

6-2011

## Perceptions of the effectiveness of not-for-profit board development opportunities

Daniel R. Abben  
*DePaul University*, danabben@me.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/etd>

---

### Recommended Citation

Abben, Daniel R., "Perceptions of the effectiveness of not-for-profit board development opportunities" (2011). *College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences Theses and Dissertations*. 78.  
<https://via.library.depaul.edu/etd/78>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at Digital Commons@DePaul. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@DePaul. For more information, please contact [digitalservices@depaul.edu](mailto:digitalservices@depaul.edu).

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT  
BOARD DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science

June, 2011

BY

Daniel R. Abben

School of Public Service  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
DePaul University  
Chicago, Illinois

## Abstract

Human service not-for-profit organizations provide goods and services that support the well being of members of society. While these organizations can vary in the goods and services that they provide and in the models that they use to provide those goods and services, they are all similar in that they are accountable to volunteer boards of directors. The literature contains myriad prescriptions boards can follow that will help them provide adequate governance to their organizations. In addition, researchers have identified specific competencies that are able to distinguish between low-performing and high-performing boards. Finally, research has suggested that a relationship exists between board performance and organizational success. The primary goal of this study was to explore internal stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of initial orientations and ongoing training and development opportunities in increasing board members' facility in the board competencies that have emerged in the literature. The data suggest that while stakeholders believe that initial orientations effectively prepare board members to fulfill their responsibilities, many of the not-for-profit organizations in the sample are missing a potential opportunity to improve board performance and organizational success by failing to offer systematic ongoing training and development opportunities to board members.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Not-for-profit Organizations.....	5
Board Recruitment, Selection, and Behavior.....	6
Board Roles and Responsibilities.....	8
Theoretical Models.....	11
Board Competencies.....	15
Board Performance and Organizational Effectiveness.....	16
Board Interventions.....	18
Board Limitations.....	20
CHAPTER III. METHODS.....	22
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS.....	28
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	35
Discussion and Recommendations.....	36
Limitations.....	38
Future Research.....	40
Conclusion.....	41
Appendix A. National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities.....	43
Appendix B. Interview Protocol.....	46
Appendix C. Survey Protocol.....	49
References.....	55

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Format of Initial Orientations .....	30
Table 2. Topics Covered During Initial Orientations .....	30
Table 3. Length of Initial Orientations .....	30
Table 4. Effectiveness of Board-Member Orientations .....	31

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A Theory-Based Typology of Board Behavior .....	12
Figure 2: A Three-Factor Framework for Organizing Board Responsibilities.....	14
Figure 3: Board Competencies .....	16
Figure 4: A Framework for the Analysis of NPO Boards .....	17

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) provide goods and services that contribute to the common good of society. While these goods and services may be charitable, educational, or religious in nature, according to United States law, any organization can qualify for not-for-profit status as long as the goods and services that are provided by the organization are done so on a not-for-profit basis (Hall, 2005). While NPOs cannot operate for profit, they must generate funds in order to achieve their goals. NPOs rely on multiple sources of funding, including individual and corporate donations, fees for goods and services, investment income, and government grants and contracts (Hall, 2005).

The goal of human service organizations, a specific type of NPO, is to improve quality of life by responding to various human needs; these organizations protect, maintain, and enhance individual and family well being across the lifespan (Hasenfeld, 2010). Americans have come to rely on the broad range of welfare, education and job training, mental and physical health, and child- and residential-care services that are provided by human service organizations (Gronbjerg, 2010; Hasenfeld, 2010).

Like all NPOs, human service organizations are accountable to volunteer boards of directors, which are responsible for ensuring federal, state, and local statutory compliance; protecting organizational assets; and providing financial oversight of the organizations for which they are responsible (Axelrod, 2005; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Preston & Brown, 2004). To help board members fulfill their responsibilities, researchers have articulated prescriptive practices for them to follow. One such prescription is the suggestion that board members receive ongoing training and development (Brown, 2007; Green & Griesinger, 1996). One team of authors also found that specific competencies were just as important to board performance as the development practices that boards use (Holland, Chait, & Taylor, 1989)



### Research Question

Do Chicago human service NPOs provide board members with both initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities?

### Hypotheses

Chicago human service NPOs provide board members with both initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities.

Internal stakeholders perceive that these development opportunities prepare board members to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities and increase board members' facility in the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989).

CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

### Not-for-Profit Organizations

Not-for-profit organizations can vary in purpose, in structure, in the types of goods and services they provide, and in the models they use to deliver those goods and services. These organizations can range from community-based, volunteer-run organizations with limited budgets to multimillion-dollar organizations whose staff members are paid professional salaries. The types of goods and services that are provided by NPOs may include intangibles such as education and counseling, physical items such as food and clothing, or emergency funding that clients can use to pay their bills. NPOs might provide goods and services through direct service, referrals, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, or fundraising.

Because the not-for-profit sector is so diverse, the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) has established the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) to help classify NPOs. This taxonomy is comprised of 26 major types of organizations across 10 broad categories, including arts, culture, and the humanities; education; human services; and international and foreign affairs, among others (Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, 2009a; see Appendix A for a list of the NTEE categories).

According to NCCS data, 1.5 million NPOs existed in 2009, which was a 31.3% increase over the number of NPOs in existence in 1999 (Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, 2009b). In 2005, public charities in the United States generated \$1.1 trillion in expenses and amassed almost \$2 trillion in total assets, figures that do not include the service hours donated by volunteers (Blackwood, Wing, & Pollak, 2008). In 2006, around 61,000 people contributed 12.9 billion hours of volunteer service to NPOs, representing a cost savings of approximately \$215.6 billion to the organizations (Blackwood, Wing, & Pollak, 2008).

Even though NPOs provide valued goods and services, they may experience limitations that prevent them from fully achieving their goals. Perception issues, for example, may have an impact on resource development. For example, large organizations may be perceived as bureaucratic and ineffective. People also may have negative perceptions of organizations that serve devalued populations, such as individuals with mental illnesses, people who are homeless, or convicted criminals (Hasenfeld, 2010). The current economy also has had a negative impact on NPOs, which are experiencing an increased demand for services while also experiencing decreased funding. In addition, NPOs are noticing increased competition for funding and clients as a result of for-profit organizations' attempts to provide similar goods and services. Some government officials are attempting to facilitate this trend. Recently, a lawmaker in one jurisdiction introduced legislation that would prevent NPOs from receiving funding for providing goods and services if comparable goods and services could be provided by a government or for-profit organization (Boyd, 2011).

#### Board Recruitment, Selection, and Behavior

NPOs are accountable to volunteer board of directors. Researchers continue to develop the literature by studying various board-related issues. The policies regarding board-member recruitment and selection have received considerable attention. Two recruitment strategies common among NPOs include having existing board members recruit new members and establishing nominating committees to facilitate recruitment and selection processes (Brown, 2002; Houle, 1989). Research has suggested that when recruiting new board members, executive directors and board chairs look for similar attributes among the potential candidates (Kearns, 1995). When determining whom to recruit, Provan (1980) found that NPOs take specific characteristics into consideration. He explained that candidates often are recruited for their

knowledge of the organization, for specific abilities and skills they can bring to the board, and for relationships that they may be able to leverage to help the organization further develop its resources. The results of one study suggested that NPOs may wish to consider the occupation of potential board members: Miller, Weiss, and MacLeod (1988) found a correlation between the number of board members with a background in marketing and an organization's ability to fundraise effectively.

