Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Laura Maurer

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Review Committee
Dr. Pamela Denning, Committee Chairperson, Human Services Faculty
Dr. Barbara Benoliel, Committee Member, Human Services Faculty
Dr. Andrew Garland-Forshee, University Reviewer, Human Services Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2014

Abstract

Board Member Perceptions of Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness

by

Laura Levy Maurer

MA, New York University, 1973

BS, Cornell University, 1970

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

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Abstract

In contemporary American society, the nonprofit board is accountable for ensuring that an organization has sufficient resources to carry out its mission. Filling the gap between demands for services and the resources to meet them is often a struggle for small, local nonprofit organizations. This hermeneutic phenomenological study examined how board members of small, local nonprofits in the focal community perceive organizational effectiveness. Understanding the nature of nonprofit organization effectiveness according to board members contributes to understanding how those accountable meet their organizational objectives. A review of the literature revealed that nonprofit effectiveness involves the action of contributing and the motivation behind the action, both of which are associated with trust and reciprocity. Guided by social constructivism, this study employed a qualitative analysis of repeated iterations of semiotic data from board members (n = 30) and text analysis of organizational mission statements (n = 21), generating thick descriptions of the board members' understanding of effectiveness. Findings were derived from successive coding iterations starting with the raw data, through locating text related to specific codes, to verifying relationships among codes, and incorporating researcher reflection. The analysis revealed that strategies focused on developing reciprocity and mitigating mistrust among board members contribute to board members' perceiving their organizations as effectively achieving their objectives. The study's findings support positive social change by informing social scientists and members of local nonprofit boards of the perceived gap between services demands and the resources to meet them among board members.

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ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Dedication

I dedicate this document to my father, Barnett Levy and to my grandmother, Doris Kirschenbaum Grogan.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the invaluable contribution of my dissertation committee of Walden Faculty, Drs. Pamela Denning, Barbara Benoliel, and Andrew Garland-Forshee. I also gratefully acknowledge the unwavering support of my husband, Gary Maurer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Small Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness in Contemporary America

In contemporary American society, small nonprofit organizations must determine how to fill the gap between the service demands of their constituents and the resources to provide these services (National Research Collaborative [NRC], 2012). Small nonprofits are expected to bear a greater burden of service provision during the current economic downturn. I refer to the phenomenon of filling this gap as the effectiveness of the nonprofit organization.

Recent researchers showed that government, corporate, foundation, and individual funders of social services were increasingly interested in the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations (Herman & Renz, 2008). Organizational stakeholders, including service consumers, staff, and directors can adapt findings of this study into organizational objectives, strategies, activities, the achieve organizational outcomes. Funders can use the study findings to refine benchmarks for assessing the organizations to which they are considering making donations.

Walden Notices (2012) underscored the importance of this study by stating that one of the three key findings of its recent survey on positive social change was that nonprofit organizations have an important role in social change. My research contributes to informing and specifying the meaning of effectiveness for small, local nonprofit organizations. Application of the findings and conclusions, developed from the lived experiences of members of small nonprofit boards, contributes to social change among

small American nonprofit organizations by suggesting means to address the stresses that compromise the availability and quality of their programs.

Study Overview

I included five major sections in the study. The first section serves as a general introduction to the study topic. I framed the research question in the contexts of its theoretical and conceptual background, its significance to current investigations, and contemporary practice. In the second chapter I uncovered, explained, and integrated the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study through a thorough literature review.

In the third chapter I explicated the study methodology. I covered topics including how I defined the study population and how I selected and recruited participants. I described and authenticated the research instruments. I laid out my data collection and analysis procedures. In the third chapter I made transparent my researcher biases and other ethical issues. I explained how minimized their impact on the investigation. I also discussed and analyzed the trustworthiness of the study by addressing its credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and related topics.

In the fourth chapter I spelled out the conduct of the investigation according to the methodology explained in the previous chapter. I discussed and analyzed the results of the investigation and related the results to the original research questions. In the final chapter I provided a detailed review and analysis of the study findings. I addressed how the findings may be used to impact positive social change.

Background

The current situation facing American nonprofit organizations is one of reduced support from both government and private sources, combined with increased demands for services (NRC, 2012). According to the NRC (2012), 65% of American nonprofit organizations reported increased demands for services in 2011 compared with 2010. The Portland Business Journal (2012) stated that philanthropic contributions have been essential in covering the gap left by federal funding cutbacks over the last 10 years. Nonprofit organizations must determine how to fill the shortfall between the service demands of their constituents and the resources to provide these services.

Theoretically, trust and reciprocity are necessary for the efficacy of social interaction, in general (Blau, 1964; Bourdieu, 1990; Putnam, 2000). Regarding the organization of local nonprofits, in particular, trust is essential (Putnam, 2000). Stakeholders trust that the organizations are effective stewards of their contributions.

Recent sociological researchers suggested that nonprofit effectiveness may be construed at the group level analogously to how altruism is applied at the individual level (Marx & Davis, 2012; Schefczyk & Peacock, 2010). In workplace studies, perceptions and attitudes about reciprocity and trust were involved with perceptions and attitudes of effectiveness (Montes & Irving, 2008; Thomas & Medina, 2008). Montes and Irving (2008) added that trust was essential to the fulfillment of reciprocal obligations that included an affective component, as opposed to straightforward economic exchanges.

According to Herman and Renz (2008) current literature showed that board effectiveness and organizational effectiveness were inextricably tied in American nonprofit organizations. Marx and Davis (2012) suggested that social scientists could define organizational effectiveness by determining what boards of directors actually do in the course of their real world operations.

The situation for board members of nonprofit organizations is one of uncertainty about how to be effective in this time and place. Board members determine how to fulfill organizational requirements, are accountable for the organization's staff, and for making sure that the organization has sufficient resources to carry out its mission (Board Source, 2012; Grant Space, 2012). I sought to derive an understanding of nonprofit effectiveness from the perceptions of the board members, as suggested by Marx and Davis (2012).

Problem Statement

Social scientists are in the process of developing a body of research on the structure and functioning of those responsible for nonprofit organization operations, namely nonprofit boards of directors (Dixon, Storey, & Rosete, 2010; Jacobs & Polito, 2012). Based on the findings of the NRC (2012), Board Source (2012), Marx and Davis (2012), and Schefczyk and Peacock (2010), the problem is how do small nonprofit organizations fill the gap between their constituents' service requirements and acquiring the resources to meet them. I conceived of this as a problem of organizational effectiveness. I undertook a hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry into the experiences and perceptions of board members who seek to guide effective small, local nonprofit organizations.

Research Question

Moustakas and Callahan (1956) recommended a holistic approach to research and practice. They stressed that researcher/practitioners continually reflect on both common sense and professional over-reliance on standard definitions. By letting go of preconceptions, a researcher has a better chance of getting at the essence of the experience under investigation. Creswell (2007) noted that the underlying purpose of construct-centered research was to come up with a description of the essence of the experience. The description, in turn, provided empirical evidence and support for the conceptual framework of social constructivism.

The research question is "How do board members of small, local nonprofits perceive organizational effectiveness"? I constructed the answer by asking several subsidiary questions:

What do board members identify as actions that are part of organizational effectiveness?

According to board members' accounts, what motivates organizational effectiveness?

What is the role of reciprocity in organizational effectiveness?

What is the role of trust in organizational effectiveness?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand what constitutes small nonprofit organization effectiveness. The objectives of the study are fourfold: (a) to explore board members perceptions of nonprofit effectiveness, (b) to understand the participants'

concept of effectiveness, (c) to identify themes and patterns that emerge from the data, and (d) to describe the role of reciprocity and trust in determining participants' perceptions. For the foreseeable future the effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofit organizations is in doubt (Marx & Davis, 2012; Schultz & Williams, 2010). This study relieved some of this doubt by providing on a better understanding of what it means to be an effective small, local nonprofit organization.

Nature of the Study

As a sociologist, my interest is in understanding group processes. The approach of social constructivism eschews the scientific method in favor of experience. In order to understand organizational effectiveness I focused my investigation on the meaning attributed to it by a group of people, specifically the board members of small, local nonprofit organizations (Creswell, 2007).

I looked for the commonalities and differences of the board members' experiences of effectiveness. My study population was members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a community of less than 15,000 in central Arizona. In this study, I explored what members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations did that drives organizational effectiveness.

Conceptual Framework

According to Hall (1981), in general, a research paradigm includes the purpose, nature of phenomena, method, and concerns that are, in essence, worthy of study. The early paradigm of Western sociology encompassed specific descriptions and explanations, as well as a quest to formulate general laws. It included both conceptual

framework and substantive content. Contemporary sociologists recognized that they also needed to understand the nature of subjectively meaningful social action (Hall, 1981). In other words, people built up, or socially constructed, a shared version of reality by converging, but never completely agreeing, upon understanding what made up social interaction.

I framed this study from the perspective of social constructivism. Social constructivists use phenomena to guide their investigations. The phenomenological approach gives precedence to subjective meaning (Hall, 1981). In practice this translates to studying how people routinize and rationalize their shared meanings and activities.

Herman and Renz (2008) stated that social constructivism was not a specific model, but rather a general philosophical research perspective. It meant that people's beliefs and knowledge determined their understanding of most aspects of reality. Thus, social scientists could avail themselves of many interpretations of a situation to get a better understanding of it. In order to understand nonprofit organization effectiveness, I examined the definitions, interpretations, and perceptions of participants who are members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations.

Using this approach to understanding effectiveness provided me the latitude to uncover, in an iterative fashion, how the process of becoming (or not becoming) an effective local nonprofit organization unfolded. From this perspective I ascertained the underlying structure of effectiveness by looking for themes and patterns that emerged from the empirical manifestation of interpersonal communication, including words, texts, and symbols (Marx & Davis, 2012). Social constructivists Berger and Luckman (1967)

set out to interpret how human beings perceived the reality of everyday life. Their basic assumptions were that social scientists could study people's experiences, and that people were conscious of their lived experience (Creswell, 2007).

For Berger and Luckmann (1967) it was the shared human knowledge of the taken-for-granted that held society together. I assumed that I can construct a detailed picture of nonprofit effectiveness by studying the semiotic practices of the members of boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations. I provided an explanation of the conceptual framework in Chapter 2.

Social constructivists, such as Berger and Luckmann (1967), were among those social scientists who introduced phenomenology as the method of analysis best suited to their pursuit of inter-subjective meanings. The objective of phenomenologists was to discover the meanings of the shared human knowledge of the everyday, the taken for granted. A corollary assumption was that meaning could only be understood in context (Luhmann, 1995).

Identification of Related Theories/Frameworks Not Investigated

I identified two theories used by social scientists to explain the activities of nonprofit organization boards of directors. Miller (2002) subtitled her study *The applicability of agency theory to nonprofit boards.* She applied agency theory as a means to determine how boards provided monitoring of organizational programs. Her rationale was that since this theory was accepted among social scientists as explaining the activities of corporate boards, it should also apply to nonprofit boards.

Agency theory is a derivative of contract theory where the contract was assumed as between a principal and an agent. The function of the contract was to mitigate potential conflict between the parties. According to Miller (2002), the agent for a nonprofit was the Executive Director, whom the board of directors hired to oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization. Social scientists did not agree on who was the principal in a nonprofit organization. In addition, social scientists have not been able to document any conflict between the principal, however defined, and agent in a nonprofit context (Miller, 2002). Thus, I did not deem this theory a good framework for my study.

The other theory used by authors such as Hodge and Piccolo (2005) and Corritore (2009) was resource-dependence theory. Like Miller (2002), Hodge and Piccolo and Corritore noted the acceptance of resource-dependence theory among social scientists who studied for profit boards of directors. The key tenet of this theory is that organizational survival depended directly on acquisition and maintenance of resources. Directors of nonprofits focused on acquisition of necessary resources, especially cash resources, directly as availability of the resources became increasingly uncertain and challenging (Corritore, 2009).

For contemporary nonprofit organizations, funding was the key resource (Hodge & Piccolo, 2005). Hodge and Piccolo focused on the extent to which Executive Directors engaged or involved board members in fundraising, thereby begging the question of whether or how the board developed its perspective on gathering resources. They concluded that although some of their findings were consistent with resource dependence

theory, social scientists needed more investigations to explore boards' perspectives on the resources of nonprofit organizations.

Corritore (2009) further contradicted the reactive strategy implied by resource dependence theory; that is, restructure to prevent collapse. Corritore provided a case study of the merger of two midsized educational nonprofit organizations in Providence, Rhode Island. He found that directors in his case used restructuring proactively to further the accomplishment of their missions. Certain funding streams decreased following restructuring, due to donor duplication, while the community impact, organizational capacity, and program effectiveness increased.

Both of these approaches, resource dependence and agency theory, had limitations in two areas. The approaches made it difficult to identify principals or stakeholders. They engendered assumptions such as resources=funding to overcome the difficulty of quantifying objectives. Yet, they admitted that organizational decisions were made based on a myriad of non-rational factors, such as limited resources and technology and organizational culture. These factors led me to take a constructivist approach to the study.

Using Systems Theory as the Framework

The social constructivist approach provided the perspective from which I determined what lived the experiences of the board members, as a social group, revealed about nonprofit organization effectiveness. The approach is sociological because it also assumes that the nature of effectiveness will be revealed through communication and interaction among the directors. I ascertained the underlying structure of effectiveness by

looking for themes and patterns that emerged from the empirical manifestation of interpersonal communication.

Maintaining a nonprofit organization requires people with extra resources. They divert these resources from other endeavors (Blau, 1964; Putnam, 2000). Thus, nonprofit organizations develop strategies of reciprocity to attract and hold onto their resources. For nonprofit organizations, trust makes it possible to centrally situate the management responsibilities for the pooled resources of many individuals (Putnam, 2000). People trust that the organization will be an effective steward of their contributions.

The situation for board members of nonprofit organizations is one of uncertainty about how to be effective in this time and place. To understand what board members think about the central concepts I used the lens of systems theory to guide my process of investigation through a framework of nested relationships (Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1995). The specific context is that of the American small, local nonprofit organization.

The nonprofit organization is embedded in and has reciprocal interaction with its environment, or context. The interactions affect and are in turn affected by the process or dynamic of the organization's board of directors. Here the context is the organization. Within the context of the organization the board process embeds a view of effectiveness that in turn resonates within and across the other environments and into the context of the larger community (Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1995). I explicated the theoretical lens in Chapter 2.

Methodology

Eberle (2010) noted that there were four assumptions to construct-centered methodology. Eberle assumed that the methodology had relevance, meaning that observers could agree that a research question was connected to the study of understanding the world of themselves and their contemporaries. He also assumed that the methodology was logically consistent. He assumed that the methodology was interpreted subjectively. Subjective interpretation meant that social scientists were ultimately trying to explain what subjective social action meant. He also made the assumption of adequacy, meaning that the constructs that social scientists agreed on also had to be intelligible to common sense experiences of non-scientists.

Moustakas, Sigel, and Schlalock (1956) stated that researchers should undertake to impart this knowledge about human interaction in the form of "accurate presentations and descriptions of observable behavior" (p. 109). They suggested that researchers record, classify, and examine human interaction as the basis for these presentations. They included categorization of the recorded data as another important step in the process. Their criteria for creating categories were: comprehensiveness of the categories as a group, relevance to the question at hand, and ease of identifying when an instance fit a category. Following the constructivist approach, they reminded me that the interpretations of the study data can never correspond completely with the perceptions of the participants.

I collected the study data from members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a community in central Arizona. As a board member of two

small, local nonprofit organizations in the focal community I have the trust of my peers. This trust was deemed essential for gathering data from board members (Leblanc & Gillies, 2005).

The method of gathering sets of responses allowd me to gather information on the lived experiences of those directly responsible for organizational effectiveness; that is, members of boards of directors (Eberle, 2010). I gathered 30 sets of responses from board members of 21 different small, local nonprofit boards. I reviewed organizational mission statements for themes that emerged from the sets of responses. NVivo software provided the backbone to establish an acceptable level of confidence in the study findings. I described the advantages of this software in the chapter on methodology.

Definitions of Key Concepts

The key phenomenon in my study is small nonprofit organization effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness may be construed at the group level analogously to how altruism is applied at the level of the individual (Marx & Davis, 2012; Schefczyk & Peacock, 2010). According to Schefczyk and Peacock (2010), nonprofit effectiveness included both the action of altruistic helping and the intent that motivated the organization. The authors distinguished this from reflexive altruism, such as running into a burning building. Moreover, nonprofit organizations had to develop strategies of reciprocity and trust to attract and hold onto their resources (Blau, 1964; Putnam, 2000). Thus the concepts of reciprocity and trust are also central to the study.

Nonprofit effectiveness: There is a lack of consistent research on what makes up effective nonprofit organizations. Thus, a gap exists in social science research about what

makes up effective small, local nonprofit organizations (Marx & Davis, 2012). I constructed an interpretation of nonprofit effectiveness based on the actions and intentions of members of small nonprofit organization boards of directors.

Reciprocity: Moutsakas et al. (1956) assumed that reciprocity was an element of human interaction. They described it as being interactive and mutually engaging. They enumerated seeking, helping, offering information as instances of reciprocal behavior. Blau (1964) considered reciprocity a fundament of human interaction. Reciprocity is actions of individuals motivated by expected returns.

Trust: Trust is implicit in reciprocal transactions because the parties had to trust one another to meet their obligations (Blau, 1964). I defined trust as a social strategy that sets the limits of social exchange by providing protection against antisocial interference with the exchange process. Trust is generalized trust, sometimes called thin trust, rather than simply trust of those whom we know personally (Putnam, 2000).

Nonprofit Organization and Small, Local Nonprofit Organization: Nonprofit organizations are a subset of voluntary organizations. Voluntary organizations are organized groups of citizens whose community participation is based on shared beliefs and interests (Weber, 1964). For study purposes, I defined nonprofit organizations as follows. They are voluntary organizations that have nonprofit or charitable legal status, an IRS designation of 501 c (3), and are governed by a board of directors. Local nonprofit organizations have all of the preceding characteristics and deliver programs and services to their local communities (Board Source, 2012). Small, local nonprofit organizations

have all of the preceding characteristics and are located in and serve communities of less than 15,000 in population and have an annual operating budget of less than $400,000.

Limitations

Transferability

Providing assurance that the study results are applicable to nonprofit organizations outside of the focal community in central Arizona is a study limitation. I minimized, but did not eliminate, this limitation by providing detailed description of the study context with particular reference to the relationship of context to the building up of the categories and themes. Taking account of context helped make the study results comparable to those of other studies (Kohlbacher, 2005). I used NVivo10 software (QSR, 2012) to enable the tracing of general descriptions to their source documents.

The credibility of my analytical processes limits the value of the research. For example, the data collection strategy was limiting because the structure of the questions did not allow for broader exploration beyond the initial responses to the questions. In Chapter 4, I established credibility by linking the study question to the study design, by substantiating that this design is appropriate to the question, and by providing a detailed description of the sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis procedures. I bolstered credibility by converging sets of responses, reflection, and document analysis into a detailed, thick description of effectiveness and related constructs.

Research Biases

I took steps to minimize the possibilites that I may inadvertently bias or prompt responses from the responsents (Kohlbacher, 2005; Leblanc & Gillies, 2005). To prevent

this I informed the respondents in writing that my research was not intended to prove or disprove a particular hypothesis or point of view. Thus, I did not look for particular responses, but rather benefitted from the articulation of the participants' experiences.

