

THE CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER: PURSUING A GROUNDED THEORY OF
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT FIELD

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Abstract

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The Chief Learning Officer (CLO) of an organization is the executive responsible for learning and workplace performance, and is often a member of its top management team. Practicing human resource development (HRD) strategically, the CLO creates and conducts learning and development activities designed to increase workers' capabilities and outcomes. This thesis establishes a theoretical description of the path HRD practitioners take to become CLOs, examines how they perform strategic HRD and where they go when finished in that role, and delineates the structure-agency dynamics they function within. Additionally, the thesis explores and explains the CLO phenomenon through the use of sociological theories of structure and agency. Particularly, it applies strong structuration theory to the CLO. Combining these theories provides a thorough theoretical explanation of the basic social process of the CLO phenomenon, grounded in the data. Using grounded theory as its qualitative research method, it gathers and analyzes the lived experiences of CLOs. The results from 20 semi-structured interviews with current and former CLOs are presented and analyzed to explore how HRD practitioners become CLOs, how CLOs practice strategic HRD, and where CLOs go in their careers. A foundational theoretical model for the CLO is offered, which includes several contributing theories. It is demonstrated that CLOs are constructing their roles and the social structures while simultaneously performing in them. Also, CLOs are shown to come from a variety of vocational backgrounds with varying degrees of experience in HR. They practice strategically whether or not they are members of their organizations' top management teams. When they leave the CLO role, they also tend to move away from organizationally defined careers and towards self-defined ways of practice. Also offered are recommendations for further research and implications for HRD scholarship and practice.

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Chapter 1—Introduction to the Topic

Overview of the Results—Putting the Ending at the Beginning

Organizations and businesses are placing greater emphasis on understanding the value of learning and performance in the workplace, as well as the need to make investments to improve performance (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). Increasingly, the person responsible for managing this is the Chief Learning Officer, or CLO (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). The CLO role, along with the people who fill it, is the topic of this thesis.

This thesis considers several questions related to the CLO role. The research was undertaken because of the seeming emergence of this new CLO phenomenon. “Seeming” because the big question is, does the CLO represent a new type and level of human resource development (HRD) practitioner? Or is it just a new title, “old wine in new bottles”? From that initial question, several others emerged, along with the data needed to answer them.

What is the Chief Learning officer, and can it be researched as a social group? This chapter will conclude that yes, the CLO is a researchable phenomenon. It will also show that it is not just a new title for training managers, but instead represents a new way of practicing HRD.

The substantial literature review in Chapter 2 answers the question of what makes the Chief Learning Officer distinct from other HRD practitioners. HRD literature is examined to establish the context for the CLO’s practice. The question of whether or not the CLO should or can be on the organization’s top management team (TMT) with other ‘C-level’ executives is examined as well. Particular emphasis was given to strategic human resource development (SHRD) (McCracken & Wallace, 2000). It is the practice of SHRD by the CLO that suggests a distinct and unique HRD role for the CLO (Harburg, 2007). This is clearly demonstrated in Chapter 4, where 19 of 20 study participants were shown to be practicing SHRD, whether or not they held a position on their respective organizations’ TMTs.

By identifying this gap in the literature, Chapter 3 provides the rationale for the best method to answer the research questions outlined above. Because the CLO is an emergent phenomenon, there is not a great deal of extant literature on it. This indicated an inductive approach—gathering data towards building theory—would be most effective. The inductive approach also gave room to emergent concepts unanticipated at

the outset of the research. Using constructive grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006) encouraged an open-ended inquiry using semi-structured interviews with current and former CLOs. This, in turn, produced complex and highly varied life stories from these extremely qualified participants.

A qualitative analysis of data provided was analyzed using a coding and theory building paradigm (Saldana, 2009), which led to a description of the CLO phenomenon in Chapter 4. The description could have emerged in a variety of ways. For example, a model of the CLO could be competency-based (Navickas, 2005) or described by a set of roles CLOs perform (Bersin, 2009). Yet, because of the inductive approach used, and the semi-structured nature of the interviews—including the types of questions asked (See Appendix 4)—the participants were encouraged to tell their work life stories. This, in turn, led to a model based on the career development of the CLO, not merely a description of being one. This model describes the process of becoming and then being a CLO, as well as where CLOs go after leaving the role.

Still, the model was descriptive. In Chapter 5, a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved with the phenomenon was sought—“What is actually happening here?” In grounded theory, this is referred to the Basic Social Process (BSP; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Examining the actors (CLOs acting as ‘agents’) operating in their environments (“structure”) (Smith & Madon, 2007) led to a review of sociological theories regarding structure and agency (Stones, 1998). Structure and agency are ontological assumptions under which this thesis operates (Smith & Madon, 2007). “Social structures are the rules and resources implicated in action by agents” (Yuthas, Dillard, & Rogers, 2004, p. 230). Agency is the ability of a person (an agent) to choose to act within the structure (Yuthas et al., 2004). So, structure is the environment in which the agent acts.

Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ (Nash, 1999) was considered initially. While this theory helps one understand how structures limit agency, it does not fully explain the agent’s impact on the structure. For example, during the course of the research, a key finding emerged: CLOs often created their positions in their organizations and were continuously working to buttress the establishment of it as a strategic contributor to the success of their respective organizations. It is as if the CLO was a train engineer faced with driving the train while simultaneously laying down the train tracks. This back-and-forth between the CLO and his/her structures (organizational and professional) could be better understood by ‘structuration’ theory (Giddens, 1984). In structuration, the agent’s

contributions and changes to the structure are considered alongside the impact and limitations the structure poses to the agent. Unfortunately, as an ontology, structuration is limited in its use in analyzing a phenomenon (Cohen, 1998). Something more robust was needed to explain and understand the phenomenon's BSP: 'strong structuration.'

Described in greater detail in Chapter 5, strong structuration provides the best fit for the CLO phenomenon, especially when described as a career development model. It takes into account structures (internal and external) and the impact of *habitus* on the agent. It considers the agents' agency, is timeline-based, and is focused on outcomes, all of which best fit the CLO phenomenon as it emerged in this research. The results: not only is the Basic Social Process of the CLO phenomenon described and analyzed, but a paradigm for conducting similar analyses is produced for use by future researchers. These two results make up the bulk of this thesis' scholarly contribution.

The Human Resource Development Context

CLOs do not operate in a vacuum; they are affected by other structures around them, including the organizations they serve and their field of practice, Human Resource Development. It is this struggle between the CLO's ability to practice—their agency—and the forces surrounding them—structure (Smith & Madon, 2007)—that is the central theme of this study of the CLO. As described below, HRD is both a field of practice and an academic discipline. Together, they make up much of the structure within which the CLO practices.

Scholarship and practice together bring positive aspects to participants and users of HRD. Additionally, scholarship brings new theoretical knowledge and reasons behind effective HRD. Practice can serve as a laboratory to see which new advances produce good results and to provide feedback to scholars in their pursuit of new understandings regarding HRD (Myers, 2008; Short, 2006). Thus, this thesis presents findings that contribute to both scholarship and practice.

When an organization or business has a Chief Learning Officer, that person is the executive responsible for HRD activities in that organization/business (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). It is this practice—HRD at strategic levels—that is the key to understanding the CLO. Thus, it is important first to understand HRD.

The discipline of Human Resource Development (HRD) defies simple description. Like a hologram, each observer constructs a different meaning. In a key work describing the practice of HRD, Chalofsky and Lincoln (1983) suggested HRD changes depending upon one's perspective. It can be a philosophical concept—the

development of human potential. It can be operational—a process that uses learning to bring about change. Last, it can be functional—developing employees to perform their jobs. It is a field of practice—HRD is a career for many practitioners. HRD is a field to be studied; it is an academic discipline. HRD “encompasses a range of organizational practices that focus on learning: training, learning, and development; workplace learning; career development and lifelong learning; organizational development; organizational knowledge and learning” (Mankin, 2009, p. 6). While the academic discipline is young, the practice of HRD is an old one (Kahn, Kahn, & Mahmood, 2012).

HRD has many practice areas, such as organizational development, supervisory training, skills training, leadership development, and human relations training (Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983). HRD is both an academic discipline and an occupational practice. Also, HRD practitioners fill a variety of roles. Many models listing the various roles of HRD professionals exist, some with as few as three roles (Nadler, 1970), others with many more. Chalofsky and Lincoln (1983) describe a model with 11 roles, each with four levels (instructor, designer, manager, and consultant). The 2013 ASTD Competency Model by the American Society for Training and Development—the leading HRD practitioners’ organization in the U.S.—provides 10 practice areas (like performance improvement, instructional design and delivery, technology management, and evaluation) that also include an indirect nod to a practice hierarchy (American Society for Training and Development, retrieved January 2, 2012).

Swanson and Holton (2009) include roles that imply a career ladder (e.g. upper management, line management, training and development leader) that may or may not be reflected in CLOs’ lived experiences. The HRD career ladder follows traditional lines with technicians/specialists, supervisors/managers, and executives (Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983). What is missing, however, is an analysis of how the various HRD roles change as one rises through the HRD career ladder—and how one develops a career in HRD. Also missing is any discussion or description of the HRD practitioner at the executive level, often called the ‘Chief Learning Officer,’ (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). This study will provide insights into both how CLOs get their roles and what they do in them.

Rationale for Selecting the Chief Learning Officer as a Research Topic

The practice of HRD can be seen to operate at three different basic organizational levels: individual, organizational, and societal (Garavan, McGuire, &

O'Donnell, 2004). As will be illustrated throughout this thesis, the field of HRD is firmly entrenched and its literature quite robust. However, the Chief Learning Office is a much more recent phenomenon (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007) and is considerably less studied.

As a lifelong HRD practitioner, the researcher was keenly interested in the CLO as a research topic. As a research topic, the CLO proves a bit more problematic. In short—as Chapters 1 and 2 will clearly demonstrate—the CLO is a much-discussed topic in the practice-related HRD literature, but scholarly research on the CLO is severely limited. This presents a huge question: can CLOs be demonstrated to be a phenomenon, a social group to be researched?

The Chief Learning Officer as a Member of the Top Management Team

Menz, (2012) defines the Top Management Team as a team of senior executives, each responsible for one or more functional areas in the organization. There has been considerable discussion about the CLO and its role on the organization's top management team. For example, in the trade literature CLOs getting a 'seat at the table' (joining the organization's top management team) is seen as a priority (Brown, 2004; Elkeles & Phillips, 2007; Moore, 2009; Scott, 2011). However, the scholarly literature is largely void of research regarding how to go about it. This is one of the purposes of the thesis research. What these scholarly sources are really describing is the practice of 'Strategic HRD' (SHRD) by CLOs. A brief description of SHRD, along with the concept of CLOs practicing SHRD is introduced here. SHRD as a component of HRD is explored in Chapter 2.

It should also be noted that management teams exist at other levels in the organization besides the most senior one (Rawlings, 2000). In this research study, some of the participants in the role of CLO did not have membership in their respective organizations' top management teams. Lower-level executives may still engage the most senior top managers strategically (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). As seen in Chapter 5, CLOs may do the same when practicing HRD strategically.

“SHRD is the strategic management of training, development, and of management or professional education interventions, so as to achieve the objectives of the organization while at the same time ensuring the full utilization of the knowledge in detail and skills of individual employee” (Garavan, 1991, p. 19). Tseng and McClean (2008) chose to use that definition 17 years later, along with Garavan's characteristics of SHRD. They include integration with organizational missions and goals, top

management support, environmental scanning, HRD plans and policies, line manager commitment and involvement, existence of complementary HRM activities, expanded trainer role, recognition of culture, and an emphasis on evaluation (Garavan, 1991).

Garavan later (2007) introduced concepts like stakeholder satisfaction and alignment with the organization's strategic goals that helped distinguish SHRD from HRD. "Strategic human resource development (SHRD) contributes to the creation of firm-specific knowledge and skill when it is aligned with the strategic goals of the organization." (Garavan, 2007, p. 11) McCracken and Wallace, (2000) considered SHRD to be the creation of a learning culture in the organization.

These practices are in use. Elkeles and Phillips (2007) describe practices and recommendations for CLOs that are focused on applying HRD in a strategic fashion. These include aligning one's position along with the organization's other senior executives, developing the learning strategy, determining the investment level (and measuring ROI), aligning HRD with the organization's needs, focusing on improving workplace performance, creating and creating/maintaining relationships with the other senior leaders (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). Smith (2011) also does not refer to 'Strategic HRD' specifically, using 'Strategic Learning Alignment' instead. Smith adds the need to know one's business climate, to have an understanding of what business the organization is in, including building the business case, and also adds engaging the organization's key leaders in the learning activities, including its governance, designing and developing learning solutions, and delivery (teaching). Finally, Smith suggests "getting a seat possibly through strategic alignment of learning activities" (p. 161). Otherwise, Smith is not very specific about the steps necessary for the CLO to take to get a seat on the top management team.

When writing about practicing HRD at strategic levels, Grieves (2003) focused on the organizational culture and creating/managing change; namely, on doing SHRD by becoming an internal consultant. However, Grieves failed to consider the outcome of workplace learning: performance, something Israelite (2006) suggested when offering the three objectives a CLO should accomplish: establish the learning program's infrastructure, enable the organization's strategic objectives, and enhance value through continuous innovation.

Strategic HRD is what CLOs practice. It emerged in the 1970's and is rooted in the management, designed to lift HRD from routine practices and to develop a strategic perspective (Grieves, 2003). Specifically, Grieves suggests three disciplines for the

practice of SHRD: HRD, Organizational Development, and Strategic Management. As a strategic manager and practitioner of SHRD, the CLO needs to connect to the organization's chief executive officer's vision (Rothwell, Lindholm, & Wallick, 2003).

The HRD trade press does not normally refer to 'Strategic HRD,' but the CLO's strategic duties are frequently described (Allen, 2010; Echols, 2010; L'Allier, 2005; Phillips & Phillips, 2010; Watson, 2007) and are ascribed to the CLO (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). However, Grievies (2003) fails to put SHRD into an organizational context—no one is identified as a practitioner of it. Smith (2011) does not call out the practitioner of SHRD, but suggests that person should be on the TMT (p. 161). Finally, Israelite (2006) states the CLO still does not have a seat 'at the table' (on the organizational top management team). This conclusion has plenty of evidence to the contrary, but illustrates the depth of the problem in establishing the CLO role as commonly placed and used in organizations. The challenge for the CLO is to impact the organization's performance by using SHRD, regardless of whether or not the CLO has a seat at the table.

The result of this review reveals a straight-forward approach to a difficult-to-describe phenomenon. How HRD practitioners become CLOs and how CLOs perform SHRD (either by joining their respective organization's top management teams or engaging them strategically) are the focuses of this thesis. Thus, the topic of SHRD and its place in HRD will be further examined in Chapter 2.

Description of the Phenomenon—The Chief Learning Officer

In 1994, Jack Welch of General Electric named the first-ever Chief Learning Officer, Steve Kerr (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). By 2002, 22% of respondents to a survey by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) reported that their organizations had someone who functioned as the Chief Learning Officer (Bonner & Wagner, 2002), with most Fortune 500 companies having someone serving in that role (Caudron, 2003). "Since then (1994), the title has become more popular, if not yet ubiquitous" (Sugrue & Lynch, 2006, p. 51), and may now be used by 30% of organizations or more (Bersin & Associates, 2008).

This section of the thesis seeks to explore the following questions: Are Chief Learning Officers discernible as a social group? Are they a social phenomenon that can be studied? The answers to these questions will help determine whether or not developing a thesis about the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) phenomenon is a worthy research topic.

To do so, this section will introduce the concept of the Chief Learning Officer as it is presented in both the academic literature and the trade press. This section will examine the phenomenon from within and outside those calling themselves ‘CLOs’, both academically and in practice. Finally, if the CLO is established as a social phenomenon that can be studied, this section will conclude with suggestions for further thesis research.

What is a Chief Learning Officer? It is tempting to describe the CLO by the attributes that make up the job (Becker, 1998) or the roles they play. For example, the CLOs can be identified by competencies, behaviors, or characteristics (Bongiorno, Coleman, Hessel, & Murphy, 2005; Bower, 2007; Buchen, 2004; L’Allier, 2005; L’Allier, 2006; Masie, 2007; Rothwell & Wellins, 2004; Watson, 2007); being a member of the ‘C-suite’ (Billington, 2005; Chang, 2005; Davenport, 2006; Kamikow, 2005; Meister, 2005b; Meister, 2007; Phillips, 2004a; Phillips, 2009; Ricketts & Pannoni, 2010); running the corporate university (Allen, 2010; Echols, 2010; Meister, 2006a); the CLO’s responsibilities and roles (Elkeles, 2007; Phillips, 2004b); and a variety of smaller roles, like leader developer (Knighton & Krupp, 2009), knowledge manager (Desouza & Raider, 2006; Gary, 1996), strategic planner (Phillips, 2004a), and others (Austin, 2005; Bersin, 2007; Bersin, 2009; Billington, 2005; Davenport, 2006; Meister, 2005a; Meister, 2006b).

The list above is hardly exhaustive. Not only is it not comprehensive, it is unwieldy. A comprehensive list—even if such a feat could be achieved—would be even more so. Yet, there are better ways of determining if a social group exists to be studied.

Burke (2006) suggests examining how the group members themselves perceived the group and membership within it: “A group exists psychologically if three or more people construe themselves in terms of shared attributes that distinguish them collectively from other people” (p. 111). In other words, if the members of a group of people consider themselves a distinct group, they can be considered as such. That is only half of the challenge. What about others outside the group?

Becker (1998) offers a way of thinking about this challenge: determine not only whether those inside the group consider themselves a distinct group, but also whether those outside that group also see a distinct group. If both conditions are met, the researcher can proceed with deciding whether or not to research the group. Whether or not Chief Learning Officers constitute a social group that can be studied (as opposed to whether or not they should be studied) will be the focus of the rest of this thesis.

Inside the CLO/HRD Community. For the purposes of this section of the thesis, the ‘CLO community’ will be the human resource development community (HRD), as it manifests itself in both the academic and practical worlds. Thus, the perspectives of CLOs, other HRD professionals, HRD scholars, and those who write about the profession will all be considered on the ‘inside.’ Later, the views of those ‘outside’ the community will be considered.

An important question is whether or not human resource management and/or human capital management perspectives are ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the community? While the debate continues among practitioners (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007), it is more important to gather their perspectives than be concerned about whether or not they are inside or outside. For the purposes of this section, they will be deemed ‘outside’ and their perspectives will be considered later.

As noted previously, a great deal of trade press written by practitioners is available. What scholarship is being produced related to the CLO and what does it say? The reason for considering scholars and practitioners separately is the established gap between practitioners and scholars in HRD (Berger, Kehrhahn, & Summerville, 2004; Gilley, 2006; Keefer & Yap, 2007; Kuchinke, 2001; Mabry, May, & Berger, 2004; McGoldrick, Stewart, & Watson, 2001; Short, 2006; Short & Shindell, 2009) and the different perspectives they offer regarding the question at hand.

What Scholars Say. In order to develop an understanding of the scholarly point of view regarding the CLO, several journals were consulted. Emphasis was placed on articles about the CLO specifically (by searching for the terms ‘CLO’ and ‘Chief Learning Officer’ in article titles), but articles merely mentioning the CLO were also examined to determine what was being said about CLOs. Additionally, in order to weigh more-recent perspectives and to ensure the manageability of this effort, sources included and considered will be from the year 2001 forward. This time limit will be observed throughout the remainder of this section, except where noted.

Finally, this thesis is focused on the CLO phenomenon as it exists in the United States. Thus, sources considered will be similarly limited to those published in the U.S. The scholarly journals examined:

Advances in Developing Human Resources. Three articles mention CLO in passing, none in titles, and none in significant ways, except to mention the CLO as the organizational learning leader (Marquardt & Berger, 2003; Nafukho, 2009; Packer & Sharrar, 2003).

Human Resource Development Quarterly. One article mentions CLO, but not in title. It mentions that the CLO needs to make the business case for learning (Baldwin & Danielson, 2002). It is interesting to note that this journal is also the *only one found to have an article with the term 'CLO' or 'Chief Learning Officer' in the title.* That article was written in 1991, however (Willis, 1991).

Human Resource Development Review. Three articles mention the CLO. Yorks (2004) describes the CLO as a learning leader who is an invaluable ally to the chief executive officer. Burke and Saks (2009) mention the CLO role and note its function as a learning leader, while Holton (2003) notes that the CLO is concerned about performance.

Human Resource Planning. Just two articles mention the CLO; one in passing in a non-academic article (an interview) (Vosburgh, 2003) and one suggesting that enlightened organizations have CLOs (and was co-written by a CLO) (Younger & Smallwood, 2007).

Journal of Workplace Learning. Qiao (2009) mentions the CLO in passing. Li et al. (2009) recount the development of the CLO position and place the CLO in the C-suite. They also recommend a design for an advanced academic degree program for aspiring CLOs (Li et al., 2009).

Human Resource Development International. This journal is published in the U.S., but has an international perspective. No articles were found to even mention the CLO.

Doctoral Dissertations. While not a journal *per se*, several doctoral dissertations on the subject of the CLO were available. The study done by (Lackey, 2000) found that CLOs (whether or not they had that actual title) were responsible for learning within their organizations. Lackey also suggested implications for both theory and practice, evoking the call to bridge the gap between these two elements of human resource development. Navickas' (2005) dissertation determined competencies the CLO should embrace. In 2009, Prafka wrote a study based on an in-depth case study of one learning executive. This study focused on how the learning executive contributed to his organization and what types of leadership he displayed. Finally, Goldsmith (2009) assessed leadership styles used by CLOs.

What Practitioners Say. The reader is directed to the section above titled '*What is a Chief Learning Officer?*' to find many examples of what is being written by practitioners in the field of HRD. However, most of those were drawn from one source,

Chief Learning Officer magazine, a trade magazine of interest to the HRD community in general and to CLOs (and those who aspire to become CLOs) in particular. The other two prominent magazines examined were *T&D* (published by the largest professional organization in the field, The American Society for Training and Development—ASTD), and *Training* magazine. Other sources considered included trade books and two related websites (from *Chief Learning Officer* magazine and ASTD).

Training magazine is a popular trade magazine reaching more than 40,000 HRD practitioners (Training Magazine, retrieved January 2, 2012). A search on the site yields dozens of hits on the search terms ‘CLO’ and ‘Chief Learning Officer,’ but very few with those terms in the article titles. Articles mentioning the CLO focus on the CLO as a senior leader of the organization (Gordon, 2005; Johnson, 2004; Weinstein, 2009) as an expert on training (Weinstein, 2006; Wolff, 2011), as a strategic planner of learning (Freifield, 2009), as an executive (Durett, 2006), and as a member of the C-suite (Gordon, 2006). Also, Gordon cites ways to measure CLO performance and key behaviors and characteristics of CLOs. *Training* has also offered interviews with CLOs (Weinstein, 2007) articles on CLO pay (Kornik & Weinstein, 2006) and even questioned the need for a CLO (Schettler, 2002). Finally, many articles make mention of the CLOs of various organization without commenting specifically about the role (Freifield, 2011).

T&D is the trade magazine published by the largest HRD professionals’ association in the world, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). Like *Training* magazine, *T&D* is targeted towards the HRD professional in general, as opposed to the CLO in particular. (*Chief Learning Officer* magazine targets the CLO; many of its articles were cited in the “What is a Chief Learning Officer” section earlier.) The website’s search function was more difficult to use with less functionality. A manual search of articles back to October 2008 yielded relevant results like these: CLOs are found in both public (governmental) and private organizations (Pace, 2011), salaries for learning executives (Mohindra, 2011); interviews with CLOs (Roche, 2009), learning executives reaching out to get support from other organizational executives (Kelly, 2009; Steeves & Frein, 2010), enhancing one’s progress to the C-suite to become a learning executive (Beeson, 2010), and the CEO’s expectations of the CLO (Phillips & Phillips, 2009). As with *Training* magazine, many *T+D* articles mentioned the CLO in passing (Bingham & Galagan, 2009; Mattox, 2011; Thornton, 2009; Wilde, 2011).

Trade Books. Only one trade book has been written specifically regarding the CLO (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007)—others (Anderson, Hardy, & Leeson, 2008; Bonner, 2000; Israelite, 2006) are about leading the learning enterprise and contain a chapter or other content on the CLO. Others on the subject of HRD mention the CLO role as well (Barquin et al., 2001; Goldsmith, Morgan, & Ogg, 2004; Mooney & Brinkerhoff, 2008; Phillips & Phillips, 2010; van Dam, 2004).

Websites. Two prominent HRD-related websites—both affiliated with publications previously discussed—were examined for content regarding the CLO: American Society for Training and Development (publisher of *T&D* magazine) at www.astd.org, and Chief Learning Officer (publisher of *Chief Learning Officer* magazine) at www.clomedia.org. A search at ASTD's site using the term 'Chief Learning Officer' resulted in 336 hits, including reprints of articles from *T&D* magazine, research reports, practitioner-related articles, blog posts, discussion groups, news releases, and other related content (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). The website also makes available research reports, HRD practitioner tools, and a wide array of HRD-related books (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). A search of the Chief Learning Officer website using the same term yielded more than 200 hits, including articles, photographs, videos, announcements, etc. (Chief Learning Officer, retrieved January 3, 2012.). The website also makes available back issues of *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, research reports, and other user content (Chief Learning Officer, retrieved January 3, 2012).

Several observations become clear. First, the CLO as a research subject is a rare occurrence (with just five instances found, four of which were doctoral dissertations). Second, the CLO is occasionally mentioned, but usually in passing. This indicates a tacit acceptance of the role, but does not indicate any particular interest in it as a research subject. Finally, combining the copious amount of trade literature available on the CLO with the sparse amount of academic literature available presents a picture of a well-established (in practice) yet under-researched concept. It satisfies the first half of Becker's (1998) 'trick': the people inside the group (CLOs and the HRD community) clearly consider the CLOs a group, even if an under-researched, atheoretical group. This, in turn, suggests the need for further research in establishing the theoretical underpinnings of the CLO. Next to be explored is what others outside the group—scholars and practitioners—have to say about the existence of the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer.

Outside the CLO/HRD Community. In the previous section on what is being said about the CLO inside the HRD community, the data were presented source-by-source. This method has been repeated and expanded upon in this section, where outside-the-HRD perspectives from scholarly and trade sources were considered, examining what they say about the CLO in general, and the CLO's place in the C-suite in particular. Because myriad sources were included in the searches and considered, this section will not examine each separately, instead taking them by category (scholarly or trade), specialty area (general management and HR management), and type (journals, magazines, books, and websites).

There is a close relationship between HRD and human resource management (HRM). There is also an ongoing debate about whether the CLO should be aligned below or alongside the chief human capital officer (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). Thus, the perspectives of the human resource (or 'capital') management community will be considered separately

Although executives serving in the CLO role may have many different titles, the term 'Chief Learning Officer' was chosen for document searches in order to gauge its use as a descriptor. It is acknowledged that this search is not comprehensive.

What Scholars Say. Journal Articles. A search was conducted using the term 'Chief Learning Officer.' Many resulted in citations of *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, while still others were from HRM- or HRD-related sources. However, there were other examples where the CLO was invoked. There were many examples where the CLO was either an article author or was used as a credible source (Arnone & Stumpf, 2010; Frecka & Reckers, 2010; Fulmer, Gibbs, & Goldsmith, 2000; Li et al., 2009; Madsen & Vance, 2009; Thompson, 2006). Others (DeSouza & Raider, 2006; Felton & Finnie, 2003; Kesterson, 2004; Maietta & Bullock, 2009; Mitchell, 2007) cite the CLO as the executive leading an organization's learning functions, a key player in implementing innovation (Buchen, 2003; Greiner, 2002). Some authors (Buchen, 2005; Glynn, 1996) described the CLO as one of the newer 'chiefs' (C-level executives), but almost never called for the creation of such a position (except Baskin & Schneider, 2003). In fact, when searching for articles discussing C-level executives, seldom did authors attempt to describe which positions were in the C-suite, despite many examples of the term being used, and none listed the CLO as one of them. This theme, the CLO as a member of an organization's executive team, will be returned to later.

