. 9th and 10th. The Comedy Night is TBA at present.

Denise is planning her upcoming Hosscar Awards Show for Sat., Aug. 6th with the theme "Pattin' On The Ritz". She also requested if she could place small flyers to place inside the programs of "The Mousetrap". There were no objections.

Denise also reported that many of the vent screens at the base of the building are crushed and animals are getting underneath and that these screens need to be repaired.

Bob said that he would get an estimate to have some of the pepper trees trimmed.

Kim Day brought up the fact that people hear Barn members/officials bickering amongst themselves and that it has a terribly negative effect amongst theater-goers. Remember to be positive. What's the old saying? "If you can't say anything nice....."

The Board discussed the bringing of wine, beer & sodas into the auditorium during performances. Two thoughts were brought up: 1) water only during performances or 2) OK to bring all beverages in during performances, but have an obvious waste container inside auditorium. Discussion and decision tabled to April's meeting.

Cake was served at the end of the meeting in honor of Nicki's 39th Birthday!

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM. Next Board meeting is scheduled for April 11th, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: April 11th, 2016
Date of Approval: __________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on April 11th, 2016 and called to order at 7:02 PM by President Nicki Edwards. Members of the Board in attendance were: Bob Merzian, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Wesley Cox, Edith LaVonne, Steve Ross, John Burkey, Corey Barnes (late) and Jeanette Jameson. Members not in attendance were: Richard Boyd, Denise Everhart, Ralph Bourne, Wendy Flaisted, and Kim Day. Also present were Mary Shaw, Sara Lee Gershon and Mike Proctor.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of March 14th, 2015 were moved for approval by Caroline Harris, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for March 2016 showed a net income $1,458.07 with expenses of $3,440.69 (administrative & utilities being the largest) and income of $4,898.67 (thanks Bellevue’s performances combined with Lunafest and various dinner parties). Edith LaVonne moved to approve the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary Wesley Cox reflected on the passing of one of our longest supporters - Myron Wilcox. His widow, Merium, was in one of the Barn's first musical. Our thoughts and prayers go with the families.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for Paradise Lounge is on track and on budget.

It was brought to the Board’s attention that we do not have to have a board member behind the bar during events. The only stipulation is that they be 21 and over.

Edith LaVonne mentioned that the silver fire extinguisher in the kitchen is for kitchen grease fires only. Also, she said that volunteers are welcome to help out at the Paradise Sunday Brunch on April 17th.

OLD BUSINESS

Sara Lee and Jeanette reported that Bob Otter, a surveyor, is getting a legal description of the property and can sign off on it. He also did an aerial photo of the property. Chris Brewer’s wife is recovering from back surgery, but he did feel that once we have received our historical status, that the lease could become irreversible.

Regarding the Outdoor Stage, Corey mentioned the possibility that there could be some dangers involved with creosote in railroad ties. Bob asked Corey to check with LL Kaylor regarding alternatives.
(continued)

Bob and John reported that we now have the 8 foot flats in house and we should be receiving the 10 foot and window & door flats at a later date.

Denise gave us a copy of the work-ups of Chiapa Welding concerning the wrought iron extension out back. It was decided to table further talk on the extension until the terracing work has begun and see how our finances are at that point.

Corey said that Cade would be helping in producing reinforcements for the privacy wall.

Mary Shaw reported that the Junior Company audition had seventeen attendees, all of good character. The finalists will be performing at the upcoming Hosscars show. It was agreed that the new company members should have Junior Company T-shirts.

Sara's and Jeanette's Barn Reunion on Aug. 13th is in full swing with the following items noted: filming has begun; the Hosscar stage will remain intact; a red carpet will be in play; refreshments for the evening will be left in Caroline's hands; a looping video of the history of the Barn will be playing continuously in the lobby throughout the reunion; theme songs for the reunion will be "There's No Business Like Show Business" as well as "We Are Family"; Peter Tewksbury's daughter sent a letter back responding to Jeanette's inquiry; Edith moved that we set aside $1,000 in expenses toward the Best Western regarding the block of rooms set aside for out-of-town guests and celebrities - it was seconded and passed.

