NONPROFIT REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION CEOS’ PEER NETWORKS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF SOCIAL SUPPORT WITHIN THE JOB DEMANDS-RESOURCES MODEL

by

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Abstract

The experiences of 12 real estate industry nonprofit association CEOs participating in a peer network, in the context of the job demands-resource model (JD-R), were examined. JD-R theory postulates that as job resources integrate with job demands the worker will either experience job engagement or job burnout. The JD-R model is heuristic in nature and assumes that all job demands within all occupational segments will be influenced, either positively or negatively, with the intervention of any job resource. This qualitative inquiry reported the effects of the job resource, social support, via the peer coaching network, as a buffer to the job demands of the nonprofit CEO. Two groups were examined: a face-to-face network and a social media network. The approach to the study was through the lens of interpretivism wherein the subjective reality was defined through the researcher’s interaction with the data. This qualitative study utilized computer mediated communication (CMC) through e-mail interviews of its participants. The study used the seven step VSAIEEDC model of analysis as applicable to generic qualitative inquiry. The study resulted in a rich and detailed account of the CEO experience in terms of job challenges related to the constructs of executive demands, impression management, and CEO isolation. The results found a positive relationship between peer network social support and job engagement. The social support application to the constructs of CEO impression management and isolation as mediators of job burnout were not as strong. However, the descriptions did appear to support current JD-R theory in that participants noted job challenges and job hindrances as separate demands, that the effects of a demand may be temporal, and that personal resources may play a significant role in mediating burnout.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved Bunks, the true love of my soul. My deceased husband, Zeke, my Bunks, stayed the course of this journey with me through the passing of the comprehensive exams. My deepest regret is that Zeke will never read what he sacrificed so much for. As I started my 12 year academic journey, my husband became the primary caretaker of our children, the family chauffeur, the housekeeper, laundress, seamstress, maid, and chef. He gave up his life so I could have the one I had always wanted.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my children, Megan and Jared, who went motherless in their teen years while I worked full time and chased the goal of college graduate. To my Gigi, who grew up as the child of a student, an eight year old when I started the journey and today a beautiful woman of twenty-one. To my grandsons, Dresden and Emerson, who did not get the full benefit of grand-motherhood because as Dresden said in Kindergarten during Grandparents’ Day, “My Nan doesn’t do any of those things because she is too tired.”
Acknowledgments

I would like to first acknowledge those 12 brave souls who came forward with great courage to pull back the curtain on the experience of being a real estate industry CEO. They gave a voice to the voiceless. I could not have completed this study without the aid of the two volunteer real estate industry CEOs who completed test interviews, whose voices would not be heard in this dissertation; their forthrightness was deeply appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge my committee chair and mentor, Dr. Stephanie Fraser-Beekman, for when I had all but given up hope of ever finishing the dissertation, came in as my new mentor to save the day. Dr. B., as she is fondly called by all those fortunate enough to have her for a mentor, was really in the moment with me. Her strategies for successful completion undoubtedly made the difference in this learner’s journey. I also wish to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Cliff Butler and Dr. David Stein, for their input and guidance. Finally, I must acknowledge my four children, Michael, Megan, Jared and Paige for not only their constant encouragement but for their patience and sacrifice.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The North American culture has had a romance with the American CEO for decades; CEOs are often raised to iconic status such as Martha Stewart, Lee Iacocca, Sam Walton, Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs and Jack Welch to name just a few (Johnson, Whittington, & Johnson, 2004). However, while the job may seem rich with perks, such as high salaries and travel, those benefits of success can come with a high price tag in terms of emotional distress, tension, and burnout. While some seem to ride the tide of CEO success unscathed others are not so fortunate (Marano, 2003). This dissertation took an intimate look at the CEO experience in real estate industry nonprofit associations with membership in a national association.

In introducing the subject matter, Chapter 1 contains an environmental scan of the CEO landscape, which will inform the problem and statement of purpose. Additionally, the theoretical background of the study, including its significance, rationale, assumptions, limitations and research questions will be examined. This introductory chapter will also define the terms utilized in analyzing the phenomenon of the CEO experience, specifically as it relates to the job demands and resources available to CEOs within the context of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The CEO experience is affected by changes in the market place ranging from the speed of technological advances, globalization, market volatility and demographic changes in the work force, all
culminating in excessive demands often without complimentary resources (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014).

Increasing rates of high profile Chief Executive Officer (CEO) suicide (Publius, 2014), CEO involuntary turnover (Oss, 2011), as well as CEO self-reported feelings of loneliness and isolation (Kets de Vries, as quoted in Ansink, 2013; RHR International, 2014) are all indicative of high work stress in the C-suite. Amongst the nonprofit CEO population these factors are amplified. Oss (2011) reported that nonprofit/government CEOs consistently have the highest rate of turnover. Krischer Goodman (2014), as well as Sherlock and Nathan (2007), reported that while work-life demands for the nonprofit CEO are intense, the nonprofit CEO often lacks the financial resources and security of his/her for-profit counterpart.

Lepore (2012) argued that a primary mental health and tenure factor, amongst the CEO population, was loneliness and isolation combined with a lack of trustworthy feedback. CEOs must be always on continuously monitoring personal behaviors to ensure credibility and competence (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011). Constant performance pressure as an external work stressor coupled with internal work stressors of impression management and CEO isolation combined with a lack of security afforded to for-profit CEOs (Sherlock & Nathan, 2007) create high levels of work stress for the nonprofit CEO. As nonprofits contribute to a significant percentage of the United States gross domestic product (Blackwood, Rodger & Pettijohn, 2012), the management problem of over-stressed nonprofit CEOs is worthy of further research in the academic community.
Background of the Study

In response to the general problem of overwhelming job demands, seminal researchers Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2001) developed the Jobs Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. This model simply states that high job demands, such as the demands of the nonprofit CEO, can be mitigated through an intervention of high job resources. The JD-R model is widely recognized as the leading theoretical model for studying the effects of job resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). It is interesting to note that the JD-R model has yet to be tested in the United States; currently the model has been tested in Spain, Greece, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Belgium, South Africa, China, and Australia (Bakker, 2014). A construct within the job resources model is social support, which may be offered via a peer coaching network, described as a small group of peers offering encouragement, advice and social support (Friedman, 2010).

Social support, within the context of the JD-R model is defined as an advocative, emotional, interpersonal relationship process designed for the exchange of information (McDonald & Westphal, 2011). Schaufeli and Taris posited that social support had academic support as a vehicle to reduce the negative impact of job demands within the JD-R model.

To date very little research has been conducted to determine if the JD-R model can be validated over specific occupational populations and whether or not specific resources, (namely social support through a peer network), play a role in mediating specific job demands (Brough, Timms, Siu, Kalliath, O’Driscoll, Sit, & Lu, 2013; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Goldman et al. (2013) described the literature on peer coaching networks as a job resource as “scant” (p.
64) stating that fewer than 100 studies in the last century have been conducted with a broad range of results. This leads to the conclusion that there is an area of concern, in both theory and practice, related to the mediating effects of social support, delivered through a peer network, as a job resource in high demand occupations. This gap in the body of knowledge creates a research problem worthy of meaningful understanding and additional investigation, specifically what is the perceived experience of peer coaching network participants as related to the demands of executive performance, impression management and CEO isolation?

Since its inception in 2001, the JD-R model has hinged on the theoretical assumption that any occupational segment, with high job demands, could be impacted with an intervention of a job resource. Specifically, the JD-R model has evolved towards an integrative process wherein high job demands without an intervention lead to burnout, and with an intervention lead to work engagement (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However, the CEO population, and specifically the nonprofit CEO, is a unique segment within the general work population with high job demands. Hambrick, Finkelstein and Mooney (2005a) suggested that executive job demands are “qualitatively different from work at other organizational levels--not in ways that render existing literature on job demands immaterial but, rather, in ways that cause that literature to be incomplete or strained when applied to the executive level” (p. 474).

The nonprofit CEO, leading an organization with national memberships, with his/her high job demands (Moyers, 2011; Sherlock & Nathan, 2007), is a worthy subject population for studying the integrative effects of applying a social support intervention (via a peer coaching network) to specific executive demands. According to the Non-
Profit Leadership Alliance (2011), the nonprofit sector will need to develop and retain over 80,000 senior managers annually by 2016 and asserted that the nonprofit CEO faces challenges foreign to their for-profit counterparts such as fundraising, relevance to members and working with an often unruly volunteer membership. In terms of nonprofits with national memberships, there exists the additional burden of constraints and political dynamics exerted by the national organization, of which, the CEO has no control (Moyers, 2011; Sherlock & Nathan, 2007).

The CEO of a nonprofit association also faces challenges of greater uncertainty than their for-profit counterparts in that they often lack the vast resources of high compensation, generous severance packages, and stock options (Sherlock & Nathan, 2007). In addition, researchers have argued that there is a much greater political liability inherent in the structure of national membership nonprofit associations. “The research of national membership associations suggests that the power dynamics between this type of association CEO and the board is even more intense than that in the for-profit CEO context” (Sherlock & Nathan, 2007, p. 21). These factors all contribute to the sui generis executive job demands of the nonprofit association CEO. This researcher was a practicing CEO of a nonprofit trade association (real estate) with a national membership umbrella (members who join must also join the state and national association and pay dues to those entities as well as the local association). The research related to stress, burnout, poor physical health, political dilemmas, dysfunctional boards, managing impressions and overwhelming loneliness, resonated deeply and personally to this researcher. This researcher can relate that receiving social support through a peer coaching network has mediated those demands and as such was able to continue in the
career choice. Although there is a pre-disposition to look favorably on this job resource, approved and financed by the Board of Directors, these presumptions have been set aside through the process of bracketing.

**Statement of the Problem**

The extant literature also suggests that social-emotional support, in the context of executive job resources, is a positive affective construct in mediating executive specific job demands such as high performance pressure, impression management and CEO isolation (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema, 2005; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Munyon, Summers, Buckley, Ranft, & Ferris, 2010; Sherin, 2008; Stock & Bauer, 2011; Hambrick, et al., 2005a; Hetty van Emmerik, Bakker, & Euwema, 2009). In their longitudinal study of Australian police officers, Chrisopolous, Dollard and Dormann (2010) found that social support was positively associated with reducing job stress, but perhaps more importantly that various job resources were ineffective within this population, leading to the conclusion that job resources may have a greater impact when tailored to specific populations.

Executive coaching, a form of social support tailored to the C-suite, is a 25 billion dollar industry (Parker, Hall & Kram, 2012). In the context of social support, the peer coaching network is a relative newcomer in organizational management interventions (Parker, et al., 2012). Goldman et al. (2013) asserted that peer coaching was widely recognized as an effective means to develop self-efficacy. Thomas and Lankau (2009), in their quantitative study, found a correlation between peer-to-peer social support and the prevention of burnout. Nigah, Davis and Hurrell (2012) posited that social support, in the context of the JD-R model, was positively associated with work engagement. The study
assumed to closely resemble the executive population, within the JD-R framework, was the Hakanen, Schaufeli and Aloha (2008) three year longitudinal study of 2,555 Finnish dentists, due to the self-employed nature of work that includes long hours, a demanding content of work, and isolation. This study found that social support adds to feelings of belonging and work competence. However, what remains unknown is how and why social support, through the vehicle of a peer-coaching network, buffers the intense demands of the C-suite, within the framework of the JD-R model.

A search in the academic databases of ABI Inform, PsycInfo, Business Source Complete and Academic Search Premier with the search terms, CEO & JD-R & Social Support returned one peer-reviewed journal article that investigated the CEO population. A similar search in the four databases of CEO & JD-R & Peer Coaching returned zero results. These searches did return a smattering of dissertations, several of which led to greater clarity of the research problem, specifically how and why does an intervention of social support, via a peer-coaching network, buffer the intense job demands of the nonprofit chief executive officer? The executive population is an important group to study through the framework of the JD-R model as they are presumed to have high job demands (Bartkoski, 2012; Ganster, 2005; Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick, Finkelstein & Mooney, 2005b; Stock & Bauer, 2011).

Executive job demands are posited to be a source of poor organizational performance and dysfunction as exhibited in satisficing, narrowing, micromanaging, symptoms of burnout, and passing the negative attitude downward (Bartkoski, 2012; Brundin & Nordqvist, 2008; Delgado-García, & De La Fuente-Sabaté, 2010; Ganster, 2005; Hambrick, et al., 2005a; Kong-Hee, 2012; Munyon, et al., 2010). Therefore the
research problem of how and why peer-coaching networks, as a form of social support, mediate the specific nonprofit executive demands of performance pressure, impression management and CEO isolation, is an important problem in organizational management theory and practice.

The affective state of high job resources, within the construct of the JD-R model, has been well examined in the extant literature; the two seminal papers of Demerouti et al. (2001) and Schaufeli & Bakker, (2004) have been referenced and cited more than 2,400 times (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However, job specific resources, and notably executive specific social support resources, have been understudied (Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick et al., 2005a). In 40 articles investigating the JD-R model constructs of job resources, this researcher found three were literature reviews and the other 37 were quantitative validations of the model. This gaping lack of understanding as to how and why the constructs of job resources actually work within the CEO nonprofit population is a significant research problem. In order to apply the research of JD-R theory, to the executive population, the research problem of how and why social support, through a peer-coaching network mechanism, buffers the executive specific demands of performance pressure, impression management and CEO isolation, requires exploration.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to investigate the subjective experience of peer-coaching network participation, as a social support job resource, in buffering executive job demands of the nonprofit association CEO, within the constructs of the JD-R model. This study explored three types of executive job demands: CEO performance pressure, impression management pressure and CEO isolation, as well as the
CEOs’ perception of the experience of participating in a peer-coaching network to buffer these demands. The analysis of the subjective experiences of a nonprofit association CEO group, within the context of the JD-R model may inform both the theories of JD-R and executive job demands, as well as lend greater insight into this particular group of the executive population.

The JD-R model posits that social support is an important resource for decreasing job stress (Bakker, et al., 2004; Demerouti, et al., 2001; Hetty van Emmerik, et al., 2009; Schaufeli, et al., 2009) ergo, an investigation of the CEO job demands that have a social context (isolation, impression management) is warranted and may address issues within the JD-R theory. In addition, executive performance demands are well supported in the scholarly literature as a causal factor of executive stress (Bartkoski, 2012; Brundin & Nordqvist, 2008; Ganster, 2005; Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick, et al., 2005a; Hambrick, et al., 2005b; Kong-Hee, 2012; Stock & Bauer, 2011) and therefore an examination as to how those demands are processed, perceived and experienced by the nonprofit association CEO may shed light upon, and possibly expand, existing executive job demands theory. However, as asserted by Merriam (1998), the purpose of a generic qualitative inquiry, which holds no allegiance to a particular methodology, is to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p.11). In summation, the proposed study seeks to illuminate existing theory and directly answer the calls for additional research in both the JD-R and executive job demands theories while potentially providing relevant information for those studying the nonprofit association executive.
Rationale

The rationale for undertaking this generic qualitative inquiry was to understand the perspectives of CEOs in a peer network. The freedom of not being confined to a specific methodology allowed for leeway in the research design in this relatively uncharted area of study. Generic qualitative inquiry is best suited when the purpose statement and research problem consists of two subsets goals (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p.452).

There is a clear dual process and goal of this CEO study. The research problem consists of two subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands? The need for the impressions, opinions, beliefs and reflections of the participants is best-served with a generic qualitative inquiry approach and according to Pratt (2009) researchers seeking to elaborate upon existing theory typically utilize a qualitative inquiry. Therefore, the generic qualitative approach, with its unique methodology of combining various research traditions fits well with both the academic and pragmatic aspects of the research problem.

In this study’s rationale, the solicitation for further research in both the JD-R model, with specific job demands and specific resources, and in executive demands is clearly called for in the literature (Bartkoski, 2012; Brough, et al., 2013; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick et al., 2005a; Hambrick et al., 2005b; Munyon et al., 2010; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). The units of analysis and their experiential definitions will answer the call for further research of the executive population, and even more specifically, the understudied nonprofit association executive (Sherlock & Nathan,
Thus expanding existing theory with a close examination and thematic analysis of the constructs within an executive level setting.

**Research Questions**

The central research question is as follows: what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States? The question is then supported by two subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands?

**Significance of the Study**

This particular generic qualitative study is significant to the body of knowledge in the field of organization and management through its contribution of knowledge and insight into the nonprofit association CEO’s job demands and the subjective experience of social support as a job demands buffer. This in turn may lead to a greater understanding of C-suite performance and over-all nonprofit association organizational performance.

The study is also significant in that it specifically integrates several existing theories, executive demands, impression management and CEO isolation and the JD-R model, creating a platform for the study of social support as a demands buffer amongst the CEO population. The purpose is to better understand how and why the process of participating in a peer-coaching network buffers the intense job demands of the CEO, from the perspective of the participating CEOs. There is a gap in what is known about specific demand variables and their interaction with social support amongst the CEO
population. This is supported by Brough, et al. (2013), “We recommend the inclusion of job-specific job demands and job-specific job resources be further considered by both future research and within theoretical explanations of organizational behavior such as the JD-R model” (p. 1328). The study will examine the specific job resource of executive peer-coaching networks in a nonprofit association executive population with the JD-R model as the overarching framework, thus illuminating the social process of peer-coaching networks. A close examination of the demand variables of performance pressure, impression management, and CEO isolation (within the JD-R framework that argues a positive correlation between all demands and all resources) from the perspective of the CEO may inform understanding of both their perspectives’ of social support as a job resource and their job demands.

This research is also significant to the academic body of knowledge due to its potential relevance to the body of work focused on executive behaviors. Hambrick, et al. (2005a) indicated that although CEO demands may not necessarily be more intense or severe, but that a specific focus on the C-suite population may advance several other theories. In addition, Hambrick, et al. posited that studies illuminating CEO demands are warranted simply because executive level work is distinctly different than the work of those who serve under them, resulting in incompleteness or gaps in any theory applied to the executive level (p. 474).

It is the integration of the executive level demands and the executive specific resource of social support, delivered through a peer-coaching network, which may inform the existing JD-R and executive job demands theoretical models. This research may also bring additional insight into executive peer-coaching networks, as the research
participants will describe the experience of peer-coaching network participation as a job specific resource. The study is also intended to take a deep look into the socially constructed demands in the JD-R and executive job demands models, which may inform organizational work design. As a practical matter, if social support resources delivered through a peer network are perceived as buffering executive stress as posited by Hall, Dollard, Winefield, Dormann, and Bakker (2013) and Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema (2005) human resource professionals, boards of directors, and others in the field of executive work design may look to the study results to help create effective executive support resources and potentially stabilize their organizations through reduced executive level turnover or increased executive level engagement (Munyon, et al., 2010).

**Definition of Terms**

**JD-R theory.** The JD-R theory is a parsimonious model of job demands and job resources processes. The primary assumption of the theoretical framework is that every occupation has a specific set of risk factors, which include job demands and job resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The JD-R theory posits that the integration of both the demand process and the resource process can ultimately achieve a balance where an employee is sufficiently challenged enough to remain engaged in the workplace and sufficiently supported enough to avoid burnout (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

**Executive Job Demands.** The job demands construct is well-developed in the extant literature and can be defined as a set of stressors experienced by an employee (Kasarek, 1979). However, Hambrick et al. (2005a) posited executive job demands as a unique construct from the general literature. The executive job demands construct is
defined as “the degree to which a given executive experiences his or her job as difficult or challenging” (Hambrick et al., 2005a, p. 473.)

*Impression management.* Impression management is a job demand that is typical at the executive level (Enns & McFarland, 2003; Hambrick et al., 2005a). Impression management theory is a dramaturgical model of the presentation of self to ensure a favorable impression within social interactions and also to avoid or ameliorate any negative impressions (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989; Goffman, 1956).

*CEO isolation.* CEO isolation is a construct that can be considered unique to the executive population as one must be an executive to experience it. CEO isolation is defined as crippling loneliness (Marano, 2003) combined with the inability to trust subordinates and boards of directors. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2004) coined the term CEO disease to describe the insular lives of CEOs, a phenomenon that is explained as “the information vacuum around a leader created when people withhold important (and usually unpleasant) information” (p.93).

*Social support.* Social support, within the boundaries of this study, is defined as a state of emotional and professional support through the context of a peer group. Social support, within this framework, is defined as moral and emotional support including reassurance and confidence in the person supported, as well as informational support, in the form of specific advice or how-to steps (McDonald & Westphal, 2011).

*Peer-coaching network.* The concept of a peer-coaching network is limited in this study to a CEO to CEO semi-formal, voluntary, networks where social support is offered. A CEO peer-coaching network is defined as a “developmental relationship with the clear
purpose of supporting individuals within it to achieve their job objectives” (Holbeche, as cited in Parker et al., 2008, p.490).

**VSAIEEDC model.** The VSAIEEDC model is a method of thematic analysis. It follows seven steps to analysis: “variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration and conclusion” (Persson, 2006, p. 38). This model is not completely dissimilar to the Moustakas’ (1994) modified van Kaam method (as cited in Machtmes, et al., 2009). A fundamental difference between the two is the VSAIEEDC model requires corroboration back to the theoretical framework (Persson, 2006).

**Assumptions and Limitations**

The primary assumption of this study is theoretical: that job resources do mediate job demands. According to the revised JD-R model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), an assumption is that high job demands and low job resources lead to burnout; conversely, high job demands and high job resources result in engagement. The study’s design therefore was to determine if that assumption was the experience of the nonprofit CEO population in a social support via a peer-coaching network. This desire to question the assumption led to the decision of a qualitative inquiry.

A topical assumption of the study is that high demands on CEOs exist and are different than the job demands of other worker populations. This led to a qualitative design as the experience of the CEO would vary dependent upon experience, association size, personal resources etc. It became important to understand the job stressors of the CEO, and how they perceived them, in order to understand the dynamic of the integration of resources and demands.
The methodological assumption of this study is that everyone’s reality is their own and cannot be experienced by another, but only reported, again leading to the design of the study as a qualitative inquiry. In terms of research method and design, there is an assumption that computer mediated communication (CMC) does not interfere with the researcher as instrument underpinning of qualitative research. This assumption is supported by the foundation of the human instrument concept defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a state of reciprocal presence and open inquiry (p.195). Current research substantiates that e-mail interviewing is superior to telephonic interviewing in obtaining rich qualitative data, full disclosure and perhaps most importantly, full attention of the respondent and the researcher (Benford & Standen, 2011; Cook, 2012; Mason & Ide, 2014; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Meho, 2006; Xu & Storr, 2012)

The limitations of this study are the inexperience of the researcher; however, that is not a sufficient reason to alter the design of the study. The research problem statement aligns with the research question. Although, a familiarity with the purposive sample could potentially be a weakness in this specific study, where an elusive and private sample frame is present, familiarity serves to open rapport and establish full disclosure.

Typically a written interview would limit the role of researcher as instrument; in this study the written interview survey serves three purposes: (a) to prevent leading the interview based on personal knowledge (b) to address researcher bias and (c) to collect the data in the channel the social support takes place.

A potential weakness of the study is the use of the VSAIEEDC model to analyze the data collected. The VSAIEEDC model is a relatively recent and untested method for qualitative analysis and thus far has been limited to educational research, specifically in
the gifted and talented research (Persson, 2006). However, the choice of the model was intentional; the model aligns with the population of CEOs (assumed to have a high level of skills and talent) and with the need for additional steps to address bias.

