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JAIME LYNN OLINSKE
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BOARD IMPACT ON NONPROFIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BURNOUT

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BY

Dr. Chan M. Hellman, Chair

Dr. Brenda Lloyd-Jones

Dr. Jody Worley

Dr. Gary Holmes

Dr. Shawn Schaefer

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

The role of nonprofit organizations is increasing in the United States as governmental involvement and/or support disappears. Nonprofits are filling the gaps in services created for at-risk clients. This ever-expanding role of nonprofit organizations has created an interest in the organizational and leadership dynamics of such entities.

This study seeks to examine the complex relationship between the board of directors and the executive director in nonprofit organizations. The relationship between the two entities will be examined to better understand the impact of the board on executive director burnout.

A survey was emailed to a convenience sample of executive directors of nonprofit organizations in medium-sized city the southern plains of the United States. The sample was based on the executive director's email address being available to the executive director of a neutral third party. The research procedure is explained in Chapter Three and an analysis of the results is presented in Chapter Four. The correlations are given and analyzed in light of the hypothesis, as well as the results and analysis of the hierarchical multiple regression. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the results, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. The findings indicate that the board does, in fact, have an effect on mental health, health perceptions, and the two most prominent characteristics of burnout, disengagement and exhaustion.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The ever-increasing role of nonprofit organizations in the United States has created an interest in the organizational dynamics of such entities. As governmental involvement and support recedes and/or disappears, nonprofits must step in to fill the gaps in services created for at-risk clients. This study examines the complex relationship between paid and volunteer nonprofit leadership, specifically the chief executive (or executive director) and board of directors roles. The complex interplay between these two top leadership spots in nonprofit organizations were examined to better understand the role strain of the chief executives as it relates to board support or interference on the chief executive's job resources.

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations, specifically those classified as 501(c)(3) publicly supported charities under the US Internal Revenue Code, are the primary vehicles for philanthropy in the United States. Nonprofits are unique and face distinctive leadership challenges. There are many pressures facing nonprofits, including leadership succession, fundraising, and personnel, as well as the pressing needs of the at-risk clients which the nonprofit serves (Herman, 2005). The typical leadership structure of human service nonprofit organizations in the United States is comprised of a board of directors and an executive director. The executive director is typically a paid employee of the organization and reports to the board of directors who are likely unpaid volunteers (Siebart, 2005).

Executive Director

Effective nonprofit leaders must have a widely varied skill set. Over time, the type of person in the executive director position has changed from the person solely

consumed with passion for the mission of the organization to those who also possess business skills and experience coupled with that passion. This has become increasingly important as donors demand a good return on their investment. The compassionate leader with business acumen must recognize that the mission and passion for the organization must not be replaced by business-like operations. A balance among the skills of the members of the board helps this endeavor. Recruiting, selecting and developing board members with business leadership skills as well as those who have a strong sense of commitment to the mission of the organization can further assist the executive director in striking the proper balance for organizational success. A good nonprofit leader must envision where the organization should go, be able to communicate that vision for the future, and continually make measurable progress toward the stated goals, all while motivating others to embrace the vision and move toward it too.

While many nonprofit chief executives face the same challenges as their for-profit counterparts, there are the additional pressures of lack of monetary resources and the necessity of striking the balance between the organization's mission and effective business practices. The balance between the mission and effective management and operations is pivotal for the success of the nonprofit. The pressure for federal lawmakers to reduce spending ultimately results in greater fiscal pressure for nonprofits. This trend is expected to continue as government subsidies dwindle or disappear, the retiring "baby boomer" generation create greater governmental healthcare and pension burdens, and as social programs increasingly shift to the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits must do more with less, and this is projected to continue. As with any organization, the balance between efficiency and effectiveness requires superb leadership both at the board and chief executive level. This is especially true for nonprofits where boards are not monetarily

rewarded for the organization's success as for-profit boards are. The recruitment and development of board members is especially critical for balancing the focus on the mission and the achievement of organizational goals. Many executive directors are drawn to the nonprofit sector by the desire to change lives and enrich the community

Executive director turnover in nonprofit agencies is fast becoming a national concern. Studies indicate that by 2011, the majority of nonprofit executive directors will retire or leave their positions. Several contributing factors to the anticipated turnover in the nonprofit area have been identified, including the baby boomer generation reaching retirement age, longstanding retention and recruitment issues, the increasing debt load of new college graduates and the stressful nature of nonprofit work. The aging of the baby boomer generation has long been a concern across all industries in America (Halpern, 2006).

While the baby boomers tend to work past the typical retirement age, the change in the workforce will be large. This could create unique opportunities for nonprofits in terms of an increased volunteer pool and creating a more diverse leadership for the agencies. The change will, however, create many new challenges for the nonprofit industry (Halpern, 2006).

Part of the challenge of replacing retiring baby boomers is the retention and recruitment problems that plague nonprofit organizations. For profit companies have launched aggressive recruitment campaigns for employees (Halpern, 2006). Of the 1.4 million US charities, only 20% of nonprofits report budgets in excess of $100,000 and less than 10% have budgets of $1,000,000 or greater. These numbers illustrate the disadvantage nonprofits have in the area of executive and staff compensation compared to for-profit organizations (Sims & Quatro, 2005). Many current and potential nonprofit

employees are lured by larger salaries, better benefits and less job strain and burnout potential. This includes new college graduates who now emerge from college with ever-increasing educational debt. Statistics show that new college graduates entering the nonprofit sector are paid 21.5% less than their counterparts who enter the for-profit work force. New graduates faced with this kind of economic burden are much harder for nonprofit agencies to attract and keep. The pay gap, combined with the job strain potential, between the nonprofit and for-profit sectors is a challenge that must be addressed with innovative solutions (Halpern, 2006).

Board of Directors

Every nonprofit board member has different perspectives and different motivations that draw them to nonprofit service. Ideally, board members are recruited based on the particular skills needed by the nonprofit organization and the network within the community they possess. Board members help make connections within the community to various sources of funding and support, as well as contributing their business skills and/or passion for the work of the nonprofit. Board members are responsible for the achievement of organizational goals, both financial and program related. A difference between nonprofit boards and their for-profit counterparts is that nonprofits tend to require greater harmony and teamwork, and the nonprofit board tends to have less authority than for-profit boards. The board, executive director and organizational policies must all protect the legal responsibility of the board. The leadership efforts of the board and the executive director must work in harmony, which makes the role of chairman of the board critical (Herman, 2005).

The executive director/board relationship is crucial to effective nonprofit organizational leadership. While formal organizational structure typically makes the

executive director subordinate to the board, in reality the executive director is expected to take the primary leadership role for the organization. At the same time, part of the executive director's job duty is to facilitate the board carrying out its duties. While much of the defining literature on nonprofit boards accepts this conventional model of organizational structure, the structure of nonprofits can be very different in the "real world." In practice, the conventional model of organizational structure for nonprofits is not supported. The relationship between the executive director and board is complicated, and in practice, a more descriptive model for organizational leadership in nonprofit organizations would be a team or partnership model. While both parties rely on one another to govern the organization, the executive director and the board are not equal. Executive directors must espouse the idea that board development and enabling the functioning of the board is the responsibility of the executive director. Various leadership models that examine the complexity of the executive director /board relationship will be addressed later in this paper. The literature indicates the most successful executive directors value and respect their boards and spend significant time and energy to support and facilitate the board's work (Herman, 2005; Sims & Quatro, 2005).