Houle (1989) encouraged organizations to take board-member diversity into account when recruiting new members. Specifically, he suggested that organizations consider the age, gender, and residential location of potential board members. Other characteristics organizations may wish to consider include racial, ethnic, and philosophical diversity (Carver, 2006). Houle (1989) also pointed out that NPO boards should reflect the diversity that is found among the stakeholders of organizations. Brown (2002) added that having a valid understanding of stakeholders' interests is fundamental to effective governance. Daley (2002) noted that board diversity can enrich board discussions and can help ensure expertise in areas such as policy analysis, strategic planning, public relations, human resources, and fundraising. He also noted that having a diverse board of directors may enhance the reputation of an organization within the community (Daley, 2002). To explore the usefulness of the prescriptions regarding board-member diversity, researchers have studied the impact of board-member diversity on NPOs. In one study, Siciliano (1996) found a positive relationship between board members' occupational diversity and organizational performance.

In addition to studying the effects of board-member diversity on organizations, researchers also have studied the impact that various facets of board behavior have had on board performance. In a study of social service NPOs, Preston and Brown (2004) found a positive

relationship between board-member commitment and executive directors' perceptions of overall board effectiveness. The authors also noted that board members who perceived themselves to be committed to their organizations were more likely to be active board members and to make larger financial contributions to the organization. The results of a study of public charities in England and Wales suggested that stakeholders' perceptions of board effectiveness were related to how effective board members were at performing various board functions, such as collectively establishing the mission and values of the organization, fundraising, providing financial oversight, determining strategic direction, and assessing board performance (Cornforth, 2001). Another study suggested that board practices such as involvement in policy formation, strategic planning, resource development, and financial planning could distinguish between more-effective and less-effective boards (Green & Griesinger, 1996).

#### Board Roles and Responsibilities

Since board members hold fiduciary responsibility for their respective organizations, they are held to three standards of conduct: a duty of obedience, a duty of care, and a duty of loyalty (Axelrod, 2005). Axelrod explain that to fulfill these duties, board members are to be faithful to the mission of their organizations and to act in accord with this mission; to exercise reasonable care by participating in decision making and doing so in good faith; and to put the interest of the organization first when making decisions that will affect the organization.

The literature contains myriad prescriptions boards can follow regarding their roles and responsibilities. Included in these prescriptions are suggested board structures, recruitment practices, diversity policies, and delineations regarding the differences between organizational governance and management (Axelrod, 2005; Carver, 2006; Houle, 1989). In addition, Houle (1989) suggested that board members participate in ongoing training and development

opportunities. He noted that there are at least three areas in which board members can continue to grow: Board members can learn more about the organization itself, about the field in which the organization is engaged, and about how to better perform board tasks. Houle (1989) offered specific practices that board members can use to further their development, including circulating pertinent books and articles among board members, presenting case studies for discussion, and attending courses and seminars offered by local organizations.

Axelrod (2005) added to the literature by identifying roles that are commonly assumed by not-for-profit board members, including defining and advancing the mission of the organization, developing and conserving the resources of the organization, overseeing the executive director, facilitating ongoing assessment of the organization, and developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders of the organization. Houle (1989) also developed a comprehensive list of board members' responsibilities, including ensuring that organizational objectives are in harmony with the mission of the organization, approving and revising the long-range plan of the organization, hiring the executive director and regularly evaluating his or her performance, establishing governance policies, fulfilling basic legal and ethical responsibilities, and establishing processes for regularly evaluating the performance of the organization. Carver (2006) added that board members should act as trustees on behalf of an organization's stakeholders and serve as the connection between an organization and its stakeholders. While the literature includes a number of prescriptions regarding board members' roles and responsibilities, Axelrod (2005) pointed out that the specific practices that are adopted will vary from organization to organization and may shift throughout the lifecycle of each individual organization.

Brown and Guo (2010) developed the literature by exploring practitioners' perceptions of the importance of the various roles and responsibilities prescribed for board members in the literature. In a study of community service organizations, the authors used an iterative process to develop a list of board behaviors that executive directors considered to be important. The six roles most frequently cited were fund development, financial oversight, public relations, commitment and engagement, policy development, and monitoring the performance of the executive director.

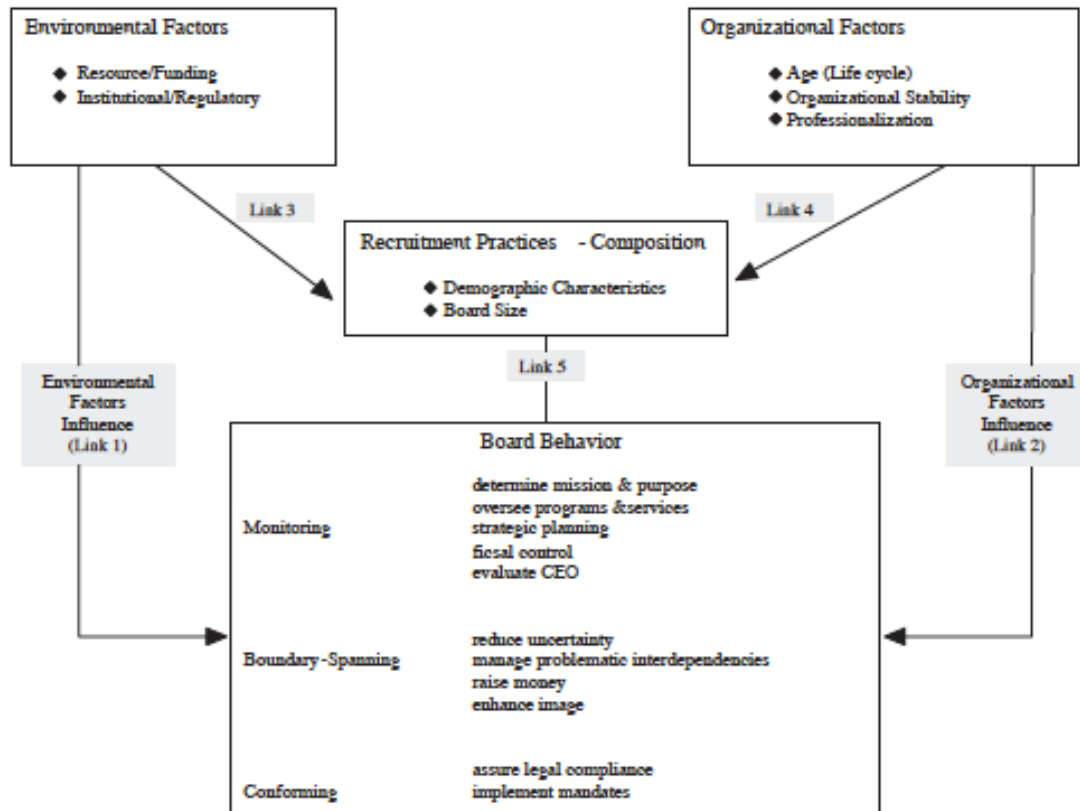
One team of researchers explored the overall effectiveness of the prescriptive practices mentioned in the literature by studying stakeholders' perceptions of board performance in relation to the prescriptive practices that boards actually use (Herman, Renz, & Heimovics, 1997). Among the stakeholders of two different samples, one of health and welfare organizations and the other of organizations that provide services to people with developmental disabilities, the authors found that a majority of the NPOs in the sample used most of the board practices prescribed in the literature. The results regarding stakeholders' perceptions of board performance, however, were mixed; executive directors' perceptions of board performance were correlated to the practices that board members used, while the perceptions of other types of stakeholders were not statistically significant. Herman and Renz (1997) used the data gathered during this study to explore the correlation between stakeholders' perceptions of board performance and their perceptions of organizational effectiveness. While the authors found variability among the perceptions of different categories of stakeholders, the findings suggested that a strong relationship between stakeholders' perceptions of board performance and their perceptions of organizational effectiveness existed.



