ABSTRACT

METELSKY, BARBARA A. Towards a Critical Social Theory of the Paradoxical Role of Board Social Capital in the Generative Governance of Nonprofit Organizations. (Under the direction of Dr. Tueré A. Bowles.)

Generative governance is the foundational and unique mode of Chait, Ryan, and Taylor's (2005) governance as leadership model of nonprofit governance. In generative governance, boards engage in deeper inquiry, explore root causes of issues facing the organization and the people it serves, consider divergent values, examine optional courses of action, create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions (Chait et al., 2005). Thus, generative governance can enhance the board's value to a nonprofit organization (Chait et al., 2005).

Chait et al. (2005) raise promising suggestions for the positive role that board social capital plays in nonprofit governance, in general, and generative governance, in particular. Surprising observations made through prior research and practice experience, however, led me to believe that board social capital might play a more complex role in generative governance. It was my contention that board social capital could also lead to negative outcomes including the exclusion and marginalization of diverse voices in the governance process. Thus, board social capital could present a paradox for generative governance.

The purpose of my study was to develop a preliminary critical social theory to help us understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations. I explored the potential benefits and detriments of board social capital in generative governance practice. The role that board relationships play in the inclusion and exclusion of diverse voices was a focal point. The following research question guided my study:
How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?

I employed a bricolage approach, which uses “qualitative methods for critical social purposes” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009, p. 53). Bricolage supported the use of multiple methods and frames and the analysis of readily available data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Lynham's (2002b) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines guided the theory-building process. The study involved three General Method phases, i.e., conceptualization, operationalization, and application. I used Poole and Van de Ven's (1989) opposition method of using paradox to build management and organizational theories and Weick's (1989) disciplined imagination theory-building method to develop the preliminary theory, operationalize it, and plan for the application of the theory in practice.

A social constructionist perspective grounded the study. Mainstream social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and critical race theory informed the development of the disciplined imagination thought trials. I used textual analysis to analyze the data, which came from multiple sources including case data from two human services nonprofits.

The study had both theory-building research and theoretical findings. The theory-building research findings support the usefulness of bricolage and abduction for theory development in applied disciplines, demonstrate the benefits of combining a paradox approach with disciplined imagination in the conceptualization phase of theory building, and document a rigorous process for the use of disciplined imagination in creating a theoretical bricolage.
The theoretical findings support my contention that board social capital can play a paradoxical role in generative governance. They provide evidence of positive outcomes attributable to board social capital and demonstrate that it can also lead to negative outcomes including the exclusion and marginalization of diverse individuals in the practice of generative governance. The preliminary theory describes my current understanding of the paradox.

Two major conclusions were drawn from the study findings. The theory-building research conclusion is: Socially-just HRD research and practice requires theory developed with interpretive and critical methods and theory developed by diverse scholars. The following is the theoretical conclusion: The paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance creates an ethical dilemma for nonprofit organizations.

Key words: nonprofit boards, generative governance, social capital, paradox, critical perspectives, human resource development, theory-building research
Towards a Critical Social Theory of the Paradoxical Role of Board Social Capital in the Generative Governance of Nonprofit Organizations

by
Barbara A. Metelsky

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Education

Adult and Community College Education

Raleigh, North Carolina

2017

APPROVED BY:

____________________________
Tueré A. Bowles, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

____________________________
Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D.

____________________________
Jessica Katz Jameson, Ph.D.

____________________________
Brad Mehlenbacher, Ph.D.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the women and men who work for social change and social justice through volunteer service on nonprofit boards.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.™”

Margaret Mead (Used with permission.)
BIOGRAPHY

For the past 30 years, I have had the privilege of working with, serving on, and researching nonprofit boards. During the first half of my career, I worked as an administrator in nonprofit organizations that provide serves to people living with disabilities. I spent the second half of my career as an administrator in the nonprofit academic centers at Seton Hall University and North Carolina State University. Most recently, I have worked as an organizational development consultant helping nonprofits and nonprofit academic centers to advance their missions.

I hold a BA degree in Psychology from Rutgers College of Rutgers University and a MPA degree with a concentration in nonprofit organization management from Seton Hall University. My master’s thesis, completed under the direction of Dr. Naomi Bailin Wish, was a qualitative study of nonprofit governance. My research furthered our understanding of the influence that board members who live with developmental disabilities have on the governance of the nonprofits that serve them. My doctoral studies at North Carolina State University have further prepared me for research, teaching, and engagement on the subjects of nonprofit governance and nonprofit boards. My aim is to further our understanding of socially-just governance practices and to help nonprofits create environments that welcome and include diverse voices in the governance process.

Field's Top Practitioners, Researchers, and Provocateurs. I have presented my work at a broad range of academic and practitioner conferences as well as professional development programs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation study is a testament to the statement “it takes a village…” (Clinton, 2006). In this case, it is not to raise a child; rather, it is to nurture and support a woman who hopes, in some small way, to make a difference in the world through this research.

There are so many people to recognize and thank, beginning with my family. First, I want to acknowledge my mother, Kathryn Hampel, a woman of great faith who is a constant example of selfless service to others. She has been a role model and my biggest cheerleader. I also want to recognize my three daughters; Lauren Pomales, Nicole Sweat, and Sarah Metelsky. I am so proud of the amazing women they have become and the service work they do in their chosen professions. I am grateful for their support of my nonprofit work and my academic studies, even though it often meant sacrifices on their part when my work and classes took me away from home. In addition, I want to acknowledge my dear friend the Rev. Wendy Abrahamson, who has been like family for over 30 years. I appreciate the way she has served as a sounding board and the supportive manner in which she has continuously nudged me forward.

There have been numerous others in my early professional life who have made an imprint on me and this work. Some of these former colleagues (from my work at the Sussex County Association for Retarded Citizens, United Cerebral Palsy, and Seton Hall University) have served mentors; others as collaborators. Each one has a strong social justice orientation, which influenced my work in the nonprofit sector and this dissertation study. They include Walter Kalman, Wendy Abrahamson, Nancy Starnes, Colleen Fraser, Dr. Naomi Wish, Dr. Roseanne Mirabella, and Dr. Pamela Leland.

I also want to recognize those who have supported my education and research. This includes the first teacher who introduced to me to issues of social justice, Sr. Kathleen Britt,
CSJ. Sr. Kathy was my third grade teacher; but, I learned far more from her than the academic subjects of reading, writing, and math. Her teachings on social justice and her lived example of service through community development work in Appalachia opened my eyes to the importance of social justice/social change efforts. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Naomi Wish, of Seton Hall University, who has served as mentor and who guided my first governance study when she served as my Master’s thesis advisor; Dr. Natalie Ames, of NC State, who I worked with on the Building a Child Health Collaborative Research Project and who is source of support and encouragement; Dr. Colleen Wiessner, who taught a course on race and racism in adult education, which influenced my interest in and use of critical race theory; fellow students Dr. Thomas Easley, of NC State, and Dr. Hassel Morrison, formerly of NC State and currently at the University of Idaho, who I worked with on multiple research projects related to issues of race, racism, and intercultural competency; Dr. Scipio A. J. Collin, III, of National-Louis University, who mentored me and opened my eyes to why it is important for researchers with white privilege to conduct critical research on issues of race and racism; Dr. Patti Clayton, formerly of NC State, who introduced me to the scholarship of engagement; Dr. Chris Cornforth, of the Open University in the U.K., who introduced me to paradox theory and suggested that it would be useful for my dissertation study; Dr. Chao Guo, of the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Patricia Bradshaw, of St. Mary’s University in Canada, who I have worked with on research related to the use of critical and democratic perspectives in nonprofit governance research and practice. I also want to acknowledge my collaborators on the NC State Board Communication Research Initiative, Dr. Stan Holt, Dr. Sue Barcinas, and Dr. Jessica Katz Jameson. Each one of these individuals has made a unique impact on my development as a scholar and on my dissertation work.
Finally, I want to acknowledge my past and current dissertation committee members. I want to thank Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker, formerly of NC State, who served as my dissertation chair until she accepted a position at George Washington University. This study was conceptualized under her direction. Her guidance pushed me beyond my comfort zone, broadened my thinking, and spurred my interest in conducting a study with an explicit social change focus. I am grateful for the efforts she made on my behalf.

I also want recognize Dr. Tueré Bowles for her willingness to move from committee member to committee chair. She has much on her plate and I know that chairing another dissertation, especially one already underway, is a big job. This dissertation could not have been completed without her direction and support. I am especially grateful for her key input on my methodology, her constant encouragement, and her guidance on the preparations necessary for the final dense.