Human Resource Management Journals. The following human resource management-related journals were reviewed for insights into the CLO because they are the major sources for scholarly research on the CLO and HRD-related topics: *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *Human Resource Planning*, *Human Resources*, the *Journal of Human Resources*, and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. By leveraging meta-search engines like Google Scholar® and academic databases like Proquest®, it was not necessary to limit the scope of journals searched.

Very little scholarship about the CLO role has been produced. *Chief Learning Officer* magazine was occasionally cited as a source (Carliner & Bakir, 2010; Griffith & Sawyer, 2010) and a few other others either were CLOs or mentioned the CLO's role in enhancing HRM (McAlearney, 2006; McKnight, Doele, & Christine, 2001; Yeung, 2006; Younger & Smallwood, 2007). Scholars do not distinguish between CLOs and other HRD practitioners, despite the field's efforts to establish the role in organizations and businesses. This certainly contributes to the gap between scholarship and practice that will be a continuing theme throughout this thesis.

Doctoral Dissertations. Doctoral dissertations *unrelated to HRD* and invoking the CLO were sought through a search of the Proquest database. While at least 20 cited *Chief Learning Officer* magazine as a reference, only eight were found that mentioned the CLO with any substance: as a valued resource in developing leadership (Nicholson, 2009; Stanley, 2010); as part of a high-impact organization (Kohut, 2010; Kubit, 2009), as the organization's executive in charge of learning (Epperson, 2006; Fancher, 2007; Schreeder, 2008), or as one of many C-level executives interviewed (Cross, 2008; Heidt, 2006; Lapham, 2009).

When seeking evidence of the relationship of the CLO and the rest of the C-suite, little was found. Most listing several C-suite examples (i.e. CFO, CIO, CMO, etc.) did not include the CLO (Davis, 2008; Francis, 2011; Green, 2011; Mack, 2010; Moore, 2009; Rocha, 2010), where only one that did (Cohill, 2007) was found.

What Practitioners Say. Trade Magazines (General). The trade press is filled with references to the CLO. For example CLOs are often authors of articles in non-HRD-related magazines or are cited as credible sources (Bailor, 2007; Brady, 2010; Cespedes, 2006; Darling & Smith, 2011; DeFlippo, 2010; Guttman, 2009; Jennings, 2010; Manville, 2001; Offerman, 2004; Prokesch, 2009; Sills, 2005) and are noted as their respective organizations' learning leaders (Baskin & Schneider, 2003;

Bickerstaffe, 2011; Bronner & Kaliski, 2007; Davenport, Prusak, & Wilson, 2003; Liberman, 2010; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007). Again, it is sometimes noted that the CLO is a new member of the C-suite (Baskin & Schneider, 2003; Bladen & John, 2010; DeJong, 2009; Poe, 2007) and in other instances the CLO is listed among other C-suite executives (Bladen & John, 2010; Grenny, 2009; Meyers, 2007; Weinstock, 2010).

HRM-related Magazines. In human resource management magazines, the CLO is frequently cited as a credible source or listed as an article's author (Cascio, 2009; Grossman, 2011; Ladika, 2008; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Moscato, 2005; Zielinski, 2010) and is cited as an executive in charge of learning (Arnold, 2006; Babcock, 2004; Dobbs, 2002; Gale, 2003; Lin, Hitchens, & Davenport, 2001; Noelke, 2009; Roberts, 2007; Rodriguez, 2005).

Trade Books (General). In order to gain insight into what is being written about the CLO in trade books (non-HRD-related subjects), a search was performed on a robust library of e-books, *Books 24x7*, offered by the Skillsoft Company (Skillsoft, n.d.). Its library contains more than 8,000 business-related titles. A search using 'Chief Learning Officer' resulted in 391 hits. The non-HRD-related titles were considered. In some cases, CLOs were considered credible sources (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Seldman & Seldman, 2008). In others, CLOs were called out as the executive learning leaders of their respective organizations (Allen, 2002; Ashby & Miles, 2002; Crandall, 2007; Laird, Naquin, & Holton, 2003; Lambert, Ohai, & Kerkhoff, 2009; O'Connor, Bronner, & Delany, 2007; Rudzki & Trent, 2011; Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2009). Other examples of the CLO role being invoked include the CLO as a facilitator of strategy development (Sloan, 2006), a strategic leader (Robinson & Robinson, 2005) and partner (Davis, 2011), as a people risk reducer (Vallabhaneni, 2008), as a role on the rise (Stenzel, 2007) and as a key player in performance analysis and management (Rossett, 2009). There is an increasing use of the CLO role in government—even the U.S. Navy has appointed one (CNO Guide, 2005).

HRM-related Trade Books. The CLO role appears in some titles. Buchen (2007) notes that the CLO is a new C-level title, but has no academic preparation available for the role. However, the University of Pennsylvania now offers a doctoral program specifically aimed at current and prospective CLOs (University of Pennsylvania, retrieved January 22, 2012). The CLO is a talent manager (Israelite, 2010), learning leader (Efron, Grandossy, & Goldsmith, 2003), emergent executive role (Torres-

Coronas & Arias-Olivia, 2005), and a key player in succession management (Rothwell, 2010).

Websites (General). Some websites related to executive management were consulted to see what (if anything) was being said about the CLO. *Chief Executive Magazine's* website (Chief Executive Magazine, retrieved January 3, 2012) revealed nine hits using the search term 'Chief Learning Officer.' Most quote an individual holding that title, but three articles mention the role of the CLO. Notably, there were zero hits from a search of 'CLO,' while other C-level acronyms did result in hits—CIO had 392, CFO had 784, and even CMO ('Chief Marketing Officer') had 163. At *Chief Executive Officer* (Chief Executive Officer, retrieved January 22, 2012), only two hits resulted from a search on 'Chief Learning Officer,' both quoting people holding that title. There were also two hits from a search on 'CLO.' One of those referred to the need for a Chief Learning Officer, while the other referred to a 'chief legal officer.' When searching for material on other C-level positions (and their acronyms), CIO turned up 21 hits, CFO had 27, and even CMO revealed 5.

HRM-related Websites. Two key HR-related websites were consulted. At *Human Resource Executive Online* (HREO, retrieved January 22, 2012), a search on the term 'Chief Learning Officer' revealed mostly hits related to CLO's being quoted or mentioned. At the website for the *Society for Human Resource Management* (SHRM, retrieved January 22, 2012), the leading professional organization for HR practitioners with more than 250,000 members in 140 countries, a similar search turned up 44 hits. Again, most were quoting or otherwise mentioning people holding the title of CLO. SHRM does acknowledge the CLO role in its membership guide, but 'training and development' professionals (at all organizational levels) make up just 3% of its membership.

Very few instances of scholarly research done outside the HRD community examine the role of the Chief Learning Officer in any substantive way, despite it being routinely mentioned in passing. The trade materials examined—both in general and specifically from human resources-related sources revealed more prevalence for the CLO and for specific contributions the role makes to organizations. (This difference is illustrative of the gap between scholarship and practice prevalent throughout this thesis.) Thus, the second portion of Becker's (1998) 'trick of the trade', whether or not those outside the group consider it a distinguishable group, rests on a much less stable base.

Summary. This section of the thesis set out to examine the role of the Chief Learning Officer and to determine whether or not it exists and can be researched. It employed Becker's (1998) approach to making such a determination by examining whether or not those inside the group (in this case, the human resource development, or HRD, community) and outside the group (management in general and human resource management in particular) consider the CLO a distinguishable group. The 'inside/outside' paradigm was further broken down by academic and practitioner/trade sources for each. This leads to several conclusions.

The practitioners inside HRD, particularly the CLOs themselves, consider themselves a distinct group. They use a commonly (but not universally) accepted and understood title, CLO. They have a professional magazine called the *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, which also hosts seminars, symposia, etc. Finally, the trade literature within HRD is rife with examples of the role of the CLO.

The scholarly research coming from the HRD community does not match the robust nature of the trade press (and related materials). The CLO is a rare research subject. Most references to the CLO are in passing and without in-depth examination of the role and its place in either HRD or in executive leadership.

From outside the HRD community comes even less research referring to the CLO and none about the role itself. It does receive passing mention on occasion in research pieces focused elsewhere, but very little is written to either support or challenge the role of the CLO from the outside. Surprisingly, this is also true of HRD's related field, human resource management. Except in passing, the CLO is largely invisible to non-HRD scholars.

The trade press from outside the HRD community is stronger as it relates the CLO, but the same conditions persist. CLOs are frequently quoted, sometimes acknowledged, but almost never studied. When memberships in the C-suite are examined with any detail, the CLO is usually omitted from the list. Still, the CLO is frequently mentioned (though usually just in passing) as the executive in charge of learning and development for the organization.

May the Chief Learning Officer phenomenon be treated as a distinct group for study? Yes. This is particularly so from inside their group; the CLOs consider themselves a distinct population. However, it is less so from outside their group (and the HRD community in general). Even less support is found on the academic side, both from within and from outside the HRD community. Still, it is reasonable to conclude

that the Chief Learning Officer is a phenomenon that can be studied empirically. This thesis does just that.

Research Contribution

This is a thesis conducted in a professional doctorate program (Scott, Brown, Lunt, & Thorne, 2004; Smith, 2009)—and in a field with both scholarly and applied elements. Thus, it makes contributions to the academic discipline and practice of human resource development (HRD).

This study will make scholarly contributions in several ways. It uses sociological theories to examine and analyze the CLO phenomenon. It provides a theory-based descriptive model of the CLO career journey, and applies a sociological theory (strong structuration) to analyze and understand the theoretical model developed to explain the CLO. The research also creates a paradigm for studying careers based in other disciplines.

Additionally, the study contributes to the practice of HRD. It provides key information for HRD practitioners seeking to develop their careers and to practice at the field's highest levels. It also offers a greater understanding of how CLOs leverage Strategic HRD to impact their organizations' pursuit of strategic goals and outcomes. Finally, it identifies professional roles and opportunities for CLOs once they leave that position.

Personal Motivation for the Research

Personal Profile. The researcher began his career in the practice of HRD when he enlisted in the United States Air Force. Starting off on the administrative side as an educational specialist, he soon graduated to counseling employees regarding higher education and other developmental opportunities. A few years later he began managing on-the-job training. His long-term career was solidified when, after graduating from The University of the State of New York with a bachelor's degree in business, he became an education officer, and was formally trained as an instructor, instructional designer, becoming a leader of learning teams. He supported technical training development, earned a Master of Business Administration degree from National University, and taught in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (while on faculty of San Diego State University), along with several other assignments.

Upon retiring from active duty, the researcher entered the private sector, practicing HRD in several settings, including health care, corrections, higher education, and the federal government. Earning the Doctor of Philosophy from Union Institute and

University (specializing in nontraditional higher education), he became a consultant, developing leadership programs and providing other support services to several government agencies, before finally joining the Department of Homeland Security as a senior education and training manager, where he serves today.

When using a grounded theory approach, it is essential that the qualitative researcher set aside as many preconceptions regarding the phenomenon as possible (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Still, it is reasonable to expect that the researcher will have some—or even extensive—knowledge and experience related to the research, and is faced with the challenge of both leveraging prior knowledge in order to more efficiently and effectively study the phenomenon while also remaining open to what arises from the data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). In his career, the researcher has risen to the level of senior manager in several organizations, often reporting directly to the CLO. However, his experience did not include actually being a CLO and, thus, is not reflected in the data gathering. His 30 years of HRD experience informed the structure of the study. He then relied upon both the interview structure and the participants' own story-telling to direct it. This had the effect of minimizing the influence of the researcher's own knowledge and experience on the study's outcomes.

Desired Outcomes. A primary purpose of a doctoral thesis is for the degree candidate to make an original contribution to the academic discipline under study (Sternberg, 1981). Another primary purpose is to demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct research. "A doctoral dissertation [thesis] is a formal document that demonstrates your ability to conduct research that makes an original contribution to theory or practice" (Roberts, 2010, p. 18). (NB: In the U.S., the doctoral product is normally called a 'dissertation' instead of a 'thesis.')

This thesis aimed for an academic contribution: to explore the theoretical dynamics of the phenomenon of the CLO in order to increase understanding regarding it. As described throughout this thesis, the phenomenon of the CLO is little-researched and understood; yet, represents the pinnacle of the field of practice (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). As a result of the research, the phenomenon of becoming and being a CLO is more readily understood and explained. Also, the paradigm created to do this is one that can be used to study careers based in other disciplines. In addition to the academic contribution of this thesis, there is another desired outcome for this thesis.

The researcher intended it to have an impact on practice as well as scholarship. The research will become the basis for the researcher's practice in developing HRD leaders to become Chief Learning Officers and to practice HRD strategically in their own environments.

Conclusion

This chapter served to preview the major questions and findings of the research and introduce the phenomenon under study, the Chief Learning Officer. It laid out the aims of the research. It also described the phenomenon under study, the analytical framework and methodology used, the anticipated research contribution, and the author's personal motivation and preparation for the research. In the next chapter, the relevant literature—both scholarly and practice-based—will be reviewed in order to identify the major issues leading up to this study, as well as its potential contribution to the HRD body of knowledge.

Chapter 2—Literature Review

Chapter 1 asked whether or not the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) was a phenomenon that should and could be studied. This chapter continues that theme by establishing a context for the work—a study of the CLO—making a new and significant contribution to the scholarship, and demonstrating a high level of knowledge (Hart, 2007).

When examining the outcomes of the research as presented in Chapter 4, several themes emerged to explain the theoretical underpinnings of the CLO phenomenon. In short, the ‘feeder’ theories of career development (CD), human resource development (HRD), and upper echelons (UE) theories contribute to the CLO practicing strategic human resource development (SHRD). These are depicted in the following figure and then explored through the remainder of this chapter.

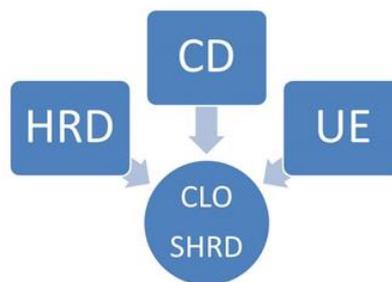


Figure 2-1. Theories Contributing to the Chief Learning Officer Phenomenon

Career development theory provides the structure of the phenomenon, which emerged as a story about developing a path to the CLO role. Human resource development is the field in which CLOs (and aspiring ones) practice. Upper Management Team Theory helps explain how the CLO operates strategically within the organization. All of these lead to the CLO practice Strategic HRD, the crux of being a CLO. Each of these theories is described more thoroughly in the remainder of this chapter.

Search engine tools and electronic libraries used included the University of Phoenix, University of Leicester, and Union Institute and University; Google Scholar; Books 24x7®; and Amazon.com. Databases researched included ProQuest Business, ABI/INFORM, Emerald, Harvard Business Review, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, and

ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Additionally, the physical library at George Mason University was utilized.

Career Development Theory

Because the CLO phenomenon emerged in this study as a career development model, career development theory should be considered when structuring that model. Career development theories sit on two foundations: selecting a career and progressing through one. Both are considered below.

Career Development Theory—Structural

Understanding how careers are selected and developed are key to understanding the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer. Career development theories follow two strains: Structural, dealing career and vocational choices) and Developmental, human development across the career life span (Brown, 2002). Structural career development theory is most useful for understanding this early juncture in the development of the CLO.

There is a need to connect career theory with research on career success (Arthur et al., 2005). This bears directly on a significant portion of this study; namely, how do HRD practitioners go through their careers and become CLOs? What are the choices they make and why?

These theories have their basis in the works of Parsons, the founder of vocational counseling and proponent of making ideal career choices by matching personal traits with job characteristics (Kazuyuki & Wang, 2006). Yet, it was John Holland that advanced this practice and who developed a typology of work environments and individual characteristics, who proposed that some environments fit some characteristics better than others, and who stated that some characteristics fit some environments better than others (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009). The typology describes how individuals interact with their environment when making career and vocational choices (Brown & Lent, 2005). There are six interest types. Most people resemble more than one, and a person is matched with job choices aligned with his/her interest type using instruments, promoting career development through better choices (Brown & Lent, 2005).

Before participants entered the field of human resource development (HRD), most worked in other fields. Structural theories, like Holland's theory of careers, focus on individual characteristics and occupational tasks (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009). It assumes vocational interests and choices are personality-driven (Brown, 2002). In this

study, participants came from blue collar trades, white collar occupations, the military, and a few who entered the HRD career field directly.

Career Development Theory—Developmental

Super (1980) defined a career as the series of roles one plays over a lifetime. However, before Super, career development was almost always focused on choices (Structural, see above), not development (Super, 1980). The stages of development include Birth, Growth (development of self-concept), Exploration (trying out possible choices), Establishment (entry-level skill-building and establishing vocational identity), Maintenance (adjustments and improvements), Decline (reduced output, specialization, and retirement), and Death. Career choices and decisions are affected by each stage (Brown, 2002). While there have been other advancements in career development theory, much of it, like career construction (Brown & Lent, 2005), has been an extension of Super's theory (Busacca, 2007). There was an additional development that represented a radical departure, two closely related theories that moved the emphasis on career development from the structure to the agent.

Human Resource Development

Human resource development is an academic discipline and a workplace practice. Both affect the way CLOs practice, with scholarship advancing the field and practice refining it and producing organizational results (Mankin, 2009). As such, HRD is examined from both of these perspectives.

HRD as an Academic Discipline

Human resource development (HRD) was introduced in Chapter 1. In this section, specific aspects of HRD as an academic discipline will be explored, including a review of the major HRD-related academic journals, a more-detailed description of the discipline and its history, HRD theory (including a proposed foundational theory), an examination of the boundaries of the academic discipline, and an introduction to several of the major arguments in the discipline. The result will be a clear and useful explanation of the context in which Chief Learning Officers perform, how they perform, and the potential relationship of HRD scholarship to their performance.

While several perspectives on HRD are included in this chapter, one—the HRD foundational theory offered by Swanson and Holton (2009)—was used when analyzing the results from the data gathering process. Additionally, understanding the foundations of HRD is essential when examining the practice of Strategic HRD (SHRD) by CLOs and discerning the unique nature of CLOs and their practices. As will be illustrated

later, SHRD subsumes HRD practice and goes beyond it in key ways fundamental to CLOs.

Academic Journals. The academic literature is fragmented and reflects a diverse set of perspectives and models (Garavan, Costine, & Heraty, 1995). In the United States, the academic literature for HRD is dominated by the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD)—a major source offering four journals (Academy of Human Resource Development, retrieved February 28, 2013). *Advances in Developing Human Resources* is dedicated to exploring single topics with each issue. The implication here is that the journal supports bridging the gap between scholarship and practice, useful because this thesis is both an academic and practical enterprise. *Human Resource Development International* focuses on both practice and research at the individual, group, and organizational levels. *Human Resource Development Quarterly* was the first HRD journal. It focuses on HRD research. *Human Resource Development Review* has an emphasis on developments and contributions to HRD theory and theory-building methods. It is concerning these four journals—from one source—are the sole significant source of HRD research in the U.S. Other academic journals are additional sources for HRD-related research, and are examined next.

Other contributing sources of scholarly writing about HRD include the *Journal of Workplace Learning* which “...aims to provide an avenue for the presentation and discussion of research related to the workplace as a site for learning. Its scope encompasses formal, informal and incidental learning in the workplace for individuals, groups and teams, as well as work-based learning, and off-the-job learning for the workplace” (*Journal of Workplace Learning*, para 1, retrieved February 28, 2013). *The Journal of European Industrial Training* is another robust contributor to HRD scholarship. “The journal aims to provide all those involved in research and practice in training with ideas, news, research findings, case examples and discussion on training and development. The journal focuses primarily on activity in Europe, although draws on insights from the rest of the world where they are seen to make an appropriate contribution” (*European Journal of Training and Development*, retrieved February 28, 2013).

Purpose of Human Resource Development (HRD). The ultimate purpose of HRD is to improve workplace performance. The performance paradigm “...holds that the purpose of HRD is to advance the mission of the performance system that sponsors the HRD efforts by improving the capabilities of individuals working in the system and

improving the systems in which they perform their work” (Holton, 2002b, p. 201). Thus, HRD improves the performance of the organization by improving the performance of its members and it does this by improving their ability to perform.

The focus of HRD has changed from training individuals to improve job performance to a comprehensive emphasis on individual, group, and organizational performance improvement (Rothwell et al., 2003). To reflect this, the authors suggest the title ‘Workplace Learning and Performance professional,’ because ‘training’ is considered a short-term effort towards current performance, while HRD is more comprehensive, looking to manage long-range processes like change management, is longer-term and forward-focused. ‘Workplace Learning and Performance’ represents a move away from learning and on to performance (Rothwell et al., 2003). This is a change in focus from the output of training (workers imbued with capabilities) to an outcome (the result of their performance), which was improved by their increased capabilities. There has been some acknowledgement of this by the American Society for Training and Development with the creation of their ‘Certified Professional in Learning and Performance’ credential (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). This distinction has significant potential implications for practicing CLOs, suggesting they move their practices beyond training management and delivery—an input to organizational success—to being part of the decision-making defining and driving that success. CLOs need to engage their organizations strategically to help create results for the organizations they help lead.

The conflict of ‘learning versus performance’ is ongoing (Russ-Eft, 2005), even though the conflict itself has been suggested to be ‘old hat’ (Holton, 2003) or even the wrong question (Ruona, 2001). According to Ruona (2001), by supporting both learning and development, HRD supports both organizational performance and individual professional development—it supports both learning and performance. Learning improves performance (Jacobs & Washington, 2003). Some in the field have suggested it be called ‘Workplace Learning and Performance’ (Galagan, 2003). Kuchinke (2007) suggested HRD's scholarly role is to pass on specialized (to HRD) knowledge to the field and to generate new knowledge. The CLO, as a strategic leader in his/her respective organization, is focused on outcomes, which is a transition from the learning perspective towards performance which, in turn, creates organizational success.

HRD Defined. There is room for multiple definitions from multiple points of view on the definition of HRD (Russ-Eft, 2000). Sambrook (2004) described HRD as

still being an emerging concept. Mankin (2001) said HRD is subsumed by Human Resources—making HRD a component of that discipline. Mankin also called for more research to test HRD theories, a concept to help bridge the gap between HRD scholarship and practice.

Torraco (2005) described HRD as integrated use of organizational development, career development, and training, but that this was incomplete. HRD has expanded into ethical research and practice. It has also expanded beyond skills training into executive development, workforce development, and others (Torraco, 2005). These are more related to HRD practice rather than HRD theory. While it is argued throughout this thesis that the CLO should have a firm grasp of both HRD scholarship and practice, it will be shown that concepts like these—that focus on practice—are more familiar to the CLOs in the field.

In their seminal work on developing and proposing a foundational theory for HRD, Swanson and Holton (2009) define HRD as a “...process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance” (p.4). This is the theoretical explanation of HRD that is used in the analysis of the data gathered in this study, and is the key to moving from a tactical perspective to a strategic one embraced by CLOs practicing Strategic HRD (Grieves, 2003).

In addition to individual and organizational perspectives, HRD also has a national one (Garavan, McGuire, & O'Donnell, 2004). The US has too many low-skilled workers and it is HRD's responsibility to elevate them with national HRD (Torraco, 2007). Yet, it is difficult to reconcile national HRD with the theoretical construct of HRD (Wang & Swanson, 2008). Because national HRD is not well-defined, and because this study focuses on individuals and how they fit into organizations, national HRD is outside the scope of the thesis.

In sum, HRD uses learning to improve workplace performance. It operates in organizational development, career development, and training. Additionally, it functions at the individual, work team, and organizational levels. Finally, it is one of the foundations of Strategic HRD (Grieves, 2003), the key practice by CLOs. This makes the CLO responsible not just for training and developing the organization's workforce, but for their performance (and results) as well.

Challenges to HRD as an Academic Discipline. HRD is not well-understood by those outside the field, creating challenges for the field to legitimize it (Ruona,

2000). Further, it is hard to pin down what makes up a discipline (Oldnall, 1995; Turner, 2006). Del Favero (2003) offered a list of elements of an academic discipline, including the presence of a community of scholars; a tradition or history of inquiry; a mode of inquiry that defines how data is collected and interpreted, as well as defining the requirements for what constitutes new knowledge; and the existence of a communications network (Del Favero, 2003).

At the other extreme, Kuchinke (2001) argued that HRD was not an academic discipline at all because HRD is applied and, thus, cross-disciplinary. It was a field with multiple disciplines as its roots/foundations (Kuchinke, 2001). Interestingly, the most prominent foundational HRD theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009) agreed that HRD is made up of contributing theories from other disciplines, including ethics, psychology, economics, and systems theories.

If HRD scholarship is going to play a distinct role in the performance of the CLO, then it must continue to strive towards establishing itself as an academic discipline. It must also work towards being of use to these practitioners. Finally, it must be accessible to them. The failings in this area constitute the “gap” between HRD scholarship and practice.

HRD Theory. In general, theory can be used to either predict phenomena (to be tested) or describe them (already tested or grounded) (Torraco & Holton, 2002). HRD remains indistinct because of the continuing argument over a foundational theory. For example, back in 1990, Jacobs offered five ‘feeder’ theories into HRD (Jacobs, 1990), and as mentioned above, Swanson and Holton (2009), in their foundational theory, suggest there are four.

Holton (2002a) noted that HRD needs theory and needs more robust theory. Yet experience, good practice, or problem-solving alone do not constitute research. “As an applied discipline, HRD needs to be backed by theory-building and research” (Swanson, 2003, p. 207). Further, Swanson notes the need for practitioners to be either involved or supportive of HRD scholarship, again pointing to the need to bridge the gap between HRD scholarship and practice. One needs two types of expertise to do theory-building – this is incomplete

In *Foundations of Human Resource Development*, Swanson and Holton (2009) provided a history of HRD and discussed several other theories that contribute to HRD theory. Each of these—Psychology, Economics, and Systems theory—was presented by a key HRD theorist. Psychology (Holton, 2009) discussed its impact on learning in the

workplace. Economics (Torraco, 2007) examined the business-related elements of HRD, and Systems Theory (Ruona, 2009) provided a clearer understanding of how all the moving parts in a system work together. These three made up a “3-legged stool,” sitting on a foundation of ethics (Swanson, 2001, p. 303). Alagaraja and Dooley (2003) editorialized the strengths and weaknesses of this theory when it was first proposed, finding it not strong enough on performance or on HRD practice.

The discipline has not fully settled on Swanson’s 3-legged stool as the foundational theory for HRD. McLean (1998) said Swanson's 3-legged stool metaphor is too simple. He suggested adding more legs (like an octopus), possibly other social sciences like anthropology, sociology, and speech communications. Swanson (1999) agreed with McLean that the 3-legged stool is not enough and that HRD should continue to conceptualize. Kuchinke (2000) suggested two debates for HRD: learning versus performance and which disciplines contribute to HRD. McGuire and Cseh (2006) argue for adult learning, systems theory, and psychology identified as disciplinary bases for HRD.

Regardless of its current or future form, having a foundational theory is valuable to HRD scholarship and this thesis. It provides both a central theory for understanding the development of CLOs. It also provides a framework for their strategic practice of HRD and their performances as learning leaders.

Boundaries of the HRD discipline. It has been hard to draw boundaries around what is and is not HRD, particularly when it comes to (a) education and (b) business management (Jacobs, 2000). Practitioners are told to draw upon theory, but theory is sometimes inconsistent (Watkins, 2000). On the other hand, Holton (2002b) urged that the field should not be distracted by defining the boundaries of HRD as this takes away from the real issue: “...improving the development of human resources and their organizations” (Holton, 2002c, p.276).

There has been an emphasis on clarifying what ‘human resources’ means as opposed to ‘development.’ (People who are ready, available, willing, and able to participate in productive activities.) HR, thus, is a boundary for HRD (Wang & Sun, 2009). Still, despite the need for boundaries around HRD, contradictions and confusion remain (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011). As they encounter the discipline’s boundaries, HRD scholars need to be willing to rebel against the status quo (Wang, 2011).

Arguments in HRD Scholarship. In reviewing an academic discipline’s literature, it is useful to examine the significant arguments in the field, particularly as

they bear on the thesis topic. Human resource development is not exception; several of its arguments are offered here.