Formation & Development of the proposed Barn Guild is still ongoing.

Carlos is still working on ideas for a new cover for the warehouse door. Perhaps curtains or moving blankets to provide extra thermal protection. She is working on some other ideas.

Mel gave some estimates for a new PA system to be used in the lobby and outside stage. The board took the estimations into consideration. Mary Shaw mentioned that the school might donate one and will report to us at a later time.

Blues & Brews is coming up quickly - May 21st. Nicki assigned people to help out at this function. Volunteers are still appreciated. Let Nicki know.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Proctor suggested using two or more steel cables to reinforce the light bar above the stage. Steve volunteered to talk to Gordy and Charles about attaching them after the Paradise Lounge play has struck its set.

It was proposed that we dedicate the entire next season to the late Myron Wilcox. The Board unanimously agreed.

Board of Directors election is on Saturday, June 25th. Nominations are due by the May 9th meeting.

Corey volunteered to move forward on John Burkley's priority list of building repairs.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM. Next meeting scheduled for May 9th, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Gosage, Secretary of Minutes
BARN THEATER

Minutes

Board of Directors

Meeting Date: May 9th, 2016

Date of Approval:_______________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on May 9th, 2016 and called to order at 7:04 PM by President Nicki Edwards.

Members of the Board in attendance were: Bob Merzioan, Nicki Edwards, Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Wesley Cox, Edith LaVonne, Steve Ross, Corey Barnes, Ralph Bourne, Jeanette Jameson, Denise Everhart and Wendy Plaisted. Members not in attendance were: Richard Boyd, John Burkey and Kim Day. Also present were Mary Shaw, Sara Lee Gershon and Mike Proctor.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of April 11th, 2016 were corrected as to the spelling of Myron Wilcox’s widow, Mariam according to Steve Ross and Jeanette stated that surveyor Otter’s first name was Larry and that the historical status statement in combination with the lease be removed from the record. Once those amendments were made, the minutes were moved for approval by Steve Ross, seconded and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statement for March 2016 showed a net income $84,65 with expenses of $3,512.96 (administrative & utilities being the largest) and income of $3,597.61 (thanks to Psycho Night performances and various dinner & brunch events). Ralph Bourne moved to approve the report. It was seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary Wesley Cox stated that Maureen Hamilton’s condition remains unchanged at Sierra Medical Center. He also reminded us that Joan Given and he will be giving a reading of “Love Letters” next Sat., May 21st at the Unitarian Fellowship Hall and urged the Board to attend if possible.

Wesley went on to report that one of our faithful supporters, Alphonso Hernandez will be presiding as Grand Marshal of the Cinco de Mayo festivities & parade. And finally, Wes mentioned that the Ice House Theater in Visalia will be presenting “Next Fall” from May 13th thru the 28th.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising and publicity for Paradise Lounge was on budget and that publicity and ad plans are on track for upcoming Blues & Brews Festival.

Sign up sheets for various tasks/responsibilities were sent around for the upcoming B & B festival. Wendy also mentioned that she will be going in for surgery soon. Our thoughts and prayers will be there for you.

Edith LaVonne said that we need help in the kitchen & serving line for the Blues and Brews Festival. Also, since many of the cooks, dishwashers, servers are involved with “Mousetrap”, some extra help will be needed for the Gala on Friday, June 10th as well as the brunch on Sunday, June 19th (Father’s Day).

OLD BUSINESS

Sara Lee and Jeanette reported that the Historical Status nomination is pending. Chris Brewer also added
that the nomination status should be kept on the QT.

Ralph Bourne said that he will take care of getting hay bales for the B & B Festival. Since Kay Technology is busy, Corey volunteered to do some tractor work in the outdoor stage area with Ralph offering his raking skills.