In addition, I want to acknowledge my other departmental committee members; Dr. Audrey Jaeger, who has served on the committee since the start and provided important input on my methodology and Dr. Brad Mehlenbacher, who generously agreed to join the committee when Dr. Bowles became the committee chair. I also want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Amy Orders, who stepped in at the end of the process, when she graciously agreed to serve as a substitute committee member for my final defense.

Finally, I want to offer a special recognition to my external committee member, Dr. Jessica Jameson from the Department of Communication. When I introduced the faculty members affiliated with the NC State Institute for Nonprofits to the book Governance as Leadership and the practice of generative governance, I specifically reached out to Dr. Jameson. I believed that communication research was a natural match for the study of nonprofit governance, in general, and generative governance, in particular. She agreed, and
the NC State Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative was born. I have had the pleasure to work with Dr. Jameson on this project from conceptualization, to the selection of co-researchers and research partners, to data collection, and to the development of multiple studies with corresponding papers and presentations. This dissertation on generative governance would not have been possible without her leadership and guidance. I am forever grateful for all that I have learned from our collaborative work and for her support of my individual research, especially this dissertation study.

Yes, it did take a village to prepare me for, and support me with, this dissertation study. I am most thankful to everyone who has supported me and played a role in making this research possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES...........................................................................................................xiii  
LIST OF FIGURES..........................................................................................................xiv  

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..............................................................................1  

Background Information...............................................................................................3  
  
Nonprofit governance....................................................................................................3  
Nonprofit boards...........................................................................................................5  
*Board responsibilities*.................................................................................................5  
*Board size and composition*......................................................................................6  
*Gender*........................................................................................................................6  
*Race and ethnicity*........................................................................................................7  
*Social class*..................................................................................................................8  
Importance of studying nonprofit governance............................................................10  
Problem Statement.......................................................................................................11  
Challenges facing nonprofit governance practice.......................................................11  
Generative governance: An innovative solution..........................................................13  
  
Board social capital: A benefit *and* challenge for generative governance..............16  
Purpose of the Study......................................................................................................19  
Research Question......................................................................................................19  
  
Need for a Critical Social Theory of the Paradoxical Role of Board Social  
Capital in the Generative Governance of Nonprofit Organizations........................20  
  
Significance of the Study..............................................................................................21  
  
Nonprofit governance theory significance................................................................21  
Social capital theory significance..............................................................................22
Critical human resource development significance………………………………………22
Theory-building research significance…………………………………………………23
Theoretical Framework…………………………………………………………………25
Philosophical Assumptions……………………………………………………………..27
Definitions………………………………………………………………………………….28
Dissertation Overview……………………………………………………………………28

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW…………………………………………………30
Generative Governance…………………………………………………………………30
Introduction………………………………………………………………………………30
Characteristics of generative governance…………………………………………….34
Concerns regarding generative governance………………………………………..37
Generative governance and the social construction of knowledge………………39
Nonprofit Governance Theory…………………………………………………………43
Agency theory……………………………………………………………………………44
Description………………………………………………………………………………44
Practice evidence……………………………………………………………………….45
Research evidence……………………………………………………………………….46
Critique…………………………………………………………………………………..47
Relevance………………………………………………………………………………….48
Resource dependence theory………………………………………………………..51
Description………………………………………………………………………………51
Practice evidence……………………………………………………………………….52
Research evidence……………………………………………………………………….53
Critique…………………………………………………………………………………..56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social capital benefits and generative governance</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Theory</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical human resource development</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical social capital perspectives</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital detriments and generative governance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical race theory</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of CRT</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenets of CRT</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT in HRD</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical perspectives and nonprofit governance research</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory Building</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions and roles of theory</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building research</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building research methods</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubin’s Method</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Method</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Scholarship Model</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing Dubin’s Method, the General Method, and the Engaged Scholarship Model</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional theory-building research methods</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-analytic</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social constructionist</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Study Overview

Use of Theory-Building Research in Doctoral Dissertations

Research Approach

Methods and Frames

Overarching Theory-Building Method Selection Criteria

Assessment of Dubin's Method

Assessment of the General Method

Assessment of the Engaged Scholarship Model

Selection of the General Method

General Method

General Method phases

Adapting the General Method

Research Process Part I

Abduction

The role of abduction in the study

Abduction and the General Method

Research Process Part II

Induction

The role of induction in the study

Phase 1: Conceptualization

Paradox approach

Disciplined imagination

Phase 2: Operationalization

Phase 3: Application
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4: Ongoing refinement and development</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance as Leadership text</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner literature</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case data</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative overview</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case information</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case datasets</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher reflection journal</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Story</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit trail</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: THEORY-BUILDING RESEARCH FINDINGS</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps and Inconsistencies in the HRD Theory-building Research Literature</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricolage approach</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Method</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building strategies</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building phases</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: Operationalization</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation .............................................. 202
Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development .................................... 203
Disciplined imagination .................................................................. 205
Theory assessment ........................................................................ 206
Transparency of theory evaluation .................................................. 206
Tools to support theory evaluation .................................................. 206
Evaluating critical theories .............................................................. 208
Guidance for HRD theorists ............................................................ 210
Developing the Theoretical Bricolage .............................................. 212
Disciplined Imagination Thought Trials Process .............................. 215
Theory-Building Research Contributions ........................................ 222
Chapter Summary .......................................................................... 223

CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL FINDINGS ........................................ 224

Values .......................................................................................... 224
Diversity ...................................................................................... 225
Inclusion ...................................................................................... 225
Empowerment ............................................................................. 225
Assumptions .............................................................................. 226
Nonprofit boards ........................................................................ 226
Social constructionism ................................................................. 226
Social capital ............................................................................. 227
Racism ....................................................................................... 227
Social change ........................................................................... 228
Context ....................................................................................... 228
Phase 1: Conceptualization

Findings overview

Descriptive explanation of the theory

*Readiness for the socially-just practice of generative governance*

*Governance at the organizational boundaries*

*Diverse voices are at the board table*

*Issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board*

*Practice of generative governance*

*Reframing issues*

*Reflective practice*

*Collective sensemaking*

*Barriers to the socially-just practice of generative governance*

Phase 2: Operationalization

*Readiness for generative governance*

*Governance at the organizational boundaries*

*Diverse voices are at the board table*

*Issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board*

*Practice of generative governance*

*Reframing issues*

*Reflective practice*

*Collective sensemaking*

Phase 3: Application

*Purpose*

*Research questions*

*Research approach*
Theoretical frames .................................................................264
Methods.................................................................................265
*Critical participatory action research*.................................266
*Case study*.........................................................................267
*Critical narrative research*....................................................268
Data and data analysis..............................................................270
Resources...............................................................................271
Transferability........................................................................274
Evaluation...............................................................................276
*Interpretive perspective criteria*.............................................277
*Critically analytic criteria*......................................................280
Theoretical Contributions.......................................................283
*Contributions to nonprofit governance theory*....................284
*Contributions to social capital theory*.................................285
*Contributions to critical human resource development*........285
Chapter Summary....................................................................286

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..................................................287

Summary of the Study...............................................................287
Rationale for the study..............................................................287
Purpose...................................................................................288
Research question....................................................................288
Methodology............................................................................288
Findings..................................................................................290
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building research conclusion</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive and critical methods</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse scholars</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory-building research implications and recommendations</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive and critical methods</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse scholars</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical conclusion</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical implications and recommendations</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Definitions</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Disciplined Imagination Thought Trial Example</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Exempt from Further IRB Review Letter</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Nonprofit Board Communication Study - Board and Staff Member Interview Protocol</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Critical Research Methods Resource List</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Post-dissertation CPAR Study Stages</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Theory Assessment Template</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 *Theoretical Framework* ......................................................................................................... 26

Table 2.1 *Distinctive Characteristics of Generative Governance* ....................................................... 35

Table 2.2 *What’s Different about Generative Governance?* ................................................................. 37

Table 2.3 *Concept Analysis of Critical HRD* ......................................................................................... 95

Table 2.4 *Definitions of Theory* ........................................................................................................ 111

Table 3.1 *Practitioner Publications Analyzed* ..................................................................................... 170

Table 3.2 *Case Organizations: Organizational and Board Characteristics* ................................. 175

Table 3.3 *Racial and Ethnic Diversity: City and County Demographics* ........................................... 177

Table 3.4 *Criteria for Assessing Theory in Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective* ................................................................. 188

Table 3.5 *Brookfield’s Critically Analytic Evaluation Criteria* ............................................................. 192

Table 4.1 *Developing the Theoretical Bricolage* ................................................................................. 213