The executive director is responsible for ensuring that the board engages in governance that is meaningful. They determine where the board focuses time and energy, as dictated by the mission of the organization. This relationship is never simple and requires skillful leadership to understand (Herman, 2005). The nature of the relationship between the executive director and board of directors is a fundamental aspect of the success of the nonprofit. A negative relationship can slow or stop the progress of the organization, and a positive relationship can lead to effective and efficient goal attainment. Indeed, it is vital that both parties work toward a common goal and have a

similar vision for the organization. That is, a healthy working relationship between the executive director and the board is essential to the ultimate success of the nonprofit in serving typically at risk members of the community (Herman, 2005; Sims & Quatro, 2005). Without a good working relationship between the executive director and the board, the very existence of the agency can be in jeopardy.

This study examines the relationship between the two parties and seeks to determine if the nature of the partnership lends itself to the job strain or enhancement of the executive director. The executive director and the chairman of the board having clear, open communication and aligned goals is essential to the success of the organization. This is especially true as the investment of time, resources and knowledge of board members leads to a feeling of ownership on the part of the board member. These feelings of ownership must be channeled for the good of the organization and the realization of the established mission (Herman, 2005). The board "…is expected to define the mission, establish policies, oversee programs and use performance standards to assess financial and program achievements (Herman 2005, p. 154)." In addition to these responsibilities, boards in the United States have a legal obligation to be responsible for the business endeavors of the organization and general organizational comportment. The board bears the weight of the legal and moral obligations of the workings of the organization, thus making the board more responsible for the overall performance of the organization (Sims & Quatro, 2005).

The Job Demands-Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model proposes that working conditions can be listed into two categories, job demands and job resources (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). The JD-R assumes burnout can happen in any occupation. When job

demands are high and resources are limited, employees become exhausted and lose motivation. Job demands are defined as the physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort (physical or mental). Job resources are those physical, psychological, social or organization aspects of the job that help the worker achieve work goals, reduce job demands or stimulate personal growth and development. Social resources can be defined as support from family, peers and/or colleagues. Organizational resources are things such as the ability to actively participate in decision making, job control and task variety. When job resources are not available, individuals are less likely to be able to manage job demands. It is thought that in situations like these, reduced motivation and withdrawal at work serve as a protection mechanism. In conclusion, the JD-R suggests that burnout develops in one of two ways. In the first process, the job demands workers experience can lead to overtaxing and exhaustion. In the second process, withdrawal behaviors resulting from a lack of job resources impede the progress toward meeting job demands, which leads to further withdrawal behaviors. Long periods of emotional and cognitive withdrawal can result in disengagement from work (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005).

The JD-R has been used in a wide variety of settings; however it has never been applied to executive directors of nonprofit human services agencies in the United States. This application allows for the generation of new knowledge about nonprofit executive directors in particular, as well as the JD-R in general.

Without the proper ratio of job demands to job resources, job strain can increase to the point of burnout and withdrawal behaviors. The factors that are related to the reduction of withdrawal behaviors among effective leaders can have a positive impact on

the climate of the organization but also impact the agency's capacity to serve at-risk clients (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which executive directors' relationships with their boards of directors are seen as an interference or enhancement. Further, this study will examine the effect that the relationship being seen as an interference or enhancement on mental health, health perceptions and the two main dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement.

Significance of the Study

The application of the Job Demands-Resources Model to the relationship between the executive director and board members can primarily serve to create a better understanding of nonprofit organizations. Further, the application of the Job Demands-Resources Model in this particular context in the United States allows for an investigation of the validity of the model in a new occupational group and country.

The review of literature has driven the following series of hypotheses concerning the impact of the board on executive director burnout:

H_1 Mental health dysfunction will increase as board interference increases.

H_2 Mental health dysfunction will decrease as board enhancement increases.

H_3 Health perceptions will become more negative as board interference increases.

H_4 Health perceptions will become more positive as board enhancement increases.

H_5 Disengagement will increase, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board interference increases.

H_6 Exhaustion will increase, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board interference increases.

H_7 Disengagement will decrease, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board enhancement increases.

H_8 Exhaustion will decrease, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board enhancement increases.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature on nonprofit organizational governance has grown significantly over the past two decades. There is, however, scant empirical literature examining the topic of the board – executive director relationship, which is identified by many as the most important relationship in a nonprofit organization's governance structure (Eadie, 2001; Howe, 2004; Lechem, 2002; Light, 2002; Tebbe, 1998). This chapter will discuss the nonprofit organization and the differences between nonprofit and for-profit organizations, nonprofit governance, the role of the board, the role of the executive director, the relationship between the board of directors and the executive director, current leadership challenges in nonprofits and the Job Demands-Resources model.

The Nonprofit Organization

As government funding for social services has declined in the United States, the public has become increasingly reliant on nonprofit organizations to fill the gap to meet the basic human need. The charitable public has high expectations for the work human services organizations do, and have come to expect that quality of service is unaffected by profit margins (Futter & Overton, 1997). Profitability can, and has, affected services offered by for-profit organizations. One only has to look at the airline industry historically and the more recent banking industry to see an illustration of the impact profits can have on services offered (Markman, 2007).

The nonprofit sector has been identified as the "third sector" in America in addition to the public and governmental sectors (O'Neill, 1989). Nonprofit organizations are defined by the Internal Revenue Service tax code, Section 501(c)(3). The code is as follows:

(3) Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in subsection (h)), and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office (IRS, 2009).

The governance structures of nonprofit and for-profit organizations are not vastly different and they face some of the same challenges. There are differences, however, as one might expect.

Governance

The administration of an organization, referred to as governance, is the responsibility of the board of directors (Carver, 1997; Gies, Ott, & Shafritz, 1990). The board has the legal responsibility to ensure the organization is conducting business in accordance with the articles of incorporation, bylaws and organizational mission, and in addition to local, state and federal laws (Dropkin & La Touche, 1998; O'Neill & Young, 1988). The articles of incorporation are legally binding, as are the bylaws of the organization (Tesdahl, 2003). The articles of incorporation are filed with the state and are the legal documents that create the organization. The bylaws are the written legal

operating guideline for the board. The bylaws flesh out the organization created by the articles of incorporation and describe how business is to be conducted. The most specific written documents in the creation of an organization are the policies that describe how the organization will fulfill the purpose for which it was created (Axelrod, 1994b; Carver, 2006). Board members that operate nonprofit organizations unethically or illegally can be subject to lawsuits and prosecution (Waldo, 1986). While the law views the board as one entity, the courts have shown a willingness to allow individual members to be held accountable for the actions of the board as a whole (Gies, Ott, & Shafritz, 1990; Nicholas, 1993). The board has fiduciary responsibility as well, which is the legal responsibility to hold the property and power in trust for the public (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1991). The board is legally required to act in the best interest of the organization and therefore the public good (Andringa & Engstrom, 2007; Brown, 1994; Duca, 1996; Panaro, 1993). This brief examination of the legal responsibilities of the board puts the seriousness of board membership in perspective. Board members are responsible not only for providing advice and donations, but also bear a responsibility to the public in general and donors specifically (not to member client welfare).