**Delimitations.** This study will not address the immense literature on executive-coaching and peer-coaching. The peer-coaching network is the manifestation of social support in this study. This study will not address the concepts of burnout and engagement; these constructs are posited to be end results of the JD-R theory and are not the focus of this study, which is the integrative JD-R process. The focus of the study is the mediating or buffering effect of job resources as applied to job demands.

**Nature of the Study (or Theoretical/Conceptual Framework)**

The overarching theoretical framework for this research is the JD-R theory. This theory takes its underpinnings from the existing theory of burnout. JD-R theory espouses that as job resources increase job demands are mediated to decrease burnout or increase job engagement (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Seminal authors, Demerouti et al. (2001) left their model very broad, but indicated that all job demands and all job resources could fall within JD-R’s theoretical framework.

Throughout the academic practice of theory building researchers have tested the model with various populations, demands and resources. Generically, job demands can be classified as the sustained state of “physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs” (Hakanen, et al., 2008, p. 255). For the purpose of this study the theoretical models of executive job demands and impression management will be investigated as well as the construct of CEO isolation (that appears primarily in trade journals and periodicals).
Job resources can be defined as the resources available to the employee, in this case the CEO, that mediate job demands. Schaufeli and Taris (2014) posit autonomy, locus of control, knowledge, feedback, and social support are common areas of job resources; however, they noted that an employee’s personal resources (family support, education, time management skills) also play a role as a job resource. For the purpose of this study, only the construct of social support, as a job resource, will form the conceptual model.

![Conceptual model of CEO experience of social support as job demands mediator](image)

*Figure 1.* Conceptual model of CEO experience of social support as job demands mediator. The intersection of the Venn diagram represents the integrative dual process of the experience of a job resource, social support, in mediating executive job demands. The mediating effect is proposed to increase engagement and/or decrease job burnout.
Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 is a literature review of foundational models of JD-R theory and the evolution of JD-R theory since its introduction. Constructs that are pivotal to the conceptual model are investigated within the review. Chapter 3 covers the methodology choice and research design. Chapter 4 details and describes the data collection process and relates the findings of the research. The final chapter, Chapter 5 provides discussion on the findings, implication of the findings and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative generic inquiry study was to explore the perceptions of CEOs participating in a peer-coaching network, as a form of social support, within the context of the JD-R model. The JD-R model espouses that job demands can be mediated with appropriate job resources. The JD-R model also supports that high job demands matched with high job resources will result in a state of balance and create a state of work engagement. Conversely, high job demands coupled with low work resources will result in a state of imbalance and create a consequence of job burnout. Specifically within the context of the theoretical model of JD-R, the researcher sought to understand how and why the perceived experience of a peer-coaching network, as a form of social support, may have mitigated the often overwhelming job demands of the CEO. Although the JD-R model is elegant in its simplicity, its simplicity and broad heuristic nature, requires a thorough and critical review of the existing literature in order to carry out the study successfully.

This critical literature review explored the interplay of the experiences of participants and the resource of social support as job resource, in the form of a peer-coaching network. A limitation of this review is that the expansive literature on coaching, peer-coaching and social support will not be thoroughly and critically reviewed. The peer-coaching network to be studied is merely a vehicle to house the construct of social support and will only be briefly described as a unit of analysis. Social support was only researched within the context of the JD-R model. In addition, the vast literature on work
engagement and work burnout will only be reviewed in a historical context, as the basis for the JD-R theory. In consideration of the limitations of this study, three major areas of literature were critically reviewed: (a) JD-R theory, (b) executive demands theory, and (c) social support theory. As secondary areas of interest, both impression management theory and the concept of CEO isolation were reviewed critically through the extant literature.

A review of the literature on JD-R provided an understanding of the context and history, upon which the model was constructed. A focus on executive job demands, through a critical review, not only provided a context for understanding if the model can be applied to the executive population but also assisted in painting a picture of the executive demands landscape; the life that may make job resources more important than in other job roles. In exploring the specific job demands of the executive, and how the construct of social support may mediate them, a review of the literature of two socially influenced job demands states was also deemed necessary. These states were the constructs of impression management and CEO isolation. Social support theory is reviewed to provide a context for understanding what avenues of emotional and professional support were perceived as needed by the participants and how they perceived to receive them via the peer-coaching network.

The focus of this literature review was thus two-fold. The review attempted to advance the current theory of JD-R by studying a population that is understudied (Hambrick, 2007; Nohria & Khurana, 2010) and also the practices and application of JD-R, which may inform qualitative analysis of the experiences of the nonprofit CEO. For example, Randolph (2009) asserted that a literature review with a practice and application focus may describe, “how a certain intervention has been applied or how a group of
people tend to carry out a certain practice” (p. 3). The goal of this review was to integrate the current literature of executive demands and social support to further strengthen the assumption of the JD-R model’s heuristic implications and its potential applications. Therefore, the review was critical in nature, attempting to find gaps in the literature or weaknesses within the current research.

In the role of researcher for this literature review, and from the perspective of a qualitative inquiry, biases in selecting the literature are addressed. The focus on expanding existing theory, to include the CEO population, led to an exhaustive search of the JD-R literature. This researcher utilized the databases of ABI Inform, EbscoHost, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, PsycNET, GoogleScholar and various industry trade journals, specifically AE Magazine and Associations Now. A search in EbscoHost returned 10 articles with JD-R or Job Demands- Resources in the title. A search in ABI Inform returned 15 articles that were specific to JD-R in their titles. This researcher dismissed articles that were not in English. These preliminary articles’ reference sections were then culled for supporting articles that included the terms social support, executive job demands, impression management, CEO isolation or peer networks. The goal of reviewing the literature was to identify central and pivotal issues related to the JD-R model, and specifically the construct of social support as a job resource. The focus of practices and applications led this researcher to articles wherein social support and peer-coaching networks were specifically tested within the conceptual framework of JD-R. There was no pre-determined timeframe in reviewing and organizing the literature. The current body of literature to be reviewed was amassed over a period of 20 months.
The perspective of this review was from the interpretivist viewpoint and from a priori knowledge. As a former member of the sample frame, (CEOs in nonprofit national membership associations), participating in a peer network, it was found that the social support of the group helped to navigate the loneliness and political perils of the job, for this researcher. Initially, this peer group was viewed as a means peer-coaching; a learning exchange. However, after nearly eight years of participation, this researcher realized the energizing and motivational force of the group, as well as the emotional support on a deeply personal level. The opinion that a peer-coaching network, as a form of social support, did indeed create a balance between the high demands of CEO leadership and the rewards of the position, keeping engagement high and burnout at bay. Therefore, extreme care and a critical thought process was involved as the literature was reviewed to support the position that the JD-R model was applicable to the executive segment and that social support in the form of a peer network was a potentially viable option in executive job design, as an effective job resource.

In addressing personal bias, articles that referred to flaws in the JD-R model or, which addressed gaps, were thoroughly read and reviewed. Also competing models, such as the job demands control [JD-C], Job demands control support [JDCS] and effort reward imbalance [ERI] models were also reviewed. Throughout the review, the researcher attempted to point out relevant gaps, omissions and potentially flawed logic in the literature. In addition, these areas are identified and discussed. Each major section of the literature review concludes with a synthesis that focuses on research implications, as pertains to the JD-R model. The interpretive summary, typical in a qualitative study, concludes the literature review and explicates the relationship between the extant
literature and the researcher’s understanding of that literature and how it informs the
development of this study's conceptual framework (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

**Historical Context of the JD-R Model**

The JD-R model was initially developed as a theoretical expansion of the
construct of burnout (Demerouti, et al., 2001). Of particular concern to the seminal
authors of the JD-R model was the concept that the well accepted Maslach (1981) theory
of burnout could be applied across occupational segments and was not limited to social
service professions (Demerouti, et al., 2001). The concept of burnout across occupational
segments is central to this research as the sample frame is posited to be a unique and
understudied population with job demands that may lead to burnout. In their first study
and conceptualization of the JD-R theoretical framework, Demerouti et al. encompassed
the various job stressors related to burnout as job demands. The research team defined a
job demand as “those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require
sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with physiological and
psychological costs (e.g., exhaustion)” (p. 501).

Conversely, the researchers defined job resources as:

Those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the
following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands at
the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal
growth and development. (Demerouti, et al., 2001, p. 501)

The Demerouti (2001) research team introduced the concept of job resources within their
test of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory [OLBI]. In the early 2000’s the accepted
measure of burnout was the Maslach Burnout Inventory [MBI], which only phrased
burnout questions negatively and personal efficacy questions positively (Demerouti, et
The OLBI was intended to measure both burnout and disengagement as two separate constructs and utilized external variables, as personal resources vary among participants and situational factors (Demerouti, et al., 2001). The original study was intended to validate the OLBI and to establish a correlation between demands and exhaustion, as well as resources and disengagement (Demerouti, et al., 2001).

The original quantitative test of the OLBI included 374 participants across 21 unique job segments and outside observers were used to rate job demands utilizing a job description checklist (Demerouti, et al., 2001). The researchers utilized a series of individual and multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, which did result in the findings that exhaustion and disengagement were two separate constructs that may result in burnout. More importantly, the research team maintained that job demands were positively correlated to exhaustion and resources were negatively correlated to disengagement. While the study had the weaknesses of self-reports it did have the strength of a heterogeneous sample. Thus, the JD-R model was originally touted as a model of burnout, recognizing that different work segments weighted variables differently (for example transport workers were more likely to rate physical demands as a cause of exhaustion, whereas social service workers were more likely to cite emotional demands as a cause of exhaustion); however, through separating disengagement as a separate construct with potential separate causes, its counterpart, engagement, became a significant factor in the JD-R framework.
Evolution of the JD-R Model

The Revised JD-R Model.

Two of the seminal authors of the JD-R model, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) took their findings and applied them to the trend of positive psychological research, defined as “a shift from this traditional focus on weaknesses and malfunctioning towards human strengths and optimal functioning” (p. 293). In doing so, the researchers focused their work on the antipode of disengagement; work engagement. Their subsequent study on the JD-R model was conducted with the intent of designing a comprehensive model to predict both burnout and engagement through the intervention of job demands and job resources (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The team posited that engagement was not simply the absence or opposite of burnout but was a separate construct defined by “vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295).

The original JD-R model was characterized by the dual process of job demands and job resources impacting the emotional and physical state of the employee. Job demands were isolated as the energizing process wherein energy is stable, increased or expended and job resources as the motivating process wherein personal efficacy is stable, increased or depleted (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The Schaufeli-Bakker study was an extension of the originating hypotheses of the JD-R model with the 2004 study positing that job resources are negatively related to burnout and positively related to engagement, an ultimately organizational performance. The quantitative study conducted had four sample sets consisting of a total of 1,698 respondents from four occupational segments, of various ages and gender, within the countries of Norway and the Netherlands.
Structural equation modeling was used to test the network of variables consisting of workload, emotional demands, social support, coaching, feedback, exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy, vigor, dedication, absorption, physical health problems and turnover intention (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 306). Although some variables had weaker correlations than others, the study found direct links between the job demands and burnout and job resources and engagement. The key finding was that professional efficacy plays a significant role in mediating the burnout variables of exhaustion and cynicism (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This finding, and foundation for the revised JD-R model (job resources can buffer job demands across occupational segments), was pivotal to the research being conducted for two reasons: (a) the revised model addresses the buffer professional efficacy or the self- perceived ability to do one’s job well and (b) that social support is factor in decreasing burnout while simultaneously increasing engagement. The Schaufeli and Bakker study lends reliability to the current research and its question, *what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?*

The role of social support was again examined in a later 2004 article authored by Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke. The researchers’ hypothesis was that social support was the most important predictor of role performance, as a mediator of job demands. In the 2004 study Bakker, et al. introduced and reinforced the concept of the buffering or mediating role of job resources that is core to this current research study. The authors pointed out that the JD-R model is consistent with earlier burnout theory including the job demand-control model [JD-C] and the effort-reward imbalance mode [ERI]; however,
they asserted an expansion of existing theory based on the assumption that various resources can impact various demands (Bakker, et al., 2004). Bakker, et al., utilized structural equation modeling analyses in loading the variables in the OLBI, amongst a population of 146 employees in 12 different work structures. The significance of this study was that the revised JD-R model was tested along with the original JD-R model and the revised model did explain variances (Bakker, et al., 2004). The seminal JD-R model explained that exhaustion could be mediated by demands, reduce demands and performance should increase; however, the revised model suggests that performance increases with the intervention of specific job resources, such as, “autonomy, social support, and possibilities for self-growth” (Bakker, et al., 2004, p. 97).

This buffering effect, which laid the foundation for the revised model, was noted in two other studies prior to the revision. First, in a submitted for publication manuscript in 2003 authored by Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005) the core hypothesis of the JD-R model, which essentially stated high demands with low resources increased burnout, was tested. This particular study is important to the current research dissertation as it specifically identified and tested the construct of social support. The researchers put forth the concept that the JD-R model also had an inherent interaction effect in that the application of job resources may buffer job demands (Bakker, et al, 2005.). Bakker et al. supported their assumption as a natural expansion of the JD-C model, a recognized framework for job design and organizational performance, which asserted a buffering effect outcome as a result of the demands-resources interaction (Ibrahim & Ohtsuka, 2012).
The results of the Bakker et al. (2005) study, which consisted of 1,012 employees of a higher learning institution in the Netherlands, indicated a positive relationship between engagement and social support. Additionally, social support was found to be positively correlated to physical and emotional work demands (political environment, conflict, confrontation, etc.). The researchers utilized the MBI inventory and hierarchical regression analysis to analyze results; all interactions had a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of .73 or higher (Bakker, et al., 2005). A limitation of the study was a lack of confirmatory analyses. The research also lacked information on the longitudinal, cumulative or non-linear impact of the buffering effect, indicating a gap in the research of the buffering effect of social support. However, the significance of the study was the movement of the JD-R model beyond a model of burnout to a model of job demands and job resources interaction.

The second study, which led to the revision of the JD-R model, was the 2003 Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli and Schreurs research with home health care workers. This study was significant in modifying the original JD-R model in that it found through a series of multi-group regression and structural equation analyses that the interaction effects of the factors of job demands and job resources had significant correlation (Bakker, et al., 2003). This quantitative study, with a large sample of 3,092 employees, “confirmed the assumption that an interaction exists between job demands and job resources explaining burnout scores in addition to both main effects” (Bakker et al., 2003, p. 31). Significant limitations of the study were self-reports, self-selection and a 93% female sampling (Bakker et al., 2003). However, despite limitations a reliable scale was utilized, the MBI, and a thorough qualitative study of the factors of job demands and
resources, inclusive of social support, preceded the study, leading to a highly supported description of the factors. The study may have had significant chi square points as a result of the refined definitions/descriptions of the loading factors of job demands and job resources potentially leading to a call for qualitative research in strengthening the JD-R model.

The revision of the original JD-R model led early researchers to analyze the JD-R model, as it related to the JD-C, JDCS, and ERI theories of work well-being. Bakker and Demerouti (2007), in their overview of the state of the JD-R model, conducted an analysis of both the Effort-Rewards-Imbalance (ERI) and the Job Demands-Control (JD-C) model, and the models’ weaknesses and strengths, which led to the development of the JD-R model. In this analysis of the literature, Bakker and Demerouti maintained that job resources, such as social support, do buffer job demands that lead to burnout, what Van den Broeck, De Cuyper, De Witte and Vansteenkiste (2010) named job hindrances. Bakker & Demerouti purported it is the uniqueness of demands, the specificity of job resources, and the effect of the two in tandem, that support the current JD-R model. Until significant research has been conducted, which define common personality characteristics of an occupational segment (for example, police officers may share the personality characteristic of high risk attainment, kindergarten teachers may likely be nurturers, and CEOs are likely to be ambitious) within the conceptual framework of the JD-R model, and those occupational segments are aligned with specific common job demands, both challenges and hindrances, and then the intervention of a specific job resource is analyzed, the postulated synergistic effect of creating a buffer against job demands remains a mystery. As stated earlier, a demand may be found to be both a challenge and a
hindrance, and the proposed thematic analysis of nonprofit association CEOs may not only link occupational segments to specific demands and resources, but may also enhance the current model’s assertion of a positive affective state reached through the intervening ‘treatment’ of a social support vehicle in both burnout and engagement constructs.

Fundamental to the assertion that there was a causal relationship between job resources and burnout is the supposition that different support mechanisms have different effects (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker & Demerouti suggested that, as related to burnout, the demand of high workload may be mediated by autonomy (worker has control over the workload) or by a strong, supportive relationship with the worker’s supervisor (social support). Bakker & Demerouti cited two specific studies Bakker et al., (2005) and Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2007) that supported the model’s hypothesis of the dual process interaction and more importantly that social support was found to buffer what Van den Broeck et al., (2010) described as job hindrances. Bakker and Demerouti concluded that while the JD-R model is a good fit for generalizing the effects of job resources as posited in the ERI and JD-C models, “it also satisfies the need for specificity by including various types of job demands and resources, depending on the occupational context under study” (p. 320).

**Alternative Models**

**Job Demands Control Model**

Karasek (1979) addressed the interaction effects of job demands and job control in his seminal study of U.S. and Swedish workers. Important to his work, was addressing the specificity of certain demands and certain resources; in his seminal work the resource of job control was analyzed. Karasek asserted that prior study on the interaction, which
often had inconclusive or conflicting empirical evidence, lacked attention to the physiological effects of demands and control interaction. Karasek also noted that the interaction of demands and control may have a non-linear causal association. Of particular interest, as related to the current study of CEOs, was that Karasek found an unexpected variable in that those jobs with the highest time and intellectual demands produced the most satisfaction; such as the job of a CEO. This supported the later theory of JD-R in that high demands must exist for job resources to have a buffering effect on burnout and a moderating effect on engagement.

In contrast to the heuristic design of JD-R theory, Karasek’s (1979) JD-C model, centered on job control (decision latitude) as the job resource that had an impact on both burnout and engagement variables. Van Der Doef and Maes (1999) conducted an assessment of the JD-C model through a 20-year review of the literature of 63 samples published from 1979-1997. The JD-C model was confirmed as the predominating model of occupational stress (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999). In the Van Der Doef and Maes review, JD-C theory had begun to evolve with a focus on the correlation between demands and control with a much lesser effort on interaction or buffering effects. This may have been as result of poor study results, only 15 of 31 studies showed only partial support for the buffering theory (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999). The research team determined that a pivotal concern with the JD-C model was the failure to address personality characteristics; that high job control could actual increase stress dependent upon the personality type (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999). This finding is important to this current study in that the research question is directed to a specific population, CEOs, of
which there is existing theory and testing, namely the upper echelons and executive job demands theories.

A more current review of the JD-C model was conducted by Ibrahim and Ohtsuka (2012). While the research team did not find literature supporting significant interaction effects of job control and job demands, current literature did support the interaction effect of job demands, job control, and social support. However, a cited 2001 (Rodriguez, Bravo, Peiro, & Schaufeli) study, found a negative interaction effect, “Contrary to the model prediction, increased job demands with increased job control (perceived job control and high internal locus of control), together with high social support are associated with higher job dissatisfaction” (abstract). In this context, workers experienced a damaging effect of excess control specifically in high social support situations. Rodriguez, et al. criticized the JD-C model as being too simplistic, in contrast to the JD-R model, which is an overarching framework allowing for the inclusion of numerous variables and their interaction effects.

**Job Demands Control Support Model [JDCS]**

In response to the simplicity of the JD-C model, Johnson and Hall (1988) introduced the variable of social support within the demand-control framework, in the study of cardiovascular disease contributors. Their research found, regardless of other variables, levels of social support (increasing or decreasing) had a correlating impact on the likelihood of cardiovascular disease (Johnson & Hall, 1988). The JDCS model was considered an extension of the JD-C model (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999) and thus was reviewed in context of the JD-C model in subsequent literature reviews. The Van Der Doef and Maes 20-year literature review traced the evolution of the JDCS model.
The Van Der Doef and Maes (1999) review utilized 63 studies to inform their review. The research team made the distinction that the JD-C model had evolved as a framework for work stress wherein there was found a positive relationship between job control and job well-being, the “strain hypothesis” (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999, p. 89). In contrast, the JDCS model researchers went down the path of interaction and buffering effects when the variables of demands, controls and social support were present within job design (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999). Strain in the JDCS model was identified as *iso-strain*, the convergence of work variables of high demands, low job control, low social support and isolation (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999, p. 89). The JDCS model, and its evolution as reviewed, is important to the current study of CEOs, as the variables of social support and isolation are central to the research problem.

However, this research study of CEOs takes a dramatic turn from the JDCS model as it infers that *iso-strain* may also be present with high job control due to the nature of executive job demands, including isolation, impression management and extreme personal responsibility (as a result of high control). The literature review revealed material weaknesses in both JD-C and JDCS studies such as homogenous samples (for example several buffering effect studies had a male-only sample frame), a lack of clear agreement on the conceptualization of variables, and finally, “the results suggest that certain subpopulations benefit more than others from the moderating effect of high control” (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999, p. 104). The extant research appeared to support the assertion that high job control may be both a resource and a demand (a job hindrance and a job challenge).
Two years after the 20-year literature review was completed, Rodriguez, et al. (2001) published a longitudinal study (two years were tracked), with an international sample at various job levels. A total of 542 respondents were able to complete the two year study with self-reported measurements at 30-90 days, 9-12 months and then at two full years of employment with the same firm (Rodriguez, et al., 2001). This study used widely acceptable scales to measure the variables of social support, job control, job demands, locus of control and job dissatisfaction. The main effects of the JDCS model were confirmed in that decreases in social support with an increase in job demands resulted in job dissatisfaction; however, the research team found no significant interaction correlation between high demands, high control and high social support (Rodriguez, et al., 2001). The results of their study have informed the current CEO research study in that it is proposed that strain may be an outcome of high control as a job demand.

A current extension of the Van Der Doef and Maes (1999) review is the 10-year review of Hausser, Mojzisch, Niesel, and Schulz-Hardt (2010), which utilized 83 sample studies from the years 1998 through 2007. This study of the literature found that there was significant support for the additive effects social support and job demands on job satisfaction levels. The research team asserted that the correlation was always present if samples were large enough (Hausser, et al., 2010). The most significant finding, as related to this study of CEOs, was that the variances found in the body of JDCS research were resultant of the lack of qualitative description of job variables; in other words variables were defined inconsistently across the literature. The focus on quantitative studies in all three models of buffering effects, JD-R, JD-C, and JDCS, signals a
significant gap in the research literature. Qualitative analyses of the variables of demands and social support may open avenues for further research.

**Effort Rewards Imbalance Model.**

The effort imbalance rewards model was proposed by Siegrist (1996) as a theoretical response to the Karasek (1979) model of JD-C. The seminal researcher proposed that rather than a demand-control interaction, job dissatisfaction or satisfaction was influenced by a balance of effort with reciprocal rewards (Siegrist, 1996). Siegrist posited that this work imbalance was particularly stressful in that it “violates core expectations about reciprocity and adequate exchange in a crucial area of social life” (p. 28). Siegrist raised concerns about JD-C and JDCS theory, specifically that the theories did not address the chronic effects of job stress, the research lacked a standard definition of control, and also that the extant research did not address the personal coping skills of the individual. It is also important to note that the ERI model, as a response to JDCS, is considered to be a framework for “understanding the contribution of social and psychological factors to human health and disease” (Siegrist, 2012, p. 2), but the JD-R model is limited to work-stress factors. However, its theoretical work-life foundation positions the model as an alternative to JD-R theory.