Table 4.2 *Disciplined Imagination Thought Trials: Problem Statements and Questions* ......... 217

Table 5.1 *Definitions of the Key Theoretical Concepts* .................................................................. 231

Table 5.2 *Operationalization of the Preliminary Theory* ................................................................. 256

Table 5.3 *Proposed CPAR Study Methodology* ................................................................................. 272

Table 5.4 *Evaluation Results: Interpretive Perspective Criteria* ...................................................... 278

Table 5.5 *Evaluation Results: Critically Analytic Criteria* ............................................................... 281
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Governance as leadership: The governance triangle..........................14

Figure 2.1. Dubin’s theory-building method..........................................................115

Figure 2.2. Lynham’s general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines..........................................................117

Figure 2.3. Van de Ven’s engaged scholarship diamond model of theory building............................................................................120

Figure 3.1. Sjøberg, Dybå, Anda, and Hannay’s adaptation of the General Method to incorporate abductive logic..........................................................156

Figure 3.2. Metelsky’s adaptation of the General Method to incorporate abduction and support interpretive and critical approaches..........................................................158

Figure 4.1. Disciplined imagination thought trial excerpt.......................................218
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit organizations work in complex, rapidly changing environments. The Great Recession of the United States (2007-2009) and resulting government cutbacks, high levels of unemployment, and the significant rise in home foreclosures led to increased requests for services provided by nonprofit organizations (Philanthropy Journal, 2009). At the same time, charitable donations decreased sharply and foundation giving experienced a record breaking decrease resulting in the need for nonprofits to do more with less (Center on Philanthropy, 2010; Lawrence & Mukai, 2010). These and other more recent challenges including increased economic inequality, generational tensions, pressure to lower overhead costs, and competition with for profit social enterprises (Perry, Preston, & Wallace, 2012) make good governance increasingly important for nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, a series of highly publicized scandals raised questions about nonprofit governance leading to warnings that there is a “crisis in confidence” in American nonprofits (O’Neill, 2008, p. 237) and to calls for change in nonprofit governance practice (Ostrower, 2007; Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007).

‘Generative governance’ (Chait, Ryan, and Taylor, 2005) has been promoted as a revolutionary means to improve nonprofit governance practice, which has been widely embraced by practitioners (American Society of Association Executives, 2005; Bader & Associates Governance Consultants, 2005; Koester, 2006; Kreisler, 2005). It is a mode of governance in which boards engage in deeper inquiry, explore root causes of issues facing the organization and the people that it serves, consider divergent values, examine optional courses of action, create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions (Chait et al., 2005).
A number of scholars have embraced generative governance (e.g., Beck, 2009a, 2013; Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2009; Seel & Gibbons, 2012; Trower, 2013). Other scholars, however, have raised concerns about the paucity of research and lack of theory on this mode of governance (e.g., Brown, 2009, personal communication; Hough, 2006). A theoretical concern of mine is Chait et al.'s (2005) narrow view of the role of ‘board social capital’ (i.e., the value derived from board relationships) in generative governance. They exclusively attribute benefits to board social capital without considering potential detriments. Yet, the social capital literature identifies a broad range of negative outcomes of social capital, including ways that it can negatively affect historically marginalized individuals and groups (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 2002; Arneil, 2006; Lin, 2001; Portés, 1998; Woolcock, 1998). Thus, a broader view of board social capital that considers the possibility of both positive and negative outcomes emanating from board relationships seemed warranted.

A broader view of the role of board social capital in nonprofit governance supports observations that I made during prior research and through my practice experience. Consequently, I came to believe that board social capital might present a paradox for generative governance. This study, therefore, sought to further our understanding of board social capital. It achieved this objective by proposing a new critical social theory of generative governance that sheds light on the paradoxical role of board social capital. A critical social theory focuses on power, justice, and the ways that economics, demographics, ideologies, discourses, social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to create a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). I used mainstream social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and critical race theory (CRT) to explore how board social capital can both promote and hinder generative governance. The role of board social capital in
supporting and obstructing the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the practice of generative governance is a significant focus of the theory.

This chapter begins by providing background information. Following is a presentation of the problem the study addresses, the purpose of the study, and the research question. Next, is a discussion of the need for the theory, the significance of the study, the study's theoretical framework, and my personal story. The chapter concludes with an overview of the study.

**Background Information**

This section of Chapter One provides contextual information, which informed the study. It begins with an overview of nonprofit governance and nonprofit boards. Following are discussions of the importance of studying nonprofit governance, challenges facing nonprofit governance practice, and generative governance as an innovative means to address these challenges. The section concludes by introducing the idea that board social capital creates a paradox for the practice of generative governance.

**Nonprofit governance.** Governance is an umbrella term for the ultimate accountability, authority, and responsibility for an organization by a group of individuals (Cole & Swartz, 2010). “Nonprofit governance is the process of providing strategic leadership to a nonprofit organization. It entails the functions of setting direction, making policy and strategy decisions, overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and ensuring overall accountability” (Renz, 2007, p. 1). Nonprofit governance differs from nonprofit management, which involves a different, but critically important, level of accountability, authority, and responsibility focused on the oversight of organizational operations (Chait et al., 2005; McClusky, 2002).
Governance has traditionally been the responsibility of the nonprofit organization’s board of directors or board of trustees (Metelsky & Jameson, 2009; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). Alternately, management is traditionally a staff responsibility that the board delegates to a hired agent, e.g., the chief executive officer (CEO), president, or executive director (Miller, 2002). In reality, however, the seemingly dichotomous division of governance versus management roles and responsibilities is less clear (Wood, 1996) and varies depending on organizational context (Gill, 2005).

Nonprofit governance is both an organizational process, which involves multiple functions, and a political process, which involves multiple stakeholders (Renz, 2007). Nonprofits' stakeholders include the following: (a) clients and consumers (Axelrod, 2006; Gazley, Chang, & Bingham, 2010; Stone & Ostrower, 2007), (b) executive directors (Stone & Ostrower, 2007), (c) staff (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001; Stone & Ostrower, 2007), (d) volunteers (Lewis et al., 2001; Stone & Ostrower, 2007), (e) members (Axelrod, 2006; Lewis et al., 2001); (f) donors and funders (Axelrod, 2006; LeRoux, 2009; Lewis et al., 2001; Stone & Ostrower, 2007), (g) government (LeRoux, 2009) and public agencies (Gazley et al., 2010), (h) regulators (Axelrod, 2006), (i) the community (Axelrod, 2006; Cornforth, 2003), and (j) board members (Stone & Ostrower, 2007). These diverse stakeholders frequently have competing needs and expectations.

Recently, there have been calls to re-conceptualize nonprofit governance as an engaged and inclusive process which involves organizational stakeholders (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2011; Chait et al., 2005; Freiwirth, 2011; Guo, Metelsky, & Bradshaw, 2014; Guo & Musso, 2007; Renz, 2011; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). In response, new models of nonprofit governance have been developed, e.g., community-engagement governance (Freiwirth, 2011), governance as leadership (Chait et al., 2005), networked governance (Renz, 2011),
and the relationship model (Block, 2007). These models differ in a number of ways including the roles and responsibilities of the board, groups of stakeholders involved, ways of engaging stakeholders, and level of stakeholder involvement. However, while engaged and inclusive practices hold great promise to improve nonprofit governance, nonprofit boards remain ultimately responsible for the governance of their respective organizations.

Nonprofit boards. Board service is a key vehicle and opportunity for citizen participation in the nonprofit sector (Daley & Marsiglia, 2001; Ostrower, 2007). Nonprofit boards “are groups to whom the community entrusts power and resources” (Holland & Jackson, 1998, p. 121). In turn, the community expects boards to serve as fiduciaries and guide their nonprofit organizations with “caring, skill, and integrity” (Holland & Jackson, 1998, p. 121).

Nonprofit boards are comprised of individuals who typically serve in a voluntary capacity (Ostrower, 2007). Despite the voluntary nature of board service, nonprofit boards are legally responsible for their respective organizations. Board members are required to individually and collectively meet the legal standards of a duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience (Renz, 2007, Stone & Ostrower, 2007).

Board responsibilities. The practice and research literatures identify common duties of nonprofit boards that are indicative of 'good' governance (Miller-Millesen, 2003; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). These prescriptive responsibilities can be summarized as follows: (a) determine the organization's mission, purpose, and structure; (b) select, support, and evaluate the chief executive; (c) plan for the future of the organization; (d) determine, monitor, and strengthen the organization’s programs and services; (e) provide fiscal oversight; (f) ensure adequate financial resources; (g) facilitate access to and ensure effective and efficient management of key resources; (h) serve as a liaison to organizational stakeholders and the
external environment; (i) strengthen the board’s effectiveness; and, (j) ensure the legal and ethical integrity of the organization (Metelsky & Jameson, 2009).

