CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Continuity of Operations Planning Among Los Angeles Nonprofits

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Public Administration in Non-Profit Sector Management

By

Haley Sanders

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The graduate project of Haley Sanders is approved:

_____	_____
Dr. Rhonda Franklin	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Philip Nufrio	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Henrik Palasani-Minassians, Chair	Date

California State University, Northridge

Abstract

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Continuity of operations planning allows organizations to assess their organizational strengths and risks to ensure that their operations and services are minimally disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster. The primary goal of this proposed research is to identify the prevalence of continuity of operations plans (COOP) among randomly sampled, tax-exempt public charities in the City of Los Angeles, and determine whether these results have any correlational relationship to organizational identifying factors such as mission area or organizational size.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Continuity of operations planning (COOP), like many integral processes within the purview of nonprofit administration, is a means of assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses and mitigating external risks. While other processes like strategic planning, executive succession planning, or financial assessment might address risks inherent to regular operations such as turnover or fund development, continuity of operations planning "focuses on planning and other activities to ensure an organization's ability to reestablish operations after a disruption and resume services to clients" (Gin, Eisner, Der-Martirosian, Kranke, & Dobalian, 2017, p. 4). While there can be significant barriers to conducting continuity of operations planning, and many organizations forgo the process, all public charities have mission-related obligations to ensure their own operational continuity as well as motivations related to their own finances, public reputations, and long-term survival. Although the process can seem overwhelming, "continuity planning is relatively straightforward, and completing even portions of the process enhances a nonprofit's ability to withstand an operational interruption" (Meyer-Emerick & Momen, 2003, p. 70). For "nonprofits to be part of the larger planning and response for disaster, they need to be part of the planning culture for disasters" (Jenkins, Lambeth, Mosby, & Van Brown, 2015, p. 1273).

Unfortunately, there has been very little research conducted on the prevalence of continuity of operations plans in the nonprofit sector. Further, the studies which have been conducted suggest that organizations with plans are in the minority due to the many barriers that organizations face, and that the plans which do exist are not comprehensive. The purpose of this proposed study would be to investigate the prevalence of continuity

of operations plans among 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in the City of Los Angeles and to see whether any statistically significant relationships can be established between organizational identifying factors and whether or not the organizations have plans. This information would be acquired through a randomly sampled survey of 1,257 of the organizations in the city. This proposed study would also collect information on the quality of continuity of operations plans and the barriers that organizations face in creating these plans. This research would increase practical and academic understanding of which organizations have continuity of operations plans in place, and thus can inform the sector and emergency managers on where gaps in this type of preparedness exist.

Chapter 2: Background

Continuity of Operations Planning in Context

The continuity of operations planning process has many steps. Key components include identifying critical and mission essential functions; identifying threats to an organization's processes; creating plans to respond to events that cannot be prevented; training staff and running exercises on contingency procedures; recovering and resuming essential functions after an emergency; and restoring or replacing critical resources and infrastructure lost during an event (Griffith, 2015). It is worth noting that 'disruptions' might entail large-scale destructive events such as natural disasters, but any "event that can destroy or affect an organization or some of its parts and has harmful consequences for the organization's operations, financial performance, reputation, health and well-being of clients and employees can be perceived as a crisis situation" (Meyer-Emerick & Momen, 2003, p. 68). Continuity of operations plans have often been referred to interchangeably as "Business Continuity Plans," even in the public and nonprofit sectors. However, the use of this term "brings to mind private sector goals that are not the primary focus of nonprofit management," (Meyer-Emerick & Momen, 2003, p. 67) and implies that the continuity of operations planning process is the same for nonprofit organizations as it is for private businesses. While there is not yet a nonprofit-specific term, continuity of operations planning originated in the public sector and implies priorities of public safety and continued offering of services for the good of society, which is very much in line with nonprofit ethos (Griffith, 2015). Thus, this process will be referred to exclusively as continuity of operations planning throughout this research proposal.

While continuity of operations planning is very important for nonprofit organizations, it is not the only necessary step in disaster preparedness. Preparedness for nonprofits can be thought of as part of a three-tiered maturity model, which involves (in order) planning for life safety through a disaster or emergency response plan, conducting continuity of operations planning, and developing intersector partnerships outside of the organization (Gin et al., 2017). This model begins by addressing immediate concerns and then moves to issues which are long-term but can nevertheless impact the survival of the organization (Gin et al., 2017). Continuity of operations planning is often confused with the process of disaster planning, but continuity of operations planning "goes beyond emergency response or disaster planning because it does not focus on specific risks, such as floods or hurricanes, but identifies interruptions of processes that can be short or long-term, such as a power outage or the complete loss of a facility" (Meyer-Emerick & Momen, 2003, p. 68). Thus, when thinking of the continuity of operations planning process, it is important to remember that it is just one of the steps essential to an organization's resiliency after a disaster or disruption occurs. However, as one of the steps in disaster preparedness, it is still very important; "efforts to contribute to disaster resilience need to employ an ecological framework that emphasizes multiple strategies to bolster factors and conditions associated with community resilience processes" (Gil-Rivas & Kilmer, 2016). This study will consider the prevalence of continuity of operations plans among nonprofits and the factors related to this data.

Nonprofit Organizations and Disaster Response

The concept of nonprofit organizations supporting emergency management efforts is not new. The American Red Cross has had a congressional charter to provide disaster

relief services in exchange for financial reimbursement from the federal government for over a century, and has been responding to disaster events of its own volition since 1881 (Kosar, 2006). Additionally, hundreds of other organizations nationwide provide disaster relief services, and are often referred to as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) (Brudney & Gazley, 2009). Many VOADs have been active for several decades in providing disaster relief services, and research has shown that counties where emergency managers engage in joint planning and collaboration with these VOADs are positively correlated with public managers' increased perceptions of preparedness (Brudney & Gazley, 2009). However, the American Red Cross and other VOADs comprise a very small portion of the nonprofit sector and are not the only organizations which have an important role to play in ensuring the resilience of vulnerable populations and communities in the aftermath of disasters. Although these "national 'disaster' non-profits are important in disaster recovery, many recovery roles (particularly long term recovery roles) fall to more general and local non-profits. [...] Although most non-profits would not consider themselves disaster responders, the vast majority will react after a manmade or natural disaster" (Flatt & Stys, 2013, p. 351). For example, social service organizations like homeless shelters often see increases in the need for their services both during and after disasters (Gin et al., 2017). Furthermore, even the nonprofits which are not directly involved in disaster response and recovery – such as museums – need to plan for disaster continuity so that they can keep their doors open if they are impacted by a disaster. Thus, it is very important to note that when discussing the scope of this research and the importance of continuity of operations planning, this research proposal refers to both VOAD and non-VOAD tax-exempt public charities.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The purpose of this proposed study would be to investigate the prevalence of continuity of operations plans among 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in the City of Los Angeles and to determine whether any statistically significant relationships can be established between organizational identifying factors and whether or not the organizations have plans. This information would be acquired through a randomly sampled survey of 1,257 of the organizations in the city. This proposed study would also collect information on the quality of continuity of operations plans and the barriers that organizations face in creating these plans. The significance of this research is that it would increase the understanding of which organizations tend to have continuity of operations plans in place, and thus can inform the sector and emergency managers on where gaps in this type of preparedness exist.

The studies which have been conducted in regards to continuity of operations plans have been very limited in both number and scope. Thus, there are significant gaps in the literature. The studies discussed below represent the only relevant published research which has been done on this topic in the nonprofit sector. Within the following studies, three primary areas of inquiry stood out: the importance of continuity of operations planning, the prevalence of these plans, and barriers to creating these plans. Although this proposed study considers whether continuity of operations plans are comprehensive, this issue is quite scarce among existing literature and overlaps significantly with the other sections, where it is discussed when applicable.

Importance of Continuity of Operations Planning

Because many public charities are already geared towards meeting specific social needs in the community, in “times of disasters, non-profit agencies face two realities: the

needs of existing clients become more acute while at the same time new clients arrive seeking service. These needs and services may be temporary or long term based on the nature and severity of the disaster" (Flatt & Stys, 2013, p. 351). In order to continue to provide these services effectively, organizations typically need to take action to prepare before a disaster occurs (Gin, Kranke, Saia, & Dobalian, 2015). Additionally, being prepared for disasters and being able to continue services after a major disruption is critical to nonprofits' survival (Gin et al., 2015).

When organizations fail to create continuity of operations plans, they face many challenges in providing their usual services: their facilities, communication, and staff infrastructure may not be usable in the aftermath of a disaster, they often have very tight budget constraints and cannot afford unexpected expenses, and they may not have established relationships with local government which can assist them (Flatt & Stys, 2013). Although disasters often catalyze mass donation drives to well-known organizations like the American Red Cross, Smith (2012) notes that these funds go towards the operations that those large organizations already have on the ground, and are almost never diverted to local organizations. Rather, local organizations primarily need to turn to local foundations, the United Way, and corporations for increased support in the aftermath of a disaster (Smith, 2012). Another key operational issue is that in many disasters, nonprofit staff and volunteers may also be victims of the event.

Although it is not the only factor at play, ensuring that all organizations are better equipped to maintain continuity of their operations has increasingly been identified as important when it comes to the resiliency of communities: "FEMA representatives regularly state that 'all disasters start and end locally.' This means that FEMA expects

local organizations to complete the recovery process for vulnerable citizens" (Flatt & Stys, 2013, p. 354). Additionally, there has been research to suggest that partnerships between governmental emergency management agencies and nonprofits can be very effective as a way of meeting the complex and resource-intensive needs of the disaster recovery process: "Post–disaster communities that have an existing coordination mechanism for non-profit organizations are generally better equipped to design and implement a long term recovery response" (Stys, 2011). This type of inter-sector collaboration is supportive of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) "Whole Community Approach." Yet, in order to develop and rely upon these partnerships, emergency managers should have data on whether organizations have robust continuity of operations plans in place so that they can accurately plan for the organizations' post-disaster resources and capabilities. Operational continuity is a requisite to realizing these partnership capabilities.

While the literature surrounding the role of traditionally non-VOAD nonprofit organizations in disasters is relatively new, several studies have been done on the continuity of operations plans in place with these organizations. Among the first of these studies were those which documented the experiences of organizations that responded to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Gajewski, Bell, Lein, & Angel, 2011; Smith, 2012). Gajewski et al. (2011) conducted informal interviews of nonprofit service providers and funding entities to survey the nonprofit response to Hurricane Katrina in Austin, Texas. During Hurricane Katrina, although over $5 million flowed through the city for survivor assistance, and although "Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were key players in the response," (Gajewski et al., 2011, p. 390) long-term affordable housing and

transportation needs were not able to be meaningfully addressed by any of the participating organizations. This was a response that, on the nonprofit end, was largely improvisational: "although local funders, NGOs, and FBOs responded quickly and creatively to survivors displaced to Austin, the system that evolved was complex and often unstable. Coordination of the new system was costly in terms of time and overhead, and it was not able to eliminate duplication of services or provide complete accountability for all the resources spent" (Gajewski et al., 2011, p. 398). Although this study did not identify continuity of operations planning specifically, it did conclude that nonprofits needed to engage in more preparedness planning generally, and it discussed the lack of coordination and partnership between nonprofit and government entities as one of the reasons for the inefficiency of the response.

Similarly, Smith (2012) interviewed 10 executive directors of local New Orleans nonprofit organizations to learn about their struggles and organizational responses in the aftermath of the hurricane. One of the core lessons learned from these organizations was that improved coordination is needed between government and nonprofits, and nonprofit responders need to build their capacity (Smith, 2012). While this study also does not identify continuity of operations planning as a core need in the future, it does address the importance of leadership continuity, service continuity, and administrative continuity, which are all components of this type of planning. Both of these studies demonstrate clearly the problems that can arise when organizations are under prepared for disasters, and show the importance of taking steps to mitigate risk, including continuity planning.

Prevalence of Continuity of Operations Planning and Strength of Plans

Despite the importance of this process, there have been very few sector-wide studies on what percentage of public charities actually have continuity of operations plans or how comprehensive the existing plans are. However, the existing research suggests that a large percentage of tax-exempt public charities do not have continuity of operations plans in place, that many existing continuity of operations plans in nonprofit organizations contain significant omissions and weaknesses, and finally that there is a lot of variation among different types of nonprofits on both of these points (Benson, 2017; Gin et al., 2017; Gin et al., 2015; Kapucu & Khosa, 2013; McGrady & Blanke, 2014).

Because the Los Angeles region is susceptible to as many as 28 different types of disasters, this is a significant issue (Slight, 2017). The only two studies that have been done in the Los Angeles Region were done with homeless service organizations, so it would be beneficial to examine continuity of operations planning in this city in more depth. Gin et al. (2015) first conducted a qualitative survey of 6 of the 53 nonprofits providing homeless emergency shelter and transitional housing services in Los Angeles County to look at the challenges and barriers to disaster preparedness planning in community-based organizations. Their study involved interviewing an executive and an emergency planner in each organization in order to observe multiple perspectives on these matters (Gin et al., 2015). While the study was qualitative in nature, they found that "although all six homeless-provider CBOs had plans addressing life safety, it is equally notable that none of them had written plans to address continuity of operations issues such as how to address demand surge or triage services during extended staff

unavailability" (Gin et al., 2015, p. 6). Although these organizations were all prepared enough to have emergency plans, they still did not have continuity of operations plans.

In a very similar study, Gin et al. (2017) replicated this selection methodology and again interviewed 12 individuals from 6 nonprofits providing homeless emergency shelter and transitional housing services in Los Angeles County. This time, they were evaluating the organizations "using a tiered maturity model that organized preparedness into three progressively advanced steps: (1) life safety, (2) continuity of operations planning (COOP), and (3) collaborative relationships" (Gin et al., 2017, p. 1). Again, none of the organizations had a continuity of operations plan in place, although one of them had created a written protocol for prioritizing services in a post-disaster environment - which is an aspect of continuity of operations planning - and two of them had commissioned teams to put a continuity of operations plan together (Gin et al., 2017). These two studies are the only published studies that have collected data on the prevalence of continuity of operations plans in nonprofits in the Los Angeles area exclusively. However, studies done on this subject in other geographic areas can also be referenced.

In a study on the disaster response and resiliency practices of California museums, Benson (2017) sent a questionnaire to 80 midsize nonprofit museums in the Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco Bay regions. In total, 24 of these organizations completed the survey, and of those, only 14%, or 3 of the museums, had continuity of operations plans in place (Benson, 2017). When these 3 respondents were asked to rate the perceived effectiveness of their continuity of operations plans on a given

scale, one gave it a neutral rating and all three reported that they had never used the plan (Benson, 2017).

In the Dallas, Texas area, McGrady and Blanke (2014) conducted a survey on the readiness and level of continuity of operations planning of nonprofit and public sector organizations. They found that 58% of respondents had a continuity of operations plan in place, but "only 16.7% had reviewed, updated, and tested the plan in the last year" (p. 14). McGrady and Blanke (2014) developed a twelve-factor index for assessing these plans by determining whether certain critical elements were included in the plans. When they applied this index to the organizations they surveyed, they found that the "mean score for the Readiness Index was 4.79 (sd= 2.83) out of the possible score of 12" (McGrady & Blanke, 2014, p. 14). This means that on average, the organizations were lacking at least seven of the twelve factors identified as being essential to comprehensive continuity of operations plans. Additionally, with a standard deviation as high as 2.83, it is clear that there is a lot of variation between the nonprofits surveyed in their index scores. This suggests that there is not a lot of consistency in the thoroughness of continuity of operations planning among the organizations studied, which makes sense when considered alongside the varying results of the other studies. This twelve-factor index will be discussed in more detail in the Methodology section, as it serves as the foundation for this proposed study.

At the national level, Kapucu and Khosa (2013) conducted a survey to determine the disaster resiliency practices of universities and colleges by sending out a survey to a listserv of over 450 campus emergency management professionals all over the country. In this case, "of 75 respondents who responded to the question pertaining to continuity

planning, 52% report that their university/college has a COOP in place. However, out of the 52% who claim to have a COOP, only 59% report that the plan is updated, evaluated, and tested on a yearly basis" (Kapucu & Khosa, 2013, p. 23). While this rate of continuity of operations planning is much higher than that found in the homeless service organization and museum studies, it is important to note that these researchers did not report on whether the responding universities and colleges were nonprofit or for-profit institutions. Since there is no information provided about how many of the participants were 501(c)(3) nonprofit entities, the representation of different sectors among this sample could have some bearing on the results and greatly limits the conclusions which can be drawn from this study. However, it is interesting to note that universities as a whole have such high rates of continuity of operations planning.

Similarly, Sadiq and Graham (2016) conducted a study of employees in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors which asked them whether their organizations were prepared for disasters. This study also fails to state how many organizations of different sectors were sampled because the sample was anonymous, and does not distinguish continuity of operations planning from other preparedness activities. However, one of its main findings was that there is a "a significant positive relationship between organization size (facility level) and the adoption of preparedness activities" (Sadiq & Graham, 2016, p. 1050). This relationship suggests that identifying organizational characteristics may have a correlational relationship to an organization's likelihood of having a continuity of operations plan as well.

The above studies represent very limited types of tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and, in some cases, private sector companies. Even though these studies

may not be representative of the entire nonprofit sector, or of all of the nonprofits in the City of Los Angeles, they suggest significant disparities in the prevalence of continuity of operations planning and in the strength of these plans at different types of organizations and in the sector as a whole. However, there is no way of knowing how pervasive this preparedness gap is within the nonprofit sector until further research is conducted. In addition to the types of organizations mentioned above, most nonprofit organizations in the field of healthcare should have continuity of operations plans, at least in relation to their data security, because they are required to have them by law. All healthcare organizations and hospitals that are considered covered entities or business associates under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and later amendments are required to have an emergency mode operation plan to "establish (and implement as needed) procedures to enable continuation of critical business processes for protection of the security of electronic protected health information while operating in emergency mode" (45 CFR § 164.308(a)(7)(ii)(C)). Although it is expected that most of these organizations will have these plans, the strength and quality of these plans is still to be determined. That will also be addressed in this proposed research.

Barriers to Continuity of Operations Planning

Although some of the cited studies have found that most nonprofits do not conduct continuity of operations planning, there are many barriers that nonprofits face which help explain why these rates may be low. In the Los Angeles homelessness study, Gin et al., (2015) asked their survey respondents directly about why they hadn't conducted continuity of operations planning. The most prevalent responses in their interviews were that disasters were perceived as a non-immediate threat, and that the

importance of this process competed with the "urgent demands associated with operating a homeless serving nonprofit CBO. The urgency of more pressing demands, of which there are many in homeless-serving CBOs, tended to take precedence over planning for disasters" (Gin et al., 2015, p. 5). In addition to the scarcity of time and money, respondents reported that there was a lack of guidance and structured information on how to plan for disasters within community-based organizations specifically (Gin et al., 2015).

Furthermore, continuity of operations planning is still relatively new, and it is not yet a standard element of nonprofit management curriculums or guide books (Gin et al., 2015). One respondent in the Gin et al. (2015) study said that despite the importance of the COOP process, he opposed the concept of mandatory preparedness requirements like HIPPAA for other types of nonprofit organizations, citing concerns that it "would result in a compliance-only mentality, while forcing [organizations] into making trade-offs and compromising services" (Gin et al., 2015, p. 5). Forcing organizations to comply with a planning requirement would, arguably, be an undue burden on organizations that are already stretched very thin. Interestingly, the respondents also thought that "the absence of mandates or other sources of motivation contributed to the lack of preparedness planning" (Gin et al., 2015, p. 5), and suggested that implementing a requirement for continuity of operations planning as a requisite to receiving donations or grant funding might be an effective way to incentivize the process. In other words, it would be better to incentivize organizations to conduct this planning process than it would be to force their hands. Gin et al. (2015) ultimately identified three things that would assist organizations in their disaster mitigation activities: "(1) internal and external impetus to motivate preparedness, (2) outside technical assistance and training, and (3) collaboration

opportunities with peer entities" (p. 5). In addition to having formal or informal mandates that organizations conduct continuity of operations planning, this study suggests that further training and peer collaboration is necessary.

In the Memphis and Selby Counties of Tennessee, Chikoto, Sadiq, and Fordyce (2013) conducted a set of fifteen exploratory interviews and then used a stratified sample of 733 public, private, and nonprofit organizations based on organizational size to study the levels of disaster preparedness of these organizations based upon a ten-factor disaster mitigation index. Although this study's focus was on disaster mitigation in a broad sense, and not on continuity of operations planning specifically, Chikoto et al. (2013) found that organizational size was a reliable predictor of organizational preparedness, and that there was high variation in the levels of preparedness among different industries. Again, this is consistent with what has been seen in the other literature. However, it is important to note that of the 227 organizations which responded to the study, only 34 were nonprofit organizations (Chikoto, et al., 2013). Interestingly, while the respondents in Gin et al. (2015) cited the implementation of funding restrictions as a possible solution to the problem of the lack of nonprofit disaster planning, Chikoto et al. (2013) found that these are actually a barrier to planning: "although nonprofit organizations may face more challenges in raising funds, including possible donor-restrictions to their financial resources relative to private and public organizations, nonprofits are not resistant to adapting organizational disaster mitigation and preparedness activities" (Chikoto et al., 2013, p. 403). Thus, an issue with nonprofit disaster and continuity of operations planning is that they often can't allocate time and funding to this process even if they want to, under threat of losing funding. The study's primary finding was that

organizations in the public and nonprofit sectors are more likely to adopt more disaster mitigation practices than private sector organizations, but this is relative and does not speak to the overall prevalence of continuity of operations planning in the nonprofit sector.

Perhaps the final barrier to continuity of operations planning in the nonprofit sector is that disaster preparedness and emergency management topics are not emphasized in many public administration degree programs, or by the leadership of many nonprofit organizations. Emergency management topics are often seen as niche topics which should be addressed by experts in that field rather than everyday citizens or professionals. The fact is that continuity of operations planning is not just an emergency management issue; it is also an issue for nonprofit and public administration practitioners and scholars. As Boin and Lodge (2016) wrote,

> public administration scholars have not prioritized the study of crisis and disaster management. They prefer to study routine processes of governance. The study of crisis and disaster management remains the province of specialized journals and a niche group of interdisciplinary academics and practitioners. If crises and disasters are indeed becoming an integral part of the 'new normal', the time has come to bring the study of crises and disasters into the mainstream. (p. 295)

This dynamic within both academia and in nonprofit practice may contribute to the apparent dearth of continuity of operations plans - and other preparedness measures - in the nonprofit sector.

Ultimately, emergency and nonprofit managers both need to learn more about how many organizations have continuity of operations plans, how robust existing plans

are, and for those organizations without plans, what barriers have prevented them from planning, and whether there are any trends among nonprofits with similar results. This information can assist everyone involved in determining how to move forward and improve cross-sector collaboration and nonprofit resiliency.

Chapter 4: Research Question

What is the relationship between the prevalence of continuity of operations plans and tax-exempt public charities in the City of Los Angeles?

Chapter 5: Methodology

Methods

This proposed study would collect primary data through a random sample of the 19,742 tax-exempt 501(c)(3) Public Charities in the City of Los Angeles, identified through the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search tool, sorted by EIN number, and chosen using a random number generator. A sample size of at least 377 organizations would be needed in order to achieve a minimum confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 5% with this population. However, based on similar studies, only a 30% response rate should be expected for the surveys (Chikoto, et al., 2013; Benson, 2017). Thus, it will be necessary to increase the sample size to 1,257 organizations in order to account for the anticipated response rate while maintaining the same minimum confidence interval and margin of error, and the random quality of the sample.

This proposed research would be a hybrid combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative aspects of this study would allow us to draw statistically significant correlations – if there are any – as to the identifying characteristics of surveyed organizations and the prevalence of continuity of operations planning. The qualitative aspects – the surveys on the quality of continuity of operations plans and the barriers to this planning – would help to answer the question of why the sector does not have more continuity of operations plans in place, and whether the plans which exist are doing what they are meant to be doing. This hybrid methodology was chosen because the quantitative methods can be used as a justification for further research and funding in this area of inquiry, but the quantitative methods can help inform future research designs. The

combination of these methods allows more comprehensive information to be collected from these organizations than quantitative or qualitative data would alone.

Once the sample organizations are chosen, our surveyors will reach out to them first by phone to ask what the best method of contact is for their organization and who might best be able to assist in completing this survey. This type of personal contact may help to lend legitimacy to the survey and also assist in identifying people who are knowledgeable enough about the organization to complete the survey accurately. The next step - or, in the event that our surveyors are unable to reach the organization by phone, the first step - would be to send the survey by email in a fillable PDF format to make the process as quick and easy to return as possible, either digitally or in print.

The survey, although fairly brief, would have three sections for each participant to complete. It would first ask participants to provide some information about identifying factors for their organizations like their staff size, financial capacity, mission area, age, and prior experience with disaster. These identifying characteristics would be used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between any of these factors and the results of the surveys on continuity of operations plans. Lastly, this part of the survey asks whether the sampled organizations have continuity of operations plans in place (see Appendix A-1: Survey Cover Sheet). This portion of the survey will be representative of all nonprofits in the City of Los Angeles, and will be statistically rigorous with at least a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error, depending on survey turnout. The data drawn from this section can be used to look for correlations between an organization's demographic characteristics and their response to whether they

have a continuity of operations plan. This will help identify common factors that may exist between organizations that do and do not have plans in place.

In the next part of the survey, the sample size will be segmented into two groups based on their answer to the question of whether they have a continuity of operations plan in place. Because the sample size will be split based on a previous question, the confidence interval will need to be widened or the margin of error will need to be increased for this section. The actual survey results will need to be considered before it will be possible to determine how much the confidence interval or margin of error will be impacted for these sections. However, since the original sample is representative of the population, the insights drawn from this section do have a meaningful interpretation and are representative of organizations which either do or do not have a plan.

Among those organizations which have a plan, the second section of the survey would rate the quality of their plans based on the twelve-factor readiness index conceptualized by McGrady and Blanke (2014) (See Appendix A-2: Continuity Planning Compliance Questions). This index determines whether an organization's continuity of operations plan is a robust plan based upon the twelve factors, including whether the plan is reviewed and updated annually, whether it accounts for all possible threats, and whether the organization has a written interoperability plan in place with partner organizations and the local emergency management department (McGrady & Blanke, 2014). This is a critical part of the study because prior studies have suggested that a majority of organizations do not have plans in place, and that those plans which do exist may not be operable (Benson, 2017; Gin et al., 2017; Gin et al., 2015; Kapucu & Khosa, 2013; McGrady & Blanke, 2014).

Organizations without a plan would alternatively be surveyed on the reasons why they have not conducted this planning process, based again on common responses seen in the other studies discussed in the Literature Review (See Appendix A-3: Barriers to Continuity of Operations Planning Survey). This part of the survey asks participants to identify and rate the importance of factors which have interfered with their ability to conduct continuity of operations planning. There is an open ended space where other reasons can be added by the participants.

Limitations

As discussed earlier, the biggest limitation of this study is that in the survey portions on the quality of continuity of operations plans and on the barriers that organizations face to this type of planning, the confidence intervals and margins of error will need to be widened. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn and represents more uncertainty in the findings that this study will have. However, this information is still valuable and can be instructive in designing future studies.

A further drawback of this study is that it is possible for a selection bias to develop among respondents who answer the survey versus those who do not. It would not be possible to predict whether organizations which respond to the survey are more or less likely to have continuity of operations plans and other disaster preparedness measures in place. Additionally, due to the low anticipated survey response, it is possible that the random sample will not be representative of the identifying characteristics - such as staff size, sector, and financial capacity - of tax-exempt organizations in Los Angeles, but this can be verified using external data after the study is conducted.

A final drawback of this study is that the surveys may be completed by people who know too little about the continuity of operations planning process or about their organizations to answer the survey questions accurately. This effect will be mitigated as much as possible by the surveyors' efforts to identify qualified survey respondents, and by the brief information provided about the continuity of operations planning process at the start of the survey, but it cannot be prevented completely. Sadiq and Graham (2016) were concerned in their research design with the tendency of organizational leaders to overstate their levels of preparedness in surveys like this. They decided to survey employees of organizations instead of organizational leaders. The decision to focus on organizational leaders in this proposed study stems from the relative obscurity of continuity of operations planning in the nonprofit sector, and from the desire to receive accurate information when possible. Statements on the surveys regarding the anonymity of responses should assist in eliciting honest survey responses.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study on its own is not enough to change the prevalence or quality of continuity of operations plans in the nonprofit sector. However, collecting this information can provide a baseline for further intersector efforts to improve the resiliency of Los Angeles and other communities by starting a dialogue on this topic and by engaging people across the community in a study designed to survey part of the Los Angeles region's resiliency. This study would also be the first of its kind. While studies have been done on the prevalence of continuity of operations plans in some sectors, none have ever collected as much information on the identifying characteristics of participating organizations as this study would for correlational analysis. No method of assessing continuity of operations plans, including the readiness index developed by McGrady and Blanke (2014) has ever been applied on a scale as broad as this in the nonprofit sector, despite the statistical limitations of the proposed survey. In sum, this study would provide emergency managers and nonprofit administrators alike with the data to better understand this weak point in resiliency among so many organizations. Only with this information would these entities be prepared to offer effective and targeted interventions, training, and support to organizations to help them create plans and improve their plans.

Conclusion

While there has not been nearly enough research on continuity of operations planning in the nonprofit sector's use of continuity of operations plans, existing data suggests that a large percentage of organizations lack continuity of operations plans, and that those plans which do exist omit important information and characteristics. Interdisciplinary studies like this one can help bridge the gap between emergency management and nonprofit administration.

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Appendix A

Participant Surveys

A-1: Survey Cover Sheet

Survey Cover Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers are considered confidential, and will be used only in aggregate data. The information that you provide will not be shared with any third parties, and we will not identify your organization as a participant in our study.

Date: _____

Organization Name: _____

Employer Identification Number (EIN): _____

Name and Title of Individual Completing This Survey:_____

_____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Please answer the following questions about your organization. Choose the best answer for each question by circling it.

1. How many employees does your organization have?

1-9 10-19 20-49 50-99 100-249 250-499 500+

2. Which of the following terms best describes the nature of your organization?

Arts Education Environment and animals Health Human services

International Other public and social benefit Religion-related

3. Has your organization ever experienced a disaster? Yes No

4. How long ago was your organization founded?

0-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21-50 years 51+ years

5. How much did your organization earn in revenue last year?

Less than $50,000 $50,001-$150,000 $150,001-300,000 $300,001-$500,000

$500,001-$1,000,000 $1,000,001-$2,000,000 $2,000,001-$250,000,000

$250,000,001-$500,000,000 Over $500,000,000

6. A continuity of operations plan (COOP) is a plan which helps organizations bounce back from disruptions and disasters that interrupt their regular operations. COOP's focus on planning and other activities to ensure an organization's ability to reestablish operations after a disruption or disaster, and resume services to clients in a timely manner. COOP's are NOT the same as disaster plans, which focus on life safety needs like evacuation and first aid.

Does your organization have a continuity of operations plan (COOP) right now?

Yes No

If you circled "Yes," please proceed to the Continuity of Operations Planning Survey. If you circled "No," proceed to the Barriers Survey.

A-2: Continuity Planning Compliance Questions (McGrady & Blanke, 2014)

Continuity of Operations Planning Survey

Organization EIN: _____

1. A threat is described as an impending danger or harm that can result in an undesired event. Which of the following four types of threats are identified in your organization's continuity of operations plan? (Circle any/all that apply).

Manmade Disasters Natural Disasters Infrastructure Threats

Digital Threats

2. Does your plan assign a probability of occurrence to each of these types of threats? In other words, does it say how likely certain disasters are to happen?

Yes No

3. Which of the following potential vulnerabilities are identified in your organization's continuity of operations plan? (Circle any/all that apply).

Loss of Resources Loss of Assets Loss of Financing Loss of Funding

Loss of Cash Flow Ability To Communicate Availability of Human Resources

Availability of Facilities Availability of Supplies Availability of Files

Availability of Data and Information.

4. Does your plan evaluate the potential impact of each of these vulnerabilities on the organization and its operations?

Yes No

5. Does your organization **review** its plan annually? Yes No

6. Does your organization **update** its plan annually? Yes No

7. Does your organization **test** its plan annually? Yes No

8. Does your plan list key contacts? These include assets, employee contacts, vendor contacts, insurance plan information and coverage, patient or client information, continuity collaborators, volunteers, members of the governance board, and media contacts. It may include donors if the organization is dependent on contributions for funding.

Yes Some of Them No

9. Continuity plans can be destroyed by disasters such as fire. Is the plan available electronically at any time OR at off-site locations in case the original is unavailable?

Yes No

10. Alternate Location:

Does the plan describe how and where services can be delivered in the event of a loss of the facility?

Yes No

Is there an agreement in writing which allows the organization to operate at this alternate location if necessary?

Yes No

11. Does the plan provide a list of the vendors under contract to restore key assets or services?

Yes No

12. Communicating the plan with other organizations:

Do the organization's partners know about its COOP plan?

Yes No

Is there an interoperability agreement in writing?

Yes No

Does the agreement outline how they will be contacted and when?

Yes No

Does the plan describe the organization's relationship with Emergency Management?

Yes No

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

A-3: Barriers to Continuity of Operations Planning Survey

Barriers Survey

Organization EIN: _____

Since your organization does not currently have a continuity of operations plan (COOP) in place, please share more about the factors which have prevented your organization from conducting this planning process.

For each factor listed below, please determine (circle) the level of impact that it has had on your organization's ability to create a COOP. If a factor has not affected your organization's ability to create a COOP, please circle "N/A".

We don't have the time	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
We have more urgent things to do	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
We cannot afford to create a COOP	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
Restricted funds prevent COOP planning	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
We don't know how to create a COOP	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
Our organization doesn't need a COOP	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
We didn't know what a COOP was	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
We had an old plan, but didn't update it	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major
Other reason(s) (please explain):	N/A	Minor	Moderate	Major

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.