Van Til's (2009) perspective reflected the mission of Walden to prepare scholar-practitioners whose research and practice promoted and provided for social change. He provided a lucid reminder that identifying and articulating one's values is part of the responsibility of the scholar-practitioner. The message for me is that I must be reflective and transparent about any strongly held underlying values that could motivate my choices as a scholar-practitioner.

Measures Addressing Limitations

Luhmann (1995) emphasized that taking account of context helps make study results comparable to those of other studies. Giordano, Hutchison, and Benedikter (2010) studied and contextualized the empirical factors of culture, religion, politics, and economics involved in forming the contemporary philosophy of medical practice. Scerri and James (2010) recommended that social scientists measure organizational sustainability by applying context-specific methods. I used the Memo function of NVivo10 as a researcher journal to document my thoughts and feelings throughout the research process.

I triangulated data collection methods. As stressed by Eberle (2010), I followed the methods recommended for empirical studies of human phenomena, including researcher reflection, sets of responses, and document analysis. Thus, I improved credibility by using multiple data sources and types (Creswell 2007, 2009). I obtained

pariticpant checks and gave each participant the opportunity to ask questions prior to and during the completion of their sets of responses. I thereby included participant review in my plan for validating my study data collection and analysis. I used multiple iterations of data analysis to, in essence, saturate the process.

I conducted all research according to Institutional Review Board protocols. I was thorough, reflexive, scrupulous, and transparent in constructing my set of questions, protocols, coding, coding structure, thematic analysis, and all related tasks. I used the journaling and memoing recommended by qualitative texts (Creswell, 2007). I used NVivo10 (QSR, 2012) software to establish an acceptable level of confidence in the study findings. The NVivo10 software also provided the means to ensure an audit trail from source document through coding, generating patterns and themes to conclusion or generalization.

I also supported the adequacy of my results. Adequacy refers to the postulate that the constructs that I developed in my study also have to be intelligible to common sense experiences of non-scientists (Eberle, 2010). I used the Memo function of Nvivo10 software as the vehicle to journal as I went along in order to capture, make transparent, and minimize researcher biases.

Social scientists and nonsocial scientists can interpret the processes of continuous researcher reflection, participant checking, iterative data analysis, and creating an audit trail alone and in combination. They can assign a sense of adequacy based on their own background and experience. In this way they construct their own sense and experience of

the dependability/reliability, credibility, and confirmability/validity of my study individually and collectively.

Significance of the Study

By conducting this investigation, I contributed to the social science literature by advancing the understanding of effectiveness in the context of small, local nonprofit organizations. Both in theory and practice, the results help scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders to distinguish between effective and ineffective boards of directors. The findings thus contribute to disciplinary understanding of organizational effectiveness.

At the same time the findings can be used to generate strategies and practices for boards to apply in the day-to-day conduct of their operations. The results of the study can be communicated to nonprofit board members who are interested in assessing and setting priorities. Boards of nonprofit organizations that adapt philanthropic objectives within their individual contexts will be likely to be perceived as effective in providing their programs and services. Thus, they can fulfill external demands for service and accountability (Ebrahim, 2009). This allows such organizations to obtain the funding necessary to underwrite their operations and continue to adjust their practices to changing environmental conditions (Herman & Renz, 2008). In addition the study results can contribute to professionals who train boards of directors. The results provide specificity to their descriptions and recommendations on how to recruit and orient new board members.

Contemporary American society is increasingly dependent on nonprofit organiations for the health, human services, and arts programs that invigorate individuals

and communities. My research was focused on the understanding of effectiveness for small, local nonprofit organization boards of directors. This enhanced understanding informs them to take on the challenge of filling the shortfall between demands for services and the wherewithall to provide them. Walden Notices (2012) underscored the importance of this study by stating that one of the three key findings of its recent survey on positive social change was that nonprofit organizations have an important role in social change.

Summary

My research was focused on perceptions of members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofits about organizational effectiveness. The perspective of social constructivism allowed for interpreting the phenomenon of effectiveness in the context of contemporaneous nonprofit boards in changing environmental conditions. I constructed the meaning of nonprofit effectiveness by conducting a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach.

The study population was members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a community in central Arizona. Through sets of responses, document analysis, and reflection I ascertained how, when, where and by whom the key phenomena manifest themselves. The phenomena are effectiveness, reciprocity, and trust.

The study results are useful for social scientists, practitioners, and social change agents. The findings contribute to disciplinary understanding of nonprofit organization effectiveness. In theory and practice, the results help scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders to distinguish between effective and ineffective boards of directors.

In the first chapter I framed the research question in the contexts of its theoretical and conceptual background, its significance to current investigations, and its implications for contemporary practice. I devoted the next chapter to laying out the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study. I included a thorough literature review related to key concepts. Then I uncovered, explained and integrated the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study through a synthesis of seminal writings and research that grounds and defines the phenomenon of interest.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The current situation facing American nonprofit organizations is one of reduced support, from both government and private sources, combined with increased demands for services (NRC, 2012). According to Schultz and Williams (2010) nationally organized charitable institutions experienced a 10% decline in contributions in 2009, compared with 2008. At the same time over 60% of respondents to their annual survey reported increases in requests for assistance.

These organizations must determine how to fill the shortfall between the service demands of their constituents and the resources to provide these services. I conceive of this as a problem of nonprofit organization effectiveness. I developed the central concept of this study, nonprofit effectiveness, from my interest in understanding altruism from the sociological perspective.

According to Schefczyk and Peacock (2010), nonprofit effectiveness involved both the action of altruistic helping and the intent that motivated the organization. The authors included action and intent to distinguish instances of effective altruism from reflexive altruism, such as running into a burning building. They described the motivational condition as a reasoned approach to benefitting others.

According to Board Source (2012) and Grant Space (2012) nonprofit board members determine how to fulfill organizational requirements. Board members are accountable for the organization's staff and for making sure that the organization has sufficient resources to carry out its mission. Marx and Davis (2012) suggested that the

way to understand nonprofit effectiveness was by determining what boards of directors actually do in the course of their real world operations. I derived an understanding of nonprofit effectiveness from the perceptions and experiences of the board members, as suggested by Marx and Davis.

Agreement on what constitutes nonprofit effectiveness is becoming increasingly important as such organizations assume more and more responsibility for providing health and human services, as well as arts education and appreciation (Van Til, 2011). Moreover, there is a climate of uncertainty about where the funds for their programs and services come from (Portland Business Journal, 2012; NRC, 2012). The bodies responsible for filling this shortfall are the boards of directors of the nonprofit organizations (Board Source, 2012; Grant Space, 2012).

Overview

I start this chapter with a description of how I conducted my literature search. I included major databases, search engines, key search terms, and why I selected them. Next I defined, described, and explained the theoretical framework of my study, including my conceptual lens.

Using my conceptual lens, social constructivism, I identified my key phenomenon. I elucidated the work of seminal contibutors to the conceptual framework of social constructivism, including Berger and Luckmann (1967), Giddens (1990), Bourdieu (1990), and Luhmann (1995). I examined how current researchers understand the phenomenon of nonprofit organizational effectiveness and how my study contributes to this body of knowledge.

I included references to seminal theorists, basic theoretical assumptions, and fundamental tenets. I attached the framework to current social science research on organizations, particularly nonprofit organizations. I used this information to underscore my rationale for selecting this theoretical perspective. I logically connected the framework to my study topic. I concluded this chapter with a comprehensive literature review that covers the central construct, the selected methodology, the key concepts of reciprocity and trust, and approaches to the research problem.

I discussed the strengths and weakness of the approaches. In synthesizing the information, I came up with a description of the knowledge base that illustrates what social scientists have agreed on and what gaps about nonprofit effectiveness remain. I provided insight into how my study contributes to the knowledge base that fills some of the gap.

Literature Search Strategy

In conducting my research I used Ebsco Host/SocIndex and the American Sociological Association (ASA) web site. I used the ASA list of the 100 seminal works in sociology to guide my search for references for the theoretical and conceptual basis of my proposed research. I selected the ASA recommended references that directly traced the intellectual history of social constructivism from Weber through Luckmann to Giddens. I covered this in detail in the following section. All references in the literature review are primary sources.

To construct my literature review of recent peer-reviewed journal research I used the Walden Library SocIndex database. Tying together my professional interest in how

nonprofit organizations contribute to the communities they serve, my academic interest in understanding altruism from the sociological perspective, and Walden's mission of positive social change, I first looked into current research on community sustainability. Rather than simply list the key search terms that I applied in gathering the relevant peer-reviewed journal research, I constructed Figure 1, below.

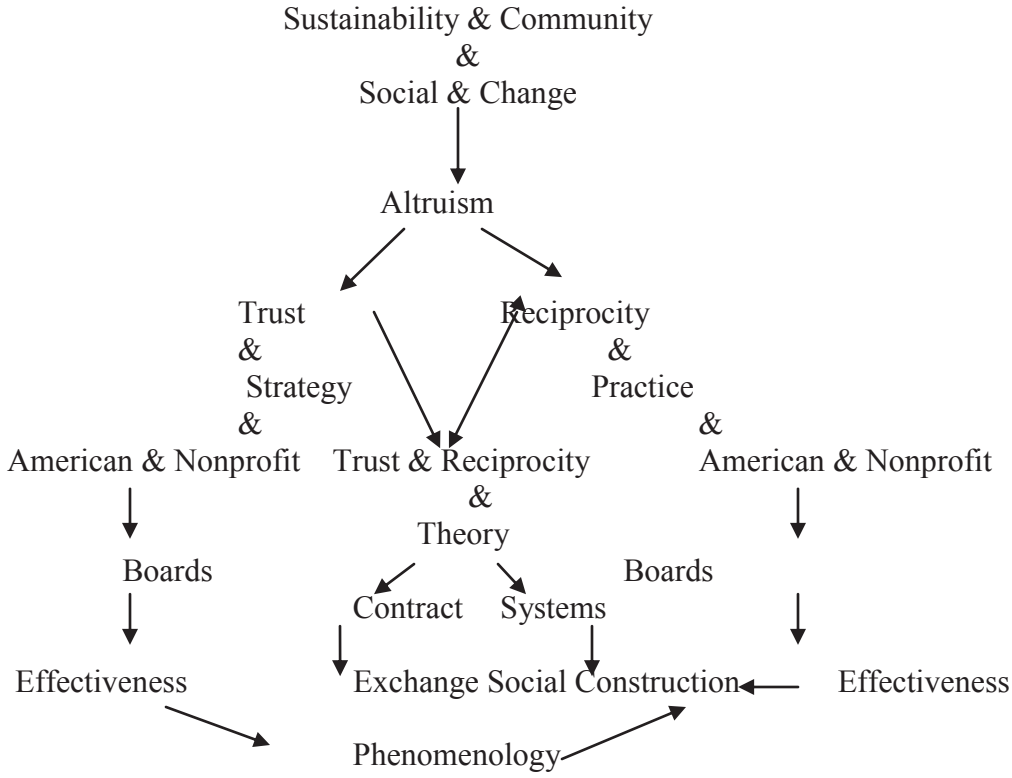

Figure 1. Pathway of key search terms: Figure 1 depicts the pathway of key search terms as my literature review narrowed and then broadened and then narrowed again throughout the process.

Figure 1 reflects the process from studying general approaches to and strategies of social change to conceiving a phenomenological study of perceptions of nonprofit

board members of the concept of organizational effectiveness. By this strategy, I developed a core of peer reviewed journal articles from whose reference lists I located other germane studies.

While developing each concept by a reading of recent peer-reviewed literature, I simultaneously used the ASA list of seminal sociologists' works to select, research, and analyze theorists from various schools of thought in my discipline of sociology. In combination with the journal references, I gravitated toward the approaches of a few authors, especially Giddens (1990), a systems theorist, and Berger and Luckmann (1967), seminal social constructivists. At no point in the process did I find a dearth of materials pertaining to my study interests.

Conceptual Framework

Defining Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness

The central phenomenon of this study is nonprofit organization effectiveness. I defined nonprofit effectiveness using a qualitative study, with a phenomenological approach, of board members' experiences and perceptions of the central phenomenon (Marx & Davis, 2012). The definition emerged in an iterative fashion during data collection and analysis. The sector of American nonprofit organizations is a unique area of inquiry (Marx & Davis, 2012). Barman (2008) found that the field, or environment, that embedded a nonprofit organization and its directors affected donor behavior, and, by implication, effectiveness.

In doing an intellectual biography of American sociologist Parsons, Gerhardt (2007) noted her acceptance of the assumptions of social constructivism. She stated that

social theorists' works were attached to the historical circumstances that embedded them. For example, Parsons' work, written before, during, and after the Second World War, was often a direct defense of democratic political ideals. Gerhardt made clear that social theorists brought their value systems into their work. She stated that it was imperative for her to make her own ideological background part of her research.

Gerhardt (2007) articulated the constructivist imperatives of context, subjective interpretation, and researcher reflection. In the synthesis that follows, I traced how I developed my conceptual framework for analyzing the perceptions and experiences of members of board of directors of small American nonprofit organizations about nonprofit effectiveness. The following sections show how I developed my conceptual framework through its theoretical antecedents.

Sociological Roots of Social Constructivist Framework of the Study

Weber (1964): Subjective interpretation of social action. Weber was a founder of the discipline of sociology. Historically, Weber experienced the early 20th century challenges of communism to the capitalist hegemony of Western Europe (Weber, 1964).

Context. Weber (1964) assumed that social scientists could understand interaction between people only from the perspective of those in whose actions they were interested. Subjective interpretation meant that social scientists were ultimately trying to explain what subjective social action meant (Eberle, 2010). Weber developed the theory that social action was not the sum of the actions of the individual actors. In other words, sociology could not be a derivative of psychological explanations.

Theory. Weber's central concept was social action. He understood social action as having two components. People's behaviors included the components of recognizing both that people interacted with one another as subjective beings and that people's behaviors affected the behaviors of others (Weber, 1964). Thus, from its origins, sociologists were interested in interpretation. Constructivists departed from Weber's approach because he sought a causal relationship between social action and its effects, and they did not agree that there was any such relationship. Weber took a subjective view of social action. He emphasized the development of patterns of interaction and eschewed theories based on supply, demand, production, and consumption (Weber, 1964).

Methodology. Although his search for causal relationships resulted in a positivist methodology, Weber's (1964) nonrational approach set the stage for sociological methods of data analysis based on forming and reforming patterns, categories, and themes. This conceptualization laid the groundwork for the semiotic approach represented by Giddens (1990). I discuss Giddens in detail later in this section.

Concept of voluntary social organizations. Weber (1964) identified a classification system, or typology, of social action. At the general level a social interaction was dichotomous. If it admitted others, it was open. If not, it was closed. Following this logic, Figure 2 shows Weber's conception of the social formation of a voluntary organization, my area of interest.

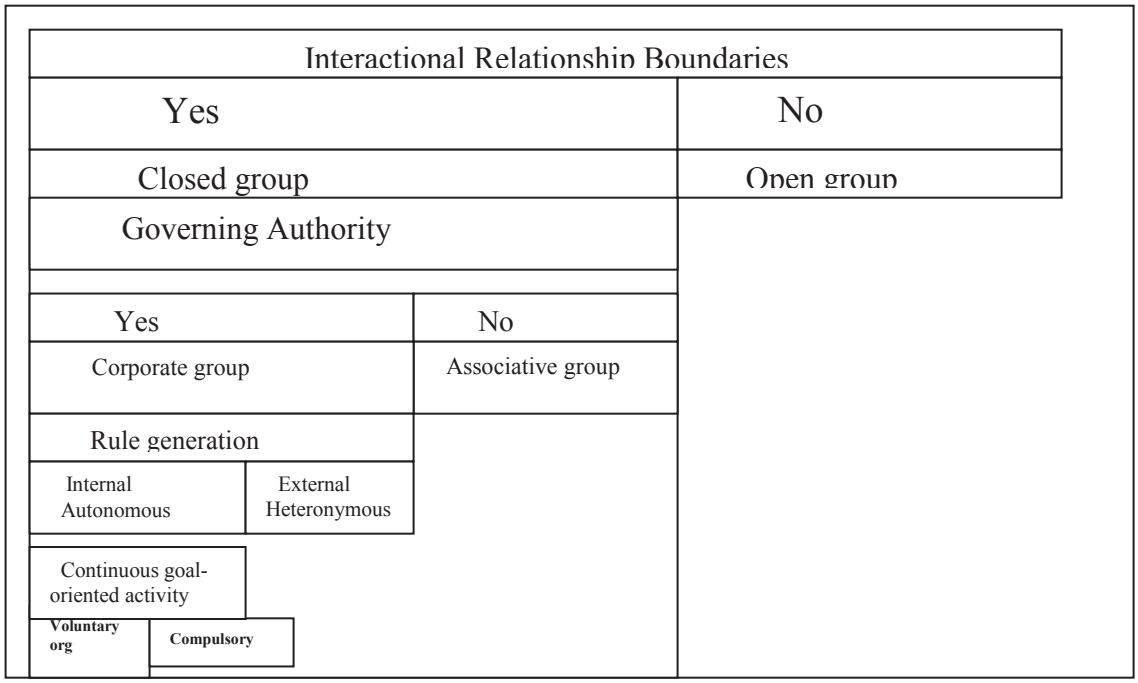

Figure 2. Weber's conceptual framework of the social formation of voluntary organizations: The figure shows the formation of voluntary organizations according to a system of typological binary classification.

Figure 2 shows Weber's conceptual framework of social organizations according to a system of typological classification. He recognized that empirical observations would fall along a continuum within and between classifications. He also recognized, as implied by Figure 2, that human activity could be discontinuous and intermittent rather than organized.

According to Weber (1964), organized social interaction could be open or closed, depending upon whether or not outsiders were admitted. Next he distinguished corporate and associative groups. The former had rules that governed closure that encompassed a governing authority. If a corporate group made its own rules and picked

its own leaders, it was autonomous. If it had rules and leaders imposed from outside, it was heteronymous.

Finally, Weber (1964) theorized that organizations were ongoing, goal-oriented autonomous corporate groups that were either voluntary or compulsory. Voluntary organizations were independent within their spheres of operations. A voluntary organization was any one that involved enterprise. At its simplest it was the activities of an entrepreneur. Voluntary organizations operated according to rules devised by a specifically designated group determined by the organizational participants. The rules were not enforced by coercion, but rather according to custom and convention. Compulsory groups were made up of everyone who fell into a specific sphere of activity. For example, residents of Indiana are subject to the laws and restrictions of the state of Indiana.

Following Weber's (1964) logic social scientists studied how human groups developed modes of activities that continued over time and across distances. They sought explanations of how people obtained life's necessities. Thus, they came up against economic explanations of human interaction based on theories of exchange.

Writing in the positivist tradition, Sociologist Blau (1964) developed the theory of social exchange. He conceived social exchange as actions for which people expected to be rewarded. Unlike economic exchange, social exchange involved the parties in unspecified obligations. His method was to analyze less complex processes of social association to develop insight into more complex processes. He focused on simpler

processes of exchange to understand complex structures built of and upon the simpler ones.

Blau (1964) did not study reciprocity. He assumed that reciprocity was a necessary and ubiquitous element of social exchange. Reciprocity engendered benefits given in return for benefits received. He also assumed that in most social exchanges the expected return was social approval.

In Blau's system of social exchange, altruism was the actions of individuals to benefit one another and the actions taken to reciprocate those benefits. According to Blau (1964) people contributed to charity not to garner thanks from recipients, but to establish credibility with their peers. People reciprocated charitable contributions with enhanced status, respect, and compliance.