Questions have been raised regarding how closely aligned actual board practice is with the prescriptive board duties (Metelsky & Jameson, 2009; Metelsky & Jameson, Manuscript submitted for publication; Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Zimmerman & Stevens, 2008). Recently, a few scholars and practitioners have identified and promoted new board responsibilities, which move boards beyond their traditional fiduciary role. A number of these responsibilities address board relationships, e.g., governing at the organization's internal and external boundaries (Chait et al., 2005), engaging the community (Freiwirth, 2011), developing social networks (Metelsky & Jameson, Manuscript submitted for publication), and building social capital (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012).

**Board size and composition.** Nonprofit boards vary in size and composition. Ostrower’s (2007) nationally representative study on nonprofit governance in the United States (the first and only such study) found that on average boards have 13 members with 26% of boards having more than 15 members. More recently, BoardSource (2015) found that the average board has 15 members. Given the small size of nonprofit boards, attention to board composition is particularly important (BoardSource, 2015).

Most research on board composition concludes that nonprofit boards are largely male, White, and comprised of individuals from the middle and upper classes (Brown, 2002; Ostrower, 2007). While some progress has been made toward greater representation of individuals from historically marginalized groups on nonprofit boards in recent years, board composition does not reflect current U.S. demographics.

**Gender.** Research demonstrates recent shifts in board composition as it relates to gender representation. For example, Abzug and Galaskiewicz (2001) conducted a panel study
in which they examined the composition of 15 types of nonprofit boards in six American cities at three points of time, i.e., 1931, 1961, and 1991. In regards to gender, they found that the percentage of female board members increased over time. At the conclusion of study, however, women remained significantly underrepresented as compared to their percentage in the population (approximately 35% as compared to 51%).

More recently, Ostrower (2007) found that 94% of U.S. nonprofit boards included women and that on average nonprofit boards were comprised of 46% women. Similarly, BoardSource (2012) found that 46% of board members were female. However, BoardSource also found that 77% of nonprofits with male CEOs had male majority boards. These boards averaged only 32% female representation. Furthermore, women were largely underrepresented on the boards of large and prestigious nonprofits (BoardSource, 2012). More recently, BoardSource (2015) found that 48% of nonprofit board members and 43% of board chairs were female.

While the percentage of women at the board table in nonprofit organizations has increased, evidence suggests that female board members are not full and equal members of the board. Women are often marginalized (e.g., excluded from board committees, have unequal access to and participation in trustee networks) or are assigned gendered roles (e.g., appointed as the board secretary) (Guo et al., 2014). Board social capital (derived through relationships among and between board members) may play a role in their marginalization.

Race and ethnicity. In addition to the evidence of gender disparity in U.S. nonprofit board composition and the marginalization of female board members, there is also evidence of long-standing racial and ethnic disparity. The aforementioned Abzug and Galaskiewicz (2001) study found the consistent underrepresentation of people of color on the nonprofit
boards they examined across all three time-periods. However, they also found that the racial representation gap was slowly closing.

More recent research suggests that the number of people of color serving on nonprofit boards continues to be very low and is not reflective of U.S. demographics. For example, Ostrower’s (2007) national study found that on average 86% of nonprofit board members are White, while only 7% were Black and 3.5% were Hispanic/Latino. The medians were 96% for Whites and 0% for Blacks and Hispanics suggesting that there was an even greater degree of racial homogeneity than the means indicate (Ostrower, 2007). Furthermore, Ostrower (2007) found that 51% of nonprofit boards were exclusively White.

Despite rapidly changing demographics in recent years, research suggests that progress towards the racial and ethnic diversity of U.S. nonprofit boards remains slow. BoardSource (2015), for example, found that people of color hold just 20% of nonprofit board seats. Only 8% of board members are African American or Black and 3% are Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish. In addition, 25% of all boards remain exclusively White. This is despite the fact that 71% of board chairs and 76% of CEOs believe that expanding board racial and ethnic diversity would greatly, or to some extent, enhance their organization's ability to advance its mission (BoardSource, 2015). Furthermore, board members of color are often tokenized (Widmer, 1987) and socially excluded (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2011).

*Social class.* Research also provides evidence of social class disparity in U.S. nonprofit board composition. While the following studies did not involve the collection of data on the income or wealth of board members, their findings suggest that nonprofit boards are primarily comprised of upper and middle class members.

Abzug and Galaskiewicz’ s (2001) panel study found that over time the nonprofit organizations they studied saw increases in the proportion of board members with college
credentials. The study also found that these nonprofits either maintained a significant representation of board members with managerial positions or increased their proportion of managers. Furthermore, they found that professionals were overrepresented. Abzug and Galaskiewicz suggest that their findings demonstrate that upper and middle-class interests dominated nonprofit boards in all three of the study periods (1931, 1961, and 1991).

More recently, Ostrower's (2007) nationally representative study provides evidence of continued class disparity in board composition. The study found that larger, wealthier nonprofits draw their board members more heavily from members of elite groups. In addition, Ostrower found that almost 33% of board members from the smallest nonprofits also serve on corporate boards and that the percentage of corporate board membership increases to 80% for the largest nonprofits.

BoardSource (2015) did not collect data on board members' socioeconomic status. However, the study found that 58% of board chairs and 60% of CEOs believe that expanding board socioeconomic diversity would greatly, or to some extent, enhance their nonprofit organization's ability to advance its mission (BoardSource, 2015).

These board composition findings related to gender, race and ethnicity, and social class raise serious concerns about the inclusiveness of nonprofits boards. The findings also raise “basic questions about the ability of many boards to truly represent and respond to the diversity of the public they serve” (Ostrower, 2007, p. 18). These findings have important implications for the practice of generative governance. I contend that the key elements of generative governance including reframing issues and problems (Bolman & Deal, 2008), reflective practice (Schön, 1983), and collective sensemaking (Weick, 1995) require the perspectives of diverse individuals who are largely absent from the nonprofit boardroom.
**Importance of studying nonprofit governance.** The study of nonprofit governance is important for several reasons including the size and scope of the nonprofit sector, its economic impact, and most importantly its social impact. The United States “has one of the largest nonprofit sectors in both size and scope of any nation in the world” (Collins, 2010, p. 21). Over the past 30 years, the number of tax-exempt organizations has approximately doubled (Independent Sector, n.d.). In 2013, approximately 1.41 million nonprofits were registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and unregistered nonprofits expand the scope of the sector (McKeever, 2015). These nonprofits include public charities, private foundations, and religious congregations, which are designated by the IRS as 501(c)3 nonprofits. Nonprofit organizations that are public charities are the focus of this study. However, the study findings are likely to have relevance for other types of nonprofits as well.

Public charities are also known as charitable nonprofits. They are the type of nonprofit organization that people typically think of and refer to when they use the term ‘nonprofit.’ In 2013, there were over 950,000 registered public charities in the U.S. (McKeever, 2015). These nonprofits address quality of life issues, e.g., arts and culture, education, employment, environment, health care, housing, human services, and international and foreign affairs (McKeever, 2015; Independent Sector, n.d.). Broad citizen participation enacted through board membership is essential to the governance of public charities.

The study of nonprofit governance is also warranted because nonprofit organizations are a major economic force. In 2013, U.S. charitable nonprofits reported $1.73 trillion in total revenue, $1.62 trillion in total expenses, and held assets totaling $3.22 trillion (McKeever, 2015). These figures demonstrate the enormous economic impact of charitable nonprofits and call attention to the corresponding importance of the fiduciary responsibilities of nonprofit boards. Furthermore, charitable nonprofits are tax exempt under IRS Section 501(c)3 of the
federal tax code. Therefore, all Americans have an economic stake in the effective governance of charitable nonprofits.

Yet, it is the social impact of charitable nonprofits that makes the study of nonprofit governance particularly important. Charitable nonprofits work to meet the basic needs of the disadvantaged and improve our quality of life. Their missions focus on such issues as affordable housing, animal welfare, arts and culture, the protection of civil rights, community and economic development, education and job training, environmental protection, healthcare access, recreation, religion, youth development, and other social concerns (National Center for Charitable Statistics, n.d.). With an understanding of why it is important to study nonprofit governance, the next section addresses the governance problem that was the focus of this study.

**Problem Statement**

This section of Chapter One discusses the problem the study was designed to explore and explain. It begins by examining key governance challenges facing nonprofit organizations. Next, an innovative solution to these challenges is presented, i.e., generative governance. The section concludes with a discussion of the problem caused by the paradoxical role that board social capital can play in the practice of generative governance.