Mary Shaw reported that the Junior Company will be presenting Beauty and the Beast for next season's Christmas spot Dec. 2, 3, 9 and 10th at their regular prices. Edie moved that the Barn purchase the rights from Disney, it was seconded and passed. Mary held a wonderful awards show for the Bellevue Performing Arts students at the Mormon Church recently and asked for some help in the cost of the awards given that evening. Edie moved that we allow a $153 towards the cost of those awards, it was seconded and passed. The Junior company is busy working on "Puttin' On The Ritz" for the Aug. 6th Hoosier Show and is also working on "Happy" to sing at the Reunion/Homecoming Show on Aug. 13th. She has a mini Junior Company she is working with comprised of 3 and 4 year olds as well.

Sarah's and Jeanette's Barn Reunion on Aug. 13th is in full swing with Sara sending out invitations to the celebrities. Edie suggested that we have a little more money set aside for food/hors d'oeuvres. Mel moved that we budget $300 instead of the $150 for the reunion. It was seconded and passed. Steve suggested that we make this a "dress-up" black tie affair. We all agreed that reservations for this event will be a must, but if we have room that walk-ins will not be turned away.

Caroline talked to Kevin regarding the warehouse metal door. He said he can build an extension door to look just like a barn door. Kevin also completed the work on the north security door. Thank you, Kevin!

After alternatives for a PA system fell through, Mel was given the green light to purchase a PA system from Jeff's music. Steve Ross made the motion, it was seconded and passed.

Stage lights repair and replacement discussion was tabled to the June meeting.

Ralph has got the Blues & Brews Festival under wraps with posters, security, bar, food, bands

NEW BUSINESS

Due to confusion, it was suggested that we change the times of the Sunday matinees to 2:30 PM instead of 2:15 PM.

Bob Merzioan came up with an estimate from Danial Tree Professional of $3700 to prune the trees on the entire property. Some discussion ensued about the city's responsibility in this area.

The Junior Company will be performing Opening night of "The Mousetrap".

Board of Directors election is on Saturday, June 25th. Mel nominated Mary Shaw to the ballot. Votes will be tabulated on June 25th at 2:00 PM. Drop offs will be accepted from 12 noon to 2 PM on that day.

Denise's "Cooler" guy will be repairing or replacing pads in cooler in warehouse.

Bob knows a Harmony colleague who has experience in writing grants for air conditioners.
Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM. Next Board meeting is scheduled for June 13th, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
Barn Theater
Board of Directors Minutes
June 13, 2016

Call to order: Regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors, held in the Barn Lobby was called to order at 7:00 pm by Recording Secretary Mel Gosage. Members in attendance were: Mel Gosage, Corey Barnes, Jeanette Jameson, Edith La Yonne, John Burkey, Wesley Cox, Richard Boyd, Caroline Harris, Kim Day and Nicki Edwards (arrived 10 minutes late). Members not in attendance: Steve Ross, Ralph Bourne, Denise Everhart, Wendy Plaisted and Bob Merzolian. Also present were Mary Shaw and Sara Lee Gershon.

Minutes of the last board meeting of May 9, 2016 were read. Motion by Corey Barnes to approve, seconded by John Burkey and passed.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss statement for May 2016 showed a net income of -$3564.01 with expenses of $4928.01 (with building, royalties and utilities being the largest) and income of $1364.00. John Burkey moved to approve, Wesley Cox seconded and passed.

Corresponding Secretary Wesley Cox reported Maureen Hamilton is still ill. Jeanette Van Antrep has died.

Committee Reports:
Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage, reports Blues and Brews on budget as is Mousetrap. Mel is looking into putting an ad into a special summer issue at the Recorder, will bring more information to next meeting.

Edith La Yonne reported the Brunch will have some new help in the kitchen.

Old Business
Sara and Jeannette reported that the Historical Status is going well.

-1-
No Outdoor Stage Committee report however Edith reported our neighbor prevented a theft as equipment was left by the stage and the gate was not locked.

Richard Boyd reported the piano cover was completed and back stage. A discussion of where best to store the piano was not resolved.

Corey reported the privacy barrier is almost finished and will be in the next day or two.