In 2005, Russ-Eft suggested four 'controversies' in HRD, the first of which is learning versus performance. While HRD focuses on learning, learning can best be determined when it improves performance in the workplace. A second is critique versus collegiality. While HRD scholars benefit from the collegiality of being in a recognizable social group where peers serve to boost each other's efforts, honest and sincere critique is essential to move the science of HRD forward, to discard (or alter) ideas that do not hold up, and to advance those that do hold up. A third is the qualitative versus quantitative debate. The field must (and does) embrace either approach. More important, it must embrace the use of both. Finally, Russ-Eft describes the theory versus practice debate. The discussion around which of these best advances the field of HRD is not 'either/or'; it is 'both.' The gap between theory and practice has been, and remains, an unsolved issue, and will be further explored later in this chapter.

Learning versus Performance is another continuing argument in HRD scholarship. There is an ongoing argument whether learning or performance is the goal of HRD (Kuchinke, 2001). However, learning improves performance. "There is much support for the belief that employee development programs make positive contributions to organizational performance" (Jacobs & Washington, 2003, p. 351). One survey showed that HRD members want the field to be called 'Workplace Learning and Performance' (Galagan, 2003). This is also reflected in ASTD's professional certification, the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 20102). HRD is increasingly focused on performance. It relies on performance to justify its activities. (Holton, 2003). Also, Ruona (2001) argued that 'Performance versus Learning' is not a sufficient question. "We should not be too quick to assume that the two emerging paradigms and performance versus learning, or that there are only two paradigms" (p. 340).

In the field of HRD, there remains a struggle for control of learning and development. Does it belong to the individual or the organization? (Holton, 2003) To extend Holton's argument, does it belong to both? If so, who controls HRD in the organization, and how does it relate to the individual employee? This argument relates directly to the practice of HRD by the CLO. As a highly placed executive within his/her respective organization, the CLO may manage learning and performance across the

enterprise. In the next section, how HRD is practiced in the workplace will be further explored.

HRD as a Practice

In addition to being an academic discipline, human resource development (HRD) is also a career field filled with practitioners. This section will explore this facet of HRD, including a review of the major HRD-related trade magazines and books, a description of the levels of HRD practice, a return to the concept of Strategic HRD, a discussion of the boundaries of the practice, and the major arguments within it.

Trade Magazines. Practitioners in human resource development have several popular magazines in the field. These magazines, one published by the leading trade organization in the United States, the others published independently, offer tips, tools, and best practices for HRD practitioners. What research is offered is applied, rather than scholarly. Prominent scholarly authors, like Swanson, Holton, Garavan, do not appear in these publications. Nor do the prominent practitioners, like Masie, Bersin, Elkeles, and Phillips, publish in the scholarly journals. The gap between the two is well-established.

Training Magazine is a nearly 50-year-old professional development magazine that advocates training and workforce development as a business tool (Training Magazine, retrieved January 2nd, 2012). *T+D* is a magazine published by the American Society for Training and Development and distributed monthly to its 39,000 members (American Society for Training and Development, retrieved January 2nd, 2012). *Chief Learning Officer* magazine is focused on senior HRD practitioners, whether or not they hold the title ‘CLO.’ It is the major source of practice-related information about the CLO (CLO Media retrieved January 2nd, 2012). Together, these magazines offer a wide array of advice and best practices, but little in the way of information about scholarly advancements in the field of HRD.

Books on HRD Practice. Just as there are trade magazines available to the practitioner, there are also books written about various aspects of human resource development. Like the trade magazines, these books tend towards best practices and solving problems while applying HRD in the workplace. Examples of these texts—each associated with an HRD practice area—are described below.

In *Principles of Instructional Design* (Gagne, Wagner, Golas, & Keller, 2005) offers guidance on the full gamut of instructional design, from analyzing learning and performance requirements to designing/developing instruction to delivery (including

choosing from various methods), and evaluating the results. It is written at an introductory, high level.

In *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (Mager, 1977) is the field's cornerstone to developing instruction—writing learning objectives that define (in a structured way) what participants are expected to be able to do, think, and feel after completing the instruction.

In *Telling Ain't Training* (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2011)—is focused on effective delivery, including methods, the ways adults learn, and makes distinctions between education, instruction, and training.

In *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels* (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The lead author, Donald Kirkpatrick, is the guru of training evaluation. His four-level model (Reaction, Learning, Transfer, and Impact) has been the standard for decades. Recently, however, a fifth level—Return on Investment (ROI)—has been suggested in *How to Measure Training Results* (Phillips & Stone, 2002). This book begins to build the bridge to Strategic HRD by adding the new level of new level of ROI, plus the examination of intangible benefits elusive to quantification.

The Chief Learning Officer (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007) is a cookbook for being a CLO, including developing a learning strategy, analyzing and supporting the business needs, moving learning to performance, and managing ROI of training. The book is focused on the practice of Strategic HRD, even though it does not use that particular term.

Thus, CLOs (and other HRD practitioners) have a variety of sources for advice and best practices suggested. The ones offered above are merely a sample of them. However, in none of these will the reader find practices and advice offered by—or even supported by—scholarly researchers and their work. This condition even further illustrates the gap between scholarship and practice that will be explored later in this chapter and in the results the thesis research.

Purposes of HRD Practice. The purposes of HRD were presented in the previous section, but warrant another look from a practitioner's perspective. "The purpose of HRD is to improve organizational performance" (Swanson & Arnold, 1996, p. 13). In operational terms, HRD brings about change through learning (Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983). Regarding HRD practice, "HRD is an occupation which includes activities like executive development, technical training, internal consulting, counseling, and other development activities" (Chalofsky & Lincoln, p. 16). It comprises several

roles, such as “HRD manager, learning specialist, consultant, or career counselor” (Chalofsky & Lincoln, p. 17). In a more recent example, Swanson and Holton (2009) retain the need to consider both learning and performance. “It is interesting to listen more closely to each side and to discover that learning is seen as an avenue to performance and that performance requires learning” (p. 17). Swanson and Holton, however, suggest that in both “....there is an overarching concern for improvement” (p.17).

Levels of HRD. HRD can be defined and analyzed at the Individual, Organizational, and Societal levels (Garavan, McGuire, & O’Donnell, 2004). The individual level of analysis largely emphasizes the human aspect of HRD. Organization goals can only be achieved through individual performance (Garavan et al., 2004, p. 419). This approach involves determining individual employees’ learning needs and fulfilling them with training and development experiences (Mankin, 2009).

HRD is also a specialized set of developmental activities or interventions that focus on supporting organizational objectives (Garavan et al., 2004). Organizational learning is closely associated with individual learning and focuses on improving organizational performance, which also includes individual learning (Mankin, 2009). Organizations also offer learning experiences to individual employees (but managed centrally) that they cannot create on their own, including career planning, job rotations, experiential learning, and formal on-the-job training (West, 2002).

A society’s developmental needs are addressed with National HRD: “HRD at this level is concerned with the provision of education and the development of human capital toward improving national competitiveness and the quality of life of citizens” (Garavan et al., 2004, p. 423). However, National HRD is still underdeveloped theoretically (Wang & Swanson, 2008).

The Chief Learning Officer is concerned with both individual learning (and how it translates into performance), as well as the organization’s performance and success. While it is a subject often considered by scholars (Garavan et al., 2004; McLean, 2004; Wang & Swanson, 2008), it is not a hot topic of discussion among practitioners. A search through the three periodicals described above yielded no examples.

Boundaries of HRD Practice. As described earlier, the practice of HRD focuses primarily on the individual and organizational levels, but not on the national level (Garavan et al., 2004). This thesis is about Chief Learning Officers, who are engaged in individual and organizational learning, but not in national HRD. Of course,

HRD practitioners at the individual and organizational level would not be precluded from moving into, or contributing to, national HRD.

Another boundary is the question of whether or not career development is a part of HRD practice. Career development got pushed out as HRD theory matured. Eventually, career development theory was not included (McDonald & Hite, 2005). Little attention has been paid to career development by HRD scholars (Egan, Upton, & Lynham, 2006). Still, in practice HRD is a key for protean careers (McGoldrick, Stewart, & Watson, 2001). Career development is a "strategic lever in HRD" (Abdullah & Kumar, 2008, p. 62). Swanson and Holton (2009) agree that career development is a key component of HRD practice. As it is explained later in this chapter, this thesis considers career development—whether or not it is a part of HRD practice—is an important consideration when examining the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer.

The final theme under consideration regarding HRD practice boundaries is whether or not organization development (OD) is a part of HRD. As Swanson and Holton (2009) laid it out, OD is not part of their foundational theory of HRD; yet, they describe it as part of HRD practice. This, in turn, makes it part of the CLO's practice domain.

Arguments. Besides the boundaries of HRD described above, there are some running arguments among HRD practitioners to consider. There are not many, since the practitioner literature is focused primarily on advice, not on debating issues. Two are considered here.

HRD practitioners should get out of training business and into learning (Mosher, 2007). The field argues about training versus learning, but are they paying attention to performance, regardless of whether it comes from training or learning? The field needs to actively pursue learning, not just training (Zahn, 2001). Training is a one-time event; learning is life-long (Leonard, 2006). More important—and relevant to the CLO—workplace learning leads to higher workplace performance (Ashton & Sung, 2004). This indicates the need to actively pursue individual and organizational improvement, both roles for which the CLO—practicing Strategic HRD (Grieves, 2003) is ideally placed.

By the 1960's, it was recognized that subject-matter expertise alone was not sufficient. According to Bartlett (2003), organizations need professional HRD specialists. Minimum competencies and standards should be developed and adhered to

(Bartlett, 2003). HRD professionals are focused more on employee development and work autonomy than on business agendas (Hansen, Kahnweiler, & Wilensky, 1994). While the argument continues, it currently appears that HRD is still a practice, not a profession. HRD fails to meet three criteria to be a profession (Kuchinke, 2000). While it is not yet a profession, HRD has available two strategies: traditional and nontraditional. Traditional would be to follow other professions (like counseling). Nontraditional would be other roles that could be done to ‘professionalize’ the field of practice (Kahnweiler, 2009). The research will reflect a number of approaches taken to the CLO role—getting there and performing in it—by its participants. No prescribed competencies or prior experience will emerge from the research findings that create a *de facto* professional standard for the CLO.

Upper Echelons Theory

As described in Chapter 1, the Chief Learning Officer’s practice is focused on using learning and development to help lead organizations strategically. This means engaging its senior executives. As a group, these executives are referred to the ‘upper echelon’ in scholarship (Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009). In practice, they are normally called the ‘Senior Leadership Team’ (Hughes & Beatty, 2005), ‘Top Management Team’ (Zaccaro, 2001) or the ‘C-suite’ (Groysberg, Kevin, & MacDonald, 2011).

Upper Echelons Theory. The senior managers of an organization exist as an ‘upper echelon,’ strategically directing the organization (Nishii, Gotte, & Raver, 2007). This senior leadership team can be referred to as a ‘Top Management Team’ (TMT) (Hughes & Beatty, 2005). A common model is the departmental model. Members of the TMT are heads of their respective departments, responsible as a group for strategic management, and individually for managing their respective departments (Talaular, Grundei, & Werder, 2005). Another is the CEO model: one member has the right to dictate to the other members and can undertake strategic decisions unilaterally. The CEO has final say-so, even for departmental decisions (Talaular et al., 2005). Regardless of the models in place, the typical TMT is growing by adding functional managers rather than general managers (Guadalupe, Li, & Wulf, 2012).

Not everyone agrees that the TMT actually functions as a team or should (Hughes & Beatty, 2005). Katzenbach was asking this in 1997 and it is still being debated. Frisch (2011) said there is often a select few that make the real decisions in a

company or organization and that informal groups form despite the formal organizational structure, both of which serve to undermine the authority of the TMT.

The seminal work on upper echelons theory comes from Hambrick (with Mason, 1984, then updated by Hambrick in 2007). There are two parts to theory: First, executives act because of their personal interpretations and second, these are a function of their experiences, values, and personalities. Focusing on the characteristics of the TMT will yield stronger explanations of organizational outcomes than just looking at the CEO alone (Hambrick, 2007). Studying TMTs provide opportunities for more complexity than the single entrepreneur (Cannella & Finkelstein, 2009).

For Chief Learning Officers, the key to getting selected to join the TMT is to be a fundamental part of running the business or organization (Kleponis, Christiansen, & Hall, 2005). To get a seat at the table, CLOs need to ensure "learning across the enterprise is an integral part of the business operations...and valued by employees" (Kleponis et al., p. 61). The TMT knows that intellectual capital is a vital asset. An effective manager of it will be seen as a valuable member of the TMT. A key aspect of this study is the understanding of how HRD practitioners rise to the level of the CLO and practice Strategic HRD (either by being on the TMT or engaging it strategically).

Getting a Seat on the Top Management Team. The top management team (TMT) of an organization is the groups of executives at the top of the organization who steer it strategically. As noted earlier, Menz, (2012) defines it as a team of senior executives, each responsible for one or more functional areas in the organization. Menz includes the CLO in that lineup as well. Yet, joining the TMT may not be the only way for the CLO to practice Strategic HRD. Anderson (2009) says that SHRD alignment is hard, situational, and may not be desirable. Alignment is an interactive process. It is not clear if alignment has been or can be achieved. Often the HRD chief is not a key stakeholder in the organization (Anderson, 2009). Being on the TMT might not even be the best use of a CLO's time (Ricketts & Pannoni, 2010). Either way, the CLO will need to align initiatives with business objectives, gather meaningful metrics, and communicate clearly and concisely with boards of executives (Ricketts & Pannoni, 2010). The results of this research support this conclusion—CLOs practice HRD strategically whether or not they actually hold membership on the TMT.

According to Vancil (1987), executives are selected to the TMT by several processes. He called it a 'relay race' when the position is filled through succession planning, where a replacement is groomed for promotion into it. A 'horse race' occurs

when group of candidates is solicited, with the 'best' person then selected to fill the position. Finally, when the organization faces a critical need to fill a position quickly with a qualified candidate, rather than being able to wait to either groom one (Relay Race) or hold a competition (Horse Race), it fills it by 'Crisis' (Vancil, 1987). However, Vancil's model does not anticipate a fourth way demonstrated by many participants in this study: the candidate creates the executive position and then fills it. This approach emerged from the data gathered in this study and represents a significant finding. It is explored further in both Chapters 4 and 5.

Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD)

As noted in Chapter 1—Introduction, SHRD is an important component of the practice of HRD, particularly for the Chief Learning Officer. Grieves (2003) states that SHRD subsumes mere HRD practice, adding organizational development and strategic management. SHRD represents a "...desire to rescue the concept of Human Resource Development from a mundane existence in the depths of training programs" (Grieves, 2003, p. 1). This distinction also leads the research from a general examination of HRD practitioners and towards the specific study of CLOs.

Focusing on organizational strategy is the key to its successful implementation by integrating learning and knowledge into business operations (Harrison, 2000), becoming a "Master of Business Awareness" (Salopek, 2003, p. 71). HRD managers are beholden to stakeholders (Garavan, 1995); strategic alignment via stakeholder engagement creates positive results (Wognum & Lam, 2000). Aligning SHRD practices to the outcomes of the organization is a key role for the CLO and distinguished the CLO from the rest of HRD practitioners when the research topic for this thesis was being considered.

Strategic HRD requires the building of a learning culture (McCracken & Wallace, 2000). HRD is expected to make a strategic contribution to the organization's mission and outcomes (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). Further, HRD has been weak strategically, focusing on individual learning instead of organizational results (Vince, 2003). HR departments are moving to become more strategic (Marques, 2006). This will drive HRD practitioners towards being more strategic, too. Thus, SHRD can be defined as the creation of a learning culture (McCracken & Wallace, 2000). As the leader responsible for the organizational level of HRD, the CLO is challenged with creating this culture.

Swanson and Holton (2009) devote a chapter to SHRD in their seminal work. Two factors pushing HRD into a more strategic role: centrality of IT to business success and the competitive advantage gained from employees' knowledge and skills. HRD is a shaper of strategy, not just a supporter of it. SHRD is valuable to an organization when it is: performance-based, it demonstrates its strategic capability, and it is responsive to the emergent nature of strategy. Swanson and Holton identify a wide variety of SHRD activities practitioners may follow, including strategic planning, conducting interviews, and gathering data.

Organizations engaged in SHRD are more likely to produce good HRD outcomes (Tseng & McLean, 2008). In one case study, (Kalman, 2008) strategic planning was used to reinvent a corporate training department and elevate it. Five critical success factors were identified to support training's alignment with the organization's strategic requirements: planning, people, process components, personal capability, and political awareness.

On a cautionary note, SHRD alignment is hard, situational, and may not be desirable (Anderson, 2009). Alignment is an interactive process. It is not always clear if alignment has been or can be achieved. Often the Chief Learning Officer is not a key stakeholder in the organization (Anderson, 2009). This key point will factor into this thesis' study of the Chief Learning Officer phenomenon.

Other Notes on the Phenomenon Studied

Because of the need to establish the Chief Learning Officer as a phenomenon to study, much of what needs to be said about the CLO was covered in Chapter 1— Introduction. This section presents some background information about the CLO, along with what little research has previously been conducted about the subject. This will include notes on what CLOs do, how HRD practitioners become CLOs, and the issue of the CLO joining the organization's top management team—'getting a seat at the table.'

What CLOs Do. CLOs align HRD with business requirements through Business Transformation and Key Talent Retention/Development (Chang, 2005). Their key competencies include strategic management, general management, knowledge management, leadership skills, and learning methods/concepts (L'Allier, 2006). The CLO's skills must include defining the CLO position, getting results, and managing the learning organization (Bower, 2007). The CLO must be the catalyst to bring about organizational change and create value (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). The role is more

essential than the specific title. What one does in it is more important than the title (Laff, 2008).

How to Become a CLO. This is not well-researched and will be a central focus of this study. Elkeles and Phillips (2007) and Israelite (2006) offer sound advice about being a CLO, but not one becoming one. L'Allier (2005) describes the CLO as typically highly educated, more than 45 years old, with a background in both business and education, has come up through the organization's structure, is long-tenured in the industry, and is a member of a large organization. Unfortunately, books and articles tend not to discuss how to climb the career ladder to become a CLO.

Advice for the New CLO. Making the transition from manager to executive is difficult in any field (Eblin, 2010), including becoming a CLO. Finley (2002) suggests having a broad business understanding. Davenport (2006) says to act as if one has been sitting there all along, and do not wait for a seat on the top management team to be offered. Either take it or assume it. Know the business and deliver results. A key measure is if and when the CLO is asked to facilitate a major business change (Davenport, 2006). Oakes (2004) said CLOs should speak the language of business and ensure they are adding value to the organization. Brown (2004) encouraged CLOs to play to unique HRD strengths such as leveraging human learning and performance. Moore (2009) encourages the CLO to get to know the business and build a learning team that does as well. Scott (2011) encourages the CLO to emphasize communications with the rest of the top management team and to act like an equal member on it. Yet, does the CLO need to 'have a seat' on the top management team?

Conclusion

This chapter sought to scan the relevant literature of the HRD discipline and establish the theoretical basis for studying the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer.

Next, in Chapter 3—Research Method, the processes used to explore this phenomenon are examined and explained, including issues associated with methodological philosophy, sample selection, developing data sources, developing an analytical framework, creating a coding structure, and formulating a theoretical design. The result will be a complete description of how the research was able to go from the questions to it beginning to formulate some answers, and how it nurtured the emergence of elements of the phenomenon not anticipated by the study's design and proposal.

Chapter 3—Research Method

This chapter serves to introduce the research method selected and used for this project. It covers broad areas like the ontological/epistemological perspectives taken and where this method sits with other qualitative methods available. It also covers specific areas, including an in-depth exploration of the grounded theory process, the rationale for participant selection, and the interview method. Additionally, it presents a description of the data analysis employed (including a discussion about computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software), ethical issues considered, and the pilot study conducted as well as its impact on the rest of the research. Finally, issues and limitations of the research method are considered. At the end of this chapter, the context will be established for presenting, describing, and analyzing the data, which will occur in Chapters 4 and 5.

Regarding the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer, the researcher was faced with a topic that was not only under-researched, it needed to be established whether or not the phenomenon was real. Was the CLO a new development in the practice of HRD? Or was it merely a new, fancy title training managers had begun to adopt? While that question was settled in Chapter 1, the challenge of exploring this phenomenon remained.

Due to the gap in the literature and the lack of knowledge on the topic, the researcher decided on an inductive approach, where the topic could be challenged openly without regard to ‘armchair’ theories that might be ideated and tested. Further, a qualitative analysis was conducted (based on semi-structured interviews of CLOs) to both gather their lived experiences and to allow unanticipated aspects of the phenomenon to emerge from the collected data. Finally, a constructive grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) approach was taken, where multiple, even paradoxical, perspectives were gathered and used, and a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon was sought. These goals were achieved, and a ‘basic social process’ (BSP; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of ‘strong structuration’ (Stones, 2005) was identified. This further discovery of a BSP would not have been possible without the unique theory-seeking nature of grounded theory.

Through the use of the research methods described below, the phenomenon of the CLO was explored, data was gathered and analyzed, and the career path of the CLO

and its internal dynamics were identified and analyzed. It was made clear that strong structuration was occurring; the CLOs engaged their structures to fill, and sometimes even create, their positions. Strong structuration went even further to explain the CLO's career development, including the dynamic of leaving the role and pursuing other interests. Finally, the paradigm developed from the analysis of this phenomenon could be re-used when exploring career development in other disciplines.

What ensues in the remainder of this chapter is an explanation of the critical considerations in establishing and executing a research process, along with details on how they were employed in this study.

Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives

When setting the stage for thesis research, it is useful to consider the underlying assumptions regarding how the world works and how it can be understood. Thus, it is essential to identify the ontological and epistemological assumptions that support the study.

Ontology refers to the researcher's perception of the way the social world is constructed (Mason, 2006). It can be considered the nature of the reality (Patton, 2002). The researcher's ontological perspective affects the way the researcher goes about investigating the phenomenon under study. One useful ontological dichotomy is objectivism versus constructionism. Objectivism asserts that the phenomenon has construct and meaning beyond the impact of social actors upon it, while constructivism posits that the social actors are continually affecting and shaping the phenomenon through their actions (Bryman, 2004). This research takes a decidedly constructivist approach.

Epistemology asks the question, "How do we know what we know?" (Patton, 2002, p. 134)? Thus, the researcher's epistemological perspective helps determine what methodologies the researcher will use in studying the phenomenon. Constructivism, an ontological perspective (Bryman, 2004), is also the epistemological perspective this research takes (Charmaz, 2006). How the participants construct their views on their profession, coupled with the actions they take, becomes the phenomenon from both an individual and a social group perspective. Together, they create the CLO phenomenon and, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4 and 5, many of them have created their own individual CLO roles.

The Grounded Theory Paradigm

This research project uses grounded theory as its research framework. As such, grounded theory is explored in considerable detail in this chapter. As the reader will see, grounded theory is both a research method (the grounded theory method) and an outcome of inductive research (the grounded theory itself) (Charmaz, 2006). Topics included in this analysis are the background of grounded theory, its particular use in this research project, challenges as they relate to the research process and risks as they relate to the project's research outcomes.

What Grounded Theory Is. This study took a *grounded theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach towards developing a theory of how CLO's rise to their roles, what they are responsible for doing (and are capable of), and how they develop professionally along the way. The researcher drew on several other sources as well (Centre for Labour Market Studies [CLMS], 2003; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Morse et al., 2009).

A key aspect of qualitative design is that the researcher is situated in the project; the fieldwork is highly personal (Patton, 2002). How the researcher chooses to search for, construct, interpret, and report has a significant impact on the final findings of the project. This subjectivity is not only acknowledged in this project, it is embraced, along with the changes the researcher will undergo due to the experiences derived from the project.

Grounded theory is an *inductive* approach to qualitative research, meaning the theory, the explanation of the phenomenon, emerges from the data collected and its analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This differs from more traditional *deductive* approaches, where the research questions (and possibly theory) are derived from an up-front literature review (Allan, 2003). Grounded theory uses a statement of the phenomenon to be studied instead of pre-fabricated research questions (Backman & Kyngas, 1999). The researcher begins with general questions or ideas and then works to develop them further (Charmaz, 2006). The result is theory developed and grounded in the data gathered. Theory building is not obscured by theory testing (CLMS, 2003).

Grounded theory involves *continuous analysis*. Rather than waiting for the entire data collection process to be completed, the researcher analyzes the data collected immediately after collection (Charmaz, 2006), permitting the researcher to make decisions about what further data to seek while still in the collection process. This is called *theoretical sampling* (CLMS, 2003) and it focuses the data collection on the

themes emerging from the data (and its analysis) and towards building a theory to explain the phenomenon under investigation.

Grounded theory is a method that is inclusive regarding what data might be collected, analyzed, and used to build theory. In fact, everything is data when using grounded theory (CLMS, 2003; Glaser, 1998). It permits the researcher to explore the phenomenon without many preconceptions (Backman & Kyngas, 1999); yet, still leaves room for some prior knowledge and at least a preliminary review of the literature (McGhee & Atkinson, 2007).

What Grounded Theory is Not. Suddaby (2006) provides a solid summary of what grounded theory is not. It is not:

- An excuse to ignore the literature. In fact, the literature is included in the continuous analysis and after theory development in order to situate the new theory into the extant literature (Backman & Kyngas, 1999).
- A presentation of raw data. Instead, the data collected during grounded theory research is subject to a great deal of analysis, meaning-making, and code/category/theory development (Saldana, 2009).
- Theory testing, word counts, or content analysis. Again, grounded theory seeks to find meaning and, ultimately, an explanation of the phenomenon under study (Charmaz, 2006).
- A simple routine application of formulaic technique to data.
- Perfect. Because of this genealogy, grounded theory techniques are inherently “messy” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638).
- Easy. This thesis examines some of the challenges and risks associated with doing grounded theory.

Origins. Grounded theory was introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 (CLMS, 2003) and has gone under considerable refinement since (Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 2009). Originally, Glaser and Strauss “...argued that the actual process of generating theory was being neglected by the need to test theories” (CLMS, 2003, p. M1U4-15). In other words, quantitative (inductive) methods based upon hypothesis testing were pushing out the deep research necessary to formulate good theory in the first place. Further, Glaser and Strauss (1967) wanted to demonstrate that qualitative methods were legitimate and could be used to create and confirm theories.

Styles. According to Creswell (2007), grounded theory has two popular approaches: systematic and constructivist. This also reflects a schism between grounded theory's two founders, with Strauss taking the systematic approach and Glaser the constructivist route. In systematic grounded theory, the researcher conducts field interviews until no more new data is discovered ("saturation"). The researcher begins analyzing the data by "open coding," where each fragment of the data is analyzed and categorized (CLMS, 2003). Then "axial coding" is conducted, where the different categories are compared and relationships are determined. This may also cause the researcher to pursue follow-up data (CLMS, 2003). One category is selected as the "core" category, with other categories, through their relationship to each other and to the core, linking back to the core (CLMS, 2003), resulting in a "conditional matrix" (Creswell, p. 65) a sort of visual depiction of the categories and how they form the emergent theory. In addition to interviews, the researcher may examine literature to inform the emerging theory (CLMS, 2003).

A second approach to grounded theory, constructivist, "...lies squarely within the interpretive approach to qualitative research with flexible guidelines, a focus on theory developed that depends on the researcher's view, learning about the experience within embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships..." (Creswell, 2007, 65). Proffered by Charmaz (2006), this approach to grounded theory eschews much of the positivism seen in the systematic approach, is wary of forming firm conclusions about proving theories (as opposed to developing them), and takes into account much more of the subjective side of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). This study will employ the constructivist approach, with the intent of building a theory to describe the studied phenomenon (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2003).

Coding Structure. Fitting the grounded theory approach, several coding methods have been considered, with four selected. Each is appropriate for grounded theory studies (Saldana, 2009). They are described in the following table:

Table 1. *Coding Structure*

Method	Purpose
Process	Uses gerunds to capture the action in the data. Search for consequences from the actions.
Initial	“...breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences” (Saldana, p. 81).
Focused—2nd level	Follows Initial coding to search for the frequent or significant Initial codes in order to develop the most relevant categories.
Axial—2nd Level	Axial Coding provides the connections between categories which, when connected, lead to a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under study.
Theoretical 2nd level	An umbrella code that accounts for all the other codes/categories. It connects the other codes/categories into a comprehensive theory that explains the phenomenon under study. The goal of this study.