The Board of Directors

The nonprofit board is generally elected in accordance with the bylaws (O'Neill & Young, 1988; Wilbur, Smith & Associates, 2000). Members are usually chosen on the merits of business acumen, professional expertise, community influence, and financial capacity to support the needs of the nonprofit organization (Wilber et al., 2000). Many of these descriptors may sound similar to for-profit boards. There are many similarities, including the legal obligations of the board and why members are recruited.

By definition, for-profit boards work to generate profits for shareholders and owners – considered investors (O'Neill & Young, 1988). The boards tend to be rather small (3-7 members) and are primarily made up of other business executives. Their efforts are motivated by financial profit and grounded in the principles of capitalism. The members of the board are elected by shareholders and often are paid for their service on the board. Financial success effects leadership success. Accountability to the public is limited to what is required by law to be released to the public. Transparency and accountability for a for-profit company is limited to what the law requires to be released publicly. Openness about business operations and the financial standing of the company are not generally valued by those who lead for-profit companies. They generally are very private and protective of the competitive information of the corporation. This is the opposite of the approach that nonprofit organizations take, where openness and transparency is the norm.

On the other hand, the nonprofit board has the goal of improving human capital of at-risk individuals by fulfilling the stated service mission of the organization. Nonprofit boards tend to be rather large, with a median of seventeen members (Brudney, 2001). Similar to for-profit board members, the members of the board are often people in the community with specialized knowledge or skills that are beneficial to the organization. The members are often people of influence in the community with the capacity to financially support the organization. The beneficiaries of their work are ultimately the clients of the nonprofit. Membership to boards is decided by election, by appointment or the recommendation of other board members in collaboration with the executive director. Most nonprofit board members are not paid for their service (Bernstein, 1997; Brudney, 2001). In contrast to the for-profit organization, nonprofit organizations are accountable

to the public at large and provide extensive information to the public regarding their operations, budgets and activities.

Many articles, books and white papers exist that prescribe various structures of nonprofit governance; however, there is a consensus about effective nonprofit governance. The most common board functions cited in the literature are establishing the organization's mission; hiring the executive director; overseeing strategic organizational planning; understanding and following all legal, ethical, financial and moral obligations; serving as a representative of the organizations in the community; and assisting with fundraising goals (Herman & Associates, 2005; Knauft, Berger & Gray, 1991; Powell & Steinberg, 2006). Equally important, the board is not to be a demand on the effective executive director by micromanaging the day to day operations and activities.

A challenge that nonprofits share with their for-profit counterparts is measuring their effectiveness. In for-profit corporations, profits show success and are easy to quantify (O'Neill & Young, 1988). A for-profit organization with a ten percent profit growth over the last fiscal year can easily say they were more successful than the previous year. By what measure do nonprofits determine success? Any agency uses their mission statement to determine what specific outcomes they are seeking. The successful impact of a nonprofit agency's services is much more nebulous and difficult to quantify than measures of for-profit success (Anthony & Young, 1989; Nanus & Dobbs, 1999).

Organizational Effectiveness

Herman and Associates describe the "Central paradox of nonprofit boards is that the board holds ultimate power but it does not ordinarily wield it operationally unless the organization does not have any paid staff members." Unless an organization is very new, the board commonly delegates all day-to-day operations and staff member management

to the executive director (Anthony & Herzlinger, 1975; Axelrod, 1994b). In new organizations, there may not be any staff hired in the beginning, however, as the organization grows the day-to-day duties are shifted away from the board to the executive director (Andringa & Engstrom, 2007; Berstein, 1997; Brophy, 1986; Heidrick, 1996; Kolzow, 1995; Mathiasen, 1990; Tesdahl, 2003; Wilbur et al., 2000).

The first important issue for any board to address is the mission of the organization (Muehrcke, Mattison, & Society for Nonprofit Organizations, 1993). It is the mission of the organization, along with constituent needs, that drive the organization as described in the articles of incorporation (Houle, 1989). The second most important task of a board is choosing the executive director.

Executive Director

While the primary role of the board is to provide global leadership, the executive director's primary role is to manage daily operations (Duca, 1996; Houle, 1989; Wilbur et al., 2000). Part of those daily operations should be recruitment, selection and retention of staff and volunteers (Bernstein, 1997; Wolf, 1984). The executive director acts as a conduit between the board and the staff, volunteers and clients of the agency. The board communicates to the executive director, primarily through the chairman of the board acting as spokesperson, and the executive director distributes directions and information to the staff. Conversely, the staff communicates information about the daily operations to the executive director, who passes along the most important information to the board through the chairman. This leadership role allows the executive director to function as a buffer between the board and the staff and reflects the generally agreed upon Carver Policy Governance model of nonprofit leadership (Carver, 1997; Seel, Regel, & Meneghetti, 2001). Any evaluation of staff performance by board members should pass

through the executive director to the individual (Bernstein, 1997). The ability of the board chair and the executive director to work together effectively is paramount to the organization's success. Sometimes the chair plays the role of mentor and advisor, while other times playing a more supportive role with the executive director. Both the executive director and the chair must remain flexible as circumstances change. Regular communication is essential to keeping the board informed at all times (Knauft et al., 1991).

While regular communication with the board is vital, flooding the board with non-essential information does not assist the board in determining if organizational goals are being met. Carver's Policy Governance model is based on principles that eliminate many of the challenges discussed above. Carver's (1997) model is a way of thinking about board leadership that can be applied to a wide variety of organizations. The model encourages true leadership by encouraging focus on the larger issues of policy, as well as on the impact of the organization on the world (referred to as ends). An organization's means include anything not classified as an end. This distinction helps those within the organization to separate issues of organizational purpose from all else and to place appropriate focus on the ends of the organization (Carver & Carver, 1996a).

The board acts on behalf of the owners of the organization. Rather than trying to control all aspects of the organization, the board focuses on policy. The board empowers the CEO and delegates to the CEO the responsibility of carrying out policies created by the board. The CEO is then free to make the decisions necessary to work within the policies established, but the board does not interfere with those decisions (Carver, 2002). The board clearly states the expectations of performance to the CEO, and monitors the progress toward meeting those expectations. Carver's model limits the role of the board

to these three areas described: connecting to the moral and legal owners of the organization, creating clear governing policies, establishing clear expectations for organizational and CEO performance, and creating accountability procedures. Policy governance eliminates micromanaging, communication breakdowns, vague expectations, and distractions from the organization's primary purpose (Carver & Carver, 1996b).

There is some debate about the executive director having a formal place on the board. Most researchers agree that the executive director should be allowed to attend board meetings and to have the opportunity to address members of the board (Andringa & Engstrom, 2007; Duca, 1996; Herzlinger, 1994; Houle, 1989; Kolzow, 1995; O'Connell, 1997; Wolf, 1984; Zeitlin, Dorn & National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996). Some feel the executive director should have voting rights as well (Andringa & Engstrom, 2007; Houle, 1989). Opponents of voting rights for executive directors site the possibility of conflict of interest as the reason for not supporting voting privileges for executive directors (Herzlinger, 1994; Kolzow, 1995; Zeitlin et al., 1996).