Mary Shaw reported the Original Junior Company completed their final performance. Auditions are continuing for the new group. Boot camps for new candidates are: June 28-30 and July 7-9. Candidates will be notified by July 11 if they made it. Final Junior company photo will be taken July 12th. Auditions for Beauty and the Beast Jr will be held August 20 & 21 1 pm to 4 pm. The new group will be performing at the Hoscars and the Homecoming.

Sara and Jeannette provided an invitation list for the Homecoming for the board to review and prioritize. Also they have had 10 positive responses and are hoping for more. All but 5 persons have sent in their videos. Legacy guests coming includes 10 Murry’s and 2 Tewksburys. Edith La Vonne moved that tickets be priced at $25, Wesley Cox seconded, passed

Jeannette says she will help with restarting the Barn Guild after the Homecoming.

Caroline will get with Kevin when he returns from vacation and see about covering the metal warehouse door.

Mel reported that the portable PA system was used at Brews & Blues. It has been labeled and is stored in the light booth.

Edith brought up the problem with the light bar that holds stage lights, its bowed. Kim said she will speak to Charles and Gordy to see about fixing/supporting it.

Caroline reported that the Mousetrap cast and crew are excellent.

Everyone was reminded of the Annual meeting on June 25th.

New Business

Ralph stated that Patty Torry would be willing to perform several times a month if we are interested.

Item on agenda says under stage cleanup, Bob not here to say which stage.
Caroline reported more repairs made to cooler, replace pump, wrong one was installed.

Plans are continuing for the Summer Follies & Melodrama. Mel and Mary are directing the follies, Edith and Bianca Vanderhorst are directing the melodrama "Walt till The Sun Shines Nellie". Auditions are July 24th and 25th.

Mary Shaw asked can she do special fund raising for her production. Board said yes.

Cory requested to speak to a friend about tractor work for outside stage area. Also want to see if Boy Scouts will help with outside stage repairs and terracing. He will contact them and report back at July meeting.

McLane High School will like to speak to the board at the July meeting.

Kim asked if there can be overhead mikes installed above the stage. Gene wants to possibly donate. She will report back at the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith La Vonne
Acting Recording secretary
Meeting called to order by Nicki Edwards, President, at 2:05 pm.

Treasurer Caroline Harris presented all ballots received, 49, to be counted. Nicki appointed members Mike Proctor and Sara Gershon to count.

Results as follows:

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<td>Mary Shaw</td>
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<td>Charles Higgenbothum</td>
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Nicki asked Edith LaVonne to inform Kim, Mary and Charles of results.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm

Respectfully submitted,
BARN THEATER
Minutes
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: June 8th, 2015
Date of Approval:____________________

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Barn Theater Board of Directors was held in the Barn Theater Lobby, Porterville, CA, on June 8th, 2015 and called to order at 7:03 PM by Vice President John Burkey. Members of the Board in attendance were: John Burkey, Nicki Edwards, arriving late (excused), Caroline Harris, Mel Gosage, Wesley Cox, Bob Merzoian, Edith LaVonne, Richard Boyd, Wendy Piaisted, and Steve Ross. Members not in attendance were Corey Barnes, Ralph Bourne and Denise Everhart. Also present were Sara Lee Gershon, Katie Espejo, Mary Shaw and Joel Buringrud.

Minutes of the last Board meeting of May 11th, 2015 were moved for approval by Wendy Piaisted, seconded and passed. A BIG thank you to Wendy for filling in for Mel while he was in Utah.

Treasurer’s Profit & Loss Statements for May. Bob Merzoian made a motion for approval of treasurer’s report. It was seconded and passed. I will have to get the figures at the next meeting as I did not receive a P & L statement.

Committee Reports:

Publicity Chairman, Mel Gosage reported that advertising for Death of a Salesman was on schedule and on budget. Can’t say anything about publicity as I wasn’t a part of it. For anybody needing publicity for any event connected with the Barn, I would appreciate any notification as to whether you need my services in this area - advertising or publicity articles for the newspaper. Lack of communication can be disastrous and confusing for the paper if it isn’t coordinated. I spent many hours gathering specific information about “Death…” and was surprised that it was submitted to the paper by someone else. This has nothing to do with egos, but everything to do with coordination and timing. If any event coordinators or directors would like to handle their own publicity (or ads), I respectfully ask that it be approved by me and any future committee members in the future.