Berger and Luckmann (1967): Intersubjectivity and the importance of reciprocity. Berger and Luckman (1967) set out to challenge academic interpretations of how human beings perceived the reality of everyday life.

Context. Following World War II, Western sociologists began to challenge Weber's positivist approach to social science research. Individually and collectively this group of social thinkers moved away from Weber's focus on answering why to answering how social action proceeded and changed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). They focused on process, rather than cause and effect.

Conceptual framework. Berger and Luckman (1967) took an implied postpositivist approach. Positivists generally assumed that an objective understanding of social phenomena could be deduced from empirical data. Postpositivists looked for

subjective meaning and sought but never achieved a shared understanding. Berger and Luckmann assumed the centrality to human experience of spatial and temporal transcendence. Another assumption of Berger and Luckmann's social constructivism was that human beings shared knowledge and negotiated meanings.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) focused on the relationship between institutions and knowledge. For Berger and Luckmann social knowledge mediated between individuals as to how they agreed on shared meanings. They studied how subjective perception came to take on the common sense of reality. Social interaction was all about constructing shared meanings or knowledge bases.

Figure 3, below, provides a graphic depiction of Berger and Luckmann's (1967) conception of the relationship between knowledge construction and social structure. People recognized each other reciprocally by their socially constructed level of expertise, represented in Figure 3 by Groups A, B, and so on. The groups were composed of individuals 1, 2, and so on. Finally, the specific knowledge bases generated experts who contributed to the maintenance of the knowledge base and the social hierarchy structures constructed from it.

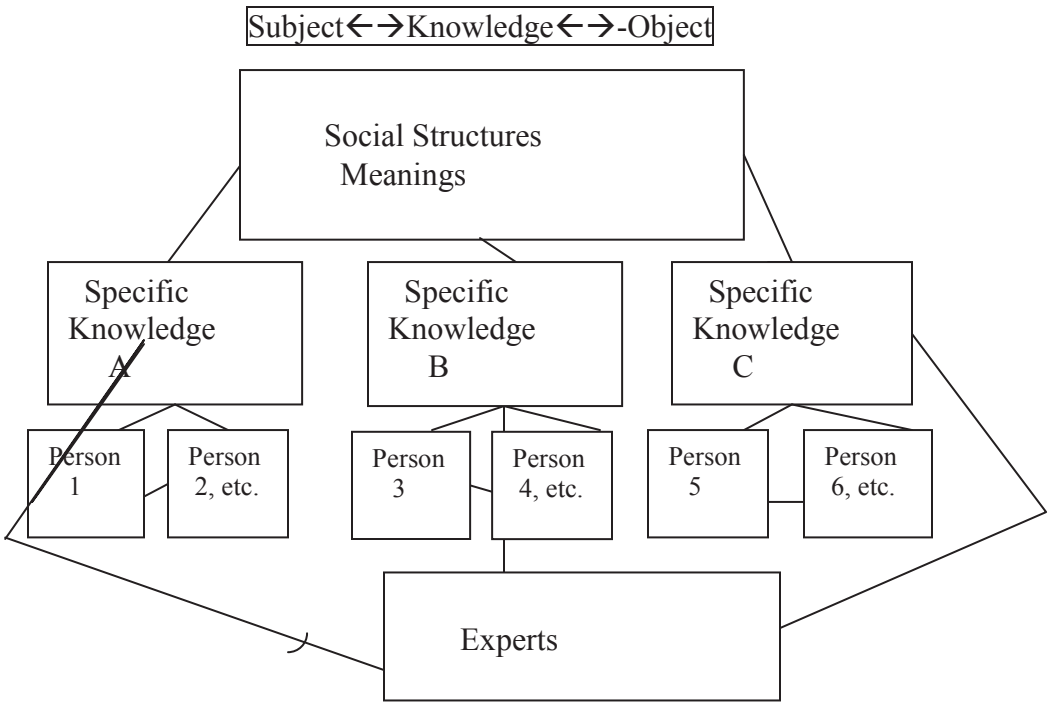

Figure 3. Relationships of knowledge construction and social structure. Figure 3 shows that boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations are part of the social system of organizations operating in an embedded environment of larger and smaller social systems. Technicians and/or experts are the principle managers of these systems. As individuals within groups, and groups within larger systems they take on reciprocally recognized identities (Luhmann, 1995).

Levy and Peart (2010) studied how experts fit in the current socio-economic climate. They assumed that everyone wants to communicate knowledge. They suggested that the expert's role was to mediate the assumptions, presuppositions, and biases that human beings bring to social life. They conceived of the social world as made up of small groups with the same taken for granted assumptions, similar to the knowledge groups depicted in Figure 3.

The role of experts was to expose, through communication by words and symbols, artifice and contrivance. In other words, experts prevented people from starting with

conclusions and looking for evidence to back them up (Levy & Peart 2010). From the point of view of this study, the evidence precedes the conclusions.

Concept of Reciprocity. For Berger and Luckmann (1967), it was the shared human knowledge of the assumptions that individuals all take for granted that held society together. The question that remains is why were people involved with taking care of the needs of others. The answer came from the concept of reciprocity. People contributed to charity not to garner thanks from recipients, but to establish credibility with their peers. People reciprocated charitable contributions with enhanced status, respect, and compliance (Blau, 1964).

Berger and Luckmann (1967) recognized that reciprocity was integral to shared social expectations. In a practical and participatory sense, reciprocity meant that people recognized responsibilities toward others in the same way that others recognized them toward themselves. People defined shared situations reciprocally.

Reciprocity was the bedrock of institutionalization, which occurred at the intersection of reciprocally typified relevant actions with reciprocally typified actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The social world was a world of humanly created institutions. Reciprocity is a key concept in my analysis of small nonprofit organizations.

From the constructivist viewpoint, institutions controlled behavior without recourse to coercion. The principle mechanisms of social order were symbols, exemplified by language. Language allowed for typified interaction along the continuum from face-to-face to virtual interaction. The circle is complete when returning to the methods of description and observation expressed in language where description and

observation were characterized by reflexivity, reciprocity, and continuity over time and distance.

Methodology. Berger and Luckmann (1967) were among those social scientists who introduced phenomenology as the method of analysis best suited to their pursuit of intersubjective meanings. The objective of phenomenologists was to discover the meanings of the shared human knowledge of the everyday assumptions that people take for granted. Their method relied exclusively on descriptions and observations to uncover the structure of experience, making it thus empirical but not scientific.

Giddens (1990): Shared meanings mediated by reciprocity and trust.

Giddens' (1990) goal was to understand the processes of patterned human behavior. He questioned how patterns persist over time and space. His conceptual framework was itself subject to the context of the time and place of his research and his personal history. He defined his sphere of investigation as what he called the modern world social system.

Context. This system started in Western Europe in the early 17th century (Giddens, 1990). Giddens' purpose was to explain the hegemony of the West from that time until the time of his studies. In this way, he was the intellectual heir of Weber (1964) who focused on explaining the early twentieth century challenges of communism to the capitalist hegemony of Western Europe. However, Giddens' personal history placed him in the context of explaining the challenges to Western hegemony following the demise of communism in Western Europe and its concomitant domination in China, Korea, and Viet Nam.

Conceptual framework. The central concept of sociology for Giddens (1990) was social structure. Giddens' theoretical framework assumed that social structures were changeable, rather than stable, in nature. His unit of analysis was the nation-state because it represented the unique, bounded institutional unit of the modern era. The nation embodied the sociopolitical systems and the state the cultural systems of the modern global society. The nation-state, from Giddens's perspective, was also discontinuous from other forms of social order based on the pace, scope, and nature of social change.

It was different from other forms of human collectives described by Weber (1964) such as associations, business corporations, and foundations. The methodology of his approach was dialectics. Giddens (1990) assumed that social structures were dual by nature. He amplified and enhanced earlier constructions of social organization. Giddens's approach assumed that social knowledge stemmed from a framework of social action and experience at the world historical level. Into this perspective he introduced the process of embeddedness. Social organizations were embedded in larger organizations and themselves embedded smaller organizations. His dialectical methodology meant that disembeddedness, the antithesis of embeddedness, was inherently present in all social structure.

The process of disembedding, or lifting out, and restructuring human activity over time and space was the process of interest for Giddens (1990). Giddens called the mechanism of disembedding *abstract systems*. Embeddedness was the antithesis of disembeddedness. Rather than removing contextual constraints from social relations, the process of embeddedness put social relations back into context. According to Giddens the

global embedding of abstract systems in the modern social organization made it separate and distinct from those of the past. Abstract systems had two components: symbolic tokens and expert systems.

Abstract systems engendered trust, which Giddens defined as expectations that were guaranteed over space and time. Thus, Giddens brought into play the concept of trust which I integrated as a key concept in the discussion of board members' perceptions of effectiveness of local nonprofit organizations. Giddens (1990) called trust "the link between faith and confidence" (p. 33).

Trust helped social scientists understand the taken-for-granted in human social action because it implied that people could assess the risks of their interactions. In other words, trust made transparent the taken-for-granted idea that the social world was made up of humanly created risks and benefits. When transactions involved money, reputation, or prestige, all parties had to impute the same value to the sides of the transaction. The transaction involved an element over and above the intellectual comprehension of what was being offered (Giddens, 1990).

People trusted abstract systems through the lens of their life experiences (Giddens, 1990). In other words, people built trust based on mutuality of experience. People could take for granted that their perceptions of their environment and their self-identities were the same as those of others. Giddens also embraced the concept of reciprocity which I further elaborated in my study of nonprofit organization effectiveness.

Methodology. Giddens's (1990) dialectical methodology meant that he interpreted the social world in which he found himself as discontinuous and distinct from other types

of traditional social order. In addition, like his intellectual ancestor Weber (1964), Giddens attributed causality to time. He separated his framework from that of the social constructivists who preceded and followed him.

Giddens (1990) insisted on reflexivity in accumulating social knowledge. Reflexivity meant the simultaneous interaction and reflection between knowledge accumulation and the lived experience of the social world. The concepts of social theorists, such as money, were simultaneously linked to empirical information about them and used to pattern day-to-day social interaction.

Giddens emphatically distanced himself from positivist thinkers because he conceived of human knowledge as ascertainable by other than the scientific method. In short, Giddens's (1990) theoretical perspective encompassed much of that of social constructivism. It included interpretivism, context, and reflexivity as fundamental to understanding human interaction.

Bourdieu (1990): **Reciprocity and trust, as practices.** For Bourdieu (1990), the logic of practice solved the sociological problems of transcending time and space. Social scientists could express this logic by synoptic representations of the totality of relationships that were continually practiced in a practical way. Thus, Bourdieu's approach was reflexive in nature.

Conceptual framework. Bourdieu (1990) embraced Giddens's (1990) rejection of human beings as essentially rational actors. A postpositivist thinker, Bourdieu's logic was neither linear nor sequential in nature. He cautioned against the prevailing theoretical

assumption that anticipating future benefits, in the form of indirect reciprocation, was the starting point for causality.

Methodology as representation reflecting social organization or habitus. Investigators read a synoptic diagram, such as a family tree, from any starting point and in any direction. They got information from their reading about relationships over the generations at the moment of the reading. From such relationships they could derive a general principle.

They accomplished this by examining the conditions that affected the available choices of the social actors. External conditionings affected available choices. Spatio-temporal arrangements at the moment of examining the representation reflected the contemporaneous underlying economic and social processes. These also affected the constraining external conditionings (Bourdieu, 1990).

The set of conditionings produced what Bourdieu (1990) called *habitus*. He defined habitus as systems of lasting, interchangeable arrangements oriented to function as axioms that produced and structured practices. This was Bourdieu's way of approaching the construction of the taken for granted underpinnings of social life.

He verified his constructs empirically by case studies of the structures of various forms social organization. Bourdieu (1990) studied different sociological levels which he analyzed by analogical comparison in stepwise, or iterative, fashion. He looked for unifying themes in otherwise disparate data.

In the next phase of analysis he refined the themes by locating similarities and differences. He used the revealed differences to reconceptualize his organizing principles,

or theoretical framework (Vaughn, 2008). I used a similar analytical logic as my methodology which I explained in detail in the following chapter.

Organizational effectiveness as habitus. Bourdieu conceived of the habitus as a "system of generative schemes" that were simultaneously interrelated and integrated (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus generated practices and products in conformance with its logic of organization. It was analogous to the knowledge system depicted in Figure 3. For example, the habitus of financial capitalism made possible its practical manifestation in the banker. I conceive of the habitus of nonprofit effectiveness as making possible its practical manifestation in the member of boards of directors of nonprofit organizations.

Reciprocity and Trust as Practices. Bourdieu (1990) eschewed the concept of norms in general, and a norm of reciprocity in particular. He cited the example of preferential marriage, not as one of normative conformance, but rather as a strategy in a system of strategies oriented to the same function. In this case the function was maximization of material and reputational profit.

For Bourdieu (1990), reciprocity and trust were strategies (rather than norms) to disquiet exigencies. They were strategies to reduce uncertainty in an uncertain world. In the United States, agreement on what constitutes nonprofit effectiveness is becoming increasingly important as such organizations assume more and more responsibility for providing health and human services, as well as arts education and appreciation (Van Til, 2011). Moreover, there is a climate of uncertainty about where the funds for their programs and services come from (NRC, 2012; Portland Business Journal, 2012). This situation of uncertainty led to my focus on strategies of trust and reciprocity.

Bourdieu (1990) deemed social exchange as a central process of social life. He deemed reciprocity essential to social exchange. He felt it was at the root of all social exchange. Moreover, reciprocity imbued capricious interactions with naturalness. Reciprocity, as a strategy, ensured the continuous reproduction of social relations. In other words, it was essential not as a norm but as a practice. People acted in their social worlds according to strategies of reciprocity.

For Bourdieu (1990), trust was a variant in the strategy of reciprocal exchange. For example, doing a favor implied trust. Trust was justified when the favor was returned. The recognition, honor, and prestige reciprocally attached to acts of people who had no appearance of self-interest cultivated its own pool of practitioners out of those who practiced this strategy. A community could thereby ensure the ability to meet exigencies by mobilizing voluntary assistance.

Bourdieu (1990) provided the logical and conceptual connections that explained the emergence of nonprofit boards of directors as the organized group of practitioners responsive to community needs. By locating the key concepts of reciprocity and trust as strategies or practices, rather than norms, Bourdieu allowed me to analyze how members of local nonprofit boards describe practices they perceive as effective. The conceptual logic of Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Giddens (1990) allowed me to develop or construct effectiveness by looking for themes and patterns that connect the meanings of the individuals closely but not completely.

As noted by Canada (2011) and Vaughn (2008), empirical research is grounded in theoretical or conceptual frameworks that inform the research questions and methods

and underscore the research findings. Thus, the following section addresses the state-of-the-art sociological research on the key concepts from the social constructivist perspective.

The Central Construct: Nonprofit Effectiveness

Barlow and Johnson (2008) described the context of community radio stations in Great Britain as existing in a struggle for funding. They found that perceptions of the quality, intelligence, and cheerfulness of the stations were the key factors in engendering community support. Their study was a qualitative example with descriptions of the synergies among the levels of analysis and the importance of approaching understanding nonprofit effectiveness from the perspecitve of the perceptions of its participants.

Barman (2008) stated that American nonprofit organizations were increasingly responsible for providing social services previously administered by municipalities. She noted further that this led to a body of social science literature about the effectiveness of organizations that were part of the nonprofit sector. Marx and Davis (2012) concluded that nonprofit effectiveness and nonprofit board effectiveness were inextricable. Table 1, below, summarizes some of the recent published research that focused on the effectiveness of nonprofit boards. The authors came up with similar dimensions of effectiveness, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Components of Nonprofit Board Effectiveness

Model	Effective Management	Effective Performance	Empirical basis
Author	Hopson & Lawson (2010)	Barman (2008) Marx & Davis (2012)	Jacobs & Polito (2012)
Dimension	Interactional Manifestation		
Contextual	Not addressed	Recognizing organizational culture	Constituencies Board process
Strategic	Developing vision & planning for the future	Developing vision & strategy	Passion Board process
Educational	Self-assessment & evaluating the organization's program	Educating on roles & responsibilities	Knowledge Board structure
Interactional	Serving as mediator of conflict	Developing cohesion	Priorities Board Process
Political	Serving as ambassador & spokesperson for the organization	Enhancing constituent relationships	Influence Board process
Economic	Providing sound financial management & resource development		Dollars Board process
Operational	Selecting & evaluating Chief Executive		Board Structure

Barman (2008), Marx and Davis (2012), and Jacobs and Polito (2012) recognized the importance of context to understanding the concept of nonprofit organization effectiveness from the point of view of their boards of directors. The idea of context is critical to the approach of this study. As shown in the previous section, from the theoretical approach of social constructivism, context was an essential element in the theoretical literature (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1990; Weber, 1964).

In addition, my study results pertain to a particular context, nonprofit boards in a small community in central Arizona. Different nonprofit boards may be able to adapt the

findings to their own contexts. I developed this idea in detail in the chapter on methodology.

Table 1 demonstrates that nonprofit board effectiveness is primarily a matter of board process rather than board structure. I therefore focused my study on board process. I uncovered how the concept of nonprofit effectiveness was perceived by board members. Table 1 demonstrates a growing body of literature on the subject of American nonprofit effectiveness in general; but, it also shows a need for a better understanding of effectiveness.

The Selected Methodology

Using qualitative methods, social scientists are engaged in accounting for variations in people's perspectives by asking for and studying how they articulate their underlying rules of social life. The general intent of this study was to contribute to the social scientific understanding of subjectively meaningful action (Hall, 1981). In other words, I used Wagner, Warren, and Mosley's (2010) method of looking for common ideas about nonprofit effectiveness among the experiences and perceptions of the respondentss, members of particular boards of directors in a particular community.

Wagner et al. (2010) noted that although producing a quantitative measure might be an eventuality, qualitative methods were appropriate when the topic was not well understood. Researchers needed a good grasp of what they were measuring and an agreed upon definition, before they developed quantitative measures. Herman and Renz (2008) determined that nonprofit board effectiveness was not well understood by contemporary social scientists.

Ebrahim (2009) recommended thick description, which he defined as a combination of observation and interpretation, as the means for social scientists to understand how complex social processes operated in practice. He said that this methodology applied to understanding how nonprofit organizations were affected by and responded to the construct in question within specific contexts. He maintained that the phenomenological methods of thick description would help social scientists understand problems and solutions associated with such constructs as effectiveness in ways that attached directly to practice.

For example, Claver (2010) used a qualitative study that formulated categories of a decision-making process. A better understanding of this process contributed to practical interventions that enhanced the quality of hospital care for older adults in her community. Scerri and James (2010) found that, quantitative methods notwithstanding, qualitative methods were more likely to actively engage people interested in nonprofit activities in achieving organizational effectiveness in the context of their own communities. This methodological approach is also in keeping with Walden's mission of educating scholar-practitioners.

Jacobs and Polito (2012) and Thomas and Medina (2008) conducted recent studies of nonprofit effectiveness that included financial considerations. The former authors studed faith-based nonprofit organizations (FBNPOs). The latter authors studied a federally-funded community based employment program. Both studies used qualitative methods.

Jacobs and Polito (2012) were interested in the extent that faith motivated the the organizatinal effectiveness of FBNPOs. They conducted open-ended interviews with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of six FBNPOs in the Northeast. Five of the six were already rated as highly effective by their peers. They found that the activities of the CEOs were faith-driven.

Thomas and Medina (2008) used social capital as their central construct. They studied a family unification project using participants in a federally funded program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). They wanted to know if the social capital of the executives of the family unification project implementation committee played a role in whether the TANF participants gained employment. They used 16 question semi-structured interviews and interviewed 25 executives. The authors' results indicated that the executives used social capital to form collaborations that enhanced trust and reciprocity within the program and also enhanced employment for the TANF participants. The phenomenological research of Jacobs and Polito (2012) and Thomas and Medina (2008) sampled specific experts, executives of nonprofit organizations. They used semistructured interviews, a form of communication through shared language, to collect their data. Levy and Peart (2010) studied how experts fit into the current socio-economic climate. The expert's role was to mediate the assumptions, presuppositions, and biases that human beings bring to social life. The function of experts was to expose, through communication by words and symbols, artifice and contrivance.

As shown in Figure 3, social systems were essentially communication systems. Communication systems were made up of words (Giddens, 1990). Phenomenological

methodology included the observer, (the researcher, the expert), as part of the research process (Jacobs & Polito 2012).

Thick description, the combination of observing and interviewing, contributed both to practical application and conceptual elucidation (Ebrahim, 2009). In practice, thick description developed themes and patterns by which organizations could verify performance data. These data informed both processes of organizational planning and donor decision-making. Thick description enhanced both the symbolic tokens of general communication and the abstract systems of the organizational experts. (Giddens, 1990).

The Key Concepts: Nonprofit Effectiveness, Reciprocity, and Trust

Nonprofit Effectiveness

The nonprofit organization is embedded in and has reciprocal interaction with its environment, or context. The interactions affected and were in turn affected by the process or dynamic of the organization's board of directors (Ebrahim, 2009). Here the context was the organization. Within the context of the organization the board process embedded a view of effectiveness that in turn resonated within and across the other environments and into the context of the larger community (Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1995).

Barman (2008) studied this relationship empirically. Barman proposed that the dynamic between the nonprofit organization and the the organizational field (context, environment) that embedded it was critical to understanding organizational effectiveness. She conducted her study in San Francisco, CA and Chicago, IL. There she studied large workplaces with direct connections to the United Way, a large, national, multipurpose

charitable organization. I collected data from a different organizational field than the one in Barman's study. My study focused on small, local nonprofit organizations in a rural community of less than 15,000 in population.

Nonprofit effectiveness is embedded among social levels. Schensul's (2010) central hypothesis was that goal-directed change took place more quickly and effectively when people coordinated its implementation across the various levels of a social system. Schensul elucidated the conceptual and theoretical roots of the constructs and application of her approach called Multilevel Dynamic Systems Intervention Science (MDSIS). The constructs she discussed were science, community, culture, and sustainability. The author asserted that these were the core concepts in community based participatory research. From Schensul's perspective strategic interventions, or goal-oriented change, would be more effective when coordinated across the levels of a community.

Figure 4 shows that the nonprofit organization is embedded in and has reciprocal interaction with its environment, or context. These interactions affect and are in turn affected by the process or dynamic of the organization's board of directors. For example, the board is embedded in the context of the organization. The innermost circle in Figure 4 shows that the board process embeds a view of effectiveness that in turn resonates within and across the other circles and into the context of the larger community.

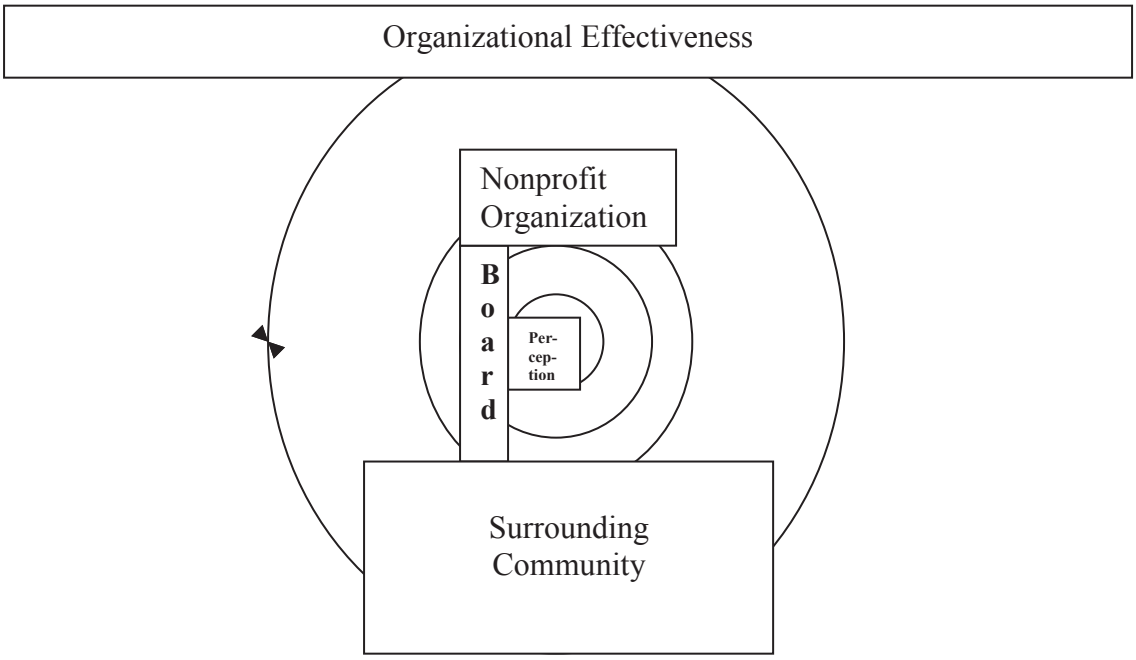

*Figure 4***.** Embedding of relationships between levels of analysis. Board members' experiences contribute to their perceptions and experience of effectiveness as a board which contributes to the perceptions and experience of effectiveness of the organization which contributes to the effectiveness of the surrounding community which contributes to the understanding of what is means to be an effective local nonprofit organization.

Perceptions and attitudes about reciprocity and trust were involved with perceptions and attitudes of effectiveness (Montes & Irving, 2008; Thomas & Medina, 2008). These perceptions are represented by the innermost circle of Figure 4. Herman and Renz (2008) showed that board effectiveness and organizational effectiveness were inextricably tied in the context of American nonprofit organizations. Figure 4 provides a graphic depiction of this connection. As demonstrated in Figure 4, taken together myriad environmental conditions impact the views of the board members. Theoretically the interventional effects at each level would have synergistic effects across levels.

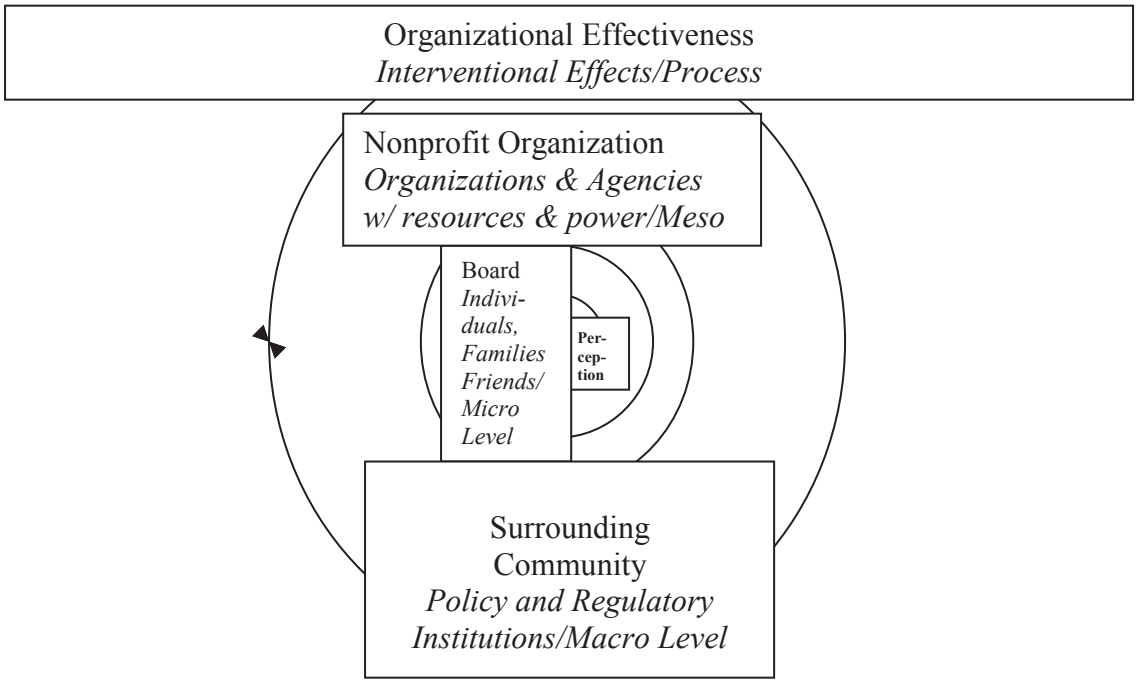

Figure 5. Embedding of relationships between levels of analysis. Schensul (2009) described the same embedding of relationships as depicted in Figure 4 among the interactional levels in her investigation. In Figure 4A the original concepts that apply to this study are in regular type. The concepts from Schensul's MDSIS theoretical framework are in italics.

Effectiveness involves action and motivation. According to Schefczyk and Peacock (2010), nonprofit effectiveness involved not only the action of altruistic helping, but also the intent in the form of motivation. They described the motivational condition, or goal, as that of benefitting another at one's expense combined with reason to think the action would benefit others. Van Lange (2008) described other motivations based on egalitarianism and selfishness, as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Motivations Related to Effectiveness

Motivation	Definition: Concern with	Representation
Altruism	others' outcome cooperation	enhanced self-worth
Egalitariansim	equality in outcomes fairness	learning through community increased community contact
Selfishness	one's own outcomes self-interest	increased individual relationships social status

The central concept of Van Lange's (2008) study was empathy. He wanted to find out what actions empathy would motivate in others. He devised experimental games to test whether being encouraged to take the perspective of another who was experiencing a crisis would precipitate altruism, selflessness, egalitarianism, or some other action. His control group was not asked to take on another's perspective. He found that empathy elicited altruism. Participants expressed selfishness and egalitarianism independent of empathy.

Krueger, Massey, and DiDonato (2008) identified the same motivations outlined in Table 2. They termed those motivated by self-interest as individualists; those motivatd by benevolence as altruists. Those motivated by inequality-aversion the authors termed competitors. They conceived of this type of motivation as anti-egalitarian. Competitors sought to maximize the difference in the payoff to themselves compared with the payoff to others, even at the expense of the amount of their own payoff.

Table 2 illustrates the definitions and relationships between the several types of motivations related to effectiveness, as described above. The motivations activated behavior (Van Lange, 2008). Van Lange (2008) identified behaviours of generosity and enhancing self-worth with altruism. He also identified justice and learning through community, and personal conquest and developing individual relationships as other non-altruistic behaviors embedded in nonprofit board processes.

Barman (2008) added that board perceptions, processes, and strategies were subject to the conditions of the prevailing community context, (organizational field), as shown in Figure 5. From the constructivist point of view the strategies, or practices as Bourdieu (1990) called them, became part of the seemingly naturally appearing rules of conduct that guided the actors' day-to-day decisions and activities. In the instance of nonprofit boards strategies consisted of reciprocity and trust.

Reciprocity and Trust

Reciprocity. From the social constructivist perspective, understanding how and why people were involved in taking care of the needs of others came from understanding the concept of reciprocity. For Berger and Luckmann (1967), reciprocity was the shared human knowledge of the taken-for-granted that held society together. Reciprocity was the bedrock of institutionalization, which occurred at the intersection of reciprocally typified relevant actions with reciprocally typified actors. People defined shared situations reciprocally.

Barman (2008) contended that the organizational field determined the strategies, such as reciprocity and trust, applied by the nonprofit to prospective donors. Rice (2008)

provided an empirical example. Rice observed that in the case of Icelandic charitable donations, it was structurally impossible for the beneficiaries of donated goods to reciprocate. Although there were no obvious connections between donor and recipient, there were still expectations on the part of donors and the community at large of returns to the donor, that is, structural indirect reciprocity.

Fisher (2009) added that cooperation was based on reciprocity at both the levels of individual and group transactions. Thomas and Medina (2008) studied reciprocity at the organizational level. At the level of organizations, they loosely defined reciprocity as mutual exchange of ideas, thinking, and reflections. In other words, interactions between individuals and organizations constructed opportunities to collaboratively pursue the same goals. I applied this understanding to my study of the experiences and perceptions of members of boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations.

Trust. For study purposes, trust was defined as social trust, trust in others, rather than trust in institutions. It is generalized trust, sometimes called thin trust, rather than simply trust of those whom we know personally (Putnam, 2000). Trust is critical to the completion of specific transient, anonymous exchange, and social cooperation. Trust is implicit in reciprocal transactions because the parties had to trust one another to meet their obligations.

Krueger et al. (2008) provided a quantitative study that empirically confirmed this understanding of trust. Their findings from a mathematical analysis based in game theory indicated that most social motivations were based on self-interest; but, seemingly nonrational actions could be understood as people wanting to enhance their moral

reputations in their communities. Trust was a strategy applied to enhance social reputation, even at the expense of monetary return.

Montes and Irving (2008) defined trust as the expectation or assumption that the future actions of another person or group were likely to be beneficial, or at least not detrimental, to the truster. The understanding of Montes and Irving was analogous to Schefczyk and Peacock's (2010) thick description of altruism as having an element of action and an element of motivation. According to Montes and Irving, trust, a practice or strategy, also had these components. As such, people had to reestablish trust depending upon the particular context in which they interacted (Bourdieu, 1990).

Reciprocity and trust. Gintis, Henrich, Bowles, Boyd, and Fehr (2008) cautioned that constructively the concepts of reciprocity and trust should be studied within their cultural contexts because people's behavior was a direct reflection of their situated values. By locating reciprocity and trust in social practice these authors acknowledged their attachment to the theoretical approach of practical logic, described in the section above on Bourdieu (1990).

Montes and Irving (2008) worked in the context of the contemporary factory workplace. They found that in the workplace imbalance in reciprocity had a negative effect on trust. Montes and Irving found that this relationship held in affect-laden interactions characterized by loosely specified performance criteria, a strong emotional component, and strong commitment by both parties to the organization.

Thomas and Medina (2008) argued that group-level resources were integral to reciprocity and trust between organizations. In their study the shared or reciprocal

interpretation of their focal concept, diversity, engendered trust between the constituents and the organization. In turn the efforts of the organization's board were reciprocated by furthering its community influence. On the other hand, if the shared meanings were not reciprocal, perceptions of diversity weakened the organization's community standing and increased conflict within the board.

Krueger et al. (2008) found that trust and reciprocity were both necessary components of the actions of the participants in their trust game. As noted, they provided quantitative evidence that explanations of interpersonal behavior must include more than those of self-interest. The authors found that neither the regularities predicted by game theory nor the strictly motivation-based choice of social preference theory explained the outcomes of their trust game.

Kreuger et al. (2008) tested whether social perceptions, the focus of this study, were better at predicting the amount of money transferred between partners in their trust game. They described the social problem modeled by their experimental game as that of the trustor's prediction of the trustee's willingness to reciprocate. They found that reciprocity, and to a lesser extent trust, were strategically adhered to or suspended by participants in order to manage their social reputations. This conformed to the conceptual framework of this study, specifically to conceiving of reciprocity and trust as practices that are likely to be activated in environments of uncertainty.

Ebrahim (2009) advocated thick description, a hallmark of the qualitative approach to this study, for understanding the logics of the operations of nonprofit organizations, such as improving performance and demonstrating progress toward

mission. He based his analysis on the assumption that nonprofit organizations have reputations of being more trustworthy than governmental or corporate organizations. However the context of today's economic and political climate, the assumption of trustworthiness has been eroding, creating conditions of uncertainty within the nonprofit sector.

Ebrahim (2009) pointed out that recent strategies within the nonprofit sector to reduce uncertainty have focused on the organizations' boards, especially in the United States. Based on the internal logic of organizational learning systems Ebrahim stated that the solutions would depend upon which practical logic the board focused on. For example, focusing on the rules that boards establish for themselves, the solutions would be vested in external controls, such as disclosure requirements by the IRS, and internal controls such as codes of conduct. He eschewed such solutions as being too punitive.

Table 3 presents a summary of the various authors' constructions of trust and reciprocity. It shows that reciprocity was conceived as an individual level construct that dealt with how people were disposed and behaved toward others. Trust was similarly constructed at the individual level but also had a broader structural component. With the exception of Rawls and David (2005), the table confirms my study approach that conceives of both reciprocity and trust as having components of both situated action and motivation.

Table 3

Conceptualization of Reciprocity and Trust

Definition	Category/Level of Analysis I=Individual, O=Organizational, S=Structural	Author
Reciprocity		
The giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received	Action I	Molm et al. (2007)
Mutual exchange of ideas, thinking, reflection	Thomas & Medina (2008)	Thomas & Medina (2008)
The propensity to return similar acts of kindness to another who has treated on well; bao in Chinese	Disposition S	Yan (2009)
Indirect Reciprocity		
The giving of benefits where the recipient does not return the benefits directly to the giver but to another in the social circle	Action I	Molm et al. (2007)
Strong Reciprocity		
A propensity in the context of a social task to cooperate with others similarly disposed even at a personal cost	Disposition I	Boyd and Fehr (2008)
Trust		
Any action that increases ones vulnerability to another whose behavior is not under one's control	Action I	Buchan, Croson, and Dawes (2002)
The belief that the exchange partner can be relied upon to help, rather than exploit, the actor	Sentiment I	Molm et al. (2007)
A process of overcoming differences through locating commonality by means of a mutually affirming commitment to mutual engagement in practice	Process S	Rawls and David (2005)

Glanville and Bienenstock (2011) stated that trust and reciprocity taken together were part of a three pronged approach to clarifying the term social capital (the other prongs were network structure and resources.) The authors also understood the phenomena of trust and reciprocity as influencing individual and collective attitudes and perceptions. This is the approach of this study to understanding the concepts of trust and reciprocity. The purpose of this study to describe effectiveness by studying the experiences, perceptions, and opinions about the concept of effectiveness of member of boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations in a community of less than 15,000 in central Arizona.

Glanville and Bienenstock's (2011) purpose was to elucidate social capital in order to underscore its explanatory power on the level of sociological constructs such as power and status. They explained that social scientists used the term social capital to describe transactions at both micro, or individual, and macro, or structural, levels. This study focused on the meso-level of the boards of directors.

Other Approaches to the Research Problem

I based the approach that frames and grounds this study in the concepts of contemporary Western sociological thought, as described and analyzed on the preceding pages of this chapter. However, research on the topic of small organization effectiveness can also be approached from the assumptions and ethics of non-Western sociological thought, such as the Neo-Confucian perspective of Kalton (2009). I described Kalton's approach in the following paragraphs.

The methodological approach used in this research tied to the tenets of Western sociology, is phenomenology. I used a qualitative research methology. At the other end of the research specturm, the problem of effectiveness of small organizations could have been approached using a quantitative methodology. Klapwijk and Van Lange (2009), as reviewed in detail below, examined this topic from a quantitative perspective.

