Board Membership Motivations

A Research Project on Individual Motivations for Nonprofit Board Membership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As accountability within nonprofit organizations is becoming increasingly important, more responsibility is being placed on nonprofit boards of directors to ensure that public dollars and private donations are being used in an effective and efficient manner. Additionally, board members are also asked to serve as ambassadors for the organizations they represent in communities to facilitate both operations and fundraising. While these individuals play an increasingly important role in nonprofit governance, little is understood about the types of individuals attracted to serve on nonprofit organization boards and the methods used to recruit and retain these individuals. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the questions: What characteristics describe individuals most likely to serve on a nonprofit board of directors? How do life experiences impact individuals' motivations to participate on nonprofit boards? How can nonprofit boards improve their tactics for recruiting and retaining board members?

To help us answer these questions, we apply the lens of public service motivation (PSM) theory to the study. While this theory is well-known in the public administration and policy literature as a lens for viewing individual motivations to work in the public sector, there is a dearth of literature applying the theory to a nonprofit context. We believe the central tenets of the theory will help us understand the motives of individuals who serve on nonprofit boards.

The contributions of this study are twofold. First, expanding our understanding of why individuals serve on nonprofit boards will help practitioners in their recruitment and retention efforts of quality board members that are dedicated to the mission and motivated to serve the organization and community. Second, the study expands the nonprofit and theoretical literature by linking theory and practice within the context of public service motivation, volunteerism, and nonprofit board participation. This paper applies a well-developed theory, public service motivation (PSM), to a new environment.

The study employs two methods of data gathering. First, qualitative data on board member attributes, experiences, attitudes, and behavior were collected during a focus group with an advisory council of twelve individuals representing nonprofit organizations in and around the Atlanta Metro area. Second, quantitative data was collected through an online survey administered to the member organizations of the Georgia Center for Nonprofits, including questions asking a) demographic information of individual respondents, b) reasons that individuals were initially attracted to serve on a board, and reasons they continued serving on a board, c) information on the organization for which the individual served on the nonprofit boards of directors, d) perceptions of board performance, and finally e) life experiences of respondents based on questions initially created from previously tested public service motivation (PSM) scales (Perry, 1996, 1997). Our analyses of the results are discussed at length in this report. We conclude the report with few "promising practices" for recruiting and retaining nonprofit board members based on the advice and wisdom of the advisory council and the measurable responses from the survey of nonprofit board members.

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INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit boards of directors are charged with the complex and often challenging task of ensuring their organizations are operating effectively, efficiency, and equitably. While a research agenda relating to nonprofit board governance has started to develop over the past two decades, there are still major gaps in our understanding of how boards are organized and managed. Further, very little is known about individual board members and why they are attracted to serve on nonprofit boards of directors. This research proposes to test a public sector motivation theory, public service motivation (PSM), to better understand why individuals are attracted to serve on nonprofit boards. A deeper, more rounded understanding of these motives will help nonprofit organizations to better attract and retain appropriate board members. Within this context we seek to answer the questions: What characteristics describe individuals most likely to serve on a nonprofit board of directors? How do life experiences impact individuals' motivations to participate on nonprofit boards? How can nonprofit boards improve their tactics for recruiting and retaining board members? The report is written for both practitioners and researchers in mind, as it aims to understand the "who," the "what," and the "why" of nonprofit board members.

What is Board Governance?

Board governance is a term that is used to describe the processes associated with oversight, strategic planning, evaluation, and establishing accountability within nonprofit organizations. For this report, we begin by defining a few important terms:

1) *Nonprofit organizations* are typically defined as corporations having tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and typically file under one of the two dozen categories found in section 501 of the US Tax Code. Around 70 percent of nonprofit organizations file for either 501(c)3 or 501(c)4 status (Worth, 2009).

2) While many authors identify varying roles and responsibilities of boards and board members, *board governance* is defined here as "the process of providing strategic leadership to the organization. It comprises the functions of setting direction, making decisions about policy and strategy, overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and ensuring overall accountability" (Renz, 2010, p. 126).

3) *Governing boards,* or *boards of directors,* may be considered to be: "a group of people working together within a well-defined structure who employ formal processes to carry out a mission, which generally speaking is to *govern*. The governing board, therefore, is an organization within the wider nonprofit corporation, just as the offices of the executive or the finance and human resource development department are an organization within an organization that carry out specialized missions through formally defined structure and process" (Eadie, 2009, p. 20).

4) *Motivation* is defined as the stimulation of desires and drive that keep individuals committed to their roles and responsibilities. Motivation is also frequently associated with an individual's ability to set and attain goals.

5) Additional terms are introduced and defined throughout the report.

What Do Boards Do?

Much of the scholarship and research on boards today has focused on the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors as one entity, rather than individual responsibilities within the board. Responsibilities of boards are frequently categorized in general terms as legal, fiduciary, or functional.

From a *legal* perspective, the US Supreme Court, in Stern v. Lucy Web Hayes National Training School ruled that nonprofit boards of directors hold three important responsibilities: the duty of care, the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience (Renz, 2010; Worth 2009). The responsibility of duty of care requires that individuals act in good faith and in the best interest of the board. Duty of loyalty requires board members to avoid conflicts of interest and to advance the interests of the organization. Finally, the duty of obedience requires board members to observe the organization's mission, policies, and bylaws (Renz, 2010).

Boards also have important *fiduciary* responsibilities to serve as good stewards of the financial resources and assets of the organization. Board members should ensure these resources are utilized in a reasonable, appropriate, and accountable manner (Renz, 2010).

Much of the research however, has worked to better describe the day-to-day responsibilities of boards, or the *functional* responsibilities of boards. According to Worth (2009), the functional responsibilities of boards include:

- Appoint, support, and evaluate the CEO
- Establish a clear institutional mission and purpose
- Approve the organization's programs
- Ensure sound financial management and the organization's financial stability
- Establish standards for organizational performance and hold the organization accountable

Other research on the functional responsibilities of boards finds that boards often engage in such activities as appointing other board members, raising funds, maintaining good relations with the staff, and performing outreach on behalf of the organization (Eadie 2009; Ostrower and Stone 2006).

Finally, Worth (2009, p. 83) suggests that boards often find they are charged with numerous, often competing responsibilities, including those to society as well as to the organization. He also identifies particular qualities of nonprofit boards that he deems as important to balancing these responsibilities as noted in the following table.

Table 1: The Board's Competing Responsibilities*

To society:	To the organization:
- Accountability for resources and results - Adherence to mission and law - Representation of community needs	- Advocacy and authenticity - Protection of autonomy - Fiscal stability and sustainability
Indicated board member qualities: - Integrity - Expertise on programs and finances - Knowledge of community/clients	**Indicated board member qualities:** - Stature - Influence - Wealth or access to wealth

*This table is from p. 97 of Worth, M.J. (2009). *Nonprofit Management: Principles and Practice, 2nd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Board members today are faced with many competing and often complex responsibilities. As such, it is becoming increasingly important for nonprofit organizations and their boards to identify individuals who will take on these responsibilities and help their organization thrive.

Studying Motivation

When considering the motivations of board members, it is first necessary to provide context relating to the nonprofit sector and the rationale/reasons for its existence. The nonprofit sector exists for many reasons, including the failures of private markets such as correcting information asymmetries, providing public goods, and producing products with external benefits. The nonprofit sector also exists, at least in part, because of government failures, such as high costs of programs, limited constituencies, target populations with limited political power, and term limits among legislators that encourage short-sighted policies. In addition to these "gap-filling" roles between the public and private sectors, the nonprofit sector also plays an important role in providing democratic opportunities for civic participation, as well as the promotion of values through lobbying and advocacy (Boris & Steuerle, 2006). Within this context, motives often associated with the nonprofit sector have been examined. Following is a short synopsis of theories of motivation found in both the nonprofit and public sectors that are relevant to this research.

Motives in the Nonprofit Sector

The "trust theory" of nonprofits suggests that consumers are attracted to goods and services provided by nonprofit entities because they believe that these organizations have their interest as consumers in mind. Additionally, consumers assume that nonprofit employees and nonprofit board members are driven by pro-social (voluntary behavior intended to benefit someone else) or altruistic motives, thus making their services more trust-worthy than those provided by the private sector (Hansmann, 1987; Worth, 2009).

While conventional wisdom suggests that nonprofit organizations and the employees in the sector are trustworthy and hold pro-social beliefs, the motivation of nonprofit sector employees has been under-examined and the motivations of board members have been largely unexplored.

The most prominent vein of research on the motives of both nonprofit employees and board members are often founded on theories of altruism (Worth, 2009). While altruism is undoubtedly a component of what drives nonprofit employees and board members, these explanations are likely too narrow in their focus.

Motives in the Public Sector

Since an explanation of motives of nonprofit employees and board members has not been fully developed, this research applies the empirically tested and validated public service motivation (PSM) theory as a frame to identify specific behaviors and attitudes that have been linked to pro-social motives.

The underlying assumptions of PSM are that "rational, normative, and affective processes motivate humans; that people are motivated by their own self-concept; that preferences or values should be endogenous to any theory of motivation; and that preferences are learned in social processes" (Perry, 2000, p. 6-8). Rational, normative, and affective motives are described below:

- ***Rational motives*** include the self-interested inclinations and tendencies of individuals to maximize their own utility, a central tenet of free markets and capitalism. Rational motives are those based on individual gains.

- ***Normative motives*** have an altruistic element and assume that public and nonprofit sector employees may be motivated out of "a desire to serve the public interest," belief in and loyalty to government, or a desire to promote social equity (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368-9).

- ***Affective motives*** are related to emotional processes, and may stem from a genuine conviction in the importance of a program or organization or a sense of compassion for others (Perry & Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996).

Using this frame of rational, normative, and affective motives, the public service motivation literature has identified that individuals who are attracted to public service are more likely than their private sector counterparts to demonstrate high levels of:

- Attraction to public policymaking
- Compassion
- Commitment to the public interest
- Self-sacrifice

Additionally, several researchers who employ the public service motivation scale suggest that it may be more appropriate for studying nonprofit sector workers (Brewer, 2009; Brewer et al., 1998; Coursey et al., 2008; Gabris & Simon, 1995; Park & Word, 2009). The public service motivation frame is particularly relevant for studying this sample of nonprofit board members since board members come from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, but all demonstrate an interest service through duties as volunteer board members.

Why is Studying Board Member Motivation Important?

Studying board member motivation has important implications, both for practitioners and for researchers attempting to more fully understand the relationships between attributes, attitudes and behaviors of board members.

Practical concerns

From a practitioner perspective, a clearer understanding of motivations of board members could help with the recruitment and retention, improve performance, and better match prospective board members with organizations.

A common discussion between CEOs and officers of nonprofit boards is how to improve attraction, selection, and attrition of board members. Organization culture and attraction-selection-attrition models suggest that individuals are attracted to organizations that hold similar values, interests, and have other similar attributes. Organizations are likely to select individuals who have the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are similar to those of existing members of the organization. Members who do not fit in well to the organization culture tend to leave the organization.

When applied to nonprofit boards, the more we understand about the motives of board members, the better nonprofit managers and boards will become at recruiting new board members. Not only will they be more capable of attracting strong candidates, they will also be more skilled at marketing (and catering to) their board experience to the wants and desires of prospective board members. Additionally, a better understanding of motives could lead to higher retention of board members through improved board experiences and expectations.

A second common discussion between CEOs and their nonprofit boards is how to improve board performance. Motivation is often positively linked to performance – the more motivated individuals are, the higher they tend to perform. Another important dimension of motivation is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. In the nonprofit sector, high levels of intrinsic motivation are important since nonprofit organizations often have constrained budgets. The theoretic frame used in this study is founded on the idea that intrinsic motivations are paramount for understanding what compels individuals to serve.