Programs are going smoothly and Edith LaVonne is out searching for more advertisers for the program.

Wendy Piaisted would like to have more volunteers in the box office. There are anywhere from 6 to 9 performances per play and there will be 14 board members for the upcoming season. With the exception of those board members who are involved with any current play, there shouldn’t be any excuses for volunteering at least one night (2 would be even better). And remember, we need a board member behind the bar during intermission.

Richard Boyd mentioned that it has been at least 10 years since the ducts and vents in the kitchen have been cleaned and that restaurants usually have their ducts cleaned twice a year. Wendy moved that we have them steam cleaned. It was seconded and approved.
(continued)

Wendy Plaisted mentioned that due to scheduling conflict that the dates of her play Psycho Night at the Paradise Lounge and Caroline’s play Mouse Trap would each be moved ahead by one week. There was no discussion for or against and both directors had no objection.

OLD BUSINESS

Sara Lee Gershon, speaking on behalf of Jeanned Janison, was proud to say that the rough draft for the application was ready regarding the Barn Theater’s Historical Status. Thank you, ladies for your efforts!

Wendy Plaisted said that a few more adjustments and clarifications are still needed for the Barn’s By-Laws and a special meeting was scheduled for the By-Laws committee to make those changes.

Bob Merzovan reported that Dick Jameson was helping him out on the Outdoor stage and hope to have it ready to go (in its primary stages - tiering, lighting, etc.) in time for Summer Follies/Melodrama event on August 21 and 22.

Information regarding a cover for the upright piano was again tabled to next meeting.

According to Caroline Harris, election ballots will be sent out on June 9th and a special ballot tabulation meeting will be on Sunday, June 28th at 2PM for those interested in attending.

The 2nd Annual Summer Follies and Melodrama was scheduled for August 21st and 22nd (Friday and Saturday nights) at 8PM. Mel Gosage will be directing the Follies with Caroline and Ralph directing the Melodrama. A special meeting was set aside to discuss details on Monday, June 15th at 6 PM. Mary Shaw volunteered to help and is working with a special group of children that will be performing “It’s a Hard Knock Life” from the musical Annie.

John Burkey introduced Joel Buringrud to the Board. Joel is with the Harmony Performing Arts Department. He will be undertaking a flat building course that his students would earn credits for under his supervision. They would be building 8’ and 10’ flats with widths of 2’, 4’, also 6’ and 8’ flats with doors and windows. Our part: supply the materials; and supply 2 project managers - John Burkey and Bob Merzovan. This would take place at Harmony and the proposed time frame for the project would be during the first 3 weeks in September.

Reports for Death of a Salesman were all favorable with good feedback. 32 brunches were served on Sunday, June 7th.

Denise has volunteered to purchase a mirror for the men’s lobby restroom. Wendy moved to make it happen and it was seconded and approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Edith LaVonne asked for some help for the Leadership Porterville function to be held at the Barn on Thursday, June 11th.

Denise sent word that the Oscar Show on July 25th will be great, although it is a surprise as to the theme.
Meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM. Next meeting scheduled for July 13th, 2015 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Gosage
Secretary of Minutes
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# BARN THEATER
## Profit & Loss
### August 2015

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## BARN THEATER
### Profit & Loss
#### September 2015

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# Barn Theater Profit & Loss
## October 2015

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### BARN THEATER

**Profit & Loss**

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<p>| Net Income                                  | -2,308.25 |</p>
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# Barn Theater Profit & Loss

**January 2016**

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### Expense

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# BARN THEATER
## Profit & Loss
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### BARN THEATER
#### Profit & Loss

**May 2016**

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### BARN THEATER
#### Profit & Loss
##### June 2016

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