**Challenges facing nonprofit governance practice.** The practice of nonprofit governance has remained largely unchanged for more than 20 years (Miller-Millesen, 2003). Yet, traditional governance practice no longer meets the needs of nonprofit organizations given the complex, rapidly changing environment they work in. In response, there have been increased calls to reexamine governance practice (e.g., Chait et al., 2005; Ostrower, 2007; Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007). These calls for change came from outside the nonprofit sector as well as within the sector.
Calls for change from outside the sector stemmed from a series of highly publicized governance scandals including both for-profits and nonprofits (Ostrower, 2007). These scandals caused challenges for nonprofits as public confidence eroded (O’Neill, 2008). Cries for change came from legislators, the public, and the media (Chait et al., 2005; Ostrower, 2007; Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007). The U.S. Senate Finance Committee took a particular interest in this issue and sought to enact change through legislative means (Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007). In response, nonprofits concerned about potential negative impacts that might come from legislative mandates suggested the voluntary adoption of best practice guidelines as an alternative. In turn, the U.S. Senate Finance Committee spurred the formation of the Panel on the Nonprofit Sector. The Panel’s purpose was to find ways to strengthen governance, increase transparency, and foster ethical behavior in nonprofit organizations (Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007).

Calls for change also came from within the nonprofit sector (Chait et al., 2005; Ostrower, 2007; Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007). These calls also stemmed from highly publicized failures of governance. However, calls for change also came in response to new situations facing nonprofit organization, e.g., changes in public policy. The devolution of numerous public services from the federal to local level and the ensuing privatization of many of these services amplified the role that nonprofits play in American society (Alexander, 2000; Birkenmaier, Rubio, & Berg-Weger, 2002; Smith, 2008; Smith & Lipsky, 1995). This led to nonprofits taking over numerous roles and responsibilities formerly held by government.

Today, nonprofits face a rapidly changing environment, increased competition from the growing nonprofit sector and the for-profit sector, and economic challenges (Chait et al., 2005; Ostrower, 2007; Roeger, Blackwood, & Pettijohn, 2011). While charitable donations
have increased slightly, “after adjusting for inflation giving is still lower than its pre-recession peak in 2007” (McKeever & Pettijohn, 2014, p. 1) as requests for services have increased (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2011; Philanthropy Journal, 2009). Therefore, while charitable nonprofits comprise an increasingly larger part of our nation’s social safety net (Allard, 2008), the safety net is sagging under the weight of increased needs and decreasing support (Strom, 2009). These challenges require new perspectives and new governance practices that support board effectiveness in demanding times (Chait et al., 2005).

Generative governance: An innovative solution. In response to the increased attention to the importance of nonprofit governance and calls for change to governance practice, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (now known as BoardSource) invited Richard P. Chait, Ph.D., William P. Ryan, MPA, and Barbara E. Taylor, Ph.D. to consider changes to the practice of nonprofit governance (Chait et al., 2005). Chait, a professor emeritus of education from Harvard, studied nonprofit governance for more than 20 years. Ryan is a nonprofit and foundation consultant who also served as a research fellow at Harvard’s Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. Taylor is a higher education governance consultant, researcher, and author.

Chait, Ryan, and Taylor responded favorably to the National Center for Nonprofit Boards’ invitation and developed a new model of governance, which they named ‘governance as leadership’ (Chait et al., 2005). They developed the model based on their body of independent and collaborative research as well as their consulting experience. They presented the model in their 2005 book, Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards. The book became a best seller within the relatively small but growing number of books on nonprofit governance (Trower, 2013).
The governance as leadership model includes three modes of governance; Type I: fiduciary mode, Type II: strategic mode, and Type III: generative mode (See Figure 1.1).

![Figure 1.1](image_url)


Fiduciary governance involves the board’s oversight and control functions, e.g., overseeing finances and assuring fidelity to the organization’s mission (Chait et al., 2005). It requires the board to use due diligence to “prevent the misuse of resources, ensure that resources are used appropriately, keep the organization on mission, and ensure that the members of the board act in the interests of the organization” (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 228). Fiduciary work, which includes “budgeting, auditing, investment and program review” (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 228), is considered by many to be synonymous with governance (Chait et al., 2005).

Strategic governance moves the board beyond its role in addressing compliance issues (Quarter et al., 2009). It focuses on the board’s role in envisioning, shaping, and planning for the organization’s future (Chait et al., 2005). Strategic governance shifts the board’s attention from “conformance toward performance” and refocuses the board’s perspective from “inside out” to “outside in” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 51). Strategic work involves aligning internal organizational strengths and weaknesses with opportunities and
threats in the external environment with the aim of increasing organizational impact (Chait et al., 2005). It involves a partnership between the board and the CEO to shape strategy, review implementation, and monitor results (Chait et al., 2005; Quarter et al., 2009). Most nonprofit boards engage in strategic governance in varying degrees (Chait et al., 2005).

Generative governance (the subject of this study) is the foundational and unique element of the governance as leadership model (Chait et al., 2005). Promoted as a revolutionary means to improve nonprofit governance practice, generative governance has been widely embraced by practitioners (American Society of Association Executives, 2005; Bader & Associates Governance Consultants, 2005; Koester, 2006; Kreisler, 2005).

Generative governance is an outgrowth of generative thinking, which provides new understandings of the problems and opportunities facing an organization. It is a collaborative process, which requires the board to work at the organizational boundaries. Generative governance involves such practices as reframing problems, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking, which foster board learning, and in turn, the development of creative and innovative solutions to issues before the board (Chait et al., 2005). Other scholars (e.g., Jaskyte, 2012) and practitioners (e.g., Cuesta, 2010) support Chait et al.'s (2005) contention that boards can play an important role in fostering innovation in nonprofits. Generative governance is particularly important when boards address “complex, risky, and ambiguous situations” (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 288).

In summary, “fiduciary governance spots problems, strategic governance solves problems, and generative governance frames problems” (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 229). In turn, these modes of governance respectively ask, “What’s wrong?,” “What’s the plan?,” and “What’s the question?” (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 229).
Board social capital: A benefit and challenge for generative governance.

According to Chait et al. (2005), generative governance “starts and ends in the boardroom” (p. 111). They also state, however, that generative governance requires boards to work at both the internal ("between the board and the organization") and external ("between the board and the wider environment") organizational boundaries (Chait et al., 2005, p. 111). Thus, generative governance involves a range of board relationships, including relationships between and among the board members and relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

Social capital is a set of resources made accessible to us through relationships (Storberg-Walker, 2009). It is “about the value of connections” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 97). “Social capital is productive,” i.e., it makes the achievement of specific ends possible that would not be possible in its absence (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). Scholars increasingly recognize social capital for its importance in organizational success (Storberg-Walker, 2009). It is viewed as a key contributor to increasing organizational learning (Storberg-Walker, 2009), organizational knowledge (Anand, Glick, & Manz, 2002), and organizational innovation (Tsai & Ghosal, 1998). Furthermore, groups of individuals in organizations and other settings can use social capital “to solve collective problems in the present and future” (Ostrom, 2009, p. 22).

Chait et al. (2005) state that social capital is one of four types of working capital “that make governance work” (p. 137). They suggest that in governance as leadership, boards can harness their social capital to optimize board effectiveness. Chait et al. (2005) contend that board social capital facilitates generative governance by translating “personal relationships and mutual trust into social capital that stresses personal responsibility, collective industry, and improved performance” (p. 157).
While Chait et al. (2005) raise promising suggestions for the role that board social capital can play in generative governance, they also note that board members traditionally use social capital to “strengthen relationships to gain personal advantage” rather than to advance the nonprofit’s mission (Chait et al., 2005, p. 151). Furthermore, their discussion of board social capital is brief, narrow in focus, and exclusively addresses its potential benefits.

Given what literature tell us about social capital and what I had observed through my prior research and practice experience, I came to believe that board social capital might play a much broader and more complex role in the practice of generative governance. It was my contention that in addition to positive outcomes, board social capital could lead to negative outcomes for generative governance; thus, creating a paradox for nonprofit organizations. The following discussion provides a brief overview of the potential benefits and detriments of board social capital. It is based on my review of the mainstream and critical social capital literature, which is presented in Chapter Two.