The Board Chair-Executive Director Relationship

Several researchers believe the most important relationship in a nonprofit organization is the relationship between the board chair and the executive director; however, the literature on this most important relationship is very slim. It can be inferred from the literature that the effectiveness of the organization hinges on the relationship between the board chair and executive director. One of the most common reasons executive directors cite for resigning from a nonprofit organization is their relationship with the board or the chairman of the board (Peters & Wolfred, 2001; Wolfred, Allison & Masaoka, 1999). As previously discussed, the executive director and the board chair are the conduits of communication between the board and the staff that manages daily

operations. It is not hard to imagine the impact staff ordinarily could have on the at-risk client. The board chair and the executive director must trust one another and work together harmoniously as the two members of the organization with the highest amount of responsibility (Bernstein, 1997; Knauft, et al., 1991; Middleton, 1987; Vladeck, 1988, Wilbur et al., 2000). Because of the nature of the relationship between the board and the executive director, there will exist a certain amount of conflict (Houle, 1989; O'Neill & Young, 1988). The best board-executive director relationships are those in which the executive director does not dominate the board, the board does not micromanage the daily operations of the agency, the board and the executive director are not in disagreement about how to carry out the organizational mission, and requests made by the board to the executive director are not excessive, given the executive director's resources (Houle, 1989). Wilbur et al. (2000) posited different, but equally essential roles for the executive director and the board. It is critical that the executive director be given the freedom to manage daily operations without board interference (Wilbur et al., 2000). In some instances both the executive director and the board chair are strong leaders which can make learning to work in a partnership more difficult. Both must share power and focus on the mission of the organization in order for the relationship to be as conflict-free as possible and for the client to prosper.

Current Leadership Crisis

Changes in the board and executive director roles can result in an organization losing sight of the goals that have been established and can cause enough confusion and disarray to produce a loss of momentum by the organization (Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996). As the Baby Boomers begin to retire from the workforce a personnel crisis is emerging. Given the anticipated changes in the workforce and the resulting uncertainty that can

emerge following a change in leadership, the decisions regarding new executive directors are even more critical. The leadership skills of executive directors are crucial. Incumbent leaders must prepare their organizations for changes on the horizon while addressing current challenges; incoming leaders must be able to sustain the momentum and focus immediately upon the current status of the organization (Knauft et al., 1991). The flexibility of the nonprofit executive director is more vital than ever, as markets fluctuate, economic pressure increases, and the anticipated leadership migration in the nonprofit sector. Historically nonprofit executive directors have experienced long hours and low pay, in spite of the requirement of complete dedication to the organization. The current generation of nonprofit leadership has offered itself as a safeguard for the organization, and there is some concern this same level of dedication will not be extended by the incoming generation. It is likely the emerging leadership of the new generation will be vastly different (Kunreuther, Kim & Rodriguez, 2002). Therefore an understanding of the interplay between boards and executive directors will be crucial in the recruitment, selection and retention of effective executive directors.

According to Kunreuther, Kim & Rodrigues (2009), there are four generations currently in the workforce: the Traditional or Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000). Each generation has a different approach to the workforce and leadership. The Traditional Generation favors a more hierarchical, top-down style of management. They tend to be very devoted to their organizations. The Baby Boomers are vast in numbers (roughly 80 million) and tend to believe in hierarchy, but attempt to be less top-down and exclusive in their management. Generation Xers are a much smaller generation (an estimated 45 million), and tend to be

independent. Their independence is often expressed in not liking to be told what to do. The focus for the Xers are on results. Generation Y is roughly the size of the baby boomers. They tend to be self-confident and rely on their practical skills. Studies have shown repeatedly that executive directors are leaving the workforce and the nonprofit sector seems to be unprepared for the coming transition (Kunreuther et al., 2009).

The current economic crisis presents deleterious effects for all sectors of the economy, but those organizations with endowments are anticipating continued and unique challenges that may extend far beyond the current crisis. Foundations typically payout using multi-year rolling averages, as do most educational institutions. This will result in decreased giving in 2010 or beyond (Strom, 2008). The DOW industrial average dropped from 13,010 in May 1, 2008 to just over 8,000 in April 2009 with a low of 6,469 in March 9, 2009.

Burnout

The study of burnout began over thirty years ago as an observed social issue and has evolved into a quest for practical solutions. The study of occupational burnout has grown to include scholarly research, but the emphasis on practical applications remains. The self-help industry and professional development workshops long preceded the scholarly research (Maslach, 1993).

Studies have identified various contributors to burnout and have defined the concept in many ways. Long lists of job stressors and factors thought to be related to burnout have been developed over the course of time. Every researcher seeking to create a list of factors that cause burnout faced the same challenge: What list of factors can be applied to a wide variety of occupations that are filled with countless individual people? One concern researchers have voiced about the lists of job stressors and factors is that the

lists reduce burnout to a static mental condition rather than a dynamic process that develops over time (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

The first definition of burnout was offered by Freudenberger (1974), who identified three characteristics are still recognized today as comprising the core of burnout: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment. The most influential definition of burnout was offered by Maslach and Jackson (1986), wherein burnout was described as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment occurring in those who do people-oriented work. The idea that those who engage in people-oriented work were more susceptible to burnout was born with this definition. The chronic nature of burnout was identified by Maslach (1993), who described burnout as a response to chronic exposure to job stressors. Over time, the two basic dimensions of burnout that have shown the most robust relationship with job stressors are depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). While lack of personal accomplishment is cited to be an additional factor in burnout, it is rarely the primary focus of research (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2000). Lack of personal accomplishment can be defined as a negative assessment of and a feeling of inadequacy with regards to one's work (Schaufeli & Buunk, 1996).

The development of the burnout syndrome has been described as following a certain path the majority of the time. It begins with chronic stressors, which lead to exhaustion; exhaustion grows into depersonalization and/or cynicism. If conditions continue without improvement in some way, the worker begins to experience feelings of a lack of personal accomplishment. This increasingly negative trajectory was described by Leiter and Maslach (1998) and has been supported by other studies on burnout

(Bakker, Schaufeli, Demerouti, Janssen, & Van Der Hulst, 2000; Cordes & W., 1993; Leiter & Meechan, 1986).

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) discuss the problematic nature of defining burnout. There are two immediate issues involved in attempting to compile a list of symptoms: 1) no list of symptoms could ever be exhaustive and 2) a list of symptoms represents burnout as a static state rather than a dynamic process. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) suggest two types of definitions for burnout: state definitions and process definitions. State definitions are those that identify the core symptoms of burnout that describe the end-state of the burnout process. Process definitions describe the dynamic process of the burnout syndrome.

Three elements emerge from the comparison of state definitions of burnout, including the symptoms of burnout, how it originates and evolves, and where burnout is most likely to occur. Some of the most common symptoms of burnout include exhaustion, disengagement, negative attitudes about coworkers and service recipients, and a decline in effectiveness and overall performance. According to Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), burnout begins with unrealistic expectations and emotional demands. Burnout is generally thought to be work-related and to occur in those who do not have other underlying mental illness. Indeed, those who experience burnout have functioned in a normal capacity prior to the development of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Process definitions of burnout also point stress resulting from discrepancies between expectations and reality as a contributing factor to the development of burnout. As the stress over the imbalance between expectations and reality grows, how the stress is handled determines if the tension reaches an intensity and duration sufficient for development into burnout. The individual may not notice their progression toward

burnout. It can be present for quite some time before the individual becomes aware of it (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Initial theories suggested that burnout primarily affected human services workers. The emotionally taxing nature of relationships with clients served by human services workers was thought to be the primary cause of burnout (Maslach, 1993). Research by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) found that there were other job demands like heavy workload, time pressure, and conflicts surrounding roles in the workplace which were highly correlated with symptoms of burnout. These job demands were actually more highly correlated with job burnout than emotionally taxing relationships with clients. Meta-analyses identified many factors related to burnout such as lack of performance feedback, low social support, and lack of independence. The identification of these different factors supports the idea that burnout does not just affect human services workers, but rather that burnout can effect a wide range of individuals in various occupational settings. Karasek's (1979) Job Demands-Control model assumed that work load and time constraints were the most significant stressors in the workplace. The more recently developed Job Demands-Resources model takes a broader approach to workplace stressors, as job demands are defined as any condition that potentially evokes stress reactions. Thus, the individual worker, regardless of occupation or any other mitigating factor, self-defines work-related stressors based on individual reactions to stress. It is this principle of the Job Demands-Resources model that allows for freedom of application across all occupations and personal characteristics of individual workers (Demerouti et al., 2000).