The focus on board members' roles and responsibilities is not without merit. In a sample of human service organizations, Miller, Weiss, and MacLeod (1988) explored the relationship between board members' responsibilities and organizational outcomes. The findings indicated a weak relationship between the two variables, which the authors suggested might have been a result of boards' reactive rather than proactive natures. The authors also hypothesized that the relationship between the variables might have been moderated by other environmental and organizational factors. Despite the weak relationship between board members' responsibilities and organizational outcomes, Miller, Weiss, and MacLeod (1988) suggested that board members' responsibilities could, nonetheless, have an impact on an organization's outcomes.

#### Theoretical Models

In order to better understand the various practices that are suggested in the literature, researchers have developed theoretical models that can be used to explain board members' roles and responsibilities. Some of these models are helpful in that they explain board members' roles and responsibilities in relation to various theories of organizational behavior. Miller-Millesen (2003) used agency theory, resource dependence theory, and institutional theory to develop her model, which is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: A Theory-Based Typology of Board Behavior**

(Miller-Millesen, 2003)

In presenting her typology, Miller-Millesen (2003) explained a central component of agency theory as it relates to NPOs: Boards delegate responsibility for the day-to-day operations of their organizations to executive directors who are expected to act in the boards' best interest. Miller-Milleson (2003) suggested that boards are more likely to engage in monitoring practices, such as engagement in strategic planning and fiscal control, when the organizations are stable and that boards are less likely to engage in monitoring practices when professional staff members manage an organization.

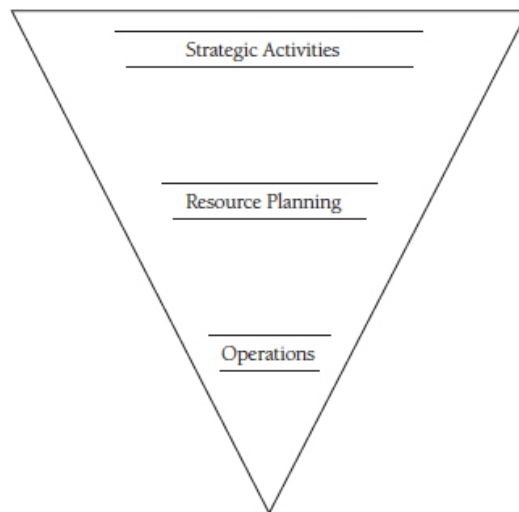
Miller-Millesen (2003) drew upon resource dependence theory when suggesting that boards engage in activities that help reduce environmental uncertainty and provide access to

critical resources through the leveraging of personal and professional relationships. She posited that boards are more likely to engage in boundary-spanning practices, such as fundraising and public relations, when the proportion of an NPO's income from external sources is high, and that boards are more likely to engage in monitoring practices when the proportion of external funding is low. She also suggested that boards might be more likely to focus on boundary-spanning practices when organizations are in crisis.

Institutional theory, which suggests that an organization's behavior is shaped by the environment in which it operates, is the third theory from which Miller-Millesen (2003) drew when developing her model. Through the policies that boards establish, organizations conform to environmental norms so that they can establish and maintain credibility within the communities in which they operate. These norms may include the laws and regulations with which organizations comply in order to maintain certain benefits, such as tax-exempt status or the ability to obtain government grants and contracts (Miller-Millesen, 2003). The author also suggested that the policies developed by NPO boards might be influenced by the example set by other organizations that are considered to be successful or held in high esteem in the community.

Another team of authors contributed to the literature by developing a framework that can be used to organize board members' roles and responsibilities (Inglis, Alexander, & Weaver, 1999). The authors had two primary objectives in mind when they developed their framework, which is presented in Figure 2. The first objective was to replicate a framework that Inglis (2007) had previously developed from using data gathered from amateur sports organizations and which organized board members' roles and responsibilities into four factors: mission, planning, executive director, and community relations. The authors' second objective was to develop a framework that contributed to the theoretical understanding of NPO board members' roles and

responsibilities and that could be used by practitioners for various purposes, including setting agendas for board meetings and developing training opportunities for board members (Inglis, Alexander, & Weaver, 1999).



**Figure 2: A Three-Factor Framework for Organizing Board Responsibilities**  
(Inglis, Alexander, & Weaver, 1999)

The team of authors developed their framework by following a multistep process. Their first step was to use the existing literature to develop a list of board members' suggested roles and responsibilities. Based on what they found, the authors then developed and administered a scale in which board members were asked to rate the importance of each role and responsibility and the degree to which the board was fulfilling each role and responsibility. Using this data, the authors used factor analysis to identify the factors common among the various roles and responsibilities that participants reported using. The three factors that the authors identified were strategic activities, operations, and resource planning, which the authors then used to develop their framework (Inglis, Alexander, & Weaver, 1999).

Inglis, Alexander, and Weaver (1999) identified some of the roles and responsibilities that comprise each of the three factors. The first factor, strategic activities, included establishing a mission and vision for the organization, developing and regularly assessing long-range plans, and evaluating the performance of both the executive director and the board. These strategic activities help the board establish a strong foundation for the organization and its future. The responsibilities that fall under the operations factor help an organization develop and deliver goods and services; these responsibilities included advocating for the interests of an organization's stakeholders and raising funds for the organization. The third factor, resource planning, included responsibilities such as setting financial policy, allocating funds for the annual budget, and hiring executive staff.

#### Board Competencies

Rather than focusing on board members' roles and responsibilities, one team of researchers has explored specific competencies, or dimensions of knowledge. After an extensive, three-year study of college trustees, Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993) found evidence suggesting that specific competencies, which are able to distinguish between levels of board performance, exist. The six competencies the authors identified were contextual, educational, interpersonal, analytical, political, and strategic (see Figure 3 for a list of behaviors that demonstrate each competency).

*Contextual Dimension* The board understands and takes into account the culture and the norms of the organization for which it is responsible.

- The board adapts to the culture and characteristics of the organization's environment.
- The board's decisions are guided by the organization's mission, values, and tradition and reinforce the organization's core values.

*Educational Dimension* The board takes the steps necessary to ensure that members are well informed about the organization, the sector in which the organization operates, and board members' roles, responsibilities, and performance.

- The board facilitates opportunities for members' ongoing training and development.
- The board engages in ongoing self-reflection and assessment.

*Interpersonal Dimension* The board nurtures group development, attends to the board's collective welfare, and fosters a sense of group cohesiveness.

- The board develops group goals and recognizes group achievements.
- The board identifies and develops leadership within the board.

*Analytical Dimension* The board recognizes the complexities of the issues in which it is involved and relies on multiple perspectives to analyze problems and synthesize responses.

- The board strives to obtain information and feedback from various categories of shareholders.
- The board tolerates ambiguity.

*Political Dimension* The board develops and maintains healthy relationships with stakeholders.

- The board respects the integrity of the governance process and the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders.
- The board attempts to minimize conflict and win/lose situations.

*Strategic Dimension* The board envisions, shapes, and ensures the organization's future.

- The board establishes and follows processes that develop institutional priorities and that focus on issues of strategic or symbolic importance.
- The board takes a proactive rather than reactive stance to change.

### **Figure 3: Board Competencies**

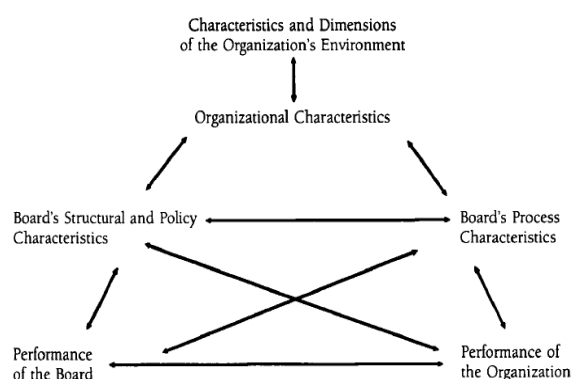
(Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1993)

#### Board Performance and Organizational Effectiveness

Researchers have developed the literature by moving beyond exploring the relationship between board practices and board performance and have begun exploring the relationship between board performance and organizational effectiveness. Brown (2005) explored this

relationship vis-à-vis the six competencies identified by Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993). His findings suggested that the analytical and the interpersonal dimensions were correlated with an NPO's ability to run a net surplus. He also found that the contextual, strategic, and analytic dimensions were associated with stakeholders' perceptions of an NPO's effectiveness. Based on his findings, Brown (2005) concluded that the interpersonal and the strategic dimensions potentially might have the most significant impact on organizational effectiveness.

Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin (1992) studied the relationship between board performance and organizational effectiveness by developing a conceptual framework that incorporated many of the variables that have been used to assess board performance (see Figure 4). The authors began by exploring the impact that various board practices had on stakeholders' perceptions of board effectiveness. The authors found that the practices associated with stakeholders' perceptions of board effectiveness included strategic planning, maintaining a common vision, and following good meeting-management practices. Ultimately, the authors suggested that a significant correlation existed between stakeholders' perceptions of board performance and their perceptions of organizational effectiveness.



**Figure 4: A Framework for the Analysis of NPO Boards**  
(Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1992)

Herman and Renz (2000) explored the relationship between board performance and organizational effectiveness by building upon their prior research. Using data gathered from both health and welfare organizations and organizations that provided services to people with developmental disabilities, the authors concluded that a strong positive correlation existed between the two variables. In another study, Green and Griesinger (1996) also used a sample of organizations that provided services to people with developmental disabilities. After first exploring stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of various board practices, Green and Griesinger (1996) concluded that a strong relationship existed between board performance and organizational effectiveness. In their study of college trustees, Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993) also found a strong correlation between board performance and organizational effectiveness.

#### Board Interventions

Despite the presence of findings suggesting a relationship between board performance and organizational effectiveness, researchers have noted a gap between the level of desired board performance and the level of actual board performance (Green & Griesinger, 1996; Herman & Renz, 2000). In a study of Canadian NPOs, Brudney and Murray (1998) reported that 72% of the executive directors in the sample indicated that their boards had undergone a planned change effort in the past three years. When asked to rate the extent of the change, the participants provided a mean response of 6.57 on a 10-point scale, in which 10 meant "a very large amount." The authors also asked the executive directors to rate the success of and their satisfaction with the change efforts. The participants' mean scores on a 10-point scale were 6.43 and 6.31 respectively. Brudney and Murray (1998) concluded that the executive directors believed that a relationship existed between the change efforts undertaken by boards and improved board effectiveness and that change efforts could at least moderately improve board performance.



Researchers have responded to the gap between the desired and the actual performance of NPO board members by exploring the effectiveness of various interventions. Kovner (1997) examined the effectiveness of an intervention used with two healthcare systems that was based on the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989). The goal was to increase board members' facility in each of the six competencies in order to help them better carry out their responsibilities (Kovner, 1997). After the intervention was implemented with each board, Kovner suggested that obtaining support from executive directors and key board leaders are two factors that can contribute to the success of an intervention. He also noted the usefulness of board retreats, which give board members a significant amount of time to engage in development opportunities.

Holland and Jackson (1998) also explored the effectiveness of an intervention that was based on the six board competencies identified by Holland and his colleagues (1989). Using a nonrandom selection process, the authors divided a sample of NPOs into two groups. The boards of the organizations in the first group received the intervention, while the boards of the organizations in the second group did not. Holland and Jackson (1998) found that the interventions were successful in improving board members' understanding of the six competencies. As part of their study, the authors identified obstacles that may prevent interventions from being implemented effectively. Their list included ambiguous expectations about the purpose of the intervention, not defining clearly the issues that an intervention is intended to address, board members' biases as a result of previous unsuccessful change efforts, and board members' hesitancy to try new practices. Holland and Jackson (1998) also provided a list of suggestions to help organizations implement successful interventions, including first assessing the effectiveness of the board's current practices and helping board members articulate

their own development goals. Holland and Jackson (1998) suggested that retreats may be an effective component of board interventions, as can restructuring the board and its committees.

The research findings regarding the effectiveness of board interventions are significant. The previous evidence noting the relationship between board performance and organizational effectiveness suggests that improvements in board performance can have an impact on organizational effectiveness. Research has also suggested the importance of offering board members initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities. In studying the effectiveness of board-development practices, Brown (2007) found that orientations were associated with perceptions of the competency of board members and that the use of initial orientations was correlated with overall board performance. Regarding ongoing development, Green and Griesinger (1996) found that, for executive directors, board development was an important factor that distinguished between levels of board effectiveness.

#### Board Limitations

While the various prescriptions that can be found in the literature may help improve board effectiveness—and organizational performance by association—it is important to note the limitations of these practices, as well as the limitations of NPO boards themselves. Axelrod (2005) presented some of the limitations of the various practices prescribed in the literature: The practices often do not consider the strengths and weakness of board and staff members, nor do they take into account differences in organizations' missions, ages, and sources of funding. Existing prescriptions often assume that a gold standard or a single best way for boards to fulfill their responsibilities exists. Finally, the prescriptions rarely suggest contextualizing the practices by first establishing and defining the criteria by which board performance is to be evaluated.

Carver (2006) noted a few of the ontological limitations of the board-of-directors governance model. The first limitation is a propensity for boards to engage in management of organizations' day-to-day operations rather than on developing policy and establishing long-term goals and objectives. A corollary to this limitation is a potential failure for boards to define clearly the authority of board members and of senior-level staff. A second limitation is that board members often spend time on trivial matters or low-level decisions that can be entrusted to staff members. Third, board members may have a short-term bias that makes them more concerned with immediate issues rather than the long-term future of the organization. Carver (2006) further pointed out that boards that are more concerned with present realities than they are with future possibilities are being reactive rather than proactive, which can impede an organization's growth.

CHAPTER III  
METHODS

For this study, the researcher selected Chicago human service NPOs as the population of interest. While these NPOs differ in that they offer a broad range of services to diverse stakeholders, they are similar in that they are all mission-driven. All human service organizations strive to achieve a specific objective—to improve the individual and collective well being of members in society—through the programs and services they provide (Hasenfeld, 2010).

Data about the population were gathered using a multistep process. The first step was to establish the criteria used to define the parameters of the population from which the sample was drawn. This was done by using the NTEE's human-service category. A subset within this category is human service organizations that focus specifically on human welfare as opposed to other human service issues, such as education and job training, food and nutrition, or public safety. The researcher used the human service subset within the broad human-service category as an inclusion criterion. Organizations within this subset provide various services, including welfare services across the lifespan, individual and family social services, emergency social services, residential care, and services that support independent living for specific populations (Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, 2009a). The other inclusion criterion that the researcher used was geographical location: To qualify for the study, the organization had to have an office within the City of Chicago.

Once the population was established, the researcher downloaded from the Guidestar Web site's database all the available information for each of the Chicago human service NPOs that met the inclusion criteria. The researcher then attempted to verify the contact information and the names of the executive director and the board chair for each organization by doing a Web search. Organizations for which accurate contact information could not be found were excluded from the study. The researcher then segmented the population into three groups. The first group included

all the organizations for which the Guidestar database had no financial data. The second group included all the organizations for which the average annual income for the most recent year for which the Guidestar database had information was below the mean for all the organizations in the population, and the third group included all the organizations for which the average annual income was above the mean for all the organizations in the population.

During the next step the researcher developed an interview protocol that included questions about board-selection practices, board members' roles and responsibilities, and board practices regarding initial board-member orientations and ongoing training and development opportunities. After the protocol was developed, the researcher contacted the executive directors and the board chairs of a small sample of the organizations from the population and invited them to participate in an interview. Either an in-person or a phone interview was scheduled with the stakeholders who agreed to participate (N = 4). Some participants asked for and received a copy of the interview protocol before the interview was conducted (see Appendix B for the interview protocol).