In the table above, two codes are labeled “2nd level.” These codes are created when “coding the codes”; a second-level analysis of the first round of coding. To support theoretical sampling, this coding is done on an ongoing basis as indicated by the results of the 1st level coding, which is also done continuously. The process is depicted below:

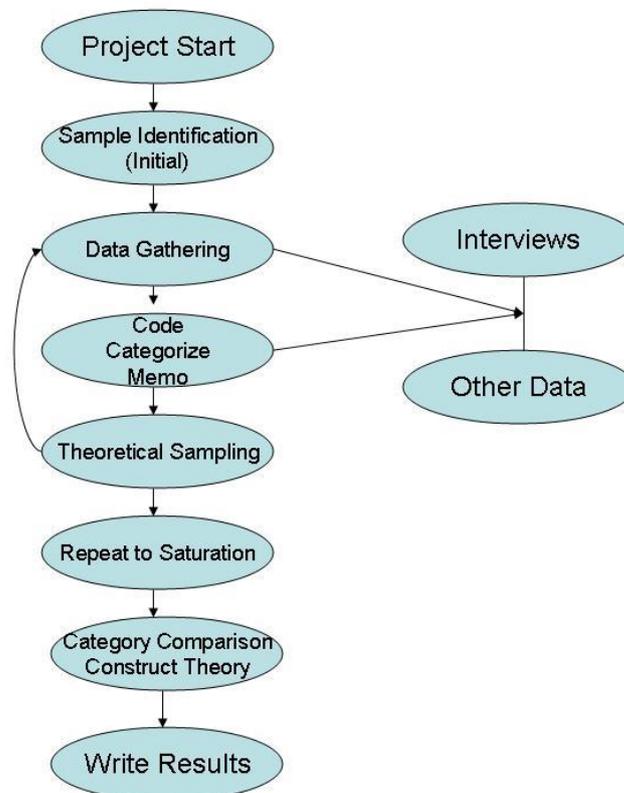


Figure 3-1. Data Gathering and Analysis Process

Challenges to the Process. There are many challenges unique to using grounded theory as a research method. These are described below. Also offered is commentary regarding mitigating factors relevant to easing such challenges.

Deep Understanding of Issues. When using deductive qualitative approaches to research, particularly within the scope of a doctoral thesis, the researcher undertakes a thorough review of the literature in order to understand the salient issues related to the research topic, determine gaps in the literature (and, thus, potential areas for study), and to situate the research into the extant literature. While one of grounded theory's co-founders insists the researcher refrain as much as possible from being influenced too deeply by the extant literature and conventional thinking (Glaser, 1998), the researcher must still understand the relevant issues sufficiently to determine the purpose and initial direction of the study (Goulding, 2002). After the theory is substantially developed, the literature should then be thoroughly reviewed in order to situate the new theory into it (Goulding, 2002).

The researcher developed a literature review as part of the thesis and has extensive professional experience and knowledge in leadership development, research methodologies, and the learning and development profession. Additionally, extant literature was used as a data source to further inform the project's findings.

Lack of Structure. Because grounded theory has such structural flexibility, the researcher can be overwhelmed with the amounts of data and the number of key ideas emerging, challenging the data analysis process and potentially causing the researcher to miss key emergent points (Backman & Kyngas, 1999). Further complicating matters, grounded theory's founders, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, did not prescribe a particular coding philosophy (CLMS, 2003); yet, over-coding can deflate creativity (Selden, 2005) and be time-consuming and confusing (Allan, 2003). No matter the specific approach, the process itself can be unwieldy (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2003; Fassinger, 2005). Thus, a significant challenge facing the researcher is to choose between the two philosophies suggested by grounded theories founders: more structure—Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or less structure—Glaser (1998).

To mitigate the challenge presented by the amount of data, coding was done for concept, not just literal meaning or "labeling." This risked introducing researcher bias, but was balanced by the researcher's prior knowledge of the field, and through reflection by transcribing interviews and writing memos to record contemporaneous reactions to the data being gathered for analysis.

Saturation. Traditionally, “saturation” occurs when the researcher notes no new, significant themes emerging from the data as additional data collection will not be particularly revealing (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). However, this form of saturation does not pose unique challenges to using grounded theory. Instead, grounded theory presents the challenge of “theoretical saturation,” where, in creating the theoretical construct emergent from the data analysis, the researcher “...identifies a point where no further conceptualization of the data is required...” to explain the phenomenon (Dey, 2008, p. 8). The theoretical construct is complete. However, theoretical saturation can be difficult to identify (Allan, 2003; Creswell, 2007). The researcher can be overwhelmed by the large amounts of data and codes/concepts with no clear approach to analyzing it (CLMS, 2003).

The nature of the thesis process was somewhat limiting. Time, funding, and even word constraints may each or all served to delimit the study, requiring the researcher to build the best concepts available within these limitations (Allan, 2003). Thus, a true grounded theory was not constructed. However, the foundation for one was laid. Further research towards a complete theory is recommended in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

Translating Meaning. Using positivistic methods, it is assumed there is one commonly shared meaning available to explain data, and the challenge is to find it and communicate it. However, using a constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006), the researcher is interested in how the participants themselves make meaning. One is challenged with making the same meaning of data gathered from the participants as was intended by them (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003). Another challenge is to provide every-day meaning to participants’ statements (Selden, 2005) so that other consumers of the research will also be able to understand the phenomenon fully.

The challenge of making meaning of the data gathered from participants was met with several mitigating efforts. First, the researcher sought to analyze the data to determine its scholarly meaning, rather than merely resorting to labeling and superficial interpretation. Related to that, it is key to remember that the data do not generate theory; the researcher, through careful and thorough analysis of that data, does. Qualitative research and the grounded theory method are highly personal and rely on the effectiveness and balance of the researcher.

Risks to the Outcomes. In addition to risks related to the grounded theory process, the research faced several risks regarding the final product (outcome) of the process.

Data Analysis. Any time the researcher summarizes the data gathered (often by coding for concepts and theoretical constructs) the loss of context is a potential risk (Bryman, 2004). This is especially true if the researcher conducts an overly generic analysis (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1996). Another, related risk is that the concepts do not emerge from the data (Selden, 2005), or the researcher fails to identify the basic social process—the underlying theoretical explanation of the phenomenon being studied (Cutcliffe, 2000). Finally, competing accounts of meaning might be present (Bryman, 2004), which can complicate analysis and interpretation of the data.

A key to overcoming the risk of lost context when data is “chunked” (summarizing the data and/or separating parts of it from its original context) during analysis is to focus on finding meaning, not merely literal translation of what was said in the interviews. This also helped guard against an overly generic analysis of the data. A well-structured coding system (with more than 100 codes) coupled with robust theoretical sampling helped ensure the emergence of the basic social process. Multiple meanings of the data were not guarded against. Instead, they were embraced in the spirit of constructivism (Charmaz, 2006), knowing that the participants’ meaning added rich elements of understanding when the phenomenon was explored.

Preconceptions. This risk was partially discussed in the “Challenges” section above. In this case, the potential impacts of preconceptions on the study’s outcomes were examined. First, the influence of preconceptions, firmly held ideas regarding the phenomenon being brought into the research process, can corrupt the findings by causing the researcher to merely echo the conclusions of those who have gone before, thus breaking no new ground (Glaser, 1998). Yet, having no preconceived ideas is hard to achieve (Allan, 2003) and having a *tabula rasa* not really all that valuable (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher should know some things about the phenomenon under study.

This is particularly troublesome for researchers with extensive experience in their fields (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1996). Allen (2003) recommends the researcher openly acknowledge prior knowledge and biases, then continuously reflect upon them during data analysis. The readers of the research may be introduced to them and the researcher may document his/her reflection on them through the inclusion of personal profile, as was done in Chapter 1.

In this thesis, the researcher had significant experience and knowledge of both the field of human resource development and of the role of the Chief Learning Officer. This prior knowledge was key to conceiving the project and to developing its initial structures, such as the topic selected, the project design (Appendix 2), and the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix 3). This prior knowledge also informed the semi-structured interviews as they were taking place, when the researcher and the participant would follow a basic structure, but either was free to pursue other lines of discussion as they might arise. Finally, the researcher's prior knowledge and experience were re-introduced when analyzing the results of the research, as well as when selecting additional literature to use in that analysis.

Results. This final section examines other potential risks to the results of the study when using grounded theory as the primary research and analysis method. First, there is real possibility that no theory emerges from the data collected and analyzed (Cutcliffe, 2000; Goulding, 2002; Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2003). Then there is the risk that the theory is not grounded (Goldkuhl & Cronholm), either in the data itself or in its connections to the extant literature and other theories. There is the possibility that the theory will not be credible (Cutcliffe), or it will not be of sufficient quality (Fassinger, 2005).

Rationale for Participant Selection

This study is an inductive, constructive, qualitative study seeking insights from the lived experiences of its participants: Chief Learning Officers. In order to form a complete "picture" of the phenomenon, it would be necessary to obtain perspectives from various informants in multiple roles. Together, their perspectives could be connected to build a 'hologram' of the phenomenon. In that case, the CLO would be examined not only from his/her perspective but from other role players associated with the CLO, such as HRD practitioners, human capital managers, operational executives and managers, customers, and others. Following constructive principles (Charmaz, 2006), these efforts would provide multiple insights into the phenomenon of the CLO or reality as each set of participants would construct it. Given the limitations of the study discussed earlier, it was determined that the CLOs themselves would provide the most diverse and rich perspectives immediately available.

Remarkably, participants were eager to refer their colleagues for interviews. Eight of the 20 participants interviewed came from these referrals. Additionally, several other participants came to the project from referrals from non-CLOs interested in

supporting the research project. Finally, the remainder of the participants came into the project through the researcher's efforts and contacts.

Thus, participants were identified and selected using a combination of 'convenience sampling,' where the researcher selects cases (participants) that can be easily reached in order to facilitate the process (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2007) and 'purposive sampling,' where participants are selected because of their relevance to the research outcomes sought (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This diverges from theoretical sampling, where cases are selected for their potential contribution to the emerging theory (in a grounded theory process), often selected as a result of analyzing earlier cases (Glaser, 1998). This decision was based on time, scope, and limitations imposed by the thesis process and represents a limitation towards developing a full grounded theory.

Potential participants were identified by the researcher, either through direct contact or by referral from professional colleagues. Potential participants were sent a package via e-mail describing the project (see Appendices). The researcher then followed up with each potential participant to arrange the interview. Every person who was contacted and sent the participants' package agreed to be interviewed for the project.

Semi-structured Interviews

When preparing for a series of interviews, the researcher may take a variety of approaches in terms of how structured the interviews will be. These can range from a rigid question-and-answer format, with very little variance on the questions asked and little room for follow-up, all the way to a nearly unstructured interview resembling a conversation rather than a disciplined process (Bryman, 2004). Heavily structured interviews strive to provide consistency of inquiry from participant to participant. However, less-structured interviews allow for the tailoring of the interview for each participant, either prior to the interview or even during it. This approach gives the qualitative researcher much more flexibility to examine the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews are where the researcher begins with a main set of questions, but uses follow-up questions and probing inquiries to gain further in-depth understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviewer begins with a guide or a set of questions or areas of inquiry of interest to the research, but then the researcher uses his/her judgment and experience in deciding when and where to follow up or probe

more deeply (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). When taking a grounded theory approach to qualitative inquiry and analysis, using the semi-structured interview is particularly helpful to the researcher because it allows relevant data to emerge or be uncovered by the researcher (Charmaz, 2003).

For this project 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted, each taking approximately 1 hour to complete. Because the researcher used the grounded theory technique of continuous analysis (Charmaz, 2006), the interview guide was modified in response to new areas of inquiry suggested by earlier interviews.

Interview Participants

In this project, the researcher reached out to professional sources to identify potential participants. Training-related sources such as the LinkedIn® website and local chapters of the American Society for Training and Development provided referrals to informants from the private and state government sectors, while the Federal Chief Learning Officer Council was a source for CLOs working in the federal government. In some cases, participants were identified by referral from other participants or from other professional colleagues of the researcher.

The participants break down as follows:

- Gender:
 - Male: 15
 - Female: 5
 - *Note: no effort was made to select or exclude participants based upon gender*
- Holds an advanced degree:
 - In HRD (or a related field, like education): 9
 - In another field: 13
 - *Note: In four cases, participants had gone on to earn advanced degrees in an HRD-related area. However, in none of the cases was an advanced degree earned by a participant while performing as a CLO.*
- Performing in the CLO role:
 - Is currently a CLO: 13
 - Is a former CLO: 10
 - *Note: Some participants had performed the CLO role for multiple organizations. One participant had never been a CLO, but had*

been a very senior Chief Knowledge Officer for two large corporations. It was decided his perspectives added value to the understanding of the phenomenon and were included.

- Holds the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) ® from the American Society of Professional Development (ASTD): 0
 - The CPLP is a 10-year-old effort by the largest HRD-related professional group in the U.S., ASTD, to professionalize the practice of HRD by certifying its practitioners in a variety of HRD-related roles (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012).
 - *Note: It is significant that none of the study's participants held this designation, nor had any considered pursuing it.*
- Sector:
 - Private: 12
 - Government: 7
 - Non-Profit: 1

Table 2. *Participant Characteristics*

Alias	Advanced Degree-- HRD	Advanced Degree-- Other	CLO-- Current	CLO-- Former	ASTD Certification	Sector
Greg	N	Y	N	Y	N	Private
Hal	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Private
Jim	N	Y	N	Y	N	Private
Lex	N	Y	Y	N	N	Government
Lonnie	Y	N	N	Y	N	Government
Milton	Y	N	Y	N	N	Government
Mike	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Government
Norris	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Private
Peter	Y	N	Y	N	N	Private
Patty	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Private
Paula	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Private
Jack	N	Y	N	N	N	Private
Maggie	Y	N	Y	N	N	Private
Rex	N	Y	N	Y	N	Private
Will	N	Y	Y	N	N	Government
Tony	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Private
Betty	N	Y	Y	N	N	Non-Profit
Lisa	Y	N	Y	N	N	Government
Yvonne	N	N	Y	N	N	Government
Alex	N	Y	N	Y	N	Private

Media. Eighteen of the interviews were conducted telephonically, while two were conducted face-to-face. The potential advantages of doing interviews by phone

such as lower costs, access to a wider participant pool, were weighed against the potential limitations of this method or lessened opportunity to build trust and to go in-depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Given the business-like nature of the subject; however, telephone interviews were sufficient. Additional effort by the researcher to prepare the participants included sending detailed Participant Guide, which included information about the project (including its underlying assumptions and goals), the researcher's professional background, the semi-structured interview guide, and the theoretical and practical bases for the research.

Process. Because the researcher had not met with any of the participants prior to the scheduled interviews, an attempt was made to establish a personal connection with each before the formal interview began (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Then the interview was conducted following the interview guide, but allowing each participant to share his/her lived experiences as they arose. Thus, the interviews had a conversational tone to them, albeit a professional one. This conversational tone gave the interviews the flexibility to go where the participants needed to go to plumb the depths of their experiences for insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This also led to minor fine-tuning of the interview process as the interviews progressed. This is discussed in more detail in the Memos section below.

Transcription. Each interview was recorded with the knowledge and permission of the participant. The recordings were submitted to a transcription service and transcribed *verbatim*. The researcher reviewed each transcript for accuracy, particularly where technical terms were used. These transcripts were the basis for the computer-assisted quantitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) approach used. The benefits and risks of using CAQDAS are discussed later in this chapter.

Coding. As described earlier in this chapter, a coding process was used to analyze each interview (Saldana, 2009). A total of 126 initial, process, axial, and theoretical codes were developed and arranged into four categories to form the theoretical model that provides an explanation of the phenomenon. This is described further in the Data Analysis section of this chapter below.

Memos. Memos are notes the researcher makes during the research process to note codes and categories developed, as well as significant points raised and changes made during the research (Bryman, 2004). During this research, memos were also created to summarize each participant's significant characteristics. These memos were particularly helpful in documenting and tracking changes to the coding paradigm so the

researcher could return to interviews coded earlier and re-analyze them with the newly developed codes. This was repeated several times as the list of codes grew from a dozen (based on potentially contributing theories to the phenomenon) to more than 10 times that number.

Closure. When using the grounded theory process and pursuing the development of a grounded theory, the study is concluded when the phenomenon is fully understood (theoretical saturation) and a good-fit theory can be developed to explain it (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The reality, however, is often more modest. To fully understand the CLO phenomenon, it would have been necessary to continue interviews of CLOs until no new information was emerging (Bryman, 2004) and to obtain the perspectives from other sources capable of informing the study regarding the phenomenon. In this study, the limitations inherent in the thesis process were acknowledged by both the researcher and his advisor, and an arbitrary number of participants (20) were agreed upon. Thus, the result is not a complete grounded theory, but is instead detailed, inductive, qualitative analysis of the CLO phenomenon which, with further research, can lead to a complete grounded theory.

Data Analysis

The analysis of interview transcripts was facilitated through the use of a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, NVivo® (QSR International, retrieved July 24, 2013). Using this program, the researcher was able to identify and mark pieces of text from participants' interviews with codes. This served to move the researcher beyond the reams of data provided and arrange, sort, and analyze the lived experiences described in the interviews (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006). There remains a lack of universal acceptance of using computer software to assist analyzing qualitative data, but provides some advantages as well (Bryman, 2004).

Perceived Limitation using CAQDAS. Bryman (2004) listed several potential concerns regarding the use of CAQDAS, including the temptation to quantify findings, introducing reliability and validity criteria applicable to quantitative studies. The text, retrieved and put together in like groups, will lose its original context. The complexity of the software requires a long period of preparation by the researcher in order to use it and that it caters more to grounded theory methods compared to other approaches to qualitative research.

In this study, the researcher mitigated these concerns by doing almost no “tallying up” of responses in categories, instead relying on the power of the participants’ narratives to deliver the point; continuously referred back to the original transcripts during analysis to ensure the retention of context; prepared for software usage by taking a class and reading a text on the subject (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013); and overtly pursued a grounded theory approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Advantages of Using CAQDAS. The use of CAQDAS presented several benefits to the analysis of the data (Bryman, 2004) that were realized in this study. Using CAQDAS made managing and coding the data easier and more efficient. It helped explain the data more fully by easing the management and logistical challenges presented. It enhanced the transparency of the coding process. It eased code management, allowing for both combining of like codes (reducing redundancy) and for splitting out codes into multiple codes in order to capture nuances in the interview texts. When one broad code was split into several related but nuanced codes, it was simple to retrieve the data marked with the original code and re-code it with greater precision and specificity. Finally, it preserved both the original texts and the codes so that both could be re-visited for further analysis.

Ethical Issues in the Research

The CLMS (2003) provides several ethical areas to consider when undertaking research, whether or not it involves human subjects. Described below are several typical areas for concern. Also described is how this study managed each one.

Informed Consent/Getting Permission. When working with humans—or when seeking to use their data—it is necessary to gain their permission to do so. Regarding interviews, all interviewees received full disclosure regarding the purposes of the study, its methods, and all other relevant information. This consent sheet informed them of their right to disengage from the project at any time. Also, consent was re-confirmed at the start of each interview, both for participating in the study and having it electronically recorded. Regarding other forms of data, intellectual property used in this study remained within what is permitted by “fair use” rules) will be requested in writing, with full disclosure regarding the purpose and context of this study. Finally, all data gathered was done overtly; no covert research was conducted.

Non-disclosure/Privacy Protection. All participants have had their identities shielded in the findings presented. Pseudonyms will be used to differentiate interviewees and all personally identifying information has been redacted. This was

explained in the consent form participants were provided. No participants elected to disengage from the project.

Fair Representation of Findings—Truth-Telling. To the fullest capabilities of the researcher, the findings are accurately and completely represented in the research. It is important to know that there is no such thing as data coming out “wrong.” Unanticipated results, even a failure to support a project’s goals, are still significant additions to the field’s literature and should be explained to their fullest.

A difficult aspect of qualitative research is the involvement (subjectivity) of the researcher, his/her closeness to the data and the phenomenon being observed. To balance this, the researcher reviewed progress periodically with another researcher not involved in the project, and would have adjusted either findings or methods as indicated. No such adjustments were necessary.

Power Relationships. As a member of the profession being studied, the researcher is at risk regarding power relationships or the potential for exploitation of one party in the relationship by the other. Two potential areas for risk were anticipated: that the interviewee (or other participant) will hold a position of power over the researcher, or that the researcher might grow closer to the interviewee (or other participant) and leverage that relationship for personal gain. Another risk occurs when two or more participants in the study know each other and a power relationship exists between them. Strategies used to guard against these three risks are described next.

To guard against the first risk, a relationship within the study where the participant has power over the researcher, the interview pool did not contain anyone the researcher knows personally. Regarding the second, leveraging of the relationship for personal gain by the researcher, the researcher refrained from any contact or business activity with participants outside the scope of the study for the duration of the study. Finally, to guard against two or more participants having a power relationship between them, the researcher did not include participants who had a supervisor-employee relationship during the study, and at all times kept each participant’s identity confidential from the other participants, and from anyone outside the study as well.

Reward for Participation. Creswell (2007) suggests an appropriate reward for participants. The participants were not tangibly rewarded for their participation. However, the author will provide a copy of the final study to all participants for their personal use after it is published.

Data Storage and Security. All data were held strict confidence and security. Computerized data (memos, files, etc.) were stored on a private system with no access available to anyone but the researcher. All primary data (raw data collected for analysis) will be retained by the researcher for seven years, then it will be destroyed.

Insider Knowledge. The researcher is employed by the United States Customs and Immigration Service as a Training Manager. In order to avoid conflicts of interest in the workplace, the researcher did not conduct research activities in this agency, its parent (the Department of Homeland Security) or its sister agencies within the Department. However, other governmental agencies were considered within the scope of this study, as will non-governmental agencies, organizations, and companies.

The Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study in the form of a semi-structured interview of a Chief Learning Officer. Conducting a pilot study can be helpful in trying out sampling issues, data-gathering strategies, and analytical processes to improve the project's potential for success (Mason, 2006). In this study, the pilot provided a bridge between the original set of codes (drawn from the researcher's reading of literature related to the research topic) and the dozens of codes that emerged from this and subsequent interviews. A follow-on interview with the participant in the pilot provided even greater insight into how the process and its outcomes could be improved. It also confirmed the efficacy of the telephone interview and its fitness for this project. Finally, the interview itself provided valuable insights and in the spirit of "all is data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), its contents were included in the data set for the project.

Issues and Limitations of the Research Method

There are no unique issues related to this particular research. However, there are several areas of concern related to all qualitative studies. These include reliability, validity, and generalizability. To illustrate these issues, their relationship to quantitative studies will be used as a basis of comparison.

Reliability. A measure or process has reliability when it produces consistent results when applied (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). In this way, the reader can more readily accept the veracity of the results of the research. For example, a bathroom scale that produces the same reading when a person steps on it repeatedly is considered reliable. This does not mean it is accurate, which would be an indication of validity—see below. In quantitative studies, reliability is demonstrated by taking repeated measures and examining the variability of the measurements. This technique is not

available in qualitative studies since each human experience is different. The use of careful records (like field notes and interview transcripts), re-coding the data, and the production of consistent responses to interview questions all lead to greater reliability (Creswell, 2007) and were employed in this research.

Validity. A measure or process that has validity when it tends to measure what it claims it will measure (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). In quantitative studies, validity is measured through statistical analyses. In qualitative research, validity can be strengthened through the same processes described in the paragraph above on reliability, as well as the employment of recognized research techniques and paradigms (Creswell, 2007).

Generalizability. A study's results have generalizability when its results can be said to represent a similar result in the population (Bryman, 2004). This is a concept where quantitative and qualitative methods diverge widely. In quantitative research, generalizability can be established by using statistical tests to measure the probability the result obtained in a sample represents the population as a whole. It is not an objective of qualitative research to generalize to a larger population (Bryman, 2004). Instead, the rich, dense, complex concepts that emerge from qualitative research can provide unique insights to a phenomenon that the population at large may find useful once documented and published (Charmaz, 2006). That is the goal of this research project.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explain the research framework employed by this study. It included a review of the ontological and epistemological perspectives and the grounded theory paradigm employed. Also included was a description of the participants of the study, including how they were selected and the processes used to generate data for the study. It concluded with an examination of issues related to the research process, including the use of computer-assisted analytical software, and general issues around the reliability, validity, and generalization of qualitative research.

In Chapter 4, the reader will take the journey through the Chief Learning Officer experience, examining the CLO phenomenon as a multi-stage, career development process. Also included is an examination of the transition into each subsequent stage. The CLO phenomenon will be presented, along with its theoretical underpinnings. This will set the stage for further analysis of the phenomenon and, in Chapter 5, presentation of the basic social process that explains this phenomenon.

Chapter 4— The Chief Learning Officer Described

This chapter presents and describes the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer based on an analysis of the data gathered during the research. The result will be a model of the Chief Learning Officer that will be (in Chapter 5) further analyzed in order to draw insights into the CLO phenomenon.

Model Design

The model that emerged from the data is based on career development. This seemed a natural outcome of the interview process, where participants shared their career arcs in chronological fashion. However, this is not the only possible approach to building a model of the CLO. For example, a competency model could be used, where the various capabilities, behaviors, and/or values held by position incumbents are documented (Mansfield, 1996). Yet, a competency model fails to take into account changes over time, a key component of this study. As will be demonstrated, there are significant aspects of the CLO phenomenon that occur before assuming the position and after departing it. Also, as will be illustrated in Chapter 5, time is a key component in understanding the basic social process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that emerges from the data presented in this chapter.

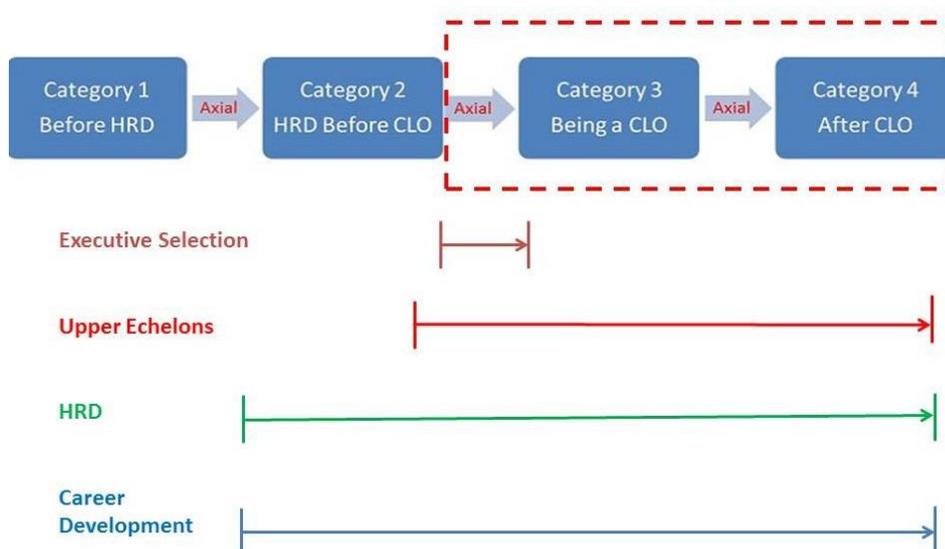


Figure 4-1 Basic CLO Model

The CLO model—along with its constituent theoretical components—is shown in Figure 4-1 above. Following a brief overview of the model, the data developed from the research to create the model will be presented and discussed. Note: while all four career categories in the model below are presented, particular emphasis is given to

participants' experiences before becoming CLOs, while they held that role, and what they did after leaving the role.

The CLO model consists of four categories, each represented by a period of time in the development of the CLO. These categories consist of what CLOs do before they enter the field of HRD, the HRD practitioner's experience, what it means to be a CLO, and what CLOs do after they leave their roles.

The categories are connected by axial codes that help explain the transition made from one category (or, stage in one's career) to the next. These are the transition into HRD, into the CLO role, and then out of the CLO role.

Finally, there are four contributing theories that thread throughout the model, helping to analyze and explain the CLO phenomenon. (Each was presented in Chapter 2, Literature Review). These contributing theories are Upper Echelons—how top management teams affect their organizations' performance—career development—both career selection and how careers evolve over time—human resource development theory—what HRD practitioners (including CLOs) do—and Executive Selection—the ways organizations select members to the upper echelons.