The literature points to a range of social capital benefits that are relevant to generative governance. For example, social capital has been found to have the following benefits: (a) facilitate access to broader sources of knowledge (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2000); (b) improve the flow, quality, relevance, and timeliness of information (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997); (c) improve knowledge sharing (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); (d) generate new learning (Wallis, Crocker, & Schechter, 1998); (e) facilitate innovation (Adler & Kwon, 2002; King, 2004; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998); and, (f) create shared vision (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

The literature also demonstrates that social capital can lead to negative outcomes. Negative outcomes relevant to generative governance include the following: (a) the exclusion of others/outsiders (Li, Savage, & Pickles, 2003; Portés, 1998); (b) abuses of power and
influence (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Putnam, 1993); (c) manipulation of trust (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012); (d) unquestioned loyalty (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); (e) demands for conformity (Portés, 1998); (f) lack of creative abrasion (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); (g) reduced flow of new ideas (Adler & Kwon, 2002); and, (h) conflict between groups (Foley & Edwards, 1996). These findings suggest that board social capital may present a paradox for generative governance, i.e., board social capital may produce both positive and negative outcomes that can respectively foster or inhibit generative governance.

Furthermore, the literature that employs a critical social capital perspective demonstrates that social capital can lead to negative outcomes for historically oppressed groups. Examples of these negative outcomes include the following: (a) reinforcement of economic, social, and political divisions (Maloney, Smith, & Stoker, 2000); (b) reproduction of dominant gender ideologies (Mulcahy, Parry, & Grover, 2010); (c) perpetuation of exclusion (Mulcahy et al., 2010); (d) “downward leveling norms that keep members of a downtrodden group in place” (Portés, 1998, p. 17); (e) skewing of public policies in favor of certain participant groups as opposed to the broader public interest (Maloney et al., 2000); and (f) “relatively worse outcomes for racial minorities” (Hero, 2003, p. 113). Social capital, therefore, can be a threatening force for historically excluded groups in American society (Arneil, 2006).

These findings suggest that board social capital can lead to both negative outcomes for generative governance and negative outcomes for diverse individuals and historically oppressed groups; thus, deepening the paradox. With an understanding of the problem this study addressed, the next section turns to a discussion of the purpose of the study.
Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to develop a preliminary theory to help us understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations. Good theory is valuable because it sheds light on “the meaning, nature, and challenges of a phenomenon, often experienced but unexplained in the world in which we live” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 222).

A secondary purpose of the study was to plan for the application of the preliminary theory in practice. This was accomplished by drafting a theoretically informed, critical participatory action research (CPAR) project. Practitioners can use new knowledge gained through good theory to help them “act in more informed and effective ways” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 222).

Research Question

The research question that guided the design and implementation of the study is the following:

How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?

This question is qualitative and critical in nature. The question aligns with the primary focus of the study, i.e., to explore my contention that board social capital presents a paradox for generative governance. The new understandings gained by examining this phenomenon were used to build a preliminary critical social theory on the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations. The study findings also informed the design of the post-dissertation CPAR study. The ultimate aim of
the CPAR study is use the study findings to develop socially-just generative governance practices.

Need for a Critical Social Theory of the Paradoxical Role of Board Social Capital in the Generative Governance of Nonprofit Organizations

A range of factors support the need for a theory that helps us to understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofits. First, nonprofit governance is relatively under-theorized (Cornforth, 2001). Second, leading nonprofit governance scholars suggest that in the future, theory should inform more governance research (Cornforth, 2001, 2003; Hough, McGregor-Lowndes, & Ryan, 2005; Jegers, 2009; Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Nonprofit governance research draws from a “relatively limited range of theoretical perspectives” (Cornforth, 2014, p. 2). Third, there is a need for new governance theories that explain governance in the complex, changing environment in which nonprofits currently operate (Hough et al., 2005). Fourth, nonprofit theory needs to explain the “key paradoxes that boards face” (Cornforth, 2001, p. 1). Fifth, most governance theory fails to consider the relational and group dynamic aspects of governance (Study Group on Nonprofit Governance Relationships and Group Dynamics, personal communication, August 6, 2010). Sixth, some governance scholars have suggested that Chait, Ryan, and Taylor have not clearly defined generative governance (Hough, 2006) or fully explained the concept of generative governance making it difficult to study empirically (J. K. Jameson, personal communication, April 12, 2010). Seventh, while social capital has increasingly been found to be an important and useful concept for nonprofit research and practice, limited theory and research exists on the role of social capital in nonprofit governance in general (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012) and the dark side of social capital in particular (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012). Finally, critical perspectives are largely
absent from nonprofit governance theory (Guo et al., 2014; Hough et al., 2005). With an understanding of the theoretical needs relevant to this study, the next section addresses the study's significance.

**Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to nonprofit governance theory. It also furthers the development of social capital theory. In addition, it contributes to the literature on critical human resource development. Furthermore, the study advances theory-building research methodology.

**Nonprofit governance theory significance.** This study is significant because the preliminary theory developed contributes to the growing body of nonprofit governance theory and specifically to our understanding of the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofits. In addition, the research is significant because of its use of critical perspectives, which are largely absent in nonprofit governance theory as noted above. Furthermore, the study findings address additional theoretical needs described in the preceding section including a theoretical understanding of the governance paradox created by board social capital and its role in board relationships and group dynamics. I provide evidence of these contributions in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

A second contribution is the development of a plan to apply the preliminary theory to nonprofit governance practice. I accomplished this by drafting the design of a theoretically informed, empirical study of the theory. The proposed post-dissertation CPAR study holds promise to help us understand “the theory in action” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 233). The design of the post-dissertation study is presented in Chapter Five.

These contributions suggest that the study's findings will be of interest to nonprofit governance scholars, nonprofit leaders, and others with a stake in the practice of nonprofit
governance. Nonprofit governance scholars will be interested in the capacity of this theory to inform future governance research and theory building. Nonprofit leaders and other stakeholders will be interested in the theory because of its potential to inform the practice of generative governance and the development of inclusive and socially-just governance practices.

**Social capital theory significance.** The study also aimed to contribute to social capital theory. First, the study contributes to the growing body of social capital theory influenced by heterodox economic foundations, i.e., theory that challenges “the foundational concept of individual rationality on which the orthodox economic theories are based” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 98). This study recognizes that social well-being is as relevant to HRD practice as economic well-being is (O’Donnell et al., 2007) and that social well-being holds particular importance in the context of nonprofit governance. Second, through its focus on the value of board relationships, the study furthers our understanding of the influence of social capital in the largely unexamined context of nonprofit governance (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012). Third, the study contributes to the critical social capital literature through its use of critical perspectives to examine the unexplored dark side of board social capital in the practice of nonprofit governance (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012). I provide evidence of these social capital contributions in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

**Critical human resource development significance.** This study also sought to contribute to critical human resource development (CHRD). CHRD is an emerging area in the field of HRD that examines and addresses issues of power, privilege, and oppression in organizations (Fenwick, 2004) and in the boundaries between organizations and communities (Harvey, 2011). Interest in CHRD is growing (Callahan, 2012; Sambrook, 2009) and is important to the field as a means to promote “diversity of voice” (Callahan, 2012, p. 4). Yet,
despite calls for the increased use of critical perspectives in HRD research, few HRD studies employ a critical approach.

This study contributes to CHRD by responding to Callahan’s (2007) call for the use of critical constructionism in HRD theory building and to Williams and Mavin’s (2014) call to use this approach in HRD theory-building studies that address diversity issues. Critical constructionist HRD combines “the essence of critical theory with the aim of creating new understandings that lead to changed practice within social contexts, especially organizations” (Callahan, 2007, p. 79). I provide evidence of the study's contributions to CHRD in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

**Theory-building research significance.** A number of contributions to theory-building research methodology for the field of HRD and other applied disciplines were also expected. First, the study contributes by responding to the recent call for HRD theory and research to address the social and relational aspects of organizational learning and performance (Korte, 2012). Second, the study answers calls from the disciplines of education and HRD to use a bricolage approach as a means to engage in more creative theory building and to develop more innovative theories (Kincheloe, 2005a; Turnbull, 2002a). Third, the study furthers the use of the General Method (Lynham, 2002b), by incorporating an abductive to inductive process. This approach responded to calls for the increased use of abduction in HRD (Gold, Walton, Cureton, & Anderson, 2011), organizational (Hansen, 2008; Van de Ven, 2007), and social (Van de Ven, 2007) theory-building research. Fourth, the study employs a critical approach. It answers calls for CHRD research and theory (e.g., Fenwick, 2004; Valentin, 2006) and the use of CRT in HRD theory-building research (e.g., Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Rocco, Bernier, & Bowman, 2014). Fifth, the study contributes to theory-building research methodology through the innovative pairing of Poole and Van de
Ven's (1989) opposition method of exploring paradox with Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method to support the conceptualization phase of the theory-building process. Sixth, the study also contributes to the theory-building literature through the development and documentation of a rigorous analytical process for Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method. Some scholars have criticized disciplined imagination for its lack of transparency and step-by-step instructions (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007) and the resulting challenge for its use by scholars who are new to theory building. Storberg-Walker and Chermack (2007) called for an explicit process, such as the one used in this study, to counteract these criticisms. Finally, the study contributes to HRD theory-building research by promoting the use of criteria for assessing good HRD theory that employs interpretive and critical approaches. This was accomplished by combining Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) criteria for assessing good theory in HRD and other applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective and Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria for assessing formal theory building in adult education.