Job Demands-Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model) was described in the early 2000's (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Although the model has been developed fairly recently, empirical research tends to support the assumptions of the model (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). The model was developed to address perceived weaknesses in the leading burnout models, specifically the demand-control model (DCM) and the effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model. The basic assumption of both the DCM and the ERI-model is that job demands particularly lead to job strain, when certain job resources are lacking. The DCM cites the lack of autonomy as leading to job strain. The ERI-model, on the other hand, points to monetary compensation, job security, advancement opportunities, and esteem as the job resources. While both models were simple and straightforward, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli (2001) saw this as a weakness of both models. Because the working environment in organizations is rarely so simple and clear-cut, it was thought that reducing job resources to a few prescribed variables was not expansive enough. Prior research supported Demerouti, et al. (2001) by showing that there is, in reality, quite a long list of job demands and job resources that workers list. The question became if the DCM and the ERI-model could really be applicable across all occupations or if there were other variables at play. The fixed list of variables for both the DCM and the ERI-model did not allow for changes and fluctuations, which was also thought to be a weakness. Perhaps a model could be created that could be more applicable to a wider range of occupations, thus creating the motivation for the development of the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

There are three principles of the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model). The first principal is the assumption of this model that every occupation has its own specific characteristics related to job stress. Those characteristics fall into two categories, job demands and job resources. These two types of working conditions are described by (Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Salonova, 2006):

> *Job demands* refers to the physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or mental effort and that are thus associated with certain physiological and psychological costs. On the other hand, *job resources* refers to physical, psychological, social, or organization aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker, Shaufeli, & Demerouti, 2003, p. 379).

While job resources motivate employees, job demands drain the employee's energy reserves and can lead to burnout and disengagement.

The second principle of the JD-R model is that there are two different psychological processes that contribute to job strain or job motivation. The first process is the health impairment process, which results from jobs that are poorly designed or jobs that have chronically high demands that tax employees' mental and physical energy reserves. This can lead to exhaustion and to health issues. The second process is motivational, suggesting that job resources have the potential to motivate employees, resulting in work engagement, low cynicism and high performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The interaction of job demands and resources effects both job strain and motivation. It is thought that job resources buffer the negative effects of job demands,

and that several job resources can play the role of buffer for several different job demands. This claim sets the JD-R model apart from other models such as the DCM which pairs specific job resources with job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The final principal of the JD-R model is that job resources particularly influence motivation or work engagement when job demands are high.

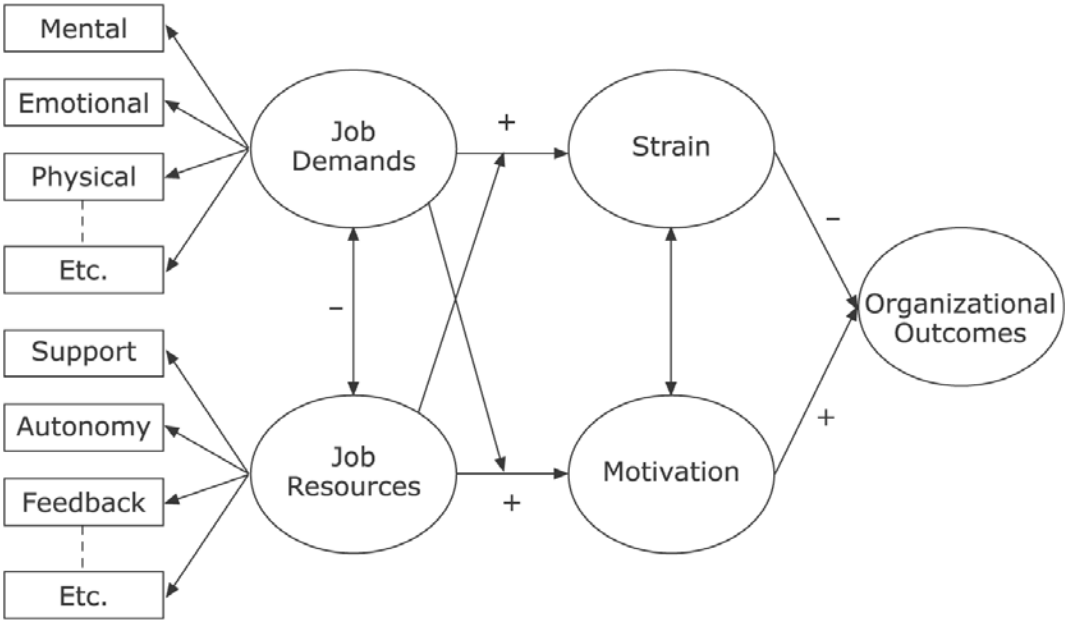

Figure 1. The Job Demands-Resources model of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Used with permission.

The JDR has been tested in **Australia** (Lewig, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard & Metzer, 2007), **Finland** (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2006), **Germany** (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2000; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, Schaufeli, 2001), **Greece** (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003), **The Netherlands** (Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2003; Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007), **Norway** (Martinussen, Richardsen, & Burke, 2007), **South Africa** (Jackson, Rothmann, & van de

Vijver, 2006),**Spain** (Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Salanova, 2006), and **Sweden** (Peterson, Demerouti, Bergström, Åsberg, & Nygren, 2008), with various occupations. Although the JDR has been tested in a variety of settings and locations, it has not been tested in the United States with executive directors of nonprofit human services agencies. Thus, this research contributes new knowledge by testing the JD-R model in a new way, as well as using a new model to examine the burnout of executive directors and to learn more about what they define as their job demands and job resources.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Target Population

The target population for this study included all executive directors from the 13,891 501 (c)(3) organizations located in a medium-sized city in the southern plains of the United States. The sample was a convenience sample, based on the executive director's email address being available to the executive director of a neutral third party.

Procedures

Upon approval from The University of Oklahoma Human Subject Review Board, the link to the completed survey with an explanatory email was emailed to the executive director of a neutral third party, who in turn forwarded the email to the executive directors. The researcher was not given the names and email addresses of the executive directors of the agencies. The neutral third party was chosen in order to avoid any undue influence from a funding agency or foundation sending out the survey link and explanatory email. The third party estimated that there were approximately 300 email addresses available. An exact count was unavailable.

Those executive directors agreeing to participate in the survey were directed to a website hosting the questionnaire. Upon agreeing to an electronic version of an informed consent statement, participants completed the survey anonymously. Neither the survey nor the website collected any identifying information.