A third topic of note between CEOs and their nonprofit boards is how to achieve better mission congruence. While only limited research has been done on motivation among nonprofit employees, a positive link between attachment to the mission and performance has been identified. Research has shown that public and nonprofit service-delivery jobs often require an intense emotional investment necessary to perform at a high level, and that a deep belief in the core values of the work is paramount (Guy, Newman, & Mastraci, 2008). By better understanding board members' attachment to the mission, boards and nonprofit organizations are more likely to identify individuals who share the deep core beliefs that are central to the organization's mission.

Theoretic Concerns

There are a number of theoretic concerns we would like to address as well. Each of these concerns is relevant to both practitioners and academics interested in motivation of nonprofit board members.

First, the development of specific theories of motivation within the nonprofit sector has been slow moving. While many readers of this report may not be concerned with the theoretic component of this research, the data collected in this study will continue to be analyzed in an effort to more fully understand the motives of board members. Currently, nonprofit scholars have not yet developed a unified theory of effective board governance. Since the motivation component is important to performance and board effectiveness, this continued research effort could potentially provide important contributions to the nonprofit governance literature and ultimately nonprofit practitioner wishing to improve board governance practices.

Related to the first point, this research takes a well-developed public sector motivation theory and applies it to a new setting – nonprofit boards of directors. Nonprofit scholars should continue to develop theory (by either borrowing existing theories or creating new ones) to better explain the nonprofit sector.

Finally, moving beyond simplified explanations relating to altruism should be another goal of nonprofit theorists. As it stands, explanations of nonprofit employee and board motivations are too commonly oversimplified to motives associated with altruism. While pro-social values are undoubtedly an important component in explaining board membership, the public sector motivation research suggests the explanation is likely more complex.

What Do We Know About Nonprofit Boards?

Board research is a burgeoning field that has developed over the past two decades. To date, much of the research relating to nonprofit boards has been descriptive. In particular, scholars have focused on dimensions such as size, diversity, and performance, which are summarized below.

Size

It should be noted that research has tended to focus on larger, more affluent nonprofit organizations and their boards (Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Thus, the current state of research on boards and attributes may not be generalizable to smaller boards.

Boards of trustees or boards of directors typically have between 15-20 members, with boards of 10 or fewer considered to be small (Smith, Bucklin & Associates). BoardSource finds that boards, on average, have 19 members (BoardSource, 2005)[2]. Ostrower and Stone (2006) suggest that boards typically range from 12-30, but that organizations with diverse target populations or special fundraising needs tend to have larger boards.

Diversity

There are a number of factors considered with diversity and boards, including gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Gender is perhaps the most studied dimension of diversity of boards. Typically, men outnumber women on boards, with women representing around 40 percent of trustees (Ostrower & Stone, 2006; BoardSource, 2005). Ostrower and Stone suggest that while this number is low, it is better than the 7 percent of women found on corporate boards of directors (Ostrower & Stone, 2006).

Size and scope of the organization tend to be good predictors of the presence of females on the boards – smaller, less prestigious nonprofit organizations tend to have more women on their boards.

The research on race and ethnicity in board membership is limited, but most scholars tend to find that board membership skews heavily white. BoardSource (2005) finds that 86 percent of board members are Caucasian, 9 percent are African American, 3 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 2 percent Asian American. Foundation boards are populated primarily by Caucasians (89.5 percent), with other studies finding similar results (Ostrower and Stone 2006). While longitudinal research has indicated that demographic diversity on boards is improving, it has been evolving at a very slow pace (Ostrower and Stone 2006). In particular, Azbug (1996) finds that African American board membership is rising at a rapid rate, but still finds very low rates of overall representation. Generally, most scholars agree that more research should be done on board diversity, with a particular focus on race and ethnicity (Ostrower & Stone, 2006).

There are also evident trends in socioeconomic status of board members. Board members tend to be affluent and of high socioeconomic status. Studies find that there may be a social network component to this clustering phenomenon: "socially and economically prominent community

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[2] BoardSource collected board governance data in 2012, but did not publish a technical report with updated statistics.

members select, and are selected by prominent boards of affluent institutions" (Ostrower & Stone, 2006, p. 616).

Board diversity is an important issue that raises many important questions about the role of representation of target populations and stakeholders on governing boards.   And given the dynamic nature of this topic, issues of gender, race, and socioeconomic diversity are certainly worthy of continued examination.

Board Performance

Most research on board performance tends to rely on perceptions of performance since performance is a difficult construct to measure. Additionally, much of the research on board performance has used gender as an independent variable. Bradshaw, Murray and Wolpin (2006) find that the presence of women on boards significantly impacts board dynamics. Additionally, O'Regan and Oster (2002) indicate that women spend significantly more time on their board responsibilities than men serving on the same boards. However, they do not find a relationship between gender and personal giving or monitoring responsibilities.

Ironically, one of the primary responsibilities of boards is measuring and evaluating the performance of the organizations they serve. However, very little research has been conducted on how well boards perform. Vic Murray and Yvonne Harrison have developed an online tool to help boards measure their board performance (www.boardcheckup.com) and BoardSource offers a similar resource for a fee (www.boardsource.org). Research is developing around these topics, but more work needs to be done.

What Do We Know About Nonprofit Board Member Motivation?

Currently, there have only been a handful of attempts to explain individual motivations of board members to serve on nonprofit boards of directors.

Widmer (1985) uses the incentive-barrier model to explain board member participation. According to this framework, individuals may be motivated by:

- material incentives, defined as tangible and individually oriented rewards;
- social incentives, which include intangible rewards such as friendship and improved status;
- developmental incentives, which are also intangible and relate to the opportunity to improve one's knowledge and skills or to fulfill a civic obligation;
- and ideological incentives, which relate to the ability to work for a cause greater than individual benefit.

Among board members who participated in Widmer's study, the desire to contribute to the work of the agency and the desire to support the goals of the agency ranked highest in terms of reasons for serving, followed by the belief that the job was well-matched to one's skill set (classified as a developmental incentive) and the desire to help the less fortunate.

Three of the four of these incentives appear to involve a motivation to serve; Widmer classifies them as "service incentives." This suggests that nonprofit board members are indeed motivated by a service ethic. However, "no board members in the study reported only 'altruistic' reasons for serving" (p.19), indicating that motivations behind board service are diverse and complex.

Interestingly, Widmer also notes that board motivation varies by agency characteristics. For example, agencies characterized by professional networking and bureaucratic board style tend to have board members motivated more by employment related incentives, while agencies with a specific political, social, or economic mission had members driven less by service goals than ideological and developmental incentives, and agencies that emphasized the volunteer aspect of service tend to have members motivated more out of a desire to fulfill civic obligations. This finding is significant because it suggests that not only agency mission but also organizational structure may factor into the decision to serve on a nonprofit board.

Previous work on board member motivation has included the development of scales to determine the factors that influence board member decisions to participate (Searle, 1989; Inglis, 1994; Clary et al., 1998). Searle (1989) identifies four major factors: growth, responsibility, contribution, and recognition. Inglis (1994) finds support for these four factors, as well as a fifth factor, the opportunity for social interaction. The scales were based on needs theory and social exchange theory. Clary et al. (1998) use a functional approach to create the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) which includes six motivations: altruistic values, skill use and knowledge growth, social relationships, career benefits, egoistic enhancement, and the desire to offset negative personal opinions of oneself.

Inglis and Cleave (2006) point out that these scales share common constructs, but there is also variation in motivation factors across the scales. To this end, Inglis and Cleave (2006) design a framework to assess board member motivations. They identify six components of board member

motivation:

- Enhancement of self-worth is based on individual benefits, including recognition from others as well as an improvement in one's self perception and career advancement opportunities.
- Learning through community involves the desire to gain knowledge and improve skills as well as to network and establish professional relationships.
- Developing individual relationships includes motivations to develop social relationships and work with others.
- Some individuals are motivated by their ability to make unique contributions to the board, through different perspectives and experiences or a special skill set.
- Others join nonprofit boards for self-healing purposes, in the hopes of using the membership opportunity as an escape or a coping mechanism for dealing with personal problems.
- Finally, helping the community reflects individuals' motivation to help others and make a difference in one's community.

While the first five components all capture individual-oriented reasons for volunteering, respondents ranked the items in the "helping the community" component highest in terms of important motivations to serve, lending support to the argument that people serve for altruistic reasons (Inglis & Cleave, 2006). That the desire to help others is a determining factor in one's decision to serve on a nonprofit board also indicates that these individuals may be motivated by a public service ethic.

Additionally, BoardSource (2012) includes several questions that are loosely related to motivation in their biannual Governance Index, which samples board members across the United States. However, more needs to be done. With this in mind, we move to the methodology and survey instrument for this study.

STUDY METHODOLOGY and SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The qualitative data for this report was collected during a focus group with an advisory council comprised of twelve individuals who represent nonprofit organizations in and around the Atlanta Metro area of Georgia. Advisory council members were asked to discuss a) what makes a good board member, including attributes, experience, attitudes, and behavior, and b) what they look for when recruiting board members – including attributes, experience, attitudes, behavior, and any other traits. Information from the advisory council was used to enhance the study, and as information to improve the survey tool. Advisory council members were also asked to review and pilot the draft survey tool and provide feedback.

The quantitative data for this report was collected through an online survey administered to over 3,000 member organizations of Georgia Center for Nonprofits between January 11 and February 11, 2013. Executive directors or other primary points of contact for member organizations were asked to forward pre-written recruitment email from the research team to members of their current board of directors accompanied with a description of the study and a link to the survey instrument.

The survey instrument included questions asking a) demographic information of individual respondents, b) reasons that individuals were initially attracted to serve on a board, and reasons they continued serving on a board, c) information on the organization for which the individual served on the nonprofit boards of directors, d) perceptions of board performance, and finally e) life experiences of respondents based on questions initially created from previously tested public service motivation (PSM) scales (Perry, 1996, 1997).

Out of the 1,046 survey attempts we received from board members filling out the survey, 726 were usable for our data analysis. Surveys were removed from the database if the individual did not answer a significant portion of the questions.

One common obstacle in surveying nonprofit board members is the difficulty in obtaining accurate and current email addresses of respondents. Often, researchers must rely on nonprofit employees (most often the CEO) to forward on surveys to the organizations' board members. This makes tracking response rates to the survey nearly impossible. Additionally, similar to other surveys that use self-reported measures, common method bias is possible.

A copy of the survey instrument can be obtained by contacting Dr. Kevin D. Ward at kevin.d.ward@gmail.com or Dr. Katrina Miller-Stevens at klmiller@odu.edu.

RESULTS

The results of this survey have been divided into four categories including:

1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents
2. Organizational Characteristics of the Boards for which the Respondents Serve
3. Individual Motivations to Serve on a Nonprofit Board of Directors
4. Perceptions of Board Performance of the Boards for which the Respondents Serve
5. Early Life Experiences Viewed Through the Lens of Public Service Motivation Theory

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study gathered data on the age, race, gender, educational attainment, and yearly household income of the board members who completed the survey. We compared these numbers to the data available on the demographic make-up of the general citizenry of the state of Georgia, and found that there were stark divides in every category except gender. Note that we do not have information on the diversity within specific boards of directors since, for reasons of anonymity, respondents were not asked to provide the name of the organization for which they serve. Thus, the information presented below is in aggregate across the entire database.

As Table 2 indicates, 83% of board members report they are white, non-Hispanic, 11% African American, and 3% Latino. These numbers are compared to a state of Georgia representation of 56% white, 31% black, and 9% Latino. Also, if you isolate the metro Atlanta area, the numbers become even more diverse, with a representation of 36%, 54% and 5% respectively. This finding indicates that the make-up of the respondents more closely represent the make-up of the state of Georgia, rather than the make-up of the Atlanta area.

Regarding educational attainment, the GCN board member sample shows that 87% have a bachelor's degree, Master's or doctorate degree, compared to only 28% of the rest of the state. With respect to household income, our GCN sample reported that 64% had an annual household income of over $100,000, compared to only 20% for the rest of the state. The gender composition of our board members was the only demographic variable that did not have a significant divide. The GCN sample reported that 49% of board members were females, compared to 51% in the state of Georgia.

Table 2: Demographic Data of Board Members, Metro-Atlanta Area, and State of Georgia

Category	2013 GCN Board Member Sample	Metro-Atlanta	State of GA
Race			
White	83%	36%	56%
Black	11%	54%	31%
Asian	1%	3%	3%
Latino	3%	5%	9%
Other	2%	2%	<1%
Educational Attainment			
High School Diploma/Equivalent	5%	21%	29%
Bachelor's Degree	38%	28%	18%
Graduate or Professional Degree	49%	18%	10%
Household Income/year			
Less than $50k	9%	53%	50%
$50k-$99,999	27%	24%	30%
More than $100k	64%	24%	20%
Gender			
Male	49%	50%	49%
Female	51%	50%	51%

In addition to looking at the demographics of the board members in comparison to the general populations of Atlanta, we also broke down gender, race, income, education, and age across the different board member roles. The respondents to the survey identified themselves either as a Board Chair, a Board Officer (such as vice chair, secretary, or treasurer), a Board Member, or fulfilling some "Other" position on the board.

As Table 3 indicates, the findings show that men are more likely to hold the Board Chair position (57% of Board Chairs were men) but women were more likely to hold Board Officer positions on the board (59% of officers were women). Other Board Member positions were closely split between men and women.

Board Chairs were found to have the highest average age (69% were over 50 years old), and were most likely to be white (89% white), but interestingly, Board Members were the most wealthy board position, with 68% reporting a household income over $100,000 annually.

Table 3: Demographic Data of Board Chairs, Board Officers, and Board Members

Category	Number of Board Chairs	Number of Board Officers	Number of Board Members
Gender			
Male	67	66	192
Female	50	95	184
Race			
White	104	134	327
Black	7	20	40
Asian	0	0	6
Am. Indian/AK Native	4	3	4
Latino	1	5	9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	1
Other	1	3	5
Income			
Less than $50k	10	17	28
$50k-$99,999	37	42	90
Over $100k	64	95	248
Education			
Less than High School	1	0	0
High school diploma/equivalent	6	7	21
Associate's Degree	7	12	17
Bachelor's Degree	42	66	141
Graduate or Professional Degree	59	73	190
Age			
Under 50	37	56	150
Over 50	81	105	229

Another curious finding regarding board diversity is the fact that on an A-F grading scale, with A being exemplary and F being failing, 89% of respondents gave their board a C or higher when asked to grade their board's performance on "increasing the diversity of the board".

The fact that nonprofit boards tend to be so homogenous may have some serious implications for the nonprofit sector and the constituents it serves. One criticism is that these nonprofit boards, which are composed sometimes almost exclusively of wealthy, well-educated, Caucasian/non-Hispanic individuals have little understanding of the lives of the constituents they serve. Service recipients of the nonprofit sector are oftentimes disadvantaged members of society. Many critics

wonder how these board members who are so advantaged can possibly understand the struggle of the people they are serving and make the best decisions on their behalf.

This criticism may be particularly pertinent in this study. While our survey did not specifically ask where the respondent's organization was located within the state of Georgia, it can probably be assumed that a relatively large percentage of the organizations represented in this sample reside in and serve constituents of Georgia's two main metro areas—Atlanta and Savannah. Under this assumption, the level of homogeneity among the board members is certainly surprising. Can a board member in the Atlanta area who is statistically likely to be wealthy and white truly represent a less a disadvantaged constituent?

The nonprofit literature stresses the need for a diverse and well-represented board to be able to effectively meet the needs of stakeholders, but clearly, there is a disconnect here between board members' perceptions of how well-diversified their board is and the fact that they are overwhelmingly wealthy and white.

Characteristics of the Organizations for which the Respondents Serve on the Board

The survey also asked respondents to report on the characteristics of the organizations for which they serve on the nonprofit board. The majority of respondents (50%) describe the organization for which they serve on the board as a public charity (see Chart 1). When asked which part of the nonprofit sector most closely fits their organization, the most common responses were youth development (30%) and human services (18%) [see Table 4]. The majority of organizations represented in the sample have an annual operating budget under $5 million with the two most reported budgets being an annual operating budget of $1 million - $4,999,999 (26%) and an annual operating budget less than $250,000 (21%) (see Chart 2). Finally, respondents were asked to identify the region that best describes their organization. Forty-eight percent of organizations represented in the sample are local organizations with regional (within state) organizations following behind at twenty-four percent, and all other categories at less than ten percent (see Chart 3).

Chart 1: Categories of Organizations Represented in the Sample
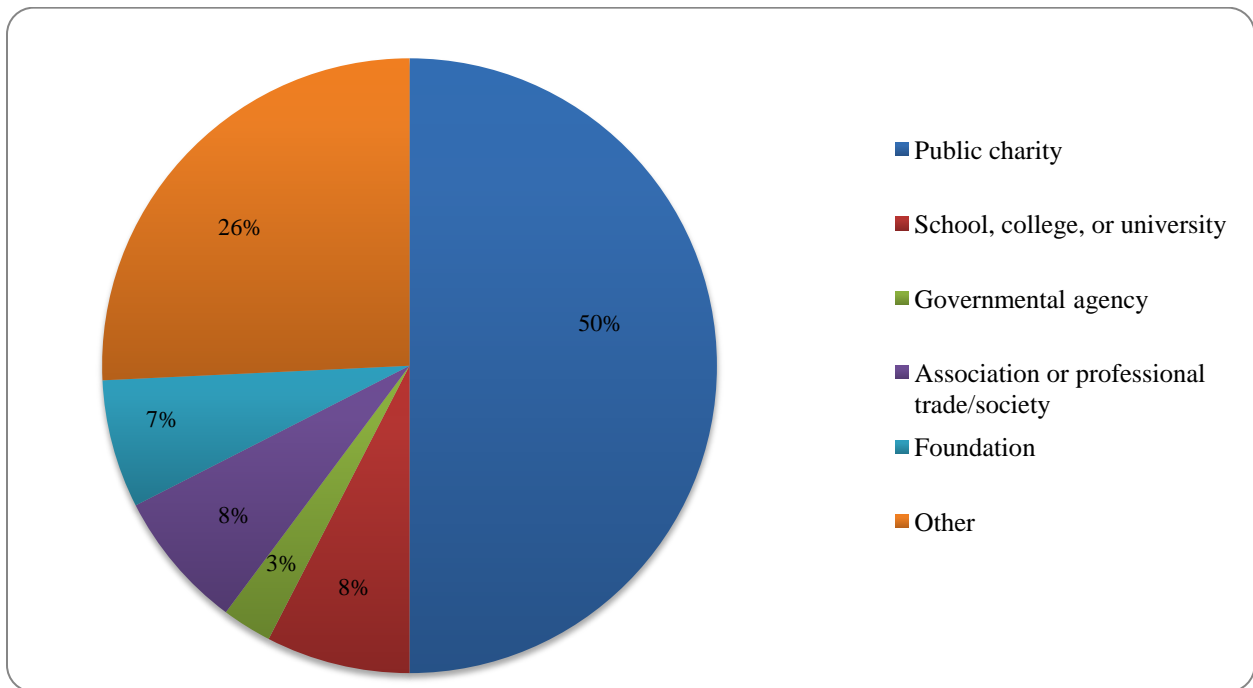
Chart 2: Annual Operating Budgets of Organizations Represented in the Sample
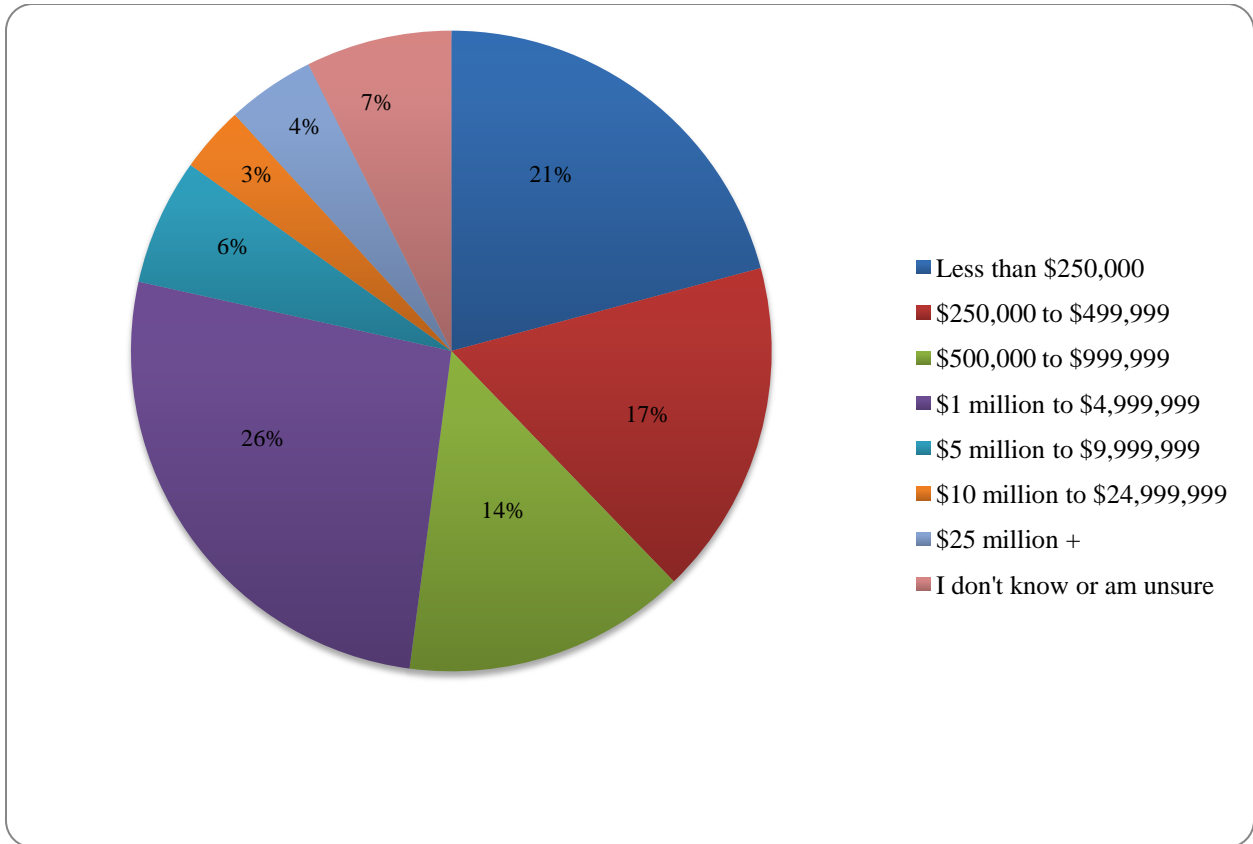
Table 4: Types of Organizations for which the Respondents Serve on the Board

Type of Organization	Percentage
Youth development	30
Human/ social services	18
Arts and culture	10
Health care	8
School, college, university	7
Business/ industry	6
Other	6
Housing and shelter	5
Community/ economic development	5
Environment	2
Sports and recreation	1
Religious congregation	1
International development/ foreign affairs	<1
Philanthropy/ grant-making	<1
Science and technology	<1

Chart 3: Organizations in the Sample as Described by Region

Legend:
- Local — 48%
- Regional (within state) — 24%
- State — 9%
- Regional (multi-state) — 4%
- National — 7%
- International — 7%
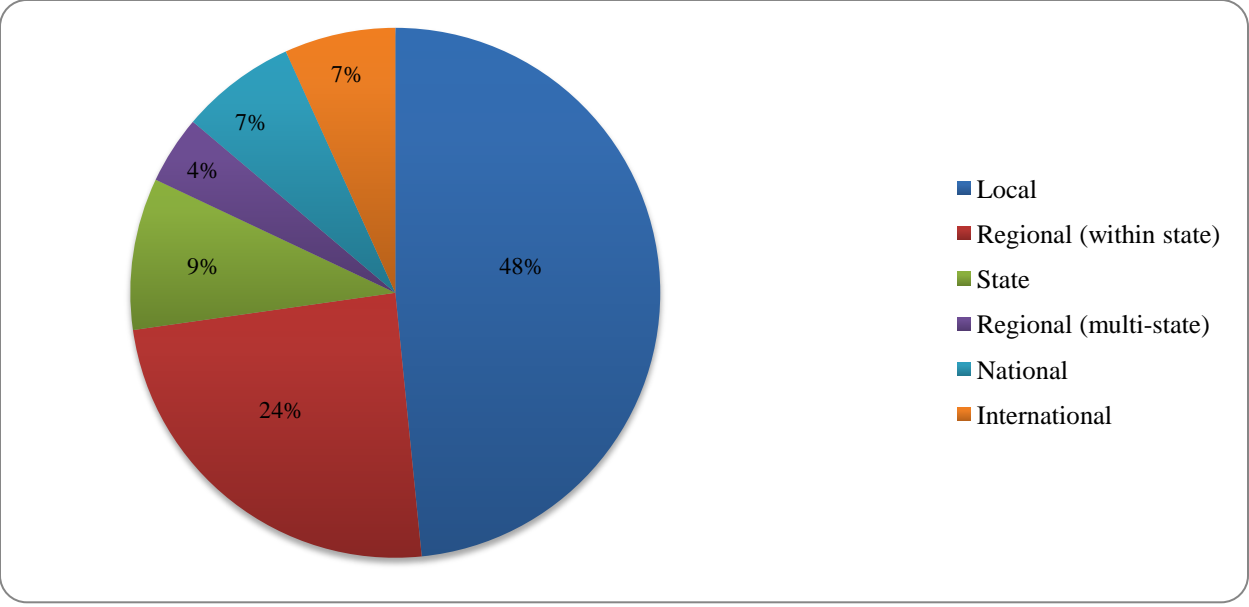
Individual Motivations to Serve on a Nonprofit Board of Directors

Deciding to Serve on a Nonprofit Board of Directors

Reasons for Deciding to Initially Serve:

Respondents were asked to rate twenty-seven factors they might have considered when *initially deciding* whether to serve on the board [See Table 5 on p. 42 for the full list of 27 factors]. Factors were rated on a scale of:

> 1= Not important at all
> 2= Somewhat important
> 3= Important
> 4= Very Important
> 5= Critically important

When comparing mean scores and percentages across the 27 factors, the *ten most important factors* for deciding whether to initially serve on a board of directors include [See Table 5 for calculation of percentages]:

1. To serve the organization and contribute to its success
2. To be helpful to others
3. To contribute to society
4. I have a sense of duty/commitment to the mission
5. Because I really want to help the particular group that the organization serves
6. To share my expertise and professional skills
7. Out of loyalty and respect for the organization
8. I have a desire to work with others
9. To learn more about the organization and the cause it supports
10. For an opportunity for personal growth

*It is of interest to note that the response "For altruistic reasons" was the 11th rated item of importance.

Nine factors scored *"Not important at all"* including:

1. For recognition in the community
2. Because I have friends on the board
3. For self-healing purposes
4. Because my employer expects me to serve on the board
5. To feel important
6. I am retired or unemployed and want something to do
7. Because my friends serve on other boards
8. To make connections so that I can eventually work in a paid position with the organization
9. Because my church expects me to serve on the board

_____

We also looked at whether variables such as age, gender, income, education, employment status, and how the individual acquired the position on the board had an impact on individuals' reasons for initially joining a board of directors.

Impact of Age:

Age categories included:

      a. Under 25
      b. 25-29 years
      c. 30-34 years
      d. 35-39 years
      e. 40-44 years
      f. 45-49 years
      g. 50-54 years
      h. 55-59 years
      i. 60-69 years
      j. 70 years or older

The reasons for serving on a board of directors are by and large consistent between all age groups, and reflect the lists noted above. However, a few observations can be made when comparing specific age groups:

- Respondents 25-29 years of ages rated *enhancing their self-worth* as an important reason for deciding to serve on a board, while respondents ages 55-69 years old rated this reason as not at all important. All other age categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents 45 and older consider *recognition in the community* as not at all important for deciding to serve on a board, while respondents under 45 years of age consider this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents 60 years and older consider *networking and developing professional relationships* as not at all important, whereas respondents 25 and under find this reason to be very important and 25-34 year-olds find the reason to be important.

- All of the age groups reported the following reasons as not at all important when deciding whether to serve on a board of directors:
  - *For self-healing purposes*
  - *To make connections so that I can eventually work in a paid position with the organization*
  - *Because my friends serve on other boards*
  - *Because my church expects me to serve on the board*

- Respondents ages 55-59 years old reported the highest degree of importance *for altruistic reasons* for joining a board, noting this reason as important. All other age groups reported this reason as somewhat important.

Impact of Gender:

Gender does not appear to have an impact on reasons for initially serving on a board of directors. Responses to all questions had nearly identical mean scores* between males and females, with the exception of the following:

- Both men and women reported *altruistic reasons* as being somewhat important for joining a board of directors. However, women reported this reason as being of slightly higher importance than men (a difference of .31).

- Women also reported *an opportunity for personal growth* as being more important than men (with a difference of .27), with women rating the reason as important and men rating the reason as somewhat important.

- Women rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as important, while men rated the reason as somewhat important (a difference of .23).

- Both men and women reported *helping the particular group that the organization serves* as being an important reason for joining a board, but women rated this reason slightly higher than men (with a difference of .18)

*No more than .15 difference between scores. Mean scores are calculated on a scale of 1=Not important at all to 5= Critically Important)

Impact of Annual Household Income:

Categories of annual household income include:

        a. Less than $50,000
        b. $50,000 to $74,999
        c. $75,000 to $99,999
        d. $100,000 to $249,999
        e. $250,000 +

Income does not appear to have an impact on individuals' reasons for initially deciding to serve on a board of directors with the following three exceptions:

- Respondents with an annual household income of $50,000-$74,999 reported *contributing to society* as an important reason for joining a board, while all other categories for annual household income reported this reason as very important.

- Respondents with an annual household income of $100,000-$249,000 reported *a sense of duty/commitment to the mission* as important, while all other categories for annual household income reported this reason as very important.

- Respondents with an annual household income of less than $50,000 or an annual household income over $250,000 reported *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as being an important reason for joining a board, while all other categories of annual income reported this reason as being somewhat important.

Impact of Education (Highest Academic Degree):

Categories for highest academic degree include:

    a. Less than a high school diploma/GED
    b. High school diploma/GED
    c. Associate's (2 year) degree
    d. Bachelor's degree
    e. Master's degree
    f. Doctorate or other professional degree
    g. Other

Education appears to have an impact on reasons individuals decide to serve on nonprofit boards. In particular:

- Respondents with a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, and master's degree reported *enhancing their self-worth* as being somewhat important, while respondents with an associate's degree or doctorate reported this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher reported *contributing to society* as being a very important reason for joining a board, while respondents with and associate's degree and below reported this reason as being important.

- Respondents with a doctorate degree or equivalent reported *having a sense of duty/commitment to the mission* as being very important, while those with a master's degree and below reported this reason as important.

- Respondents with a master's degree or below reported *a desire to work with others* as being an important reason for joining a board, while respondents with a doctorate or equivalent reported this reason as being somewhat important.

- Respondents with a master's degree or below reported *altruistic reasons* as being a somewhat important reason for joining a board, while respondents with a doctorate or equivalent reported this reason as being important.

- Respondents with a master's degree reported *opportunity for personal growth* as being an important reason for joining a board, while all other degree categories reported this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents with a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, or master's degree reported *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for

joining a board, while respondents with an associate's degree or doctorate reported this reason as being somewhat important.

Impact of Employment Status:

Categories of employment status include:

a. Working full-time
b. Working part-time
c. Currently unemployed
d. Retired
e. Full-time student
f. Full-time stay-at-home parent
g. Not employed
h. Other

More than any other demographic factor, employment status appears to have the most impact on individuals' reasons to join a board of directors. For example:

- Respondents who are retired reported that *enhancing their self-worth* was not an important factor in determining whether to serve on a board of directors, whereas all other employment categories said this reason was somewhat important.

- Full-time students and self-employed individuals responded that *recognition in the community* was somewhat important in determining whether to serve on a board, while all other employment categories reported this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents who work full-time, part-time, are retired, or are full-time students reported *contributing to society* as a very important factor in considering whether to serve on a nonprofit board, whereas all other employment categories reported this reason as important.

- Respondents who were willfully not employed reported *networking and developing personal relationships* as not at all important, while all other categories of employment reported this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who were willfully not employed, retired, or a full-time student reported *networking and developing professional relationships* as not at all important, while all other categories of employment reported this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents working full-time, currently unemployed, retired, or self-employed reported *the nonprofit asking them to serve on the board* as somewhat important, while all other categories reported this reason as important.

- Full-time students reported *sharing their expertise and professional skills* as a very important reason for serving on the board, while willfully unemployed respondents

reported this reason as somewhat unimportant. All other employment categories reported this reason as important.

- Respondents who were working part-time, retired, full-time students, willfully not employed, or self-employed reported *having a sense of duty/commitment to the mission* as a very important reason for serving on a board, whereas respondents working full-time, are currently unemployed, or are working as a full-time stay at home parent report this reason as important.

- Respondents who were full-time stay at home parents reported *serving the organization and contributing to its success* as important, while all other employment categories rated this factor as very important.

- Respondents who were currently unemployed or self-employed reported *helping others* as an important reason for joining a board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as very important.

- With the exception of respondents who are willfully not employed, all unemployment categories rated *a desire to work with others* as an important reason for joining a board.

- Respondents who are full-time students rated *altruistic reasons* as a very important reason for joining a board. Respondents who work part-time, are currently unemployed, or are willfully not employed rated this reason as important. All other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who are currently unemployed or a full-time student rated *an opportunity for personal growth* as an important reason for joining a board, while all other categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Full-time students rated *learning more about their community* as an important reason for joining a board, all other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents working full-time, part-time, or retired rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as somewhat important, while those who are currently unemployed, full time students, full-time stay at home parents, and willfully not employed rated this reason as important.

- Full-time students rated *fulfilling a need to volunteer* as an important reason for joining a board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who are full-time students rating *helping the particular group that the organization serves* as critically important, while respondents who are self employed or retired rated this reason as very important, and all other employment categories rated this reason as important.

Impact of How Individual Acquired Position on the Board:

Respondents were asked how they acquired a position on the board with the choices of:

a. I actively sought out a position on the board
b. I was asked to serve on the board without inquiring about the position beforehand
c. Other

Responses for each group were the same (and largely reflect the initial list presented at the beginning of this section) with the exception of the following:

- Respondents who actively sought a position on the board rated *recognition in the community* as somewhat important, whereas those asked to serve rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents who actively sought a position on the board rated *an opportunity for personal growth* as an important reason for joining a board, whereas those asked to serve rated this reason as somewhat important.

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Continuing to Serve on a Nonprofit Board of Directors

Reasons for Continuing to Serve on the Board:

Respondents were given twenty-seven factors they might have considered when deciding whether to *continue serving* on a board of directors [See Table 5 on p. 42 for the full list of 27 factors]. Factors were rated on a scale of:

> 1= Not important at all
> 2= Somewhat important
> 3= Important
> 4= Very Important
> 5= Critically important

When comparing means and percentages across all categories, the *ten most important factors* for deciding whether to continue serving on a board of directors include [See Table 5 for calculation of percentages]:

1. To serve the organization and contribute to its success
2. I have a sense of duty/commitment to the mission
3. To be helpful to others
4. Because I really want to help the particular group that the organization serves
5. Out of loyalty and respect for the organization
6. To contribute to society
7. To share my expertise and professional skills
8. To learn more about the organization and the cause it supports
9. I have a desire to work with others
10. To learn more about my community

*It is of interest to note that the response "For altruistic reasons" was the 12th rated item of importance.

Ten factors scored *"Not important at all"* including:

1. Because I have friends on the board
2. To enhance my self-worth
3. For recognition in the community
4. For self-healing purposes
5. I am retired or unemployed and want something to do
6. To feel important
7. Because my employer expects me to serve on the board
8. Because my friends serve on other boards
9. To make connections so that I can eventually work in a paid position with the organization
10. Because my church expects me to serve on the board

We also looked at whether variables such as age, gender, income, education, employment status, role on the board, and participation in a board sub-committee had an impact on individuals' reasons for continuing to serve on a board of directors.

Impact of Age:

Age categories included:

        a. Under 25
        b. 25-29 years
        c. 30-34 years
        d. 35-39 years
        e. 40-44 years
        f. 45-49 years
        g. 50-54 years
        h. 55-59 years
        i. 60-69 years
        j. 70 years or older

Age appears to have an impact on reasons individuals continue to serve on a nonprofit board. The data tells us that:

- Respondents who are 25-29 years of age rated *enhancing their self-worth* as an important reason to continue serving on the board, whereas respondents between the ages of 30-39 years old rated this reason as somewhat important. All other age categories rated the reason as not at all important.

- Respondents 25-29 years old rated *recognition in the community* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, whereas respondents 25 and under and 30-34 years of age rated this reason as somewhat important. All other age categories rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents 25-29 years of age rated *contributing to society* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents 25-29 rated *networking and developing personal relationships* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age groups except 70 and older rated this reason as somewhat important. Respondents 70 and older rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents in the age categories of under 25, 25-29, 30-34, and 40-44 rated *networking and developing professional relationships* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while the age categories of 35-39, 45-49, 50-54, and 55-59 rated this reason as somewhat important. Respondents in the age categories of 60-69 and over 70 years old rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents ages 25 and under rated *sharing their expertise and professional skills* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents ages 50-59 rated *a sense of duty/commitment to the mission* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, whereas all other age categories rated this reason as very important.

- Respondents ages 29 and under rated *being helpful to others* as very important, whereas all other age categories rated this reason as being important.

- Respondents in the age categories of under 25, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 50-54, and 55-59 rated *a desire to work with others* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- All age categories except individuals 70 and older rated *altruistic reasons* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board. Respondents 70 and older rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents ages 25-29 rated *an opportunity for personal growth* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, whereas all other age categories except 70 and older rated this reason as somewhat important. Respondents 70 years and older rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents ages 29 and under rated *loyalty and respect for the organization* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents ages 25-34 rate *learning more about their community* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other age categories rate this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents ages 25-29, 30-34, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, and 70 and older rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board. All other age categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents under 25 years of age rated *having friends on the board* as an important reason for continuing to serve, while all other age categories rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents under 25 years of age rated *feeling important* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve, while all other age categories rated this reason as not at all important.

Impact of Gender:

Similar to initial reasons to serve, gender does not appear to have an impact on reasons for continuing to serve on a board of directors. Responses to all questions had nearly identical mean scores* between males and females, with the exception of the following:

- Women rated *serving the organization and contributing to its success* slightly higher than men (with a difference of .16), with both groups rating this reason as very important for continuing to serve on the board.

- Women rated *a desire to work with others* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while men rated this reason as somewhat important (a difference of .19).

- Women rated *altruistic reasons* slightly higher than men (a difference of .23), with both groups rating this reason as somewhat important.

- Women rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while men rate this reason as somewhat important (a difference of .22).

*No more than .15 difference between scores. Mean scores are calculated on a scale of 1=Not important at all to 5= Critically Important)

Impact of Annual Household Income:

Categories of annual household income include:

a. Less than $50,000
b. $50,000 to $74,999
c. $75,000 to $99,999
d. $100,000 to $249,999
e. $250,000 +

Income does not appear to have much of an impact on reasons individuals decide to continue serving on a board of directors. Exceptions to this include:

- Respondents with an annual income of $100,000 to $249,999 rated *having a sense of commitment to the mission* as an important reason for remaining on the board, while all other income categories rated this reason as very important.

- Respondents with an annual income of less than $50,000 and over $250,000 rated *being helpful to others* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other income categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents with an annual income of less than $50,000 rated *having a desire to work with others* as an important reason to continue serving on the board, while all other income categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents with an annual income of less than $50,000 rated *having respect and loyalty* for the organization as being a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other income categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents with an annual income of less than $50,000 and over $250,000 rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other income categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

Impact of Education (Highest Academic Degree):

Categories for highest academic degree include:

      a. Less than a high school diploma/GED
      b. High school diploma/GED
      c. Associate's (2 year) degree
      d. Bachelor's degree
      e. Master's degree
      f. Doctorate or other professional degree
      g. Other

Education appears to have somewhat of an impact on individuals' reasons to continue serving on a board of directors. The areas that were impacted by education include:

- Respondents with an associate's degree or higher rated *networking and developing professional relationships* as not at all important to deciding whether to continue serving on the board, whereas all other education categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents with an education less than a high school diploma rated *sharing their expertise and professional skills* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on a board, while all other education categories rated this reason as important.

- *Having a sense of duty or commitment to the mission* rated very high for all education categories as a reason for continuing to serve on the board. Respondents with an education less than a high school education rated this reason as critically important, while respondents with a high school diploma rated the reason as important. All other education categories rated the reason as very important.

- *Serving the organization and contributing to its success* also rated high with all education groups. Respondents with an education less than a high school education rated this

reason as critically important, while all other education categories rated this reason as very important.

- Respondents with a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctorate rated *being helpful to others* as an important reason for continuing to serve on a board, while respondents with an associate's degree rated this reason as very important, and respondents with less than a high school education rated it as critically important.

- All education categories except those with lower than a high school education rated *loyalty and respect for the organization* as an important reason for staying on the board, while those with lower than a high school education rated this reason as critically important.

- Respondents with an education lower than a high school education, or with a master's degree or doctorate rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as somewhat important, while respondents with a high school degree/GED, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree rated this reason as important.

- All education categories rated *helping the particular group that the organization serves* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while respondents with less than a high school education rated this reason as not at all important.

Impact of Employment Status:

Categories of employment status include:

       a. Working full-time
       b. Working part-time
       c. Currently unemployed
       d. Retired
       e. Full-time student
       f. Full-time stay-at-home parent
       g. Not employed
       h. Other

Similar to initial reasons to serve, employment status appears to have the most impact on individuals' reasons to continue serving on a board of directors. For example:

- Respondents who are currently unemployed rated *enhancing their self-worth* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as not at all important.

- Full-time students rated *recognition in the community* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as not at all important.

- Full-time stay at home parents rated *contributing to society* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents who are retired or willfully not employed rated *networking and developing personal AND professional relationships* as not at all important to continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who are full-time students rated their *sense of duty/commitment to the mission* as a critically important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while those working full-time, part-time, retired, full-time stay at home parents, and willfully not employed reported this reason as very important. Respondents who are currently unemployed or self-employed rated this reason as being important.

- Full-time students rated *serving the organization and contributing to its success* as a critically important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as very important.

- Full-time stay at home parents rated *being helpful to others* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board of directors, while all other employment categories rated this reason as very important.

- Respondents who are full-time students rated *a desire to work with others* as being very important for continuing to serve on the board. Respondents working part-time, who are currently unemployed, are full-time stay at home parents, or are self-employed reported this reason as being important. Those working full-time, retired, or willfully not employed reported this reason as being somewhat important.

- Full-time students rated *altruistic reasons* as being very important for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories except self-employed rated this reason as somewhat important. Those who are self employed rated this reason as not at all important.

- All employment categories except self-employed rated *an opportunity for personal growth* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board. Those who are self-employed rated this reason as not at all important.

- Full-time students, full-time stay at home parents, and those willfully not employed rated *loyalty and respect for the organization* as being a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as important.

- Full-time stay at home parents rated *learning more about the community* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who are retired, full-time stay at home parents, or willfully not employed rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, whereas all other employment categories rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Respondents who are currently unemployed or are full-time students rated *fulfilling a need to volunteer* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories except those self-employed rated this reason as somewhat important. Self-employed respondents rated this reason as not at all important.

- Full-time students rated *having friends on the board* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve, while all other employment categories rated this reason as not at all important.

- Respondents who are retired or full-time students rated *helping the particular group that the organization serves* as being a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, whereas all other employment categories rated this reason as important.

- Respondents who are willfully not employed rated *wanting something to do* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while all other employment categories rated this reason as not at all important.

Impact of Role on the Board:

We wanted to know whether having an Officer position on the board had any impact on an individual's decision to continue serving on a nonprofit board of directors. Respondents were asked to identify whether they were a Board Chair, a Board Officer (e.g. Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary), or a Board Member with no officer role. There were only four reasons listed on the survey that showed any difference in response between a Board Officer or Board Member without an officer position, including:

- Board Members rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while Board Officers and Board Chairs rated this reason as somewhat important.

- Board Members rated *having a sense of duty/commitment* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while Board Officers and Board Chairs rated this reason as very important.

- Board Officers (excluding the Chair) rated *being helpful to others* as a very important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while Board Chairs and Board Members rated this reason as important.

- Board Chairs rated *a desire to work with others* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while Board Officers and Board Members rated this reason as important.

Impact of Participation on Board Sub-Committee:

Participants were asked whether they participated on a sub-committee of the board (e.g. Finance Committee, Advocacy Committee, Development Committee). Participation on a sub-committee had virtually no impact on reasons for a respondent to continue serving on a board. Only two reasons had any difference in rating between those who do, and those who do not, serve on a sub-committee:

- Respondents who serve on a sub-committee of the board rated *a desire to work with others* as a somewhat important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while respondents who do not serve on a sub-committee of the board rated this reason as important.

- Respondents who serve on a sub-committee of the board rated *learning more about the organization and the cause it supports* as an important reason for continuing to serve on the board, while respondents who do not serve on a sub-committee of the board rated this reason as somewhat important.

Table 5. Comparison of percent of respondents that identified this reason as important, very important, or critically important for *initially joining* <u>or</u> *continuing to serve* on a nonprofit board

Reason	% of Respondents that Identified This Reason as Important, Very Important, or Critically Important	
	Initially Join	Continue Serving
1. To serve the organization and contribute to its success	82.4	83.6
2. To be helpful to others	77.7	68.6
3. To contribute to society	76.1	63.9
4. I have a sense of duty/commitment to the mission	72.1	74.1
5. Because I really want to help the particular group the organization serves	69.5	69.2
6. To share my expertise and professional skills	57.7	60.6
7. Out of loyalty and respect for the organization	54.8	76.9
8. I have a desire to work with others	40.4	35.7
9. To learn more about the organization and the cause it supports	37.3	40.0
10. For an opportunity for personal growth	32.7	24.1
11. For altruistic reasons	32.0	24.3
12. To fulfill a need to volunteer	27.8	22.2
13. Simply because the nonprofit asked me to join the board	27.6	17.6
14. To learn more about my community	26.9	27.1
15. To network and develop professional relationships	24.9	22.3
16. To network and develop personal relationships	18.7	18.3
17. To enhance my self-worth	14.6	6.9
18. Other	11.8	13.9
19. Because I have friends on the board	8.5	9.2
20. For recognition in the community	7.3	5.8
21. For self-healing purposes	3.5	3.8
22. Because my employer expects me to serve on the board	3.5	3.0
23. To feel important	2.9	2.0
24. I am retired or unemployed and want something to do	2.8	3.2
25. Because my friends serve on other boards	1.7	1.5
26. To make connections so that I can eventually work in a paid position with the organization	1.4	1.8
27. Because my church expects me to	0.6	0.8

Perceived Board Performance of the Boards for which the Respondents Serve

Respondents were asked the questions, "Relying on your own perceptions, please "grade" your board's performance in each of the following areas," with the choice of A=Excellent, B=Good, C=Satisfactory, D=Unsatisfactory, and F=Failing.

Table 6. Perceived Effectiveness of Board Performance as Rated by Respondents∗
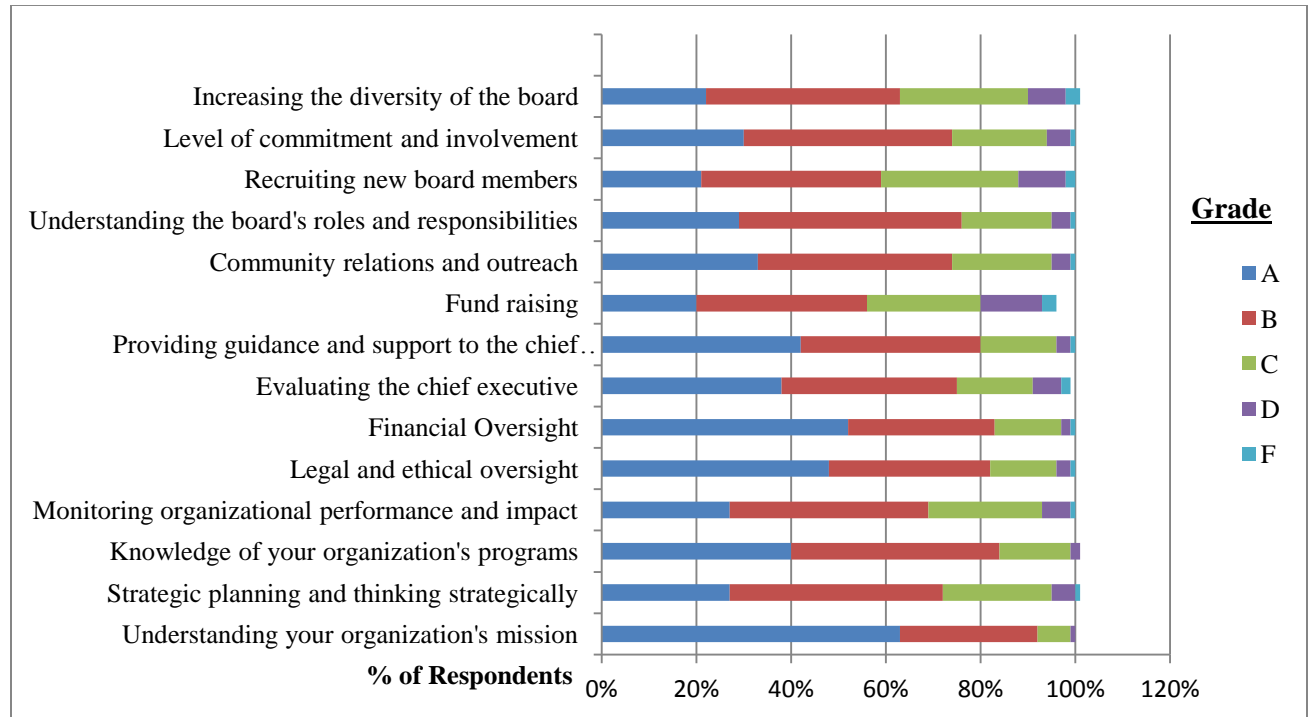
Table 6 illustrates that the large majority of respondents report excellent (A), good (B), or satisfactory (C) grades for all areas of performance of their board. The areas receiving the highest ratings of effectiveness (the most As) include understanding the organization's mission, financial oversight, and legal and ethical oversight. The high number of excellent (A), good (B), and satisfactory (C) grades reported by respondents is somewhat surprising when considering there is no standard model of board governance across the nonprofit sector. Areas with the most need for improvement (the most Ds and Fs) include increasing the diversity of the board, recruiting new board members, and fundraising.

Life Experiences of Respondents Through the Lens of Public Service Motivation Theory

Antecedent Conditions of Public Service Motivation and Pro-social Behaviors

Within the public and nonprofit sector employee motivation literature, it has been found that experiences early in life serve as good predictors of whether or not an individual will develop the motives or values often found in public and nonprofit employees (Perry 1997, 2000). In particular, links between factors such as family socialization, religious activity, formal volunteering and informal volunteering have all been shown to be positively related to public service motives and pro-social behaviors [voluntary behavior intended to benefit someone else] (Perry, 1997; Coursey et al., 2008).

We asked respondents to think about their life experiences that may have influenced their desire to participate in public service and participate on a nonprofit board of directors. Respondents were asked to reflect on experiences within the categories of family socialization, religious activity, formal volunteering, and informal volunteering. Respondents were then asked to report whether they agreed or disagreed to a series of statements taken from Perry's (1996) public service motivation scale [see Appendix A for examples of the questions]. Results of the life experiences questions are summarized below.

Families and Upbringing Matter

Survey respondents reported that when they were younger, their families placed high importance on volunteering and helping others. Board members appear to commonly come from supportive home structures with nearly 80 percent of respondents agreeing that their family helped one another [see Table 7]. In addition to supporting each other, it was reported that as children, board members' parents also encouraged them to think about the larger community: over 73 percent of respondents indicated that their parents taught them to "lend a helping hand." Conversely, only 16 percent of respondents indicated that their parents did not think that getting involved with strangers in distress was appropriate.

Typically, there is a strong link between seeing parents or mentors volunteer and volunteering later in life. Here, we see that over half of the respondents had parents who were actively involved in voluntarism, while all of the respondents to the survey indicated that they volunteered in one form or another (either in their duties as a board member, or through additional volunteer duties with other organizations).

As a baseline, the Corporation for National and Community Service (2012) recently reported that 26 percent of residents of Georgia volunteered in 2011 ranking them 34th among the 50 states. 28 percent of residents of Atlanta volunteered, ranking the city 23rd among the 51 largest metropolitan statistical areas in the US. The same report found that 60.1 percent of people in Georgia "do favors for neighbors" (more information about volunteering and civic life in Georgia and Atlanta can be found at http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/GA). It appears that volunteering and helping others were emphasized in the families of board members at a higher rate than their peers. The relationships between family socialization and board membership are not inferential or predictive, but these descriptive statistics do support the

theoretic literature that learning values associated with volunteering and helping others are important to developing motives that attract them to public or nonprofit service later in life.

Table 7. Respondents Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Statements on Family Socialization

	Question	Percentage of Respondents who either Agree or Strongly Agree with the Statement
1	My parents actively participated in volunteer organizations	51.49%
2	In my family, we always helped one another	79.72%
3	Concerning strangers experiencing distress, my parents generally thought that it was more important to not get involved	16.05%
4	My parents frequently discussed moral values with me	71.73%
5	When I was growing up, my parents told me I should be willing to "lend a helping hand"	73.48%
6	When I was growing up, my parents often urged me to get involved with volunteer projects for children.	36.32%

Religious Activity in Youth Matters

Another strong predictor of motives that attract individuals to careers in the public and nonprofit sectors is activity in religious organizations (Perry, 1997; Perry et al., 2008). Among the sample, we see that over 62 percent of board members who participated in the survey attended a religious service either "often" or "all of the time" [see Table 8]. Conversely, only 17 percent indicated they "rarely" or "never" attend religious services. This finding is supported throughout the public service motivation literature which posits that religious activity is a driver of pro-social behaviors and values.

Additionally, it has been posited in the sociology and civic engagement literature that religious organizations are important to the social fabric (Putnam, 2004) of communities and cultivate subcultures is which voluntarism is promoted. Among our sample of board members, it was found that they participate in church activities or groups (other than attending services) at a lower rate than those who attended a religious service: 43 percent reported regularly participating in these activities and 31.7 percent suggested that they very rarely participate.

Table 8. Respondents' Participation in Religious Activities Throughout Their Lifetime
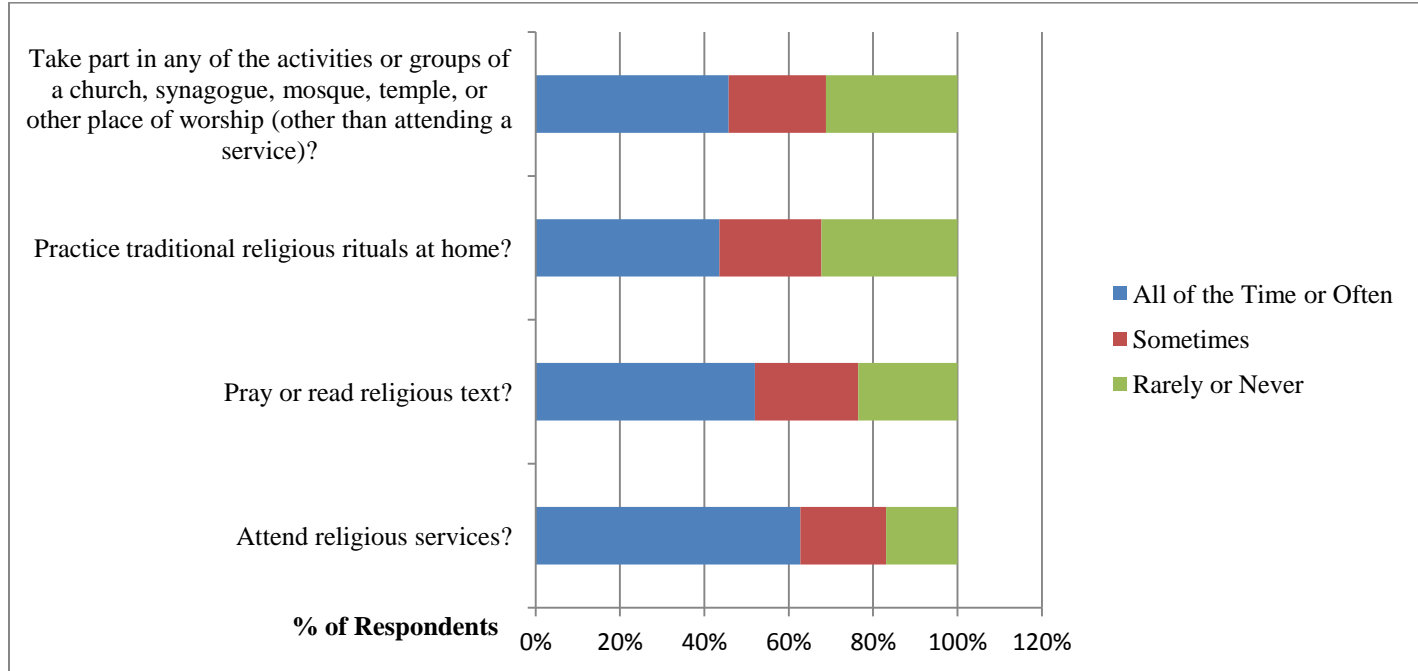
Formal Volunteering Later in Life Matters

Within the public and nonprofit motivation literature, a positive correlation has been identified between formal volunteering activity and the development of pro-social values (Perry 2000; Coursey et al., 2008). In our sample of nonprofit board members (who demonstrate pro-social values), we would expect to find high levels of volunteering.

As expected, nonprofit board members, appear to be active volunteers in their communities. This section examines the different types and frequency of volunteer activities that board members engage in outside of their board responsibilities.

As noted above, many board members are active in volunteering with their church or religious organizations. As Table 9 illustrates, more than 52 percent of respondents report volunteering with these types of organizations for at least one hour per year. Nearly 30 percent are regular volunteers and contribute more than 20 hours of service to their religious organization per year.

Many board members are also active in their local schools, with over 36 percent volunteering regularly. Only 30 percent of respondents reported *not* volunteering at a school or educational organization, which suggests that many board members likely have children in their home.

Board members are less active in volunteering with political groups. 59 percent of respondents indicated that they had not volunteered for a political group or campaign over the past year, which included the 2012 presidential election cycle (it is expected to see higher levels of political and campaign volunteering to be higher during presidential election years, so we can assume that

our sample likely volunteers even less than the rates they reported during non-presidential election years).

The highest rate of formal volunteering appears with human service organizations, such as the YMCA, American Red Cross, day care, etc. Over 68 percent of respondents volunteered at least one hour per year with human service organizations, and nearly 50 percent of the sample volunteered for a human service organization more than 20 hours per year.

Table 9. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Hours of Formal Volunteering

How many hours per year do you volunteer with the following organizations?	0 hours	1-19 hours	20-39 hours	40-79 hours	80-159 hours	160+ hours
Religious organization	42%	28%	8%	9%	7%	6%
School or educational organization (can include church affiliated schools, libraries, museums, etc.)	31%	33%	13%	9%	6%	9%
Political groups and campaigns (political parties or nonpartisan political groups)	59%	27%	8%	3%	2%	1%
Human service organizations (YMCA, Red Cross, day care, homelessness, etc.)	21%	29%	16%	13%	10%	11%
Other national or local organizations	27%	28%	17%	12%	6%	9%

Informal Volunteering Matters

Informal volunteering rates were also high. Board members engage in activities such as providing child care without pay (63 percent report doing this at least once a year), providing transportation for shopping or errands (over 16 percent report doing this more than 20 hours per year), and helping with upkeep of a house, car, or other belongings (over 16 percent report doing this more than 20 hours per year) [see Table 10].

Table 10: Percentage of Respondents Reporting Informal Volunteering

	How many hours have you performed any of the following types of informal volunteering?	0 hours	1-19 hours	20-39 hours	40-79 hours	80-159 hours	160+ hours
1	Provide transportation, shop or run errands	40 %	43%	51%	55 %	58%	17 %
2	Help with upkeep of their house, car, or other belongings	56%	28 %	35 %	40%	42 %	16 %
3	Child care without pay	63%	24%	29 %	32 %	35 %	13 %
4	Any other form of helping out	21%	43%	60%	70%	74 %	36 %

We now turn to questions from the public service motivation scale. General themes from the findings are that board members are:

- highly compassionate,
- moderately interested in public policymaking (but understand politics and politicking),
- moderately willing to self-sacrifice,
- and highly committed to the public interest.

Thus far, we have highlighted many motives and reasons that board members are initially attracted to and continue to serve on boards, as well as the importance of experiences throughout life that affect an individual's propensity to engage in community service. However, the public and nonprofit motivation literature suggests that particular factors can serve as statistically accurate indicators of an individual's interest in serving the public. Among these indicators are values associated with attraction to public policymaking, compassion, self-sacrifice, and commitment to the public interest. Here, items associated with these constructs are reported. These dimensions, associated with the public service motivation scale (Perry, 1996) are examined in this section.

Board Members are Only Moderately Attracted to Public Policy Making

Public policymaking and politicians do not appear to be of particular interest to nonprofit board members. When asked how they feel about politicians, many responded unfavorably (45%). Nearly 1/3 of respondents held a neutral view of politicians. Nonprofit board members did report being interested in the give and take of politics, with only 36% indicating that they were not interested in these processes. Most respondents also did not view politics unfavorably (over 80 percent had a neutral or positive view of the word "politics") [see Table 11].

Table 11: Respondents' Opinions of Public Policymaking and Politicians
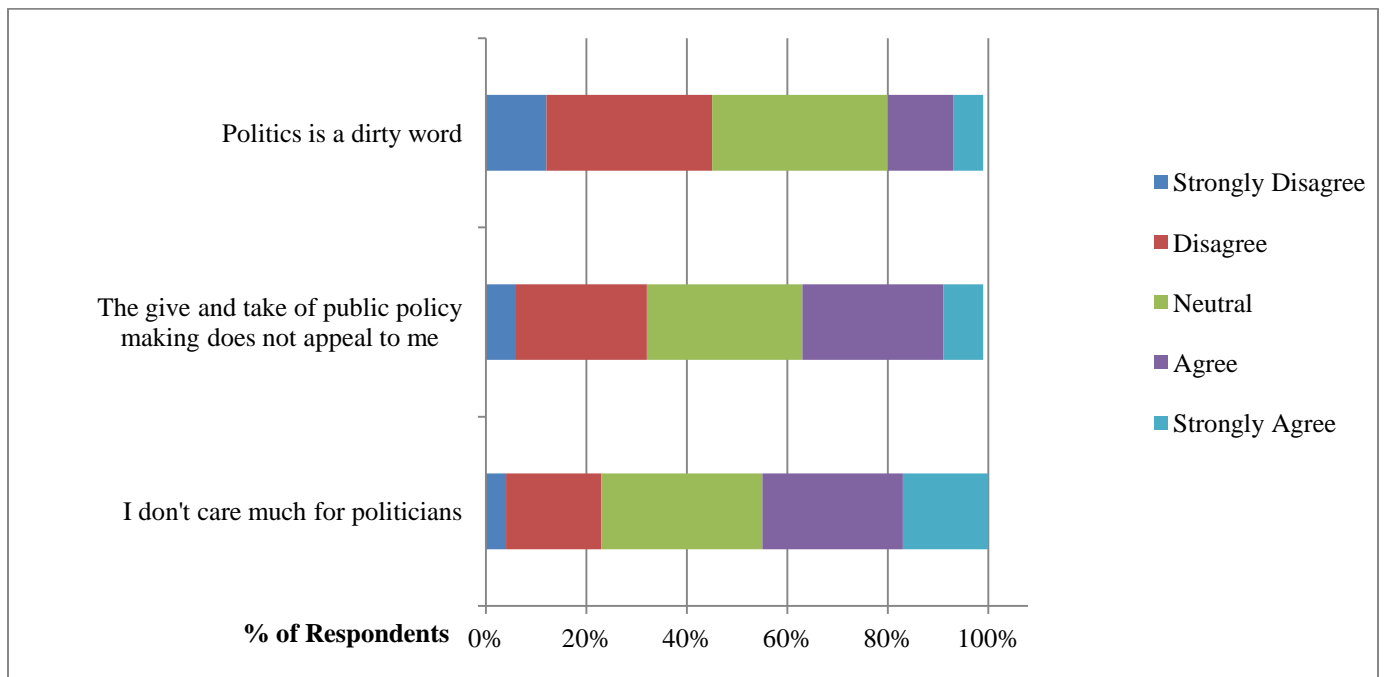
Board Members Demonstrate High Levels of Compassion

Nonprofit board members report relatively high levels of compassion [see Table 12]. Most respondents reported they were moved by the plight of the underprivileged (83 percent). They also reported thinking about the welfare of people they didn't know regularly (76 percent). Similarly, as a proxy for compassion, respondents thought that the term "patriotism" included seeing to the welfare of others (75 percent agreed or strongly agreed). However, when respondents were asked about social programs, less than 50 percent of respondents indicated they felt that most social programs were too vital to do without. Respondents were relatively evenly split when asked about their wholehearted support for specific public programs (just over 40 percent indicated there were public programs that they were devoted to).   This suggests that while board members demonstrate an interest in the welfare of others, they are somewhat discerning in what the role of public programs is in addressing the needs in their communities. This finding lends support to the idea that the nonprofit sector is sometimes seen as a "gap-filler" between the private and public sectors.

Table 12: Respondents' Opinions on Levels of Compassion
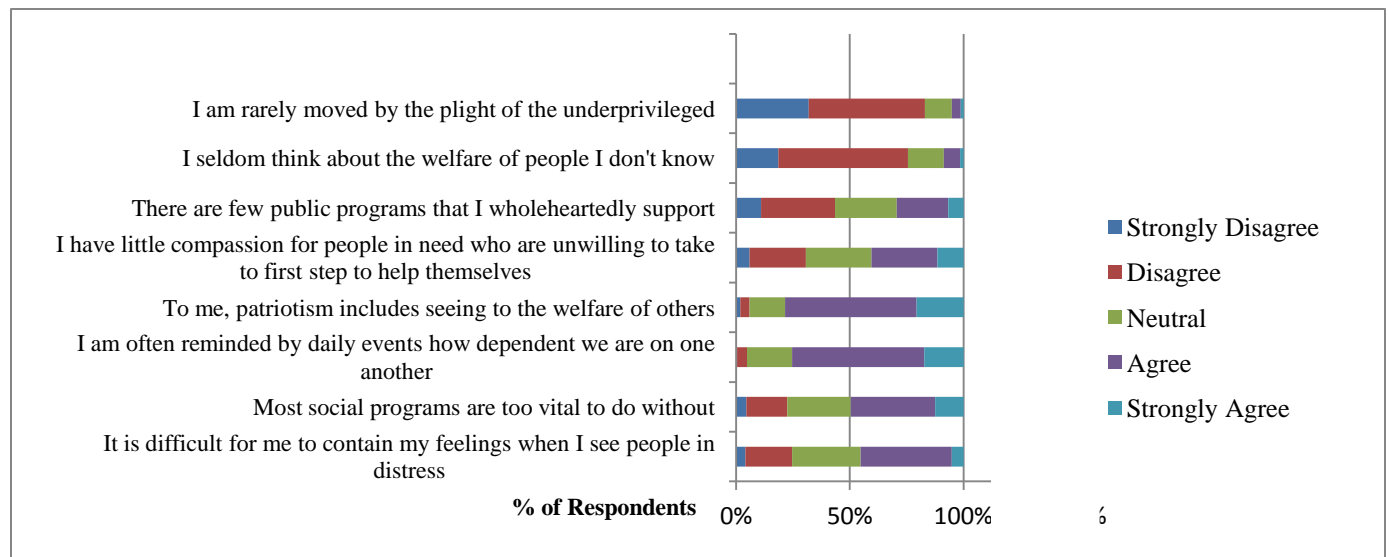
Board Members Report Varying Levels of Self-Sacrifice

While board members appear to be compassionate, they tend to report only moderate levels of self-sacrifice [see Table 13]. Board members suggest that people should give back to society more than they get from it (78%) and most thought that people should put "duty before self" (59 percent agreed or strongly agreed). But, when asked about risking personal loss to help another individual, 45 percent were neutral and only 41 percent indicated they were willing to make sacrifices. Additionally, only 40 percent indicated that they were prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society.

Board members do not appear to be extrinsically or materially motivated. Only 4 percent indicated that doing well financially was more important to them than doing good deeds, while over 70 percent reported that much of what they do is for a cause bigger than themselves. Within this latent category of willingness to self-sacrifice, there appears to two subtexts. First, many board members indicate that they, themselves, tend to be moved or affected by the difficulties faced by others. However, these feeling, while still present, appear to be somewhat tempered when it comes to providing social programs to address these difficulties.

Table 13: Respondents' Opinions on Levels of Self-Sacrifice
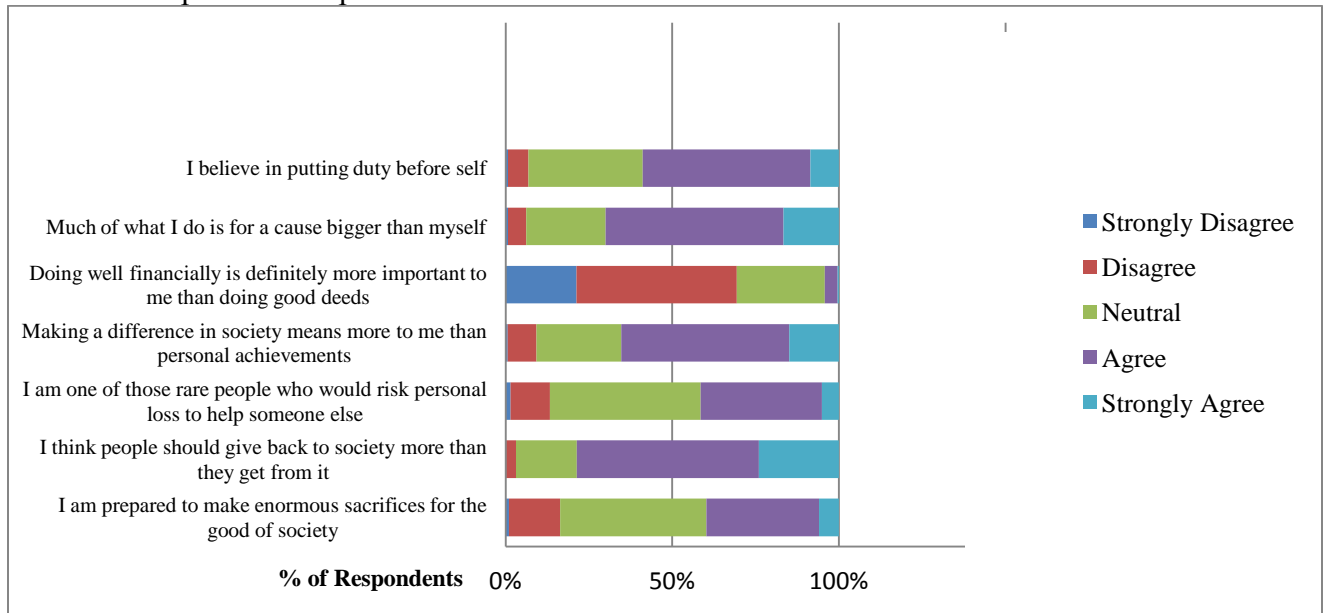
Board Members Reported Being Highly Committed to the Public Interest

Over 90% percent of respondents agree that public service is very important [see Table 14]. Board members also believe in social responsibility with over 78 percent suggesting that public service was their civic duty. Finally, members report at a high rate (71%) that they unselfishly contribute to their communities.

Table 14. Respondents' Opinions on Commitment to the Public Interest
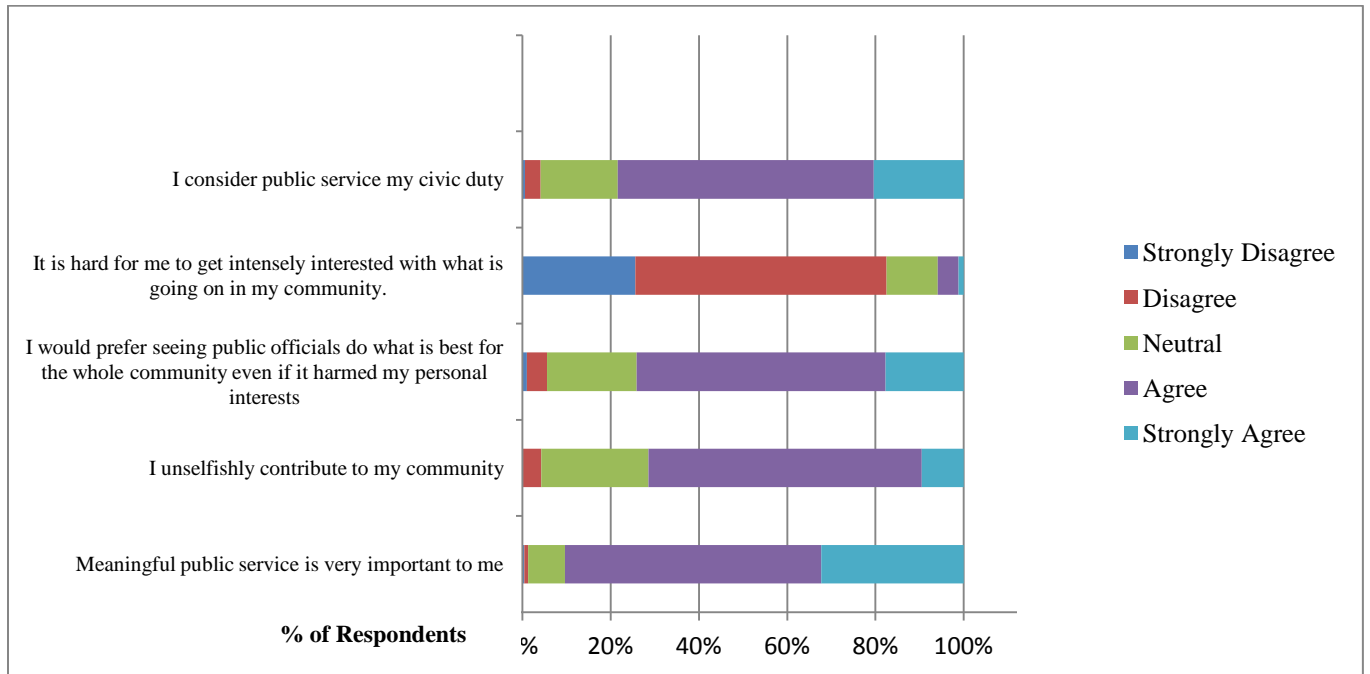
CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study bring us back to the questions asked in the introduction: What characteristics describe individuals most likely to serve on a nonprofit board of directors? How do life experiences impact individuals' motivations to participate on nonprofit boards? How can nonprofit boards improve their tactics for recruiting and retaining board members?

Prior research on best practices of nonprofit boards has indirectly addressed motivations for recruiting and retaining nonprofit board members, but the discussions have usually been couched in the context of how to achieve effective or high-impact boards. For example, a few suggested strategies to improve board effectiveness that relate to this study include (examples are compiled from Eadie, 2006; Herman & Heimovics, 2005; BoardSource, 2005):

- Attracting board members with:
    - a good organizational fit
    - values that are in line with the organization and its mission
    - knowledge and skills that will benefit the board and the organization
    - the ability to think strategically
    - good decision-making skills and forward thinking

- Retaining board members by:
    - creating positive working relationships between the board and the CEO
    - encouraging standing committees to be involved in the decision-making process
    - making board members feel respected
    - making board members feel useful and appreciated
    - encouraging individuals to be innovative and apply their knowledge and skills to generate ideas, actions, or products that will benefit the organization

Previous work on high-impact boards offers an attractive description of what an effective board may look like, but there is no single standard for defining the effectiveness of a nonprofit organization or its board of directors. As John Carver (2006) notes, variables chosen for measurement in some research studies seem to imply "that effectiveness in governance is to be judged by whether board members are more fulfilled, challenged, or involved; the CEO is happier or the board less meddlesome; the board raises more funds; grant revenues are increased; committees are more active; or the board chair perceives the CEO to be meeting his or her objectives" (p. 337).

Herman and Renz (2002) caution against lists of best practices for board effectiveness arguing that "Many sources that claim to offer 'best practices' for NPO boards or management provide little or no basis for their assertions. The evidence from our…study does not support the claim that particular board and management practices are automatically best or even good (that is, that using them leads to effective boards and organization). We prefer to talk in terms of 'promising practices' to describe those approaches that warrant consideration" (p. 6-7).

Furthermore, nonprofit leaders often encounter suggestions for board effectiveness that are compilations of practitioner wisdom rather than actual measures of performance. We suggest that the best approach to board effectiveness – and thus recruiting and retaining board members - may be one based on both practitioner wisdom and empirical research. Thus, we conclude this

report with a few "promising practices" for recruiting and retaining nonprofit board members based on both the advice and wisdom of the advisory council *and* the measurable responses from the survey of nonprofit board members. We hope you will consider these promising practices in conjunction with other resources available online [see Appendix B for examples of additional resources on board effectiveness and recruitment].

First, when your board of directors is working on a plan for recruiting and/or retaining board members, you should consider multiple efforts and plans that will reach different groups of people. As illustrated in this study, some demographic characteristics including employment status, education, and age have different impacts on individuals' reasons to join or continue serving on a board. Boards should be cognizant of these differences when creating their plans for recruiting and retaining board members.

Second, when creating matrices of what you are looking for in board members, consider adding life experiences to your list such as formal and informal volunteering experiences, levels of commitment to the public interest, levels of compassion and self sacrifice, religious experiences as a youth, and family upbringing. As indicated in this study, individuals with high levels of each of these constructs will most likely have a higher commitment to public service, and thus a higher commitment to serving on a nonprofit board.

Third, when determining the make-up of your board, consider forming an advisory council of stakeholders from the community such as clients you work closely with, major donors and occasional givers, previous board members, or other nonprofits familiar with your cause, and ask these individuals what they think a good board looks like. You might be surprised with what you hear!

Finally, at the heart of it all, consider what motivates individuals to serve. Read through this report, and think about what motivation means to you and your board. What can you learn from this report? Based on what you've learned, how can you change your tactics on recruiting and retaining board members? What will motivate *you* to become a more effective board member? And how can you motivate your board members?

We encourage you to think about these questions. Our aim with this study is to further both practice and research in the areas of motivation and nonprofit board governance, specifically with recruiting and retaining nonprofit board members. We hope we have achieved this goal, and we look forward to any comments or questions you may have. Please feel free to contact us at Kevin D. Ward kevin.d.ward@gmail.com or Katrina Miller-Stevens klmiller@odu.edu.

APPENDIX A: Sample Questions from Perry's (1996) Public Service Motivation Scale

Below is a list of sample questions from James Perry's (1996) public service motivation scale. Individuals are asked to indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree with the following statements:

1) It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress

2) Meaningful public service is very important to me

3) I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society

4) I unselfishly contribute to my community

5) I don't care much for politicians

6) I think people should give back to society more than they get from it

7) I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests

8) Most social programs are too vital to do without

9) I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another

10) I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else

11) The give and take of public policy making does not appeal to me

12) Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements

13) To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others

14) I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves

15) Serving other citizens gives me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it

16) There are few public programs that I wholeheartedly support

17) Politics is a dirty word

18) I seldom think about the welfare of people I don't know

19) Doing well financially is definitely more important to me than

20) It is hard for me to get intensely interested with what is going on in my community

21) Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself

APPENDIX B: Sample Online Resources for Nonprofit Boards of Directors

Below is a small sample of online resources available for nonprofit boards of directors. Our hope is that by seeing these examples, you will be encouraged to seek more resources online.

The Georgia Center for Nonprofits

The Georgia Center for Nonprofits offers trainings and resources to its members for board-related issues.

http://www.gcn.org/

Performance Assessment Tools:

https://www.boardsource.org/eweb/dynamicpage.aspx?webcode=AssessmentsWhat

https://www.boardcheckup.com/

Online Board Matchmaking Services:

www.boardnetusa.org

www.volunteermatch.org

www.bridgestar.org

http://www.bridgespan.org/getattachment/de0fa2d1-6d2a-4163-872f-8aa49845a4b8/Board-Matchmaking.aspx

Recruiting and Retaining Board Members:

http://www.bridgespan.org/getattachment/f1cc926a-0146-435b-8d7a-871c8963aa9e/Building-a-Diverse-Board.aspx

http://www.bridgespan.org/getattachment/14588322-b2f2-4184-a02a-fbaf50716c62/Recruiting-and-Keeping-GOOD-Board-Members.aspx

http://www.bridgespan.org/getattachment/f1310119-2b21-4908-8e80-7fcc945291cf/Recruiting-and-Vetting-Nonprofit-Board-Members.aspx

http://www.compasspoint.org/board-cafe/five-fast-ways-recruit-new-board-members

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