Note that while career development and human resource development theories inform the emergent model throughout, upper echelons theory is introduced as the HRD practitioner transitions towards becoming a CLO. This distinction, and the practice of strategic human resource development (SHRD)—truly separates the CLO from other HRD practitioners and further supports the decision to single out the CLO for study presented in Chapter 1.

As described earlier, the model consists of categories grounded in the data that helps explain the phenomenon. Those categories are made up of codes or descriptions of what was actually being related by the study's participants as they engaged the researcher in the semi-structured interviews. More than 100 codes were initially identified; the relevant ones were used to create the categories in the model. Codes will emerge in the discussion of each category below as they help describe and analyze the phenomenon of the CLO.

While this chapter presents and analyzes significant findings from the research, Chapter 5 will take the CLO model and present what grounded theory researchers call the Basic Social Process (BSP). The BSP "...accounts for most of the observed behavior that is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Wiener, 2007, p. 307).

The chapters will conclude with a summary description of the phenomenon, setting the context for the final chapter, where implications of the research will be considered.

Fit and Praxis

A key to the grounded theory process is to take the completed theory (or, in this case, the completed research that is pointing towards some potential theory) and fit it with extant theory related to the phenomenon (Glaser, 1998). In fact, Glaser recommends holding off on writing the Literature Review until after the research is conducted and the results developed. This is not a real possibility in the typical doctoral thesis process, where the literature review is normally developed and reviewed prior to conducting research (Sternberg, 1981).

This chapter will use the inductive tradition of data-to-theory in order to take the initial codes developed from the raw data, build categories. It then examines related extant theories that help the reader better understand the phenomenon and its categories. This process also improves the validity of the study by connecting it to prior, well-grounded theories, as well as to actual practice (Fassinger, 2005). This praxis or analyzing actions by the participants (Sokolowski, 2000) and the connection of the theory to practice (Gerring, 2007), helps demonstrate the quality of the study and the utility of its results. Creswell (1998) recommends comparing the results with extant literature, which is done at the category and axial levels in this chapter.

In this research, additional extant theories were used to describe various aspects of the CLO phenomenon as it emerged from the data gathered and analyzed. Thus, much of that literature is presented within the next two chapters as it becomes relevant and useful. In each category, the theory(ies) used to analyze the codes that emerged are presented (in lieu of discussing them in Chapter 2, Literature Review), followed by a discussion of their relevance to the research. Quotes from participants are used to illustrate each code, which is then summed up in a brief analysis. The basic model of the CLO Career is presented below. This model will be populated during this chapter and presented again at the end.

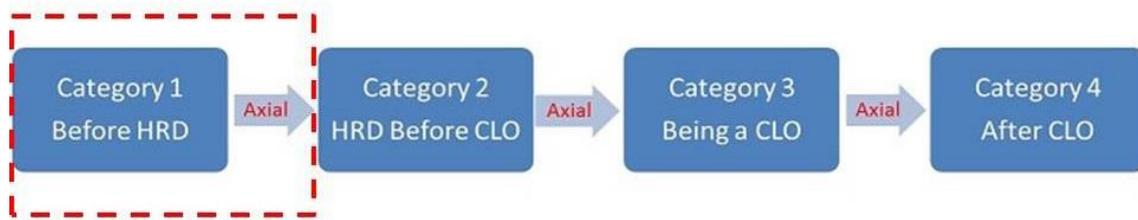


Figure 4-2. The Chief Learning Officer Theoretical Model—Category 1 and Axial Code 1-2

Category 1—Before Entering Human Resource Development and Axial Code 1-2, Transitioning into HRD

While the study focuses on the CLO entering, working in, and leaving that role, it is interesting to examine briefly their experiences before entering HRD. Participants in the study came into HRD from widely varied occupational backgrounds, including blue- and white-collar sectors and the military. It is simpler to break them down to those fields relevant to HRD and those that are not. Also, it is useful to examine how these study participants transitioned into their respective HRD careers. Finally, experience from either group is useful to performing as a CLO later on.

(Note: Because the transition into HRD and practicing HRD are so connected, they are considered together in this section. This is repeated in the last section, where the transition out of the CLO and what ensues is considered.)

The selection of HRD as a career is a blend of Structural career development (CD) theory (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009)—the selection of careers—and Developmental CD—how careers unfold over time (Super, 1980). The latter will be useful to study each category as it unfolds in the career of a CLO.

One participant used his consulting position to begin teaching consulting to others, which led to a career in HRD:

- “I went back into consulting for a major international firm and started recruiting and then started getting involved in their onboarding and started developing and delivering sessions for that.”—Alex

Another made an even larger leap, leveraging his subject-matter expertise in consulting to a role teaching consulting, then on to a role as a training manager, eventually becoming a CLO:

- “I guess the real learning career started when I worked for the Internal Revenue Service in the ‘90’s and I was a management consultant in the 80’s.

I did ‘Class One’ training in the 80’s through a lot of different cities in California and the Midwest and also the Silicon Valley. Then I moved from the Office of Personal Management and accepted a position as the director of training and Chief Learning Officer for the US Department of Commerce.”—Lonnie

The closely-related field of human resources also produces HRD practitioners:

- “I became an office manager and business development manager for an office, and then I became a regional manager and I had four sales offices. I learned how to do a P&L, I had my own budget, I hired my own staff, I was responsible for training and development of them. That was first. As I started into this, as I discovered I was a teacher and I loved the coaching, and I loved the training, and I loved with new staff of getting them up the ramp, and found a couple of other like-minded managers who thought that we needed to create a little learning program.”—Paula

Of course, making the transition into HRD is simpler when one simply starts there. Two study participants set out on HRD careers from the beginning:

- “Believe it or not, I always wanted to get into HRD and human resources, ever since graduate school.”—Peter
- “When I graduated I went straight to Accenture and joined their Change Management practice.”—Patty

Among the participants who came from unrelated fields, three had military backgrounds and leveraged the extensive training opportunities available in the military to conduct training themselves, transitioning from subject-matter experts to HRD practitioners. One participant took a temporary assignment into an office conducting organizational development and began her HRD career there:

- “Then from there I did go into the army myself. I was a direct commission and I wound up ... any army officer and actually probably any military officer it involves truly in an adult education role with their staff because so much of the time of what we do is in fact training and helping people you're training for the mission amongst a myriad of other things. I went and I worked in (the organizational development) office for 30 days in the summer to get my points and absolutely fell in love with the work that they were doing in that office which was pretty classic OD. There (were) also some

training pieces too but it was definitely an OD focus. Then I said, “Okay so this is what I want to get my degree in. I don’t want to be a history teacher.”—Xenia

Law enforcement was the background for three participants. One found herself assigned to her agency’s academy as a teacher, launching her career in HRD:

- “I was there for four or five years and then I went to headquarters and was in the corruption unit at headquarters. Then I went down to Quantico and finished my career at Quantico as an instructor. For me, I got involved in the whole learning and development thing while at headquarters because whoever is the most recent transferee at headquarters gets dumped on, assigned responsibility for in-service training....”—Quinella

Even the performing arts can be the root of an HRD career. One participant used his experience in music school to begin counseling to students, which eventually drew him to HRD:

- “As I graduated from ... beginning to graduate from the Conservatory of Music I realized that teaching music was not necessarily what I wanted to do for a living. I was actually hired by the school to be an admissions counselor. I had shown some interest and some direction in counseling so they hired me as an admissions counselor. I worked for a year at the Conservatory of Music as an admissions counselor recruiting students to come to the school. I got enamored with the counseling profession and went off to get a Master's degree....After I got my Master's degree in counseling I came back ...and served as Assistant Director for Housing and Resident....part of my responsibility was providing staff training for all the resident staff....”—Will

The study’s participants came from a wide array of occupational backgrounds. Some worked in positions related to HRD, while most did not. There is no reason to think that there is a specific entry point into the career of HRD, either in terms of career selection or timeframes.

For some of the study’s participants, the transition into HRD was truly a career change. For others, doing HRD was consistent with their existing career paths. In either case, beginning to do HRD was also the beginning of the path to becoming a CLO. Their HRD experiences and their transitions to CLO positions are examined and analyzed in the next section.

Category 2—HRD Career and Axial Code 2-3, Becoming a CLO

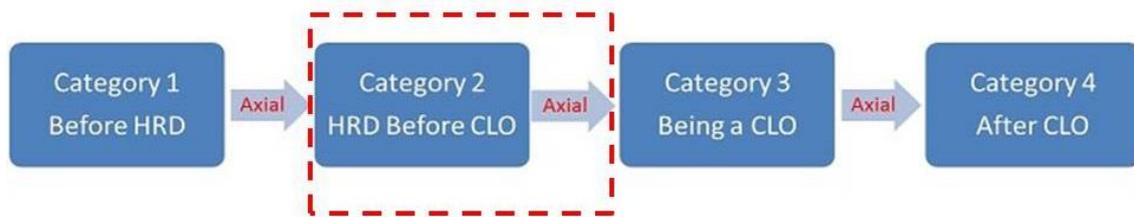


Figure 4-3. The Chief Learning Officer Theoretical Model—Category 2 and Axial Code 2-3

As described above, almost all of the participants started their careers outside of the HRD field. Subsequently, all also performed duties consistent with HRD practices. These may be examined using what can be considered a foundational theory of HRD proposed by Swanson and Holton (2009). This theory is, in turn, supported by three contributing theories (Psychology, Economics, and Systems). The contributions to this category and axial code from the study’s participants are analyzed with this theory in mind, as well as three others: career development (Super, 1980) (again), upper echelons (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), and executive selection (Vancil, 1987).

The first of the three components—or “legs” contributing to HRD theory is Psychology. Psychology “has long been a core theoretical base for HRD” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 114). In practice, this relates to human learning, with participants having experience delivering learning to working adults. Psychology, as applied to HRD, relates to HRD’s learning (and thus, training) aspect. This can include traditional classroom instruction, along with other forms of adult learning:

- “I went to work in Illinois University as a director, which started their first law enforcement academy for the university and I also participated as a professor there and also oversaw some of their law enforcement program development.”—Milton

It is also during this time that some HRD practitioners begin transitioning from tactical approaches to HRD towards its more strategic applications. This participant found herself practicing at both levels simultaneously, foreshadowing her later role as a CLO:

- “Usually that was around leadership training, how to be an effective manager or leader; sometimes on executing around goals, sometimes very tactical components around giving effective presentations.”—Patty

There were also participants who had experience developing learning programs in the working environment. Instructional design compliments instructional delivery (discussed above) as a key component of HRD practice:

- “I basically was slapping together what I thought was a solution to the problem. It was about an 80% solution. It wasn’t pretty and I certainly designed it the way that I preferred to learn it. I’m very hands-on. I want to use the content. I don’t want to just sit there and have somebody death by PowerPoint. We made changes to a curriculum that was over 50 years old and had been designed by a bunch of white guys, basically about how they preferred to learn rather than a curriculum that was designed to support different learning styles and different ways that people needed to learn. I had about 12 fully cleared instructional designers who worked for me.”—Maggie

Some practitioners found themselves doing both key components, instructional development and delivery. Each of these vital skills contributes to the future CLO’s ability to practice:

- “We didn’t have money to bring consultants in so I did the design, I did the training. I made sure we did both technical training as well as management training, all employee training.”—Lisa

The second “leg” of HRD’s foundational theory is Economics. This leg addresses the “...pressures on HRD to meet the needs of a diverse workforce in a rapidly changing work environment...” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 114). The effective HRD practitioner operating in an organizational environment and clearly contribute to its success. In this study, participants related many different experiences in managing the learning function as a business process. This study participant emphasized the business management aspects of HRD practice:

- “I had a staff of employees who helped not only to develop the technical skills and business skills at headquarters but we also supported the local country teams that were there of Americans as well as local host country nationals in training and development.”—Lex

Some organizations have as part of their offer the ability to conduct training for external customers. This participant found herself working with a sales team to deliver on customer requirements, contributing to her business acumen, an essential skill for future CLOs:

- “(As a training manager) I was part of the sales capture team. I was part of the implementation team where we did very large scale system change in healthcare systems and that was obviously a real key piece around how do you train people for their new roles but it was really as part of larger systemic organizational change.”—Lisa

The third and final “leg” of HRD’s foundational theory is Systems theory. Systems theory is concerned with “...systems and their interdependent relationships” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 128). Systems theory provides direction, information, and capabilities to an organization. HRD practitioners manage systems, and participants in this study related experiences that brought these benefits to their respective organizations.

This participant became involved with knowledge management—the capture, distribution, and archiving of intellectual capital to encourage knowledge-sharing and collaboration (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). Proactively approached, knowledge management involves the administration of a knowledge management system:

- “I was telling that story one time to a friend of mine who had just earned his PhD in Knowledge Management and said, ‘Have you ever heard of Knowledge Management?’ and I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘I’m not going to tell you what it is, but I think you need to look it up. You might be interested.’”—Jack
- “Then I basically joined (the corporate) University as the first kind of knowledge management for the company, because I was really looking at how we could start to share knowledge around the organization, and set up the idea of communities of practice and things like this.”—Rex

Managing systems is inherent to the practice of HRD, even if done tacitly. This participant managed both kinds:

- “I spent a lot of time developing formal training systems but a lot of times it was informal training systems.”—Alex

While all three “legs” of foundational HRD theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009) appear in the data collected in this study, other theoretical bases continue to be present as well, including career development. Study participants continued to grow their HRD careers towards becoming CLOs—whether or not that specific title was used.

This participant took positions that would later lead to becoming the CLO of a government agency:

- “I got a job with the Internal Revenue Service in San Francisco as their director of regional management training and then I began to manage all the leadership development training programs west of the Mississippi River for the Internal Revenue Service.”—Lonnie

Career development was a purposeful endeavor. This participant was determined to grow his career and rise to the top levels of it:

- “(I started) off as a generalist and steering my career towards learning and development, and working my way up. I tended to leave companies when it was taking too long to get into pure learning and development.”—Peter

This participant saw her career in HRD develop quickly:

- “I was only there for two years when I was promoted into the training manager’s position.”—Yvonne

Study participants began engaging their upper-echelon executives regarding HRD matters even before becoming CLOs themselves, laying the groundwork for their eventual development into that role.

Prior to becoming a CLO, this study participant was engaged by upper management to begin creating a learning and development practice for his government agency:

- “After 15 years at the Department of Transportation I then was offered a position at (the Department of) Homeland Security where they were setting up the first Chief Human Capital Office. They were looking for someone to...set up a learning and workforce planning function at DHS.”—Will

HRD practitioners can also engage upper management by acting as internal consultants, beginning to practice the key component of being a CLO, strategic HRD:

- “Over about a year or two I ended up helping to re-engineer the whole processes of the organization and basically formed an internal consultancy that I got funded through the training organization to continue doing that work when all the external consultants left the building, so to speak.”—Rex

Axial Code 2-3—Becoming a Chief Learning Officer

The leap from being a worker or manager in any field to becoming an executive is an exciting one. Executives are typically selected in one of three ways: by ‘horse

race’ (gathering a field of candidates and selected the best qualified), ‘relay race’ (using succession planning to have an inside candidate in place), and ‘crisis’ (where a sudden change forces the organization to make a selection quickly and/or in response to a specific condition (Vancil, 1987). Study participants reported being selected into the CLO role by both the ‘horse race’ and ‘relay race’ process. (None indicated they were selected due to an organizational ‘crisis.’) However, a fourth way to transition to the role of CLO emerged that was not anticipated by Vancil’s model: creating the CLO position for the organization.

Some CLOs were selected by the organization without prior consideration or “grooming” for the position. The candidate was sometimes unknown to the organization prior to the selection process, while in other cases an internal competition for the position was held. This is an example of Vancil’s (1987) ‘horse race’ model of executive selection:

- “I came into that capacity the Chief Learning Officer about three years ago now. That role and responsibility really tapped into the experience that I have had and all the different employment opportunities I was engaged in. As the Chief Learning Officer for the department, our department is a cabinet level agency of 14,000 federal employees and 100,000 contractors. For me to reach the top part of my career which is for me being a Chief Learning Officer. I had to move and the department...gave me that opportunity. They had posted the job, pulled it back and posted it again.”—Lex
- “The first thing that came up was a head hunter that wanted to see if I was interested in this particular position as Chief Learning Officer and which is something that I’m quite figuring what it is exactly but when it was exactly because they didn’t tell me it was government until I showed interest to the position. The person that was retiring was looking a vacant position for Chief Learning Officer.”—Mike

Much less frequently, participants were selected for their CLO positions through succession planning efforts in their respective organizations. (This is an example of a ‘relay race’ from the discussion above.) This study participant was tabbed by the organization to succeed the incumbent CLO:

- “I came to (my current company) in 2010 and then when (the CLO) left in 2011, I got promoted and basically took over his position in running the corporate university, which I have done since then.”—Maggie

This participant, however, was selected to succeed the position incumbent more informally due to his reputation for creating results:

- “I was kind of known as the guy who could get things done, who had learned in the trenches, could make things happen.”—Rex

An interesting development not anticipated by Vancil’s (1987) model was that many participants created (or helped their organizations create) the CLO position and subsequently filled it. The practice literature is rife with advice on what to do to join the “C-suite,” but it is aimed at existing CLOs wanting a more strategic impact. It is useful for the HRD practitioner looking to “upgrade” the training manager’s role into a CLO position. There is even advice on how to become a CLO (Finley, 2002). However, the literature is not prescriptive regarding creating the CLO position itself. As this section demonstrates, HRD practitioners sometimes do just that:

- “I want to build a corporate university internal. ‘So, you want it?’ I said, ‘Sure.’ I became the first Chief Learning Officer (of my company).”—Greg
- “I did that until 2001 when I had the opportunity to start (our corporate university. The group decided it was time in our profession for us to have agreed upon principles, agreed upon definitions or measures and common standard statements and reports and management principles to employ those. When we began working on that with industry taught leaders and leading practitioners three years ago now.”—Jim
- “The title of Chief Learning Officer wasn’t accepted that much in government. I helped make it accepted because I’m the one that founded the Chief Learning Officer Council in the Federal government.”—Lonnie
- “The (chief human resource officer) recommended me and then I met with the CEO of the company and a couple of key members of the senior leadership team. Quite frankly, they didn’t know what a Chief Learning Officer was at the time, so I found myself asking more questions about the business and where we were headed in a three to five year time horizon, and what capabilities were in place, and what they needed. It ended

up being more of an educational, two-way conversation, rather than them grilling me on my skills and capabilities.”—Peter

- “It was a role that the first time it was ever filled I filled it. I think we had grown to the point that, as an organization, we needed to focus on our learning and we needed our learning to link to our business and what we were teaching our clients.”—Patty
- “They had nothing in place, but they actually hired me first as a consultant. Like a lot of these stories, it’s a long, winding relationship, but they ended up finding me and me finding them. The job really, was again a much smaller place than my most recent gig of 300 employees, represented all the major players in the chemical industry. Again, just hadn’t had any real development, real intentional development, didn’t have any infrastructure place.”—Tony
- (Asked if the CLO position existed prior to her filling it...) “No, not at all. We invented it.”—Betty
- “But I had a conversation with a gentleman who was our deputy administrator at the time, and he and I, we talked for a couple of hours, and he said, ‘Why would you leave (a large government agency) when I know that you’re so passionate about what you do here?’ I said, ‘You’re right, but I don’t feel that I am contributing everything that I can do. I don’t believe that we are being heard across the agency, and I don’t think that we have the collaboration that we need to make a difference.’ They promoted me to GS-15, put me in the CLO position, and gave me more staff.”—Yvonne

Executive development is a key component to becoming a CLO. The CLO, by definition, is an executive in the organization (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). It was expected that some CLOs would achieve their positions by the “horse race” and others by the “relay race” (Vancil, 1987). What was not anticipated, however, was the number of informants who became CLOs by creating the position. This outcome points to a deeper dynamic—structuration (Giddens, 1984; (Stones, 2005) as a basic social process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to help explain the phenomenon of the CLO. This BSP will form the most significant outcome of this study and will be explored in depth in Chapter 5.

Category 3—Being a Chief Learning Officer

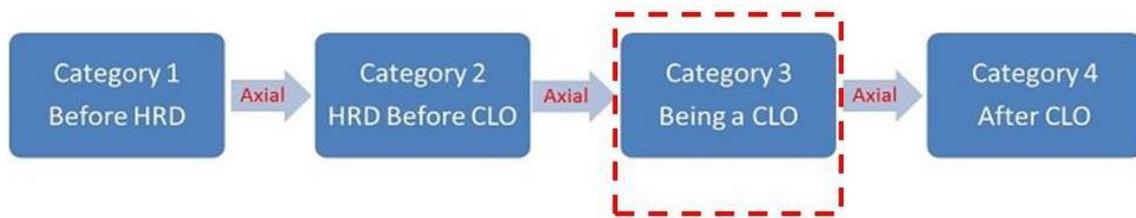


Figure 4-4. The Chief Learning Officer Theoretical Model—Category 3

This category will undergo greater analysis and produce more results than the other three categories and the connecting axial codes. Because of this, more attention is paid to structuring the ensuing narrative—an enhanced use of sub-titles and sub-paragraphs. However, continuous analysis of the data being presented will help ensure a cogent description of the CLO is presented.

Several aspects of the Chief Learning Officer’s experience are examined, with supporting commented upon as appropriate. Areas analyzed will include activities CLOs undertake, the roles they play, how their function can be aligned in the organization, how they engage the practice and scholarship of HRD (and their peers), the issues related to “getting a seat at the table,” and how CLOs can practice strategic HRD.

Chief Learning Officer Activities

While these sections are not meant to be exhaustive, several distinct strategic HRD activities emerged, in addition to those performed by HRD practitioners prior to becoming CLOs.

Business acumen is “the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically” (U.S. Office of Personnel Management [OPM], n.d). A definition from the private sector: “Business acumen is keenness and speed in understanding and deciding on a business situation” (Financial Times, retrieved October 2, 2013). Chief learning officers are encouraged to practice in a way that connects to and supports the larger organizational objectives (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). From a theoretical perspective, this ties to foundational HRD theory’s economics component (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

CLOs practice HRD strategically. In this case, the participant connected his department’s HRD activities directly to the mission of the organization:

- “We have an entire project now, over a period of many weeks, that we’ve literally trained folks that are at a particular level in the organization that are going to manage other people. So, that’s a change in the structure. So, we knew, in advance, the change in the structure was coming. We worked very hard with the leaders, and we’re now going through a process of getting those people ready to manage people who have never had that responsibility before in the clinical trials area.”—Hal

Alex (below) made the case for HRD’s impact on the financial success of the organization...

- “We calculated that it was worth about 20% of employees' salary a year because the people that went through this were more billable faster and got better reviews at their 90 day and six months.”—Alex

...while Lonnie argues that neglecting the human development aspect of strategic change can bring about catastrophic business failure:

- “The advantage is that mergers and acquisitions over the last 15-20 years have failed at rate of 60% and one of the main reasons is there’s a human aspect to it and the OD people were not embedded within the operational units to make sure that the two organizations that merged were properly situated and connected.”—Lonnie

This study participant made the argument that not only should HRD enhance the business, it should also generate revenues directly:

- “How do we enhance that capability where you're going to get greater productivity and increased revenue generation along the way? I think that as the L&D (learning and development) progresses into the future, if you don't become a revenue generator, or at least become cost neutral in your operation, your funding is going to be severely limited.”—Greg

CLOs often use their prior, non-HRD backgrounds to bring relevance to the learning and development activities they lead:

- “That's how I found myself learning about L and D, starting this corporate university and learning what this was all about. It also gave me a background that perhaps some others done have in terms of bringing economic and business background into this HR field. What I did bring in economic and business is discipline both academically and then at the department running

that kind of an operation. I brought that to the learning and there was a stark contrast there. People were not used to having a business approach. I think any CLO or leader of learning needs that business acumen”—Jim

Betty and Maggie suggested that business acumen and HRD knowledge were both important to the success of the CLO...

- “Hand in hand. We’re very purposeful of our patient satisfaction and engagement, as well as our associates’ satisfaction and engagement, so I work with that data, to develop any responses or any programs that comes out of there.”—Betty“
- If we can couch it in those terms, I think it goes over better in a business environment and I think that’s where the majority of your CLO’s are. Getting them to the point where they can use those words requires they develop themselves and their business acumen.”—Maggie

...while these CLOs make the argument that business acumen is even more important than HRD knowledge:

- “The seat at the table comes from being a good business partner, not from being a good learning and development person but really being a good business partner.”—Paula
- “As a Chief Learning Officer, and I think that this is where they talk about having a seat at the table, what’s important upstairs is impact in numbers.”—Yvonne

Financial management is a key aspect of a CLO’s role. As with business acumen, financial management relates to the economics “leg” of HRD foundational theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Greg suggests the value of being familiar with the financial aspects of the organization:

- “The one end that probably is most beneficial to CLOs is they have to understand numbers. They don’t have to memorize finance and formulas, but they have to understand numbers.”—Greg

Lex took it a step further, suggesting that financial performance should be a key measure of success in SHRD:

- “I think Chief Learning Officers should be measured on whether or not they can ...demonstrate a better return on expectations from a products and services.”—Lex

In addition to being knowledgeable about organizational finance, CLOs need to manage their learning organizations' budgets, too:

- “My group is funded couple of ways. You have working capital fund which is we are funded by bureaus configuring into corporate headquarters if you will. Then I have direct fill dollars. Direct fill dollars come from training that we do for other federal agencies and also training that we do for our own organization but they're all paying tuition.”—Lisa
- “When I first started this role, we had a lot more money. That was before sequestration. Over time, in the 13 years that I've been here, I have seen that budget cut in half, cut in half, cut in half. I don't know how much more ... they can't. I mean there's just no money left, so there's no way. I have had to change the model of the way we do business here.”—Yvonne

While business acumen and financial management are key CLO activities, they come about—from the HRD practitioner's perspective, from individual learning and organizational performance. These lead to improved workplace performance and enhanced organizational results.

In the workplace, learning is not done in isolation. As an investment, its purpose is to improve performance in the workplace (Baldwin & Danielson, 2002). CLOs are responsible for improving performance through learning (Bersin, 2007). This concept connects to two legs of HRD foundational theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009), psychology and economics.

Betty and Lex make the case for individual workplace learning leading to better organizational outcomes:

- “All the activities that support engagement, which is really about performance on a day-to-day level. A significant number of strategic goals that we have, I'm not going to say I have to deliver on, because I don't deliver them actually on productivity, but I have to assure that the workforce is prepared to deliver on those goals.”—Betty
- “To evaluate the effectiveness of the programs that we are delivering on, the learning development of the individuals and the organization and the impact that learning is having on the mission. Within that particular initiative or sector I have multiple initiatives right now.”—Lex

Not only do CLOs deliver individual learning, they also take a wider perspective through Organizational Development (OD). OD is managing organizational change towards improving performance (Mankin, 2009)—is a practice of HRD (Chalofsky, 2007; Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983; Kahn et al., 2012), which continues for CLOs (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007).

In making a business case for learning and development, Lonnie considers OD to be valuable to that end:

- “The learning organization, which includes OD as well, can be a force that will help organizations be more productive, be more resilient when it comes to mergers and acquisitions and be more cost effective. I absolutely believe that millions of dollars can be saved.”—Lonnie

As most CLOs are former HRD practitioners operating tactically, it is natural for them to manage individual training. However, as highly placed learning executives, CLOs are positioned to manage organizational challenges with far-reaching consequences:

- “Once I got the learning and development programs up and running, what the CEO really needed from me, which he wasn’t getting from his head of HR, who was a terrific person but she was really much more a comp and benefits person, and he was really looking for the OD support.”—Paula
- “Right now I’m designing the approaches that we use to deploy key messages about the organization, and so, it’s designing the meetings and the way people communicate in those meetings, so the deployment is geared towards effectiveness, and at the same time, maximizing the potential that people have in those meetings.”—Betty

Where individual learning and development activities can lead to improved job performance, OD can be used to create effective organization-wide change:

- “(I was) helping the organization transition from a functionally department-based structure to a team-based structure and that there’d be a lot of, not only classes in OD work, figuring how to do that well, but to help people transition and to do well in the major scheme environment.”—Tony

In addition to delivering training and developing the organization, CLOs are faced with managing what the organization knows and can do. Knowledge management is the capture, distribution, and archiving of intellectual capital to encourage

knowledge-sharing and collaboration (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012). As such, it is closely tied to HRD or even a part of it (L'Allier, 2006) and relates to all three legs of HRD foundational theory: psychology, economics, and systems. Practicing knowledge management emerged from the data, including a suggestion that it be managed separately from HRD.

For some, managing knowledge is a technical/systems challenge:

- “We have a learning management system and we also have an online library of 5,000 courses and 1,200 stream videos because we subscribed to a service, it's actually in a software; it's a service for the learning management system and the library.”—Norris
- “It's a Learning Management architecture where we have ...when I got here there were seven Learning Management systems. We've narrowed that down to three that are in to an architecture that serve, again 115,000 employees.”—Will

Others approach it from a challenge-to-solution perspective, seeing a need to capture knowledge and then creating systems that do it:

- “We're going to start this program called VESP, Voluntary Executive Separation Program. We didn't know what the design (will be), but 26% of senior leadership population is going to accept the package to leave (our company). That is more than a quarter of our unique and critical knowledge. Can you do something about that so that we don't forget to do what we know how to do that makes us (our company)?”—Jack
- “I was really looking at how we could start to share knowledge around the organization, and set up the idea of communities of practice and things like this.”—Rex

Similar to the argument (pursued later in this section) that the CLO should not be aligned under the HR department, one study participant felt that the knowledge management function should be formally structured and separated from HRD and other departments in order to succeed:

- “I have yet to see KM work under HRD, under strategy. The only place I've seen it work (is with a) separate seat at the table, separate perspective, separate staff, separate skill set. It is that different from HR, communications, strategy, (or) IT.”—Jack

While it is argued above that Knowledge Management is not merely a technical challenge, the CLO is faced with managing technology. Technology is a key aspect to delivering HRD within organizations (Dilworth, 2003), and relates to the systems leg of HRD foundational theory while simultaneously supporting the psychology (learning) leg and is impacted by the economics (business and finance) leg (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Technology is leveraged to create learning results...

- “We use a lot of online learning for our IT technical courses because those are usually just (used to) acquire information and practice.”—Norris
- “I was always kind of using technology and innovation to make things happen.”—Rex
- “We are bringing in, we are going to the Department of Interior for their Shared Service Center, and we’re actually buying in to their ... it’s the Talent Management System, so they have a learning management module and a performance management module. I’m responsible for that.”—Yvonne ...while also supporting the business and financial management aspects of

running an HRD department strategically:

- “It needed someone who was focused on the budgets and how it tied in with our business from a budgetary standpoint and could understand the IT systems.”—Patty

The CLO engages in a variety of HRD-related activities, an extension of his/her role as an HRD practitioner. Also, the CLO performs activities more common with his/her role as an executive with the organization. This amalgam—the blending of subject matter expertise and executive activities—is consistent with other “C-Level” executives like the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO). This, in turn, helps support the notion that the CLO is also a “C-Level” executive who should be considered for membership on the organization’s top management team.

Chief Learning Officer Roles

The lines between “activities” and “roles” are a bit blurred, but together they depict a thorough picture of what the CLO does in an organization. These roles connect directly to foundational HRD theory’s three legs (Swanson & Holton, 2009): psychology (learning), economics (as they manage the learning function), and systems (both the systems they use and how they connect to the larger enterprise).

Even though CLOs lead learning organizations, they continue to practice HRD as well, preparing other employees towards improved performance. Patty continues to use her training skills to create business results with her organization's clients:

- “I had been there with such an extensive amount of time teaching our clients our leadership theories and how to develop people and how to do performance management and how to do succession planning, how to really think about people as human resources that I was a logical choice to take that over for us.”—Patty

Tony and Alex also continued to take a hands-on approach, despite their executive roles as CLOs:

- “I love the idea of Chief Learning Officer, but it felt like that a lot of days, but if you were to look at my job description, you'd see three major things; all related to leadership and talent management. Yeah, 80% of the time I would be the facilitator, I would teach everything, obviously I taught things that were related to things that were important to the organization about leadership. Most of the time, managing change, thinking differently, coaching, (and) things like that. I actually facilitated virtually all of those.”—Tony
- “I've taken on some of this training responsibility.”--Alex

However, even with the temptation to use the experience and expertise gained from a career in HRD, the CLO must continue to lead from an organization-wide perspective:

- “Again, keeping at pretty high level I'm the department's representative for Learning and Development.”—Will

Beyond continuing to perform as HRD practitioners, CLOs sometimes act as internal consultants to the senior management of their respective organizations (Davenport, 2006; Grieves, 2003). This participant performs the consulting role herself...

- “My roles ranged from actually selling consulting services to delivering consulting services.”—Patty

...while another leads a more formally constructed team of internal consultants:

- “So, my primary job here is to run a team of organizational learning consultants that are operationally a manager that reports to me, handles his group of consultants.”—Greg

Whether or not the CLO joins other senior executives in the upper echelon, she can impact the organization strategically by consulting with its top leaders:

- “During my tenure there we had two CEOs, the one who hired me and when he retired, a new one. I worked very closely with him. I would say I was a trusted advisor for him.”—Paula

In addition to internal consulting, which is driven by expertise in HRD, CLOs can also perform as coaches. The International Federation of Coaching defines this activity as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today’s uncertain and complex environment” (International Coaching Federation, retrieved October 2, 2013). CLOs can act as coaches for their senior managers and other employees (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012; Bongiorno, Coleman, Hessel, & Murphy, 2005; Harburg, 2007). As these study participants indicate, coaching senior leaders and others can lead to enhanced business results:

- “The thing that I’m usually teaching to our leadership teams is, learning is a three-act play, before, during and after, and there are at least five actors. The student, the student’s manager, the learning community, a mentor, and the senior leadership team.”—Peter
- “One would be executives and leadership coaching for one-on-one work that a lot of us do. My contribution would be almost more like something a team coach would do.”—Tony

Managing the organization’s talent is a key part of the practice of HRD (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012) as well as in performing the CLO role (Israelite, 2010). It also connects the HRD practice strategically to the organization’s mission.

The CLO can affect the direction of the organization by influencing the selection and preparation of its senior executive leaders:

- “We recognize that and I mentioned that fact to the... (chief human capital officer) council and I said, “Look, if you want to have good (executives), you’ve got to select the right ones and for the right reasons.”—Lonnie

- “I reported to the head of HR but I was absolutely working directly with all of the senior team members because I was responsible for succession management, for big leadership development, for performance management.”—Rex

Some CLOs reported that they did not just influence talent management, but were actually responsible for it beyond HRD’s contribution, tying together learning and performance into one discipline:

- “The other thing is, I've tried to stay with companies that allowed us to add leadership development, performance appraisal, succession planning, talent acquisition, and technical training, to the role (of CLO). Not only are we influencing the supply of talent coming into the company, we're influencing our strategic direction, what businesses we can and cannot enter, and what companies we should and should not acquire.”—Peter
- “We are going to (another government department) for their Shared Service Center, and we’re actually buying in to their ... it’s the Talent Management System, so they have a learning management module and a performance management module. I’m responsible for that.”—Yvonne

The theme of examining both individual and organizational aspects of HRD continues in talent management. Improving an organization’s culture is a part of the HRD practice (ASTD, retrieved January 2, 2012; Garavan, 1991; McCracken & Wallace, 2000) as managed by the CLO. Sometimes, training is a contributor to managing the corporate culture:

- “Trainings typically falls within culture, so we say, "If you want to affect your culture, you need to sit back and look at what it is, but then I'll look at the processes that build up to it, then look at your tools....It's about organizational health, and it's about collaboration in getting people to find each other. Forget the stupid organization chart. Let's look at a social network analysis, how do people really trust each other, who talks and who doesn't talk and why and how often."—Jack

In other situations, the CLO has the lead in managing the corporate culture:

- “(Our) team has responsibility for culture (in the company). We don't report through the human resources function. Our strategy is very cultural-based.”—Patty

Moving from the organizational culture to the top of the organizational chart, improving leadership abilities through training and development has long been a practice of HRD (Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983; Nicholson, 2009; Simmonds & Pederson, 2006; Stanley, 2010). Sometimes, that means delivering specific leadership development programs:

- “We have the Successful Leaders Program, which I designed about 2006.”—Yvonne
- “We’re creating some leadership curriculum. We’ll use the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Challenge model and method.”—Hal
- “I developed a course on visionary leadership and I taught that course to every supervisory course that was taught at (my agency).”—Lonnie
- “We’ve chartered a working group that, over the last couple of years now, that are looking at supervisory framework and managerial framework.”—Will

Other CLOs described leader development as fundamental to their role, almost inseparable from its other elements:

- “When I say learning and development, unlike some other corporations, that will include leadership so we had responsibility for leadership at all levels as well as the more traditional L and D.”—Jim
- “I became the Chief Learning Officer...and led our leadership development practice.”—Patty
- “If you were to look at my job description, you’d see three major things; all related to leadership and talent management.”—Tony

In addition to developing leaders (described above), CLOs are leaders and managers themselves (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). These participants described the position more tactically than strategically....

- “My primary job here is to run a team of organizational learning consultants.”—Hal
 - “Under me comes all the learning, all the classes, all the workshops, everything that’s learning in the organization, and there’s a lot of it.”—Betty
- ...while this one made clear distinctively strategic nature of his CLO position:
- “I’m the chair of the board of directors of learning development. That board is made up of senior leaders from each of the organizations there are about

14 members. We collectively agree to a strategy. We looked at the programs and the governance necessary to address the development required for the department to set different standards. Consider some best practices. That's how I engage the organization across the enterprise for the learning development of the agency. Keep in mind that's what my job is and that's what I do. Each one of the organizations within the department also had this own autonomy whereby they can make decisions about the development of their individuals."—Lonnie

As with CLO activities, the CLO also performs many roles, both related and unrelated to the practice of HRD. Again, this is consistent with performing as an executive in the organization, rather than merely as a subject matter expert in HRD.

Alignment of the CLO and the Learning Function

Where the learning function should be placed in the organization is a subject of continual debate (Anderson, 2009; Elkeles & Phillips, 2007; Smith, 2011). Study participants offered differing perspectives on where it is aligned, where it should be aligned, and whether or not aligning HRD within the HR department is a good idea. Alignment can have a direct effect on the CLO's ability to act as a strategic leader within the organization and, thus, his/her practice of SHRD. Some participants reported being aligned within the HRD department...

- "Initially at (our company) I reported to the...executive vice president of HR."—Greg
- "I report into the chief human capital office, the director of HR operations there."—Lex
- "I report functionally to the CHCO (chief human capital officer) who reports to the chief administrative officer who reports to the controller general."—Mike

...while others managed learning operations outside of HR:

- "I reported to the CEO."—Hal
- "No, I have a seat at the table and I am not in HR. You have to consider that I am part of our business execution and strategy."—Maggie

Among the study's participants, there was considerable disagreement regarding whether or not the CLO should be aligned under HR. Some saw it as advantageous,

while others did not. Paula and Norris thought aligning under HR helped improved synergies between learning and other HR functions:

- “(It) worked a lot better because learning was integrated with the overall practice of how you handled humans in the enterprise so that there was a lot more transparency between developing people, compensating people, doing performance management, setting goals, all of that, if we were all working together. I actually built a competency model, but I did that in consultation, initially with the broader HR group as they worked with the business, and then going out to all the business leaders and say, ‘Okay, here's what we're thinking about. What do we need to tweak? What do we need to throw out? It was much more of a unified, integrated voice.’—Paula
- “I think the positive impacts are enhancing the alignment between what we are doing in the business and what we need to do for our people to achieve the competence it needs, or skills and knowledge, or retention that we want. So, alignment would be much closer. It might simplify communications as well, but just by a little bit.”—Norris

Will saw advantages from increased collaboration with the head of HR to tie together learning and development with other human capital management challenges faced by HR:

- “(The chief human capital officer) relies on me as the Department's expert on Learning and Development. I'm brought in to meetings when those kinds of issues ... top leadership meetings with her when decisions are made, or asked for, in terms of my functional area; again learning and workforce planning.”—Will

Rex felt the advantages of aligning under HR could be realized without detracting from the CLO's ability to collaborate with other senior executives:

- “I held the CLO title, I reported to the head of HR but I was absolutely working directly with all of the senior team members because I was responsible for succession management, for big leadership development, for performance management.”—Rex

Regarding aligning the CLO under the HR department, the prevailing attitude was that it was not a good idea. Some saw HR not as a strategic partner, as merely a place to process benefits and other personnel actions:

- “Most human capital officers come from a background of recruiting. I would break HR down to two things; learning and HR management and HR development. HR management is recruiting and retention. It is merit promotion and its labor relations. All the transactional kinds of activities that they do but because the OD function, because the learning function, is in the shadows of HR, not only in the public sector but in the private sector as well.”—Lonnie

Lex and Tony felt they were irrelevant to the strategic mission of the organization...

- “No its not, it’s not good. Because unless a person is hired their ability to have a positive impact on the mission is based on their skills and knowledge scale. HR is not helping them do that. All they do is get them in the job into the position, make sure the benefits are being paid, they are covered and those kind of things. The individuals’ impact on the mission is directly related to his or her skills or knowledge, who affects that most? I do.”—Lex
- “We didn’t have an HR department that had ever even conceived of things like this.”—Tony

...while Jim experienced HR proactively inhibiting the CLO’s ability to practice strategically:

- “We've heard how you were in your previous department. You have to understand now that you're in HR, you can't run (the corporate university) like that because we are in HR, we deal with people and people were unpredictable and so all you can ask is we will work hard. You can't set goals like we've heard you set goals for your employees before. You can't really set goals in HR because we deal with people so you just have to ask us to work hard and we'll work hard and that's how it is now that you're in HR.”—Jim

Milton and Maggie felt the HR department was out of touch regarding operational needs, rendering them even less relevant...

- “(The HR department does) a really good orientation program, but then when it comes to going to the unit, I think that's where a lot of times it falls down because HR has not worked with the unit or the division to, you know,

this is the proper way to on-board them and to mentor them, to coach them and bring them all of them through.”—Milton

- “I need to be included in that conversation because as our functional managers are revealing what they need to do their job, that’s a great way for us to keep our courses fresh and revised and reflective of what our employees need at any given moment. I don’t see any down side for not being involved in HR.”—Maggie

...while Jack felt that HR was so transactional and outside the key functions of the organization that it might as well be outsourced:

- “That whole (human resource management) thing can go to salesforce.com and be done as a commodity just like every other company because that’s pretty much how we treat it anyway.”—Jack

Finally, Rex felt it (aligning under HR) could go either way, depending on the quality of leadership in the HR department and its ability to understand human capital management challenges:

- “I really worry about this because depending on, now, the way things work, the savviness of your head of HR, how much your head of HR is going to allow other people to have relationships with the senior team, and all that kind of stuff, especially the higher up you go, will absolutely make or break the impact that you can have. When it’s good, it’s great. When it’s not, it’s horrible, because it’s frustrating.”—Rex

The struggle to “get a seat” at the executive table—particularly as part of the top management team (TMT), is a vital issue regarding the CLO and the establishment of the role in organizations. Where the CLO is placed in the organization can have an impact on his/her ability to join the TMT and function as both the functional leader of HRD in the organization and to participate in its direction as a member of the TMT. The study participants generally did not find being aligned in the HR department to be effective, unless the HR department was responsive to the needs of the business and of HRD, preferring to be placed on the same level as the director of HR. This dynamic is explored further in the next section.

Getting a “Seat at the Table”

Having the CLO take a “seat at the table” by being a member of the organization’s top management team (TMT) has been advocated for years (Brown, 2004; Chang, 2005; Elkeles & Phillips, 2007; Moore, 2009; Scott, 2011). However, it is

not universally embraced (Anderson, 2009; Laff, 2008; Ricketts & Pannoni, 2010). The senior managers of an organization, and the Chief Learning Officer may be one, exists as an ‘upper echelon,’ strategically directing the organization (Nishii, Gotte, & Raver, 2007). This senior leadership team can be referred to as a ‘Top Management Team’ (TMT) (Hughes & Beatty, 2005). The seminal work on upper echelons theory comes from Hambrick (with Mason, 1984, then updated by Hambrick in 2007). There are two parts to theory: First, executives act because of their personal interpretations and second, these are a function of their experiences, values, and personalities. Focusing on the characteristics of the TMT will yield stronger explanations of organizational outcomes than just looking at the CEO alone (Hambrick, 2007). Studying TMTs provide opportunities for more complexity than the single entrepreneur (Cannella & Finkelstein, 2009).

For Chief Learning Officers, the key to getting selected to join the TMT is to be a fundamental part of running the business or organization (Kleponis, Christiansen, & Hall, 2005). To get a seat at the table, CLOs need to ensure "learning across the enterprise is an integral part of the business operations...and valued by employees" (Kleponis et al., p. 61). The TMT knows that intellectual capital is a vital asset. An effective manager of it will be seen as a valuable member of the TMT. A key aspect of this study is the understanding of how HRD practitioners rise to the level of the CLO and practice Strategic HRD (either by being on the TMT or engaging it strategically).

In this study, some participants reported being on their organizations’ TMTs while performing the role of CLO:

- “At (our company) we’re our own entity. I reported to the CEO.”—Hal
- “I would in my chief learning office role at (my company), yes, I had a seat at the table.”—Paula

In some situations, the organizations made clear their desire for the CLO to have a seat at the table:

- “When I was aligned to the chief strategic officer, he wanted me at the table. Okay? Because I had spent about six months schmoozing and sucking up to all the business group presidents, they wanted me at the table, so that as they were forecasting where they were going with business, they could turn to me.”—Greg

- “I was definitely at that level at (my company). I reported to the CEO. I was at all of the top management meetings, the general management meetings. I had a voice for many years. Especially by the time I was a COO I totally had a seat at the table; everything was considered very effectively. I feel extremely lucky that that is how that evolved for me.”—Patty
- “I have a seat at the table and I am not in HR. You have to consider that I am part of our business execution and strategy.”—Maggie

Alex even felt it was a fundamental requirement for the CLO position:

- “I didn’t accept the offer until they made that happen. They held it out that if you do a good job you can have it. I said I won’t take the offer unless I’m there from day one.”—Alex

However, not all participants are/were members of their respective organizations

TMTs:

- “I am a member of the next level down.”—Norris
- “There’s a deputy assistant secretary who covers human capital and diversity and I report to that person.”—Lisa

Participants who were not members of their organizations’ TMTs still sought to perform the CLO role strategically:

- “Our senior leadership team meets every Monday morning, and whenever there’s enough meat on the bones...the Chief HR Officer books some time. I think since last July I met with the leadership team seven different occasions as an extension to their normal Monday meetings. A second way is hold special meetings, so when we started doing our review of top talent, those are special half day and full day sessions. Then meet on occasion with the individual members, to talk about specific topics.”—Peter
- “I was not a member of the senior executive team so that’s probably important for your research. I was granted access to most or all of those conversations, whenever we need to go through a strategic planning process.”—Tony
- “Obviously I didn’t always get my way, but I would rather have an initiative that is free within the context of what has to happen in the business. Because I had a seat at the table I know when there was a particular financial or operational constraint. Instead of someone saying to me, “No, you can’t do

that,” I was saying to myself, ‘It doesn't make any sense to do that in this current environment.’”—Patty

Some were not members of their TMTs, but wanted to be. Yvonne felt that a seat on the TMT would be a key to managing change and collaborating with senior leaders...

- “To make sustainable change, here is what we need to do. We need a seat at the table, which we did not have back then, and that seat at the table does make a difference when you’re trying to reach the senior management team.”—Yvonne

...but Lonnie cautioned about remaining in the HR department’s shadow while also taking a seat on the TMT:

- “Yeah, the CLO should have had a seat at the table but if he did, as long as he or she is a subordinate to the HR director, it’s not a full seat.”—Lonnie

Jim thought it would make his role more effective, but the idea was not practical for his organization:

- “(Being on the TMT) would have made my life easier. It would have been good to do that. (But) there were 800 employees in HR. I had 100 of those. It wouldn't have made sense to have a direct report to the group president because the organization was small.”—Jim

Lex felt the elevation of the CLO to the TMT would bring greater authority and independence to the role by giving the learning and development function its own budget:

- “The advantage would be from my perspective is it would be a funded position. Right now I’m a part of a larger organization and historically learning development or training is the first to get hit all the time. You have layers of people above you in order to make your case. They have control over your budget.”—Lex

Similarly, Will felt elevating the CLO to the TMT would bring about more authority and more resources:

- “I think (there would be advantages to being on the TMT). I think there may be, at least in budget. I think the learning professions would get more, I would think would get more share of the budget for learning purposes. It would help them ... help the learning professional deal strictly with learn ...

help the Human Capital person just deal with human capital issues and learning people just deal with the learning issues. There is a partnership there through the process.”—Will

Milton made distinctions between operating HRD tactically versus strategically, noting that having a seat on the TMT would help the CLO guide the rest of the TMT past making mere tactical decisions regarding staff training and development, and making distinctions around performance issues needing to be addressed with training and conduct issues that should be referred to HR:

- “I firmly believe that the learning leader has to be part of senior management and be able to discuss fully when stuff is brought out on the table, they’ll say, “Well we need training on this,” or “We need training on that,” and they’re just throwing it out. If you have a good learning leader, they can say, you know, “Now what you’re saying is not training, it’s not learning, you need to deal ... that’s a personnel issue.” You’ve probably seen this, “We need training.” “No you don’t. You need to deal with personnel.”—Milton

The desire of CLOs to get a seat on the organization’s top management team is not universal. Several study participants cited reasons for not taking such a role. For example, Norris and Patty felt that the other strategic management responsibilities involved could take time away from SHRD practice:

- “I do think there can be some disadvantages and that is that you have to spend more time in peripheral activities like attending the chiefs’ meeting and not that it’s a bad thing, but you do as an individual then, end up being you know seen and or recruited for all the kinds of broad initiatives that go on.”—Norris
- “Well, frankly I have a lot less responsibility. I mean, you should know what responsibility is. I really enjoy the job; it’s very engaging. That translates into a lot of different things. I travel a lot less than he does. I am able to get significant amount done because he’s going to all the meetings and passing on some of the key information, or maybe bringing me in for an hour here or there. While he might be tied up in the meetings that previously would have taken so much of my time, I’m actually doing things.”—Patty

Peter and Jack report they are able to collaborate with their TMTs despite not being members:

- “I have full access to the senior leadership team. What I like about working for... my current boss, is that I do not have to run things by him if I need to meet with our CEO or other members of the SL team. It's not because he thinks it's a good idea. It's because I earned that.”—Peter
- “I would say I'm a heavy influencer of the executives. I have yet to work for an organization. I'm sure there are organizations where the CLO truly has a seat at the table. Funny, I've read all the stuff through this, what I've seen and read in the experience. I think it's very rare for the CLO to have a seat at the C-suite table.”—Jack

Finally, Alex suggested that the CLO role is not important enough to take a seat at the table, seats he considers limited and precious:

- “I think the disadvantages are you can only have so much at the table. Everybody wants to be at the table. Customer service wants to be. Everybody wants to be at the table. You can only have so many things at a table, so many slots at the table. I just don't think training alone is a broad enough perspective to be at the table.”—Alex

Study participants offered many perspectives regarding being placed on the organization's top management team (TMT). Some wanted it for the access and authority it would bring, while others preferred to engage the TMT on an as-needed basis, being free to otherwise concentrate on learning and development issues. Either way, they considered engagement with the TMT a key component of practicing HRD strategically.

Strategic HRD

Strategic HRD (SHRD) “is the strategic management of training, development, and of management or professional education interventions, so as to achieve the objectives of the organization while at the same time ensuring the full utilization of the knowledge in detail and skills of individual employees” (Garavan, 1991, p. 19). Because CLOs are placed in strategic positions in their respective organizations, SHRD becomes their central practice.

CLOs report that they often practice in a strategic environment. For example, one participant was, from his role as CLO, in charge of the company's strategic planning:

- “I'm in charge of the organization's balanced scorecard.”—Hal

Other CLOs leverage the organization's strategic plan, using it to align learning and development activities to bring about the organization's strategic goals, whether or not the plan has specific learning and development goals:

- “I have a seat at the table and I am not in HR. You have to consider that I am part of our business execution and strategy.”—Maggie
- “I look at the overall mission of the organization, the strategic plan. How that flows down to the human capital office. How the hiring and development piece helps support that mission. I attract a strategy for the department, for the development, professional skill development of the employees that make up the organization.”—Lex
- “Because a significant number of strategic goals that we have, I'm not going to say I have to deliver on, because I don't deliver them actually on productivity, but I have to assure that the workforce is prepared to deliver on those goals, whatever that is.”—Betty

Some CLOs used other information and insights to develop their SHRD practices and perspectives:

- “Now one of the fortunate aspects of this was we were part of a much larger organization so we could share in investments and initiatives that the other parts of Deloitte had, the audit people, the tax people, and so forth, so I then became part of a governing group of learning officers, so to speak, for each of the functions and that brought us along.”—Norris

These strategic perspectives lead to specific SHRD outcomes tied to the organization's goals. For example, Greg links learning to performance in order to meet strategic goals:

- “How do we enhance that capability where you're going to get greater productivity and increased revenue generation along the way?”—Greg
- Norris and Maggie collaborate with other senior leaders to determine what

learning and development initiatives they should undertake:

- “I engage them (senior managers) or talk with them about the goals that they have for the business, or improving business performance, or improving our competitive position, or our profitability. I talk about their responsibilities and then we talk about how the quality capabilities skills of all of our people make those things come true.”—Norris

- “(Our company) doesn’t view training as a benefit. (It) views it as a business imperative and distinguisher on contracts. Being physically present and hearing execution reviews and our business development meetings where even things like new tools and new strategies are being considered, I never have to get that information filtered through somebody else’s filter. I’m right there, hearing them talk about it.”—Maggie

The CLO is not limited to collaborating with senior management. Peter connects to councils throughout his organization in order to inform his SHRD practice:

- “By having advisory councils that are working governance boards, have them help you build your agenda.”—Peter

Not only does the CLO link to and support the organization’s strategy, he or she may also create a strategic plan for learning and development:

- “My charter focuses on the federal employees of 14,000 and I’m responsible for setting strategy policy for the agency in learning development.”—Lex
- “I was part of the decision to fragment industry and put some training in place to enable small and say “Mom and Pop” operation type brokers, mortgage brokers and to counter as I said competitive front to cover the merging of the large banks and presenting that to the competition that it was purely a strategic move, again, which was a part of, and learning and development is a very important component.”—Mike

Not everything CLOs do is at the strategic level. Being a CLO also means being the functional manager of a variety of learning and development programs, practicing HRD that is more tactical than strategic. Mike feels his environment discourages embracing the strategic perspective...

- “It’s hard to look at strategy in the government when it’s so reactive. I mean every week we got a request for congress to look at different things and of course there’re ongoing mandates that we look at how far you can go strategizing. It’s pretty tactical. You don’t strategize about how we got to go about improving our defense systems.”—Mike

...while Peter feels it is sometimes too soon to operate strategically; that the CLO must sometimes (especially at first) solve more immediate concerns before moving to bigger perspectives:

- “If your function is new to the company or you and your team are new to the company, you will take care of some of the low-hanging fruit. But if you're doing that a year from entry into a company then something's wrong. You haven't been able to push back on the organization and suggest other options.”—Peter

Finally, there is the drag on the emergence of the CLO created by old, outdated perceptions of a training manager filling training requests:

- “I fundamentally believe that if you let people define CLO then most people will define it as a training job.”—Rex

Participants in this study who voiced opinions about the CLO operating strategically (and thus, performing SHRD) were unanimous that it is key function of the CLO, regardless of where he or she appears on the organizational chart. There was some concern expressed with environments that discouraged SHRD, as well as outdated perceptions of managing training versus conducting SHRD.

CLO Engagement

CLOs engage with other social structures besides their own organizations' strategic leadership. They interact with the field of HRD practice (and HRD practitioners), and also with their fellow CLOs. These interactions—like those described in the previous section—have an impact on the CLOs' practices, their 'agency.' It is the back-and-forth between the agents (the CLOs) and the structures around them (their organizations, the field of HRD, and other CLOs) that form the basis for examining this phenomenon using structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005) in Chapter 5.

Just as CLOs do not operate in an organizational vacuum—their activities and roles are influenced heavily by their surroundings—nor do they operate without the structure of a field of practice: HRD. Some study participants described various ways their practices were affected by the HRD field:

- “I go to ASTD (American Society for Training and Development conferences) every three or four years and occasionally there will be something that pops that looks different. I'm not in the market for an LMS. We are not going to do performance management here at (our company). That's not going to happen.”—Maggie

- “A lot of learning, you get cutting-edge learning by rubbing shoulders with your peers. The Chief Learning Officer (magazine) put on lots of conferences and they happen to be in Orlando and I try to go once a year.”—
Lonnie

Other participants describe how they, in turn, affect the structures by participating in activities beyond their organizational responsibilities:

- “About three years ago, I got involved with talent development recording principles. This is a grass root industry led effort to bring standards and principles to L and D and to HR more generally. This group wanted to do for HR what the generally accepted accounting principles have done for accounting.”—Jim
- “Every year I participate, I guess the best word for it is “judging” but I've done this the last three years for LearningElite. I have found judging the LearningElite competition that CLO magazine does. It definitely gives me a lot of experience ... I get way more best practices because when you're reading the applications according to the criteria doing the effective judging I'm writing to the side, ‘We should do that. We should do that, too.’”—Patty
- “I wound up becoming an adjunct with the Center for Creative Leadership and I was working with their group that based at San Antonio, Texas.”—
Lisa
- “I'm a member of ASTD. I've been on their selection board for two years.”—Yvonne

Not only are they affected by the HRD field, a structure creating habitus (Wacquant, 2007), they also consciously alter the structure itself through their activities—structuration (Stones, 2005).

CLOs also engage other CLOs. As described in Chapter 2, CLOs have had a rallying point around *Chief Learning Officer* magazine and the workshops, conventions, meetings, and symposia it holds (CLO Media, retrieved January 3, 2012). Several participants in this study who work for the Federal government describe their involvement with a peer group of CLOs called The Chief Learning Officer Council;

- “The Chief Learning Officer Council (made up of government CLOs) is probably about almost five years old. Its charter is to bring together the Chief Learning Officers as well as key directors across the federal

government; establish a community of collaboration in learning development for the whole of federal government. To do so to improve learning development and its impact on (the) mission. To reduce redundancy and to make the learning development experience for all federal employees more effective.—Lex

- “The title of Chief Learning Officer wasn’t accepted that much in government. I helped make it accepted because I’m the one that founded the Chief Learning Officer Council in the Federal government.”—Lonnie
- “I was among some people who were in this profession since the beginning of their careers and were watching over the learning and development in the other (organizational) functions. Of course I learned a lot from them.”—Norris
- “I also am an active member and one of the founders of the Chief Learning Officers Council here in D.C., and we get together on a monthly basis, and we work to collaborate and share resources and ideas and find better ways of doing what we do and changing the learning environment for the federal government.”—Yvonne

CLOs engage a variety of other structures as they practice their craft, including participating in professional organizations, interacting with their peers, and engaging with scholars. They draw benefits to their professional practices and to the establishment and enhancement of the CLO role. They also affect change in the field by using their agency to alter existing structures and to create new ones.

This section presented several perspectives on being a CLO. They are sometimes, but not always, aligned under HR and this alignment is not always optimal. They perform several competencies and roles, some of which are an extension of roles performed by HRD practitioners, while others are unique to being a CLO. They engage HRD practice (and each other) The debate on “getting a seat” continues, but there seems to be a bias towards having a seat on the top management team, if it can be obtained. Finally, they practice strategic HRD where possible, but also deliver tactical training solutions where required. What happens to CLOs when they’re finished in that role is examined in the next two sections: Transitioning out of the CLO Role (Axial Code 3-4 and After Being a CLO (Category 4).

Axial Code 3-4—Transitioning Out of the CLO Role and Category 4, After Being a CLO

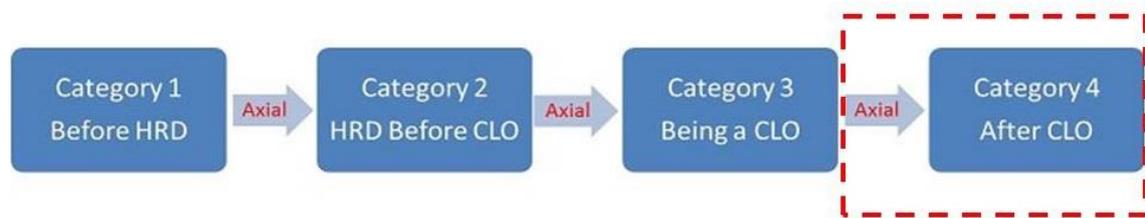


Figure 4-5. The Chief Learning Officer Theoretical Model—Axial Code 3-4 and Category 4

(Note: as with Category 1 and Axial Code 1-2, the transition out of the CLO role—Axial Code 3-4—and what ensues—Category 4—are considered together since they are so closely related.)

As CLOs consider their work options beyond that particular role, they are really contemplating a transition, often out of the traditional workplace. The three underlying theoretical bases for the model—career development, upper echelons, and HRD theories—were considered.

Super's (1980) career development theory helps explain this transition through its "Maintenance" phase, where adjustments are made to the current career path, and the "Decline" phase, where the person's role in the workplace diminishes.

As seen below, some former CLOs (or current CLOs anticipating the next phase of their careers) continue to engage organizations' top management teams, where upper echelons theory still applies (if not to them individually). Finally, HRD theory continues to be at the center of former CLOs' professional activity—for those who decide to continue to work. Before considering where CLOs go to practice, however, it is valuable to consider why they transition out of the CLO role.

Despite the cessation of physical development once people reach adulthood, their personalities can continue to develop (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). While there are several models depicting this (Cook-Greuter, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 1998; Le & Loevinger, 1998), the basic concept is the same. Adults develop from earlier stages to later stages of development, enabling them to see more complex concepts, consider myriad options, and undertake longer timelines in their planning. Adults at later stages see more complex meanings, meta-accomplish, use longer timeframes, focus less on selves, focus more on others, and accept paradoxes (Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

It has been observed that 80% of adults are in the conventional stages of adult ego development (Cook-Greuter, 2000). These people are concrete, operational, and are still developing their personalities. Post-conventional personalities, however, experience the world differently. Meaning-making is more individual and constructed, paradoxes are held open for consideration, and underlying assumptions and frameworks are challenged (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Developing as an adult is key to developing as an executive (Laske, 2003) and CLOs are HRD managers who have become executives (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). People at later stages are able to see more complex problems and more complex solutions, and recognizing the leader's stage and the stage of others promotes better interpersonal connection and creates greater mutual meaning (Berger, 2011).

In some people, however, a personality change is underway, or has occurred, with the person transitioning from a conventional perspective and meaning-making to a post-conventional phase (Le & Loevinger, 1998). People making this transition often find themselves at odds with their conventional workplace roles and withdraw from them (Pfaffenberger et al., 2011). They frequently seek ways to practice that are not organizationally-based. Several study participants indicated they were viewing their careers in more post-conventional ways and finding themselves growing weary of conventional organizations:

- “I also think after 19 years, I was tired of corporate culture.”—Jim
- “What I find in the government is that, and particularly in the organizations that I'm in is that it's very compliance guided. There's a law, there's a standard operating procedure, there's a rule that are strictly written, a passage to go by. I don't think that's a formula for success to stand forward.”—Mike
- “Again, that may be a really small percentage of opportunities for CLOs. I think, like a lot of people, maybe it's a hybrid of me ... lots of people just burn out.”—Paula

Others saw the transition out of traditional organizations as a way to practice HRD in new and different ways:

- “How exciting it is to think about what's next and who is the person I'm going to be? Who is the person I'm looking to become?”—Paula

- “What is a platform that would help me make a bigger difference in the world, to take what I've learned and kind of make a bigger difference, and also continue to innovate and grow? Because, again, I think the right way to say it is, the higher you go up in a company, it turns out, while I think the illusion is you have more degrees of freedom, you actually have less.”—Rex

For others, leaving traditional organizations was a leap into the unknown:

- “I’m going to be open to just following that for a while yet I don’t have to create income right away, so I’m just let that process unfold, see what interests me. See what kind of opportunities are there, just a wild brand of thought.”—Tony

Only a small percentage of adults fall into the post-conventional category of personality development (Cook-Greuter, 2005), but it explains much of the transition CLOs contemplate when leaving the role. It also informs the reader regarding the choices CLOs make as they exit the role and take the next steps in their careers. Examples from the study participants are offered in the final category described in the next section.

As CLOs transition out of the role, after one or more iterations of it, they enjoy a plethora of options. Some continue to grow their careers and move into larger organizational roles, while others turn away from the corporate environment. However, Super’s (1980) career development theory does not fully anticipate the possibilities now available besides “Declining” in one’s career. CLOs turn to other ways of practicing and having careers. Some undertake protean careers, which are person-centered, rather than organizational-centered (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Hall, 2004; Truty, 2003). Others stay within organizations, but take an approach less limited by boundaries, crossing organizational lines to practice (Arthur et al., 2005; Bridges, 1995). Still others retire completely, or nearly so (Super, 1980). From the data, two broadly defined paths arose: maintaining a corporate career (up the organizational ladder) and boundaryless/protean careers (centered more on the practitioner rather than the organization).

Maintaining a Corporate Career

Some study participants have experienced—or hope for—career growth beyond the CLO role:

- “I later became the chief operating officer and ran all the operations functions.”—Patty

- “I think for a Chief Learning Officer, there's that opportunity as well, is really taking on a chief administrative role, moving into leading another function, really stepping out of that somewhat narrow practice area to become a much broader and richer kind of leader.”—Paula
- “I'm at the top of my function. There's no further growth except maybe CEO, maybe board of directors.”—Jack
- “Depending on what their previous role was, they could move into being in some other kind of a management role in government depending on the size of the organization, depending on where they had been before.”—Lisa

Some participants discussed moving up to head up all of human resources for an organization:

- “They (CLOs) are not moving to other senior positions, very often in organizations, but there is a growing number of them that are, moving to other senior positions. Of course everybody was talking about General Electric two weeks ago when the Chief Learning Officer was appointed the chief human resources officer.”—Norris
- “I have no doubt about it. In fact, I really believe that there is a great opportunity for people who've held the CLO title to become the head of HR, if you will, for an enterprise.”—Rex
- “The CLO for the Department of Energy went on to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a CLO and he's now a deputy (chief human capital officer—CHCO). He's in that lane now to go to CHCO. We have the Department of Agriculture; she is a deputy CHCO and a CLO.”—Will

Boundaryless and Protean Careers

New, person-centered career paths have emerged recently, where one's professional identity is drawn less by what the structure determines about the agent, and more by what the agent him/herself determines (Bridges, 1995). Rather than being bound to a particular organization, some people pursue ‘boundaryless’ careers across organizational lines (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005), while a ‘protean career’ is person-centered (Arthur et al., 2005). It is a condition where the person, not the organization, is in charge; where the person's core values are driving career decisions. People should build a “path with the heart” and find their calling (Hall, 2004, p. 9). The ‘career contract’ (set of mutual expectations between employees and employers) is

changing with protean careers (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). With a protean career, the person's main activity may or may not be centered in an organization (Reinhold, 2002), and it may or may not have occurred voluntarily (Truty, 2003). Traditional career arcs are still dominant, but aspects of protean careers are emerging in otherwise traditional careers (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Whether full or part-time, whether organizationally centered or located in one's own practice, protean careers represent a shift for HRD practitioners away from being identified by their organizations towards being identified by their practice and the clients, internal and external, they support.

It is essential to understand that careers can continue even after traditional career paths disappear or are abandoned. These new ways of practicing have been embraced by many study participants, some of which are described below.

Some study participants suggested a role for former CLOs as coaches and advisors:

- “My jobs are executive advisor for the talent and learning practice at (my former company).”—Greg
- “I would say some (CLOs) will end up being consultants, and coaches, and all that sort of stuff kind of to keep their minds alert.”—Hal
- “When I retire from the government, it's (coaching) what I have a passion to do.”—Yvonne

Others suggested a related approach, *Mentoring...*

- “You're done being a CLO. I think you have a responsibility to coach and mentor your successor.”—Greg
- “One (alternative) is to mentor the next CLO, get him or her ready.”—Peter
- “What I would like to do is really develop other people to be able to do my job.”—Betty

...while another way to ‘give back’ was discussed by several participants, teaching in *Higher Education*:

- “I've pretty well plateaued where I'm going at. The (local university) has a position that just came open within the week, called Director of Leadership and Executive Programs, which is their extended studies program.”—Milton
- “I do know (CLOs) that have retired and become instructors at university. I could teach but I would definitely be considered an instructor. They'd pay me nothing. It's for somebody who's retired.”—Patty

- “I’m probably going to at some point just pull the plug and go down there and maybe teach at a community college.”—Maggie

Some participants felt the need to continue contributing to organizations, but from the outside-in by *Consulting*:

- “I left (my company) in 2007. I became a consultant at that point.”—Jim
- “Where do CLOs go? They have traditionally over the last dozen years or so, they have essentially gone back to being an independent consultant/speaker/writer.”—Norris
- “So I left and took about six months to just detox from my 30 years in the corporate workplace, and now I’m doing some consulting work on my own.”—Paula
- “I would like to continue to consult; either do OD, consulting with organizations.”—Will

Even though they have left the role of CLO (or see themselves leaving in the future), some still wish to *Contribute to HRD Practice* by writing and publishing:

- “You still need to be active by being a thought leader and publishing articles, pragmatic articles, scholarly articles, and attending conferences and sharing the wisdom that you learned over the years.”—Greg
- “I can do it now. I’m retired but I still believe in the profession and I want to make it better. I get paid nothing for this but yeah, I’m going to get the article, once published and I’m going to send it to every HR director I can think of.”—Lonnie
- “That’s sort of where I am now. I’m doing a little writing. I actually am writing a couple of papers, one with someone and one on my own.”—Paula
- “I wrote a book, a book that I thought about for a long time.”—Jim
- “I’m probably going to write a book.”—Maggie

Some study participants discussed the potential for starting new business ventures as *Entrepreneurs*:

- “I am now CEO of the other two service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.”—Greg
- “I’ve never had a chance to really work at a sustainability field. I want to learn about it. I’m going to work in it for a few years and then when the time comes, I will reinvent myself at least one more time before the end of my

career and move onto something else is very likely what it's going to be.”—

Alex

- “(I will) fully deploy the concept I have floating around in my head about corporate universities becoming learning development apps store, where you build what the customer wants and if they don't want it, you can't sell it.”—Peter
- “I know you're not going to get it in business, so you have to start your own business. It's the only way to get even close if you have a chance at getting that number. If I could do it successfully, yes, but I'm scared to death of it. I would enjoy aligning customer needs with resources at a broad level and I think I would have to start my own organization to do that.”—Jack
- “I left the organization about a year and a half ago to start my own company with some partners. I just can't imagine going back into that corporate setting. I guess if I had to, I would, but not my first choice.”—Rex

Others still consider their next career stop to be the ultimate

protean/boundaryless role, complete *Retirement* from work:

- “Having said all that, my own personal view is that life is short and there are many other things that I would want to do and I saw a lot of people at Caterpillar who were staying too long, who were staying after the time they should have left, they were eligible to retire and they should have retired, they were becoming cynical, skeptical and I've seen them change. I've been there long enough to know them when they are younger and full of energy and full of optimism and can do.”—Jim
- “I think some people just come to the end of the journey and they say, "This has just been all in, head, heart and hands, and I just burned out and I can't do this anymore, and I'm stepping off the track. I'm retiring. I'm opening a mom-and-pop grocery store. I'm opening a bed and breakfast, something that's quite different.”—Paula
- “I'm picturing a pasture somewhere.”—Tony

After concluding their experiences as CLOs, participants have entered—or envision entering, a wide array of activities. Some consider going higher in their respective organizations. Most, however, see themselves remaining in HRD, but practicing it in different ways, often outside being employed by organizations. A few

even contemplated retirement. Yet for all participants, being a CLO signals the last stop on a traditional career path in HRD.

Findings

This section presents the key findings culled from the analysis of Category 1, Before HRD, and Category 2, HRD Career, along with Axial Code 1-2, The Transition into HRD, and Axial Code 2-3, Becoming a Chief Learning Officer. It also discusses the key findings culled from the analysis of Category 3, Being a CLO, and Category 4, After Being a CLO, along with Axial Code 3-4, Transitioning Out of the CLO Role. These culminate in the descriptive model developed to examine and explain the CLO phenomenon as determined by this research. It is this model that will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 5 as the Basic Social Process of the Chief Learning Officer is presented and the theoretical model of the CLO is completed.

CLOs Follow a Career Path

Whether they select HRD as a career field from the outset (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009), or gravitate towards it as part of their selected careers (Super, 1980), CLOs gain HRD experience in areas like instructional design, instructional delivery, and training administration. It is possible to become a CLO without any prior HRD experience and some CLOs spend their entire careers in HRD. In this study, participants were mostly in between, starting their careers in other fields and then instructing as subject-matter experts, only find themselves moving into HRD full-time. These experiences then led to their elevation to the CLO level.

CLOs are Selected for the Role in Different Ways

Vancil (1987) suggested that executives are selected in one of three ways: by ‘horse race’ (where an opening is identified, candidates are gathered, and one is selected over the others), by ‘relay race’ (succession planning, where internal candidates for potential openings are identified, prepared, and once the opening is available, selected), and by ‘crisis’ (an organizational emergency requires a particular candidate or kind of candidate to be found). In this study, participants were selected to their CLO positions in one of the first two ways: ‘horse race’ or ‘relay race.’ None of the study’s participants were selected in a crisis situation.

A different way of being selected emerged not anticipated by Vancil (1987). Some study participants *created the CLO position for their organizations and then filled it*. This had the dual effect of creating a career opportunity for the new CLO and to introduce the practice of the CLO—and its impact on the organization. Nearly half of

the study's participants reported creating and filling the CLO position for the first time for their respective organizations. Regardless how they were selected, winning a competition, being groomed through succession planning, or by creating the position for them to fill, becoming a Chief Learning Officer meant entering an exciting and impactful role. This finding is so significant that it becomes the basis for the Basic Social Process of the CLO identified and explored in the next chapter.

CLOs Practice Strategic HRD

While they still practice HRD in general, the CLOs in this study play a variety of roles and practice in different ways than do HRD practitioners in general.

CLO Roles. According to the study's participants, CLOs not only practice HRD, some even still instruct in the classroom, they manage training and leverage technology, particularly in knowledge management and to deliver non-residential training. They consult with senior managers to develop learning and development solutions. They coach senior managers to help them perform better as leaders. They develop careers and manage talent. They lead their own teams, develop leaders throughout the organization, and even manage organizational cultures. Yet, their roles do not fully define the position.

CLO Practices. The participants in this study identified several unique elements to performing the CLO role. They engage the top management team (TMT). Sometimes, they have a seat at the table, membership on the organization's TMT. Other times, their role as the CLO does not include this membership. They report advantages to being on the team, like having a greater say in the organization's strategic direction, enhanced sponsorship of HRD activities, and stronger protection of the HRD budget. Also, they report disadvantages to TMT membership, including the time it can take away from HRD responsibilities and, sometimes, the lack of operational experience and perspective necessary for the larger organizational management role. It was clear from the study that CLOs were able to practice strategic human resource development (SHRD) whether or not they had TMT membership. Sometimes managers did not want the transformative impacts of SHRD from the CLO, seeking tactical solutions to short-term or compliance-related issues instead.

Aligning the CLO under Human Resources

Where the CLO should be aligned, within the organization's human resources department (HR), on the same level with HR, or even within another department in the organization, remains a debated topic (Anderson, 2009; Elkeles & Phillips, 2007;

(Smith, 2011). Participants were mixed on the value or impediments involved with aligning the learning function and, thus, the CLO under HR. Some reported advantages to being a part of HR: alignment with the organization's human capital management requirements, having the HR director spend the time required on the TMT, and using the HR director as leverage to practice SHRD. Disadvantages included impeding HRD's access to the TMT, a lack of understanding about HRD by HR directors, and threats to HRD's budget without a 'seat at the table.'

CLO Engagement

CLOs engaged outside groups in two categories, according to the findings of this study. First, they engaged the field (practice) of HRD by participating in professional organizations (like ASTD). Second, they engaged their fellow CLOs by participating in symposia like those offered by *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, or (particularly in the Federal government sector) by forming peer groups.

After Being in the CLO Role

In this study, some participants were in their first CLO positions. Others had been CLOs in more than one organization, and some others had moved beyond the CLO and on to other challenges. A few reported the possibility of moving up in the organization—either to a broader role like heading up all of human resources, or by moving into an operational executive role. They reported that the likelihood of these opportunities was limited if the CLO did not have an HR or operational background, respectively. Study participants largely looked to extra-organizational experiences for their next career moves, including consulting, coaching, teaching, writing, scholarship, and even retirement.

Conclusion

After practicing strategic HRD—whether or not they had a “seat at the table”—Chief Learning Officers either moved out of the CLO role or were contemplating it. Their post-CLO roles and/or aspirations include climbing the corporate ladder, entering the field of education, becoming entrepreneurs, consultants, and coaches. A few were even contemplating retirement. None were considering proactively working on the gap between scholarship and practice in HRD, even those who are considering teaching at the tertiary level. If that gap is to be addressed, it will not be by these very senior members of the field, no matter what contributions they make to the practice of HRD.

All CLOs operate within the structure of the HRD field and inside organizations. While that structure can limit their ability to practice, it can also—when structure

and agency are managed effectively as a polarity—provide a framework for achieving excellent results.

The myriad codes (more than 100) form categories and axial codes, which are then arranged into a theoretical model depicting the CLO phenomenon. The figure below again depicts that model, along with its underlying theoretical support. This model will be the basis for further analysis of the CLO phenomenon, identifying and describing strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) as the Basic Social Process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the Chief Learning Officer.

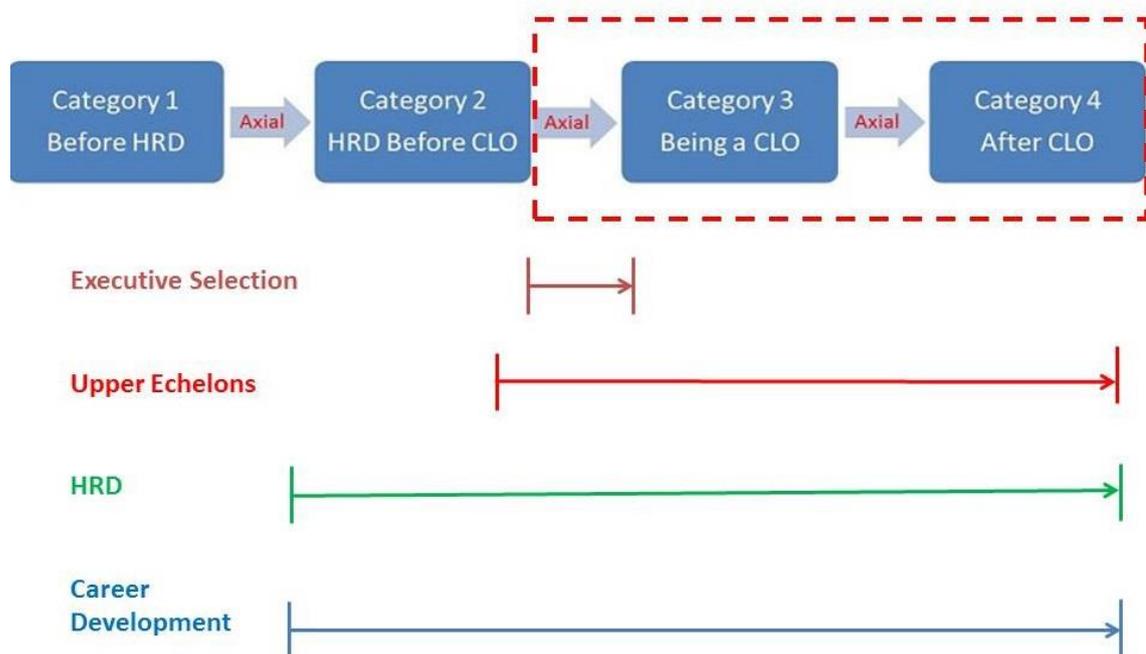


Figure 4-6 Basic CLO Model

Chapter 5 – Analysis, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

This final chapter of the thesis sets out to accomplish several tasks. First, it will take the CLO Model developed and presented in Chapter 4 and analyze it using a form of structuration theory. Next, it will identify the limitations and delimiters of the research project, followed by implications of the findings for HRD scholarship and practice. Additionally, recommendations for future research will be offered. The chapter concludes with suggestions for the future of HRD practice as they related to the findings of this research.

Analysis and Conclusions

Basic Social Process of the Chief Learning Officer

In the previous chapter, data emerging from the research process—gathered from interviews with the study’s participants—was analyzed and a model describing the Chief Learning Officer phenomenon was created. It consisted of four categories, or phases, that represented a path for future, current, and former CLOs, with each transition explained by one or more axial codes. Further, other contributing theories were used to understand and explain these categories and axial codes. The result was a model that can be observed and reconciled with the data emergent from the study as well as with other observations, such as other research or observations from the field. While the model describes the CLO and much of the workings of the CLO career path, it does not reveal the underlying dynamic that is driving this phenomenon.

Throughout this thesis, it was stressed that when the grounded theory approach to qualitative research is used, the researcher seeks out the Basic Social Process (BSP), the central theme that explains most or even the entire phenomenon under study (Wiener, 2007). It basically asks, “What is really going on here?” It is the BSP that is the subject of this section of the chapter, and it is the BSP that is at the heart of the developing grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theories are analyzed with consideration towards time—they develop in stages (Dey, 2007). This is consistent with the CLO model developed and presented in Chapter 4. In pursuit of the BSP for the CLO, the social structures CLOs operate within and the structures’ constraints on the ability of the CLOs to act are essential factors. Neither are social structures static; the progression of time must be considered

as they are analyzed as processes (Dey, 2007). As will be seen in this chapter, time has a significant impact on the BSP as the CLOs proceed through their career paths.

Social Structures and Their Agents

Social science is designed to explore and explain the processes of social life (Gregson, 1989). (This makes the grounded theory approach quite compatible with studying social groups and the participants in them.) Theories are particularly useful for analyzing and explaining social phenomena (Gregson, 1989). Extant relevant theories were used in the last chapter to describe the Chief Learning Officer phenomenon. In this chapter, a key theory in the social sciences will be used to explain and present the basic social process of the CLO, *structuration* (Giddens, 1984). First, however, it is essential that the two components of structuration, Structure and Agency, are explained.

Social *structures* can be thought of as the medium within which individuals act. They are the rules and resources for use in social settings, while *agency* is the power individuals hold to act within the constraints of the structure (Yuthas et al., 2004). This “duality” of structure and agency resulted in two perspectives: Objectivism, where the focus was on the structure’s restriction of agents, and Subjectivism, where the individual’s actions (agency) were the focus (Stones, 2005). However, this duality did not fully satisfy the obvious notion that social structures do not naturally exist; they are created. By whom? The agents within them (Stones, 2005).

Structuration theory, first put forth by Anthony Giddens (1984), offers a paradigm to address the structure/agency duality. Giddens suggested a *dualism* of structure. In this manner, structure is both the medium within which the agent acts and it is the outcome of those actions (Stones, 2005). These actions can be unknowing, perhaps the result of Bourdieu’s *habitus*, where the agents within the social structure are conditioned to act in certain ways by the pressures placed upon them by the structure (Reay, 2004). However, Giddens noted that the agents may also act *consciously* both within and upon the structure, using it as a medium for their actions and creating/changing the structure itself (Stones, 2005). This idea—agents creating the structure within which they operate—is crucial to understanding the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer. However, there is a significant limitation for researchers when using structuration on empirical research.

Structuration is an ontology (Giddens, 1984). Ontological perspectives are useful in studying social structures, especially in generating questions and analyzing categories in the data (Gregson, 1989). (This is how theories were used in creating the

CLO model presented in Chapter 4.) However, structuration does not provide an epistemological or methodological framework—a way of knowing about the phenomenon (Stones, 2005). There is no checklist, no set of criteria or characteristics to go over to see if structuration is happening within the phenomenon. structuration is useful in sensitizing the researcher to the social dynamic within the phenomenon (Giddens, 1989), but it is limited in its ability to explain a phenomenon (Cohen, 1998). Something additional is needed.

Strong Structuration

Recognizing the limitations of Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), Stones (2005) took it a step further, proposing what he called ‘strong structuration.’ Stones suggested Giddens’ structuration is an “ontology-in-general” (Stones, 2005, p. 7), focused more on a philosophical use. While still remaining an ontology, and still lacking an epistemology, strong structuration represented an ontology *in situ*—moving from the abstract towards the particular. strong structuration retains the philosophical perspective of Giddens’ structuration, but adds elements that make it more useful in explaining and analyzing the phenomenon under study. This, in addition to its more specific use of elapsed time, makes it an ideal fit to understand and explain the Chief Learning Officer Phenomenon as presented in Chapter 4.

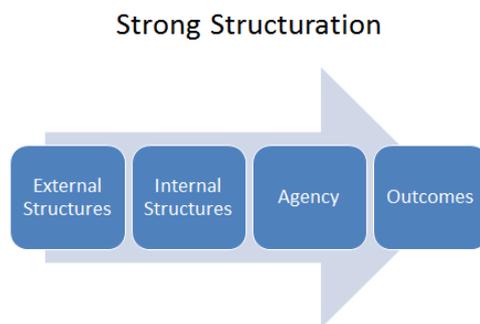


Figure 5-1. Stones’ Strong Structuration

Strong structuration (Stones, 2005) is made up of four elements that, over time, produce and continuously change the structure-agent phenomenon. The first two elements focus on the structure part of strong structuration, while the second two focus on agency and outcomes. As will be illustrated below, this is consistent with the greater impact of structure on the agent early in the process, with agency (and its outcomes) emerging to a greater extent as time elapses.

The first two elements of strong structuration are external and internal structures (Stones, 2005). External structures are the “conditions of action” (Stones, p. 84), aspects of the social structure that impact individuals’ actions. Internal structures consist of the situation-specific and conscious knowledge of external structures held by individuals, as well as the “general dispositions” (Stones, 2005, p. 85) acquired over time by individuals, following Bourdieu’s *habitus* (Wacquant, 2007). Thus, whether conscious of it or not, agents’ actions are affected by external and internal social structures.

The final two elements of strong structuration are active agency and outcomes (Stones, 2005). Active Agency represents the conscious actions of the agent within and upon the structure, while Outcomes are the results of the agent’s actions on external structures.

Strong Structuration and the Chief Learning Officer

Depicted in Figure 5-1 is Stone’s strong structuration. When it is combined with the Theoretical Basis for the CLO model Developed in Chapter 2 (Figure 2-1), this depiction of the CLO experience in terms of strong structuration results:

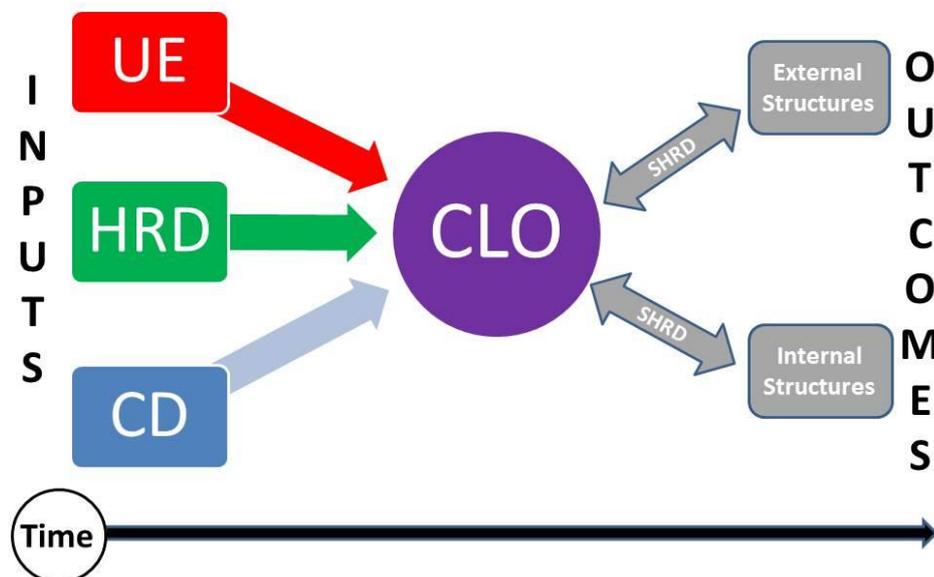


Figure 5-2. The CLO and Strong Structuration

In Figure 5-2 above, the processes involved with upper echelons (UE), human resource development (HRD), and career development (CD) theories move the CLO to perform strategic human resource development (SHRD). That performance is affected

by external and internal structures and results in organizational outcomes. These dynamics were described in detail in Chapter 4, and represent the elements of strong structuration theory depicted in Figure 5-1.

Stones' (2005) strong structuration is not only useful for capturing the CLO experience over time, it can also be applied to the larger CLO model (Figure 4-6). This results in the model seen in Figure 5-3:

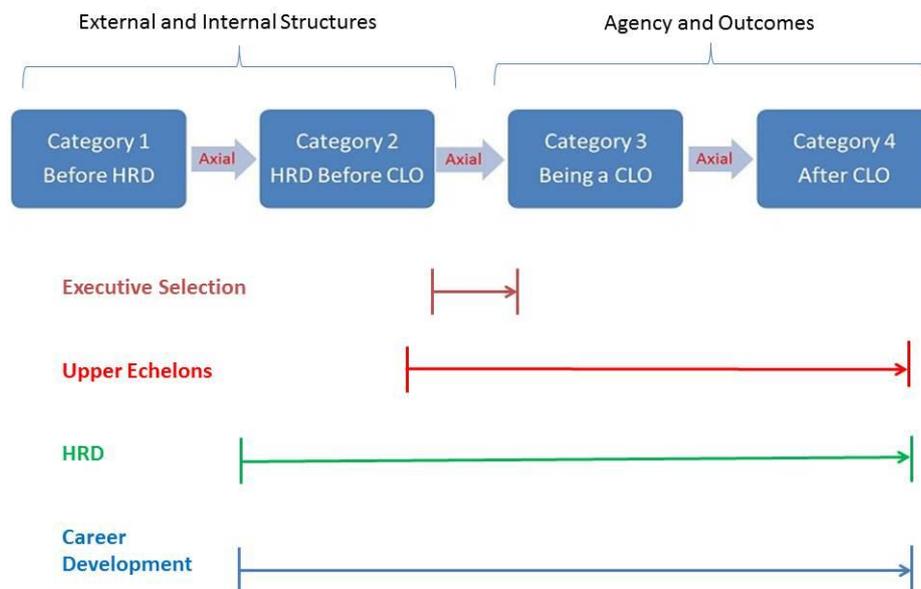


Figure 5-3. The CLO Career Path and Strong Structuration

The argument put forth by this thesis is that strong structuration (Stones, 2005) theory helps observers see and understand the CLO phenomenon, and contributes to the grounded theory on the CLO beginning to emerge from the data. The two, Stones' strong structuration theory and the CLO model produced in Chapter 4 will be discussed in parallel, examining them along a timeline that follows the CLO career path that has emerged from this research.

As noted earlier, structuration—"strong" or otherwise—takes place over time (Stones, 2005). Structures, which are both the medium in which agents act *and* are the products of their actions, form and change over time as well. In the concept presented here, the research suggests this is true of the Chief Learning Officer's career path as well. This helps the researcher utilize strong structuration theory by combining it with

the CLO Model (Figure 4-6) to create the Basic Social Process for the CLO (Figure 5-1) and the CLO career path (Figure 5-2).

CLOs during the developing periods of their careers were influenced by many external and internal structural factors, such as Career Selection and career development. Certainly, these future CLOs demonstrated their Agency by making career choices where possible, but even these were strongly influenced by existing external structures (such as defined careers and career paths) as well as internal structures (the expectations they set for themselves—sometimes sub-consciously—through their experiences in their careers). However, the key point in the model—and in their career paths—is illustrated in Axial Code 2-3, *Becoming a CLO*.

The reader will recall Vancil's (1987) model for executive selection that provided three categories, two of which were present in the data. 'Horse race' involved opening the position to be filled, weighing the quality of the candidates, and selecting the best qualified. 'Relay race,' on the other hand, was based on preparing one or more successors for a position and then promoting the protégé when the position opened. The third, 'crisis,' involved selecting a candidate under emergency conditions. None of the participants in this study were selected to become CLOs in this manner. What was not anticipated by Vancil's model was a fourth way—one very consistent with the theory of structuration, including Stones (2005) strong structuration.

Many of the study's participants were the first CLOs of their respective organizations, usually creating the position themselves. To employ a metaphor, it is like running a train down a set of tracks while simultaneously laying those tracks for the first time. This is the epitome of structuration: the CLO community (thoroughly described in the Literature Review in Chapter 2) is both being created by the CLOs and is the medium in which the function. This shift in emphasis from Structure to Agency is gradual throughout the CLO's career path, but it emerges strongly right here in "Becoming a CLO." However, the experiences of the CLO—and the impact of strong structuration—do not end there.

As CLOs, study participants reported—and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 supports—working within and affecting the social structures around them. The fields of human resources, human resources development, executive management, and the group of CLOs themselves are all examples of these structures. As seen in Chapter 4, the CLOs operate within these structures while also contributing to changes in them. As seen in Chapter 2, the concept of the CLO is very recent (the past two decades) and

evolving, with much of the change coming from the CLOs themselves. Thus, the CLOs undergo continuous change during their individual careers, just as the concept of the CLO continues to change and mature over time, reflecting the impact of their Agency and being an Outcome of it (Stones, 2005). Still, this dynamic does not stop when these people stop being CLOs.

The final step in the CLO model is the category “After CLO,” when people leave the CLO position. As documented in Chapter 4, many CLOs transition into other roles. A few stay in the organizational environment, but many other pursue extra-organizational roles like consulting, teaching, coaching, writing, and mentoring. These opportunities are a result—an “Outcome”—of their Agency. They create new opportunities, new Structures that become the media in which they will operate and are a result of those actions. Again, structuration helps to understand and explain this dynamic.

CLOs follow their career paths—from before entering the HRD field, to being in HRD, to becoming and being CLOs, to moving on to new challenges. All along the way, Structures within and around them exert great influence on their progress. As they develop more and more agency, these outcomes can lead to the top of HRD practice—the Chief Learning Officer position—then, ultimately, beyond to new roles and experiences, often of their own creation. They continue to run the train and lay down the tracks.

Quality of the Theory

Throughout the research, the approach used has been consistent constructivist grounded theory, which “...places a priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences with participants and other sources of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Thus, objectivity of the researcher was not sought—nor desired. As noted in Chapter 1, the researcher has an extensive background in the field of human resource development. The researcher used both it and the data drawn from participants in order to create the research outcomes presented in Chapter 4 and in this chapter.

Grounded theory is not created by hypothesis testing—deriving an “armchair” theory from extant research and then testing hypothesis about the theory to see if they hold (Patton, 2002). Instead, the efficacy of grounded theory comes from the strength of the data collected and the analyses performed (Dey, 2007). In that vein, Charmaz (2006)

presents four criteria to consider when weighing the quality of a grounded theory: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Each of these is considered below.

Credibility refers to the research process and to the results of the research. In this case, the researcher is a highly qualified and experienced practitioner in the field of human resource development and in research design and implementation. The data were constructed from 20 detailed semi-structured interviews of Chief Learning Officers in various stages of their CLO experiences. Only those codes and categories supported by the data were used in constructing the CLO model. The tallies supporting which codes were used in each category can be found in Appendix 1.

Originality is tested by asking whether or not the newly constructed theory offers new insight into the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the CLO is a recent and emerging phenomenon in the field of human resource development. Little research has been done previously on the CLO, and none involving the lived experiences of multiple participants combining to form a new theory. Additionally, none of the previous studies (Lackey, 2000; Navikas, 2005; Prafka, 2009) on the CLO took a sociological approach, as this one did in applying strong structuration (Stones, 2005) to better explain and understand the phenomenon.

Usefulness of the theory is demonstrated by its return to practice. Can others “use it in their everyday worlds?” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 331). Also, does the work contribute to existing knowledge? The utility of this research and its utility will be explored later in this chapter as the implications of the findings to scholarship and practice are examined, as well as where recommendations for future research are considered.

Limitations and Delimiters of the Study

Limitations

The study’s limitations primarily stem from the limitations inherent to the thesis process. Namely, the amount of time available for the study limited its scope. Since time limits for theses are arbitrarily set by universities (Centre for Labour Market Studies, 2010), artificial limits to the study must also ensue. For example, data gathering in qualitative research is ideally concluded when the topic is saturated, when no new information is being uncovered (Creswell, 2007). In the grounded theory approach, research should continue until theoretical saturation or when the researcher is able to construct a complete theory from the gathered data (Charmaz, 2006). Either of these objectives can be in jeopardy when the thesis must be concluded sooner due to time

constraints. The result is an incomplete grounded theory regarding the Chief Learning Officer. To complete it, many other perspectives beyond the ones gathered will need to be considered. This is further contemplated below when recommendations for future research are offered.

Another limitation of the thesis is the scope allowed or the size of the thesis itself (Centre for Labour Market Studies, 2010). This can prevent conceptual or theoretical saturation. A completed project or, with grounded theory, a complete theory, may not be able to be fit into the space provided.

The inductive approach (Bryman, 2004), data-to-theory, used in this study also presented a limitation. Because there were not specific research questions under study (as with a theory-to-data deductive approach), there may have been unexplored topics relevant to the phenomenon not proactively pursued. This was mitigated to a great extent by the semi-structured interview process used (Seidman, 2006). The interviews followed a basic structure; yet, they were flexible enough to permit other, unanticipated topics to arise.

Time and scope limited this research. As described in a subsequent section, neither conceptual nor theoretical saturation were possible. This did not, of course, prevent the study from developing significant findings useful to both HRD scholarship and practice, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Delimiters

The study had several delimiters defining its scope as well. First, it was not meant to be a representative sample of any population, including the one (Chief Learning Officers) from which the participants were drawn. As a qualitative study, it sought rich, lived experiences from its participants (Patton, 2002). “Tallying” data was kept to a minimum and emphasis was placed on the power of the experiences and perspectives shared. As described in Chapter 3, validity and reliability were enhanced by the connections made to extant theories and practices.

Another delimiter of the study was the CLO as a subject. The only organizational role drawn from for this study was the CLO him/herself. As will be explored later in this chapter, there are many other related organizational roles, both within and outside HRD practice, which could also be examined. Of particular interest would be HRD practitioners before they become CLOs and how their perspectives on HRD practice (and on their careers in HRD) differ from those held by CLOs.

Related to multiple roles as study subjects, each of those roles could also provide greater insight into the CLO. How other people in an organization perceive and interact with the CLO (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007) could have enhanced understanding into the phenomenon.

Finally, the number of interviews conducted during data-gathering (20) was entirely arbitrary. It was set with the guidance of the researcher's thesis advisor, as was meant to meet an unspecific norm. Twenty interviews was a sufficient number for the purposes of completing thesis research—Creswell (Creswell, 2007) stated that often only 5-10 are needed.

Implications of the Findings

This section explores some of the study findings' implications for HRD scholarship, HRD practice, how HRD practitioners are prepared, and for thought leadership in the practice of HRD.

Implications for Scholarship

The main contribution of this research to the scholarship of HRD has been a deeper understanding of the CLO phenomenon from the perspectives of CLOs themselves. The study collected and synthesized their observations and contributions, forming a well-grounded model of the CLO phenomenon.

Another key contribution of this study is the application of existing theory regarding social structures and the agents who function within them. It considered agency and structure separately through objectivist and subjectivist lenses (Cohen, 1998), the tacit effects of Bourdieu's *habitus* on agency (Wacquant, 2007), the duality of structure—that it is both the medium in which agents act and it is the result of their actions (Giddens, 1984), and a more utile strong structuration (Stones, 2005) used to explain and analyze the dynamics of the CLO experience.

Also, this process has created a paradigm for studying other career fields that also have an academic basis. Researchers can identify the stages in each, then core theoretical principles underlying them. By applying career development and (where relevant) upper echelons theories, then strong structuration theory, researchers may gain and communicate greater insights in those career fields.

Finally, this study helped demonstrate the utility of a more-defined form of structuration theory than that offered by its creator (Giddens, 1984). Using strong structuration (Stones, 2005) and its more-defined "ontology *in situ*" strengthened

structuration theory's explanatory and analytical capability. Other researchers studying practice-based structures will be able to leverage its advantages as well.

Implications for HRD Practice

In this study, several issues around practicing HRD at its highest levels (as a CLO) emerged.

Strategic human resource development (SHRD) focuses on organizational strategy (Harrison, 2000), building a learning culture (McCracken & Wallace, 2000), and is expected to make a strategic contribution to the organization's mission and outcomes (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). A more complete treatment of SHRD is available in Chapter 2. Study participants reported many activities executing SHRD, supporting the concept that SHRD is a key factor in CLO performance. The practice of SHRD should be emphasized in the field.

The debate over whether or not the CLO should have membership on the organization's top management team ("getting a seat at the table") can be answered unequivocally with "it depends." The negatives and positives are in constant flux and must be examined in the organizational context. Practitioners writing about this in trade journals and other sources have a responsibility to present both sides of this issue.

Study participants stressed the importance of maintaining relationships with organizational (internal) customers and stakeholders. Their customers drive requirements and their stakeholders invest in HRD activities designed to meet those requirements. Some participants reported engaging with other CLOs in the field, but these were not vital. An exception to this was the CLOs working in the Federal government, many of whom have banded together to form a council to promote their role, share best practices, and influence policy related to learning and development.

Finally, the HRD career field needs greater purpose and focus when developing its leaders. The research clearly showed that the primary factor in becoming a Chief Learning Officer is the inspiration and creativity of the candidate him/herself. This fit neatly into structuration theory—the candidate acting within the social structure while also proactively creating/changing it. However, explaining it with theory and doing something about it are separate concepts. The field of HRD should consider this study's outcomes and create purposeful and identifiable career paths for its practitioners to prepare for and to rise to the top—to become Chief Learning Officers.

Recommendations for Future Research

As described earlier in this chapter, this study was delimited and has other limitations. These, combined with the results from analyzing the data, lead to several areas recommended for future research.

Complete the Grounded Theory on the Chief Learning Officer

This study gathered perspectives from one source: CLOs. Yet, a grounded theory approach is enhanced when multiple perspectives are considered because each person constructs his/her perception of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Gathering perspectives regarding the CLO from people in other roles related to the CLO, HRD practitioners, senior managers, HR directors, HRD scholars, customers, and others, would lead to a more complete theory about the phenomenon. Additionally, each of the HRD-related roles could be considered for study as well.

Conduct Deductive Research on Study Findings

This study used a grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis. As such, it is an inductive work towards a theory already grounded in data, as opposed to an “armchair” theory awaiting empirical study (Glaser, 1998). Still, no project is complete, and no theory is ‘proven.’ There is opportunity for deductive research, hypotheses developed and tested based on this study’s findings. There is also room for developing and testing inferences about the CLO population through random sampling and quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Recommendations for Future Practice

As described throughout the thesis, the practice of HRD is rooted in its academic discipline. Because this thesis is the culmination of a professional doctorate (Scott et al., 2004), it combines both scholarly and practice-based elements. Thus, it is fitting to make recommendations to the practice of HRD as well as its scholarship.

Create and Promote a Career Path for HRD Practitioners to Become CLOs

The outcome of this research is a model for HRD practitioners who become Chief Learning Officers. This model should become the basis for a learning and development framework for the future CLO, from entering the practice of HRD to becoming a CLO; from being an effective CLO who practices SHRD to transitioning out of the role. Finally, the myriad possibilities for former CLOs to continue their HRD practices should be considered and supported to enhance the field and to retain their valuable contributions.

Create a Framework for Top Management Team Membership and the CLO

CLOs not currently serving on their organizations' top management teams (TMTs) should have a framework for deciding whether or not they should pursue TMT membership. This would go beyond current thinking around the advantages and disadvantages to TMT membership. Instead, it would give CLOs (and their organizational stakeholders) a means for deciding the optimal placement of the CLO within the organization. Additionally, all CLOs should have access to a framework for deciding whether or not it is best for the learning function in their organization to be aligned under the HR director. These decisions, highly affected by organizational and personality issues, are critical for the success of the learning function, the CLO's performance, and the accomplishment of the organization's goals.

Conclusion

This chapter made important contributions to both HRD scholarship and practice by leveraging a more robust and useful form of structuration theory to explain and analyze the Chief Learning Officer Model developed in Chapter 4. Additionally, this chapter also set out to give the myriad findings of this study meaning in both an academic and a practical context. It described how the study was limited, including delimiters in its design. It offered implications of those findings to HRD scholarship, HRD practice, and other areas. Finally, in keeping with the scholar-practitioner orientation of the thesis, this chapter made suggestions for both future research and future practice. Scholarship and practice are two aspects of one idea: the discipline of human resource development.

The Chief Learning Officer phenomenon is a new and still-forming concept. The opportunity to further establish the role and its potential impact on the practice of human resource development is firmly rooted in both the success of its practitioners and the potential for refinement and improvement through scholarship. This thesis is submitted in order to contribute to those aims.

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Appendices

Appendix 1—Codes and Categories

Note: In many cases, participants provided responses to more than one code or sub-code in a category.

Category	Code	Sub-Code	Tallies (n = 20)
1 Before HRD	Career development Theory—Structural	White Collar	14
		Military	3
		Blue Collar	3
1-2 Axial Entering HRD	Career development Theory—Developmental	N/A	5
	Career Selection	N/A	15
2 HRD Practice	Foundational HRD Theory	Psychology	20
		Economics	19
		Systems	3
	Adult Learning	Higher Education Before Entering HRD	13
		Higher Education After Entering HRD	9
		Executive Development	14
		Other Forms of Higher Learning	20
		Impact of an Advanced Degree	
2-3 Axial Becoming a Chief Learning Officer	Executive Selection	Horse Race	12
		Relay Race	5
		Crisis	1
		Creating the CLO Position	13
3 Being a CLO	Chief Learning Officer Activities	Business Acumen	17
		Manage Finances	10
		Leverage Workplace Learning	8
		Manage Knowledge	7
		Manage Technology	10
		Organizational Development	9
	Chief Learning Officer Roles	Consultant	12
		Coach	3

		Culture Manager	5
		HRD Practitioner	15
		Leader Developer	13
		Talent Manager	14
		Manager and Leader	17
	Alignment of the CLO and the Learning Function	Aligned in HR	16
		Aligned Outside of HR	14
		Advantages with Aligning the CLO under HR	4
		Disadvantages with Aligning the CLO under HR	13
	Getting a “Seat at the Table”	Membership on the TMT	7
		Without Membership on the TMT	6
		Wants Membership on the TMT	14
		Does Not Want Membership on the TMT	10
	CLO Engagement	With HRD Practice	20
		With Other CLOs	8
		With HRD Scholarship	11
	Strategic HRD	N/A	17
3-4 Axial Transitioning Out of the CLO Role	Adult Development--Post-Conventional	N/A	5
4 After CLO	Maintaining a Corporate Career	N/A	10
	Becoming the Head of HR	N/A	5
	Boundaryless and Protean Careers	Advisor/Coach	4
		Community Service	5
		Consulting	10
		Higher Education	5
		Mentoring	3
		Contribute to HRD Practice	4
		Entrepreneur	6
Retirement	3		

Appendix 2—Participants' Invitation

Introduction. Thank you for considering your participation in this project, a thesis to complete the Doctor of Social Science (in Human Resource Development) degree. The enclosed pages are for background purposes. You won't need them to participate in the interview, but they offer detailed information about the project, its objectives, and your role in that. You'll find a brochure on the project, and also a preview of the questions used in the interview. A copy of the release form is included. (I'll bring a copy for you to sign at the interview.) Finally, there is a 1-page sheet listing potential theoretical contributions to the phenomenon of the Chief Learning Officer and how they will be analyzed from the interviews.

The Research Project. The Chief Learning Officer (CLO) is a relatively new concept, taking hold only in the past two decades. But how do human resource development practitioners (HRD) become CLOs? And how do they practice strategically when they get there? Those are the major issues at the outset of this project. CLOs will be interviewed and their contributions will be analyzed qualitatively with an eye on creating a solid explanation of the CLO. The results will be used to inform HRD scholarship. And it will be used to improve the ways we can prepare people to grow into the role of CLO and how to practice once they get there.

The Researcher. Rich Douglas has 35 years of experience in HRD and education, having worked in the military, public, private, and academic sectors. This is his second doctorate, having earned the Ph.D. (in Higher Education) and Master of Business Administration degrees, along with the Project Management Professional (PMP) designation. Currently, Dr. Douglas works as a training manager for the federal government.

The University. The University of Leicester is a research-led university based in Leicester, England. The university has established itself as a leading research-led university and has been named University of the Year of 2008 by the Times Higher Education. The university has consistently ranked amongst the top 15 universities in the United Kingdom by the Times Good University Guide and The Guardian. Located in Leicester, UK, the University has more than 23,000 students, including more than 8,000 studying around the globe.

Closure. Again, thanks for participating in this important project. You will receive an electronic copy of the thesis once it is accepted by the University.

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Appendix 3—Project Description

Research Project: The Chief Learning Officer

<p><u>Project Description</u></p>	<p><u>Potential Impact</u></p>
<p><u>About the Researcher</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich Douglas, MBA, Ph.D. • 35 years practicing Human Resource Development • Instructional Developer • Leadership Developer • Education and training management • Scholarship grounded in practice • Experience includes military, academia, private sector, consulting, and federal government • Currently a senior education and training manager in Dept. of Homeland Security 	<p><u>Benefits to Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the field • Have a role in shaping the field at its highest practice levels • Help bridge the gap between scholars and practitioners • Improve the way HRD practitioners are prepared • Mentoring/Coaching/Developing • Enhance your guidance of other practitioners • Transcript of the interview • Complimentary copy of the thesis for future reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Thesis • Doctorate in Human Resource Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Leicester, UK • Topic: The Chief Learning Officer • How HRD professionals (and others) become CLOs • How CLOs practice HRD strategically • Process • Interviews with CLOs • Qualitative analysis • Theoretical explanation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve CLO strategic performance • Professional Development • Improve how HRD practitioners are developed • Scholarship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute new knowledge to the field • Help close the gap between HRD scholarship and practice

Appendix 4—Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe how you entered the HRD field?
2. Describe your career in HRD leading to your role as a CLO
 - Positions and their impact on your growth
 - Education, training, and other activities and their impact on your development
 - i. How were these choices made?
 - ii. What direction regarding content
3. Describe the selection process when you first became a CLO?
 - Subsequent times?
4. Are you a member of the organization's Top Management Team? (Having a "seat at the table.")
 - Yes: describe your role on the team and your interactions with other TMT members
 - i. What would be the impact on the organization if you did not?
 - No: describe your relationship with the TMT
 - i. What would be the impact on the organization if you did?
5. How do you engage the organization strategically?
6. How do you use learning and development to create strategic organizational outcomes?
7. As a CLO, describe the influence the career field has on your practice. Describe any ways you contribute to or impact the career field.
8. In becoming a CLO, describe any learning or experiences supporting your executive leadership development.
9. Describe the influence the organization—its rules, processes, and senior leaders—has on the way you lead your team. What influence do you have in changing the same?

Appendix 5—Participant Consent

Informed Consent and Release

From a legal point of view the interviewer must have the informed consent of the interviewee before one can use the information contained in the interview. 'Informed consent' means that the interviewee is aware of all possible uses that may be made of the interview. They should also be correctly informed about the purpose of the study and the procedures the researcher is adopting.

Interviewees may refuse to answer questions should they wish, and they have the right to restrict parts or the entire interview as they see fit.

Interviewees have a moral right for their words not to be used in a derogatory manner and for their name to be associated with the material should they wish. In circumstances where the interviewee wishes to be anonymous, the researcher must ensure that no material is made available to the public from which the interviewee's identity could be inferred. This may include using pseudonyms. *Note: For the purposes of this study, all participants shall remain anonymous in all materials published regarding the research. This includes names, places of work, and any other possible identifying factors.*

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You will receive payment based on the proportion of the study you completed. You may withdraw by informing the experimenter that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked). You may skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.