Measures

All scales were presented with a Likert-Type response format and scored according to the guidelines provided by the author of the measure.

The **Medical Outcomes Survey – Short Form 20 (SF-20)** (Stewart, Hays, & Ware, 1988) has 20 items (m = 51.53, sd = 7.86) and examines six health concepts: *physical function* (6 items), *role functioning* (2 items), *social functioning* (1 item), *mental health* (5 items), *health perceptions* (5 items), and *pain* (1 item). The **SF-20** uses a mixture of 5-point Likert scales, 3-point Likert scales and 6-point Likert scales. Internal consistency reliability for this scale was .745. Removing an item of the scale would create insignificant changes to Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .697 to .786.

Mental health (5 items) (m = 12.50, sd = 4.23) includes such things as general mood, affect and psychological well being. A representative example of the items asks how often during the past month the respondent has felt downhearted and blue. Internal consistency reliability for this scale was .857 Removing an item of the scale would create insignificant changes to Cronbach's α, resulting in a of .804 to .859.

Health perception (5 items) (m = 12.74, sd = 4.84) measures the respondent's overall perceptions of their current health condition. A representative example of the items asks the respondent to rate their health in comparison to the people they know. Internal consistency reliability for this scale was .916 Removing an item of the scale would create insignificant changes to Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .879 to .922.

Board interference was measured with 10 items (m = 15.06, sd = 4.94) based on the **Family-to-Work Interference Scale** (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996) developed by the Sloan Work-Family Researchers Electronic Network. Words such as "home" and "personal" were replaced with "board," and the word "work" to "other aspects of my work" to distinguish between board responsibilities and other work responsibilities. A representative example of one of the original items asks the respondent if the behavior that was effective and necessary for them at home was counterproductive

at work. The item was changed to ask if behavior that was effective and necessary for them with the board was counterproductive for them in other aspects of their work. Respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences over the past three months. The items were presented in four-point Likert scales (1=rarely to 4=most of the time). Internal consistency reliability for this scale was .914. Removing an item of the scale would create insignificant changes to Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .896 to .918.

Board enhancement was measured with 7 items (m = 18.56, sd = 6.15) based on the **Family-to-Work Enhancement Scale** (Netemeyer et al., 1996) developed by the Sloan Work-Family Researchers Electronic Network. Respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences over the past three months. The items were presented in four-point Likert scales (1=rarely to 4=most of the time). Words such as "home" and "personal" were replaced with "board," to change the wording to distinguish between board responsibilities and other work responsibilities. A representative example of the original items asks the respondent if their family or personal life gave them the energy to do their job. The revised version asks if their relationship with the board gives them the energy to do their job. Internal consistency reliability for this scale was .918. Removing an item from the scale would create insignificant changes to Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .898 to .922.

The **Oldenburg Burnout Inventory** (**OLBI**) (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003) was used to assess *exhaustion* and *disengagement*, classic symptoms of burnout. The **OLBI** has 16 items (m = 44.26, sd = 7.42) presented in a four-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree to 4=Strongly Disagree). Internal consistency reliability for the exhaustion scale was .897. Removing an item from the scale would not significantly impact Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .887 to .903.

Eight items measure *disengagement* ($m = 23.53$, $sd = 3.74$). A representative example of the eight *disengagement* items asks the respondent if they always find new and interesting aspects in their work. Internal consistency reliability for the *disengagement* scale was .782. Removing an item from the scale would not significantly impact Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .734 to .800.

There are eight items which measure *exhaustion* ($m = 20.84$, $sd = 4.35$). A representative example of the *exhaustion* items asks the respondent if there are days they feel tired before they arrive at work. Internal consistency reliability for the exhaustion scale was .876. Removing an item from the scale would not significantly impact Cronbach's α, resulting in a range of .85 to .87.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

In order to examine the hypotheses of this study, Pearson product moment correlations were computed. Because the hypotheses were directional in nature, the correlations were tested at the one-tail. This is followed by a series of regression analyses to further clarify the impact of board members on executive director well-being and burnout.

Demographics

For this study, the average age of the respondents was 49.99 (n = 175). The majority of the sample was female at 71.7% (n = 176). Most respondents were Caucasian (89.1%), with the next highest reporting groups being African American (2.2%) and Hispanic (2.2%) (n = 176). Most respondents reported having completed higher education degree programs, with 38.6% reporting having earned a bachelor's degree and 42.9% reporting having earned a graduate degree (n = 176). The majority (67.9%) of the respondents had never held the executive director position at another nonprofit organization (n = 153). Tenure was broken down into segments: less than one year (11.4%), one to three years (31.0%), four to five years (10.9%), five to ten years (20.1%), and 20.7% with more than ten years (n = 173). Just over eighty-seven percent of respendents reported that they were full-time employees of the nonprofit organization (n = 173).

The demographics of the nonprofit organizations show the number of board members range between 5 and 100, with an average of 19.09 (n = 156). The results show that the average number of volunteers for each organization was 196.99 (n = 150) and the average number of paid staff was 38.93 (n = 156). The directors reported the budget of

their nonprofit organization ranged from $0 to $70 million with a mean of $2.58 million ($n$ = 143). Respondents were asked if their organization was part of a national organization or an independent organization, and 63% responded that the organization was an independent organizations (n = 156).

Correlations

As seen in Table 1, a moderate positive correlation was observed between board interference and mental health (r = .49, p < .01). Also, health perceptions were observed as having a moderate, positive correlation with board interference (r = .37, p < .01). Board enhancement had a moderate negative correlation with mental health issues (r = -.45, p < .01). Board enhancement had a weak negative correlation with health perceptions (r = -.25 p < .01). These findings suggest that as board interferences increases, health perceptions become more negative. Additionally, as board enhancement increases, mental health becomes less dysfunctional and health perceptions become less negative.

A moderate negative correlation was observed between disengagement and board interference (r = -.42, p < .01), while a strong negative correlation was observed between exhaustion and board interference (r = -.56, p < .01). Also, disengagement had a moderate positive correlation with board enhancement (r = .46, p < .01). Board enhancement had a moderate positive correlation with exhaustion (r = .44, p < .01). These findings suggest that as board interference increases, disengagement increases, as does exhaustion. As board enhancement increases, disengagement and exhaustion both decrease.

Mental health had a strong negative correlation with disengagement

(r = -.53, p < .01), while health perceptions had a moderate negative correlation with disengagement (r = -.43, p < .01). A strong negative relationship was observed between mental health and exhaustion (r = -.57, p < .01). Health perceptions had a strong negative correlation with exhaustion (r = -.76, p < .01). These findings suggest that as mental health dysfunction increases, disengagement and exhaustion increase. Additionally, as health perceptions become more negative, disengagement and exhaustion increase.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental Health	12.50	4.23	(.857)					
Health Perceptions	12.74	4.84	.605	(.916)				
Disengagement	23.53	3.74	-.528	-.427	(.782)			
Exhaustion	20.84	4.35	-.760	-.568	.711	(.876)		
Board Enhancement	18.56	6.15	-.445	-.249	.464	.437	(.918)	
Board Interference	15.06	4.94	.488	.373	-.416	-.558	-.541	(.914)

Note: Coefficient alphas are shown in parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations are statistically significant at the p < .01 level.

Hierarchical Regression

The impact of the board on mental health.

For the first model, the impact of the board on mental health, the MOS scale of Mental Health [R^2 = .280, F(2,137) = 26.655, p < .01] accounts for 28.0 % of the variation with board interference and board enhancement as the independent variables. For the first model, board enhancement (β = -.276, p < .01) and board interference (β = .326, p < .01) are significant predictors of mental health functioning. These results

provide support for Hypothesis 1, as mental health dysfunction indeed increased as board interference increased. Additionally, the results provide support for Hypothesis 2, as mental health dysfunction decreased as board enhancement increased.

Table 2
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis – Mental Health Function

	Mental Health Function		
Variable	B	SE	β
Constant	11.978	1.978	
Board Enhancement	-.191	.059	-.276*
Board Interference	.278	.073	.326*
R^2		.280	
F		26.655	

Note: *$p < .05$

The impact of the board on health perceptions.

The second model, the impact of the board on health perceptions, the MOS scale of Health Perceptions [$R^2 = .138$, $F(2,134) = 10.771$, $p < .01$] accounts for 13.8% of the variance with board interference and board enhancement as the independent variables. For the second model, board interference ($\beta = .320$, $p < .01$) is a significant predictor of health perception. These results provide support for Hypothesis 3, as health perceptions became more negative as board interference increased. The results do not support Hypothesis 4, as health perceptions did not become more positive as board enhancement increased.

Table 3
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis – Health Perceptions

	Health Perceptions		
Variable	B	SE	β
Constant	9.468	2.509	
Board Enhancement	-.065	.075	-.083*
Board Interference	.312	.093	.320*
R^2		.138	
F		10.771	

Note: *$p < .05$

The impact of the board on disengagement.

The third model examines the impact of the board on disengagement over and above mental health and health perception. In the first stage in for this data, mental health and health perception [$R^2 = .303$, $F(2,124) = 26.925$, $p < .01$] account for 30.3% of the variance in disengagement. For this the first model, health perception and mental health are significant predictors of disengagement.

However, for the second stage, 37.8% of the variance with disengagement is accounted for by the model. Therefore, board interference accounts for an additional 7.6% of the variance in disengagement above and beyond mental health and health perception ($\Delta R^2 = .076$). In the second model [$R^2 = .379$, $F(4,122) = 18.582$, $p < .01$], board enhancement and board interference are significant predictors of disengagement over and above mental health and health perceptions. These results support Hypothesis 5, as disengagement increased, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board interference increased. The results also support Hypothesis 7, as disengagement decreased, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board enhancement increased.

Table 4
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis – Disengagement

		Disengagement		
		B	*SE*	β
Step 1				
	Constant	30.141	.948	
	Mental Health	-.374	.084	-.415*
	Health Perception	-.148	.072	-.192*
	R^2		.303	
	F		26.925	
Step 2				
	Constant	26.144	1.951	
	Mental Health	-.226	.089	-.251*
	Health Perception	-.156	.069	-.203*
	Board Interference	-.054	.067	-.073*
	Board Enhancement	.166	.054	.272*
	R^2		.379	
	ΔF		7.442	
	ΔR^2		.076	

Note: *$p < .05$

The impact of the board on exhaustion.

The fourth model examines the impact of the board on exhaustion over and above mental health and health perception. In the first stage in for this data, mental health and health perception [$R^2 = .592$, $F(2,128) = 92.848$, $p < .01$] account for 59.2% of the variance with exhaustion. For this the first stage, health perception and mental health are significant predictors of exhaustion.

However, for the second stage, there is an increase to 63.7% of the variance with exhaustion. Therefore, board interference accounts for an additional 4.5% of the variance in exhaustion above and beyond mental health and health perception ($\Delta R^2 = .045$). In the

second stage [R^2 = .637, F(4,126) = 55.203, p < .01], board enhancement and board interference are significant predictors of exhaustion over and above mental health and health perceptions. These results support Hypothesis 6, as exhaustion increased, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board interference increased. The results also support Hypothesis 8, as exhaustion decreased, above and beyond mental health and health perceptions, as board enhancement increased.

Table 5
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis – Exhaustion

		Exhaustion		
		B	SE	β
Step 1				
	Constant	30.971	.796	
	Mental Health	-.638	.071	-.630*
	Health Perception	-.180	.061	-.207*
	R^2		.592	
	F		92.848	
Step 2				
	Constant	31.194	1.634	
	Mental Health	-.524	.074	-.518*
	Health Perception	-.161	.058	-.185*
	Board Interference	-.178	.058	-.206*
	Board Enhancement	.044	.045	.064*
	R^2		.637	
	ΔF		7.756	
	ΔR^2		.045	

Note: *p < .05

Conclusion

The results support each of the hypotheses for this study except for one, Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 states that health perceptions will become more positive as board enhancement increases. The results for Hypothesis 4 were not statistically

significant. These findings have implications for further study, as will be addressed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This chapter discusses the study results and the possible implications for nonprofit organizational leadership. This study provides new information critical for laying the foundation for a better understanding of the relationship between the board of directors and the executive directors of nonprofit organizations. The research illustrates the effect that the board can have on burnout among executive directors and lead to more carefully constructed relationships to avoid burnout.

Overview of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which executive directors' relationships with their boards of directors is experienced as an interference or enhancement. Further, this study set out to examine the effect that the relationship being experienced as an interference or enhancement effects mental health, health perceptions and the two main dimensions of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement.

Overview of Findings

The results of the study supported all but one of the hypotheses. In the current study, mental health dysfunction increased and mental health perceptions became more negative as board inference increased, supporting Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3. Also, mental health dysfunction decreased as board enhancement increased, supporting Hypothesis 2. Disengagement and exhaustion increased as board interference increased, over and above mental health and health perceptions, supporting Hypothesis 5 and 6. Disengagement and exhaustion decreased as board enhancement increased, over and above mental health and health perceptions, supporting Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8.

Hypothesis 4, positing that health perceptions will become more positive as board enhancement increases, was not supported.

Findings in Relation to the Job Demands-Resources Model

The findings of this study correlate as expected with the JD-R scales of disengagement and exhaustion. Board interference, a job demand, was shown to be related to higher mental health dysfunction and more negative health perceptions. Board enhancement, a job resource, was shown to be related to lower mental health dysfunction. The results indicate that board interference is related to higher disengagement and higher exhaustion above and beyond mental health and health perceptions. These findings support the JD-R belief that when job demands are high and resources are limited, employees become exhausted and lose motivation (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Also, the results indicate that board interference is related to lower disengagement and lower exhaustion above and beyond mental health and health perceptions. This supports the JD-R tenet that job resources buffer the effects of job demands and gives an indication about what a powerful job resource board enhancement may be.

Impact of Burnout on the Organization

If the state and process definitions of burnout are revisited, one can easily imagine that the impact of burnout on an organization and an employee's performance are incalculable. The emotional and mental exhaustion, negative attitudes towards other individuals, decreased effectiveness and decreased performance could each have serious and far-reaching effects on the organization. However, if these characteristics were all present in one individual, the negative effects on the organization, their work performance and their relationships with colleagues would be exponentially more negative. Also, the worker experiencing burnout is often also accompanied by a reduced

sense of effectiveness, decreased motivation and dysfunctional behaviors and attitudes at work. The idea that individuals experiencing burnout may not notice the characteristics of burnout within themselves immediately also has serious implications for the negative effects of the burned-out worker on the organization and the individuals within the organization. Even if an individual notices burnout within themselves, the lack of motivation that accompanies burnout would greatly reduce the drive needed to make the necessary changes to escape burnout.

Implications to Research

The literature on the relationship between the board and the executive director is severely lacking. While the importance of this relationship is recognized by many, little empirical research examines the relationship closely, thus creating a gaping hole in the study of organizational leadership. This study helps lay the foundation for a more complete understanding of the ways in which the board impacts the executive director. The results show that for this data, the board does have a significant impact on the mental health, health perceptions, disengagement and exhaustion of executive directors. An interesting finding is that the relationship between board enhancement and more positive health perceptions was not statistically significant, but the relationship between board interference and more negative health perceptions was statistically significant. This particular finding highlights the need for further research to understand the impact of the board on health perceptions. This begins to lay the foundation of empirical research that is desperately needed regarding the relationship between the board and executive directors of nonprofit organization. The study also begins the testing of the Job Demands-Resources model in American nonprofit organizations. Further study using the JD-R in various American organizations is needed. This study could be used as means of

comparison for those future studies to create a more complete understanding of the functioning of the JD-R in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations in America.

Implications to Executive Leadership

This study has implications for executive leadership in nonprofit organizations. The results give some idea of the possible impact of the board on mental health, health perceptions, and two key components of burnout. These findings emphasize the need for effective governance of the organization in order to protect both the individuals and the organization from the destructive effects of burnout.

The Policy Governance model and the view of board leadership that is incorporated within the model, contains elements that could potentially reduce the factors that lead to burnout. For instance, the Policy Governance model focuses on carefully defining the roles of both the board and the CEO (Carver, 2002). As discussed by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), burnout begins in part with tension arising from the discrepancies between the expectations of a worker and the sometimes disappointing reality of daily life in the work environment. As the Policy Governance model dictates, the board must clearly communicate expectations and monitor the CEO's progress toward meeting those expectations. While this clear communication may not eliminate unrealistic expectations entirely, it lays the appropriate foundation for realistic expectations on the part of the board and the part of the CEO. Policy governance eliminates micromanaging, communication breakdowns, vague expectations, and distractions from the organization's primary purpose. True leadership is emphasized by encouraging the board to focus on the larger issues of policy, as well as on the impact of the organization in general (Carver & Carver, 1996b).

Limitations of Study

The first observed limitation of this study is the size of the sample used. A larger sample could result in more generalizable results. Secondly, due to the fact the sample was a convenience sample and delivery of the link to the survey was through a neutral third party, the researcher does not have a precise response rate available for the survey, although it is estimated to be 57 percent. The third party estimated that there were approximately 300 email addresses available. An exact count was unavailable. If the researcher was able to collect the email addresses of executive directors and contact them directly, the researcher would know what percentage of the population was in the sample and the exact response rate of the sample.

Thirdly, the geographic location of the sample, a medium-sized city in the southern plains of the United States could limit the generalizability of the study. Having a nation-wide study would yield more information about the impact of board members on executive director burnout in the United States as a whole. These results could then be compared to those of other nations to understand the impact of board members globally.

The potential fourth limitation for the study would be the demographics of the sample. It is not know what the demographics of the population are, and it is possible that the sample is not representative of the population. The average age of the sample was 49.99, primarily white females with a college education. Further study is needed to determine the demographics of the population and to better understand the representativeness of the sample.

A fifth limitation could be the use of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) versus the historically more commonly used Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Using the MBI may assist in comparing the findings of this study to other burnout studies.

Lastly, the cross-sectional, correlational design of the study may create some limitations. A longitudinal study would yield more information about the impact of the board. With a longitudinal study a more complex statistical analysis could yield more comprehensive, generalizable results.

Organizational Responsibility

In light of the potential organizational impact of burnout and executive director job strain, what responsibilities belong to the board, the organization as a whole, or the executive director individually? Board responsibility, based on the Carver Policy Governance model (Carver, 2007), would include, among others, six basic initiatives. First, the board must engage in strategic planning, especially as it relates to sources of stress. Second, the board must prioritize the responsibility of the executive director in light of the ends of the organization. Third, succession planning must be valued and practiced. Fourth, the prudent board will encourage and promote training opportunities for all members of the organization. Fifth, considering sabbatical options for volunteers and staff could provide the kind of break from chronic stressors that could break the cycle of burnout. Lastly, the board must share the responsibility of acquiring resources, including fundraising efforts to sustain the work of the organization and the mission.

Organizational responsibility, including foundations that fund nonprofit organizations, is centered on eliminating as much stress as possible for the organization, the volunteers and the staff. These responsibilities mesh with the responsibilities of the board. Sources of stress should be identified and analyzed to find ways to reduce or eliminate stressors. Funding initiatives such as training opportunities, multi-year grant consideration, sabbaticals, and job coaches are areas where foundations can lend financial support and make a big difference day-to-day for the nonprofit organization.

Individuals both on the board and on staff must take responsibility for board development, training, wellness living and delegation of work tasks. With the board, foundations, organizations and individuals all taking responsibility for the health and well-being of the organization and the people involved, significant progress could be made toward breaking the cycle of burnout. This work would also aid in a shift organizational cultures to a healthier environment for all involved. Healthier organizations are capable of providing services to at-risk clients with less of a toll on all of those parties that contribute to the ends of the organization.

Conclusion

This study provides important insight into the impact of the board on executive directors of nonprofit organizations. The study also highlights some specific areas for further empirical study on the impact of the board on executive director burnout, and the relationship between the board and the executive director in general. The ever-increasing role of nonprofit organizations in the United States as the role of the government recedes and leaves gaps in services for at-risk clients makes the study of the nonprofit organizational leadership structure not only timely, but vital.

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APPENDIX 1

Informed Consent

The Impact of Board Members on Executive Director Job Strain

University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: The Impact of Board Members on Executive Director Job Stress
Principal Investigator: Jaime Olinske
Department: Graduate College

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted online. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an executive director of a nonprofit human services agency in Oklahoma. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of board members on executive director job stress.

Number of Participants
About 300 people will be asked to take part in this study.

Procedures and Length of Participation
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to respond to a survey on the internet. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. At anytime the participant wishes to end the survey, the participant may exit the survey.

This study has the following risks:
There is no degree of risk associated with participation in this study. Participants will provide information relative to their relationship with the board and board members of the nonprofit agency of which they are executive director.

Benefits of being in the study:
As a participant, there is the potential for this research to contribute significantly to the current literature within nonprofit management.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. Your responses to the questions are anonymous and cannot be traced back to you. Electronic research records will be stored securely. Only approved researchers will have access to the records. The survey will be administered online by an independent company Zip Survey. The OU Institutional Review Board may inspect and/or copy research records for quality assurance and data analysis.

Costs and Compensation
There is neither a cost nor compensatory benefits for participating in this study. Rights Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decline to participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions
If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (918) 812-5069 or jaime.olinske@ou.edu The student's advisor is Dr. Chan Hellman and may be contacted at 918.660.3485 or by e-mail at chellman@ou.edu. In the event of a research-related injury, contact the researcher(s). You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the individuals on the research team, or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please print a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent
By clicking the "I agree to participate" button, I am agreeing to participate in this study. If you choose not to take part in this study, please click the "I do not wish to participate" button below.

Thank you.
1.
(Required)

☐ I agree to participate

☐ I do not wish to participate