Contemporary American peer-reviewed sociological research often ignores non-Western approaches to solving social problems. Kalton (2009) conducted his investigation of organizational sustainability from the Neo-Confucian perspective. From this perspective Kalton considered social problems to be distortions of the original nature of the structural underpinnings of human interaction, as opposed to their physical manifestation. The solutions consisted of strategies of rectifying the distortions.

Kalton's (2009) conceptualization of social life shared the basic tenets of constructivist-guided systems theory enumerated earlier: context, social construction, and reflection. However, he assumed that there were five essential social institutions, or sectors: values, knowledge, environment, technology, and organization. From the neo-Confucian perspective, values and knowledge were attached to the individual.

Kalton (2009) identified two human motivations that made up the content of the sector of values, consumption and religion. He identified socioeconomic content, including jobs and business, as the content of the knowledge sector. To the environmental sector Kalton attributed both bio-phisiological matter and how human beings interpret it in a particular time and place, or context.

Kalton (2009) referred to the organization sector as containing the organizing principles for a given context. For contemporary social systems, for example, the free market was the organizing economic principle. He described the content of the technology sector as anything having to do with transportation and information. Giordano, Hutchison, and Benedikter (2010) focused their study on how the field of medicine was situated within these sectors from the Western perspective.

Each sector had its own set of associated values. For example, Kalton (2009) associated contemporary values of convenience and speed with the technology sector. From the Western perspective, for example, the combined values of the market and technology sector defined 21st century medicine as applied biotechnology where values of speed and efficiency applied (Giordano, Hutchison, & Benedikter, 2010). Giordano, Hutchison, and Benedikter (2010) bemoaned the eclipse of the humanitarian premises of medicine that emphasized different standards of acceptable practice.

Kalton (2009) advocated substituting mindfulness for these values. Values were the focal point of his approach; and life-givingness was the guiding principle. Here the neo-Confucian approach also diverged from the constructivist-guided systems approach. Giordano et al. (2010) advocated reforming the philosophy of medicine from the essentialist perspective that addressed dimensions of content, method, concepts, and presuppositions. From this perspective the guiding principles were responsibility and empathy, reciprocity, and trust. From both perspectives spiritual well-being was the goal of practice.

Giordano et al. (2010) assumed the embeddedness relationships among patients, physicians, and society as described by systems theorists (Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1995). Also similar to sytems theory, the sectors that Kalton (2009) described constantly interacted with each other through feedback loops and according to conditions of the surrounding environment. Change in one sector resonated between and across other sectors.

Yet, from the neo-Confucian perspective, no sector had an independence from the other sectors. The system was holistic; human society and the environment were one system. This contrasts with Gidden's (1990) conception of the dialectical nature of systemic interdependence. From this perspective the nature of embeddedness included disembeddedness by which part or all of a sector could respond to change.

At the other end of the theoretical spectrum, Klapwijk and Van Lange (2009) empirically studied the effects of generosity on trust from the interdependence theoretical framework. Unlike the conceptual framework of this study, interdependence theory is deductive in nature. The authors reduced their conception social relations to one of relation among quantifiable variables: interaction (I) = f (S,A,B), where S = situation, and A and B = persons, self and other.

The authors' experiments ascertained participants' perceptions and attitudes to a partner's generosity, tit for tat reciprocity, and stinginess. This is germane to my study because the authors' focus was not on participants reactions or behavioral responses but rather on their perceptions of the partner and of the overall situation. It was the authors'

contention that this information would contribute to understanding why some strategies were more effective than others.

Klapwijk and Van Lange (2009) applied a theory-specific term for goals, outcome transformations. Each outcome transformation had a specific strategy associated with its achievement. By this method the authors operationalized their variables. For example, they operationalized the goal/strategy combination, called altruism, as maximizing partner's outcome measured in Euros.

From the theory, the authors hypothesized that transformations were related to trust, perceptions of others, and attitudes toward the interaction itself. Klapwijk and Van Lange (2009) created experimental conditions of uncertainty that gave rise to varying levels of trust. The dependent variable was level of cooperation.

Overall they found that conditions of trust combined with perceptions of each other's benign intent both precipitated cooperation and were affected by cooperation. They also found that under experimental conditions of uncertainty other-regarding strategies, like altruism, were not detrimental to the prevailing atmosphere of trust and perceptions of partner's motivation. The authors acknowledged that their results were preliminary (Klapwijk &Van Lange 2009).

The interdependence theory (Klapwijk &Van Lange 2009) also relied on the assumption of two types of situations, the given or immediate, gut-level situation and the effective situation, or the more diffuse situation involving future consequences. The authors also assumed that generosity was a key mechanism for constructing trust. The theory presented the construct of situation which I roughly equated with environment or

context. I did not understand the key construct nor the imperative to bifurcate it. Throughout this review of the literature, I did not come across many references to generosity as a sociological mechanism. Again I had no academic basis for understanding what the authors meant by generosity or how to apply it. These limitations made it difficult for me to pursue interdepence theory as a conceptual framework for my study.

According to Giordano et al. (2010), the current world system consists of changes in patterns of practices, such as reciprocity and trust, in the institutions of culture, religion, politics, and economics. Their suggested systemic shift merged the world systems perspective of Giddens (1990) with the logic of practice conceived by Bourdieu (1990) with the process of institutionalization described by Weber (1964).

Conclusion

My review of the literature suggested that social construction of nonprofit effectiveness, reciprocity, and trust resonating throughout the community, organization, board, and individual levels is the conceptual framework of my study. My empirical research consists of a phenomenological study of the perceptions and experiences of effectiveness among members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a small community in central Arizona. Most of the preceding section I devoted to establishing the face validity (conceptual appropriateness) of the key phenomenon of nonprofit effectiveness and the key concepts of trust and reciprocity. I also traced their intellectual historical development through seminal theorists in the discipline of sociology.

Reserchers (Molina 2009; and Marx & Davis, 2012), used the constructivist approach to elucidate the experiences, motivations, and processes of nonprofit board members. Eberle (2010) emphasized that all such studies examined the process of how people constructed meaning in their daily lives. They studied actual examples of actors in particular contexts with the purpose of getting at the process empirically by as nearly as possible grasping the actors' orientations.

From the social constructivist point of view, study evaluation criteria such as validity and reliability should themselves be reconstructed by social scientists. Eberle (2010) suggested that they be replaced with looking at the extent to which investigator's constructs were consistent with the taken for granted constructs of the actors. Creswell (2009) took the position that validity of construct-centered studies and other qualitative research could be assessed by determining whether researchers, study participants, and readers of the findings found them accurate. He said some researchers suggested the term *trustworthiness* for this criterion.

There is still no consensus among social scientists about how to assess the accuracy and adequacy of qualitative research results (Creswell, 2009). However, since my study increased disciplinary knowledge about the construct of trust, it may inform the practice of evaluation. This tangential result is in keeping with the overall constructivist perspective of my study.

I devoted the following chapter to explaining the methodology of my proposed investigation. I worked logically from explaining the general rationale for my study design to a detailed description of the study methodology to issues of trustworthiness. I

integrated my role as researcher, including awareness of ethical concerns, throughout the explanations and descriptions.

Chapter 3: Researcg Method

Introduction

The current situration facing American nonprofit organizations is one of reduced support, from both government and private sources, combined with increased demands for services (NRC, 2012). According to the NRC (2012), 65% of American nonprofit organizations reported increased demands for services in 2011 compared with 2010. Only 41% reported increased fundraising in 2011 compared with 2010**.** According to Schultz and Williams (2010), nationally organized charitable institutions experienced a 10% decline in contributions in 2009, compared with 2008. At the same time over 60% of respondents to their annual survey reported increases in requests for assistance. American nonprofit organizations must determine how to fill the shortfall between the service demands of their constituents and the resources to provide these services. I conceive of this as a problem of nonprofit organization effectiveness.

The purpose of the study was to understand what constitutes small nonprofit organization effectiveness. The objectives of the study are fourfold: (a) to explore board members perceptions of nonprofit effectiveness, (b) to understand the participants' concept of effectiveness, (c) to identify themes and patterns that emerge from the data, and (d) to describe the role of reciprocity and trust in determining participants' perceptions. This chapter has four major sections followed by a summary section. In the first section I described the research design and rationale, including the research question, central constructs, and research tradition. In the next section I explicated and integrated

my role and responsibilities as a qualitative researcher, including how I managed researcher biases.

In the third section I provided a detailed description of the study methodology. I focused on procedures of participant selection and recruitment. The data collection instruments were identified, justified, explained, and described. I emphasized how I connected instrument identification, justification, and description to the research question. I described the research strategy including data collection using sets of responses and analysis of organizational mission statements. For data analyis I used NVivo10 software to store and organize raw data, enhance iterative coding and journaling about my experience of the research process.

In the fourth section I covered issues of trustworthiness, such as credibility and transferability. I described, analyzed, and reflected upon the elements of ethical procedures for the study. I included plans and alternates for participant recruitment, and confidentiality. I described how I secured and diseminated confidential data. I acknowledged and managed any concerns about conflict of interest or power differential in my role as a researcher. As part of this process I offered the required documents related to the Walden Insitutional Review Board (IRB) requirements.

Phenomenological Research Design

Research Question

The research question is "How do board members of small, local nonprofits perceive organizational effectiveness"? I constructed the answer by asking several subsidiary questions:

What do board members identify as actions that are part of organizational effectiveness?

According to board members' accounts, what motivates organizational effectiveness?

What is the role of reciprocity in organizational effectiveness?

What is the role of trust in organizational effectiveness?

Central Concepts of the Study

Nonprofit effectiveness. Contemporary social scientists are unambiguous that among social groups, the sector of American nonprofit organizations is a unique area of inquiry (Barman, 2008; Cascio, 2004; Jacobs & Polito, 2012; Marx & Davis, 2012; Scerri & James, 2010). The central phenomenon of this study is nonprofit organization effectiveness. However, social scientists do not agree on a single definition.

I contributed to a definition of effectiveness using a qualitative study, with a social constructivist approach. From the results of the study, I described board members' perceptions and experiences of nonprofit effectiveness. I ascertained what the board members think about it.

I provided the basic outline of nonprofit effectiveness derived from the literature review. Then through the responses of the board members I fleshed out the structure of the core concept. I ascertained the underlying structure of nonprofit effectiveness by looking for themes and patterns that emerge from the empirical manifestations of interpersonal communication. The definition emerged in an iterative fashion during data collection and analysis.

According to Schefczyk and Peacock (2010), effectiveness involved both the action of altruistic helping and the intention that motivated the altruistic organization. The authors included action and intent to distinguish instances of altruistic effectiveness from reflexive altruism, such as running into a burning building. They described the motivational condition as a reasoned approach to benefitting others.

Effective nonprofit organizations were tied to the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of effectiveness by their boards of directors (Marx & Davis, 2012). Perceptions and attitudes about reciprocity and trust were involved with perceptions and attitudes of effectiveness (Montes & Irving, 2008; Thomas & Medina, 2008). I undertook a phenomenological inquiry into what it means to be an effective small, local nonprofit organization in a small community in central Arizona based on the perceptions and experiences of the members of their boards of directors.

Reciprocity. Seminal sociological theorist Blau (1964) assumed that reciprocity was a necessary and ubiquitous element of social exchange. He also assumed that in most social exchanges the expected return was social approval. Reciprocity engendered benefits given in return for benefits received. In Blau's system of social exchange,

altruism was the actions of individuals to benefit one another and the actions taken to reciprocate those benefits. According to Blau, people contributed to charity not to garner thanks from recipients, but to establish credibility with their peers. People reciprocated charitable contributions with enhanced status, respect, and compliance.

Thomas and Medina (2008) studied reciprocity at the organizational level. At the level of organizations, they loosely defined reciprocity as mutual exchange of ideas, thinking, and reflections. In other words, interactions between individuals and organizations constructed opportunities to collaboratively pursue the same goals.

Social constructivists Berger and Luckmann (1967) recognized that reciprocity was integral to shared social expectations. In a practical and participatory sense, reciprocity meant that people recognized responsibilities toward others in the same way that others recognized them toward themselves.

Trust. World systems theorist Giddens (1990) defined trust as expectations that were guaranteed over space and time. Giddens distanced himself from positivist thinkers because he conceived of human knowledge as ascertainable by other than the scientific method. Giddens brought into play the concept of trust which I integrated as a key concept in the discussion of board members' perceptions of effectiveness of local nonprofit organizations. Giddens (1990) called trust "the link between faith and confidence" (p. 33).

Trust helped social scientists understand the assumptions that people take for granted in everyday social interaction. Having trust meant that people could assess the risks of their interactions. Trust made transparent the taken-for-granted idea that the

social world was made up of humanly created risks and benefits. When transactions involving money, reputation, or prestige took place, all parties had to impute the same value to the sides of the transaction. The transaction involved an element over and above the intellectual comprehension of what was being offered (Giddens, 1990).

According to Giddens (1990), people built trust based on mutuality of experience. People could take for granted that their perceptions of their environment and their self-identities were the same as those of others. Giddens also embraced the concept of reciprocity. In Chapter 2 I traced the research of contemporary social scientists who applied this theoretical framework to empirical instances of trust and reciprocity in social organizations (Ebrahim, 2009; Gintis et al., 2008; Glanville & Bienenstock, 2011; Thomas & Medina, 2008).

Social Construction Through the Lens of Systems Theory

Using the perspective of social constructivism allows me to study effectiveness through the eyes of board members themselves (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Herman & Renz, 2008). The social constructivist approach guided my methodology. It means that I studied how these concepts play out in the interactions of members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations. The study findings clarify the disciplinary framework for understanding the construct of nonprofit organization effectiveness.

Creswell (2007) noted that the underlying purpose of construct-centered research was to come up with a description of the essence of the experience. The description provided empirical evidence and support for the conceptual framework of social

constructivism. The results of the construct-centered study made visible the underlying nature of the taken-for-granted elements of everyday human life.

From a social systems perspective, boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations are part of the social system of organizations operating in an embedded environment of larger and smaller social systems. Researchers within their university departments are also individuals within groups and groups within larger systems. Technicians and/or experts are the principle managers of these systems (Luhmann, 1995).

Levy and Peart (2010) conceived of the social world as made up of small groups with the same taken for granted assumptions. They studied how experts fit in the current socio-economic climate. They suggested that the expert's role was to mediate the assumptions, presuppositions, and biases that human beings brought to social life.

Levy and Peart (2010) assumed that everyone, including experts, wanted to communicate knowledge. According to Levy and Peart, the role of experts was to expose artifice and contrivance through communication consisting of words and symbols. In other words, experts prevented people from starting with conclusions and looking for evidence to back them up (Levy & Peart 2010). From the point of view of this study, the evidence precedes the conclusions. This also represents my perspective as a researcher that helped me to bracket my personal attitudes and opinions from the conduct of the research.

Role of the Researcher

In trying to understand the structure and function of boards of directors of nonprofit organizations there is an accepted practice within the social sciences of the

researcher as observer/participant (Creswell, 2007, 2009). I obtained 30 sets of responses from board members of small, local nonprofits and review organizational mission statements. My role as a researcher fell into the category of observer, rather than participant.

Methodologically, Giddens (1990) insisted on reflexivity in accumulating social knowledge. Reflexivity meant the simultaneous interaction and reflection between knowledge accumulation and the lived experience of the social world. I included my reflections on the research process as part of my role as observer. In this way I also methodologically bracketed my personal biases from the conduct of the research.

Interacting with Other Board Members Involves Trust

An important element for me as an observer is that my researcher role be transparent to the members of the boards from whom I collected data (Creswell, 2009). In the focal community the group of individuals who regularly volunteer on nonprofit boards of directors, including me, are known to one another. The process of gaining access to respondents through credibility established organically, through regular day-to-day inteaction, was recommeded specifically for accessing board members by Leblanc and Gilles (2005).

In his study of the effectiveness of the boards of trustees of American public universities Kezar (2006) also described the efforts of his interview team to develop personal connections with interviewees. In both studies the researchers undertook the efforts in order to gain the trust and engagement of the participants. I used these relationships of trust in my focal community to provide a sufficient number of

respondents for a credible phenomenological study. I did not offer any incentives for participation. No power differential exists among the members of the various boards, including between officers and members-at-large. These roles and responsibilities shift on a regular basis, according to the various organizational by-laws.

Another important area of concern for me as a researcher is that my expressions and demeanor may be familiar to the participants. I took steps to minimize the possibilites that I inadvertently biased or prompted responses from the participants. To prevent this, I informed the respondents in writing that my research was not intended to prove or disprove a particular hypothesis or point of view. Leblanc and Gilles (2005) recommended this strategy. In addition, for this reason, I asked the questions electronically, via e-mail. This strategy also ensured that the respondents participated in a safe, comfortable environment and responded at a time and place that was convenient for each of them (Creswell, 2007).

I let participants know that with their help, I intended to enhance the understanding about how nonprofit boards work. I was not looking for particular responses, but rather hoped to benefit from their articulation of their experience. In addition, I included participant reviews in my plan for validating my study data collection and analysis. This contributed to minimizing research bias. I addressed validity, or trustworthiness, in detail later in this chapter.

Methodology

I reviewed the consonance between my research problem and types of qualitative inquiry to make sure that the study design that I selected would be the best fit. Appendix A shows how I narrowed the selection of a research design to a phenomenological study. It outlines the connections between Creswell's (2007) elements of five approaches to qualitative research design with the research purpose, question, and theoretical framework of this study. According to Appendix A, focusing on the essence of lived experience is the centerpiece of phenomenological inquiry. The purpose of my study was to understand the phenomenon of nonprofit organization effectiveness through the words, symbols, and texts of those who directly experience it.

Other types of qualitative inquiry result in narratives, generate theory, describe a cultural group, and provide detailed analyses (Appendix A). The report of the phenomenological inquiry is a detailed description of the essence of nonprofit effectiveness based on the empirical data. I elaborated on the fit between the research problem and the study design in the section on sampling strategy below.

The focus of my study was ascertaining the essence of nonprofit effectiveness as the board members of small local nonprofit organizations experience it. Out of the data that I collected, I provided a rich description of this phenomenon. Using sets of responses and analysis of mission statements I obtained the data for the investigation from several dozen individuals who serve on boards of small local nonprofit organizations. To get at the essence of the focal phenomenon, I used iterative coding to distill meaningful themes and patterns (Holton, 2010; Olszewski, Macey, & Lindstrom, 2007).

Population

My study was limited to members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a community of less than 15,000 in central Arizona. For the purposes of this study, a small nonprofit organization was one serving a community of fewer than 15,000 whose annual operating expenses are less than $400,000 per year. For purpsoes of this study, a board of directors of a small, local nonprofit organization was the legal governing body of an organization with the Internal Revenue Service designation of 501c(3).

Sampling Strategy

I used the approach to sampling that qualitative researchers identify as purposeful sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gerring, 2007; Patton, 2002). They identified purposeful sampling with qualitative research design which is the research design that I used. Participants were not selected randomly from all of the adults in the focal community.

Instead, I started with a list of the approximately 150 registered 501c(3) organizations in the two Arizona counties represented by the focal community. I contacted the authorized institutional representative, usually the board chairperson. I contacted people who have the capicity to inform my inquiry into the nature of effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. Such individuals were identified, in general, as members of boards of directors of such organizations (Kezar, 2006; LeBlanc & Gilles, 2005; Marx & Davis, 2012). Just because someone serves on a board does not mean that they are not also part of a vulnerable population. However, their inclusion in these

populations is not relevant to the study and would thus not hinder their ability to participate.

Having identified the theoretical constructs of trust and reciprocity as being part of the taken for granted experience of nonprofit organization effectiveness, my sampling strategy is also based in theory. I sampled text in the form of mission statements and conduct interviews. I used a mixed, theory based, purposeful sampling strategy (Claver, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gerring, 2007).

Rolls and Relf (2006) recommended the phenomenological approach to qualitative research because it takes into account a researcher's relationship to the phenomenon. Researchers acknowledge their underlying trust in common sense definitions and move on. This dovetails with Gubrium and Holstein's (2011) admonition that researchers not force their own meanings on to the phenomena being investigated. Their approach suggests doing enough interviews to ensure that the participants' accounts are not self-edited by the researchers' judgments of their adequacy or importantce. It also means taking into account the researchers' time, energy, and material and financial resources available to conduct the investigation.

Gubrium and Holstein (2011) argued that what people express "with words in interviews is as genuine and scientifically valuable as what they do with words in more natural settings" (p. 92). This perspective is consistent with the phenomenological approach of my study into the perceptions and attitudes of board members of local nonprofit organizations about nonprofit effectiveness. To get at the essence of this phenomenon, I collected sets of responses from 30 members of 21 boards from the

spectrum of organizations that focus their activities on the needs of the local community (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Rolls and Relf (2006) conducted 60 preliminary interviews with service providers to determine the structure of service delivery before working directly with the service population. After thereby establishing trust with the study population, they conducted 35 interviews of adult service participants. They triangulated their interviews with participant observation in six group interventions.

I reviewed the mission statements of the organizations represented by the respondents. I obtained the mission statements from the organizations' web sites. This provided the element of text from the organizational artifacts. I integrated additional data from the textual sample as it touches upon the core concepts of the study including trust and reciprocity.

Participants

Criteria. The community that I focused on for this study is known as the Verde Valley. The nonprofit organizations in the Verde Valley with an Internal Revenue Service designation of 501 c (3) numbered 123 in 2012. In 2009, the most recent year for which data are available, 72% of nonprofit organizations in the focal community reported budgets of less than $400,000 (Sedona Community Foundation, 2009). The participant organizations meet the definition of small, local nonprofit organization. I started with a list of the approximately 150 registered 501c(3) organizations in the two Arizona counties represented by the focal community. I contacted the authorized institutional representative. The organizations include secular human services providers, public

elementary schools, arts organizations, environmental organizations, animal protective services providers, and faith-based human services providers. The list is in my possession. I can make it available if deemed germane.

Number. Patton (2002) stressed that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). He recommended that the sampling strategy be judged based on its fit with the study purpose. He discussed sample size on a case by case basis with his graduate students. Based on discussions with my Methods Committee Member I collected responses to a set of questions via e-mail from 30 members of 21 boards of directors of local nonprofit organizations. Gubrium and Holstein's (2011) suggested doing enough interviews to ensure that the participants' accounts are not self-edited by a researchers' judgments of their adequacy or importantce. Rolls and Relf (2006) conducted 35 interviews of adult service participants. They triangulated their interviews with participant observation in six group interventions.

Identification. I started with the list of the names the 150 local nonprofit organizations. I used the organization's URL as obtained from a Google search. From the organizational authorized representative I obtained lists of their active board directors. I contacted each director via the electronic contact information provided by the organizational web site. All contact information came from publicly available sources. I did not seek out paticular organizations or groups of organizations, thus putting each on equal footing.

Contact and Recruitment. Via e-mail, I sent a copy of the IRB approved explanation of my research. This information is part of the Consent Form, Appendix D.

The Consent Form doubled as the e-mail invitation to participate in the study. In the e-mail I requested the responses to an electronic set of questions of all board members for whom I obtained e-mail addresses. I explained the purpose of my research and provided assurances that their personal identification and the information that they provided was kept strictly confidential. I asked them to respond, yes or no, to my request within seven days. I provided complete IRB forms, explanations, and opportunities to ask questions to the group of respondents who agreed.

Instrumentation

I used two data collection instruments: responses to a set of questions and analysis of organization mission statements. See Appendix B for the set of questions. I obtained mission statements directly from organization web sites. I entered the content of the mission statements into NVivo10 (QSR, 2012). I used the Query function of NVivo10 to produce a Word Frequency Report. I also used the Report function of NVivo10 to create a word cloud graphic. I used the results of these reports to identify frequently used words. I compared and integrated those words to the themes and patterns derived from the responses.

I based the set of questions on two sources. LeBlanc and Gillies (2005) interviewed corporate for-profit board members. The authors derived their analytical framework from an analysis of one or several of their interivew questions. Kezar (2006) published a journal article about financial efficiency based on interviews of American university trustees. He included sample questions from the interviews in the article.

Neither of these source documents is historical or legal in form or content. See Appendix B for proposed open ended questions.

Content Validity

Open-ended questions are important to conducting research from the social constructivist perspective because they provide data that reflect the lived experiences and interpretations of the respondents. Responses reflect the lived reality of the board members themselves (Marx & Davis, 2012). At the same time, researchers record their own interpretations in the form of a reflective journal. Researchers gather information on the central constructs by analyzing the data in order to build a shared understanding constructed of the various interpretations. This means researchers approach a definition but never quite ascertain a complete one (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Moutsakas, Sigel, & Schlalock, 1956).

There are limitations to the content validity of the data collection instrument. Some qualitative researchers refer to this obstacle as establishing authenticity (Creswell, 2007). Content validity means providing assurances that the researchers measured what they said they measured. It also refers to assuring that if the study were replicated similar findings would ensue, which I addressed later in this chapter (Leblanc & Gillies, 2005).

The accepted way to establish content validity is for researchers to triangulate data sources (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). In his 2006 study of the governing boards of American public universities Kezar developed a protocol of 23 questions. Eight questions directly addressed effectiveness. Four of these concerned board effectiveness. The other four dealt with board member effectiveness. Four of these

eight questions were context-specific. That is, they asked for information about higher education and campus governance.

In Appendix B, I presented a list of the proposed set of questions for this study. I designed the questions to generate data that about the lived attitudes, perceptions and interpretations of the interviewees about nonprofit effectiveness. I intended the data to reflect the lived reality of the board members.

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection Procedures

The information presented in Appendix C summarizes how I collected data from two sources, responses to a set of questions via e-mail by board members and organizational mission statements. It shows that participants completed one set of questions via the internet. In addition, I reviewed downloaded copies of the mission statements of the organizations represented by the respondents. The following section addresses the elements of recruitment, participation, and data collection in detail.

Before starting the data collection, I sent each participant a Consent Form via e-mail (Appendix D). In that communication, I informed them that I was conducting a research study to complete my Walden doctorate. I told participants that the study is about effectiveness of small nonprofit organizations as conceived by their board members. As board members of a small nonprofit they were eligible to participate in my study. I asked them to complete an on-line set of questions. I asked them to take about 40 minutes to complete the response. I based this estimate on four responses at ten minutes each.

I told them that their privacy and confidentiality were a primary consideration at all times during the study. I told them that their participation was voluntary. I asked them to read the Consent Form carefully. I gave them an opportunity to have their questions answered to their satisfaction before agreeing to the Consent Form.

The study participants were involved only in the electronic response portion of data collection. The question and answer process was be done via e-mail, rather than face-to-face. My computer is locked and password protected. Once I received their responses I assigned a number to each completed set of responses. Following all data checking and possible return, I entered all raw data into NVivo10 using the number as the sole identifier. I then deleted their e-mails.

This process made it difficult, but not impossible, to recover the e-mail contact information of the respondents, the only personal information that I obtained. The participants' names and contact information were recorded in the research records. These safeguards protected the confidentiality of the respondents for the remainder of the data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Debriefing of participants was a process that I conducted. Following the receipt of the sets of responses, I contacted each participant by e-mail. I asked participants, if they had any concerns about the process. I addressed their concerns, and gave them a chance to modify their responses, if they so desired. I described these concerns as part of my data collection and evaluated them during data analysis. I offered respondents an opportunity to receive a copy of a 1-2 page summary of the study results. All accepted this offer.

Data Analysis Plan

Table 4 shows the relationship of basic elements of the data analysis plan for the proposed phenomenological study to the research question.

Table 4

Relating Data Analysis to Effectiveness of a Board of Directors of a Small Nonprofit Organization

Data Type	Data Source	Empirical Manifestation	Inclusion Criteria	Core Concept
Reponses	Board members	Words	References, Examples, Analogies, Metaphors, Reciprocity of core concepts, Effectiveness	Trust
Documents	Mission Statement	Text	Mottoes, Key words, Symbols, Pledes, Reciprocity, Insignia, Logos, Effectiveness of core concepts	Trust

I based Table 4 on the social constructivist approach of Berger and Luckmann (1967). I assumed that I could construct a detailed picture of nonprofit effectiveness by studying the semiotic practices of the board members of small nonprofit organizations. As Servos (2002) put it, a social system was essentially a system of communication. Research on social systems requires the study of the words that articulated them. The approach is sociological because it also assumes that the nature of effectiveness d be revealed through communication and interaction by the board members.

From this perspective, I ascertained the underlying structure of effectiveness by looking for themes and patterns that emerge from the empirical manifestation of interpersonal communication, including words, texts, and symbols. I developed what lived experiences of the board members as a social group reveal about the factors that contribute to nonprofit organizational effectiveness.

Coding

Coding takes the data from their raw form to a standardized form (Kohlbacher, 2005). Throughout the iterative process of data analysis, I looked for patterns that I interpreted from the social constructivist perspective (Kohlbacher, 2005; Olzewski, Macey, & Lindstrom, 2007). According to Creswell (2009) coding, in general, required attention to several elements of the raw data including context, description, and themes. I started the coding with the responses to the set of questions data. After reading through all responses I went through them individually asking myself what was the underlying meaning of each. That is, I identified topics that emerge from the raw data.

I used the topics to generate initial codes. I identified and grouped similar categories and noted those that were unique (Kohlbacher, 2005). I looked for themes that related the organization to its social context and those that related the individuals to the organization. I located empirical instances of the construct of reciprocity.

Mentions of networks and relationship building indicated trust. Mentions of dissension were negative indicators of the same concept. Descriptions by board members of processes and participation indicated effectiveness. Initial coding provided the first level of data analysis. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), researchers used further analysis to build a conceptual framework from the relationships among the constructs that emerged. I used subsequent iterations and the addition of document analysis to build the descriptions, analysis, and relationships of the central constructs of the study.

I determined the next iteration by analyzing the balance between items coded to similar codes versus those that fall into unique or unanticipated categories. I ran a second

analysis of the new categories to determine the nature and consistency of the data attributed to these categories. For the following iteration, I combined the results of this analysis to those of the first iteration. I continued with this pattern until the same codes and assignments of data start repeating. I then added the results of the document analysis of organizational mission statements as a means of triangulation.

I used licensed and password protected NVivo10 (QSR, 2012) software to provide an infrastructure for me to organize and configure my coding structure. NVivo10 has the capacity to locate text related to specific codes and to verify relationships among codes. The Memo function of the software gave me the means to include my researcher reflections in the database. The Memo function of NVivo10 added the element of reflexivity to assist in ascertaining, making transparent, and decreasing researcher bias.

In addition, putting the data into NVivo10 provided a secure storage vehicle for all types of data, including text, photos, and other media. I backed up the software on a flash drive that I keep in a locked desk in my home. I will keep the data stored securely for at least 5 years.

NVivo10 software provided the means to ensure an audit trail from source document through coding, generating patterns and themes, to conclusion or generalization. It thus increased the reliability of the study findings because independent observers can easily access raw data. It facilitated my ability to store, track, and retrieve data sources in all formats in a single database (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I established a degree of credibility by linking the study question to the phenomenological research design, by substantiating that this design is appropriate to the question, and by providing a detailed description of the sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis procedures (Kohlbacher, 2005). I provided credibility by using multiple data sources and types, including sets of responses, content analysis, and researcher reflection. Researchers refer to this process as triangulation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002).

As I generated themes and patterns from initial data analysis, I reviewed additional data by which to reevaluate the initial themes and categories and to support or contradict interpretations. This provided additional assurance that I collected data from multiple perspectives. It also maximized the likelihood that participants provided natural, unbiased responses (Kohlbacher, 2005).

Transferability

I provided transferability by converging responses to the set of questions, reflection, and document analysis into a detailed, thick description of nonprofit effectiveness and related constructs. My purpose was to clarify this concept by getting at its dimensions through those who experienced it. However, because I showed that the central construct of effectiveness had limited understanding within the social sciences I did not have a reference point from to establish transferability.

In order to minimize, but not eliminate, the limitation of not having a reference point from to establish transferability I provided detailed description of the study context with particular reference to the relationship of context to the building up of the categories and themes. Taking account of context helped make the study results comparable to those of other studies (Kohlbacher, 2005). In addition being transparent about the category construction strengthened the comparability of this study to similar studies by other researchers (Moustakas et al., 1956).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of findings at the analysis stage (Kohlbacher, 2005). Since I was the only researcher on this study, I established dependability by coding a data set, setting it aside for four weeks, then returning to and recoding the data. I compared the results to make sure there is sufficient stability in my coding.

I did not use any other person who may view the data that contains identifiers. Thus, this study did not require confidentiality agreements. In addition, NVivo10 software provided the means to ensure an audit trail from source document through coding, generating patterns and themes, to conclusion or generalization. It increased the reliability of the study findings because independent observers can easily access raw data.

Confirmability

I used my researcher journals, observations, and reflections to construct an audit trail of how and why I made critical decisions that determined and affected the research

process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Leblanc & Gillies 2005). The Memo function of NVivo10 aided in making this evidence of researcher reflexivity part of the database.

Ethical Procedures

The Walden Institutional Review Board assigned approval number 12-13-14-0223130 to my research study. In order to ensure that I adequately planned and managed ethical concerns related to my proposed research study I addressed each of the questions of the Walden Ethics Planning Worksheet. I used Appendix E to list each question of the Walden Ethics Planning Worksheet alongside the pages in Chapter 3 that document that the answer to the question is *yes*. Any Ethics Planning Worksheet question that I did not cover in Chapter 3, I addressed in Appendix E in the order that they were listed in the Worksheet.

The set of questions protocol was based on prior peer-reviewed protocols and should therefore pose minimal risk to the respondents. The set of responses was brief, private, and unobtrusive. Participants had the opportunity to review and edit their responses. Once I entered the raw data into the study database, I eliminated any connection between the responses and the identities of the respondents.

The risks and burdens to the participants were reasonable in consideration of the gain in knowledge about perceptions and attitudes of nonprofit effectiveness by those who directly experienced it. In addition, by contributing to an empirically-based definition of nonprofit effectiveness the results of this study may help the participants achieve their own organizational objectives.

Summary

The research question of this study is, "How do board members of small, local nonprofits perceive organizational effectiveness"? I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study with a social constructivist approach. Using the lens of social constructivism allowed me to study effectiveness through the eyes of board members themselves (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Herman & Renz, 2008). I used the approach to sampling that Creswell (2007) identified as purposeful sampling. I collected 30 responses to a set of open ended questions from board members of 21 small, local nonprofits and reviewed organizational mission statements. I linked the study question to the phenomenological research design, substantiated that this design was appropriate to the question, and provided a detailed description of the sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis procedures (Kohlbacher, 2005). NVivo10 software (QSR, 2012) facilitated my ability to store, track, and retrieve data sources in all formats in a single database (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The content of the following chapter is the description and analysis of the implementation and conduct of the research study. I included the conditions that affected the participants at the time of the study. I described and explained how closely the field experience of data collection adhered to the data collection plan outlined in this chapter. I explained in detail how I generated the coding scheme, how categories and patterns emerged, and how I iterated these two processes into conceptual themes. I addressed how I dealt with discrepant cases. I demonstrated how I integrated the plans for trustworthiness outlined in this chapter, including attention to credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. I presented the findings of the empirical study as they relate to the research question.

Chapter 4: Data collection, Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand what constitutes small nonprofit organization effectiveness. The research question was "How do board members of small, local nonprofits perceive organizational effectiveness?" The study objectives determined the focus of each research question. For example, one objective was to explore board members' perceptions of nonprofit effectiveness. The literature review revealed that nonprofit effectiveness had elements of both action and the motivations behind the actions. I therefore framed two research questions to uncover the actions that board members associated with nonprofit organization effectiveness and their accounts of what motivated nonprofit organization effectiveness.

To add to the relatively small body of empirical research on the roles of nonprofit board members, this study applied the suggestion of Marx and Davis (2012) by documenting what nonprofit board members themselves articulate as their perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of effectiveness. From the social constructivist framework of this study, in order to understand how a specific social group worked, I studied the words that the group members used. In this study I focused on boards of 21 small nonprofit organizations as their work was articulated by the board members. The underlying perceptions of nonprofit effectiveness emerged from the themes and patterns revealed by the analysis of the empirical data in the form of words and texts provided by the board members themselves.

In this chapter, I begin by describing the study context, including the setting and participants. Next I provided a description of the data collection, including conformity to and variations from the plan presented in Chapter 3. The remainder of Chapter 4 I devoted to data analysis organized by research question. I included detailed evidence of the elements of trustworthiness, as outlined in Chapter 3, in this analysis.

Study Setting and Participant Demographics

The primary data collection instrument that I used was a set of four questions to which I requested responses from participants. I made the request in the form of an e-mail. The content of the e-mail was the Walden Consent Form followed by a set of four questions.

To contact potential participants, I started with a list of approximately 150 registered 501 c (3) organizations in the two Arizona counties represented by the focal community of my study. I then eliminated organizations whose names indicated that their services did not take place in the focal community. This resulted in a list of 100 organizations.

I was able to obtain, through their web sites, contact information for board members. I sent e-mails to these listed organizational representatives. The review of the web sites provided information for 90 individuals from 49 different organizations. Thus my study population consisted of 30 members of boards of directors of small nonprofit organizations in the focal community. To protect the confidentiality of the research relationship and the privacy of the participants, I did not request any demographic information about the individual respondents. The perspective of the study is

phenomenological. The information that I collected came from an undetermined range of demographic characteristics because the set of questions did not ask about these characteristics.

Data Collection

My e-mail request generated 30 responses to the set of questions. Respondents represented board members from 21 small nonprofit organizations, including, but not limited to, those organizations that provide human services, animal protection, environmental protection, and the performing arts. The Walden Consent Form encouraged each participant to ask any questions and express any concerns about the research process prior to responding to the set of questions. Two respondents had a question. I addressed this question in the section on Credibility later in this chapter.

The study participants were involved in providing e-mail responses to four questions. My computer is locked and password protected. I asked that participants take about 30 minutes to complete their sets of responses. Since they responded via e-mail they had the opportunity to determine the time and place by which they would respond and to be as comfortable as possible during this process.

Once I received each set of responses, I assigned a number to it. I then entered all raw data into NVivo 10 using the number as the sole identifier. Following this I deleted the e-mail set of responses. I retained the participants' e-mail contact information until I had a chance to ask if they had any concerns about the research process and to ensure that these concerns were thoroughly addressed. For those who requested a summary of the study results, I will maintain their contact information until I can fulfill their requests.

After I have sent a results summary via e-mail to each respondent who requested it, I will delete the e-mail contact information of all respondents.

Participants in this study were members of boards of directors of small, local nonprofit organizations in a community in central Arizona. The process of coding that I performed moved the raw data from the 30 sets of responses to four questions into standardized form (Kohlbacher, 2005). None of the four questions referred to action, intention, motivation, or commitment. See Appendix B for the set of questions. I did not want to suggest to the respondents those concepts that were revealed by the literature. I anticipated that the concepts would be fleshed out by the spontaneous responses of the participants.

Data Analysis by Research Question

What do Board Members Identify as Actions That are Part of Organizational Effectiveness?

Cohesion and compromise. The theme of cohesion and compromise emerged through multiple iterations of the data related to the first research question. I will relate the theme of cohesion and compromise again when I develop the concepts, derived from the literature, of reciprocity and trust. One respondent described an effective board as "hearing several sides to difficult questions or problems before coming to a resolution". Another described "making a clear decision after all having had a chance to give their opinion." A different respondent described an effective board as fostering a "conglomeration of attitudes that comes together for a greater cause and manages to be cohesive." One respondent summed up an effective board as "one that allowed all

members to express their opinions and a compromise was established around which all could rally regardless of individual personal preferences/prejudices."

Action word: Work. Before I identified themes related to the action component of nonprofit organization effectiveness, I had to codify how the participants interpreted *action*. The Coding function of NVivo10 gave me the means to generate codes both prior to analyzing data and generating codes as I read through the raw data. I developed the preliminary codes Process and Participation to capture the action words, or verbs, used by the respondents to describe effective boards. I intended to develop action themes based on what verbs emerged from the responses. I developed the preliminary codes based on the literature review prior to starting the process of coding (Schefczyk & Peacock, 2010).

I designed process as a stand-in for action. The definition of process includes "a series of actions or operations definitely conducting to an end." I used participation as a stand-in for common action to capture the nature of organizational, as opposed to individual, effectiveness. The definition is having a share in common with others (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2014).

The initial coding did not elicit action words that board members attributed to organizational effectiveness. The exception was variations on the theme of *work,* as exemplified by "members worked together even if their individual recommendations had been outvoted." Therefore, I assigned *work* as a theme that I would explore in future rounds of coding.

Attributes of ineffective boards. Another theme that emerged organically, and unexpectedly, was that the respondents described what they considered to be attributes of

boards that were not effective almost as frequently as those of effective boards. One respondent said that an effective board had to work "without hostility and acrimony, not micromanage the nonprofit." Another "noticed that several board members who have a lot to contribute have stepped back because it doesn't seem to make any difference." Thus I developed a theme of *attributes of ineffective boards* to be explored in future rounds of coding.

According to Board Members' Accounts, What Motivates Organizational Effectiveness?

Commitment. I assigned the code of Commitment to capture empirical evidence of the motivation. This code was easier to assign because it did not refer to abstracted concepts such as process. I was able to code data according to the mention of the word *commitment* or its variants. After reading through the raw data, I started my first round of coding. This did not preclude coding data that did not contain any of the code words but that clearly captured the essence of what motivated organizational effectiveness.

According to NVivo, I coded over 7% of the content of the raw data to the Commitment code. Some of the respondents' descriptions could be considered working, or empirical, definitions of commitment. For example, one participant said "every board member cares deeply about the success of the organization and contributes substantially to its functioning."

Reemergence of work. Consistent with the analysis of the actions associated with effective boards, the themes of *work* and description of boards that were the *opposite* of motivated also emerged as themes. For example one respondent described motivated

board members as those "willing to work for the greater good of the organization's goals and members." Another said that motivated board members "are made to feel that each member is part of a team working toward the common goal."

Attributes of unmotivated boards. One respondent described the opposite of motivation as board members "not willing or able to operate for the betterment of the organization or in one instance by being asked to leave." Another noted that "some members are more committed than others." I will integrate the theme of *opposite* when I analyze trust and reciprocity by examining empirical instances of the opposite of these concepts.

What is the Role of Trust in Organizational Effectiveness?

None of the four questions in the set of questions referred to trust. I did not want to suggest to the respondents those concepts that were revealed by the literature. I anticipated that these concepts would be fleshed out by the spontaneous responses of the participants.

Mistrust. My analysis of the first round of coding data that described or explained the concept of trust revealed an unanticipated outcome. With the exception of one instance, all of the responses referred to instances, experiences, and descriptions of the opposite of trust or negative trust. I therefore decided to change the name of the coding category to Mistrust.

The inference that I made from the overwhelming evidence of what is *not* trust led me to create another code which I called Imbalance. I created this new code to capture

what is *not* reciprocity. I performed another round of coding with this in mind. I described the results in the section on reciprocity which follows.

The single instance that at first appeared to describe positive trust was a respondent's observation that the effectiveness of fellow board members depended on the "strength of the chair and the chair's ability to rein in out of line members." I determined that this was a positive instance of trust because it described the implicit, or taken for granted, trust between the board members and the board chair. On a deeper reading I realized that it also could stand as an instance of negative trust because the trust between chair and most board members depended upon how the chair dealt with *out of line,* or not trusted, board members.

None of the other text that I coded to Mistrust had any ambiguity about whether it was a negative instance of trust. One respondent described a mistrusted board member as one who had "no common sense, reason, or dedication and is a burr under everyone's saddle. We have largely come to ignore him."

Power differentials. Most of the remaining instances referred to mistrust related to perceived power differentials among the board members. An example of this was a statement from one respondent that "a few of the officers run the organization with little participation of the others". Another noted "the board is not consulted in advance regarding financial issues and future plans of the organization."

Lack of transparency. The final element or component of mistrust that I derived from this iteration of the data was that trust between board members required transparency in the form of disclosing and taking steps to minimize personal agendas.

This was exemplified clearly by respondents who said “effectiveness was not being met when personal goals were overriding the goals of the organization.” Another said that effectiveness meant “directors having a minimum of personal agendas.” An example of a board on which both lack of transparency and power differentials existed was one where a respondent said “there is a competitiveness that is acknowledged privately between board members but that is denied by those members who are actively competing and derailing the mission of the organization.”

What is the Role of Reciprocity in Organizational Effectiveness?

None of the four questions in the set of questions referred to reciprocity. I did not want to suggest to the respondents concepts that were revealed by the literature. I anticipated that these concepts would be fleshed out by the spontaneous responses of the participants. Prior to my initial round of coding I decided to code all references to reciprocity to a code called Networks and Relationships.

This decision proved problematic. Of 30 statements that I coded to Networks and Relationships, I had also coded five to Process and Participation and five to Commitment. My initial coding decisions resulted in a lot of duplication. This prompted me to do an immediate second round of coding by eliminating the code of Networks and Relationships and coding directly to the code of Reciprocity. The result of this second round of coding was that I coded 12.7% unduplicated content of the total content of the 30 sets of responses to the code Reciprocity.

Common expectations and obligations. Most of the content about reciprocity referred to common expectations between board members. For example, one respondent

underscored the importance of giving “everyone an opportunity to speak and not have one person or two monopolize the meetings.” Another stated the reciprocal expectation that “each board member attends board meetings and shares his/her thoughts and ideas and interacts with other board members, contributes to reaching a consensus, and works as a team to divide the workload..

Other reciprocal obligations and expectations expressed by respondents were that board members “have common sense, listen, and be reasonable.. Another respondent noted that being on a board “means always being respectful of members and of the organization mission, shared vision of a greater purpose, willingness to share work and responsibility and accountability.” Another stated that “for no personal gain of its members (monetary or otherwise) the board sets strategy that will best achieve the organization’s mission.”

Accountability. Another respondent said “board members are accountable to one another to do the agreed upon work.” One respondent summed up the relationship between reciprocity and work with the following, “each member realizes that the board’s accomplishment requires team work and has a desire to be part of that team.” Thus, the theme of work revealed itself as integral also to the concept of reciprocity.

Imbalance. The empirical evidence of trust disclosed by board member respondents was exclusively in the form of the antithesis of trust, or mistrust. This led to my decision to create a code of Imbalance to capture instances of the antithesis of reciprocity. This decision was confirmed by the first responses that I coded to Reciprocity, “everyone has an opportunity to speak and not have one person or two

monopolize the meetings." It contained both a description of what reciprocity is, "everyone has an opportunity to speak" and what it is not, "not have one person or two monopolize the meetings."

A respondent observed that although the officers of the board "diligently carried out their respective duties," the at-large members "voice strong opinions on important decision making, but generally do not contribute a lot to the overall operations of the organization." Another respondent provided further evidence of imbalance by noting that "a few of the board members run the organization with little participation of the others." The following statement sums up the concept of imbalance, or the opposite of reciprocity, as follows. Fellow board members "do not seem to know that individuals on an executive board should have at least 'some' involvement in organizational duties."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Triangulation

Journaling. I used the Memo function of NVivo10 as a researcher journal. I noted my thoughts and rationales as I moved through the various iterations of the coding process. I used the function to trace the path that I followed to arrive at decisions about renaming codes, eliminating codes, adding new codes, and deciding to do a second, third, and fourth iteration of the data. I also used the Memo function to make note of the themes at the time that they originally occurred to me. I documented the thought process that structured the data analysis that I detailed in the preceding section.

Word frequency analysis. NVivo10 software provided me the capacity to run a word frequency analysis of my raw data. I performed this analysis in order to include a

supplementary means to unlock the key categories and themes hidden in the data. I ran the analysis for the most frequent 100 words. The results are summarized in Table 5, below.

Table 5

Words Used More Than 10 Times by Respondents

Word	Number of Instances
Board	67
Member(s)	56
Organization	17
Work	16
One	15
Mission	13
Community	11
Director	11
Team	11

I did not perform any further analysis on the words *board*, *member(s),* and *organization*. In addition, the NVivo10 program listed *effective* and *effectiveness* separately. Combined they amounted to 18 instances. The topic of my study is perceptions by board members of nonprofit organization effectiveness.

I used the words *board, member(s), organization, effective,* and *effectiveness* in my e-mail communications with the respondents. In a logical sense, they appeared at the top of the list by identity. Their relationship was one of tautology. Usages of *director* by the respondents were as a synonym for *board member*. Only two respondents referred to an executive director, who was an organizational employee. The rest referred to Board Directors who were volunteers. Therefore, I did not perform any further analyses of these words.

The next most frequent word was *one*. Eight respondents used this word. The majority of uses followed the syntax "an effective board is *one* …." The remaining instances used it to distinguish *one* board or *one* person from another. I did not consider this germane to the research.

Having derived the theme of work from the first and second rounds of coding I was not surprised that the word *work* appeared high on the list. Seeing that the word *team* was not far behind, I decided to do an NVivo10 Inquiry function into how frequently the words appeared together. My intuition was confirmed by the Inquiry. In the majority of instances, *work* and *team* appeared together in the data. The respondent who commented that the board should work to accomplish its objectives added that "each member realizes that this accomplishment requires *team work* and has the desire to be part of a *team*". The respondent added that an "effective board *works* as a *team*".

I followed the inquiry about *team* and *work* by separate word searches for *work*, *mission*, and *community*. I did this to determine the contexts in which the words appeared in the data. Some of respondents' descriptions of work revolved around the kind of work that effective boards took on. For example, one respondent noted that "effective boards have a staff member doing the 'skut work.'" Note that "skut work" is an expression that derives from the military. It usually refers to repetitive, but necessary, work, like "K.P." Another stated that a board started on the path of ineffectiveness when "work that was done by this group …will most likely be attributed to others or taken credit by others."

The vast majority of respondents described the work of effective boards. One respondent noted that on effective boards "board members are able to respond in a

positive way to the work needed to move forward on accomplishment of the goals and objectives." Another noted that "an effective board is accountable to one another to do the agreed upon work and represents the organization to the community at large." Another noted that an effective board has the "willingness to share work, responsibility, and accountability."

In short, according to the data, the effective board worked to set the objectives of the organization, the strategies to achieve them, and performed the actions or activities to carry out those strategies. Many comments about work centered on the concept of reciprocity. Analysis of the data about experiences of work on effective small nonprofit boards indicated that work on accountability and sharing is integral to the understanding of reciprocity between board members.

The word *community* emerged among the most frequently used words within the raw data. A word search revealed the contexts cited by the respondents that encompassed community. The responses by the various participants that included *community* were all in reference to descriptions of an effective nonprofit board. One respondent summed up the essence of board effectiveness and community as follows, "an effective board is one which generally focuses on building/creating tools for their community that serves to empower that community long after those board members terms have been served."

Analysis of the word *mission* revealed that respondents consistently used it as a unifying theme in instances of the key concept of nonprofit board trust. Respondents consistently affirmed that "board members share a common commitment to meeting the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization." The common commitment defined

the purpose that converted the individual board members to a team that was united by its "belief, passion, and commitment for the mission of the nonprofit organization." The importance of organizational mission to trust and effectiveness provided empirical justification for the selection of analysis of mission statements as another means of triangulation.

Analysis of Mission Statements

I stated in Chapter 3 that I would provide a word cloud analysis of the content of the mission statements of the 21 separate organizations represented by the respondents. However, the word cloud included identifying information about specific locations that would compromise the confidentiality of the respondents. Therefore, I will provide the same information in the form of a word frequency table in the same format as Table 5.

Table 6

Words Used 10 Times or More in Mission Statements

Word	Number of Instances
Community	29
Mission	13
Local	11
Services	11
Project	10

Table 6 reveals the clear focus of the 21 nonprofit organizations on their local *community*. As noted, the organizations represented by the respondents targeted service populations that spanned the gamut from human health, education, animal protection, conservation of the environment, the arts, and faith-based human services. Yet using

Table 6 as a tool their statements can be summarized as: “our mission is to provide projects and services to our local community.”

The word that emerged as a keystone for this group of nonprofit organization board members was *community*. *Community* also emerged in the word frequency analysis of the content of the raw data. In terms of the mission, already identified as a key concept in understand trust among board members, the sense of community was integral among the represented small nonprofit organizations.

Credibility

I established a degree of credibility in Chapter 3 by linking the study question to the phenomenological research design, by substantiating that this design was appropriate to the question, and by providing a detailed description of the sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis procedures (Kohlbacher, 2005; Appendix C). I provided credibility by using multiple data sources and types, including sets of responses, content analysis, and researcher reflection. I detailed the multiple data sources and types in the section on Triangulation. My researcher journal revealed that among the 30 respondents two had questions prior to submitting their responses. None had subsequent questions. Both respondents had the same question about the last query in my set of questions. The question I asked was “thinking of the board as a whole, rather than as individual members, how would you describe an effective board that you have been on or observed?”

The two respondents who had questions wanted to know whether the interview question referred to the board that they described in the first three questions or could they

refer to a different board for response to this last question. My answer was that it was my intention that they keep one board in mind for their responses to all of the questions. To the extent that this may have been confusing to more than a couple of respondents I will clarify this question in future research. I will add one sentence that asks that they keep one board only in mind for their responses to all of the questions.

As I generated themes and patterns from initial data analysis I reviewed additional data by which to reevaluate the initial themes and categories and to support or contradict interpretations. One example of this that appears throughout the data analysis by research question was the unexpected, yet consistent, emergence of the theme of data that described and exemplified the opposite of the code. This led me to the construct codes and themes, such as Mistrust, that I designed to capture what was not trust. I also conducted subsequent iterations of the data according to the new themes.

I maximized the likelihood that participants provided natural, unbiased responses (Kohlbacher, 2005). I did not request any demographic information about the individual respondents. The perspective of the study is phenomenological. The focus of the study was the board members' perceptions and experiences, not the characteristics of the respondents. In addition, having the participants respond electronically, via e-mail, gave them the control over when and under what circumstances they put together their responses. This made it more likely that respondents were in safe, secure environments and that their responses were more likely to be unforced.

Transferability

I provided transferability by converging responses to the set of questions, reflection, and document analysis into a detailed, thick description of nonprofit effectiveness and related constructs. I used the Memo function of NVivo10 software to keep track of my thought process behind making decisions about which themes and categories to eliminate, merge, and create. An example of this process was the creation of new themes of work, mission, and community and the integration of these themes into a detailed or thick analysis of the core constructs of reciprocity and trust. Using the Memo and Coding functions of NVivo10 increased the reliability of the study findings because independent observers can easily access raw data.

Because I showed in the review of the literature that the central construct of effectiveness had limited understanding within the social sciences, I did not have a reference point from which to establish transferability. My purpose was to clarify the concept of nonprofit effectiveness by getting at its attributes through nonprofit organization board members who experienced it. I did not have a model or benchmarks from which to determine the fit of my data. Without such benchmarks it was difficult to determine whether any data could be deemed discrepant.

In order to minimize the lack of benchmarks from which to determine discrepant data, I provided a detailed description of the study context, including being as transparent as possible about how I built up the themes. I have been careful to state clearly that the data analysis applied to a group of nonprofit organizations in the focal community.

Taking account of context helps make the study results comparable to those of other studies (Kohlbacher, 2005; Moustakas et al., 1956).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of findings at the analysis stage (Kohlbacher, 2005). Since I was the only researcher conducting this study, I established dependability by coding a data set and setting it aside for four weeks. I then returned to and recoded the data. I compared the results to make sure there was sufficient stability in my coding. The results of the Coding Comparison, provided by NVivo10, are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7

Coding Comparison: First Data Coding, Respondents 1-5

Code	% Agreement
Commitment	93.77
Networks/Relationships	84.76
Characteristics of Effective Boards	97.80
Passion	97.82
Process/Participation	83.78
Reciprocity	84.46

In general, the table shows acceptable agreement between the two sets of coding the same data. Prior to my initial round of coding I decided to code all references to reciprocity to a code called Networks and Relationships. This decision proved problematic, as reflected by Table 7. Among 31 statements that I coded to Networks and Relationships I had also coded five to Process and Participation and five to Commitment. My initial coding decisions resulted in a lot of duplication. This finding was underscored

by the results of the Coding Comparison. This prompted me to do an immediate second round of coding by eliminating the code of Networks and Relationships and coding directly to the code of Reciprocity.

Confirmability

I used my researcher journals, observations, and reflections to construct an audit trail of how and why I made critical decisions that determined and affected the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Leblanc & Gillies 2005). I used the Memo function of NVivo10 software to make this evidence of researcher reflexivity part of the database. In addition, the software provided the means to store each of my coding iterations, coding comparisons, and frequency counts separately. This adds to my ability to reconstruct my process even after the results have been promulgated.

Results by Research Question

What do Board Members Identify as Actions That are Part of Organizational Effectiveness?

I organized this section according to research question because this structure more accurately reflected the research process than the alternative of organizing by themes. Specifically, preliminary coding based on themes derived from the literature review had to be reevaluated and refocused after the first data iteration. Thus throughout the process of answering the research questions the themes emerged from successive data iterations. The questions preceded the themes rather than vice versa. I presented my analysis to reflect this phenomenon my research experience.

According to the accounts of the board member respondents, cohesion, compromise, and work are actions that are part of nonprofit organization effectiveness. One respondent summarized these themes by noting that board members contributed to a "conglomeration of attitudes that comes together for a greater cause and manages to become cohesive even when individual attitudes vary."

According to Board Members' Accounts, What Motivates Organizational Effectiveness?

Commitment. Through analysis of the data I determined that for this group of board member respondents, commitment motivated nonprofit organizational effectiveness. This theme of commitment was exemplified by the assertion of one respondent that "every board member cares deeply about the success of the organization and contributes substantially to its functioning."

Work. The next data iteration revealed that the theme of work was integral to commitment. An example is a respondent's requirement that commitment was embodied by board members who were "willing to work for the greater good of the organization's goals and members."

What is the Role of Reciprocity in Organizational Effectiveness?

Most of the content about reciprocity referred to common expectations between board members. One respondent commented that "board members are accountable to one another to do the agreed upon work." Other reciprocal obligations and expectations expressed by respondents were that board members "have common sense, listen, and be reasonable" and have the "willingness to share work and responsibility and

accountability." Another respondent noted that being on a board means "always being respectful of members and of the organization mission."

What is the Role of Trust in Organizational Effectiveness?

Mistrust. My first two iterations of the data relating to trust were in the form of empirical instances of the opposite of trust which I termed *mistrust.* A respondent defined mistrusted board members as those perceived as being "out of line" and having to be "reined in" by the other board members. Most of the instances of mistrust referred to perceived power differentials among the board members.

Ten respondents described instances where "effectiveness was not being met or personal goals were overriding the goals of the organization." This evidence backed up one respondent's claim that effective boards were ones whose "directors have a minimum of personal agendas." I inferred from this data that trust was not a taken for granted element of small, local nonprofit board organization. That along with cohesion, commitment, and reciprocity the establishment and continuity of trust must be built up through strategic work in order for the organization to be effective.

Mission. I conducted a word frequency analysis that precipitated a third and fourth data iteration. A third iteration of the data revealed trust was embedded in the strategic involvement of board members in organization mission development. In the fourth iteration, analysis of the word *mission* revealed that respondents consistently used it as a unifying theme in instances nonprofit board *trust*. It was not until the fourth data iteration that the role of trust in nonprofit organization effectiveness appeared. Figure 5 depicts the relationship of trust to nonprofit organization effectiveness that was suggested

by the data analysis. Figure 5 demonstrates the relationship among the key terms revealed by the data analysis.

Figure 6. Relationship of trust to nonprofit effectiveness**:** Trust was embedded in the strategic involvement of board members in organization mission development. Instances of the word *mission* revealed that respondents consistently used it as a unifying theme in instances nonprofit board *trust*. Community was the unifying theme among all 21 organizations.

Integration of themes of commitment, community, and mission. The content analysis of organization mission statements revealed that community was the unifying theme among all 21 organizations, regardless of individual organization focus. *Community* appeared in mission statements two and a half times more often than any other word, including *mission*. The respondents revealed that regardless of individual differences of attitudes, opinions, and perspectives a common commitment to the mission of the organization i.e., to the betterment of the community was critical to overcoming these differences.

Summary

The overall result of this research study is that, for this group of respondents, effective nonprofit boards have a common commitment that enables them to achieve cohesion and consensus. However cohesion, consensus, and commitment are not taken for granted elements of effectiveness. If they are to be effective, board members must consistently work to develop, manage, and promulgate strategies of reciprocity and trust in order to become a cohesive, committed body.

In the context of small, local nonprofit organizations reciprocity is the sharing of mission, ideas, work and accountability in an atmosphere of reason and respect. Strategies of developing and maintaining trust have to be integrated into the organizational tool kit in order to achieve cohesion, consensus, and compromise In turn, cohesion, consensus and compromise were singled out by respondents as necessary for organizational effectiveness.

In the following chapter, in the context of nonprofit organizations in the focal community I provided my interpretation of the attributes of effective small nonprofit boards as well as those of ineffective nonprofit boards. Also in the following chapter I interpreted and integrated the analysis, findings, and results of this research study into the theoretical framework and peer-reviewed current body of research described in Chapter 2. I accomplished this by describing how the findings and results extend, confirm, or disconfirm knowledge in the discipline of sociology pertaining to the understanding of small nonprofit organizations from the social constructivist perspective.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to understand what constitutes small nonprofit organization effectiveness. The objectives of the study were fourfold: (a) to explore board members' perceptions of nonprofit effectiveness, (b) to understand the participants' concept of effectiveness, (c) to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the data, (d) to describe the role of reciprocity and trust in determining participants' perceptions. For the foreseeable future the effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofit organizations is in doubt (Marx & Davis, 2012; Schultz & Williams, 2010). This study relieved some of this doubt by focusing on a better understanding of what it means to be an effective small local nonprofit organization from the perspective of a board member.

Summary of Findings

Table 8 is a summary of the key findings including the emergence of the theme of attributes of ineffectiveness in the context of small, local nonprofit organizations.

Table 8

Contrast Between Attributes of Effective Small Local Nonprofit Organizations and Attributes of Ineffective Small Local Nonprofit Organizations

Effective	Ineffective	Concept E=emerged from data P=predicted on literature
Deep commitment about the success of mission	Collection of egos with differing agendas	Mission/E
Passion for goals of the organization	Passion for individual objectives, self interest	Trust/P
Cohesion: team working toward a common goal	Hostility and acrimony Hidden competitiveness denied by those who were actively competing	Community/E
Compromise		
Giving everyone opportunity to speak	A few people monopolize discussion	Reciprocity/P
Hearing several sides before coming to a resolution	A few run the organization with little participation of the others	Trust/P
Equitable division of workload	Imbalance in contribution of board to overall operations	Reciprocity/P, Work /E
Accountability to do agreed-upon work	No follow through	Reciprocity/P, Work /E

The study contributed to a sociological understanding of the meaning of nonprofit organization effectiveness. One participant summed up effectiveness as a "belief, passion, and commitment for the mission of the nonprofit organization achieved by continual review of the mission and vision statements, combined with awareness of the duties of board members and what is expected of them." The most elusive of the key concepts was trust, which emerged from the data analysis as a strategy to eliminate

mistrust. Such a strategy can be summed up as one that has elements of common sense, as well as intelligence, discipline, thoughtfulness, and respect.

Interpretation of Findings

I added a column to Table 2 to create Table 9. I used the new column to introduce empirical examples, in the form of quotes from respondents, of the types of motivation described by Van Lange (2008) and Krueger et al. (2008).

Table 9

Motivations Related to Nonprofit Effectiveness With Empirical Examples

Motivation	Definition: Concern Representation	Description	Example
Altruism	Others' outcome	Enhanced self-worth, cooperation	"have camaraderie optimism, and hope"
Egalitarianism	Equality in outcomes, fairness	Learning through community, increased community contact	"personal relationships built around common interests"
Selfishniess	One's own outcomes, self interest	Increased individual relationships, social status	"do not act in their own self-interest"

The examples from this study imply that effective small nonprofit boards engender all three types of motivation. They also imply that in practice the three types may be difficult to isolate and that motivation is made up of altruism, egalitarianism and unselfishness in varying configurations. Finally, they imply that in addition to the three types of motivation the effective nonprofit board should also be motivated by the willingness to work.

In Chapter 2, I described how Bourdieu (1990) provided the logical and conceptual connections that explained the emergence of nonprofit boards as the organized groups responsive to community needs. I added that by locating the key

concepts of reciprocity and trust as strategies, or practices, Bourdieu provided the theoretical basis for me to derive the definitions of the key concepts from how the board members themselves describe their practices. Based on the study data, an integrated definition of reciprocity in the context of small nonprofit organization boards is sharing of mission, ideas, work, and accountability in an atmosphere of reason and respect. This definition conforms to the theoretical approach to reciprocity of this study.

The data surrounding trust revealed that an element of mistrust among small nonprofit board members may be more pervasive that either the theoretical literature or recent research has revealed. Theoretically, I located trust as a social strategy that people had to reestablish depending upon the particular context in which they interacted (Bourdieu, 1990). Recent researchers implied, but never explicitly stated, that trust might be manifest empirically as mistrust. For example, Montes and Irving (2008) defined trust as the expectation or assumption that the future actions of another person or group were likely to be beneficial, or at least not detrimental, to the truster. In other words, trust may be a fluid concept ranging from complete trust to complete mistrust depending upon the context.

The findings of the analysis of the data concerning trust among board members of small nonprofit organizations only partly confirm that the conceptualization of trust depicted in Table 3. According to Table 3, trust is any action that increases an actor's vulnerability to another whose behavior is not under the actor's control, motivated by the belief that the exchange partner can be relied upon to help, rather than exploit, the actor (Buchan et al., 2002; Molm et al., 2007).

Respondents' descriptions of mistrust did encompass the theoretical elements of action and motivation (Schefczyk & Peacock, 2010). The key components of action and motivation were reflected in the study data that described mistrust, rather than trust, as follows. Vulnerability of the actor and behavior not under control of the actor were confirmed by the descriptions of power differentials. The taken for granted understanding that the actor would not be exploited was not confirmed.

Descriptions of lack of consultation and the predominance of personal agendas indicated that board members did not trust that other board members would not exploit them. This finding implies that for small, nonprofit boards, the absence of exploitive motivation between actors cannot be taken for granted; that trust needs to be reestablished depending on the context. The groundwork for trust, as well as reciprocity, was embedded in the involvement of board members in organization mission development as a strategy.

The centrality of mission enabled most of the board member respondents to acknowledge differences of opinion but to "work together even if their individual recommendation has been outvoted." The implied trust in this statement is that in another situation the board members would trust that fellow board members would work together if their recommendation were outvoted. It appears that trust builds up as board members continue experiences of common activities that achieve organizational objectives.

Implications for Social Change

Walden has already disseminated its finding that nonprofit organizations have an important role in social change (Walden Notices, 2012). Researchers have shown that

government, corporate, foundation, and individual funders of social services were increasingly interested in the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations (Herman & Renz, 2008). Organizational stakeholders, including service consumers, as well as boards of directors, can adapt the findings of this study into organizational objectives, strategies, and activities to carry out these strategies.

The study findings, based on the lived experiences of members of small nonprofit organization boards, confirm that attention to strategies that develop reciprocity and mitigate mistrust among board members will help small local nonprofits achieve their organizational objectives. The results suggest that strategies that include fostering commitment to the organizational mission and stepwise, thoughtful, accountable work assignments should provide the structure for organization effectiveness.

Recommendations for Action

An article in the New York Times (3/23/2013) provided empirical evidence of an ineffective nonprofit organization and the potential for action to turn it around. Although larger in scope than the organizations that were the focus of this study, the experience of Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles serves as practical example that confirms the study findings. The article stated that for the past five years MOCA "was being run into the ground" (New York Times, 3/23/2013). Its board rejected an offer to merge with a larger art museum that would have stabilized MOCA's infrastructure and finances. The board decided to go it alone. The article deemed this decision unrealistic for the following reasons that fit neatly with the attributes of Table 9.

The board did not grasp either the cultural significance or the immediate financial instability of MOCA. That is, not only was it not committed to the organization's mission, it had no clear conception of its mission. The board of MOCA was dominated by a single member who was "vehemently opposed" to the merger (New York Times, 3/23/2013). That is, it had no strategy of cohesion or compromise.

The article described the board as dysfunctional and a circus. That is, it had neither equitable division of the workload, nor accountability to do the agreed upon work. The article called for the following actions: culling board members to those who "really care" and were willing to "commit enormous energy" to turning the museum around, and "attracting like-minded members to their board and their cause" (New York Times, 3/23/2013).

Recommendations for Further Study

The finding that trust is not a taken for granted" attribute of nonprofit effectiveness implies that trust may be distributed on a continuum ranging from complete mistrust to complete trust. It may have the nature of being constructed on a situation by situation basis. Further study is needed to clarify the nature of trust.

The concepts of work, community, and mission emerged from the analysis of board members perceptions of nonprofit organization effectiveness. One respondent defined work in the context of small local nonprofits as "tackling each assignment with zeal." This perception of work in the context of the study implies that these emergent concepts should have very different interpretations than their colloquial understandings. This should catalyze further inquiry.

The study results indicated that there is much to be derived from studying not only nonprofit effectiveness, but also nonprofit ineffectiveness. A contextualized definition of work as it relates to establishing and maintaining commitment is a challenge for future research on local nonprofit organizations. This could lead to a better understanding of organizations, in general, from the social constructivist perspective. In short, the findings of this study contradict the aphorism to "think globally; act locally." The study results, in the context of small nonprofit organizations, are actually more intuitive than the aphorism. They can be summed up as "think locally; act locally."

Conclusion

From the literature review, I developed the concepts of reciprocity and trust as key to the interpretation of small nonprofit organizational effectiveness. In the study, I analyzed responses from 30 members of board of small, local nonprofits to determine how they perceived organizational effectiveness in their day-to-day experience. I also analyzed the mission statements of their organizations for data that related to the core concepts and the themes that emerged from the respondents' descriptions of their experiences.

The result that I did not anticipate was that the respondents spent as much time describing the opposite of the key concepts as they did relating positive instances of the key concepts. In the words of one respondent, "board members who are not 'in the know' are much less likely to be fully functioning." Thus, in the context of small nonprofit organizations, board members should pay attention to matters of mistrust and imbalance in order to achieve the attributes of trust and reciprocity that are keys to effectiveness.

In practice, the groundwork for trust and reciprocity on small nonprofit boards was embedded in the sharing of mission, ideas, work and accountability in an atmosphere of reason and respect. As one board member noted, “less involved board members usually can be engaged to a greater degree when they know and accept the mission and see the need for their services.” Furthermore, developing and maintaining trust and minimizing mistrust had to be strategically integrated into the organizational tool kit in order to achieve cohesion, consensus, and compromise.

The respondents experienced cohesion, consensus, and compromise when they focused on their common commitment to improving their community. In their own words, effective board members were “always respectful of one another, [and] the organization mission, and have a shared vision of a greater purpose, [and] the willingness to work with responsibility and accountability.” Effective boards of small nonprofit organizations “focus on building and creating tools for their community that serve to empower that community.” Such boards can, are, and will continue to be local catalysts for social change.

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Appendix A: Fit Between Creswell's Characteristics of Five Qualititative Approaches to Research Design and Study (Y=yes; N=no)

Characteristics	Narrative	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Focus	individual life	essense of experience	developing theory from data	describing a culture-sharing group	in-depth description
Proposed study	N	Y	N	N	Y
Problem	telling stories	describing essence of a lived phenomenon	grounding theory in participants' views	describing shared patterns of culture	in-depth understanding
Proposed study	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Unit	individual	several individuals	process or action w/many individuals	group w/same culture	event, program w/ 1+ individual
Proposed study	N	Y	Y	N	N
Data Collection	interviews, documents	interviews, documents	20-60 different sets of responses	observations over long time	multiple sources
Proposed study	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Data	stories, chronology	meaning units textural description	open, selective, axial coding	group description group themes	case description case themes
Proposed study	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Report	narrative	describe essence	generate theory	describe how group works	detailed analysis
Proposed study	N	Y	N	Y	N

The table shows how I narrowed the selection of a research design to a phenomenological study.

Appendix B: Protocol for E-Mail Set of Questions

What is the main goal of your Board?

What has been your experience of an effective nonprofit board of directors?

How would you describe the effectiveness of your fellow board members?

Thinking of the board as a whole, rather than individual members, how would you describe an effective board that you have been on or observed?

To protect your privacy no consent signature is requested. Instead you may indicate your consent by returning the complete set of responses directly to me at the e-mail address of this correspondence.

Appendix C: Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data collected	Set of Questions	Document Analysis
From where	Internet	Mission statement Organization Web Site and Organization State Registration Documents
By whom	Researcher	Researcher
How often	Once w/ opportunity to review	Once
How long per event	30-40 min.	repeated iterations using coding themes/patterns
How recorded	Electronically	Electronically
Plan B, if too few participants: Contact other local nonprofit organizations		
Exit Strategy	Debriefing	N/A

The table shows the details of data collection procedures that I used to provide raw data from which to address the research question of what are the board members' perceptions and attitudes of nonprofit effectiveness in a small community in central Arizona.

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of the effectiveness of local nonprofit organization boards of directors. The researcher is inviting board members of small, local nonprofit organizations to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Laura Maurer who is a doctoral student at Walden University. She is also a member of two local boards, the Sedona Community Foundation and the Sedona International Film Festival. This study is for educational purposes and is separate from her role as a board member.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of nonprofit organization effectiveness by examining how the board members of small, local nonprofits perceive of and experience effectiveness and what their opinions are about it.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

Complete an e-mail response to a set of four questions that should take you no more than 40 minutes.

After you submit your responses, the researcher will contact you via e-mail to ask you if you had any concerns about the process. She will answer your concerns and give you a chance to change your responses, if you wish to do so. This should take no more than 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

What would be the ideal make up of your board members?

How do you conceive of an effective nonprofit board of directors?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently, if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue or stress. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. The benefits of being in the study include increasing what we know about perceptions and attitudes of nonprofit effectiveness and using this information to help those involved in the nonprofit community to achieve their organizational objectives.

Payment:
The researcher will not provide payment or any other compensation or reimbursement.

Privacy:
Any information that you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Once the researcher receives your responses she will assign a number to each set of responses. She will enter the data from the numbered sets of responses into a specialized software program using the number as the sole identifier. After data entry, the researcher will delete your e-mails. Data will be kept securely on a flash drive in a locked file cabinet. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via e-mail at laura.maurer@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-13-14-0223130 and it expires on .
Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement By returning completed responses to the set of questions, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix E: Research Ethics Planning Questions With Page Numbers for Reference

Question	Chapter 3 Page Number(s)
1. Has each data collection step been articulated?	79-80, Appendix C
2. Will the research procedures ensure privacy during data collection?	79-80, Appendix D
3.Will data be stored securely?	83
4. Will the data be stored for at least 5 years?	83
5. If participants' names or contact information will be recorded in the research records are they absolutely necessary?	80
6. Do research procedures and analysis/wrap up plans include all possible measures to ensure that participants are not directly or indirectly disclosed?	77, 79
7. Have confidentiality agreements been signed by anyone who may view data that contains identifiers? (transcriber, translator)	N/A
8. Has the researcher articulated a specific plan for sharing results with the participants and community stakeholders?	80
9. Have all potential psychological, economic/professional physical and other risks been fully acknowledged and described?	Appendix D
10. Have the above risks been minimized as much as possible? Are measures in place to provide participants with reasonable protection from loss of privacy, distress, psychological harm, economic loss, damage to professional reputation, and physical harm?	71, 77, 79
11. Has the researcher proactively managed any potential conflicts of interest?	71-72
12. Are the research risks and burdens reasonable, in consideration of the know knowledge that this research design can offer?	Below
13. Is the research site willing to provide a Letter of Cooperation granting permission for all relevant data access, access top participants, facility use, and/or use of personnel time for research?	N/A

Question 12 asks whether the research risks and burdens are reasonable vis a vis the potential knowledge accumulation that the study provides. The board members themselves were not studied. The study focus was their experience of the phenomenon of nonprofit effectiveness. The participation of the respondents was at their own volition. They had the opportunity to weigh the risks and benefits of their contribution to the study

prior to and during their responses. They received written descriptions of these conditions.

Curriculum Vitae

Laura Levy Maurer
levymaurer@hotmail.com

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Coordinator of Grants and Contracts *University of Illinois at Chicago*
May1998 – Jan. 2007
Retired: Jan. 2007
Grants and Contracts Manager *Thresholds, Chicago Illinois*
May 1990 – May 1998
Cash Manager *Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, Illinois*
Jan. 1984 – Jan. 1989

EDUCATION

Undergraduate Degree 1970
Cornell University, Bachelor of Science, Rural Sociology
Regents Scholar, Deans List

Masters Degree 1973
New York University, Master of Arts, Sociology
University Scholar

Doctoral Degree 2014
Walden University, Doctor of Philosophy, Human Services
Dissertation: Board Member Perceptions of Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness
Tau Upsilon Alpha Honor Society
Golden Key Honor Society

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Sedona Community Foundation, Sedona, AZ 2007-Present
Board of Advisors, Current Chair
Sedona International Film Festival, Sedona, AZ 2011-Present
Board of Trustees
Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL 2011-Present
Board of Directors