The researcher used the data obtained during the interview process to develop a survey that included questions similar to those asked during the interview. Because the primary focus of the research was to identify stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of initial orientation and ongoing training opportunities vis-à-vis the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989), the survey also included questions about how well both initial orientation and ongoing training opportunities help board members to improve in each competency. Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how effective they perceived their organization's orientation and ongoing training opportunities to be in developing board members' facility in each competency. The survey was designed to be administered via SurveyMonkey. The benefits

of using this program to administer the survey included swift turnaround time, convenience for the participants, and the program's data collection capabilities.

An initial version of the survey was piloted with the executive directors and the board chairs of a small sample of organizations from within the population whom were contacted and invited to participate in the study. A confirmation e-mail that included the Web link to the survey was sent to those who agreed to participate. While the researcher hoped to receive feedback from between five and seven organizations, usable feedback was received from three organizations. Some stakeholders who agreed to complete the survey did not follow through, while others completed the survey after the researcher had begun the next step of the research process. The primary purpose of the pilot was to test the clarity and understandability of the survey questions as well as to make sure that there were no technical issues associated with using the SurveyMonkey program.

The feedback obtained from the piloting process was used to prepare the final draft of the survey, which was also administered via SurveyMonkey. Most of the revisions to the original survey affected the possible response options for various questions (see Appendix C for the survey protocol). After the final draft of the survey was completed, it was administered to the executive directors and the board chairs of a larger sample of organizations selected from the population. The executive directors and the board chairs of approximately 144 organizations were contacted and invited to participate in the study. The researcher hoped that stakeholders from between 20 and 30 organizations would agree to participate in the study by completing the survey. The executive directors and the board chairs from the 20 organizations that did agree to participate were sent a confirmation e-mail and the Web link to the survey. To encourage a better response rate, a follow-up e-mail was sent about a week after the initial confirmation.

The researcher experienced a couple limitations during the data-gathering process. The first was a low response rate, even though the executive directors and the board chairs in the sample agreed to participate in the research. In addition, the researcher hoped to receive completed surveys from both the executive directors and the board chairs of the organizations that agreed to participate. For most organizations, however, either the executive director or the board chair completed the survey. This prevented the researcher from comparing the data from both stakeholders. Finally, small organizations were underrepresented in the study; the researcher was unable to obtain valid contact information for the executive directors or the board chairs of many of the small organizations in the population, while the stakeholders of others declined to participate in the research.

When contacting the executive directors and the board chairs of the NPOs that were invited to participate in the study, the researcher recorded in a spread sheet the names of the organizations, the names of the stakeholders whom the researcher contacted, the means, such as the telephone numbers or e-mail addresses, by which they were contacted, the dates the contacts were made, and the responses, if any, that were received.

The researcher began the data analysis by downloading from the SurveyMonkey Web site the participants' survey responses. Ordinal responses, such as participants' ratings of the effectiveness of initial orientations, were entered directly into SPSS. Nominal-level responses, such as whether an organization offered an initial orientation or ongoing training and development opportunities, were dummy coded and then entered into SPSS. The researcher then ran frequencies and descriptive statistics to determine the number of cases, frequencies, measures of central tendency, and standard deviations, as appropriate. Qualitative responses, such as the topics participants reported that their organizations cover during orientations, were read and



coded by hand. The researcher combined similar responses into categories. These data were used to identify and discuss conclusions and recommendations for how the organizations in the sample could improve both board performance and organizational success.

CHAPTER IV  
RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The Web link to the final draft of the survey was sent to stakeholders of 20 Chicago human service NPOs. Eighteen usable surveys representing 16 organizations were returned. Executive directors completed 14 of the surveys and board chairs completed four. Three of the NPOs in the sample provided services to other organizations, and the other 13 NPOs provided services directly to clients. The reported range of clients served in the past year was 15 to 6,000. In the survey, participants were asked to report their organizations' revenues and expenses for the past fiscal year. The reported expenses ranged from \$2,000 to \$16 million, and the reported revenues ranged from \$4,000 to \$16 million. It is interesting to note that of the two organizations for which the survey was completed by both the executive director and the board chair, discrepancies—of \$2 million in one case—existed in the reported financial data. Each of the 16 NPOs in the final sample reported having an active board of directors, none of which met fewer than three times per year and none of which met more than 12 times per year ( $M = 4.89$ , median and mode = 4.00). The smallest board was comprised of three members, and the largest board was comprised of 35 members ( $M = 14.65$ ,  $SD = 9.79$ ).

Before beginning this study, the researcher hypothesized that Chicago human service NPOs provide board members with both initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities. Despite the evidence suggesting that board-development practices have an impact on board performance, participants' reported use of the various practices prescribed in the literature was underwhelming. Participants from only four NPOs reported having a board-development plan, and participants from only five NPOs reported having a board-development committee. While participants from ten organizations reported offering an initial orientation to board members, the formats of the orientations, the topics that were covered during orientations, and the length of the orientations varied considerably, as can be seen in

Tables 1, 2, and 3. A relationship does not appear to exist between an organization's finances and whether the organization offered an initial orientation to new board members.

<i>Component</i>	<i>N</i>
Review binder/packet of information	7
Meeting board chair and senior staff	5
Meeting with stakeholders	4
Tour of facilities	3
Phone conversation	1
Some organizations reported using more than one component.	

**Table 1. Format of Initial Orientations**

<i>Topic</i>	<i>N</i>
Programs and services	7
Board members' roles and responsibilities	6
Mission	5
Finances	4
Logistics (e.g. meeting schedules, committee structures)	4
Fundraising	2
History	1
Strategic plan	1

**Table 2. Topics Covered During Initial Orientations**

<i>Length</i>	<i>N</i>
1 hour or less	2
1–2 hours	4
.5 day	2
1 day	1
1.5 days	1

**Table 3. Length of Initial Orientations**

Despite the variability in orientation practices, the participants reported having positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the initial orientations offered by their organizations. When asked whether they believe that initial orientations effectively prepare board members

to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, the participants provided a mean response of 2.33 ( $SD = 1.07$ ), which was based on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 represented “strongly agree” and 5 represented “strongly disagree.” As can be seen in Table 4, the participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of initial orientations in increasing board members’ facility in the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989), was also high. When asked to use the same 5-point Likert scale, the participants suggested that initial orientations better prepare board members for the educational and the contextual dimensions and that initial orientations are less effective in preparing board members for the interpersonal and the analytical dimensions.

<i>Dimension (N=18)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Contextual	1.92	0.67
Educational	1.67	0.89
Interpersonal	2.58	0.79
Analytical	2.67	1.07
Political	2.50	1.09
Strategic	2.33	1.07

**Table 4. Effectiveness of Board-Member Orientations**

Participants from only three of the NPOs in the sample reported offering board members with formal opportunities for ongoing training and development. Opportunities that the participants reported using included providing board members with pertinent articles and facilitating board members’ participation in various webinars. One participant reported that the information provided by the board’s finance committee served as an informal source of board-member development. Participants from four NPOs reported that their organizations asked board members to engage in an annual self-evaluation process, which was most often done by using a written evaluation. The executive director and board chair from one organization reported that their organization also asked board members to complete a written action plan

annually. Since so few NPOs reported offering opportunities for ongoing training and development, the researcher was unable to obtain data regarding participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of these experiences in increasing board members' facility in the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989).

