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# WORKING PAPER


# IDENTIFYING COMPETENCIES OF VOLUNTEER BOARD MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS

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Abstract

This study contributes to the emerging empirical studies on roles and responsibilities of boards in nonprofit organizations by identifying competencies of volunteer board members. We identified how two types of constituents—volunteer board members and sports members—perceived competencies of volunteer board members in community sports clubs. We used the repertory grid technique to draw cognitive maps and to reveal the perceived reality of these constituents. Our results suggest that constituents within a group share similar perceptions of competencies of outstanding performing board members, while they agree less on perceptions of poor performing board members. This study reveals that cognitive (e.g., having a long term vision, having professionalism), emotional (e.g., being reliable, being honest), and social intelligence (e.g., listening to others, being jovial/nice to be with) competencies are necessary to be perceived as an outstanding performing board member.


Keywords: "competencies", "boards", "cognitive maps", "board member", "emotional intelligence", "social intelligence"

IDENTIFYING COMPETENCIES OF VOLUNTEER BOARD MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY

SPORTS CLUBS

Volunteer boards of nonprofit organizations are critical assets in the overall performance of their organizations (Brown, 2005, 2007; Herman & Renz, 2000, 2004; Iecovich, 2004). They consist of members engaging on a voluntary basis, without being paid for their commitment. The effectiveness of these boards, however, has long been considered problematic (Cornforth, 2001; Herman & Renz, 2004). For example, Harris (1999) argued that either boards interfere too much in management operations, or, contrarily, that they do not get involved enough. As a result, there is a growing interest in the study of nonprofit board effectiveness and board performance that focuses on the roles and responsibilities of volunteer boards. Our study addressed the requirements for being an effective volunteer board member in terms of competencies rather than discussing the roles and responsibilities of volunteer board members. Competencies are important to study because board members who possess the necessary skills and knowledge as well as personality traits are assumed to be more effective (Leblanc, 2005; Lee & Phan, 2000). Therefore, it is important that nonprofit organizations look for the necessary competencies when recruiting new board members or when evaluating present board members. We define a competency as "an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge which results in superior performance" (Boyatzis, 1982, p. 21). We studied how two constituent groups, volunteer board members and sports members of a community sports club, perceived the required competencies of volunteer board members of sports clubs. Repertory grid technique (RGT) was used, a cognitive mapping technique that allows researchers to elicit individuals' perceptions of reality or mental models.

In the first section, we analyze the nonprofit literature on roles and responsibilities of boards and we discuss the relevant literature in nonprofit sport organizations. In the second section, we clarify our theoretical focus. In the third section, we describe our sample and explain our methodological

choices. In the fourth section, we present the results of the empirical study and in the fifth section, we discuss our results, draw conclusions and point to limitations of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

STUDIES ON BOARDS IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Early nonprofit literature on boards was dominated by a prescriptive style of authorship (e.g., Carver, 1990; Ducca, 1996; Houle, 1989; O'Connell, 1985). This literature prescribes standards about how a board ought to perform and offers guidelines for the roles of the board and the executive (Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1992; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003a; Miller-Millesen, 2003). Herman (1989) reviewed the prescriptive literature and concluded that there is a great deal of similarity between the different prescriptive models. Although some prescriptive standards for boards are still useful today, this practitioner-oriented kind of literature has been criticized for its lack of systematic empirical evidence (Cornforth, 2001; Jackson & Holland, 1998).

Starting in the 1990s, empirical nonprofit studies focusing on the competencies, roles and responsibilities of volunteer boards began to emerge (e.g., Green, Madjidi, Dudley, & Gehlen, 2001; Iecovich, 2004; Inglis, Alexander, & Weaver, 1999; Jackson & Holland, 1998). Inglis et al. (1999) developed an inverted pyramid approach that identified three main activities of the board: strategic activities, resource planning and operations. The measurement instrument contained fourteen items that were generated from the relevant nonprofit literature. Of the fourteen items on board roles and responsibilities, seven were rated as high in importance: responding to community needs, ensuring a mission and vision, developing and assessing long-range plans and overall strategy, setting financial policy, setting policy from which paid staff and program volunteers can deliver programs and services, developing collaborations and partnerships, and evaluating the executive director/CEO's performance. This framework suggested that strategic activities are the core tasks of a board, proceeding down to resource planning and then to operations. Jackson and Holland (1998) developed the Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BSAQ), a 65-item questionnaire to assess six dimensions of board

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competency: interpersonal, analytical, political, strategic, contextual and educational. These six dimensions captured the elements necessary to effective governance. In a study of nonprofit hospital boards, McDonagh (2008) found that the six competencies of the BSAQ are all important for effective boards. Strategic focus in particular was found to be related to the measure of organizational effectiveness.

Different constituents do make judgments about the board and the organizational effectiveness of their organization (Callen, Klein, & Tinkelman, 2003; Herman, Renz, & Heimovics, 1997). Empirical studies found differences in judgments by various constituents assessing roles and responsibilities of boards. Green et al. (2001) examined whether board members and executive directors differed in how they perceive what board members should do and what they currently did. The perceptions of board members and executive directors were significantly different in terms of what boards should do, especially in the areas of setting mission and policy, strategic planning, financial management and dispute resolution. Iecovich (2004) compared perceptions of board roles and responsibilities by chairpersons and by executive directors. Chairpersons perceived that boards were more involved in roles relating to fiscal areas and relationships with the task environment than perceived by executive directors.

Some studies focused on individual board member performance. Preston and Brown (2004) found a positive relationship between board member performance and affective commitment or the sense of being emotionally attached to the organization. Executive directors perceived board members who were emotionally attached to the nonprofit organization as more actively involved and as highly valuable. Board members who reported strong affective commitment, indicated being actively engaged in board member behaviors such as donating more hours to the organization, having better meeting attendance, serving on more committees and making larger financial contributions to the nonprofit organization. Being committed and being engaged in board member behaviors were factors that affected perceptions of board member performance. Brown (2007) studied whether using

recommended recruitment, board member orientation, and evaluation practices results in more competent board members and leads to better board performance. Both executive directors and chairpersons shared the perception that board development practices lead to more capable board members and that the presence of these board members affects board performance.

STUDIES ON BOARDS IN NONPROFIT SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

In most western countries, almost all sporting competitions are organized by nonprofit sport organizations. The common feature of these organizations is their nonprofit goal to offer sporting opportunities for their members. Although numerous sport organizations still operate only with volunteers, government grants have transformed some of the solely volunteer-administered sport organizations into sport organizations with professional paid staff supported by a cadre of volunteers (Schulz & Auld, 2006; Shilbury & Moore, 2006). There is an increasing body of research focusing on and contributing to our understanding of boards in nonprofit sport organizations. Researchers are interested in a broad area of topics such as board-executive relationships (e.g., Auld & Godbey, 1998; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003a, 2003b), role ambiguity and leadership (e.g., Inglis, 1997b; Schulz & Auld, 2006), cohesion and norms (e.g., Doherty & Carron, 2003; Doherty, Patterson, & Van Bussel, 2004), and organizational structure and change (e.g., Kikulis, 2000). Only a few studies (Hoye, 2007; Inglis, 1997a, 1997b; Papadimitriou, 1999; Shilbury, 2001) focused on competencies, roles and responsibilities of boards in nonprofit sport organizations.

Inglis (1997a) offered initial findings on board roles of amateur sport organizations. The measurement instrument covers 17 roles that were derived from Murray, Bradshaw and Wolpin's (1991) study on Canadian nonprofit boards and from the normative literature. Factor analysis revealed four factors of board roles, which she labeled "role of mission", "role of planning", "role of executive director" and "role of community relations". The role of setting policy from which paid staff and program volunteers can deliver programs and services did not load on any of the four factors. The results suggested that board roles of amateur sport organizations are in line with those described in the

nonprofit normative literature and with those found in empirical studies on nonprofit boards. Executive directors, board presidents and volunteer board members homogeneously rated the importance of the four factors. Volunteer board members, however, rated the performance of the board on planning, community relations and setting policy significantly higher than did the executive directors. Shilbury (2001) addressed nine board roles that referred to Inglis (1997a) factors "role of planning", "role of community relations", and "role of setting policy". The results showed that board members of Victorian sport organizations rated the importance of all board roles higher than executives did. Both groups, however, showed agreement on the board roles that they considered as more important. In addition, both groups of respondents indicated that the board role of strategy will be more important in the future. Board members also indicated that their sport experience and knowledge of the state sporting organization were the most important special skills they brought to the board. Executive directors also believed that sport experience was their most important expertise, followed by policy development. This was supported by Inglis (1997b), who identified good citizenship, which covers sport experience and knowledge of the sport, as the most important expertise and reason for board involvement. Papadimitriou (1999) addressed the issue in Greek national sport organizations. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with five constituent groups: board members, paid administrative staff, technical staff, national team athletes and state representatives. The various constituents tended to agree that motivated, competent and influential board members are a prerequisite to improve the effective operation of an organization. However, there were also differences between the various constituents. Board members and administrative staff indicated that less tangible assets (strong motivation, personality traits, values and positive attitudes) are more important for board member effectiveness, whereas elite athletes perceived familiarity with the sport as most relevant. Technical staff associated more tangible attributes such as familiarity with the sport, being intelligent, being able to make sensible decisions and being able to influence public and state opinions for sport issues with the effectiveness of volunteer sport boards. In a study of country race clubs without paid staff, Hoye

(2007) found that affective commitment, the sense of being emotionally attached to the organization, was a significant predictor of perceived board member performance. Time spent on board roles, measured by number of hours, was also found to predict perceived board member performance.

This literature overview shows that studies on boards in nonprofit and sport organizations especially focused on roles and responsibilities of boards. According to Brown (2007), the identification of competencies of board members in nonprofit organizations has been lacking. Obtaining competent and capable board members is, however, vital for board performance as they can bring knowledge, skills, relationships, and money into the nonprofit organization (Brown, 2007). The present study attempts to fill this research void by addressing competencies of volunteer board members in community sports clubs. Volunteer boards and executive committees are the pillars of community sports clubs (Doherty et al., 2004). The boards are responsible for the strategy, formulation and execution of decisions, as there are no paid staff members in the majority of community sports clubs.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We used the conceptual framework of Boyatzis (2008) to categorize the elicited competencies. Boyatzis identified three factors - individual competencies, job demands and organizational environment - that add to effective job performance. In our study, we focus on the individual competencies factor. Individual competencies comprise motives, traits, self-image, social role, skills and knowledge and they indicate what a person is capable of doing (Williams, 2008). The individual competencies consist of three clusters, cognitive, emotional and social intelligence competencies, and they differentiate outstanding from average and bad performers. A cognitive intelligence competency is defined as "the ability to think or analyze information and situations that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (Boyatzis, 2008, p. 8). Emotional intelligence competency is defined as "the ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (Boyatzis, 2008, p. 8), and includes self-awareness and self-

management competencies. Social intelligence competency is defined as "the ability to recognize, understand and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (Boyatzis, 2008, p. 8), and comprises social awareness and relationship management competencies. Competencies can be developed since people are able to change their moods, behaviors, and self-image. It is argued that differentiating competencies distinguish superior from average performers (Boyatzis, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Williams, 2008).

## METHODOLOGY

### PARTICIPANTS

A convenience sampling method was used to identify volunteers who were willing to participate in the study. At least one board member and one sports member from the same sports club had to participate. A total of 26 volunteer board members and 28 sports members of 23 different sports clubs (soccer, athletics, tennis, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, dance, handball, badminton, swimming, and cycling) participated in the study. This resulted in 54 in-depth repertory grid interviews. This sample is sufficient since a size of 15 to 25 interviewees generates sufficient constructs to approximate the universe of meaning surrounding a given situation (Easterby-Smith, 1980). The mean age of volunteer board members was 47.04 ($SD = 11.55$) years and they had participated as a volunteer board member in their current club for an average 7.52 ($SD = 6.67$) years. Seventy percent (or 18 respondents) were men and 30% (or 8 respondents) were women. Nine respondents served as chairperson, five served as secretary, one served as treasurer and 11 were board members. The mean age of sports members was 23.64 ($SD = 3.97$) years. Seventy-nine percent (or 22 respondents) were men and 21% (or 6 respondents) were women. Sports members participated in their sports for an average 14.29 ($SD = 4.16$) years, and they were active in their current club for an average 6.96 ($SD = 5.36$) years.

### COGNITIVE MAPPING TECHNIQUES

The goal of this study was to elicit respondents' cognitive maps of competencies of volunteer board members. The intention in drawing a cognitive map is to describe an individual's or a collectivity's mental model or conscious perception of reality (Fiol & Huff, 1992). Several methods for eliciting cognitive maps exist, such as classic interviews, semi- structured interviews (e.g., RGT), and the self Q-test for causal mapping. We chose RGT to elicit volunteer board and sports club members' perceptions of competencies of volunteer board members. RGT is a valid and rigorous technique that minimizes researcher bias compared to other cognitive mapping techniques (Hodgkinson, 1997; Wright, 2004). RGT is appropriate for analyzing the composition of mental models and for comparing people's mental models (Hodgkinson, 2005; Tan & Hunter, 2002). RGT allows eliciting competencies that are not revealed using other methods (Huff, 1990). RGT also has many applications within different disciplines, especially in management research (Tan & Hunter, 2002).

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE (RGT)

RGT is based on Kelly's (1955) "personal construct theory" which views people's actions as being determined by how they understand situations and people. This theory posits that bipolar constructs are the prime mechanism used by individuals to organise and interpret the mass of stimuli that confronts them. Bipolar constructs can be seen as basic facets of a person's cognitive appraisal of the environment. According to Kelly (1955), bipolar constructs are finite in number and their genre depends on the topic or objects to which they apply. Examples of bipolar constructs are good vs. bad, happy vs. sad, white vs. gray.

METHOD

In our research, the relevant environment consisted of different types of volunteer board members of sports clubs. The bipolar constructs were not given, but elicited from the respondents themselves by using Kelly's original procedure for eliciting constructs, the triadic minimum context form[1]. First, respondents were asked to think of real volunteer board members they actually knew: three outstanding performing volunteer board members of a community sports club, three average

performing volunteer board members of a community sports club, and three poor performing volunteer board members of a community sports club. In RGT methodology, these nine volunteer board members are labeled elements. Elements can be objects, other people, things or ideas (Kelly, 1955, p. 137). Examples of elements are brands of products, names of persons or concepts. Neimeyer and Hagans (2002) suggested that the dataset is richer, more differentiated and more consistent when respondents themselves provide the elements.

Second, the initials of the elements (or the volunteer board members) and the group (outstanding performing, average performing or poor performing volunteer board member) were written on blank cards. A card-sort exercise was performed to elicit bipolar constructs. Respondents were informed that the goal of the study was to identify competencies of volunteer board members. Respondents then, were asked to select at random three cards or three elements. This is called a triad. Respondents were asked to identify "any way in which any two of these elements (volunteer board members) are alike in some way, yet different from the third element (volunteer board member)". Respondents had to take all elements in the triad into consideration. This leads to better differentiation of bipolar constructs (Hagans, Neimeyer, & Goodholm, 2000). An elicited bipolar construct, as for example "honest vs. liar", is a competency that respondents used to differentiate between outstanding performing, average performing and poor performing volunteer board members. Triading was repeated until respondents did not mention new constructs. There is no minimum or maximum number of triads. According to Kelly (1955), a number of triads between 7 and 10 is most common. For more details on different RGT eliciting methods see Hagans et al. (2000) and Neimeyer, Bowman and Saferstein (2005)[2].

Third, if respondents did not understand the card-sort exercise, a cue or example was given. Easterby-Smith and colleagues (1996) warned for giving cues or examples, since cues or examples imply the researcher's cognitive structure. Therefore, the example that we used to illustrate was simple and had nothing to do with the researched topic: "Suppose two of the elements (or board members) are

wearing red clothes and the third element (or board member) is wearing black clothes. Identify the two alike elements from the third element and explain why. You could argue that the two alike elements love the red color since they are wearing red clothes and you could argue that the third element loves the black color since this person is wearing black clothes". The bipolar construct in this case is "loving red color versus loving black color". We repeated this example if cues were needed.

Fourth, the elicited bipolar constructs were inventoried on grid sheets. Afterwards, these elicited bipolar constructs were used to perform the content analysis which is described in detail in the results section. After triading, respondents were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale how the elicited bipolar constructs applied to each of the nine elements (or board members). When a construct elicited from the two alike elements was applicable to the element, a rating towards 7 was appropriate. When a construct elicited from the single element was applicable to the element, a rating towards 1 was appropriate. This rating allowed us to study the association between the elicited constructs and the elements, and was used to perform the variability analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 1996). Analyses were performed using SPSS15 and Idiogrid software.

RESULTS

The rating process resulted in fifty-four two-dimensional matrices (based on the grid) of numerical values. This 9 * n matrix, where 9 is the number of elements and n is the number of bipolar constructs, was subjected to content analysis and to calculation of basic and explorative statistical analysis. In total, 852 bipolar constructs were elicited by the 54 respondents, such as "being creative/boring", "being manipulative/honest", "being democratic/dictatorial", and "having experience/having no experience". Board members elicited 416 bipolar constructs and sports members elicited 436 bipolar constructs. The number of bipolar constructs produced per respondent varied between 8 and 30 ($M = 15.78$; $SD = 6.08$). There was no significant difference [$t(52) = 0.60$; $p = 0.80$] between the number of bipolar constructs produced between volunteer board members ($M = 16.00$; $SD = 6.50$) and sports members ($M = 15.57$; $SD = 5.76$), which indicates that both constituents share the

same cognitive complexity (Ginsberg, 1989). Cognitive complexity refers to the degree of intricacy involved in making assumptions about what are outstanding performing, average performing and poor performing volunteer board members of sports clubs. It is described as how multifaceted a respondent perceives the domain he or she is assessing and interpreting. For example, a low cognitive complexity implies that one uses few constructs to interpret the world.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

A content analysis was performed to compare the cognitive maps across individuals. Content analysis summarizes the different meanings in the respondents' grids by categorizing these meanings and by counting similarities and differences within each category (Neuendorf, 2002).

First, all elicited bipolar constructs were listed into an inventory. Second, Janckowicz's (2003) categorization procedure was applied to reduce the set of elicited bipolar constructs into construct categories which refer to the same competency. Thus a construct category or competency is a collection of similar bipolar constructs. Two researchers independently performed the categorization procedure. The categorization procedure is a two-stage process, of developing categories from the data and allocating the bipolar constructs to the construct categories. Category labels were not identified beforehand. The coders categorized the elicited bipolar constructs of the inventory into freely-chosen construct categories or competencies. Bipolar constructs that were unclassifiable were categorized into a miscellaneous category.

Third, the categorization of both coders was compared and measures of inter-rater agreement were calculated. The miscellaneous category was not considered for the calculation of inter-rater agreement. It was not possible to calculate traditional inter-rater agreement scores such as Cohen's Kappa since the categories were not specified in advance. Thus, we calculated a measure of agreement for the board member data and for the sports member data as set out by Janckowicz (2003). Of the 416 elicited bipolar constructs of the board member data, both coders allocated 297 identical bipolar constructs to the same created construct categories. This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score of

71.40% (297/416). If we only selected the bipolar constructs of the construct categories that both coders agreed on, 407 constructs were left. Of these 407 bipolar constructs, both coders allocated 297 identical bipolar constructs to the same construct categories. This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score of 72.97% (297/407). Of the 436 elicited bipolar constructs of the sports member data, both coders allocated 269 identical bipolar constructs to the same created construct categories. This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score of 61.70% (269/436). If we selected only the bipolar constructs of the construct categories that both coders agreed on, 394 constructs were left. Of these 394 bipolar constructs, both coders allocated 269 identical bipolar constructs to the same construct categories. This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score of 68.27% (269/394). These findings indicated that the content analysis may be considered reliable (Janckowicz, 2003).

Fourth, after the individual categorization procedure, disagreements between the coders were resolved by discussion. The coders negotiated until 100% agreement was reached on the final categorization and on the labels of the construct categories. These data were used in further analyses. For clarity, we only reported the construct categories that referred to competencies of outstanding performing board members (e.g., for the bipolar construct category "being honest/being a liar", the construct "being honest" is presented.) Table 1 presents the construct categories or competencies, the frequency of elicited bipolar constructs per construct category, and the frequency of respondents eliciting the construct category.

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The construct categories or competencies that board members most frequently used to judge outstanding performing volunteer board members of community sports clubs are "time spent or hard-working" (61.54%), "listening to others" (61.54%), "having good communication skills" (57.69%), "being motivated" (50.00%), "being jovial, nice to be with" (50.00% ), and "club interest vs. egoism/self interest" (50.00%). The construct

categories or competencies that sports members most frequently used to judge outstanding performing volunteer board members of sports clubs are "being honest" (67.86%), "time spent/hard-working" (57.14%), "listening to others" (50.00%), "having a long term vision" (46.43%), "well-liked" (46.43%), "being jovial/nice to be with" (46.43%), "having charisma" (46.43%), and "being modest" (46.43%). Respectively 42.31% and 26.92% of the board members used the construct category "dealing with stress" and "representing the club" as a discriminating competency when evaluating volunteer board members, while these construct categories were not elicited by any sports member. On the other hand, respectively 46.43% and 32.14% of the sports members used the construct category "having charisma" and "having good relations with sports members" as a discriminating competency when evaluating volunteer board members, while none of the board members elicited these construct categories. Significant differences (based on Pearson's Chi-square test, corrected by Yates' correction for continuity for small data, seen as when at least one cell of the table had an expected frequency less than 5) were found between the number of board members ($n = 10$) and sports members ($n = 19$) for "being honest" [$\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 4.69, p = 0.03$], between board members ($n = 8$) and sports members ($n = 1$) for "having passion for club" [$\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 5.36, p = 0.02$], between board members ($n = 4$) and sports members ($n = 13$) for "being modest" [$\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 6.02, p = 0.01$], and between board members ($n = 7$) and sports members ($n = 1$) for "having administrative knowledge" [$\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 4.12, p = 0.04$].

VARIABILITY ANALYSIS

Variability analysis or the analysis of the spread of ratings of each bipolar construct is an indication of the importance of that construct (Rogers & Ryals, 2007). Neimeyer and Hagans (2002) argued that the more extreme the given ratings, the more important or discriminating the construct is in one's perception space. Constructs with a high variability have a high spread of ratings, thus, the respondent differentiates strongly between the constructs in judging the elements. Such a differentiation indicates the high importance of that construct (Rogers & Ryals, 2007). In order to analyze variability (Bonarius, 1977), original ratings were recoded (scores 1, 2 and 3 were recoded into 7, 6 and 5. The rating 4 was kept unchanged.) Thus, strongly discriminating or extreme ratings had high new scores, while non-discriminating or mediocre ratings had low new scores. Next, the sum of

ratings was calculated for each bipolar construct. The higher the score, the more important or discriminating the bipolar construct is in one's perception space. The 90th percentile was taken as cut-off point to identify the most discriminating bipolar constructs (Rogers & Ryals, 2007). For the sample of board members, total scores that ranged between 58 and 63 felt within the 90th percentile. For the sample of sports members, total scores that ranged between 59 and 63 felt within the 90th percentile. Results (table 1) revealed that the most frequently used competencies that emerged from the content analysis are also the most discriminating competencies. Examples are "time spent/hard-working", "having good communication skills", "being jovial/nice to be with", "clubs interest vs. egoism/self-interest". Only board members perceived "having administrative knowledge", "representing the club", and "dealing with stress" as discriminating competencies, while sports members perceived "having charisma", "having good relationships with sports members", and "listening to others" as discriminating competencies.

WEIGHTED MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALING

A three-way scaling or Weighted Multidimensional Scaling (WMDS) was used to draw a multidimensional space for each sample of constituents (further referred to as group-spaces). The WMDS was based on Euclidean distances for elements of the individual RGT matrices (see Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Three-dimensional group-spaces for both the sample of board members and the sample of sports members were withheld. The explained variance of the group-space of the sample of board members accounted for 59.00% and the explained variance of the group-space of the sample of sports members accounted for 53.00%. Figures 1 and 2 show the three-dimensional group-spaces for the two samples of constituents[3]. These group-spaces indicate how the nine elements (three outstanding performing, three average performing and three poor performing volunteer board members) are positioned towards each other. Overall, the three different groups of elements in the group-space of both constituents clustered together. In the group-space of the sample of board members, the smallest Euclidean distances were found between the three elements representing outstanding performing board members (ranging from 0.13 to 0.16) on the one hand, and between the three elements representing average performing board members (ranging from 0.21 to 2.21) on the other hand. Within the group

of poor performing board members, the Euclidian distances were more dispersed (ranging from 1.08 to 2.50). However, the elements still clustered together. The group-space of the sample of the sports members showed a similar pattern. The smallest Euclidean distances were found between the three elements representing outstanding performing board members (ranging from 0.17 to 0.83). Euclidean distances were more dispersed within the group of average performing board members (ranging from 1.34 to 2.49), and within the group of poor performing board members (ranging from 1.10 to 2.53). Nonetheless, elements still clustered together.

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DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to identify how two types of constituents perceived competencies of volunteer board members in community sports clubs. RGT was applied to draw the cognitive maps of these two groups of constituents, board members and sports members.

We used WMDS to draw the group-space of each sample of constituents. These group-spaces revealed whether constituents shared a similar cognitive map of competencies of outstanding performing, average performing and poor performing board members. The results indicated that, within a sample of constituents, the individual cognitive maps of competencies of outstanding performing board members are similar. In both samples, the Euclidian distances are more dispersed for the perception of competencies of average and poor performing board members. This suggests that constituents within a sample have a wider variability of views on their perceptions of competencies of average and poor performing board members. These findings are similar to findings made by Walton (1986), who found that there was more consensus about the prototypical attributes of successful firms than of unsuccessful firms. Moreover, leadership research also suggested that conceptions about effective leaders are clearer than those about ineffective leaders (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984). Leadership categorization theory, which focuses on prototypical leader schemas and the categorization of potential leaders,

stated that people categorize stimuli based on its similarity to an abstraction or prototype (Dickson, Resick, & Hanges, 2006). Leadership perception is the process of comparing the leader to an abstract leadership prototype (Fraser & Lord, 1988). WMDS revealed that the prototype of an outstanding performing board member is more or less similar within the sample of board members and sports members. This implicates that board members who highlight the competencies of prototypical board members may improve perceptions of themselves (Fraser & Lord, 1988), and, as a result, may improve satisfaction among its members. In addition, Fraser and Lord (1988) stated that controlling leadership perceptions may be an important tool to increase perceived influence and social power.

Content analysis disclosed 41 different competencies of volunteer board members of community sports clubs. Both board members and sports members have a high cognitive complexity to interpret competencies of volunteer board members. The results showed that outstanding performing board members of sports clubs should possess differentiated competencies. These competencies can be classified within Boyatzis' (2008) three clusters of competencies: cognitive, emotional and social intelligence competencies. Both groups of constituents agreed on the cognitive competencies such as having professionalism and the ability to define strategies (e.g., having a long term vision). The self-management emotional intelligence competencies (e.g., being reliable and being honest), and the social intelligence competencies, such as being jovial/nice to be with, empathy (e.g., listening to others) and service orientation (e.g., clubs interest vs. egoism/self-interest) were also perceived as distinguishing competencies of outstanding performing board members. Our results indicated that a focus on solely cognitive competencies fails to describe the full range of attributes, traits, and skills that are associated with outstanding performing board members. Previous nonprofit studies (e.g., Iecovich, 2004; Inglis, 1997a; Inglis et al., 1999; Shilbury, 2001) explored roles and responsibilities of boards that originated from a merely cognitive approach. We also found that the roles as revealed by Inglis (1997a) such as mission, planning (including finance) and community relations are important in the judgements of what makes outstanding performing board members. Previous nonprofit studies, however, did not focus on emotional or social intelligence roles and responsibilities of board members. In early competency literature, Katz (1955) brought up that effective managers should possess certain "human skills". For a long time, scholars have acknowledged that "human" and "people" skills are relevant in managerial competency research. Its significance, however, has often been relegated to secondary

status (Berman & West, 2008). When the concept of emotional intelligence was introduced (i.e., Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), a new focus on the emotional intelligence competencies was born. In addition, social intelligence competencies have also been put forward as a differentiating factor in success (Williams, 2008).

Our findings confirm previous results (e.g., Dreyfus, 2008; Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008; Williams, 2008) suggesting that possessing cognitive competencies such as technical abilities, strategic skills or financial skills is not enough to be an outstanding performing board member. Emotional and social intelligence competencies are important pillars in perceptions of competencies. Outstanding performing or highly capable board members should have cognitive competencies along with emotional and social intelligence competencies. Outstanding performing board members are able to be aware of (self-awareness) and to manage (self-management) their own emotions effectively. Outstanding performing board members have the ability to be aware of and to anticipate to others' needs and feelings (social awareness), and to manage their relationships effectively (relationship management). In addition, our results indicated that commitment (e.g., having passion for the club), involvement (e.g., time spent/hard-working), and motivation are also perceived to be important competencies of outstanding performing board members. Literature suggested that commitment and involvement are predictors of board member performance (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Hoye, 2007; Preston & Brown, 2004). Ferkins et al. (2005) indicated that motivation of individual board members to join boards is an essential theme in sport governance.

There were also striking differences between the two groups of constituents. Board members, in contrast to sports members, perceived the cognitive competency "having administrative knowledge" as a competency of outstanding performing board members. Both groups perceived emotional and social intelligence competencies, but they differed in nature. Board members reported that outstanding performing board members should be motivated, have passion, know themselves, be able to communicate effectively, represent the club, and be able to deal with stress. Along this line, Papadimitriou (1999) also reported that board members attached a lot of importance to motivation and passion. Board members perceived having administrative knowledge,

representing the club and dealing with stress as discriminating competencies compared to sports members. Sports members, on the other hand, perceived outstanding performing board members as charismatic, honest, modest, well-liked, and sport-minded. They also perceived it as important that board members have a good relationship with sports members. Charisma and having good relationships with sports members are discriminating competencies that board members did not perceive. Papadimitriou (1999) also found that elite sports members associated "being familiar with the sport" as an important competency for board effectiveness. The perception of sports members that board members should be charismatic is an interesting finding. Charisma has been mainly addressed in leadership theory. Taking a leadership role has been identified as one of the responsibilities of board members (Hoye, 2006; Inglis, 1997b; Soucie, 1994). House (1977) suggested that charismatic leaders are exceptionally self-confident, are strongly motivated, and have strong conviction in the moral correctness of their beliefs. Leaders with these personality traits are theoretically expected to be more persistent in the face of obstacles and thus to be more effective (House & Aditya, 1997). Charismatic leaders articulate a powerful vision that motivates people towards change and that appeals to people's emotions and self-esteem (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001; Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). Followers form a strong emotional attachment and have a high sense of confidence in the charismatic leader (Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). As a result, it is more likely that sports members perceive charismatic board members as more capable. The differences in the views of both constituents could be explained by the nature of their own involvement and by the links the persons have with the board (Herman & Renz, 1997; Papadimitriou, 1999). Moreover, perceptions of outstanding performing board members might also be influenced by the focus on their own needs (Inglis, 1997a; Shilbury, 2001; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000) and access to information (Hatfield, Wrenn, & Bretting, 1987; Inglis, 1997a). The large age difference might also explain partly the different perceptions between sports members and board members. For example, since sports members are mainly interested in their sports, it seems reasonable that they associate outstanding performing board members with being sport minded. As role models are important in the lives of young people, they might look to charismatic board members as role models. Board members, on the other hand, probably have a lot of other responsibilities besides their task of board member. This might explain the perception of dealing with stress as a competency for outstanding performing board members.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

"As Aristotle said: there is only one way to get it right, but many ways to go wrong" (Furley, 1999, p. 120). Our results indicated that individual cognitive maps of the competencies of outstanding performing volunteer board members within a constituent group are similar, while the cognitive maps of average performing and poor performing board members are more diverse. This suggests that, within a constituent group, board members and sports members have the same perception of what is a right way to administrate a sports club. An interesting avenue for further research is to study whether highlighting the ways in which board members match the expectations towards them improves satisfaction among its members. Further research might also focus on the ways to change the actual competencies of board members towards the preferred competencies, since this might be an effective way to increase satisfaction and commitment.

The advantage of the RGT method is that we were not limited to using predetermined constructs. As a result, our findings corroborate only to some extent the results of nonprofit studies using a different method. This study revealed that cognitive, emotional and social intelligence competencies are necessary to be perceived as an outstanding performing board member.

The implications of this study need to be tempered by an understanding of its limitations. First, the nature of the sample limits the generalization of the findings. Further research is needed to test whether the competencies that emerged from this study also emerge in other contexts. We did not differentiate between perceptions of male or female respondents, nor between perceived competencies of male or female board members. Since occupation has also been found to be a differentiating variable its non inclusion might be another limitation of this study. Second, the use of RGT as an elicitation technique generates idiosyncratic responses that accentuate surface level differences in cognition. Third, Nicolini (1999) argued that an attempt to uncover meaningful and relevant data about what people think may be hampered by the unwillingness of members to disclose sensitive opinions to

researchers who are strangers to them. However, as precautions concerning confidentiality were taken and confidentiality was communicated to the respondents, this limitation only holds in part.

Brown (2007) acknowledged that determining the skills and competencies needed in a board is important in the process of securing competent or capable board members. He also stated that there is a lack of research that attempts to define and assess desirable competencies for board members in nonprofit organizations. This study responded to this call. However, there remains a great deal of work to do. Further research should focus on different samples and different nonprofit organizations in order to capture the full range of competencies for outstanding performing board members. This might result in validated measurement tools that help practitioners in the recruitment, selection and orientation of new board members, as well as in the evaluation of present board members. In order to enhance board effectiveness, it is important that boards are aware of different constituents' expectations and the competencies of their board members. This knowledge may lead to board composition in which motivation, commitment and development facilitate organizational effectiveness (Taylor, Darcy, Hoye, & Cuskelly, 2006).

Endnote

[1] Two major methods exist in order to come up with elements (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Holman, 1996): supply of elements, and elicitation of elements. Supply of elements signifies that the researcher provides the elements. This is recommended when the researcher wants to test a theory (Kaish & Gilad, 1991). Eliciting elements involves that the research participant provides the elements. For the present research the latter was used. It has been argued that elicitation of elements leads to more differentiation and consistency (Neimeyer & Hagans, 2002).

[2] Other "instructional sets" in order to elicit constructs exist. Two major key variations in the process of eliciting constructs are considered. The first variation concerns the number of elements (one, two, three or all elements) considered in each sort. The second variation concerns the specific commando for eliciting implicit construct poles: difference (e.g., Kelly, 1955) or opposite (Epting, Suchman, & Nickerson, 1971). Each instructional set has its pro's and contra's. For an overview we refer to Neimeyer et al. (2005), and Neimeyer and Hagans (2002).

[3] It is not possible to define the three dimensions of the common group-spaces. WMDS calculates stimulus coordinates which can be considered as factor loadings. In our study, the stimulus coordinates pertain to elements or persons who are represented in the minds of our respondents (outstanding performing, average performing and poor performing board members of community sports clubs). Thus, it is not possible to interpret and label the dimensions.

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Table 1

*Frequency count (N) and percentage (%) of perceived competencies of outstanding performing board members*

| Construct category/competency | Sample of board members (N = 26) | | | | | Sample of sports members (N = 28) | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Elicited constructs | | Board members | | P90[*] | Elicited constructs | | Sports members | | P90[*] |
| | N | % | N | % | | N | % | N | % | |
| Listening to others | 26 | 6,25% | 16 | 61,54% | | 23 | 5,28% | 14 | 50,00% | x |
| Time spent/hard-working | 29 | 6,97% | 16 | 61,54% | x | 25 | 5,73% | 16 | 57,14% | x |
| Having good communication skills | 24 | 5,77% | 15 | 57,69% | x | 13 | 2,98% | 9 | 32,14% | x |
| Being reliable | 16 | 3,85% | 14 | 53,85% | x | 13 | 2,98% | 13 | 46,43% | x |
| Club interest vs. egoism/self-interest | 19 | 4,57% | 13 | 50,00% | x | 13 | 2,98% | 12 | 42,86% | x |
| Being motivated | 20 | 4,81% | 13 | 50,00% | | 13 | 2,98% | 9 | 32,14% | x |
| Being jovial, nice to be with | 20 | 4,81% | 13 | 50,00% | x | 17 | 3,90% | 13 | 46,43% | x |
| Having professionalism | 12 | 2,88% | 12 | 46,15% | x | 11 | 2,52% | 11 | 39,29% | |
| Having creative ideas | 14 | 3,37% | 12 | 46,15% | x | 15 | 3,44% | 11 | 39,29% | |
| Having a strong personality | 13 | 3,13% | 11 | 42,31% | x | 8 | 1,83% | 8 | 28,57% | |
| Having a long term vision | 13 | 3,13% | 11 | 42,31% | x | 18 | 4,13% | 13 | 46,43% | x |
| Dealing with stress | 13 | 3,13% | 11 | 42,31% | x | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | |
| Taking initiative | 10 | 2,40% | 10 | 38,46% | | 8 | 1,83% | 8 | 28,57% | |
| Having authority | 10 | 2,40% | 10 | 38,46% | x | 20 | 4,59% | 12 | 42,86% | |
| Degree of presence at manifestations | 11 | 2,64% | 10 | 38,46% | x | 6 | 1,38% | 6 | 21,43% | x |
| Being Honest | 13 | 3,13% | 10 | 38,46% | x | 26 | 5,96% | 19 | 67,86% | x |
| Being a team player | 9 | 2,16% | 9 | 34,62% | | 6 | 1,38% | 6 | 21,43% | |
| Being precise/punctual | 10 | 2,40% | 9 | 34,62% | | 20 | 4,59% | 11 | 39,29% | |
| Being competent | 14 | 3,37% | 9 | 34,62% | x | 10 | 2,29% | 9 | 32,14% | x |

Continue

| Construct category/competency | Sample of board members (N = 26) | | | | | Sample of sports members (N = 28) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Elicited constructs | | Board members | | P90[*] | Elicited constructs | | Sports members | | P90[*] |
| | N | % | N | % | | N | % | N | % | |
| Having passion for the club | 8 | 1,92% | 8 | 30,77% | x | 1 | 0,23% | 1 | 3,57% | x |
| Having professional knowledge | 10 | 2,40% | 8 | 30,77% | x | 12 | 2,75% | 12 | 42,86% | x |
| Well-liked | 12 | 2,88% | 8 | 30,77% | x | 18 | 4,13% | 13 | 46,43% | x |
| Representing the club | 7 | 1,68% | 7 | 26,92% | x | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | |
| Administrative knowledge | 7 | 1,68% | 7 | 26,92% | x | 1 | 0,23% | 1 | 3,57% | |
| Being concerned with financial issues | 12 | 2,88% | 7 | 26,92% | | 9 | 2,06% | 9 | 32,14% | x |
| Having experience | 6 | 1,44% | 6 | 23,08% | | 9 | 2,06% | 9 | 32,14% | x |
| Being sport minded | 11 | 2,64% | 6 | 23,08% | x | 19 | 4,36% | 12 | 42,86% | x |
| Taking responsibility | 5 | 1,20% | 5 | 19,23% | | 8 | 1,83% | 8 | 28,57% | x |
| Dearing to say what is on one's mind | 5 | 1,20% | 5 | 19,23% | x | 2 | 0,46% | 2 | 7,14% | x |
| Being straight forward | 4 | 0,96% | 4 | 15,38% | | 8 | 1,83% | 7 | 25,00% | |
| Obliging/helpful | 4 | 0,96% | 4 | 15,38% | | 7 | 1,61% | 6 | 21,43% | x |
| Being modest | 7 | 1,68% | 4 | 15,38% | | 16 | 3,67% | 13 | 46,43% | |
| Having commercial flair | 7 | 1,68% | 4 | 15,38% | x | 13 | 2,98% | 9 | 32,14% | |
| Varia | 3 | 0,72% | 3 | 11,54% | | 2 | 0,46% | 2 | 7,14% | |
| Having discretion | 3 | 0,72% | 3 | 11,54% | x | 4 | 0,92% | 4 | 14,29% | x |
| Being just, righteous | 6 | 1,44% | 3 | 11,54% | | 8 | 1,83% | 6 | 21,43% | x |
| Having self-knowledge | 2 | 0,48% | 2 | 7,69% | | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | |
| Dealing with temptations | 1 | 0,24% | 1 | 3,85% | | 5 | 1,15% | 4 | 14,29% | x |
| Winning the game | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | | 3 | 0,69% | 2 | 7,14% | |
| Having good relationships with sports members | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | | 9 | 2,06% | 9 | 32,14% | x |
| Having charisma | 0 | 0,00% | 0 | 0,00% | | 17 | 3,90% | 13 | 46,43% | x |
| Total | 416 | | | | | 436 | | | | |

[*] P90: 90th percentile was taken as cut-off point to identify the most discriminating bipolar constructs and construct categories

*Figure 1.* Three-dimensional group-space (Euclidean distance model) of the sample of board

members (N=26; Stress = 0.23; RSQ = 0.59) (ALSCAL Level = ordinal untie)
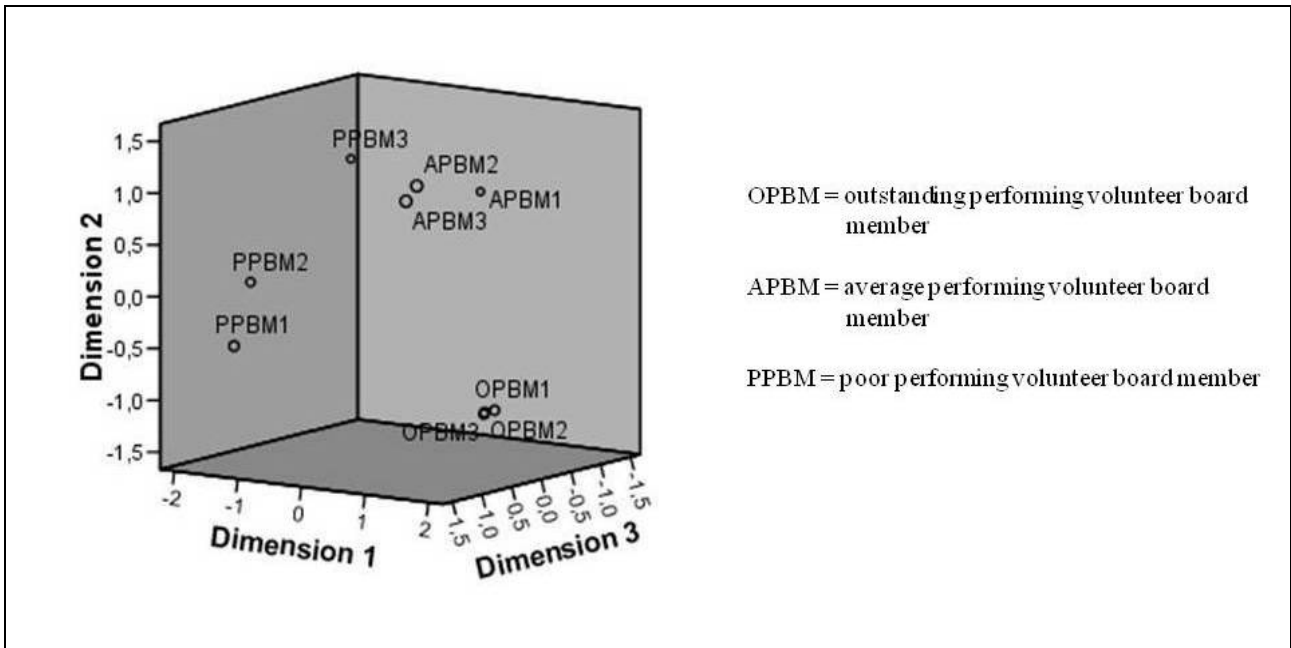
*Figure 2*. Three-dimensional group-space (Euclidean distance model) of the sample of sports

members (N=28; Stress = 0,21; RSQ =0,53) (ALSCAL Level = ordinal untie)