As related to the current CEO study, the ERI is explained as having the component of overcommitted employees (Siegrist, 2012) and of particular interest, the concept of over commitment leading to a distorted view of reality, namely the inability to realistically assess demands and personal coping skills. It is this phenomenon, upon which, the contribution of ERI is focused as it directly related to the sample of CEOs, often defined as ambitious, highly motivated and potentially overcommitted (Hambrick,
et al., 2005a). For the purpose of this literature review, articles that were examined within the context of ERI were limited to direct work related concepts (burnout, engagement, turnover, etc.).

Van Vegchel, de Jonge, and Landsbergis (2005) in an attempt to compare ERI and JD-C models conducted a multiple regression analysis with two groups of over 400 respondents. Their research found support for the assumption that demands and resources has both a linear effect and a multiplicative interaction effect (Van Vegchel et al., 2005). While this study did have some limitations, such as all respondents were in the nursing home industry, and the construct of over-commitment was not tested, those limitations did not negate the final outcome of the study which, “Based on the empirical findings, a multiplicative interaction seemed to be the most consistent representation of the relation between job demands (i.e., demands or efforts), job resources (i.e., decision latitude or rewards), and strain” (Van Vegchel, et al. 2005, p. 556).

As Siegrist (2012) pointed out in his review of over 100 studies on the ERI model the model can be used in workplace design that ultimately impacts organizational performance. The ERI model is relative to the JD-R model in that its empirical body of evidence indicates an interaction and/or multiplicative effect when job demands are combined with job resources. The JD-R model serves a purpose of developing an overarching framework for job demands and job resources balance that is posited to have a buffering effect. The ERI model is incomplete in that it fails to address specific populations and does not recognize other variables in the CEO segment such as isolation, social support, impression management and other CEO specific job demands.
Current State of the JD-R Model

This literature review has examined the seminal theory of JD-R along with a brief historical context of the competing JD-C, JDCS and ERI models. The historical overview was offered in order to support several of the assumptions in this current research study on the buffering effect of social support within the CEO population. The assumptions being that the JD-R model, and its component of demands-resource imbalance, is appropriate for the CEO population and is appropriate for studying the interaction effect within a qualitative context. Beyond the revised JD-R model of 2004 (Schaufeli & Bakker) the JD-R framework has evolved to include variables such as social support and personal resources/characteristics. The interjection of the variables of personal resources and/or characteristics is relevant to the current CEO study as it combines the body of work regarding executive demands and characteristics with JD-R theory.

The JD-R model has significantly evolved since its introduction in the academic literature by seminal authors Demerouti et al. (2001). The initial conceptual framework was built upon the vast research and literature on burnout and work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001) The JD-R theory is a parsimonious model of job demands and job resources processes. The primary assumption of the theoretical framework was that every occupation has a specific set of risk factors, which include job demands and job resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The JD-R theory posited that the integration of both the demand process and the resource process can ultimately achieve a balance where an employee is sufficiently challenged enough to remain engaged in the workplace and sufficiently supported enough to avoid burnout (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).
This dual process is central to the JD-R theory wherein job demands and job resources function as a see-saw and a state of balance between the two weights of demands and resources result in high levels of engagement and low levels of burnout and its symptoms. For example, a job with all resources and no challenges would be presumed to be a state of imbalance, precluding work engagement. Researchers Bakker, Demerouti and Sanz-Vergel (2014) posit that the dual process of the JD-R model can be applied across occupational segments despite the differences in demands and resources available in a particular field. It is important to note that the JD-R theory in its dual process produces two pathways: (a) high job demands lead to the health impairment process (burnout), whereas (b) high job resources lead to the work engagement process (Bakker, et al., 2014).

Recent research, in the form of a literature review that defined the concepts of burnout and engagement, authored by Bakker et al. (2014), has led to assumptions that as simplistic as the JD-R model is, the see-saw is not quite what it appears. Bakker et al. posited that different stimuli have different effects. While, the model still maintained the buffering effect of job resources overall, Bakker et al. asserted that job resources are strongly correlated to work engagement while job demands are strongly correlated to work burnout. This leads to the question as to whether or not job resources can ultimately affect work burnout, specifically the health impairment process related to job demands (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Bakker et al. defined the health impairment process as “physiological (elevated blood pressure, increased hormonal activity, increased heart rate) and psychological costs (e.g., fatigue, psychological need thwarting)” (p.392). In their most recent overview of the current state of the JD-R model Bakker et al. posited
that job resources were the strongest predictor of work engagement levels, certain job resources, specifically social support, had the greatest impact in both a cumulative effect over time, and on a day to day basis (p. 393).

While Bakker et al. (2014) have distinguished between two distinct processes, demands relate to burnout and resources relate to engagement, they maintained that there is a distinct joint effect between the two processes; a synergistic effect wherein the combination of demands and resources and their outcomes specifically related to organizational performance and occupational well-being. Specifically, the researchers posited that social support did mitigate job strain, which leads to burnout, and that job resources had the highest impact on engagement when demands are equally high. Finally, in their overview of the JD-R model, Bakker et al. argued that personal resources, such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, may have a direct impact on the level of work engagement experienced by a worker.

As related to the current state of JD-R theory, Bakker et al. (2014) called for more research to “link both concepts [engagement and burnout with demands and resources] to observable behaviors” (p. 403). The recent review of the JD-R model was not in contrast with the conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework does not insinuate a perfect balance (and therefore was not portrayed as a weighted scale), instead job resources are displayed as a filter/ intervention application that increases engagement and decreases burnout with no degree of impact specified. An interesting side note to the Bakker et al. literature review was the call for research in job crafting supporting this researcher’s argument regarding the practical implications of this study, that social support, in the form of peer-coaching networks may be a job resource considered by
human resource departments (Munyon et al., 2010) Bakker et al. emphasized the criticality of the JD-R model in that its state of balance was posited to be positively correlated to organizational performance.

The literature review on the current state of JD-R theory was considered highly credible, as authored by seminal researchers, Demerouti and Bakker (2014) as well as introducing Sanz-Vergel into the Demerouti-Bakker team (Bakker, et al, 2014). The review also covered several of the key studies in the JD-R venue, as related in the historical perspective of this study’s literature review. The review also further defined burnout as a health impairment process and engagement as a state of occupational well-being (Bakker, et al, 2014). This review also integrated recent research on the moderating effect of personal resources within the JD-R model. The researchers posited the findings in recent literature (as cited in Van den Broeck et al., 2010). As related to this study, with the CEO sample frame, the current theory may be enhanced, as it could be argued that the sample population has high personal resources such as self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, post-high school education, political savvy and high intelligence. The CEO population consists of those workers who have reached the highest point of career success within their organizations. In the Bakker et al. research, daily fluctuations of wellness and impairment were also questioned as an avenue for further research. Can a worker be impaired and well simultaneously? The JD-R model, by its need for both demands and resources, would imply that these conditions (job demands) are always in existence, at different levels, and it is the mediating factors of resources applied to the condition that affect worker response; health impairment or occupational well-being.
The Bakker et al. (2014) literature review offered considerable support for the need for the research proposed in this study. First, was the issue of observable behaviors. While a qualitative inquiry does not lead to observable behaviors, only the reported experience, it is anticipated that themes will emerge that may later be conceptualized in future research. Second, the challenges of being a CEO have been described in the introduction to this study, and are considered to be high, specifically in terms of psychological, rather than physical demands. The crux of the JD-R model is that it may be applied across all occupational segments, a theoretical assumption that has yet to be tested. This study may answer the question of applicability to a unique, but highly important (as in its effect on organizational performance), occupational segment. Third, the construct of social support, as an identified mediator in both the impairment process and the engagement process, was theorized to have a positive correlation in both processes. This particular qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the experience of social support within the JD-R approach. Fourth, the identified personal resources of the sample frame may further existing theory in determining if personal resources do play a role in the JD-R approach. Fifth, Bakker et al. have posited that the JD-R effect (job resources mitigate job demands) may be cumulative over time. This researcher’s current study is unique in that its intervention variable, a peer-coaching network, has been applied over time (eight years), leading to a quasi-longitudinal result. The findings may very well support the cumulative synergistic effect of the intervention of social support.

The question of applicability over occupational segments is an important one. Much of the current research on JD-R has been focused on those in the health profession wherein physical and psychological demands are high. Although the CEO population
does face a physical demand of long hours, there is a much greater psychological demand within this occupational segment (Bartkoski, 2010; Hambrick, 2007). Researchers, Van den Broeck, De Cuyper, De Witte and Vansteenkiste (2010) challenged the parsimony of the JD-R model in their research. Central to the Van den Broeck et al. argument was that job demands consisted of two types of demands: job hindrances and job challenges. Their study was of particular interest to this researcher in that it tested what was asserted to be extensively studied constructs: work demands, cognitive demands, social support as well as autonomy and work-home interface. The insertion of autonomy and work-home interface are relevant to this current study of CEOs in that CEOs inarguably have high levels of autonomy and a negative work-home interface has been related to CEO isolation and social support (Adamson & Axmith, 2003; Demerouti, Peeters, & van der Heijden, 2012).

The Van den Broeck et al. (2010) study’s findings are important to the current state of JD-R theory. The researchers suggest a tripartite model rather than the current two factor model of JD-R. The study used two different sample groups, 261 Dutch call center employees and 441 Belgian police officers, both groups assumed to have psychological demands. The quantitative testing used a variety of well-known scales and inventory to measure the various constructs of burnout: vigor (as a construct of work engagement), work demands, and work challenges. A one way ANOVA found that there were no differences between the two groups and exhaustion (burnout) but significant differences in job demands and work engagement. Structural equation modeling using Lisrel controlled for the relation between variables. The results of the study found that job demands, split into two constructs of job hindrances and job challenges, were not
consistent in the application of job resources (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Job
hindrances were defined as those demands that imposed impeding factors on the worker,
such as time constraints and CEO isolation while job challenges were those factors that
brought as sense of achievement or allowed for personal growth, such as job complexity
and impression management (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). The researchers posited from
the results that job hindrances had no correlation to a mediating factor of job resources;
however, job resources were positively associated with job challenges (Van den Broeck
et al.).

The Van den Broeck (2010) study is important as it questions both the
parsimonious nature of the JD-R model and the interplay between resources and
demands. Van den Broeck et al. did admit to commonalities between job hindrances and
job challenges but maintained their differences as a separate constructs. The authors
asserted their study was of importance as the majority of research within the JD-R model
has been conducted in testing the model with the construct of burnout versus engagement
(Van den Broeck et al., 2010). This researcher’s qualitative inquiry builds upon Van den
Broeck et al. description of the current state of JD-R as it attempts to garner a rich
description of the integration process specifically with the resource of social support,
posited as a correlating factor in work engagement (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). As the
researchers conceded in their call for future research, the research needed to include more
occupational segments, a close look at the mechanisms that are in play when applying the
mediating application of job resources, and also to explore if individual personality
differences are a relational factor to burnout and work engagement. This researcher’s
generic qualitative inquiry may enhance current JD-R theory as it seeks to discover the
CEO’s perception of the mechanisms of social support delivered through a peer-coaching network. It has been argued that CEOs share personality characteristics of narcissism, drive, servant leadership, commitment and ambition (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Peterson, Galvin & Lange, 2012); therefore this particular inquiry may moderate personality differences leading to a greater level of transferability, if other CEO groups are analyzed.

Finally, the occupational segment of CEOs, and more specifically nonprofit association CEOs with national memberships, has yet to be examined in the current JD-R literature. As this qualitative inquiry relates to the tripartite model, Van den Broeck et al., (2010) suggested that job hindrances and job demands, while sharing commonalities, are distinctly different. This is an assumption that has yet to be fully examined and arguably may be flawed. As this researcher was a working CEO, the personal view is that many job demands are contradictory in nature; job complexity is both a hindrance (when a skill set is absent) and a challenge (achievement in applying or learning a skill), time constraints are both a hindrance (not enough time) and a challenge (similar to a countdown game), CEO isolation can be both a hindrance (information withholding) and a challenge (a sense of uniqueness or specialness). The detailed descriptions of the CEO experience, within the construct of the JD-R model, may bring greater understanding of the construct of job demands, and specifically executive demands.

Brough et al., (2013) in their theoretical quest to validate the assumptions of the JD-R model also found insignificant correlation between job resources and job burnout, although there was a suggested correlation between job resources and job engagement. This study appeared to support the Van den Broeck et al., (2010) findings; however, the
researchers admitted to several limitations, which may have caused this result. First, and important, is the study’s highlight of the limited research in specific populations with the majority of research having been conducted with European samples. This particular study was conducted with two samples, 10,000 Australian employees and 5700 Chinese employees. A MANOVA test, with country as the independent variable, was administered to account for sample differences, with Australians reporting higher job demands and higher job resources (specifically social support) and the Chinese reporting significantly higher psychological strain. Hierarchical multiple regression modeling was utilized with 16 specific tests only one test revealed a correlation between resources and engagement and none found a positive connection between job resources and job burnout (Brough, et al.).

A second failing of the current JD-R model, as posited by the research team of Brough et al., (2013) is that the vast majority of the research conducted on JD-R thus far has been done so by the theory’s originators, or a team inclusive of one of the seminal authors, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli. There are several reasons that the Brough et al. study may have resulted in less than validating results, as explained by the researchers. The researchers proposed that the significant correlation may be found if “the job demand, job resources and strain variables all address the same domain of human psychological functioning (i.e. cognitive, emotional, or physical domains)” (Brough, et al., 2013, p. 1327). In addition, Brough et al. acknowledge the lack of cross national samples, the lack of specific job demands, and that social support was defined only in the terms of internal supervisor and collegiate support. This particular study was chosen for
the literature review by this researcher for her qualitative inquiry based on its limitations in fully understanding the theoretical and practical implications of the JD-R model.

First, this researcher’s qualitative inquiry solves two pressing problems with the current research in JD-R: a lack of United States sampling and the need to move research beyond the small circle of European researchers. Seminal author, Dr. Arnold Bakker (2014) on his website stated that to date the JD-R model has been tested with the following sample populations, “Spain, Greece, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Belgium, South Africa, China, and Australia” (para, 5.). Dr. Wilmar Schaufeli (2013) on his research site also relates the importance of this theory to organizational performance asserting that the balanced state achieved through application of the JD-R model results in:

- 50% less sickness absence
- 18% higher productivity
- 30 to 50% less employee turnover
- Up to 50% increase in customer orientation and satisfaction
- Up to 10% more revenues (para. 4).

Second, this researcher’s qualitative inquiry also seeks to answer the call for specificity in job demands and more importantly addresses the model within the triple-match principle of De Jonge and Dormann (as cited in Brough et al., 2010). The triple-match principle aligns the demand variables (levels/similarity of strain), the demand type (cognitive and emotional) and support resources (social support delivered via a peer-coaching network) –simplistically, comparing like to like factors. This researcher’s qualitative inquiry is also unique in that while peer-coaching networks fall under the
collective collegiate support the particular peer-coaching network is not an internal organizational resource, as it consists of peers employed at the same job in different organizations. Finally, this researcher questioned the effectiveness of the current quantitative research bent of the JD-R theorists. It is proposed that if theory is intended to eventually inform practice, an in-depth, mile deep, analysis of the mechanisms of the job resource, namely social support, is necessary and can only be derived from qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis cannot fully describe feelings, intuition and perception, it can only measure it; not understand it. In order to effectively use job resources as a means of buffering job demands, human resource departments need to know how and why certain types of support affect certain occupational segments under certain types of demands (Tims, Bakker & Derks, 2013).

In that vein, the research of Hu, Schaufeli and Taris (2011) was reviewed due to its focus on the synergistic effects of the JD-R model. This was a quantitative study that used two separate samples of 625 Chinese factory workers and 761 Chinese health professionals. The study used existing measures of work demands and work resources. The authors employed the goodness of fit model with all variables having an alpha of .70 higher. Structural equation modeling was then used to determine the effects of the variables that consisted of additive, moderating and synergistic (Hu et al., 2011). The researchers determined that there was a correlation between the additions of job resources to job demands in the overall well-being of the sample population. The researchers found no moderating effect of job resources to burnout when job demands were not high. Specifically, in the health care population the moderating effects of job demands were evident but in the blue collar population they had no effect (Hu et al., 2011). Logistic
regression analysis was utilized to determine the synergistic relationship between the interaction of demands and resources. Hu et al. found only a weak or insignificant effect, those workers with high demands and low resources were not found to have increased burnout or decreased engagement. The Hu research called for more research in the synergistic effect of high job demands and high resources, perhaps different types of resources impact different types of demands resulting in varied synergistic effects.

Although this researcher’s study does not address that particular research problem, the descriptions of synergistic effects described by the sample population (if any) may lead to a more direct path to research in this regard.

The current state of the JD-R model, as it related to the necessity of further research, both quantitative and qualitative, was recently outlined in the Demerouti and Bakker (2011) literature review. The research team had a specific concern related to measurement issues; constructs have not been substantially defined and standardized (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Qualitative analyses of the variables posited to be relevant to the JD-R model may assist in operationalizing the constructs of job demands and job resources. Demerouti and Bakker also asserted that the current literature to date implied that, “organizations should offer their employees sufficient job resources, including feedback, social support, and skill variety” (p.7). The literature review guided the current study in that the management problem was formulated with the assumption that CEOs have a high incidence of burnout (Bartkoski, 2010; Hambrick, 2007) and that a deep look into the experience of CEOs, in terms of job demands and job resources, may shed light on both the constructs within the JD-R model and the perceived work experience using the JD-R model as an overarching framework.
Although JD-R was originally intended to be a parsimonious model, and to some extent still is, current research continues to focus on the various constructs of demands and resources, and how they impact burnout and satisfaction along with how combinations of various interactions have a multiplicative or buffering effect. A search of the Business Source Complete database with the search term job demands resource and a search date range of January 2014 through January of 2015 returned 21 articles, of which, three were directly related to the JD-R model. The most recent was published in December of 2014 and was a study of Indian nurses and burnout, specifically with the construct of commitment, conducted by Kar and Suar (2014). A compelling finding was that a highly political environment (such as that of the nonprofit CEO) was discovered to be the highest predictor of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Kar & Suar, 2014). The Kar and Suar study was another quantitative examination of burnout variables and was included in the review as it indicated that certain constructs present in the CEO job demands were high predictors of burnout. While the study had several limitations, namely one occupational segment and self-reports, it did offer cogent evidence that job resources could act as a buffering mediator against high job demands.

The Constructs

Throughout the literature review of JD-R certain constructs came to the forefront as variables worthy of studying in the context of the interaction or buffering effects of the JD-R model. To summarize, the JD-R interaction effect has been repeatedly tested with variables of high job demands, namely: isolation, professional efficacy, politically charged environments, personal efficacy, physical workloads, long hours, heavy responsibility and to some extent rapid changes in technology. The interaction effect has
been tested with the resources of personal characteristics, coping skills, autonomy, locus of control, and social support. To date the construct of impression management (most likely because it is not a common work demand and somewhat limited to CEOs and those workers with fame) has not been tested within the JD-R model. The purpose of the current research is to answer the research problem of the buffering effect of the JD-R model, through the experiences and perceptions of CEOs in a peer-coaching network, using the constructs of executive job demands, impression management and CEO isolation as job demands and social support as a job resource.

**Executive Job Demands Theory**

Executive job demands theory was a theoretical outcropping of Hambrick and Mason’s (1984) upper echelons theory. The seminal theory posited that organizations reflected the personality characteristics of its CEOs. In fact, the executive demands theory was proposed by its creator to be the antithesis of upper echelons theory, Hambrick (2007) stated that upper echelons should be flipped “on its head by considering executive characteristics as consequences rather than as causes” (p. 338). In other words, the pressures (job demands) of the executive may actually form executive behaviors, such as engagement or burnout. Perhaps even more important was that Hambrick suggested that these characteristics could impact organizational performance. Hambrick inferred that there indeed was an interaction effect between the executive’s job demands and executive rewards that influenced organizational performance. This particular article was an update from Hambrick as to the possible expansion of upper echelons theory by reviewing and testing various demands and resources at the executive level.
In an earlier article, Hambrick, Finkelstein and Mooney (2005a) detailed the pressures and demands faced by the CEO. The research team argued for the necessity of studying the executive population, “Executives are finite, flawed human beings. But they reside in jobs where the stakes associated with their humaness—both positive and negative—are enormous” (Hambrick, et al., 2005a, p. 503). Hambrick et al. also posited that executive job demands could impact, decision making, emotional stability, and organizational performance. Referring back to the perception issue, reality distortion of executives, Hambrick et al. also argued that the executive has great difficulty in separating over-commitment and excessive work behaviors as later suggested by Siegrist (2012). This article was a theoretical article drafted in response to criticisms of Ganster (2005).

Ganster’s (2005) theoretical review of executive job demands theory argued that job demands are not merely a cause of job stress, but can influence multiple job behaviors. The emphasis on the executive population in Ganster’s was noteworthy as an assumption of this particular CEO study is that the CEO position is inherently different than other occupations with unique job demands that may require creative job resources including social support. Ganster stated, “Given the high impact of executive decisions on the functioning of their organizations, researchers are compelled to seek an understanding of executive-level job demands and their consequences” (p. 493). Ganster also called for an operationalization of the construct standards for measuring job demands; however, even more importantly, asserted that qualitative assessment of executive job demands and executive resources followed by executive behaviors was critical to the expansion of existing theory.
In response to the Ganster (2005) theoretical review Hambrick et al. (2005a) raised interesting counterpoints and especially embellished upon the assumption that executives have a distorted perception of their work demands (often underestimating just how much they are working) and of their work stress (believing all is well when others view them as overly stressed). Hambrick et al. discussed that many executives never saw the wave of discontent with their leadership coming and in the arena of perceptions introduced impression management as an outcome of stress levels. Hambrick et al. asserted that as job demands decrease impression management increases while as job demands increase impression management also increases. In effect, when things are easy the CEO must work to convey he has high demands worthy of a high salary but when those demands are in play the CEO must work to convey efficacy and confidence.

**Impression management.** Impression management theory and the construct of isolation are two of the constructs examined in this current study of CEO job demands. While CEO isolation is not a theoretical based construct it is repeated often in the practitioner literature as described in Chapter 1. Impression management is a theoretical construct developed from Goffman’s (1956) early sociological research in the presentation of self. The dramaturgical model of impression management asserted that there are two forms of expression and impression in any social exchange: the impression one gives and the impression one gives off (Goffman, 1959). The work of Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989) traced a historical overview of impression management theory and its growth and application in organizational systems, thus integrating impression management into organizational and leadership behavioral theory.
The focal basis for impression management was a behavior of self-monitoring wherein a person may act differently around different people or may act against their internal disposition of (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). Giacalone and Rosenfeld proposed that in an organizational context, impression management becomes a mechanism to self-promote in order to gain status, power or higher income; thus manipulating perceptions of job performance and job promotion. Elsbach and Elofson (2000) supported the need to display an image of perfect leadership as a means to building trustworthiness in the leader’s decision making competence. Pollach and Kerbler (2011) added that impression management is critical in the role of CEO because the CEO must always appear to be competent, calm, and confident in order to enhance or sustain the image of the organization, as well as remain in favor with the Board of Directors.

Indeed, impression management is important when navigating the political environment, in which CEOs live and breathe. It is imperative for nonprofit CEOs to remain in favor with their boards of directors, as they often lack the job security of their peers (Krischer Goodman, 2014; Sherlock & Nathan, 2007). Patelli and Pedrini (2014) defined impression management as a mechanism wherein the CEO downplays failures and emphasizes success in their communications with the various stakeholders of an organization. The researchers offered an analysis of over 600 CEO letters to determine the level of sincerity in each letter (Patelli & Pedrini, 2014). First the research team conducted a textual analysis of the letters, coding for themes and then conducted a quantitative regression analysis of the coded items. The research found that the tendency to downplay negative outcomes and emphasize positives may not be intentional. The question of intentionality requires further study as called for by the researchers, but, in
relation to executive job demands and JD-R theory, there is also the issue of distorted perceptions influencing intentionality. Do CEOs intentionally mislead or misinterpret in order to strengthen job security, is there a lack of intention as impression management is used to portray a true sense of optimism, or do CEOs have a distorted sense of reality due to high pressures and isolation? This study was relevant as it positioned impression management, intentionally or unintentionally, as a mechanism for controlling the political environment, in which a CEO functions.

The work of Pollach and Kerbler (2011) reinforced the necessity to control CEO impressions in their study of 200 North American and European Global Fortune 500 CEOs’ corporate profiles. Pollach and Kerbler asserted that the need for controlling the CEO persona was important to the board of directors as it conveyed a well-run organization to stakeholders and employees, as well as rationalizing high CEO incomes. Pollach and Keebler limited their mixed method analysis to what they termed “assertive impression management” differentiating it from “defensive impression management” (p. 358). Assertive impression management was defined as proactive and persona crafting and was identified with several characteristics: (a) self-promotion (b) entitlements (c) enhancements (d) exemplification (e) attractiveness (f) esteem (g) prestige (h) status and (i) credibility (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011, p. 358). While the crux of this article was to compare how North American and European CEO profiles differed, with North American profiles being much more personally focused, it is important in understanding how critical impression management is to the CEO population (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011). The study did have some serious limitations including only one female in the top 500 list, English not being the first language in European sites, and the diversity of industries that
could have led to distortion of the descriptive statistics. However, as related to the current study of CEOs and their impression management demands, it laid a foundation of expected behaviors and expected discourse outcomes (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011).

In contrast to the above study on assertive impression management as a job demand, Westphal, Park, McDonald, and Hayward (2012) offered a study on defensive impression management. In their article, Westphal, et al. described CEO defensive social support in the form of impression management. Westphal, et al. identified three methods wherein a CEO helped another CEO manage their impression with the media: direct reciprocity, chain generalized, and fairness-based giving. Direct reciprocity is when a CEO says something positive about another CEO who has said positive things about him/her in the past (Westphal et al., 2012). The chain generalized concept is better known as the pay it forward behaviors and finally fairness-based is when a CEO gives favorable press to another CEO because that particular CEO has said positive things about other CEOs in the past (Westphal et al., 2012). This study consisted of a sample frame of 367 CEOs with sales of one hundred million or more and utilized regression analyses to determine that it was not uncommon for CEOs to support each other in the media and by doing so may manage impressions of their leadership if the CEO has experienced similar issues or fears he/she may experience similar issues (Westphal, et al., 2012). This study was germane to the current CEO research as it incorporated impression management as not only a job stressor but also as a job resource in the context of social support amongst peers.

**CEO isolation.** The role of social support in ameliorating CEO isolation, specifically peer-social support, is critical to the research question of this current CEO
study. The oft repeated truism, it’s lonely at the top, as a search criterion, returned 1,342 articles from the Business Complete Resource with 21 articles with the phrase in the title on the first page return alone. All articles that did not have the adage or the term CEO/leader in the title were eliminated as well as all periodicals and those articles that were not peer reviewed. A further delimitation from 131 articles included a date range of 2011-2015 that netted two articles; one that did not focus on CEOs and a theoretical article. Although it can be said that it is lonely at the top, the vast majority of the literature is periodical in nature. Austin and Bartunek (as cited in Weiner, Borman, Ilgen & Klomoski, 2012) asserted that practical organizational issues ideally should lead to theory development. They warned practitioner information needs to flow freely to academia, and in this regard the study of CEO isolation as a construct addresses gaps in the current scholarly literature (Austin & Bartunek, as cited in Weiner, et al., 2012).

Marano (2003), editor in chief of Psychology Today and award winning author of books and articles, conducted a series of articles of depression in the C-suite. Marano detailed the experiences of two CEOs who faced depression both as a result of impression management, “CEOS cannot take their mask off, at least within the organization” and isolation, “CEOs face crippling isolation” (p. 63). The article related how long work hours alienate families making the CEO even more vulnerable to isolationistic tendencies, which included the theme of *being found out*. Marano asserted that even the most successful CEOs build protective walls to ensure their façade of competency and confidence while inside the psyche is in constant fear of losing the position of power or being revealed as an imposter.
The theme of imposter, causing CEOs to alienate themselves even further from others, is repeated in the practitioner literature. Yalom and Yalom (1998) published an article, with the senior Yalom holding the position of PhD and professor of psychiatry at Stanford University, which described the isolationistic experiences of the CEO. The CEO related feelings of being found out, that there was no one to talk to, “He could no more confide in his employees than he could in the various other people involved in the corporation--not the board members or the consultants, and least of all the customers” (para. 3). The subject of the interview was so threatened by the sense of being revealed as an imposter, although there were no indicators of such in his performance, that any sense of personal connection or human intimacy was taboo (Yalom & Yalom, 1998). Kets De Vries (2005) echoed the hypotheses of Yalom and Yalom in his article that detailed the reasons CEOs can feel like an imposter, which included birth order, gender, cultural expectations, but typically a parental emphasis on overachievement. CEOs by their very nature are likely to be overachievers, behaviors that propel them to the top, and are therefore more likely to succumb to the pressures of impression management and self-inflicted isolation (Kets De Vries, 2005).

Quick, Gavin, Cooper, and Quick (2000) proposed that there were many factors that contributed to CEO isolation, notably that CEOs averaged workload hours of 60-70 per week. The long hours naturally lead to a solitary rather than social life that they posited increased the sense of isolation. The researchers’ article was a theoretical article, which proposed a model for executive health that included four dimensions: physical, psychological, spiritual and ethical (Quick, et al., 2000). Quick et al. also maintained that impression management, the climb to the top as an isolation experience, and loneliness of
command as contributors to feelings of intense isolation. Their proposed model included the development of a peer network to act as a safety net in times of crisis, the inclusion of spirituality to diffuse feelings of overwhelming responsibility as well as distorted perceptions of personal power, and embracing ethical behavior as means to achieving a healthy state of mind and body while in the role of CEO (Quick, et al., 2000).

Beavan and Erlich (2013) took a different approach in their qualitative case study of a new CEO. The research team used narrative to describe the intense pressure of the CEO and noted that many fail and tenures are typically short term (Beavan & Erlich, 2013). They asserted it was the duty of the Board of Directors to mitigate the intense isolation of the CEO by providing mentoring, emotional support, and peer networks (Beavan & Erlich, 2013). The authors also posited that the CEO faces overwhelming workloads in addition to impression management demands that were driven by acute scrutiny and zealous evaluation (Beavan & Erlich, 2013). Key items identified as causing isolation were the inability to trust feedback, filtered upward communication, and the inability to trust that people will be honest with them even outside the organization due to their power position (Beavan & Erlich, 2013).

In their white paper, Johnson, Whittington, and Johnson (2004), of which the lead Johnson is held a PhD in strategic decision making and the remaining authors were professors in strategic management, wrote of the emotional climb to the top as CEO and its resultant isolation. Their statement as to the political environment of the job was eloquent in its simplicity.

There will, in the stewarding and leading of an organization, always be tensions between the interests of different stakeholder and shareholder groupings. The role
of the CEO is often to negotiate, act and decide within this space of tension: sometimes the villain, sometimes the hero but usually behind most things (p.1).

The need to present a competent façade and to isolate one’s self from others was explained as the CEO being closely watched by all interested parties, “the more observed and watched and talked about, the higher, the chance of being misread and misunderstood” (p.2). The researchers proposed that this constant tension of being physically accessible, but psychologically closed off, was a primary source of tension, stress, and isolation. The construct of CEO isolation, while limited to practitioner research, reveals interesting gaps in the literature, such as the impact of social support, job resources, board responsibility for CEO well-being, and a deeper understanding of CEO isolation as a theoretical element of interest.

Social Support and Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory

Beavan and Erlich (2013) asserted that social support from the board of directors and from CEO peers may have a positive effect in mitigating isolation and impression management job demands and argued it is a necessary job resource at the CEO level. The construct of social support has its foundation in social exchange theory theories (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Cobb (1976) admitted that the literature on what constitutes social support theory was exhaustive, but his seminal work on the subject made the important distinction from other theories in that social support must be inclusive of an exchange between two or more people. This study’s context will limit the analysis of social support to the exchange of communication between CEOs within a peer-coaching network. As social support is considered a basic human need (Cobb, 1976)
the construct of social support within the organization, in fulfilling a basic need, leads to attachment to and engagement with the organization, further supporting the buffering effect of job resources as proposed in the JD-R model (Fernet, Austin, & Vallerand, R. J., 2012).

**Social Support Exchange within the JD-R Model**

Fernet, et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative study of work motivation factors within the JD-R framework utilizing 586 school principals and vice principals over the 9 month school term. Their study focused on several constructs, as pertains to the current CEO study, one of the loading factors was interconnectedness in work relationships (Fernet, et al., 2012). The researchers tested social support (as a job resource) using structural equation modeling and found evidence that social support was a factor in determining work motivation. They also tested with competing structural models that is a strength of the research. Limitations included only gathering data at two points in the year, a singular occupational group was studied, the group’s duties were managerial, and there was a lack of other data sources beyond self-reports (Fernet et al., 2012). The Fernet study lends validity to the application of social support as a means to work engagement.

In contrast to the quantitative analysis of the application of social support as motivating factor within the context of the JD-R framework, researchers Daniels, Glover, Beesley, Wimalasiri, Cohen, Cheyne, and Hislop (2013) offered a generic qualitative study on the effects of social support application, as well as job control, as job resources. The Daniels et al. team explained the need for more qualitative study of the JD-R framework to provide “a contextualized and detailed understanding of how some of the principles underpinning the JD-R and DCS models become manifest” (p. 201) and to
further extend theory. A primary focus of this article was the use of social support for problem solving although Daniels et al. did raise other issues such as social support as a coping mechanism or as psychological connection needs fulfillment. The researchers utilized both diary studies of 17 participants, followed up with personal interviews with data coding and thematic analysis (Daniels et al., 2013). A strength of their work is that it included textual as well as longitudinal data sources followed up with in person interviews although the study was limited to medical equipment designers (Daniels et al., 2013).

The Daniels et al. (2013) research is important because it is one of the rare qualitative studies of the JD-R model. Interesting concepts that emerged were the phenomenon that even if the job resources were not used their existence may have influenced work well-being and that combined control and social support may have an interaction effect (Daniels, et al., 2013). An unexpected result was that the participants who used one job resource (control) to problem solve were likely to use a second resource (social support) to continue the problem solving process. The research team also found that if social support was sought as a buffer against demands the more likely the respondents would continue to eventually solve the problem (Daniels, et al., 2013). The Daniels et al. research is significant because it revealed a problem with the entire body of work on JD-R model; fixated on finding the truth of the interaction effects of JD-R through quantitative positivist research, the lack of qualitative studies, the acknowledgment of multiple truths through lived experiences, has resulted in limited understanding and standardization of the constructs beyond the simplified one statement.
inventories of the MBI and OLBI. This lack of understanding may have contributed to the variances in JD-R model testing.

**Social Support as a Job Resource**

Beyond social support as a resource for problem solving, social support serves several functions. Halbesleben and Rotondo (2007) asserted that social support was a significant factor in reducing job stress. Halbesleben and Rotondo made several empirically supported claims regarding the importance of social support including, reduced turnover intention, higher performance evaluations, higher work engagement, lower incidence of health related problems, greater sense of empowerment and use as a replacement for the loss of other resources. Their theoretical article emphasized the responsibility of organizations to provide social support as a job resource due to its direct and indirect effects identified as lower insurance premiums and less absenteeism (Halbesleben & Rotondo, 2007).

It is important to clarify that there are many constructs within the greater social support and social network theories. Social support as a job resource can be delivered in-house via supervisor support, collegiate/peer support, or organizational support (Kossek et al., 2012). Work place social support can also be delivered externally through coaching, support groups, volunteer projects and employee assistance programs (Kossek et al., 2012). The focus of the current CEO study is social support delivered externally through a peer-coaching network with the intention of improving CEO performance, validating efficacy, and emotionally supporting a colleague via talking over a problem, offering solutions to a problem, identifying their experiences with a similar problem and reminding each other that we are a value to our organizations, and cared for by the group.
Conclusion

The introduction of this literature review stated its purpose, which was to explore the perceptions of CEOs participating in a peer-coaching network, as a form of social support, within the context of the JD-R model. The JD-R model was explained to be a heuristic framework to study the interaction/buffering effects of job resources when applied to job demands. The literature review gave an introduction of both the seminal and revised JD-R model as well as analyses of three foundational theories to JD-R that were identified as: JD-C, JDCS, and ERI. The revised JD-R model began to look at the interaction effects of various constructs and although JD-R was intended to be an overarching heuristic and parsimonious model continued testing brought forth different constructs and the effects of an interaction amongst the constructs.

This researcher reviewed a significant body of literature throughout the 20 month period before this literature review and narrowed the focus down to key theoretical articles, literature reviews, as well as qualitative and quantitative studies. In reviewing the vast body of literature, only those studies with high levels of integrity were utilized. Criteria for inclusion included number of times cited, length of experience in the subject matter, seminal authors, and then of course the rigor of the experimentation methods and analysis.

The issues found that were gaps in the literature, which this researcher’s study will address, were many. Although the JD-R model is proposed to be an over-arching theoretical model that can be applied to all occupational segments (Bakker, et al., 2001) the unique population segment of the CEO has not yet been studied in the context of the JD-R framework. Foundational research of the executive population, as described in this
literature review, indicated that CEO job demands, and the population itself in terms of personal characteristics such as overachievement, driven, high intellect, etc., are different than that of the mass population (Bartkoski, 2010; Hambrick, 2007; Kets DeVries, 2005). Another area of concern is that although the creators of the JD-R model have worked to bring in fresh perspectives through the addition of a new researcher to a segment of the seminal research team, the vast majority of the research conducted was conducted by the originators of the theory.

While the Bakker, Demerouti, Taris and Schaufeli creators have impressive resumes as evidenced by their personal websites and prolific production of articles, there is a problem within their research; namely they have conducted research only in European cultures. To date no research could be found testing the JD-R model in the United States (Schaufeli, 2013). The CEO personality in the United States has been found to be different than that of other countries (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011). There is a possibility the theory has no relevance in the North American organization. Another issue is that the seminal research team approached the model from a positivist perspective. This is a concern because the model itself relates to two very human emotional experiences, burnout and engagement. The positivist approach attempts to boil down feelings into observable, rate-able, units of interest; however, each person experiences those feelings from their own perspective. The sheer lack of qualitative research on the interaction effect of JD-R is a serious shortcoming in the theory’s development (and also may explain the variances found in testing).

As the literature reviewed became more current, leaving the historical perspective, the more emphasis there was on individual constructs, although originally the JD-R was
in response to the construct specific models of JD-C and ERI. This researcher appreciated several articles regarding JD-R and social support; however, those articles did not detail what elements of interest drove the need for social support, and again the CEO need for social support has not been addressed within current JD-R studies. It was believed that in order to fully conceptualize the resource of social support, the need for it in terms of the CEO’s demands, had to be analyzed. This research focused on three areas of CEO job demands: executive demands in general, CEO impression management and CEO isolation.

Executive demands in general included physically demanding workloads, long hours, lack of job security due to short tenures, and a politically charged environment (Hambrick, 2007; Nathan & Sherlock, 2007; Siegrist, 2012): The two constructs of isolation and impression management were somewhat hand in glove with hypotheses that the requirement of impression management was a significant factor in bringing about CEO isolation (Beavan & Erlich, 2013; Kets De Vries, 2005; Quick, et al., 2000; Yalom & Yalom, 1998). However, employee information filtering is also a component of CEO isolation (Beavan & Erlich, 2013) that is unrelated to impression management. Therefore the question of potential cause and effect phenomenon of impression management and CEO isolation is yet unclear. This researcher’s study may be able to shed light on how the two constructs potentially interact.

The literature review then examined articles involving the JD-R model and social support as a general theoretical construct. There is empirical evidence that social support does indeed modify one’s reaction to job demands (Daniels et al., 2013; Fernet et al., 2012; Halseben & Rotondo, 2007); however, understanding is limited as to why it
mediates certain job demands. This literature review has attempted to synthesize the work of many into a new model within the framework of JD-R, which addresses application into North American occupational segments and the specific interaction effects of social support, as job resources, that buffers CEO demands specifically executive demands, impression demands and isolation demands.

As the story of the JD-R model’s evolution unfolded, so did more questions about why certain constructs have certain effects, the cumulative effect, the day to day effect, the environmental effect (such as a down market) and even why they may have effect in one study but not in another. It is anticipated that a generic qualitative inquiry of the CEO demands and social support resource (in the form of a peer-coaching network) may address these significant gaps in the literature. The practical significance is that with a deeper understanding of the JD-R interaction organizations may be able to craft the CEO benefits with a resource that enriches the CEO personally while improving organizational performance and stability.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to investigate the subjective experience of peer-coaching network participation, as a social support job resource, in buffering executive job demands of the nonprofit association CEO, within the constructs of the JD-R model. This study was guided by the research question: what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States? The question was then supported by two subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands?

Research Design

The central research question guided the research design. This researcher approached the design from the interpretivist perspective, believing that every individual’s reality is uniquely experienced and realized. This exploratory generic qualitative inquiry was framed within the context of an interpretivist viewpoint wherein realities are constructed through social and experiential interaction and knowledge cannot be separated from self (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000). A qualitative research approach was appropriate as it presumed that truth is mediated between researcher and participants’ multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007). The generic qualitative inquiry approach, which guided this research design, does not espouse a particular methodology, method,
epistemology or ontology; however, there are common practices within the qualitative approach. Caelli et al. (2003) described basic commonalities in the generic approach that include a focus on categories and patterns and thematic analysis that brings greater understanding or clarity to a specific phenomenon.

The research question, “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” lent itself to both phenomenology and generic qualitative inquiry. However, the research question, and the research problem, was more concerned with participants’ reflections and beliefs about the peer-coaching network experience and its component of social support. A generic qualitative inquiry is best suited when the research is concerned with a broad range of experiences and reflections, and when the researcher has a priori knowledge about the chosen topic (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015).

Generic qualitative inquiry was described as the “blurred genres” of the qualitative research movement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). McCaslin and Scott (2003) also asserted that qualitative inquiry research can consist of multiple ontological paradigms, methodological approaches and methods. Caelli, et al. (2003) elaborated on the premise that generic qualitative inquiry is an amalgam of qualitative research methodologies and ontologies and therefore prescribed that a standardized research model be applied when using generic qualitative inquiry.

The Caelli, et al. (2003) research model consisted of four factors: (a) a declarative statement of the researcher’s position (b) that methods and methodology are aligned (c) the methods used to ensure rigor are described and (d) a clear description and explanation
of the personal analytic lens (p. 19). This model will guide the research and its process. In terms of rigor, the data collection process will include field observation with subsequent journaling as well as open-ended semi-structured online interviewing followed by telephonic interviewing for clarification, if needed.

Generic qualitative inquiry typically does not have an allegiance to a particular methodological model (Caelli, et al., 2003; McCaslin & Scott, 2003). This study used the Persson (2006) analysis technique of variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration, and conclusion (VSAIEEDC).

VSAIEEDC assumes that all analysis is cognition based a commonality that applies to all models regardless of the epistemological paradigm espoused by the researcher. In utilizing the Caelli, et al. research model the method and methodology must align. This model is appropriate and aligns to generic qualitative inquiry as it does not have an epistemological or ontological stance, rather it asserts that all analysis is cognition-based and therefore VSAIEEDC can be utilized as a generic analysis tool across qualitative traditions (Persson, 2006).

This model follows seven steps to analysis: “variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration and conclusion” (Persson, 2006, p. 38) not completely dissimilar to the Moustakas’ (1994) modified van Kaam method (as cited in Machtimes, Deggs, Johnson, Fox, Burke, Harper, Matzke, Arcemont, Hebert, Tarifa, Reynaud, Regina, & Brooks, 2009). A fundamental difference between VSAIEEDC and the Moustakas method is the step of external verification wherein the analysis is corroborated back to existing theories. This type of analysis was appropriate to the research question as it was specific to a theoretical model, JD-R. The VSAIEEDC
model demonstrated that qualitative researchers inherently used patterns, specifically discourse patterns, to form interpretations of qualitative data, a commonality of the majority of qualitative approaches (Persson, 2006). Variation referred to the human tendency to assess similarities and differences to existing knowledge when encountering a new situation. Specification was typically represented by a coding process, abstraction was the synthesis of data to form a new or deeper understanding of the data, internal verification was described as a self-check for bias, external verification referred to triangulation methods and comparison to existing theory, demonstration was a conceptualization based on the new knowledge and conclusion was the descriptive synthesis of the research (Persson, 2006, pp. 35-36). In addition to the VSAIEEDC model the phenomenological technique of epoché and bracketing, setting aside personal experience and presumptions (Bednall, 2006), was used to address the internal verification component of the VSAIEEDC model.

**Sample**

The research question identified the sample frame as nonprofit real estate association CEOs. The particular respondents for this study were state and local nonprofit association CEOs with a national membership requirement. These CEOs were all specific to the real estate industry. This was a purposive sampling of those CEOs meeting the above criteria and who participated in a peer-coaching network. This purposive sampling of 12 participants was deemed as adequate due to its representative and richly informed composition: (a) CEOs ranged from leading associations of less than 100 to multiple tens of thousands (b) CEOs represented both local and state chapters (c) ranged in experience of 5 years to over 30 years of service (d) and were geographically spread
from the United States’ borders. Data collection activities consisted of two sources, field observation of the peer-coaching networks, and telephone and online interviewing.

The sample frame was the nonprofit CEO voluntary peer-coaching groups. The sample was purposive to explore a specific understudied population and to answer the research call for exploration of the JD-R framework in specific occupational populations. The sample was representative of the overall population, there was no exclusion criteria, the only inclusion criteria was participation in the selected groups. Suri (2011) indicated that in theory based purposive sampling, this type of inclusion criteria serves to further define and clarify the operational definitions within a study. This researcher utilized two groups of CEOs. One group met in face-to-face meetings, the other group met virtually through Facebook. These groups were chosen due to ready access of the researcher into the elusive inner conversations of CEO social support groups. The participants ranged in age from the early 30s to 60s. Educational background spanned from associate to graduate degree holders. The participants were of a national span with members from each region of the United States (Northwest, West, Southwest, Midwest, South, Southeast and New England) The common characteristic of these CEOs was that they all are nonprofit real estate association CEOs with membership in a national association and participated in a peer network.

This researcher was a working CEO of a nonprofit association and belonged to the selected professional groups. The groups were selected due to access and the likelihood of disclosure to another CEO. Salmons (2009) asserted that an atmosphere of trust and rapport was critical to the success of gathering information rich data. Therefore, the purposive sampling was appropriate for this research. The purposive sample was also
intended to maximize differences at the onset of the study; these particular groups hailed from a great diversity of experience and demographic data. In addition, the theoretical constructs were predetermined: executive demands, impression management, and CEO isolation. Suri (2011) asserted that theory based purposive sampling is appropriate when the participants represent the theoretical constructs to be explored. Only CEOs can experience CEO isolation. Although other executive officers may also experience executive demands the CEO population is a representative sample of executive demands. Suri also suggested that theory based sampling is appropriate when a comparative analysis is a significant analysis technique, as within the VSAIEEDC method’s use of variation and specification. The access to the sample, the alignment with the theoretical constructs and operational definitions, combined with the chosen analysis method, all served to determine that a purposive theory based sample was appropriate.

This researcher had much greater than expected difficulty in accessing the closed world of the association peer networks. Three face-to-face peer networks were contacted with site permission letters. Only one group consented. An online peer network was also contacted for site permission and declined. The declines resulted in this researcher’s own social media utilized to contact potential participants. This researcher regularly publishes an association advice blog. A page was created on the blog with links to the consent form and study as well as additional information concerned with ethical information and purpose of the study. Association executives who participated in the researcher’s professional Facebook page and LinkedIn page were messaged with the link and then confirmed that they participated in a virtual peer network.
Contact with the active participants in the face-to-face group was initiated with permission granted to interview the subject population that consisted of 14 members. However, in order to assign current and former members with interest to participate, all current and former members were contacted via e-mail with a request to participate in this study, for a total of 21 contacts. The 21 contacts resulted in eight affirmative responses for participation. The eight participants with returned consent forms were sent the interview guide and link to the interview questions. Although three e-mail reminders were sent with an option for a telephone interview, two of those who consented never replied. The third potential participant responded with a decline citing she was overwhelmed with current duties and could not find the time. The virtual group resulted in 12 returned consent forms, of which, seven members actually participated. Although two e-mailed reminders were sent to those who did not reply within seven days and then again in 14 days only seven participated in the interview process.

In terms of field observation, an implied benefit of this researcher’s status as an active or former participant in the groups studied, was the longitudinal field observation. This researcher was a seven year member of the face-to-face group and an active participant in the Facebook group for a period of two years. The observations of the interaction of the participants in peer social support were recorded in a journal prior to the onset of data collection. Data collection ran through the period of March 30, 2015 through June 11, 2015.

The central research question guiding this study referred to nonprofit real estate association executives as the population to be explored. Therefore the decision to use nonprofit association CEO groups fit well within the context of the study. Although some
respondents did not experience all the constructs described as job demands, those that did disclosed similar experiences; all respondents did experience the peer network as a positive influence and therefore data saturation was reached fairly quickly. As this was a qualitative inquiry, the sample size was determined by qualitative norms (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Jette, et al., 2003; Mason, 2010).

**Setting**

The setting for the field observations were held at the offices of the various members and within the context of being online with Facebook. All interview data was collected from the home office of this researcher, located in Missouri, via telephone and e-mail. Through the use of Formstack, a secure online software utilized for collecting data, and in privacy and seclusion of her home, this researcher was able to deeply immerse herself into the stories of each participant. The ability to be in the moment with the participant population was asserted by Creswell (2007) to be integral to an effective study. As previously stated, the sample population consisted of association executives within organized real estate. The interview data, enhanced with field observation of peer social support behaviors, may benefit organized real estate through increased knowledge of the impact of peer support amongst its executives. The benefit to the existing body of knowledge is a greater insight to an understudied, essential, organizational population and further understanding of the integrative effects of the JD-R model.

**Instrumentation/Measures**

The participants of this study were all past and former members of specific peer-coaching support groups, one that had been meeting for eight years and one formed approximately two years ago. The selection was not random, although the choice to
participate was outside of the control of this researcher. However, as the participants were self-selected, not chosen by this researcher, there was no inequity in data selection; all who responded in the affirmative to either the e-mail invitation or the Facebook message invitation were selected. Upon selection, and commencement of the study, all participants were e-mailed an Interview Guide, which assisted them in responding in a rich descriptive manner.

The interview questionnaire was e-mailed to all participants. As this researcher was the primary data collection instrument, the questions were designed to elucidate the CEO experience, from this researcher’s perspective as a CEO within the sample frame. The following interview questions were ensured for validity through a review process by three nonprofit association executives of the real estate industry who are considered industry experts and one industry peer network facilitator. In addition, this researcher conducted two practice interviews that followed the protocol of written responses followed by a telephone interview. This researcher found, as substantiated by recent academic literature (Benford & Standen, 2011; Cook, 2012; Davis; Mason & Ide, 2014; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Meho, 2006; Xu & Storr, 2012) that the e-mail dialogue resulted in rich and thick descriptions of the CEO experience. As expected, the e-mailed interviews had a greater level of disclosure than the telephone interviews, most likely due to the anonymity afforded by the Internet (Benford & Standen, 2011; Cook, 2012; Davis; Mason & Ide, 2014; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Meho, 2006; Xu & Storr, 2012). Each of the practice interviewees were asked which method they preferred and both responded that they preferred the e-mail interview for various reasons citing “It gave me time to
really think about my answers” and “I could come back to individual questions when I had time; that kept me focused.”

Both interviews indicated that a job demand, specific to their executive role, was their relationship with their volunteer presidents and their board of directors. Upon review of the transcripts (that included the telephone interview probes) with this researcher’s academic mentor, a decision was made to alter two questions. Question 2 asked to explain whether job demands pressure was internal or external was changed to-the current Question 2 asking for a description of the participant’s relationship with their volunteer president. This was done as a result of self-reflection confirmed by the test interviews that indicated that the quality of the relationship with the volunteer president was critical in determining the stress levels of the executive. Question 6 was found to be a redundant inquiry to Question 7 and was replaced with the current Question 6 inquired about the responsibility of the board to ensure the well-being of the executive.

**Interview Questions**

1. Describe for me your typical day as a CEO of a nonprofit association with a national membership; tell me about the challenges of the job.

2. Describe for me your relationship with your volunteer presidents in terms of a job demand.

3. The current literature about CEOs often describe the CEO as, *wearing a mask*, aware of the intense scrutiny of the Board of Directors, members and the media. How do you relate to that statement?

4. There is significant research that connects the role of CEO with feelings of intense isolation. In your role as a CEO have you ever experienced feelings of
intense loneliness, a disconnection from family, or the fear that important information is being withheld from you by staff or directors?

5. In your description about your challenges can you relate certain challenges to avenues where you receive emotional and professional support? Describe those avenues of support, not only what they are but how they assist you in dealing with your job demands, both personal and professional effects?

6. Explain your beliefs in the board’s role of accountability to you as the CEO, both professionally and personally.

7. You have invested your time and/or money in a peer-coaching network; if you no longer were able to participate how would it affect your job performance and personal well-being?

8. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview; anything I did not ask you that you believe to be important?

Instrumentation Method and Alignment with Qualitative Norms.

This researcher chose to craft her role as the research instrument in a non-traditional fashion. Qualitative research tradition, from the interpretivist lens, has long held that the role of the researcher as instrument is two-fold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first tenet is that the truth and its subsequent reality are formed by both the researcher and the participant, through the interview process. Truth is socially constructed from the interpretivist perspective (Wahyuni, 2012). The second tenet is that the researcher’s interaction with the data through analysis also creates another subjective reality (Wahyuni, 2012); the researcher cannot be separated from the analysis.
The complex elegance of interpretivism and its *researcher as instrument* has been distilled to its simplest form: The researcher must be physically present either face-to-face or through vocal and listening presence via the telephone; however, this assumption denied the rich interaction formed through dialogue electronically; a form of asynchronous dialogue. This assumption also negated the context Lincoln and Guba (1985) described in their concept of *researcher as instrument*. In Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) ground-breaking book, researcher as instrument begins, not with the interview process but with the formulation of the interview questions from the researcher (p.198). The tacit knowledge of the researcher is the underpinning of the naturalistic inquiry.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the researcher must be “fully present” (p. 198), not physically present. Benford and Standen (2011) related how telephone interviewees (being invisible to the researcher) may multi-task during the interview process and lack focus as a result. In addition the researchers described that normal human activity such as reading form the basis for mining data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, in accordance with qualitative inquiry norms, this researchers has fulfilled the role of researcher *as instrument* through the use of tacit and a priori knowledge when crafting the interview questions, through the use of the human activity of reading dialogue, through the use of dialoguing in the method most used by the participants (Salmons, 2009), and through the researcher’s data analysis.

This researcher’s choice in method was deliberate. This researcher approached the naturalistic inquiry from the viewpoint that the subject population was unique and also vulnerable. Although this researcher had participated in the face-to-face group for a number of years the majority of members declined to be interviewed; many of whom
simply ignored repeated e-mailed invitations, but would correspond with this researcher on other issues. In addition, this researcher’s familiarity with the CEO persona and work behaviors, led her to e-mail interviewing. E-mail is the dialogue tool most frequently used by the sample population. This assumption was substantiated by the data collected in that all participants mentioned the use of e-mail as part of their typical day.

There was found to be no concern with the richness of the data via the field test interviews. Further research was conducted to ensure that asynchronous communication and dialogue would result in building a rapport and in diving deeply with the participant experience. Mason and Ide (2014) conducted qualitative research with another group who relied heavily on computer mediated conversation: teenagers. The research team found that the participants were, “Enthusiastic about e-mail interviewing. Attrition did not occur. E-mail interviewing gave participants more control over the research, decreased power differentials between the adolescent and researcher, allowed the study to be adapted to cultural, linguistic and developmental needs, and maintained confidentiality” (p. 40).

Another benefit of this type of interviewing was a greater level of self-disclosure due to the anonymity factor created by the Internet (Cook, 2012). Meho (2006) conducted a review of studies that had utilized asynchronous e-mailed interviews in qualitative research and found that “in many cases e-mail facilitates greater disclosure of personal information, offering further benefits to both the researcher and participants” (p.1289). McCoyd and Kerson (2006) conducted a comparative analysis of e-mail, telephone and face-to-face interviewing in social work research. Their opportunity for analysis came
from honoring participant requests for an e-mail interview versus telephone and face-to-face opportunities. McCoyd and Kerson (2006) related their concerns and findings:

The researchers’ initial concerns that emotional content may not be forthcoming or adequately reflect respondents’ experience were unfounded. To a social worker, the value of non-verbal cues, face-to-face interaction and relationship have always been critical and there were fears about how much could be translated via the computer. Findings showed that responses were genuine, thoughtful and insightful, while still conveying emotion. (p. 396)

Finally, in response to the preference for e-mail expressed by both field testers and the participant sample, was the issue of reflexivity. As a researcher, the choice of interviewing method allowed for immediate data review, versus lengthy transcription time delays, and response with follow-up questions quickly. The choice also eliminated transcription error, which heightened rigor. The participants were able to thoroughly read and re-read their answers prior to submission and also were able to take the time they needed to reflect on a question. Cook (2012) supported this phenomenon with her research in e-mail interviewing vulnerable population where she posited, “Asynchronous interviews allowed for additional reflexivity in the researcher’s responses and rich data generation” (p. 1330).

**Data Collection**

The data collection process involved Internet mediated conversation. The collection process followed the procedure defined below:

1. Pre-response: The interview questions were distributed via gmail e-mail, with a link to the Formstack form that held the questions, to those who responded to the invitation,
2. Response: Responses were held in the secure Internet cloud storage of the Formstack software. Responses were not printed but downloaded to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Once in Excel format the responses were uploaded to NVIVO 10 software
folders for coding and analysis. Responses were identified as Participant A, Participant B, and so forth.

3. Post-response: Upon receipt of the response, an e-mail was sent thanking the participants for their participation and reminding them of the privacy security measures and that a copy of the study will be e-mailed to them when completed. Memo checking was conducted through a process wherein the analysis was sent to the participants for verification that the researcher had accurately and adequately reported their experiences.

4. Post-response- follow-up e-mail dialogue: The semi structured questions allowed the interviewee to stop and answer only what they perceived to be necessary. Follow-up e-mail dialogue assisted in broadening or deepening the answers to the survey questions.

While Internet mediated interviewing is relatively new there were merits to this form of interaction with the researcher as the research instrument. E-mail is a primary form of communication amongst the C-suite due to access and time limitations (Bain & Company, 2014; Ramsey & Renaud, 2012). Salmons (2009) asserted that the communication methods used in research should align with the primary communication method of the participants. In addition, Benford and Standen (2011) posited that e-mail interviewing was more likely to give the participants control over the interview process through being able to answer at a time convenient to them, to be able to have time to think through their answers, to answer free from other distractions and in a neutral (online) environment.

In response to the necessity of the researcher as instrument in qualitative research, the back and forth dialogue of short e-mails, allowed the researcher to gain greater insight without the time limitation of personal interviewing, and the use of emoticons, bolding,
italicizing and underlining gave clarity to the emotional state of the interviewee (Benford & Standen, 2011; Meho, 2006). Meho posited that there was a greater depth in response of e-mail interviewees in that Internet-mediated conversation allowed participants to feel a higher level of anonymity due to not directly interacting with the interviewer and those participants were more likely to divulge personal information in the neutral online environment. The sense of anonymity was of great importance in this particular study as this researcher was familiar with the participants. The use of Internet-mediated communication was an intentional choice to address the limitations of this study that included participant familiarity, cost and time constraints, as well as researcher bias. This interview method created a filter between this researcher’s reactions and the participant communication, which eliminated researcher bias in the initial interaction with the semi-structured interviews.

The use of semi-structured interview questions was in alignment with the research problem and research question. Semi structured research questions are appropriate in generic qualitative inquiry wherein themes are pre-existing and the researcher has a priori knowledge (Caelli, et al., 2003; Wahyuni, 2012). The research problem and the research question both called for the descriptive experience specific identified job demand constructs and the job resource of social support. Therefore the use of semi-structured interviews, wherein the constructs were predefined, was the appropriate data collection method.

Treatment/Intervention

There was no intervention applied through the course of this study. This study was undertaken with the assumption that the longitudinal intervention that occurred
through the course of participation in a peer-coaching network would be described in detail by the participants through their unique filters of self and professional efficacy, gained experience and personal resources.

**Data Analysis**

The data from the interviews were uploaded into an NVivo 10 project template. NVivo was not only used for coding but for memoing of the reflexive journaling. Upon the conclusion of data collection, a comprehensive data analysis plan was developed. The plan was inclusive of both the Caelli et al. (2003) framework and the VSAIEEDC model of analysis. First, this researcher approached the plan through the self-declaration of her position, which was a belief that CEOs had unique job demands and that social support through a peer network mediated those demands. The motivation for the study was to report the subjective experience and meaning of being an executive in a nonprofit organization. The methodology and method aligned with the research problem. The plan was developed with strategies to ensure rigor. The plan also reflected the ontological stance of interpretivism.

The VSAIEEDC model followed seven steps to analysis: “variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration and conclusion” (Persson, 2006, p. 38) not completely dissimilar to the Moustakas’ (1994) modified van Kaam method (as cited in Machtmes, et al., 2009). A fundamental difference between the two was the VSAIEEDC model requires corroboration back to the theoretical framework (Persson, 2006). This confirmation back to the theory was in alignment with the chosen analysis approach.
In the development of the research plan, the first step was to identify the approach. As the study was based upon the theoretical model of JD-R, and a predefined set of constructs informed the interview questions, a theory-driven approach was deemed appropriate (Namey, Guest, Thairu & Johnson, as cited in Guest & McQueen, 2007). The plan included a strategy for data reduction. Only data that was relevant to the studied constructs of job demands was extracted. The level of analysis was descriptive and comparative in nature. Although the data was carefully reviewed prior to analysis (as the first step in VSAIDEC Model) the data was partitioned for theoretical analysis. This step was supported by Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (as cited in Guest & McQueen, 2007) who asserted that “The researcher may still closely read the data prior to analysis, but his or her analysis categories have been determined a priori, without consideration of the data” (p. 138). The data analysis plan included a strategy for data reduction through the extraction the data that was relevant to the theoretical constructs. This data was then assigned a structural code for each predetermined construct. External source folders were created in NVivo 10 for each participant marked Participant A through Participant L. In addition codes were assigned to indicate state or local association, large and small associations, gender of the participant and years in the industry. An additional subset of codes were developed as child nodes of executive demands that included demands unique to the President-CEO and Board of Directors-CEO relationships. Data analysis techniques to be utilized, as defined in the plan were frequencies, co-occurrence, and comparison analysis. In order to ensure accuracy and credibility the analysis was returned to the original participants for member checking. Upon confirmation that analysis was
reasonable and descriptions of the constructs were accurate, the results were extrapolated and presented in the Chapter 4 Results section of the study.

For the purposes of analysis the seven steps of the VSAIEEDC model was utilized. The first step of variation required that the data was read for an overall impression, followed by summary notes of that impression in the reflexive journal, which was maintained as an NVivo memo. Variation analysis also referred to what is different and what is the same within the participant reports and served as the foundation of the comparative analysis. Specification occurred, as guided by the analysis plan when the data was re-read to determine which datum belonged to which categorical construct. This partitioning of data is consistent with theoretical analysis (Namey et al., as cited in Guest & McQueen, 2007). This process was aided by creating folders in NVivo 10 related to each of the seven research questions that all related to a categorical construct: executive demands, presidential demands, board demands, isolation, impression management demands, and peer-coaching network social support.

The data was reviewed a third time to create the various nodes in NVivo 10. Information that was specific to a construct was reduced to an abstractive description of the experience and coded under the appropriate node or nodes. This abstraction was relevant in the building of the predetermined themes and their subsequent analysis. Throughout the analysis process, this researcher continuously looked back to the literature review to ensure that the predetermined themes, and the emergent themes from the data were in congruence. In addition, this researcher continuously reviewed the memoing that held her experiences with the constructs in epoché. Through the process of re-examination of identified biases, each piece of data chosen for abstraction was
reviewed (and questioned internally) to determine if the data supported feasible and accurate themes rather than the researcher’s biased reasoning (Persson, 2006, p.40).

External verification was then conducted for triangulation. Did the JD-R theory correspond to the emerging themes in the data? Themes were checked for logic within the data context and for substantiation in other research (Persson, 2006). Another form of triangulation was established through the inclusion of former peer network participants with the assumption that these participants had the benefit of looking back at the experience rather than the experience of being in the network. The field observation of participants interacting within the Facebook network was conducted during and after data collection that led to a corroboration of patterns identified in the analysis.

These patterns of discourse within each conceptualized theme emerged from the analysis. In the VSAIEEDC model this is identified as demonstration. The participants identified various demands through repetition of demonstrations, such as dealing with ineffective volunteer leaders. The final step in the analysis process was conclusion. Persson (2006) described conclusion within the VSAIEEDC model as the final steps wherein conclusions are drawn from the analysis. Machtmes, et al., (2009) likened this to the Moustakis method where a “textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience” (p.160) is produced from the analysis.

The data was analyzed through the process of word frequency; within each construct a word frequency query was conducted to generalize the overall experience of the participants within each construct. Data was then analyzed for co-occurrence. This researcher specifically looked for instances where demographic data, such as length of service, may have resulted in a permutation of the abstracted experience. Negative -
President-CEO relationships and Board of Director CEO relationships were examined for co-occurrence of executive demands, impression management and isolation. A comparison analysis was then conducted to determine to the impacts of social support via a peer network within the context of isolation demands.

**Role of the Researcher**

In this qualitative inquiry, this researcher was the instrument through the development of the interview questions, through the established e-mail dialogue, and through the analysis of the data. It is assumed that in qualitative research only the human research can comprehend the complexity in the human experience through discourse (Fink, 2000). In this study the semi-structured interview questions were universally applied and therefore a consistency was developed. As there was a disclosed relationship between the instrument and the participants, any judgments regarding what was returned in the descriptive answers prior to coding was recorded in the reflexive journal to form the basis for follow-up questions in subsequent e-mail dialogue. Epoché and bracketing were utilized to control for preconceptions and biases, inferences were flagged rather than leading the respondent in follow-up interviews (Bednall, 2006).

The interviews were conducted via e-mail with e-mail follow up. This method was chosen for several reasons and did not compromise the role of researcher as instrument. This CEO sample, by nature of their positions, is highly articulate and accustomed to communicating clearly via e-mail. The peer-coaching networks, with participants a continent apart, utilized e-mail and social media postings as the primary method of engagement. Salmons (2009) stated, “Researchers may want to use the same tools as the participants are using in the circumstances being studied” (p. 147). As
Salmons (2009) recommended, an interview guide was developed and distributed with additional probing questions to ensure a thorough and rich, descriptive response by the participants.

This method fit well with the theoretical framework, the methodological approach and model. First, through the utilization of the primary communication mode as a job resource and social support vehicle, the interview process aligned with JD-R model. Second, as the research instrument in a generic qualitative inquiry, the methodology required interpretive analysis, in which case a well written, thoughtful, response versus off the cuff approach may have led to richer data to interpret. Third, the VSAIEEDC model acknowledges that researchers inherently use patterns in discourse and relate information back to their own cognizance of a theme (Persson, 2006). The use of a written approach ensured that inferences are noted, and also removed the ability to lead the interview based upon those inferences.

Validity and Reliability

This study was designed to meet qualitative research standards of credibility transferability, dependability and confirmability. This research was unique in that the researcher had been a member of the peer networks over a period of eight years and two years; the prolonged engagement may have assisted participants in opening up and also assisted in establishing relevant and accurate thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, the step of member checking, achieved through the participants ability to read, write and re-write their descriptions of their experiences, in addition to the analysis results being e-mailed to the participants for review, was an additional means to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Transferability was established through the thick rich descriptions in the detailed written responses of the participants. The detailed reporting should allow researchers to evaluate the extent the findings would be transferable to other CEO populations (Holloway, 1997). The context and the assumptions of this study were clearly identified, which allowed for other researchers to determine transferability. It was posited that the review by the panel of subject matter experts, along with the practice interviewing, was adequate in establishing dependability. The use of a theory driven approach to analysis was asserted to be of greater dependability in that the analysis was structured by theme and therefore repeatable (Namey et al., as cited in Guest & McQueen, 2007). This researcher’s expertise and prolonged engagement as a CEO member of a peer network and professional experience in interpreting discourse data led to trustworthiness.

Confirmability was developed through reflexive journaling, epoché and bracketing, as well as the theoretical triangulation required in the VSAIEEDC model, in which the researchers validated data against the theoretical framework. The thoroughly detailed analysis plan and process for evaluating the data enriched confirmability. In addition this researcher actively sought and analyzed patterns of discourse that were in contrast to her preconceived biases that resulted in a greater enhancement of confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

While there was potential bias, which was addressed with known and accepted qualitative research techniques, there were also ethical considerations to take into account when studying a population with a connection to the researcher. The professional risks of participants in the study were high, speaking about their employers (the associations’ board of directors) could endanger their employment, and therefore the strictest levels of
confidentiality were observed. It was imperative that anonymity was ensured at the highest level. The informed consent document detailed the risks and security procedures. The respect for privacy and the steps taken towards securing confidentiality and privacy assisted in the participants’ willingness to disclose (Swanson, 2005).

Participants were identified in the study as Participant A, Participant B, and so forth. The original interviews were stored in Formstack secure cloud storage until the analysis was completed, at such time they were deleted. The NVivo 10 file was transferred to a marked jump drive that continues to be stored in a locked file cabinet in the home of the researcher.

In addressing fairness, the participants all had an equal chance of being selected as all current members of the peer networks were accepted and offered the opportunity to withdraw at any time without consequence. As each participant was given the same set of interview questions with participation being online, and the response was at the depth they were comfortable with, it is assumed that all shared in the risk and burden of the study equally. The participants were given access to all interview results in order to add to the greater good of the study and its participants. None of the participants withdrew. The study itself was the only incentive offered for participation.

This researcher’s participation in the professional groups was disclosed and mediated through époché and bracketing (Bednall, 2006). In addition this researcher journaled throughout the process to ensure bias and a priori knowledge did not taint the study. This researcher sought to set aside biases, recognized personal feelings toward the subject matter, and used a priori knowledge of the networks only to sufficiently recognize emerging themes and patterns.
This researcher had no influence upon these groups, being neither a superior nor employer. There was no coercion to participate. This researcher held no volunteer position at the national organization where participants may have been required to report to her, nor did the researcher have any influence in volunteer selection at the national organization. This researcher had no relationships with the participants’ board of directors or employees. This researcher’s only contact with the participants was via e-mail or Facebook postings within the context of the peer networks. This researcher did not physically come in contact with any of the participants during the data collection and analysis phases.

This researcher’s inexperience with in-depth e-mail interviewing could potentially have put the participant respondents at risk through either insensitivity in questioning causing undue discomfort. The American Psychologist Association (2014) in its Code of Ethics emphasized the necessity of competence in research; the strategies of practice interviews, review by subject matter experts, and research in e-mail interviewing were intended to mitigate any issues of competence. It was asserted that this researcher had adequate competence in electronic communication and discourse analysis. In addition, the research questions were submitted to the Capella University’s internal review board, as well as reviewed by a dissertation committee mentor, as an additional review of ethical consideration.

The issue of respect for persons was addressed with training through practice interviews and in the offer of an e-mail interview, wherein the participant was in control of their time. In addition this study reflected the ethical consideration of beneficence, protecting the participants while producing a benefit to them as the research has practical
implications in terms of providing job resources. These resources may have a positive effect in terms of reducing burnout and depression. The issue of justice, as defined in the *Belmont Report* (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) was also addressed as all participants had equal access to the completed study.

This researcher was dedicated to protecting the participants. CEOs are largely private (Hambrick, 2007) and any type of breach wherein a board would identify their CEO in the study, could result in significant financial harm to the participant. The procedures in place to address this issue were deletion of e-mail after uploading to NVivo 10, locked external electronic storage in the home of the researcher, destruction of records after seven years, the survey was sent to the participant’s private e-mail address if preferred, and all participants were guaranteed anonymity (Creswell, 2007) through the use of Participant A, Participant B, and so forth, identifiers. Demographics about specific associations were not revealed and all participation was voluntary with informed consent.

As to sample selection, all who replied within this very small group of people were selected on a first come-first serve basis for equity. In terms of beneficence, all participants received the study and its findings and the study itself may provide data regarding job design and CEO physical and mental health. The presentation risk was minimalized through anonymity and through the vast geographic diversity of the participants. There was a risk that a quote may be attributed to a participant. To mitigate this risk, the peer-coaching networks were identified by a pseudonym and any quotes that could remotely be traced back through a cultural or geographical use of language were approved by the issuing participant.
Conclusion

The methodology of generic qualitative inquiry was substantiated and rationalized throughout Chapter 3. This particular study is not ethnographic, is not explanatory as in grounded theory, is not bound by a single case (as former members are utilized for triangulation and multiple methods and sources of data were not utilized), nor is it phenomenological. Phenomenology is used to determine the internalized process of experiencing while this study was concerned with experiences, what happened externally in the outer world (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015; Wahyuni, 2012). The research design itself was unique employing different data collection strategies and a high level of analysis through the VSAIEEDC method. The role of researcher as instrument was justified through research and explanation of trending methods.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to define, describe, and analyze the phenomenon, amongst U.S. nonprofit CEOs, of peer-coaching network participation, within the context of the JD-R model. This inquiry sought to capture the descriptive and subjective experiences of CEOs related to both the unique demands of the executive and how those demands were or were not mediated by the job resource of social support. The JD-R model was described as heuristic in nature (Bakker et al., 2001) and assumed to apply to all populations and all job demands. This study was conducted to capture the interactive experience, assumed by the model, in which employees with job resources not only were better able to meet and manage demands, but the process of application of the resource created a state of engagement.

In order to reach the aims of the study, this researcher developed the research question, “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” The question was then focused through two subset research questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands? The primary and subset questions were then operationalized through a series of seven interview questions, with an eighth question that allowed for the participants to express thoughts not necessarily related to the predetermined constructs of the study.
This qualitative inquiry was guided by a set of constructs: executive demands, impression management demands, CEO isolation and social support. These constructs were further refined with the addition of President-CEO relationship, Board of Directors-CEO relationship and peer-coaching networks as the vehicle for social support. Consequently, analysis and this chapter were guided by the interview questions and their subsequent constructs. This chapter also was organized in the same hierarchical manner. First, the participant sample was fully described to gain a sense of the sample demographics, with consideration for the anonymity of the participants. Second, alternative data sources were discussed; field observations from prior researcher experience with the face-to-face peer group and field observation of the Facebook peer group during data collection were included. The third section of this chapter was a discussion as to how data analysis was applied. The fourth section of this chapter was a presentation of the data and its results. As customary in generic qualitative inquiry, the interview questions represented the categorical constructs for analysis; the categories, by question, were displayed individually, in an iterative fashion, which resulted in seven subsections within the chapters. The fifth and final section of this chapter was a summary of the findings.

Sample

The participant sample for this study was purposive. The research question, in part to satisfy calls for research in the literature, focused on the experiences of United States real estate association nonprofit CEOs. This researcher specifically chose the industry of organized real estate due to her familiarity with the field and with a presumed access to the private and exceedingly busy small circle of nonprofit CEOs in organized
real estate. The access was found to be limited with several CEOs agreeing via the completed informed consent and then failing to complete the interview. Site permission obtainment was extremely difficult with four groups who opted to withhold site permission. None of the final sample of 12 withdrew from the study. The following table represented the composition of the participant sample; exact years of service were not displayed as a safeguard towards anonymity:

Table 1
Association Executive Demographic Makeup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>By Gender</th>
<th>Local Chapter</th>
<th>State Chapter</th>
<th>Average Years of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Years of service averaged to avoid identification*

**Applied Research Methodology**

This study benefitted from a detailed research plan that included use of the VSAIEEDC model, which was developed for a theoretical driven approach. The seven step method is similar to methods used in phenomenology and case study analysis. A fundamental difference in the model is the extra step of corroboration back to theory, as a means of triangulation. The seven steps in the VSAIEEDC Model include: “variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration and conclusion” (Persson, 2006, p. 38). This researcher reviewed all the data and memoed general impressions. Those general impressions were then compared to field observation; how were they different and how were they the same. Specification was achieved through
the use of categories that were predetermined based on the interview questions. The process of abstraction, wherein nodes were established in NVivo 10 software, and chunks of data were assigned to various nodes was completed with a third review of the interview transcripts. The verification process that included both internal and external verification was conducted through the comparison of the abstractions to this researcher’s experience held in epoché and then compared back to the previous studies in the JD-R model. The process of demonstration was fulfilled with the three chosen analysis techniques: frequency, co-occurrence and comparison analysis. The abstraction process results were also utilized in the demonstration of the themes. Finally, conclusion was reached as this researcher unbracketed the experiences held in epoché and allowed them to fully integrate with the data analyses (Bednall, 2006). There was no deviation from the original analysis plan that proved beneficial in organizing the very large data sets.

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The data was first examined for original impressions as a part of the variation process. In the immediate assessment not all responses experienced the same constructs, but there were similarities within each construct shared. The field observations were consistent with the raw data; CEOs within the peer networks appeared to have a genuine appreciation for each other and work solutions and work resources were regularly shared between the participants. The specification process began with assigning matching nodes to each categorical construct, which was represented by a corresponding interview question. The remaining processes of abstraction, internal verification, external verification and demonstration were analyzed within each category. The conclusion step of the analysis plan is covered in the summary of this chapter.
Executive Demands Construct

The executive demands construct as defined by Hambrick (2007) is a metaphorical three-legged stool. The three legs are task demands, performance demands (Hambrick states that performance demands relate to managing the diverse stakeholders’ expectations and are represented in this study as CEO-president relationship and CEO-board relationship), and executive aspirations (Hambrick, 2007). The theme of executive aspirations was not addressed as a stand-alone category in this study; however, the data presented the concept of wanting to perform at a high level as a significant reason for joining a peer network coaching group. The academic literature described the uniqueness of executive demands as requiring high information processing abilities in an often hostile environment (Hambrick, 2007), a copious amount of social and communication tasks (Stock & Bauer, 2011), time pressure (Ganster, 2005) and the complexity of work characteristics that include autonomy and skill variety (Munyon et al., 2010). Although the theme of executive demands was predetermined, as typical in a theoretical analysis and generic qualitative inquiry (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015), this study attempted to clarify the determinants of what constituted an executive demand and how executive job demands were conceptually different from those of other workers. This construct was represented by the first interview question in that participants were asked to describe their typical day.

Executive Demands and Task Demands

The theme of executive task demands, derived from the data, did not conflict with the theoretical construct. However, the data did present two prevailing task challenge themes, within the executive demands construct, to such a high degree of frequency that
they were analyzed as sub-themes: time pressure and e-mail communication. In response to Question 1, skill variety and job complexity were well-represented by the data. A commonality within the category of executive demands was the lack of a typical day. Phraseology with a commonality was the diverse range of duties and skills required of the association executive such as “my day is never typical,” “no day is ever typical,” and “wearing, so many hats.” While participants related that balancing the multiple needs of the organization, from managing staff, managing volunteer leadership, managing time, managing projects and finances was a challenge many felt this was also the reward of the position. This finding was not inconsistent with developments in the JD-R theory, which divided job demands into two categories, job hindrances that led to burnout and job challenges that led to engagement (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). This dichotomy of job hindrance/job challenge was expressed by Participant H (PH) “One of the things I love, and that is also a frustration, is that I don't have ‘typical’ days.”

**E-mail as a task demand.** As expected, e-mail pervaded each day and was found to not only be a form of communication but a job demand itself. Nine out of twelve participants, 75%, mentioned e-mail as a significant part of their daily routine and the interviews referenced e-mail with 17 occurrences of the word. E-mail management appeared as a job hindrance as six out of nine, or two-thirds of the participants who cited e-mail as a demand, partitioned it from the work day or referred to it as a task outside of the real work to be done.

The concept of e-mail as stressor versus e-mail as communication vehicle was inducted from the raw data descriptions: “A typical day begins with me checking my e-mail at home in the morning, to see what needs to be addressed immediately. I triage the
30-40 messages into ‘respond immediately,’ ‘wait,’ and ‘delete,’ lists.” (Participant D-PD). The requirement of checking and responding to e-mail prior to the actual start of the work day was repeated by several participants: “I begin every day before anyone gets to work by checking and responding to appropriate e-mails” (Participant E-PE). “I always start with answering my e-mail around 5:30 am just to get a head start on the day or else I could spend all day doing just that” (Participant I-PI) and in reporting the daily routine, “about 6:30 AM. Unlock the door, turn off the alarm, turn on the lights, get a glass of water, and turn on my computer and start reading the hundreds of e-mails that came after I left the office the night before at 7 pm” (Participant C-PC). Participant L (PL) described the start of the work day, “My morning started with approximately 20 e-mails that needed to be responded to from members about various topics ranging from how to send a blast e-mail, is a broker liable for damage to a property that they were showing, how much are the membership fees, etc..” PL related frustration, “Our job is to service our customers and be resources for them; but we also need time to get actual ‘work’ done.”

The use of the word triage, the commonality of addressing e-mail before the work day actually begun, the communication coming through well into the evening and the frustration of not being able to work during work time due to a barrage of constant communication all suggested that e-mail was a primary mode of communication as well as a significant demand. Hambrick (2007) posited that executive demands may not necessarily be more difficult but are uniquely different than the demands of the average worker.

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required of the association executive such as “my day is never typical,” “no day is ever
typical,” and “wearing, so many hats”. While participants related that balancing the
multiple needs of the organization, from managing staff, managing volunteer leadership,
managing time, managing projects and finances was a challenge many felt this was also
the reward of the position. This finding was not inconsistent with developments in the
JD-R theory that divided job demands into two categories, job hindrances that led to
burnout and job challenges that led to engagement (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). This
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management appeared as a job hindrance as six out of nine, or two-thirds of the
participants who cited e-mail as a demand, partitioned it from the work day or referred to
it as a task outside of the real work to be done.

Time pressure as a task demand. In the descriptions of the CEO typical work
day, an extended workday as a necessity to manage their demands was a frequent
occurrence beyond e-mail/communication management. The concept of time occurred
often within the descriptions of job demands. The looming sense of time as an executive
demand was operationalized in the responses through the use of the word time and its
equivalents. The concept of time management (represented with the use of the words
time, time frame, timely, time-consuming, waste of time, time commitments, hours,
balancing, time management, sacrificing time and the phrases, keeping up, getting work
done, staying ahead of the work, takes a while, put off for days or even weeks, working
all the time, return on investment in time, and hurry up and wait) co-occurred in every
participant node in NVivo 10 and was recorded with 35 references to the executive
demands construct of Question 1. PD specifically identified time management as a primary challenge and related how those challenges occur:

The time consuming aspects of my job revolve around planning and implementing actionable strategies from our business/strategic plan. While our focus is legislative, there are still many duties associated with staff oversight of (number deleted to protect CEO identity) employees, solving problems, being available for members, staff and leadership and overseeing the implementation of set goals for the year. The biggest challenge of the job is time management. I am the type of CEO who is a hands-on administrator, I try to keep up with many of the details that other staff are responsible for. While I have complete trust in their knowledge, I am often put into a position that I need to know the details.

**Skill variety and job complexity as task demands.** The range of job demands, both challenges and hindrances, reflected the concept of the uniqueness of executive demands as proposed by Hambrick (2007). Although many demands were cited during a typical day, not all CEOs necessarily related the same demands when interviewed, which is not to imply that they did not participate in the activities listed. The data, when synthesized with a prior knowledge unbracketed from epoché, was consistent with this researcher’s reflection of her workday even if certain job demands had not been reported in the self-interview. The following table represented a frequency analysis of the demands described by the participant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member Interaction/Interruption</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Oversight</td>
<td>9a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 *continued*
Common Nonprofit Executive Demands Excluding Leadership/Board Relations, E-mail, Communication, Time Management, and Work Variation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Industry Trends and Updates</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategizing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing the Strategic Plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Activity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Listing Service Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with the Public</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition/Editing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and National Concerns</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Oversight</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media (Press) Management</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The raw data suggested that sheer variance of demands, combined with constant communication demands, and a significant time commitment created a job environment that was not only rich with challenges that could lead to engagement but also with hindrances that could lead to burnout. The assimilated data indicated that there was a definite ongoing dichotomy as related to demands. The participants related a demand that was “frustrating” or “overwhelming” and then stated it was the aspect of the job they
“loved” or found “exciting.” This phenomenon, as related to JD-R theory might possibly represent the temporal effect of the demands-resources interaction, wherein fluctuation in demand and resource intensity varies perception of engagement and burnout (Bakker et al., 2014). The findings were also consistent with early theory that posited that job demands must be high in order for employees to be engaged (Karasek, 1979).

**Executive Demands and the CEO-President Relationship**

The concept of a relationship, rather than a duty, as causing CEO stress as a job demand was uncovered in the practice interviews. Interview Question 2 asked the participants to describe their relationships with their volunteer presidents as related to a job demand. In the association management field, the particular industry of this study is designated as a trade association. Although many trades require higher education in some form the real estate industry does not; ergo often the volunteer leadership may be comprised of individuals who are not necessarily educated in business or even skilled in their fields. The National Association of Realtors membership profile report (2015) related that less than 58% of their membership hold an undergraduate degree.

Most of the participants asserted generally favorable impressions of their CEO-President relationship. However, upon additional probing, the lack of education or business expertise as a frustration did develop as a recurring theme in the responses. Every experience was different therefore a word frequency analysis was not deemed appropriate and inductive analysis was necessary. CEOS offered that keys to success were communication, adapting to different personalities, clarifying the president’s role was not to manage the association but to manage the board of directors, and keeping the relationship purely professional, not personal.
In terms of what made the relationship difficult several themes emerged.

Communication whilst cited as a success factor could also become a demand. PL related an experience with a particular president:

One president only worked in the middle of the night, so one year I spent a great deal of time working between 1am and 4am responding to e-mails to insure that I got a response that allowed for action to take place without having to wait a day or two for the next nighttime response.

PD also offered that communication can create internalized pressure:

I try to communicate with them at least once a week and give them an update on everything we're working on. I always feel pressure; however, when talking to them, trying to make sure I let them know I am working on various projects.

The presidents who crossed over into running the organization versus managing the board of directors and providing strategic guidance were troublesome. “Ironically, the ones that want to be more involved add more work-load than the ones that want us to do it all” (Participant J-PJ). References to micromanaging were consistent in the interviews, “let staff do their jobs” (PE) and “I ended up running a successful, multimillion dollar corporation and I had to deal with people who wanted to micro manage me” (Participant A- PA), “I hated being micro-managed” (PJ) and “I felt a constant struggle that they would not let me lead. I had it verbalized to me on several occasions that they did not want to be a staff driven organization. I felt my expertise was often ignored” (PI).

Therefore, in addition to managing staff, the CEOs had the added demand of managing presidential and board leadership expectations. Unfortunately, Participant G (PG) did not give consent for direct quotations extracted from the interview. A summation of PG’s CEO-President relationship indicated that early in the position there was a desire to give
leadership whatever they desired and with time and self-efficacy the process of managing expectations became more effective.

The personalities of the individual presidents created a job demand. Although all participants indicated in general most presidents were, if not effective, at least positive in their interactions with the CEO. Presidents who were singled out as ineffective and a job demand were typically demanding, incompetent, controlling, and ego driven. The experience of the relationship as a demand was represented with the following descriptions from the interview responses:

There is something about taking the gavel of installation that turns them - like a ravenous zombie for power and control. Somehow they believe all the hype that they are now flawless and all their ideas are the very best and must be implemented regardless of budget or the strategic plan. I have had presidents who have interfered with my relationship with staff; one who waged an all-out campaign against me. It was so hurtful. I feel like I give my body and soul to the organization and to have someone convince staff to, for lack of a better word, "testify" against me in exchange for a better position was devastating. (PI)

Many presidents were very demanding, thank God they were not around all the time. When they were around I was to drop everything else I was doing to take care of them and their wishes. Many of their wishes were outside the strategic plan. I think their plan was to have a statue erected of them. Only a handful were truly leaders who inspired members, and me to great things. Mostly they were poor managers if that at all. I tried to tell myself it is part of the job and I did my best to keep them informed and up to date. (PA)

In my entire career, I've only had one president who almost made me want to resign or look for another position. His personality was controlling, abusive and inconsistent. He had a great deal of influence with other members of the leadership team. I had to learn a whole new set of coping skills to deal with a leader who was manipulative and self-serving. (PC)

These descriptions were important to the overall construct of executive demands because, unlike an employee who must cope with a difficult boss, the president of an association changes from year to year and the CEO must still be accountable to a full
board of directors as well as to the membership. The requirement of accountability, and even transparency, can often be muddied by a demanding president.

**Executive Demands and the CEO-Board Relationship**

In the operationalization of the executive demands theory, Question 6 sought to further expand upon the CEO-Board relationship as a job demand unique to the CEO position. The question asked the participants to describe the board of directors’ accountability to them as professionals. The CEO board relationship also wove through the answers to Question 1 that detailed the typical day of a nonprofit board of directors. The concept of board accountability to the CEO arose from the practice interviews wherein the CEOs felt acutely aware that their positions were tenuous. This uncertainty appeared to stem from: (a) the lack of a contract for their position (which is not uncommon amongst real estate associations based upon field observation) (b) untrained leadership who may not understand their roles or the association business (c) The constant shifts in strategic direction with each leadership year and (d) personality conflicts with the president may affect the board relationship (based upon field observations).

PJ explained the need to constantly reinvent one’s self to meet the demands of leadership, “I think AE’s have to be ‘chameleon’ in personality, flexible in their routine, while being patient and open-minded.” Participant B (PB) alluded to the shifts in leadership as a potential job loss concern:

Circumstances and variables differ and personalities can contribute to failure. If danger signs arise, it may be time for the AE to begin the task of looking for another position, especially if it appears that the next generation of leadership holds the same values as the present one.
PG also reiterated the concept that the job was not solely dependent on CEO performance but on the perceptions of the board of directors. PG indicated a heightened sense of awareness that the board could terminate the contract at any time. PI related how a president “waged a campaign” to terminate CEO services. PA described the feeling of uncertainty:

Fear of being fired was with me each and every day. CEO of an association is a job with an audience that has complete control over your future. It's like performing on the Gong Show.

Question 6 served a dual purpose in that it inquired about resources the board could provide it also illuminated weaknesses in the CEO-Board relationship. Issues raised were lack of involvement on the part of the board of directors, lack of communication from the board to the CEO, an unawareness of the hours the job demanded as well as the lack of knowledge about the demands the position held. These concepts or units of meaning were linked to the following textual descriptions:

On a personal level, they should understand that the AE chose a profession and a job that is not 24/7. We are salaried employees and are not real estate agents. Our jobs are different, our compensation is different; our profession is different. (PL)

I think the Board does have that responsibility; however, it's probably not something they consider. I don't even think that they realize the stress that comes with this job and how it affects an AE. Possibly why there is a high rate of turnover. (Participant K-PK)

I think an often over-looked, yet very important responsibility of the Board is to properly on-board a new CEO. Making sure the CEO understands the culture and is given the proper support during the first 6 months is crucial to long-term success. (PJ)

One of the roles of a Board of Directors is to provide clear direction to the CEO or trust the CEO to use his/her judgment to find a good solution for a problem. It is also good for the Board not to be ‘yes men’ to the President, or the most strident voice in the room, or to the CEO. I expect feedback (good and bad) and
criticism and praise from the President and members of the BOD. This helps me grow and see other viewpoints. (PH)

“Stand by the decision they make supporting those decisions publicly to their fellow members instead of leaving staff especially the CEO to take the heat for unpopular decisions” (PE).

There should be a test to see if someone is even qualified to take a leadership position. If they cannot pass the test then they are no longer eligible to even run for a position. Or even better, let the BOD meet 4 times a year to help develop the association strategically and then leave the professional alone! (PA)

It’s not that they lack integrity or have low standards, but generally they are unfit for the job. Many have minimal business training and are expected to lead an association into the 21 century with a ‘plan for the future’. (PB)

The demands of the CEO relationship with the board of directors and the association president are demands that contribute to the idiosyncratic experience of executive demands. The results were in alignment with executive demands theory. Hambrick et al. (2005b) asserted that executive demands varied widely and were a source of emotional and physical strain. Hambrick (2007) posited that executive demands formed the behaviors of the executive. However, one executive in the study indicated a nearly perfect relationship with the president and the board of directors over decades of service.

Impression Management

Question 3 of the interview asked participants if they related to the concept of managing one’s impression as the CEO. The question itself posed an issue because it is assumed in theory that the CEOs interviewed would attempt to manage their impressions of self with this researcher. However, while it cannot be determined if the participants did withhold personal feelings in an attempt to manage their impression, generally the interviewees were forthright in the description of their experiences.
Responses to this question were varied with three of the twelve respondents indicating they felt no need to manage their impressions and did not feel any sense of scrutiny from leadership, staff or the public. PJ stated that the question was, “a bit offensive”. Of those that did relate to the statement of wearing a mask, a word frequency analysis was not appropriate as all described the experience differently. Phraseology used to describe the experience was mostly metaphoric: “be on,” “living in a fishbowl,” “star of the show,” “be happy,” “wearing a mask,” “being a good representative,” “poker-face,” “appearing cool and competent,” and “hiding tears.” There did not appear to be any co-occurrence within the construct of executive demands; those who experienced their jobs as more stressful, for example, did not always relate to the need for impression management. There was also no gender or years of experience co-occurrence in describing the phenomenon as executives with over three decades of experience and both male and female participants related impression management to a job demand.

PA described the impression management phenomenon thusly, “The leadership and member expect a certain demeanor, a persona to reflect the perceived view of the association and I always tried to live up to that.” This was also expressed by PC, “I do not let my guard down in any type of business environment (with staff, membership or leadership). I am a strong believer that a CEO's reputation is important.” The extant of how that persona or reputation is experienced as a demand varied from participant to participant. The reported experiences were consistent with impression management theory in that, as a job demand, impression management strategies were either used to promote a positive impression or to negate an unfavorable impression.
CEO Isolation

Question 4 of the interview related to feelings of loneliness, isolation or having important information withheld from the CEO by staff and leadership. This construct was not represented in most of the interviews, although it was reported in the practice interviews and was an a priori experience for this researcher. Only PI and PA described feelings of ongoing loneliness, PA stated “No one, absolutely no one, knows me” and it was indicated that PI “tried to hide the stress I was under from my family.” These results are underscored by the majority of respondents indicating that they did not have personal relationships with their staff or with their leadership. Two participants indicated that they received social support from the workplace and five participants indicated family relationships were critical to their well-being. Only one participant utilized all three resources of workplace, family and peer support. Therefore, findings were inconsistent that social support from peers was significant in alleviating or preventing feelings of CEO isolation.

Although participants in general did not relate to feelings of isolation, that did not preclude them from emphasizing the need to maintain business relationships not friendships with either staff or leadership. Participants did describe scenarios where information was withheld from them either by staff or by leadership. In terms of the necessity to partition leadership from their personal lives recurring phraseology of “leadership not being real friends,” “not letting leadership get too close,” “it’s a business not personal relationship” were noted. Participant F (PF) indicated that (gender deleted) formed personal relationships with (gender deleted) presidents and got very close to them without a subsequent downside. As related to communication being withheld the terms
“blindsided,” “devastated,” “apprehensive,” “defensive,” “disconnected”,
“confidentiality,” “gossip,” “trust,” and “neutral” were utilized to give meaning to the experience. PC shared strategies for coping with information being withheld:

I’ve had that happen, which has resulted in two outcomes for me: (1) it ended in termination or resignation by the employee and (2) When I had an Officer leave me out of the communication link and conference calls with the leadership team - I made it clear that my job description calls for me being a part of the leadership team and all meetings. The only meeting I am not part of is when the Association leadership is discussing and preparing for my annual evaluation. While I cannot be 100% sure that outside meetings or conversations did come about conversations (without me) are done, I feel confident that I could openly discuss the issue if it did come about.

**Social Support**

Question 5 of the interview was concerned with the construct of social support as a job resource for mediating executive job demands. In this question participants were asked to link job demands to external resources. This question did not specifically answer the question of peer support and was intended to allow new themes to emerge.

Association Executives Institute (a National Association of Realtors annual conference where only association Executives and association staff are allowed to register) referred to as AEI emerged repeatedly as a job resource. Although AEI is not a specific peer-network it does provide the opportunity for peers to network. In addition to the two peer-networks identified for this study, participants also mentioned mentors, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), state associations, professional speaking groups, family members, staff support, and physical exercise, all as areas where they receive support to mediate job challenges.

The utilization of specification, (what is the same, what is different) assisted this researcher in inductive reasoning. It appeared that the resources cited were used for two
specific processes, as related to the JD-R theory, to either maintain engagement or to heal burn out. This researcher concluded from the text that knowledge transfer was a primary benefit of peer network social support, which was posited to increase or maintain engagement (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). However, it was also determined that external resources of social support appeared to have healing effects. The following table illustrated the two part process:

Table 3
Textual Units of Meaning as Related to JD-R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Unit of Meaning</th>
<th>Textual Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEI-A chance to be with 1000 people who get it</td>
<td>Camaraderie-Healing</td>
<td>It is cathartic, it is energizing, and it is almost like going to a retreat. As mention before for about 10 year I went on a trip with 6 CEOs who had the same position as me around the country...they were leaders in our field and we would spend all our time together talking about the business...the good, the bad the frustrating, the how to do this, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cathartic- Healing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retreat- Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEI-Round table discussions</td>
<td>Knowledge- Engagement</td>
<td>By discussing this topic with others, I obtained helpful information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEI-Best support group I could ever ask for</td>
<td>Knowledge- Engagement</td>
<td>It was always a safe environment to discuss issues, problems, trends, understanding key issues and in general, just a good sounding board for my personal and professional growth. Without that opportunity, I do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Unit of Meaning</td>
<td>Textual Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gained Confidence</td>
<td>Confidence - Engagement</td>
<td>where I would have received the type of knowledge and support that I did get out of it. A professional opportunity for spokesperson training (identifier deleted) to gain confidence to speak in front of a group. Meeting with my peers and discussing issues of importance, assures all of us that we have not missed anything important, so you gain confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Knowledge- Engagement Sounding Board- Prevention</td>
<td>Having a mentor who helped me almost daily for the first 2 years of my tenure, provided an enormous amount of support. Additionally, being invited to participate in a peer (deleted for anonymity) group a few years ago changed my perspective of my position. I came to see that other CEOs have the same experiences, problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Network Support</td>
<td>Knowledge – Engagement Friendship and Emotional Support- Healing</td>
<td>My ability to maintain a network among my peers has given me an extended support system that allows me the opportunity receive both emotional and professional support when issues arise within the association. Because there are never any new issues only issues that have occurred in other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 *continued*
Units of Textual Meaning as Related to JD-R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Network Support</td>
<td>Knowledge – Engagement</td>
<td>associations. I never have to reinvent the wheel and hopefully learn from others’ issues. A side benefit is my professional peers may also become my friends which allows me personal support as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendship and Emotional Support – Healing</td>
<td>Assures all of us that we have not missed anything. They were a sounding board. They helped me process the feelings of betrayal, hurt and anger without judgement. In terms of just how to deal with employees and realtors they offered suggestions. I have had them help me with a difficult performance review-articulating what the issue was with the employee. They were a sounding board and a safe place to vent. They also had so many wonderful ideas for dealing with issues we all faced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have acquired an enormous peer network, both locally and nationally. Since I am an extrovert, I get strength and energy from my network to deal with the challenges of the job. This probably also helps me deal with the loneliness issue in Q4. I believe in sharing and collaborating and build my network with others who feel the same.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 continued
Textual Units of Meaning as Related to JD-R

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<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Unit of Meaning</th>
<th>Textual Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Support</td>
<td>Knowledge – Engagement</td>
<td>I needed reinforcement on my decisions and someone to bounce off ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendship and Emotional Support - Healing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation (family and work support)</td>
<td>Emotional Support-Healing</td>
<td>We allow each other to vent and sometimes offer advice but mostly just allow venting. It helps personally as when I get home and leave the office I am not as worried or frustrated as I was able to share with someone that understands and knows the stress and pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Exercise</td>
<td>Physical Well-being- Healing</td>
<td>As previously stated, I have tremendous support from my wife. We advise each other on various aspects of our professional life and are a good sounding board for each other. Many times home is an island of stability and rationality after a hectic day. I also have a network of Realtors (mainly former presidents) and fellow Executive Officers that I can talk to and get a &quot;reality&quot; check. Many times, they provide an objective 3rd party opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A final outlet for me is swimming 3-4 times per week for 30-40 minutes a session. Not only is it good exercise, but I can think through things if I need to and there is very little outside interference. You don't hear much when your head is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 continued
Textual Units of Meaning as Related to JD-R

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<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Unit of Meaning</th>
<th>Textual Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Exercise</td>
<td>Physical Well-being Healing</td>
<td>underwater! It really is a good stress reliever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I also try to go to the gym and spend time where no members will be...so that I have some private space to myself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Participant identifiers were not used in the table quotes due to potential linkages that could compromise anonymity.*

The table exemplified the dual process integration that was the foundation of JD-R theory. Job resources integrated with job demands could positively affect both engagement and burnout. The themes also pointed to self-efficacy as a potential mediator of executive demands with confidence, validation and even physical strength being cited as coping mechanisms.

In the isolation question, the two respondents with the highest level of isolation (determined by textual analysis) also had reported only one support source: peer support. However, five others also reported only peer support as a resource and did not experience isolation. This led to a re-examination of the data to determine if variables within the construct of social support had a co-occurrence with feelings of isolation. The analysis discovered that there was not a co-occurrence that was relevant to isolation but that the co-occurrence was within the non-isolated group, in that those who were non-isolated also accessed several healing factors identified as social support.
The regrouping of the data is represented in the following cluster graph:

![Comparison of Healing Factors vs Engagement Factors Amongst Self-identified Isolated and Non-Isolated Participants](image)

*Figure 2.* Comparison of healing factors vs. engagement factors amongst self-identified isolated and non-isolated Participants through the occurrence of identified engagement and healing factors. Each occurrence was recorded cumulatively therefore the engagement factor of knowledge transfer was recorded twelve times representing all 12 participants.

These results were not inconsistent with the extant literature. However, the unique needs of each CEO, who does not receive the customary supervisory job social support or workplace collegiate support (Sultan & Rashid, 2015), must be met with either peer interaction or external-to-the-workplace social support. Therefore, the CEO position was determined to be at a greater sensitivity to peer social support and may require additional support mechanisms beyond the information exchange of social exchange theory. These
results also indicated that the inconsistency of JD-R’s integrative buffering effects may be explained if tested along with the presence or absence of other healing factors.

**Peer Support as a Demand Mediator**

The final predetermined category and question of this study’s interview related directly to the experience of peer support as a demand mediator. The participants were asked how they believed the loss of their peer network would affect their job performance and personal well-being. The participants ranged in responses; however, all found a positive correlation between the peer network and their job performance or personal well-being. A word frequency analysis was computed and the most commonly used words were “performance,” “ability,” “mentor,” “gave,” “learn,” “peer,” and “friend”. The concept of knowledge or information transfer within social exchange theory was strong. This was represented repeatedly in the social support question but also reiterated in the narrowed scope of the peer network question. PL related, “AE’s are the same, we need to network with our professionals, learn from, grow, share, etc.”. This sentiment of learning from each other was echoed by PI, “why reinvent the wheel” and PD stated, “It would prevent me from learning about how my peers respond to and think about issues/problems they are dealing with.”

Several respondents argued for how critical a peer network was to the success of the organization. This was represented through the following discourse, “I feel that the network I have built is essential to my job performance” (PB), “it would hurt me and this organization (PD), “would likely make me more cautious and less innovative” (PF), and “I would feel I would wither and my performance would be severely limited” (PH).
As related to personal well-being the follow extractions were chosen to represent the feelings associated with belonging to a peer network or the loss of a belonging to a peer network: “If I did not have one, I would build one” (PB). “I would be personally deflated and probably not very inventive or inspired at my job” (PL), “The job would no longer be fun, my performance would drop and I'd probably become confrontational with my board and get fired” (PJ), “It would not be a comfortable position (PF) and “I would probably look for a new position” (PD). Expressions related to friendships formed and the peer group becoming family were also prevalent and asserted to account for well-being. This insight into the healing and buffering effects of peer networks was described in the following excerpt:

I have acquired an enormous peer-network, both locally and nationally. Since I am an extrovert, I get strength and energy from my network to deal with the challenges of the job. This probably also helps me deal with the loneliness issue in Q4. I believe in sharing and collaborating and build my network with others who feel the same. (PJ)

The results of Question 7 are not inconsistent with current JD-R theory that posited a positive correlation between the job resource of social support and its buffering effects in mediating job demands (Brough, et al., 2013; Goldman, et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) In comparison to this researcher’s a priori experience, the results of Question 7 were consistent with the experience of enhancing job performance and abating isolation. As PH stated, “It is important to have this network as there are not many in the immediate area who do what we do.”

Summary of Findings

The results of this study, and its subsequent analysis, did find a commonality of experience within the nonprofit association executive participating in a peer network. The
central research question: “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” was answered in that the participants accurately described the experience of participation as either increasing engagement or alleviating work stressors.

The research question was then bifurcated into subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands? The perceived experience presented as one of social support, both emotional and informational. Peers were described as friends, family and resources. The second subset question of how and why required considerable extraction from the extensive amount of data collected. The question of how was answered through abstraction; the interaction of various types of social support with various demands had different effects. Not all respondents experienced the same work demands nor did they share the same results when an equal demand was addressed with an equal support between a set of two executives. Therefore, the study did not find an overarching how, but instead found individual experiences that culminated in the essence of JD-R theory. How social support buffers job demands was found in a temporal sense as demands arose there was either a listening ear or an advising mentor. The nonprofit executive in a peer network was not alone at the top, but had access to emotional and informational resources. The shared experiences served as a bonding and trust agent.

As related to why social support has an impact on buffering job demands, the literature was extensive; however, very little was known about work social support within
the context of the CEO position. The results indicated that unlike the majority of work environments where social support is measured by colleague and supervisory interaction the CEO peers filled the role of colleague and supervisor, as offsite or distance work colleagues and mentors.

In order to fully understand the executive and proposed distinctive job demands of a nonprofit CEO, five interview questions were related to the executive demand constructs theorized in the extant literature. Two interview questions were crafted to illicit how social support via a peer-coaching network assisted the CEO in coping with said demands. The findings were consistent that board relationships, staff relationships, member relationships and president-CEO relationships all contributed to the challenge of being a CEO and supported the theme of relationships as a performance challenge within executive demands. Non-relationship issues such as communication (e-mail) and time management were a shared common theme. Generally, the participants cited positive relationships with their boards, staff, members and presidents; however, several recounted difficulties with presidents who were ego-driven. Inadequate skill sets, and poor interpersonal skills, also were described as an issue when working with boards and presidents.

A full one-fourth of the participants felt no need to manage their impressions while the remainder was aware of the need to project a CEO persona within varying degrees. However, fear of being fired, in what was described as a highly politically charged environment, was only verbalized by four participants. The field test and a priori experience also indicated a fear of being terminated without cause. As a field observation, during the course of data collection and analysis four relatively well-known
and long term industry CEOs were terminated (none of which were in this study). The need for anonymity was strong in this study, ergo a correlation cannot be determined if impression management is or is not a relevant demand. One of the twelve participants refused to allow direct quote extractions, an indication that managing one’s impression may be more prevalent than the study revealed.

Only two respondents felt isolation as a burdensome job demand, and although no conclusions can be drawn from such a small sample, a cross-comparison analysis of the textual descriptions indicated that they had the fewest healing social support resources. Finally, the two social support questions did allow for the emerging theme of healing support, as respondents were asked how they believed they received social support from any source. The ending social support question mimicked the sub-questions. A final question, which gave participants the ability to add anything they felt was important to the interview, was used to enhance the research questions and subsequent data; however, no new themes emerged from the question, relevant to the JD-R theory.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The world of the nonprofit association CEO, particularly in the real estate industry, is greatly understudied. In a sweep of the existing literature, this researcher found only one study that related to the real estate industry and its leadership. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to understand the experience of being a nonprofit real estate industry association CEO. The study was guided by an interest in peer-coaching networks and specifically their effects in CEO performance. As a former practitioner in an industry peer-coaching network, this researcher reached to the network often to alleviate job demands and believed it helped her to stay on the job for over a decade. As a result of this experience, this researcher was led to a desire to analyze and understand how and why participating in such a network led to feelings of relief, engagement, excitement, and belonging. The experience assisted in forming the research question, “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?”

This particular chapter is designed to review how this study fits into the greater landscape of what is known about the experiences of nonprofit CEO. This chapter also reviews the process of the research undertaken, reviews the existing literature, synthesizes the data results and discusses its implications. This chapter’s purpose is to tie together the entire process of the research itself and lead to a concise summary of the entire manuscript. The organization of this chapter includes this introduction, a brief
Summary of the study’s results, a discussion of those results, the implications of those results, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research and a summation of this dissertation.

**Summary of Results**

The research problem was developed from the management problem of CEO retention. The initial problem was described as a need for nonprofit CEOs in the American landscape and the troublesome effects of CEO turnover and burnout. The initial research indicated that the job resources could mediate job demands. An argument was made, utilizing current research that executive demands are unique and as a consequence may not be affected by job resources, specifically social support. The Job Demands-Resource (JDR) theory states that any job resource applied to any job demand would result in a buffering effect, either reducing job stress or increasing job engagement.

The research problem included a lack of testing of the JD-R model in the United States and with CEOs in particular. As the research moved forward with testing social support as a job resource, the research studies remained inconclusive and inconsistent. A particular problem was that the majority of JD-R studies in the current body of literature were quantitative in nature. This problem led this researcher to question if perhaps the researchers were measuring the wrong things. Through a qualitative study, variables could be formed organically from the experiences of the CEO. Thus, the research question was formed with the intent of understanding the CEO experience within the context of the JD-R model. The final research question was formed as, “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching
network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” The question was then supported by two subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands?

As the research problem and question are complex so is this significance of this study. The potential significance is to expand the body of knowledge in several areas. There is a general lack of knowledge of executive demands (Hambrick et al., 2005a; Hambrick et al., 2005b; Hambrick, 2007). This study took an in depth look at the demands of the nonprofit executive, and attempted to synthesize them within existing theories of upper echelons and impression management, as well as a phenomenon occurring in the practitioner literature, CEO isolation. In addition, as stated earlier there is a limited body of researcher related to nonprofit executives and specifically those in the real estate industry. It is posited that the real estate industry associations have a unique leadership dynamic (annual officer turnover and continuous board of director turnover) that was explored in the study.

The JD-R theory has been tested almost exclusively in Europe and by a relatively small group of seminal researchers. New research in the theory may assist in establishing greater credibility, validity and reliability. The majority of the research in JD-R theory has been quantitative. A qualitative study may provide new insights into the theory and assist in reliability of future quantitative studies. Finally, the JD-R theory is heuristic in nature, posited to apply to all occupational segments. This study adds to the body of
knowledge by adding an occupational segment previously unstudied within the context of
JD-R thereby adding to the body of knowledge.

The literature review for this study was extensive. The review included a
summation of competing theories of JD-C, JDCS, and ERI as well as a review of the
theories behind the constructs of the research question: executive demands, impression
management, CEO isolation and social exchange. As related to JD-R, first a historical
view of the evolution of the model was presented followed by a review of the current
state of the model.

To recapitulate JD-R’s premise, it is a parsimonious model that posits that job
demands when met with job resources will have a buffering effect through a two way
process. If high demands are met with high resources the integration of the two will result
in either an increase in job engagement or a decrease in job burnout. As the theory has
evolved due to growing research, the theory has become less parsimonious. Several new
concept have been introduced, which include the concepts of job challenges and job
hindrances (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). The Van den Broeck et al. research team
posited that social support assisted in buffering demands that hindered CEO performance.
Bakker et al. (2014) in recent research postulated that the fluctuations in demands and
resources may result in different impacts of social support, a temporal influenced
interaction. The concept of personal resources and their effects were also covered in the
literature review wherein Bakker et al posited that personal characteristics such as self-
efficacy may affect research result. Kar and Suar (2014) also added environment as a
moderating variable in JD-R positing that highly politically charged environments may
affect the integrative effects of JD-R.
Utilizing the Capella library’s summon feature this researcher did a scan of the literature on JD-R to determine if additional studies had been conducted since the writing of the literature review. The sweep of the literature (over 100 articles were found) found five new articles relevant to this study since the literature review was complete. Two of the articles examined personal resources that also came forward from this study. One article found that if an employee was encouraged to use personal strengths on the job (CEOs have considerable autonomy to leverage their strengths) there was a positive correlation in increasing work engagement and decreasing burnout in job challenges but not in mediating job hindrances (van Woerkom, Bakker, & Nishii, 2015).

As stated earlier, not all nonprofit association executives have a contract. In addition, participants related the job insecurity inherent in the position and specifically contracts were mentioned in the transcripts. Van den Tooren and de Jong (2014) conducted a study specifically testing contract types as a job resource. Their quantitative study found a correlation between job insecurity and time pressure as work demands; however, they did not find a correlation between social support and the buffering of these two demands. The fifth study found that instrumental support (tangible help such as physical equipment, performance bonuses, or contracts) was positively correlated to buffering work demands (Asiwe, Hill, & Jorgensen, 2015). The concept of social support as a three part process of emotional, informational and instrumental support within JD-R studies (Hansung & Stoner, 2008) was not addressed in this researcher’s study.

The methodology used in this study was that of generic qualitative inquiry from the perspective of interpretivism. An interpretivistic approach is based on the concept that the truth, or reality, is formed through the social exchange of meaning and dialogue
(Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). A qualitative research approach was appropriate as it presumed that truth is mediated between researcher and participants’ multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007). This approach does not follow a particular ontology or epistemology rather it borrows from the five traditions of qualitative research to bring greater understanding of the particular topic. This approach is recommended when the researcher has a priori knowledge of the phenomenon to be studied and has existing themes as the basis for analysis (Caelli et al., 2003). This researcher did blend several research methods specifically using phenomenological and case study techniques in the research plan and in the distillations of data.

The study consisted of a purposive sample of 12 nonprofit association CEOs who participated in one of two peer networks (or both). The participants were equally divided by gender; within the male segment 50% were local association executives, all the females were local association executives. The average years of service as an association executive for males was 24 years; the average for females was 17 years. A set of eight semi-structured questions were developed to operationalize the theoretical constructs. The data was gathered via computer-mediated conversation through questions delivered by Formstack software and follow-up e-mails. This type of interviewing in qualitative research is a relatively new method, but not untested, and recommended for use when it is the primary form of communication for the participants. As noted in both the results and in the research (Bain & Company, 2014; Forbes, 2009; Ramsey & Renaud, 2012) e-mail is a primary communication method amongst the study participants. Salmons (2009) recommended using the communication channel most used by the sample; CMC may
also be used when interviewing a highly functioning (Benford & Standen, 2011) or vulnerable population (Meho, 2006; Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014).

The method used for analysis followed type of inquiry was highly appropriate as it followed the framework of Caelli et al (2003) that consists of four factors: (a) a declarative statement of the researcher’s position (b) that methods and methodology are aligned (c) the methods used to ensure rigor are described and (d) a clear description and explanation of the personal analytic lens (p. 19). For the analysis of the textual data the VSAIEEDC method of “variation, specification, abstraction, internal verification, external verification, demonstration and conclusion” (Persson, 2006, p. 38) was used. This model is similar to phenomenological methods; a fundamental difference is that the analysis requires a corroboration back to existing theories and the central theoretical framework (Persson, 2006).

The answer to the question, “What is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” was answered. The participants in this study spoke openly and eloquently about their jobs and their peer networks. The answer, in a concise distillation, is that executive demands range from time pressures, relationship management (both managing impressions and intermittent isolation), continuously educating their leadership, long hours, an extreme variation in day to day of skills and requirements, and that those demands are often buffered by participation in a peer network. Although participating in a peer network did not impact the time pressures, long days, or lack of job security it did
provide an opportunity to vent about these job hindrances and job challenges leading to the assumption that there was at least temporary relief as related to burnout symptoms.

The findings also included that peer network participation was a catalyst to self-reported positive job performance, self-efficacy, confidence and innovation. The peer network served as both an emotional and informational resource that led to heightened engagement and job satisfaction. The participation in a peer network was described as cathartic, energizing, motivating, and likened to a retreat experience. As the semi-structured interview questions sought to elicit descriptions of executive demands and subsequent relief from those demands through social support, other support mechanisms came into play such as participation in other networks, support from mentors, family, friends, leadership and physical activity.

The findings indicated that not all CEOs experience the job hindrance of isolation and impression management; however, the job hindrance of time and e-mail management was consistent throughout. In addition 80% described member interaction as a primary demand, referred to as either a hindrance or a challenge. The job hindrance of working with less than skilled leadership was also described as a job challenge (challenges have been found to lead to engagement not burnout in the existing literature) wherein the working relationship with leadership was found to be positive throughout the participants. The four most common issues when working with volunteer leadership were found to be time boundary violations (leadership did not respect the off-time of the salaried employee), internally created pressure, micromanagement, and a feeling of job insecurity. Thusly, it can be concluded that the relationship between volunteer leadership (the board and its officers) is a critical component to CEO engagement and burn out. While the job
resources of peer-support networks may mediate internal issues (executive aspirations) of
internally created pressure to perform and job insecurity, through knowledge transfer,
they do not address the deficiencies of volunteer leadership. When asked if the board of
directors had an accountability to the CEO seven themes came to the forefront: respect
for CEO work time and personal time, awareness of the CEO stress, an onboarding
process for new CEOS, clear strategic direction, participation in leadership training
and/or a responsibility to self-educate.

A finding was that not all CEOs experienced feelings of isolation but of those
who described it vividly only two did not relate multiple areas of social support. The
findings also included that the application of social support had several outcomes. These
outcomes were distilled into two categories healing factors (emotional support) and
engagement factors (informational support). The findings were that all the participants
received job knowledge (informational support) from their peer network. 58% of the
respondents discussed social support outside of the peer network. Those areas of external
social support were distilled into four categories as a result of the textual analysis with
the following results: 42% cited increases in self-confidence from outside sources, 30%
credited validation from family, friends or leadership, 15% received social support from
mentors and 15% experienced a healing effect from physical exercise. These findings
combined answered the question of how and why participation in a peer network, as a
form of social support, buffered executive job demands.

Discussion of the Results

The interpretation of these results is presented with an interpretivist perspective:
that the truth or reality of the results is created by this researcher’s interaction with them.
At the onset of the study it was disclosed that this researcher was a current or former member of each of the two groups selected for the study. Ethical considerations were thoroughly reviewed and discussed at the onset of the study. This researcher set aside her own assumptions when analyzing the data, but the assumptions created the research subset questions. In additions, as a part of the VSAIEEDC analysis process, holding the data up to one’s own experiences fulfills the required step of internal verification and triangulation.

The central research question, “what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” was formed from this researcher’s experience as a nonprofit real estate industry CEO who had participated in two peer networks. The personal observation, and self-reflection of the experience, led to a belief that peer networks offered more than just job knowledge to mediate demands, but served as emotional support. Many times when this researcher was experiencing the symptoms of burnout and felt she could not continue in her executive role, she reached out to her peers and peer networks. Participating in the peer network not only mediated the symptoms of burnout but also and often resulted in feeling extremely engaged with the profession and the job role. This researcher questioned if her own experience was unique and through initially researching the practitioner literature found that it was not. This researcher found in reviewing the literature that her experience of job demands was supported by the academic research and that an existing theory, JD-R, explained the fluctuating effects of interaction with the network.
As part of the analysis process, this researcher could not let her own assumptions color the analysis (only triangulate findings) or steer the respondents. In this discussion of results, this researcher has unbracketed her experience and thoughts held in epoché and allowed them to interact with the data. The findings in the study do answer, in part, the management problem of CEO burnout through revealing, clarifying, and operationalizing the intense demands that the CEO faces. In offering a peer support network job resource boards can provide a buffering mechanism to address CEO burnout. However, not every possible cause of CEO burnout was addressed in this study. The nonprofit executive job demands are not just widely varying requiring the CEO to be skilled in advocacy, human resource management, board relations, financial analysis, strategic visioning, professional publishable writing, technological tools and board relations but they are excessive. One respondent indicated that Monday through Friday (gender deleted) consistently worked twelve hours per day in order to preserve weekend free time for family. The demands weren’t just excessive in terms of time, although that was described frequently throughout the interviews, but in expectations of the leadership. Narratives varied but were inclusive of late night e-mails, texts, and conversations with leadership, leadership expecting that all work be halted when they had a need, consistent member interruptions, leadership micromanaging to the point of hindering the ability to do the job, leadership interfering with the CEO staff relationship and a continuous need for the CEO to be constantly training and educating a rotating board of directors and officers. The results indicated that leadership expectations and behaviors play an important role in creating executive demands. Yet, when asked for a description of the relationship with the members, board of directors, and presidents the participants consistently reported that
they enjoyed their jobs and those relationships. They found these challenges to be what kept them engaged and satisfied. This inconsistency, the research problem distilled, was hypothesized to be answered through JD-R theory.

JD-R theory is heuristic in that it is postulated to be applicable to all job demands, all job resources and all occupational segments. However, it is not simplistic. One cannot simply apply X resource to X demand with a result of engagement or burnout prevention because as the theory states, and is represented in this study’s conceptual framework, there is an interactive and synergistic effect to the application of resources to demands. It is within this intersection of demands and resources that outcomes of burnout or engagement will occur.

This study attempted to answer the research question and its two subset questions “what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?” and (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands? The concept of executive demands was illuminated through the application of impression management and CEO isolation theories while job resources were operationalized through the peer network as social support (social exchange theory).

The findings indicated that in relation to JD-R theory there did appear to be an interactive buffering effect against job demands when a social support intervention existed. This study also suggested a positive correlation to executive demands theory that posited that executive demands are qualitatively different than demands in the overall
work sector (Hambrick, 2007). Social support was theorized to be effective as a job 
resource in JD-R (Brough, et al., 2013; Goldman, et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) 
and this study did corroborate the correlation through a qualitative measure. 

An issue with the existing JD-R research is that it is primarily quantitative and 
results are still, as of 2015 research, inconsistent and inconclusive. This issue was 
brought to light by Bakker et al. (2003) whose mixed method study based its 
operationalization of job demands through a qualitative research study. The resource 
intervention in this 2003 study was social support. Bakker et al. credited the redefined 
definitions/descriptions of the loading factors of job demands and job resources for the 
positive study results and suggested further qualitative research to increase reliability in 
quantitative JD-R studies. Recently, Daniels et al. (2013) found through qualitative 
research that the use of social support had several different effects when combined with 
other job resources and posited that quantitative research neglects the social process of 
JD-R, focusing only on results. The findings indicate that the intervention of a peer 
network social support resource did have different outcomes when combined with other 
support resources and illuminated the psychological process underpinning the results. 

An expectation of this qualitative inquiry was that CEOs would report impression 
management and isolation as job demands. This assumption was not wholly supported by 
the findings. The interpretation of the results could be made stronger if the researcher 
could ensure impression management strategies were not in play during the actual data 
collection process. In other words, were the CEOs managing their impressions with this 
researcher? One participant in particular had absolutely nothing negative to state about 
any aspect of the position or the interaction with staff and leadership that could be
interpreted as a strategy to preserve the impression of high competence. This could also be a result of a flaw in the research design; this participant may have answered differently in a focus group wherein feelings may be validated by others.

Although CEO isolation did not return anticipated results of experiencing isolation, meaning the participants did not feel particularly isolated, this researcher has felt generally isolated in her 11 years as a CEO. A search of the Academic Search Premier database with the terms “lonely at the top” returned 779 results. Of the first 30, 20 had the words “Lonely at the Top” in their title; however, most were periodicals. The results indicated that those participants who had numerous healing factors (not directly related to the job resources) such as self-efficacy, validation, and physical exercise routines appeared to experience isolation to a much lesser degree. This is not inconsistent with recent literature in JD-R that has asserted that personal resources may play a significant role in the buffering effects of JD-R, which may contribute to the inconsistent results when the theory has been tested (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti, et al., 2001; Hamsung & Stoner, 2008; Van den Broeck et al., 2010; van den Tooren & de Jong, 2014; van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2015).

Overall the findings do support JD-R theory, as well as executive demands and social exchange theories. This researcher’s personal experiences, member checking, and the textual data all support a much more complicated effect of job resource intervention as described in JD-R theory. The effect of peer network support was eloquently and sometimes poignantly expressed by the participants. The research question, “what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive
job demands, in the United States?” was answered with rich and detailed descriptions of the peer network participants.

The textual analysis reported gave an insider’s look at a private group of a very private occupational segment, the real estate industry nonprofit CEO. The findings do appear to indicate a strong correlation between job engagement and participation in a peer network. This study was not without its flaws. Although this researcher believes she elicited rich textural descriptions of the CEO experience, computer-mediated communication is relatively new in the field of qualitative research. The semi-structured interview questions, as customary with the role of researcher as instrument may have been flawed as they were based upon a priori knowledge and the concepts of an established theory. A limitation of this study was the small sample group and a group specific to a niche industry. Delimitations were identified in that peer networks were not researched and the instrumental facet of social support (tangibles such as contracts, pay, car allowances, as well as others) was not addressed. An additional delimitation that was identified from the analysis was that theory on board of director performance was not addressed.

**Implications of the Study Results**

The outcome of this study corroborated the conceptual application of JD-R theory. The study results were conclusive that peer-coaching networks through their delivery of social support were effective in mediating the effects of job demands. The study also supported the JD-R interactive theory and its two part process of engagement and burnout in that participants both expressed mediated burnout through *venting* and other effects such as friendship and knowledge transfer and a sense of motivation an
energy through participation in the network. The study results also corroborated recent JD-R literature that bifurcated demands into challenges and hindrances (Van den Broeck, et al., 2010) and included personal resources as moderating variable (Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti, et al., 2001; Hamsung & Stoner, 2008; Van den Broeck et al., 2010; van den Tooren & de Jong, 2014; van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2015).

In the wider field of business and technology, this study relates some very practical implications in job design. In terms of CEO retention, the study appeared to indicate several effective strategies such as onboarding, mentoring, and board of director training; most vividly the study indicates a strategy of ensuring a peer-coaching network is in place for the organization’s CEO. In the Bakker et al. (2014) and Munyon, et al (2010) studies there was support for the assumption that CEO job design included access to personal resources and this inclusion was critical to an organization’s success. The study implied that CEOs may not always seek social support and personal resources on their own and indicated that a board of directors may also be accountable for ensuring adequate emotional, instrumental and informational resources.

As related to the management problem of CEO burnout and the increasing market need for nonprofit CEOs the study is clear that JD-R theory is applicable and that social support offers at least some assurance of burnout prevention. As to CEO retention in the nonprofit world the study implies that volunteer boards of directors have a responsibility to the CEO in not only ensuring adequate resources but to seek education in business management and association practices, or at the very least be open to leadership training. The practitioner and academic literature regarding executive demands is clear that the demands are unique and as such tried and true strategies may not be effective. Future
nonprofit leadership may benefit from learning the demands of the CEO before entering
the CEO-board relationship.

Limitations

This study had limitations, which may have impacted the outcomes of the research. The design of the study could be considered flawed in that the researcher only had contact with the participants through field observation and computer-mediated communication (CMC). However, this research design was purposeful to abate impression management as the academic literature supported the design in that CMC allowed for a greater level of self-disclosure (Benford & Standen, 2011; Cook, 2012; Davis; Mason & Ide, 2014; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Meho, 2006; Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014; Xu & Storr, 2012). The design did start with preconceived themes, which may have omitted pertinent constructs; however, themes did emerge outside of the predefined constructs through the inclusion of questions related to other areas of support and a question that allowed the participants to include anything they felt was relevant but that was not touched upon by the interview questions.

This researcher found that data saturation was achieved very quickly, perhaps because of the industry specific sample. However, with such a small group the results are not generalizable. While the niche within in a niche, real estate industry nonprofits within the nonprofit sector, was a limitation in terms of generalizable results, qualitative in nature therefore not transferable, it did support the call for qualitative research of JD-R and the call for industry specific segments to be tested in JD-R. The use of the VSAIEEDC model specifically was a strategy to address transferability in that it requires the use of pre-existing themes. Persson (2006) stated that this practice assisted in
transferability and triangulation as the use of existing themes could be duplicated within qualitative research. Also inter-reliability was increased through the use of preconceived themes as it was likely that separate coders of the raw data would achieve similar results.

The delimitations of this study were primarily in reference to the design. The research was not inclusive of all forms of social support, job resources, job demands or peer networks, peer mentoring, peer coaching and executive coaching. The peer-coaching network was only utilized as a vehicle for social support delivery and the phenomenon of a peer network was not researched or studied. The secondary delimitation came to light from the data analysis; this researcher presented only the CEO perspective of the CEO-President and CEO-Board relationships. Had the study included leadership the study results may have been very different as the other side of the relationship may have been explored in greater detail.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study sought to explore, describe and relate the experiences of participation in a peer-coaching network by real estate industry nonprofit association CEOs as a buffer of job demands within the context of the JD-R model. This qualitative inquiry was one of only two that this researcher is aware exists in the current academic literature of JD-R. In the Bakker et al. (2003) mixed methods study the need for qualitative research was emphasized as it caused a redefinition of job demands that resulted in a much stronger correlation between demands and the buffering effect of resources. In short, Bakker et al. discovered they had a reliability issue; simplistically, they were measuring the wrong things. In this study’s findings it was discovered that, in terms of the construct of isolation, peer network social support may have been more effective if coupled with
personal resources or other external support. It is suggested that isolation buffers illuminated qualitatively be now tested quantitatively in a structural equation model. Which of these extra factors (validation, self-confidence, mentoring, and physical exercise) had the most impact and how did they interact with each other are questions that remain unanswered.

It is recommended that more qualitative research be conducted within the context of the JD-R model and with more occupational subjects and more social support resources. This study did not research instrumental resources within social support such as contracts, pay, or employee benefits. It is unknown if instrumental social support has an impact on nonprofit CEO well-being similar to that which was discovered in this research study. Specifically further research is needed to determine if the experiences of the real estate industry nonprofit CEO are similar to other industry trade association CEOs. An interesting concept revealed during data analysis was the process of onboarding a new CEO and how that resource may significantly impact the retention and success of a nonprofit CEO.

This researcher found the use of the VSAIEEDC model to be extremely useful in creating the research plan and guiding the qualitative analysis. This method is highly similar to phenomenological methods with the exception that the analysis is held up to the epoché in a reiterative fashion as one goes through the data. It is recommended that further research be conducted as to the effectiveness of this method and that future researchers may want to utilize the model when dealing with pre-existing themes or conducting a generic qualitative inquiry, which has no established analysis methods and instead *borrows* from phenomenology, ethnography and case study methods.
The issue of CMC was an area of research design wherein this researcher conducted months of ongoing research. This method did bear out existing literature that rich, thick, detailed descriptions were returned when used as a qualitative inquiry method. However, Internet and computer mediated discourse is a relatively new undertaking and therefore it is recommended that research in this vein of qualitative inquiry be continued. Specifically within the CEO segment, wherein CEOs defined themselves as multi-taskers, the method may be more effective as CEOs in a telephone interview, hidden from view, may be attending to other tasks at hand during the interview (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). A recommendation for future research is to utilize the McCoyd and Kerson model of phone and e-mail interview comparison within the same study and same pool of participants (in the McCoyd & Kerson study participants chose e-mail or phone) within the CEO population and evaluate the depth of information from the two source channels. Although there is substantial evidence of the effectiveness of CMC in qualitative research, and this researcher had a priori knowledge of the writing skills of this segment and the need for anonymity, most research is recent and its use with this occupational segment is understudied.

Conclusion

This dissertation was driven by the personal experience of participating in a peer-coaching network for nonprofit CEOs. The phenomenon of job resources as a buffer against job demands was proposed in the parsimonious JD-R model. The call for research within JD-R theory, which was to test JD-R in different occupational segments, specifically nonprofit CEOs assisted this researcher in defining the research question. The research question is what is the experience of participating in a nonprofit real estate
association CEO peer-coaching network as an executive job resource of social support, as related to buffering executive job demands, in the United States?

The question was then expanded to include two subset questions: (a) what is the perceived experience of the peer-coaching network amongst CEOs and (b) how and why does the intervention of social support, via a peer network, mediate CEO job demands? This study answered those questions by providing a rich descriptive picture of the CEO experience as provided through the CEOs narrative. The study expanded executive demands theory by offering a textual operationalization of the actual experience of executive demands. The study also answered the research question in that peer network participation did help the participants in navigating the knowledge demands of the CEO job but generally the interactive effects of social support in this study were found to be engagement. The JD-R theory was supported by this study’s results. JD-R theory posits that any job resource applied to any job demand will create an integrative effect of enhanced engagement or burnout mitigation. Yet, the constructs of impression management and isolation were not significantly correlated to peer-networking social support but may be impacted by another resource. It appeared that a mixture of social support resources were more likely to mediate the burnout created by impression management and isolation. A significant contribution to the body of knowledge, as related to JD-R theory, was the finding that job resources did mediate job demands within the United States western culture and amongst a significant (in terms of organizational performance) occupational segment.

This study was undertaken from a deep personal perspective of a former real estate industry nonprofit executive. I found that I had experienced almost all of the
demands revealed through the discourse. This researcher believed that the peer support network mediated her own burnout through providing career guidance and knowledge transfer as well as addressing the issues of impression management and CEO isolation. During the course of this dissertation I opted to remove myself as a peer. I am no longer an executive in the industry. This allowed me to complete the analysis from a distanced perspective and to ensure my own biases were not affecting the study negatively. A significant take-away from this study is that peer support coaching networks were attributed as a factor to nonprofit CEO success and organizational performance. Volunteer leadership of nonprofit real estate associations may want to consider peer networks in their CEO job design and professional development budgets. The participants credited the networks for knowledge transfer and their own success in the industry. Another significant take-away from this study was the CEO-board relationship. It is suggested that boards may want to define a set of guidelines for leadership expectations and behaviors. This dissertation was written from the perspective of shedding light on the CEO experience and in hopes of fostering additional research on executive demands and executive job design.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Participant Interview Guide

Thank you for participating in this study. This guide is intended to help you in formulating descriptive answers to the research questions.

Question 1: In answering question 1 please do not limit yourself to what you believe others might not consider a demand. If anything about work causes you stress- it is a demand; no matter how small. Please describe not just the demand itself (although a very thorough description of the demand is necessary) but please describe in detail how this demand makes you feel? How does it affect your overall work performance? How does it change your mood? Does it change how you react to others? Are there any physical manifestations of this demand such as nausea, headaches, poor sleep or loss of sleep, overeating or weight loss, the desire to use alcohol or tobacco? Is this demand externally created (by others) and if so is it one specific person? Please don’t identify by name but by position.

In answering question 1, what demands do you put upon yourself? Why do you put this level of pressure on yourself? Please describe how this pressure makes you feel and the origin of this demand. For example, I tend to work best under pressure and will often create a pressure situation, by putting things off, in order to get projects complete.

Please write as freely as you can, describing as many demands as you can or are willing to.

Question 2: In describing your relationship with the volunteer president consider all you have served under and how the different personalities affected your role and performance as CEO.

Question 3: In answering question 3, please describe how you manage to carve out time for family and community if at all? Please describe what you believe to be your relationship with your senior staff and your board of directors. Have you ever confided in an employee about another employee? How did that feel? Were there any repercussions? Describe the feelings of loneliness, if any, that come with the position. Have you ever felt that the board has withheld important information from you? What made you feel that and how did it feel? Have you ever been betrayed by an employee? What happened and how did that make you feel? How did you react to the betrayal (did you penalize or terminate the employee)? Do you feel you can trust your employees? Do you feel you can trust your board of directors? If you have not experienced CEO isolation can you describe how you avoid the status separation that typically occurs between bosses and subordinates? Please describe your life as a CEO in terms of playing that role in the public. Guiding questions to ask yourself are 1) Do you feel as if you must be “THE CEO” in every work situation? 2) Do you ever let your guard down in public? 3) Do every worry about what people are thinking about you? 4) Do you turn down social opportunities in order to maintain your status? 5) Do you socialize with your board of directors? Describe those situations. 6) When at conferences or meetings do you feel your personal time is invaded by your leadership? 7) Do you feel relaxed or stressed when out after hours with your leadership or your
employees? 8) Have you ever formed friendships with your employees- if so please describe that relationship in detail.

Question 4: Please describe any avenue that you use for professional support or emotional support in dealing with feelings of isolation. How does accessing that support make you feel? Do you ever come back from a conference feeling energized and motivated? What was the result of that? Do you do anything to take care of yourself physically to help you deal with job stress? If so how does it make you feel? In terms of emotional and professional support, does your board do anything to help you achieve balance and how does that make you feel? Is there anything you wish your board would provide as a resource to help you achieve balance and what do you feel/believe would be the impact of that resource.

Question 5: In answering question 5, think about how you feel when external or internal demands are overwhelming. Would you describe one of your challenges as being overwhelmed with information about your industry and how does a peer network either help or hinder the feeling of information overload? What strategies have you developed? Does peer support play a role in those strategies? What is different about interacting with peers versus interacting with friends, family, employees and volunteer leadership?

Question 6: Explain what you believe would be the ideal venues of support from your Board of Directors. Explain why you feel that way. Explain what you believe the board should be accountable for in ensuring you have job resources to deal with the job demands. For example, paying for a peer support network, ensuring you have access to a health club, employee assistance program, and ensuring you have access to AEI.

Question 7: What is it about this type of peer network that piqued your interest in the first place? Why do you continue to voluntarily pay dues and pay for the sessions? Can you describe any practical benefits of peer networks in terms of performance metrics, sociability and learning systems? How do you deal with essentially meeting with your competitors? If you have left the group, why did you leave? Explain what could have changed your mind about leaving.

Question 8: If there is something that the questions have not covered that you believe is important to this study please feel free to add it describing not only the concept but how it makes you feel.