In summary, the study made these contributions by using a methodology that builds on methods developed, implemented, and recommended by a range of well-known theory-building scholars in the field of HRD and other applied disciplines. The study's methodology:

- employed a bricolage approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005a, 2005b; Turnbull, 2002a);
- built on Sjøberg, Dybå, Anda, and Hannay's (2008) adapted version of Lynham’s (2002b) General Method which incorporates abduction;
- used a critical HRD approach (Fenwick, 2004) and critical perspectives including CRT (Rocco et al., 2014) to explore the paradox;
• paired Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method of working with paradox
  with Weick's (1989) disciplined imagination method to support the conceptualization
  phase of the research;
• used textual analysis to examine the data; and,
• employed both Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) and Brookfield’s (1992) criteria for
  assessing good theory as a means to evaluate both the interpretive and critical aspects
  of the theory.
I provide evidence of the study's theory-building research significance in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Theoretical Framework

Multiple theoretical perspectives comprised the study’s theoretical framework. These frames grounded the study (social constructionism) and focused attention on various aspects of the paradox of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations (social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT). Table 1.1 offers an overview of the study's theoretical framework.
Table 1.1

_Theoretical Framework_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructionism</td>
<td>The tenets of social constructionism grounded the study. Justification: Generative governance involves the social construction of board knowledge. This theoretical perspective, therefore, focused attention on the role of social relationships in the board's co-construction of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital Theory</td>
<td>The five disciplined imagination thought trials conducted for the study used Putnam's (2000) concepts of bonding and bridging social capital to explore the role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance. Two of the disciplined imagination thought trials used mainstream social capital theory to explore the role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance. Justification: Mainstream social capital theory supported an analysis of the data focused on how board social capital can lead to positive outcomes for the practice of generative governance. The respective roles of bridging and bonding relationships were examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Social Capital Perspectives</td>
<td>Two of the disciplined imagination thought trials used critical social capital perspectives to explore the role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance. Justification: Critical social capital perspectives supported an analysis of the data focused on how board social capital can lead to negative outcomes for the practice of generative governance. The respective roles of bridging and bonding relationships were examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
<td>One of the disciplined imagination thought trials used critical race theory to explore the role of board social capital in the exclusion and marginalization of diverse voices in the practice of generative governance. Justification: Critical race theory supported an analysis of the data focused on how board social relationships can lead to the oppression of people of color and other historically marginalized individuals in the practice of generative governance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I provide further information on these theoretical perspectives in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I discuss how I used them to develop the disciplined imagination thought trials and analyze the data.

**Philosophical Assumptions**

Critical researchers are explicit about their philosophical assumptions to avoid confusion about their political and epistemological positions (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Therefore, I share my assumptions as a means to help others understand my worldview. My positionality and experience have influenced these assumptions and shaped this research project.

I view reality as being subjective and deriving from multiple perspectives (ontology). I believe that researchers should lessen the distances between them and the people they are studying (epistemology). I recognize that research is value laden and that I, as is true of all researchers, have biases (axiology). I believe that knowledge should be accessible to all. Therefore, I believe that academic writing should be informal and personal in tone, and that uncommon terms should be defined (rhetorics). These writing guidelines, however, can be challenging given the academic expectations placed on those seeking a doctoral degree. I believe that problems should be studied in their natural settings, that interpretive approaches are best suited to study complex social issues, that critical approaches are needed to uncover systemic oppression, that application to practice is essential, and that research design should emerge as new learning takes place (methodology) (Creswell, 2007). In addition, I bring an advocacy/participatory worldview to my research. Therefore, I believe that “research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21).
Definitions

I hold an advocacy/participatory worldview (Creswell, 2007). Thus, it is my intent to make my work transparent and accessible to both academic and practitioner audiences (with the understanding that the academic requirements for the completion of doctoral dissertations can make accessibility to practitioners somewhat challenging). Toward this end, I have developed a comprehensive list of important terms and their corresponding definitions designed to meet the needs of both audiences. Because the list of definitions is lengthy, I present it in Appendix A: Definitions instead of in its traditional placement in Chapter One.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter One introduces the study. It begins with the presentation of background and contextual information. I discuss the problem that the study addresses, the study’s purpose, and the research question. Chapter One also presents the need for the theory and the significance of the study, which offer a rationale for the development of a critical social theory on the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations. A discussion of the study’s theoretical framework and my philosophical assumptions follow. Chapter One concludes with this overview of the dissertation document.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literatures that informed and grounded my study. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of generative governance. A review of the relevant literature on nonprofit governance theory, social capital theory, and critical theory follows. Chapter Two concludes with a discussion of the theory building literature.

Chapter Three presents an in-depth description of the study’s methodology. The chapter begins with an overview of the study followed by a discussion of the use of theory-building research in doctoral dissertations. Information about the research approach is next, followed by a discussion of the research methods and theoretical frames used in the study. I
present the criteria used to select the study's theory-building framework next. A discussion of
the selected theory-building framework follows. The research process, theory-building
phases, data sources, and data analysis are discussed next. My story, which includes a
discussion of my background and positionality, follows. Next is a discussion of
trustworthiness. A chapter summary concludes the chapter.

Chapter Four presents the study’s theory-building research findings. The chapter
begins with a discussion of the development of the theoretical bricolage. An overview of the
disciplined imagination thought trials follows. I present gaps in the HRD theory-building
literature next. Following is a discussion of the methodological lessons learned. Next is a
presentation of the study’s theory-building research contributions. A summary of Chapter
Four follows.

Chapter Five presents the study’s theoretical findings. The chapter begins with a
presentation of the results of the first three phases of the theory-building process (Phase 1:
Conceptualization, Phase 2: Operationalization, and Phase 3: Application). I address the
evaluation of the preliminary theory next. Following is a discussion of the study’s theory-
building research contributions. Chapter Five concludes with a summary.

Chapter Six begins with a summary of the study. I present a discussion of the study’s
two major conclusions next. Following are implications for theory-building research and
practice. Recommendations for further research are addressed next. A chapter summary
follows.

A list of the references cited follows Chapter Six. The appendices appear at the end
of the dissertation.

The next chapter provides a review of the literature.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two provides a review of the key literatures that informed and grounded this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of Chait et al.’s (2005) concept of generative governance. Next, I review five common governance theories. I discuss their general relevance to nonprofit governance and specific relevance to the practice of generative governance. Following is an overview of the mainstream social capital literature that contributes to our understanding of generative governance. An overview of critical theory and the critical perspectives that informed the study follows. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theory-building research literature.

Generative Governance

This section of the literature review focuses on generative governance, which is the subject of this study. The section begins with an introduction to generative governance. A discussion of the characteristics of generative governance follows. Next, I present concerns regarding the concept of generative governance. The section concludes with a discussion of generative governance and the social construction of knowledge.

Introduction. As mentioned in Chapter One, Chait, Ryan, and Taylor collaborated with the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (now called BoardSource) to launch the Governance Futures Project. BoardSource is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization whose mission involves building the governance capacity of nonprofit organizations. Through this collaborative venture, Chait et al. (2005) developed a new model of nonprofit governance called governance as leadership. In 2005, they published the model in their book, Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards.

The governance as leadership model includes three modes of governance, i.e., Type I: fiduciary, Type II: strategic, and Type III: generative. Generative governance is the
innovative and foundational mode of the model. Chait et al. (2005) suggest that generative governance offers a new way for nonprofit organizations to derive value from the work of boards. They describe generative governance as an outgrowth of generative thinking, which provides new understandings of the problems and opportunities facing an organization. Generative thinking is a thought process for determining “what to pay attention to, what it means, and what to do about it” (Ryan, 2007 as cited in Koteen, 2009, p. 6). Chait et al. (2005) suggest that “generative thinking produces a sense of what knowledge, information, and data mean” and note that it involves a “process of problem-framing and sense-making” (p. 84). In generative governance, board members collectively engage in generative thinking. The board finds, frames, and focuses on the issues that are most critical to the nonprofit's “current and future welfare” (Trower, 2013, p. viii). Practices that support the board's generative work include but are not limited to reflective practice, reframing issues, and collective sensemaking.

Conceptualized by Schön (1983), reflective practice involves reflection-in-action as a means to engage in continuous learning. It involves learning through experience. In generative governance, reflective practice supports board learning through the board's collective reflection on their governance work.

Reframing is a practice conceptualized by Bolman and Deal (2008) which involves the intentional use of different frames or lenses to examine an organizational issue or problem. Reframing helps nonprofit boards to “perceive and understand organizational situations” in new and different ways (Chait et al., 2005, p. 86).

Sensemaking is a practice by which individuals give meaning to their experience. Weick (1995) describes sensemaking in organizations as a collaborative process through which organizations attempt to make sense of an ambiguous issue or situation. In generative
governance, nonprofit boards collectively create new understandings gained through a shared awareness of differing perspectives and varied interests.

When boards engage in collective sensemaking, new ways of thinking may emerge leading to paradigm shifts after which “nothing looks the same” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 80). These new paradigms allow the board to develop creative and innovative strategies that address the changing circumstances facing the organization. Thus, in generative governance board members serve as “thought leaders from whom ideas and insights flow” (Trower, 2013, p. 172) and the board serves as a source of leadership for the organization (Chait et al., 2005). As a result, nonprofits are better prepared to deal with today’s challenges and tomorrow’s uncertainties.

According to Chait et al. (2005), work at the organizational boundaries is also important to generative governance. Such work is not governance per se; rather, board work at the internal and external boundaries prepares the board to govern generatively.

Board work at the organization’s internal boundary (between the board and the nonprofit) provides board members with “unfiltered access to...organizational stimuli” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 112). Such access, gained by observing the work of the organization and conversing with staff members and service recipients, increases the board's exposure to cues and clues that promote generative thinking and support board decision making. When board members engage in boundary work in groups, they “generate different insights and discern different patterns by reflecting collectively on shared experiences” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 113). Thus, work at the internal boundary supports collective sensemaking as the board moves from having shared experiences to creating shared meaning.

The board's work at the external boundary (between the board and the outside environment) also supports collective sensemaking through “generative occasions” and
“alternative frames” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 115). Chait et al. (2005) argue that boards typically preserve their organization's frames rather than seek new frames. Alternative frames help the board to reconsider and judge the organization's current goals and purposes. Thus, new frames promote generative thinking.

Chait et al. (2005) state that boards engage in work at the external boundary by interacting with individuals and groups outside the organization such as other nonprofit boards, influential funders and collaborators, and accrediting bodies. This external work provides the board with new perspectives that raise generative questions and promote generative deliberation. Therefore, board work at the external organizational boundary supports generative governance.

Ultimately, the aim of work at the organization's internal and external boundaries is a shared commitment by the board to take action based on their new insights and understandings. Successful work at the organizational boundaries, therefore, requires the board to develop and maintain relationships with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Simply depending on the CEO to bring stakeholder perspectives to the board's attention is insufficient for the practice of generative governance.

Chait et al. (2005) state that governance as leadership is not a linear process. Generative work, therefore, should not necessarily be the last mode of governance addressed by the board (Chait et al., 2005). Because generative governance helps boards to address big issues and answer big questions, boards should engage in generative governance whenever such issues arise or questions come up. Thus, generative governance can also lead to and provide support for the board's fiduciary and strategic work.

Many nonprofit practitioners have embraced the concept of generative governance and numerous capacity-building organizations and consultants have promoted generative
governance as a means to improve nonprofit governance practice (e.g., American Society of Association Executives, 2005; Bader & Associates Governance Consultants, 2005; Huff, 2010; Koester, 2006; Kreisler, 2005; National Parks and Recreation Association, 2011; Trower, 2013; Zastocki, 2015). This interest in generative governance has spurred the development of workshops, conferences, board training curricula, and publications that address this innovative governance practice (e.g., Beck, 2009c; Greater New Orleans Foundation, 2015; Metelsky, 2011; Metelsky & Jameson, 2013; Seel, 2008; Trower, 2013; University of San Diego, 2013). Some nonprofit scholars also recognize the importance of generative governance as evidenced by an increasing number of studies and academic publications that examine or use this concept (e.g., Beck, 2009a, 2013; Caron, 2009; Ferenczi, 2012; Jameson, Metelsky, & Crone, 2010; Jameson & Metelsky, 2012; McInnis, 2013; Pugh, 2007; Quarter et al., 2009; Seel & Gibbons, 2012). In addition, a number of the aforementioned scholars and nonprofit academic programs offer continuing education programs or consult on the practice of generative governance.

**Characteristics of generative governance.** Chait et al. (2005) identified 12 distinctive characteristics of generative governance. Each characteristic addresses an important governance concern, e.g., What is the board’s core work? – *creative problem framing and solution generation*; What is the key question facing boards? – *What is the problem*?; How should boards deliberate? – *in a robust and sometimes playful manner*. Table 2.1 presents Chait et al.'s (2005) complete list of governance concerns and their corresponding generative governance characteristics.
Table 2.1

Distinctive Characteristics of Generative Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Concerns</th>
<th>Generative Governance Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of organizations</td>
<td>Nonrational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of leadership</td>
<td>Reflective learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s central purpose</td>
<td>Source of leadership for organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s core work</td>
<td>Creative: discern problems, engage in sense-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s principal role</td>
<td>Sense maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key question</td>
<td>What's the question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems are to be</td>
<td>Framed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation process</td>
<td>Robust and sometimes playful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of deciding</td>
<td>Grappling and grasping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of knowing</td>
<td>It makes sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with constituents</td>
<td>Multilateral, ongoing to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance metrics</td>
<td>Signs of learning and discerning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Trower, a senior research associate at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, published a book on the governance as leadership model. In her book, The Practitioner’s Guide to Governance as Leadership (Trower, 2013), she presents additional characteristics of generative governance. Trower suggests that in generative governance:

- the board provides insight;
- the board's work is organized as a “community of learners focused on [the] strategy of understanding;”
- the board's power source is ideas;
• the board-CEO relationship is akin to “think-tank peers;”
• strategy involves the board and CEO thinking together strategically;
• board agendas and meetings reflect the “collective mind of [the] board doing generative work;”
• board information focuses on “forensic clues” and “alternative explanations;”
• the group norm is “robust discourse;”
• the group dynamic is “great minds think differently;”
• board members “create comparative advantage re: intellectual, reputational, and political capital;” and,
• board education is continuous, academic, experiential, and is conducted both inside and outside the boardroom (pp. 17-18).

Chait et al. (2005) also provide insight as to how generative governance differs from traditional, nonprofit governance practices. These differences include the view of organizations, the understanding of leadership, the board’s mindset and role, as well as the different way that boards think, work, and conduct business. Table 2.2 provides a synopsis of what is different about generative governance and what these differences mean for the practice of nonprofit governance.
Table 2.2

What’s Different about Generative Governance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s different?</th>
<th>What does it mean for nonprofit governance practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>A different view of organizations.</em></td>
<td>Organizations do not travel a straight line and rational course from mission to goals to strategy to execution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different definition of leadership.</em></td>
<td>Leaders enable organizations to confront and move forward on complex, value-laden problems that defy a “right” answer or “perfect” solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different mindset.</em></td>
<td>Beyond fiduciary stewardship and strategic partnership, governance is tantamount to leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different role.</em></td>
<td>The board becomes an asset that adds value to and creates a comparative advantage for the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different way of thinking.</em></td>
<td>Boards are intellectually playful and inventive as well as logical and linear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different notion of work.</em></td>
<td>Boards deliberate in new ways. The board frames higher-order problems as well as assesses technical solutions and asks questions that are more catalytic than operational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A different way to do business.</em></td>
<td>The board relies more on retreat-like meetings, teamwork, robust discourse, work at the organization’s boundaries, and performance metrics linked to organizational learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While many extol the value of generative governance, some scholars have raised questions and expressed concerns about the concept.

**Concerns regarding generative governance.** A growing number of scholars use the concept of generative governance in their research. Some scholars have incorporated the concept in their theoretical frameworks and others have explicitly examined the concept through empirical research (e.g., Beck, 2009b; Caron, 2009; Ferenczi, 2012; Jameson & Metelsky, 2012; Jameson et al., 2010; Koteen, 2009; Morfin, 2015; Thompson, 2008). In
addition, a number of scholars have identified examples of generative governance in practice (e.g., Beck, 2009b; Caron, 2009; Chait et al., 2005; Jameson & