

# Effective Practices and Challenges in Succession Planning in Health Sciences Education through Academic Leaders' Perspectives

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IUPUI Assessment Institute 2023

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12:30–1:30 p.m.

# **Speaker Information**

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# Acknowledgement

*I would like to acknowledge the guidance and mentorship of Drs. Crystal Green Brown, PhD, Larry Gay Reagan, EdD, and Daniel Zimmerman, DM. All contributed greatly to this work on succession planning and have provided me with strong support in exploring this exciting area within higher education leadership.*

# Significance of the Research

- Building on guiding models
- Performance review & evaluation
- Strategies to approach succession planning across diverse roles within organizations





# Purpose Statement

- Adding to the working knowledge on:
  - Hiring talent into the organization
  - Communicating role expectations and responsibilities
  - Identifying talent
  - Developing employees to work beyond their immediate roles through delegation, and
  - Leading the organization's sustainability

# Research Questions

- *What successful practices do academic leaders use to build internal talent and develop and retain employees in roles that will benefit the organization's sustainability?*
- *What challenges do academic leaders encounter when they seek to build internal talent and develop and retain employees in roles that will benefit the organization's sustainability?*





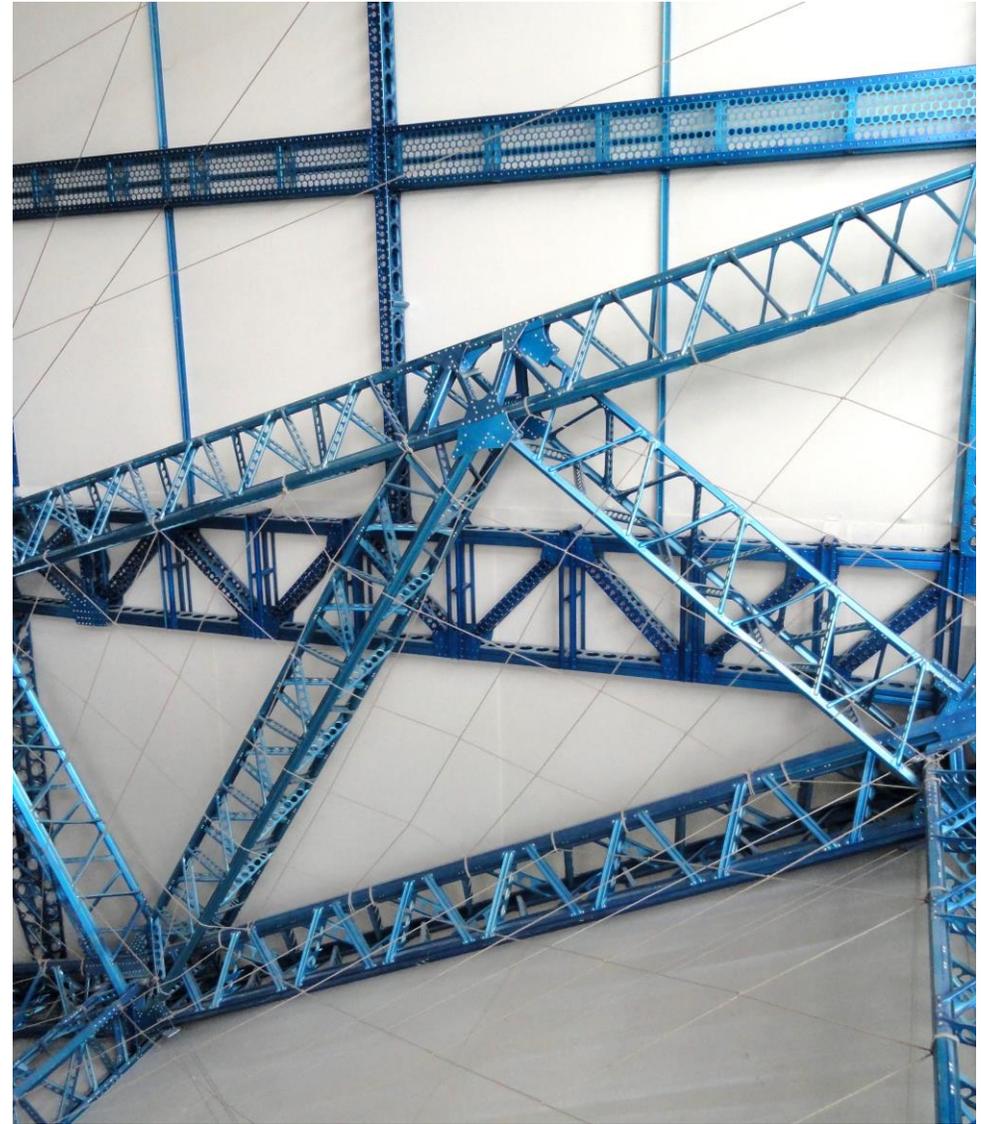
# Literature Review

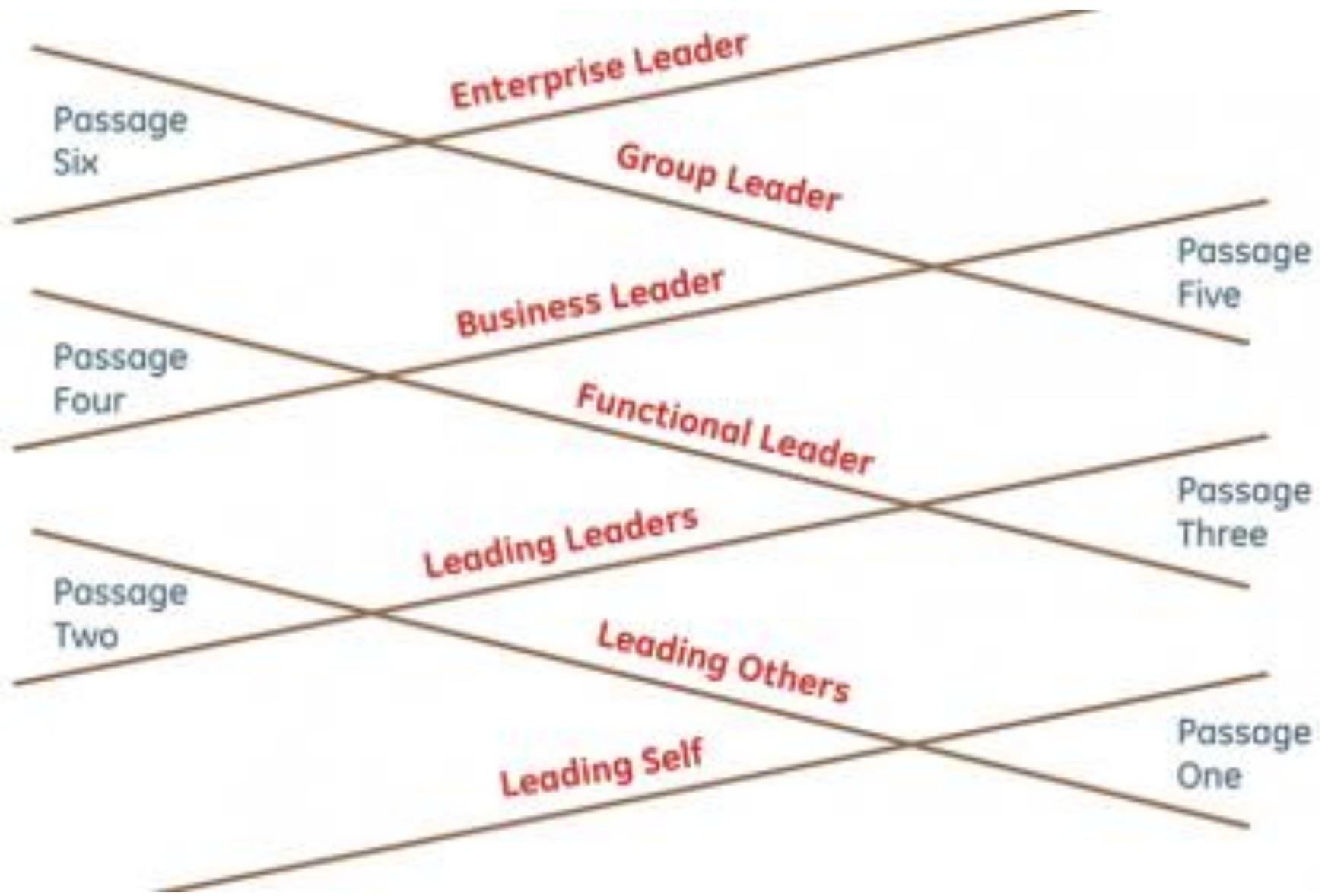
- In healthcare education, succession planning promotes sustainability
- Professions (medicine, pharmacy, nursing) have studied succession planning in academic settings
- Academic presidents, provosts, deans, associate deans, department chairs, and directors, etc. work to integrate succession planning

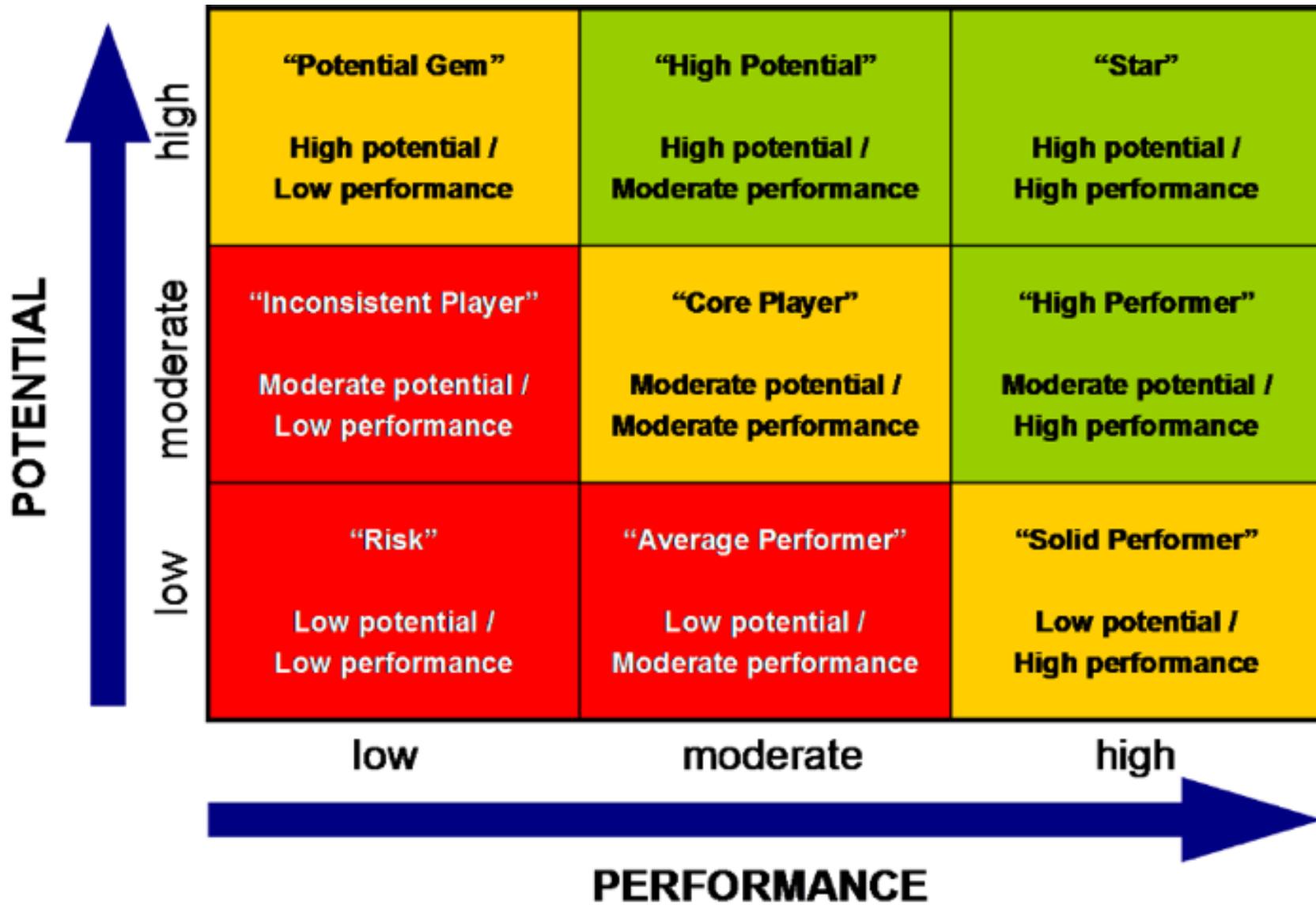
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# Literature Review

- Gaps in succession planning continue to exist.
- This study combined two main general models









# Method

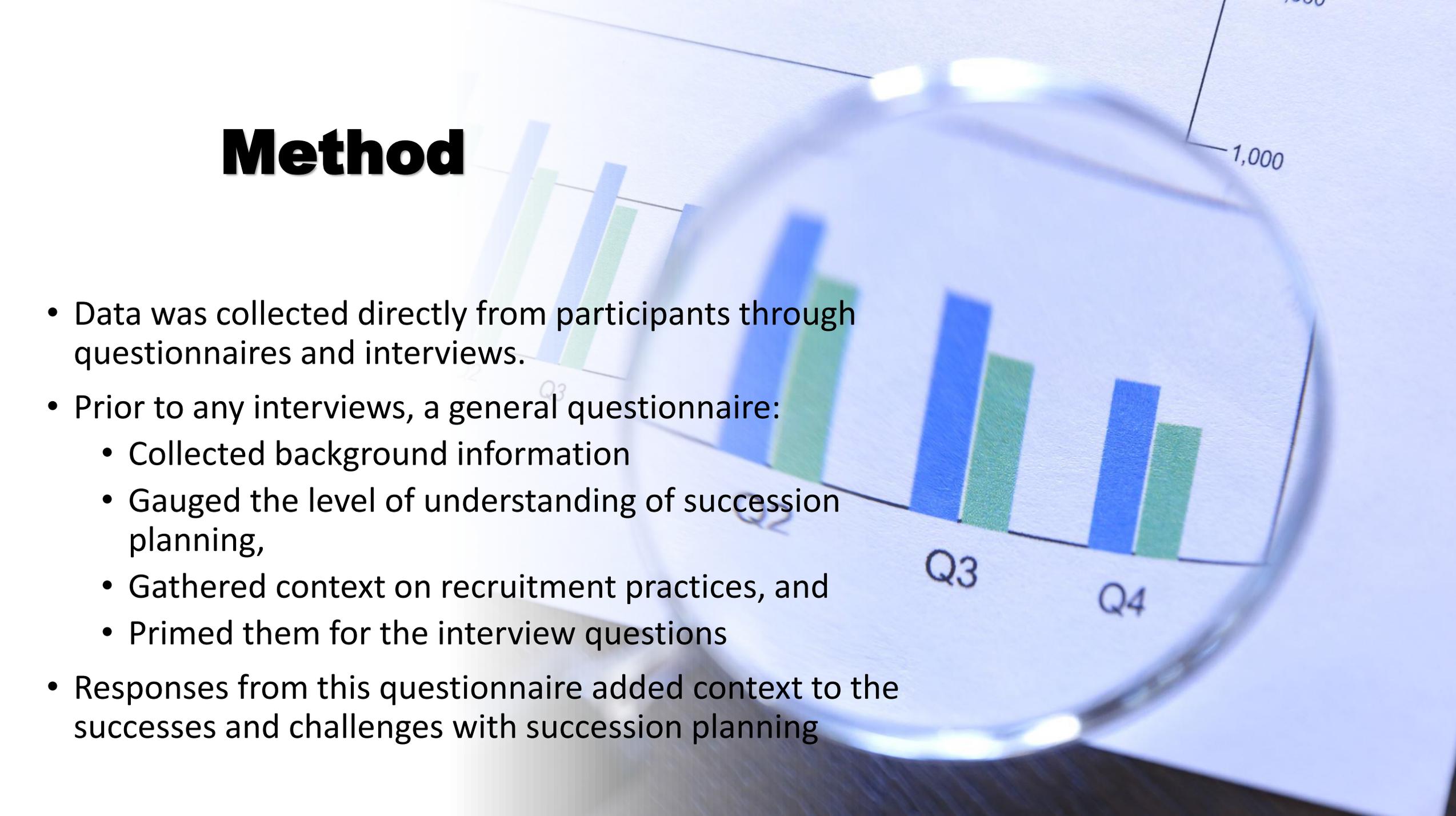
- The qualitative case study approach
- The multiple case study approach helped study this contemporary phenomenon
- Easier to gather information for depth and context
- Applied an interview process



## **Method**

- The study sample included academic leaders in supervisory roles, and involved in leading recruitment or hiring
- 10 academic deans and administrators were invited to supply up to five names meeting the criteria at their institution
- One individual per organization was selected to participate, aligning with the multiple case study approach sample size of 3-10 participants or cases

# Method



- Data was collected directly from participants through questionnaires and interviews.
- Prior to any interviews, a general questionnaire:
  - Collected background information
  - Gauged the level of understanding of succession planning,
  - Gathered context on recruitment practices, and
  - Primed them for the interview questions
- Responses from this questionnaire added context to the successes and challenges with succession planning

# Method

- Received IRB approval
- Documents describing the study were shared with the appropriate consent forms
- Participants received items for a brief questionnaire through SurveyMonkey.





# Method

- Open-ended interview questions
- Identify areas of convergence and divergence
- A post-interview session followed
- Data collected was analyzed using Quirkos
- Themes were connected to the two research questions

### **Dissertation Phase 1: Pre-Interview Questionnaire (expected time: 30 minutes)**

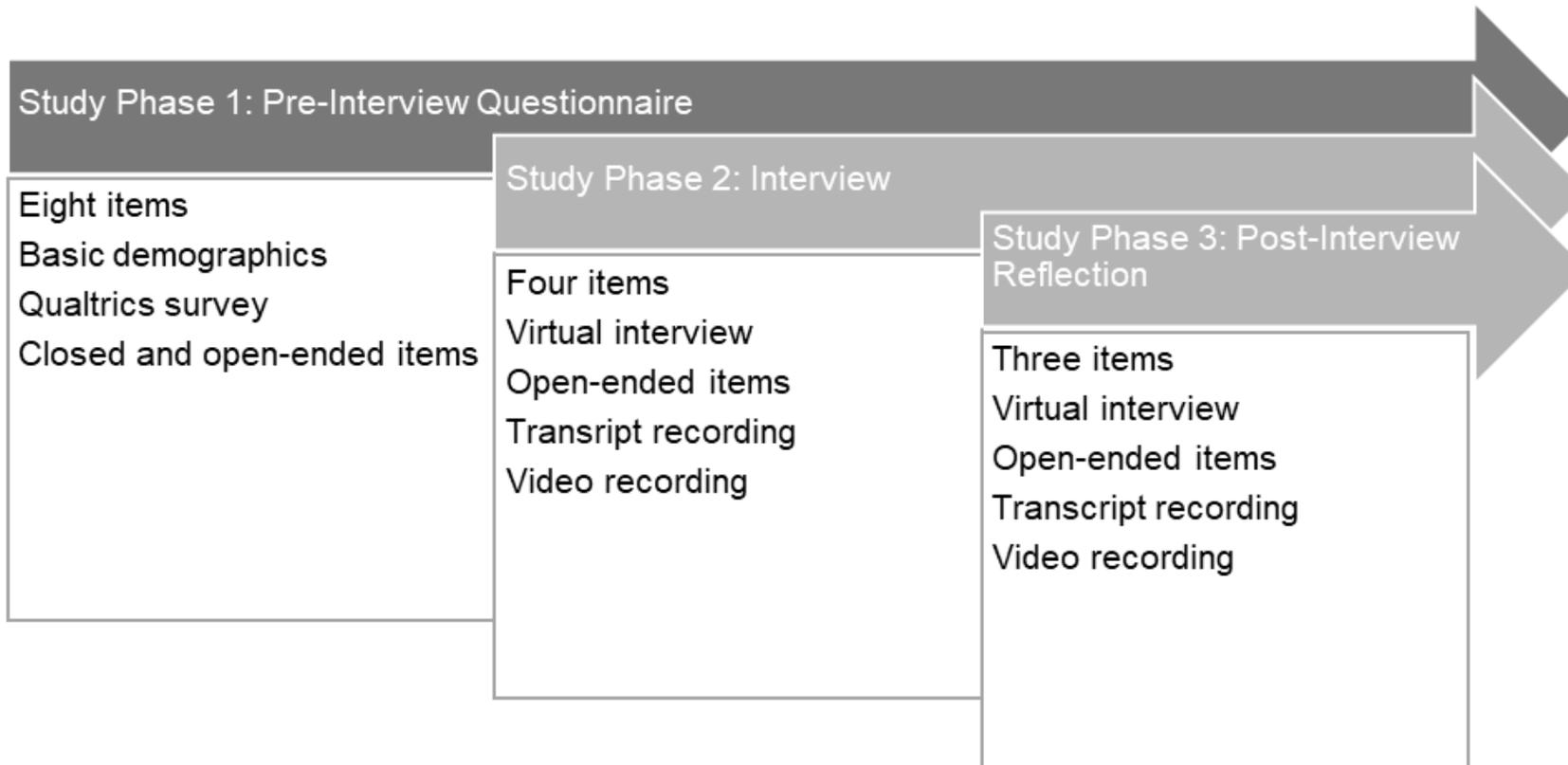
1. Select the title or role that best fits your current position: Options (select all that apply): Faculty; Staff; Program Manager; Director; Department Chair/Vice-Chair; Assistant/Associate Dean; Dean; Provost/Chancellor; Vice-President/President
2. Select the range of employees you directly supervise within your role. Please Note: these may also be employees supervised by someone else in a matrix reporting structure, i.e., “dotted line reporting”: Options (select best single response): 1-10 direct reports; 11-20 direct reports; 21-30 direct reports; > 30 direct reports
3. Describe how your role contributes to any succession planning within the organization. If your role does not directly connect with succession planning, then please describe any initiatives you are aware of that are currently used in your organization.
4. Describe any plans or processes in place that you are aware of that create a contingency or back-up for any critical roles within your organization.
5. Describe the strategies you use to ensure you are recruiting the hiring individuals that would succeed in your organization.
6. Describe successful strategies for developing the talent of your faculty and staff within the organization.
7. Identify strategies used to help identify strong performers and high-potential talent within the organization.
8. Describe the challenges the organization faces, if any, in developing and/or retaining strong performers and high-potential talent.

### **Dissertation Phase 2: Interview Items (expected time: 30 minutes) – For each item: Follow up: Please say more about (core idea).**

1. What programs do you have to ensure that every employee is evaluated for their potential?
2. What special preparation, or training, do you expect of supervisors within your organization?
3. How is clarity among and across all roles established and shared among your employees?
4. What strategies help you in successfully selecting an internal applicant for an open leadership role in your organization?

### **Dissertation Phase 3: Post-Interview Debrief (expected time: 30 minutes) – For each item: Follow up: Please say more about (core idea).**

1. In review and reflection of the transcript of your interview responses, what would you add or change about any of your responses?
2. In review and reflection of the transcript of your interview responses and the aggregate data summarized to date, describe how similar or different you believe you are compared to other respondents.
3. In review and reflection of the transcript of your interview responses and the aggregate data summarized to date, what questions do you think should have been included that were not part of the interview?



# Interview Methods & Phases

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<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>
<b>R1</b>	Adrian
<b>R2</b>	Finley
<b>R3</b>	Jamie
<b>R4</b>	Jessie
<b>R5</b>	Lee
<b>R6</b>	Morgan
<b>R7</b>	Riley
<b>R8</b>	Sam
<b>R9</b>	Skyler
<b>R10</b>	Tyler

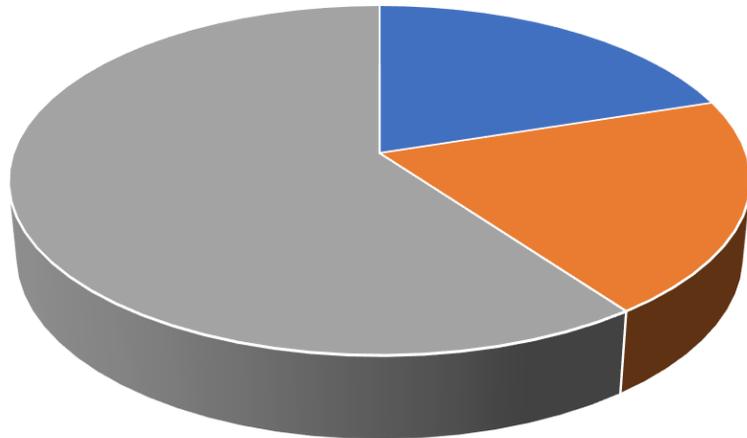
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# **Results & Analysis**

# Results & Analysis

## Respondent Characteristics on Administrative Role

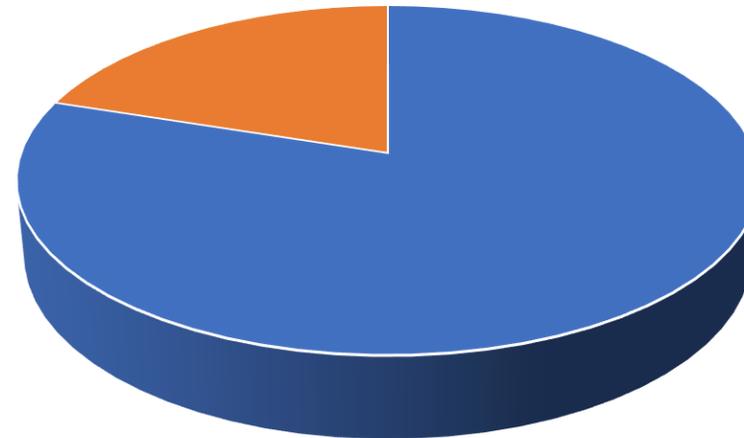
Respondent Characteristics on Administrative Role



■ Chair ■ Director ■ Dean

## Respondent Characteristics on Direct Reports

Respondent Characteristics on Direct Reports (DR)



■ DR 1-10 ■ DR 11-20

# Results & Analysis

Table 1. Successes Identified in Organizational Approaches to Building a Leadership Pipeline and Promoting Succession Planning

Theme	N	Frequency of occurrence (%)
Organizational leadership and enabling infrastructure	294	84.97
Organizational engagement	39	11.27
Positive characteristics of internal applicants	13	3.76

# Results & Analysis

Table 2. Challenges Identified in Organizational Approaches to Building a Leadership Pipeline and Promoting Succession Planning

<b>Theme</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Frequency of Occurrence (%)</b>
Gaps in retention and talent development	23	27.38
Lack of clarity in communication	40	47.62
Inconsistent practices across roles	7	8.33
Lack of intentionality and future planning	14	16.67

# Results and Analysis

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## Theme

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### **Organizational leadership and enabling infrastructure (n=294; 84.97%)**

- System development
- Providing opportunities to develop (internal and external)
- Skillful direct supervisor(s)
- Annual evaluations
- Communicating with transparency
- Surveying employees for strengths and talents
- Modeling positive leadership behaviors by formal leaders
- Specific role dedicated to operations and succession planning/talent development
- Regular discussions about talent among formal leaders

### **Organizational engagement (n=39; 11.27%)**

- Employee is involved in discussions about their growth
- Leaders help identify potential future leaders (sense of community and connection)

### **Positive characteristics of internal applicants (n=13; 3.76%)**

- They know the operations, practices, and culture
  - They have formed relationships
  - They are known quantities – both “good” and “bad” characteristics are known
  - They may likely have mentors in the organization and support for future initiatives
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# Discussion



Academic leaders seemed to perceive more successful practices than challenges in their own organizations.

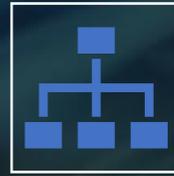


Academic leaders specified challenges providing insights about specific managers or departments within the larger organization.

# Discussion



The organization's health was specifically mentioned as a factor in its effectiveness.



Systems approaches were more highly valued specific individuals or departmental structures.



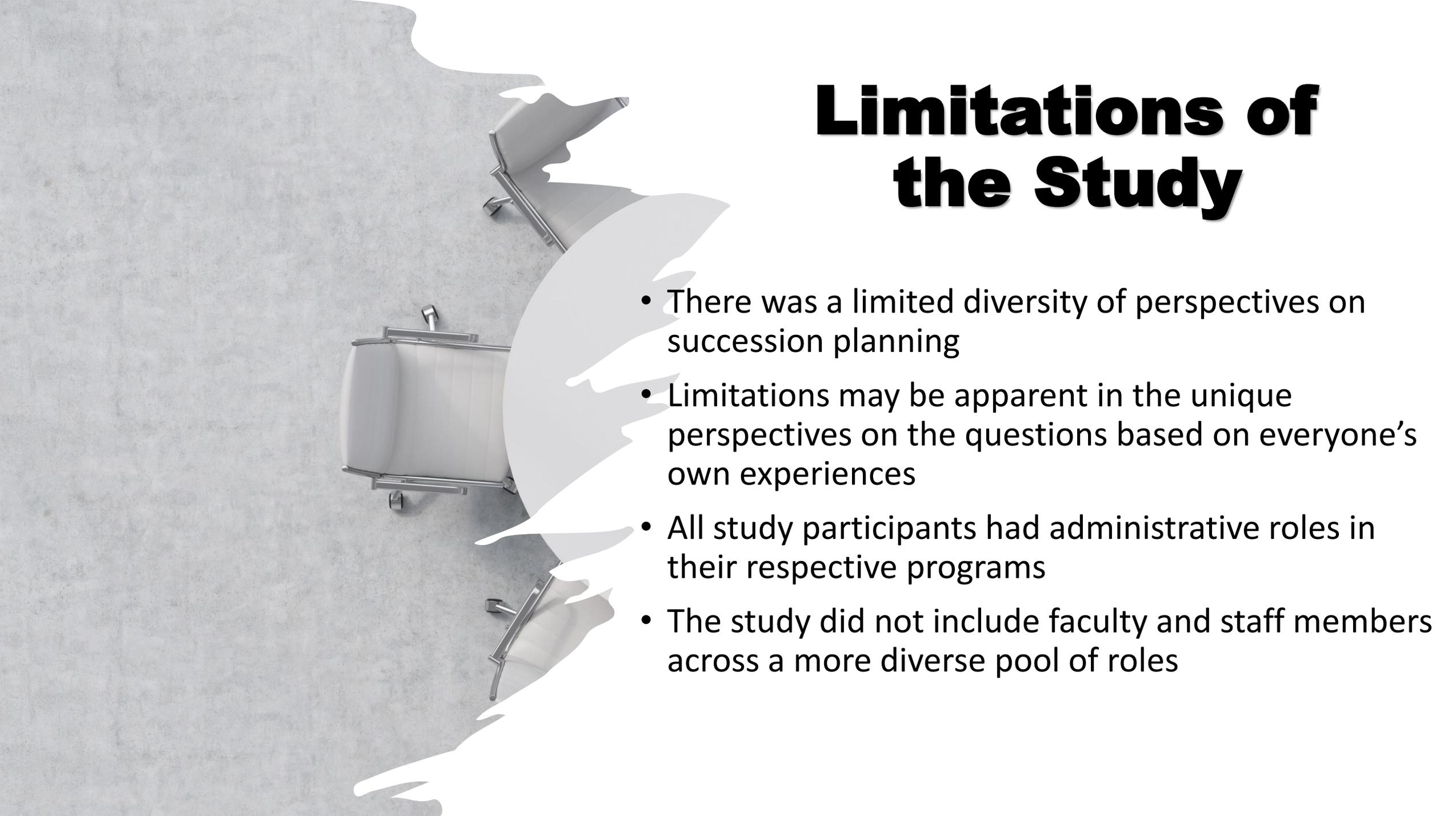
Human variables (behaviors and systems) were connected to both healthy and unhealthy organizational outcomes

# Limitations of the Study

LIMITATION



- Interviewees were selected by the researcher, introducing bias
- Some interviewees were more comfortable with the topic
- Some participants had a natural affinity towards developing leaders and succession planning
- Some seemed more confident and effective in answering the questions posed in the interview
- Some participants worked in universities with more access to a major city and a metropolitan population compared to others
- Reproducibility of the study



# Limitations of the Study

- There was a limited diversity of perspectives on succession planning
- Limitations may be apparent in the unique perspectives on the questions based on everyone's own experiences
- All study participants had administrative roles in their respective programs
- The study did not include faculty and staff members across a more diverse pool of roles

# Limitations of the Study

- Possibly many ways the items could have been interpreted
- Limited attention consistently given to the idea that all leaders, no matter how senior, have someone else, or an entire board, to which they report
- Possible unintended bias towards emphasizing the positive aspects of respondents' organizations





# Recommendations for Future Study

- Mindset shifts favoring the importance of organizational systems thinking are essential
  - Getting people on the bus (conventional thinking)
  - Putting the right people in the right seats (individual-focus)
  - Building a safe and better bus (systems thinking)

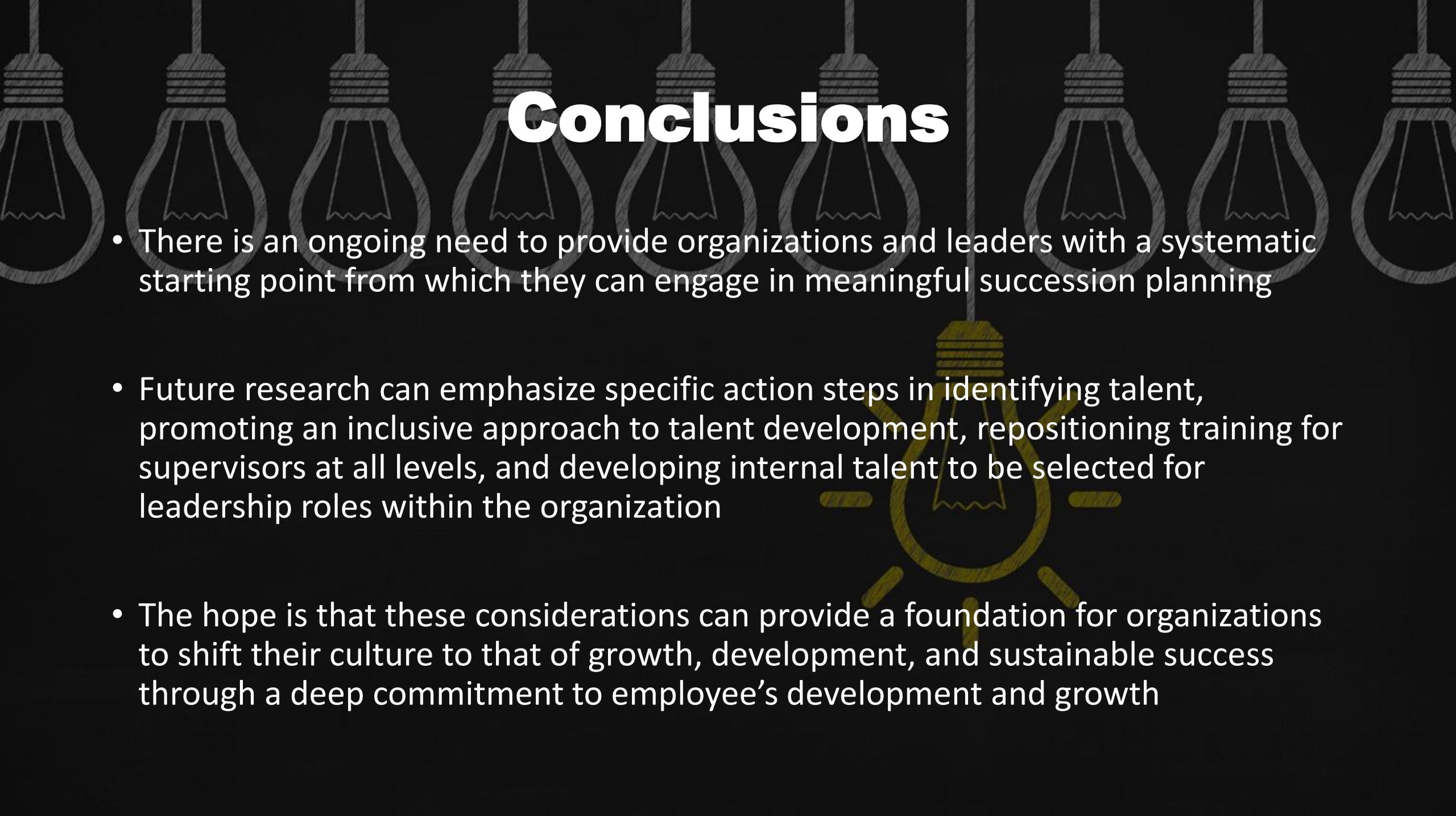
# Recommendations for Future Study

- Elements for future study may include:
  - Perspectives from faculty and staff with no formal leadership roles
  - Context on what promotes the behaviors consistent with fragmentation, silos, and scarcity in organizations.
  - Systematic ways to find and hire more suitable internal candidates into mission-critical roles.
  - Enabling factors and barriers to discuss clarity on roles and responsibilities in the workplace.
  - Identifying basic needs fulfilled by placing efforts on “fighting fires” at the expense of intentionally planning and thinking futuristically about the organization’s success.

# Recommendations for Future Study

- Continued elements for future study:
  - Ability to accurately identify successes and challenges within one's own institution, if the respondent has no other organization to compare.
  - Impact of institutional pride, or cynicism, on biasing employees towards positive or negative perspectives.
  - Context on how roles are both equipped with, or burdened, an inordinately high or low amount of information, including sensitive and high-risk information.

# Conclusions

A row of ten lightbulbs is shown against a dark background. The top row consists of nine unlit lightbulbs. The bottom row features a single glowing yellow lightbulb in the center, which is surrounded by radiating lines, suggesting it is the source of an idea or the focus of the conclusions.

- There is an ongoing need to provide organizations and leaders with a systematic starting point from which they can engage in meaningful succession planning
- Future research can emphasize specific action steps in identifying talent, promoting an inclusive approach to talent development, repositioning training for supervisors at all levels, and developing internal talent to be selected for leadership roles within the organization
- The hope is that these considerations can provide a foundation for organizations to shift their culture to that of growth, development, and sustainable success through a deep commitment to employee's development and growth



**Questions**

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