In addition to asking participants to provide information about their NPOs' board-development practices, the researcher also asked participants to provide information about both the criteria used for recruiting and selecting board members and board members' primary roles and responsibilities. When recruiting and selecting new board members, participants reported that their NPOs considered personal qualities and characteristics, including a candidate's commitment to the organization, the amount of time a candidate had to give to the organization, and a candidate's fit with the mission of the organization. Another criterion that the participants reported using was a candidate's social network and his or her ability to leverage this network on behalf of the NPO. Other reported criteria were the professional skills that candidates brought to the board, strategic consideration of board diversity, how well a candidate might fill in any lacunae among the competencies of current board members, and a candidate's knowledge of the specific sector in which the NPO was engaged. Participants reported that board members' primary roles and responsibilities included overall governance, establishing policy, developing long-range plans, ensuring that programs and services adhere to an organization's mission, accountability for financial resources, fundraising, hiring and supervising the executive director, and helping raise awareness of an organization and its mission.

While the sample for this study was small, the data suggest that the participants believe that the boards of their respective NPOs effectively meet their fiduciary responsibilities. When asked whether they believed their boards are effectively doing so, the participants provided a

mean response of 2.60 ( $N = 18$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) using the 5-point Likert scale described above. Despite this strong perception, however, participants were able to suggest areas in which their respective boards could improve in performance. A number of participants reported that their boards could improve by developing both an initial orientation for new board members and an annual self-evaluation process for the board. A few participants also suggested that their board members would benefit from receiving opportunities for ongoing training and development. Fundraising is another area for improvement that participants reported with some frequency. Other ideas that were reported include recruiting qualified board members, focusing board efforts on program outcomes, raising awareness of organizations in the larger community, increasing board diversity, and encouraging board members' engagement with both the board and the organization.

In addition to having a positive perception of their boards' effectiveness, the research participants also reported having high perceptions of the success of their respective organizations. When asked whether they believed that their NPOs effectively achieve their missions, the participants reported a mean response of 1.33 ( $N = 18$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ). Participants also were able to provide insight into the issues that their organizations currently face as they attempt to achieve their goals. A majority of the participants reported economic issues, including limited access to capital, decreased success in fundraising efforts, decreased return on economic investments, and receiving fewer governmental grants and less governmental funding. While a majority of the economic responses suggest that the NPOs in the sample are attempting to maintain a status quo, a few of the participants reported struggles with managing organizational growth, the need for larger facilities, and the need for more staff members. Other issues reported by participants include recruitment of talented board members, board members' overall

commitment and engagement, managing volunteers, and developing and maintaining relationships with key constituencies such as funders and other program partners.



CHAPTER 5  
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Discussion and Recommendations

The data gathered during this study suggest that the research participants perceive initial orientations to both effectively prepare board members to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities and to increase board members' facility in the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989). The data also suggest, however, that the initial orientations offered by the NPOs lack robustness. The researcher suggests that the NPOs in the sample that are not offering initial orientations begin doing so and that all NPOs strive to offer robust orientation experiences. In addition, given the research which suggests that a link between NPO board effectiveness and organizational success exists (see Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1992; Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1993; Green & Griesinger, 1996; Herman and Renz, 1997, 1998; Herman, Renz, & Heimovics, 1997), most of the NPOs in the sample may be missing an opportunity to improve their success by failing to provide ongoing training and development opportunities for board members. Thus, the researcher suggests that NPOs offer systematic ongoing training and development opportunities. To help ensure that these are high-quality, evidence-based experiences, the researcher further suggests that those organizations which currently do not have either a board-development committee or a board-development plan establish both. Finally, as there is research to suggest that retreats may be an effective format for board development (see Holland & Jackson, 1998; Kovner, 1997), the NPOs in the sample may wish to consider using this format for their ongoing training and development opportunities.

As regards empowering board members to fulfill their various responsibilities, the NPOs in the sample appear to be aware of the prescriptions in the literature. Participants from a majority of the organizations reported that their board members are responsible for many of the prescriptions suggested by Axelrod (2005), Carver (2006), and Houle (1989). The NPOs in the

sample also appear to hold board members to an adequate standard of conduct through the responsibilities they ascribe to them. In addition, board members who diligently fulfill their responsibilities will meet the duties of obedience, care, and loyalty to which board members are frequently held (Axelrod, 2005).

When comparing the selection criteria that NPOs use to recruit and select board members with the primary roles and responsibilities that organizations ascribe to their boards, a disconnect emerges. The NPOs in the sample reported that board members primarily are responsible for fiduciary and governance responsibilities, whereas the participants reported that board members frequently are recruited and selected for their personal qualities and characteristics. Participants less frequently reported using the selection criterion presumably correlated with governance functions—candidates' professional skills. Furthermore, board members' personal qualities and characteristics do not appear to ensure their active engagement, which is an issue participants reported that their organizations face. Another apparent disconnect exists between candidates' social networks, another reported selection criterion, and NPOs' ability to fundraise, which is another issue participants reported that their organizations experience. Admittedly, the inability to raise funds effectively may be a result of the current economy; it may, however, be the result of board members ineffectively leveraging their social networks.

When recruiting and selecting board members in the future, the NPOs in the sample may benefit from more closely following the prescriptions in the literature, particularly those regarding board diversity and board members' occupations and professional experiences (Brown, 2002; Carver, 2006; Daley, 2002; Houle, 1989; Miller, Weiss, & MacLeod, 1988; Siciliano, 1996). The NPOs that have difficulty recruiting qualified board members may benefit by recruiting candidates from among the members of professional organizations, such as the

American Management Association, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. NPOs also may wish to recruit board members from among students in nonprofit management, public service management, and social work graduate programs.

As many researchers have pointed out, there exists a researcher-practitioner gap. Both researchers and practitioners can use various practices to help address this issue. Researchers can work toward closing this gap by serving on NPO boards, offering consulting services at reasonable fees, and publishing research findings and suggestions for best practices in journals published for practitioners. Practitioners can help close this gap by inviting researchers to sit on boards, hiring them as consultants when necessary, by offering ongoing training and development opportunities for board members, and by collaborating with researchers on studies.

A majority of the participants in the sample reported that economic concerns, including decreased success in fundraising efforts, decreased income from grants and investments, and a lack of adequate fundraising staff, were the major issues that their organizations currently face. Organizations may wish to consider various practices to help them address these concerns. For example, organizations may wish to collaborate with one another to share fundraising practices and to identify additional sources of funding. Organizations that feel understaffed may wish to utilize undergraduate or graduate student interns to serve as grant writers or to help with data entry and other tasks.

### Limitations

It is important for researchers to acknowledge potential limitations in their research. Doing so contributes to readers' understanding of the reported data and helps identify issues for researchers to consider when designing future research. The first limitation to acknowledge in

this study is the use of a nonrandom selection process. Since organizations were included based on nonrandom selection criteria, the data cannot necessarily be generalized to other types of NPOs in other geographical settings.

Another limitation of this research is the small sample size, low participation rate, and underrepresentation of small NPOs. The small sample size is especially discouraging given the number of organizations that were contacted and invited to participate in the various stages of the research. An issue to consider when designing future research includes potentially using a different source of data to determine which organizations to include in the population; a significant percentage of the organizations in the Guidestar database had to be excluded from the study simply because the researcher could not find contact information for the organizations in question. Thus, it may be worth considering other recruitment methods. When developing future research methodology, it also may be worth considering using only interviews rather than both interviews and surveys to gather data. Because the primary goal of this study was to obtain qualitative data, interviews might have offered a sufficient method for gathering the desired data and would have allowed for more direct follow-up and clarification of participants' responses.

The data in this study were self-reported by the participants. While some of the data could have been verified by other sources, the subjective questions regarding the participants' perceptions of board performance could not have been independently verified. As Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002) pointed out, self-reported data often are used in organizational research because they are easy to obtain and often are the most effective means by which to measure the constructs of interest. Despite their frequent use, self-reporting techniques often are vulnerable to various types of response biases, including socially desirable responding and impression management (Gardner & Martink, 1988; Padsakoff & Organ, 1986). Padsakoff and Organ (1986)

noted that an additional weakness of self-reported data is that if the instrument by which the data are gathered is not validated, the instrument may not measure the construct of interest. In this study, socially desirable responding may be operating in the participants' ratings of board performance and organizational success, as the participants had both a personal and a professional stake in the responses and in others' perceptions of their respective organizations.

#### Future Research

In analyzing the data that were obtained through this study, the researcher was able to identify potential areas for future research. Given how few of the participants reported using both orientations and ongoing training and development practices, it may be helpful for researchers to identify and present easy-to-implement prescriptions or models for these experiences. Before doing so, it also may be helpful to research why organizations offer neither initial orientations nor ongoing training experiences to board members; in this way, any issues that prevent NPOs from doing so may be addressed. Furthermore, given the research suggesting the importance of the six dimensions identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989), it may be helpful for researchers to work with practitioners to create board-development models that are based on these six competencies.

A goal of this study was to explore executive directors' and board chairs' perceptions of the effectiveness of board-development practices. Another line of research would be to explore board members' perceptions of the effectiveness of these experiences in order to determine whether board members believe that these experiences effectively prepare them to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities. Exploring this question may help determine whether it is necessary to improve or augment the development opportunities currently being offered to board members.

Currently, a wide range of practices are in place regarding the number of people serving on Chicago human service NPO boards as well as the number of times those boards meet annually. Because the dataset was too small to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the number of people serving on NPO boards, the number of times the boards meet per year, and the stakeholders' perceptions of both board effectiveness and organizational success, the relationships between these variables present potential areas for future research. It also may be productive to investigate the relationship between both the number of board members and the number of times the board meets per year and the constructs of board-member engagement and board-member commitment, which some participants suggested are areas in which their boards can improve. A specific research question may be whether more board members and more frequent board meetings either hinder or encourage board members' commitment and engagement.

Finally, more than one participant reported that an issue NPOs currently face is a lack of board-member engagement. A potential area for future research is to determine whether particular personal qualities and characteristics are unique to engaged board members. If such qualities and characteristics emerge during research, they can be used to develop an instrument that can help predict board-member engagement and that NPOs can use when recruiting and selecting new board members.

### Conclusion

Initially, the researcher hypothesized that Chicago human service NPOs provide initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities to board members. The researcher also hypothesized that organizational stakeholders perceived these opportunities to effectively prepare board members to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities and to increase board

members' facility in the six competencies identified by Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989). While the data support the second hypothesis, support for the first hypothesis appears to be less convincing. By offering high-quality initial orientation and ongoing training and development opportunities to board members, NPOs potentially may increase both board performance and organizational effectiveness. In the literature, there exist prescriptions that organizations can follow to help them offer such development experiences.



APPENDIX A  
NATIONAL TAXONOMY OF EXEMPT ENTITIES

- I. Arts, Culture, and Humanities
- II. Education
- III. Environment and Animals
- IV. Health
  - A. Health Care
  - B. Mental Health and Crisis Intervention
  - C. Diseases, Disorders, and Medical Disciplines
  - D. Medical Research
- V. Human Services
  - A. Crime and Legal Related
  - B. Employment
  - C. Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition
  - D. Housing and Shelter
  - E. Public Safety, Disaster Preparedness and Relief
  - F. Recreation and Sports
  - G. Youth Development
  - H. Human Services
- VI. International, Foreign Affairs
- VII. Public, Social Benefit
  - A. Civil Rights, Social Action, and Advocacy
  - B. Community Improvement and Capacity Building
  - C. Philanthropy, Volunteerism, and Grantmaking Foundations
  - D. Science and Technology

E. Social Science

F. Public and Societal Benefit

VIII. Religion Related

IX. Mutual and Membership Benefit

X. Unknown, Unclassified

(Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, 2009a)

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is the mission of your organization?
2. How many times per year does the board of directors meet?
3. How many people currently serve on the board of directors?
4. By what criteria are board members selected?
5. What are board members' primary responsibilities?
6. Can you please describe the structure of the board?
7. Does the board have a board-development plan?
8. Does the board have an official board-development committee?
9. Do new board members receive an initial orientation?
10. If so, how long is the orientation?
11. What major topics are covered during the orientation?
12. Please indicate who is responsible for planning the orientation.
13. Please indicate who leads the orientation.
14. Do board members receive any ongoing development or training that is designed to help them fulfill their responsibilities?
15. If so, how frequently do board members participate in ongoing development opportunities?
16. Please indicate who is responsible for planning ongoing development opportunities.
17. Please indicate who leads ongoing board-development opportunities.
18. Please indicate the topics that were covered during ongoing board-development opportunities offered within the past fiscal year.
19. Are there any other ways in which the organization helps board members carry out their governance responsibilities? If so, please list and describe them.
20. Does the board undertake any regular self-assessment to determine board effectiveness?

21. If so, please describe the self-assessment procedures.
22. How effective do you believe the board of directors to be?
23. How effective do you believe the organization is in fulfilling its mission? For example, has the organization increased fundraising or the number of clients served over the past year?
24. Please indicate the top five areas that are of significant concern to your organization.

APPENDIX C  
SURVEY PROTOCOL

N.B. Response options for non-open-ended questions are included in brackets.

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. Please indicate your affiliation with the organization. <Executive Director/CEO; Board Chair/President; Other>
3. Please describe in a sentence or two the mission of your organization.
4. How many clients does your organization serve per year?
5. Approximately what were the total expenses and total revenue for your organization for the past fiscal year?
6. How many times per year does the board of directors meet? <12; 6; 4; 3; Other—please specify>
7. How many people currently serve on the board of directors?
8. By what criteria are board members selected?
9. What are board members' primary responsibilities?
10. Does the board of directors have a board-development plan (i.e., a plan outlining board training/in-service opportunities)? <Yes; No>
11. Does the board of directors have a board-development committee (i.e., a committee responsible for planning and facilitating the implementation of board training/in-service opportunities)? <Yes; No>
12. Do new board members receive an initial orientation? <Yes; No>
13. Please briefly describe the structure and format of the orientation.
14. How long is the initial orientation? <Full day; Half day; One to two hours; Less than one hour; Other—please specify>
15. Please list the major topics that are typically covered during the orientation.



16. Who is responsible for planning the initial orientation? <Executive Director/CEO; Board Chair/President; Board Development Committee; Other—please specify>
17. Who is responsible for leading or facilitating the initial orientation? <Executive Director/CEO; Board Chair/President; Board Development Committee; Other—please specify>
18. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation prepares board members to carry out their fiduciary responsibilities. <1—strongly agree; 2—agree; 3—neither agree nor disagree; 4—disagree; 5—strongly disagree>
19. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps board members understand and take into account the culture and social norms of the organization when fulfilling board responsibilities. <1—strongly agree; 2—agree; 3—neither agree nor disagree; 4—disagree; 5—strongly disagree>
20. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps board members become well-informed about the organization and the board's roles and responsibilities. <1—strongly agree; 2—agree; 3—neither agree nor disagree; 4—disagree; 5—strongly disagree>
21. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps nurture group development, attends to the board's collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness. <1—strongly agree; 2—agree; 3—neither agree nor disagree; 4—disagree; 5—strongly disagree>
22. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps prepare board members to recognize complexities and subtleties in issues, draw upon

multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems, and synthesize appropriate responses.

<1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>

23. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps

board members accept as a responsibility the need to develop and maintain healthy

relationships among key constituencies. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor

disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>

24. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The initial orientation helps

prepare board members to envision and shape institutional direction and to ensure a strategic

approach to the organization’s future. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor

disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>

25. Do board members receive ongoing training or in-service training that is designed to help

them carry out their fiduciary responsibilities? <Yes; No>

26. Please briefly describe the structure and format of the ongoing training opportunities that are

offered to board members.

27. How often do board members receive ongoing training or development? <Four times per

year; Three times per year; Twice per year, Once per year; Other—please specify>

28. Who is responsible for planning ongoing training opportunities for board members?

<Executive Director/CEO; Board Chair/President; Board Development Committee;

Other—please specify>

29. Who is responsible for leading or facilitating ongoing training opportunities for board

members? <Executive Director/CEO; Board Chair/President; Board Development

Committee; Other—please specify>

30. Please list the major topics that have been covered during the ongoing board training opportunities offered during the past fiscal year.
31. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help board members understand and take into account the culture and social norms of the organization when fulfilling board responsibilities. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>
32. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help board members become well-informed about the organization and the board’s roles and responsibilities. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>
33. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help nurture group development, attend to the board’s collective welfare, and foster a sense of cohesiveness. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>
34. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help prepare board members to recognize complexities and subtleties in issues, draw upon multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems, and synthesize appropriate responses. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>
35. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help board members accept as a responsibility the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships among key constituencies. <1–strongly agree; 2–agree; 3–neither agree nor disagree; 4–disagree; 5–strongly disagree>

36. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: Ongoing board-training opportunities help prepare board members to envision and shape institutional direction and to ensure a strategic approach to the organization's future. <1-strongly agree; 2-agree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-disagree; 5-strongly disagree>
37. Are there other ways in which the organization helps prepare board members to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities? <Yes; No>
38. If so, please describe these additional practices.
39. Does the board engage in regular self-assessment in order to gauge board effectiveness? <Yes; No>
40. If so, please describe the board self-assessment process.
41. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: I believe that the board of directors effectively meets the fiduciary responsibilities of this organization. <1-strongly agree; 2-agree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-disagree; 5-strongly disagree>
42. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: I believe that this organization effectively fulfills its mission. <1-strongly agree; 2-agree; 3-neither agree nor disagree; 4-disagree; 5-strongly disagree>
43. Please list any areas in which the board can improve its performance.
44. Please list the top three to five challenges or issues that your organization currently faces.

## REFERENCES

- Axelrod, N. R. (2005). Board leadership and development. In R. D. Herman and Associates (Eds.), *The Jossey-Bass handbook of nonprofit leadership and management* (2nd ed., pp. 131–152). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Blackwood, A., Wing, K. T., & Pollak, T. H. (2008). *The nonprofit sector in brief: Facts and figures from the nonprofit almanac 2008: Public charities, giving, and volunteering*. Retrieved from National Center for Charitable Statistics website: <http://nccSDataweb.urban.org/kbfiles/797/Almanac2008publicCharities.pdf>
- Boyd, C. (2011, April 12). Proposed legislation stuns Minnesota's non-profits [Web log post]. Retrieved from [http://www.minnpost.com/communitysketchbook/2011/04/12/27383/proposed\\_legislation\\_stuns\\_minnesotas\\_nonprofits/](http://www.minnpost.com/communitysketchbook/2011/04/12/27383/proposed_legislation_stuns_minnesotas_nonprofits/)
- Bradshaw, P., Murray, V., & Wolpin, J. (1992). Do nonprofit boards make a difference? An exploration of the relationships among board structure, process, and effectiveness. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 21, 227–249. doi: 10.1177/089976409202100304
- Brown, W. A. (2002). Inclusive governance practices in nonprofit organizations and implications for practice. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 12, 369–385.
- Brown, W. A. (2005). Exploring the association between board and organizational performance in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 15, 317–339.
- Brown, W. A. (2007). Board development practices and competent board members: Implications for performance. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 17, 301–317. doi: 10.1002/nml.151
- Brown, W. A., & Guo, C. (2010). Exploring the key roles for nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39, 536–546. doi: 10.1177/0899764009334588
- Brudney, J. L., & Murray, V. (1998). Do intentional efforts to improve boards really work? The views of nonprofit CEOs. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 8, 333–348.
- Carver, J. (2006). *Boards that make a difference: A new design for leadership in nonprofit and public organizations* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy. (2009a). *National taxonomy of exempt entities*. Retrieved from <http://nccs.urban.org/classification/NTEE.cfm>
- Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy. (2009b). *Number of nonprofit organizations in the United States, 1999–2009*. Retrieved from <http://nccSDataweb.urban.org/PubApps/profile1.php?state=US>
- Chait, R. P., Holland, T. P., & Taylor, B. E. (1993). *The effective board of trustees*. Westport, CT: Oryx Press.

- Cornforth, C. (2001). What makes boards effective? An examination of the relationships between board inputs, structures, processes and effectiveness in non-profit organisations. *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, 9, 217–227.
- Daley, J. M. (2002). An action guide for nonprofit board diversity. *Journal of Community Practice*, 10, 33–54. doi: 10.1300/J125v10n01\_03
- Donaldson, S. I., & Grant-Vallone, E. J. (2002). Understanding self-report bias in organizational behavior research. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 17, 245–260.
- Gardner, W. L., & Martinko, M. J. (1988). Impression management in organizations. *Journal of Management*, 14, 312–338. doi: 10.1177/014920638801400210
- Green, J. C., & Griesinger, D. W. (1996). Board performance and organizational effectiveness in nonprofit social service organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 6, 381–402.
- Gronbjerg, K. A. (2010). The U.S. nonprofit human service sector: A creeping revolution. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human services as complex organizations* (2nd ed., pp. 79–96). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hall, P. D. (2005). Historical perspectives on nonprofit organizations in the United States. In R. D. Herman and Associates (Eds.), *The Jossey-Bass handbook of nonprofit leadership and management* (2nd ed., pp. 3–38). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hasenfeld, Y. (2010). The Attributes of Human Service Organizations. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human services as complex organizations* (2nd ed., pp. 9–32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (1997). Multiple constituencies and the social construction of nonprofit organization effectiveness. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 26, 185–206. doi: 10.1177/0899764097262006
- Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (1998). Nonprofit organizational effectiveness: Contrasts between especially effective and less effective organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 9, 23–38.
- Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (2000). Board practices of especially effective and less effective local nonprofit organizations. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 30, 146–160. doi: 10.1177/02750740022064605
- Herman, R. D., Renz, D. O., & Heimovics, R. D. (1997). Board practices and board effectiveness of local nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 7, 373–385.
- Holland, T. P., Chait, R. P., & Taylor, B. E. (1989). Board effectiveness: Identifying and measuring trustee competencies. *Research in Higher Education*, 30, 435–453.

- Holland, T. P., & Jackson, D. K. (1998). Strengthening board performance: Findings and lessons from demonstration projects. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 9*, 121–134.
- Houle, C. O. (1989). *Governing boards: Their nature and nurture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Inglis, S. (1997). Roles of the board in amateur sports organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 11*, 160–176.
- Inglis, S., Alexander, T., & Weaver, L. (1999). Roles and responsibilities of community nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 10*, 153–167.
- Kearns, K. P. (1995). Effective nonprofit board members as seen by executives and board chairs. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 5*, 337–358.
- Kovner, A. R. (1997). Board development in two hospitals: Lessons from a demonstration. *Hospital and Health Services Administration, 42*, 87–99.
- Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*, 34–47.
- Miller, L. E., Weiss, R. M., & MacLeod, B. V. (1988). Boards of directors in nonprofit organizations: Composition, activities, and organizational outcomes. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 17*, 81–89. doi: 10.1177/089976408801700307
- Miller-Millesen, J. L. (2003). Understanding the behavior of nonprofit boards of directors: A theory-based approach. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 32*, 521–547. doi: 10.1177/0899764003257463
- Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management, 12*, 531–544.
- Preston, J. B., & Brown, W. A. (2004). Commitment and performance of nonprofit board members. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 15*, 221–238.
- Provan, K. G. (1980). Board power and organizational effectiveness among human service agencies. *Academy of Management Journal, 23*, 221–236.
- Siciliano, J. I. (1996). The relationship of board member diversity to organizational performance. *Journal of Business Ethics, 15*, 1313–1320.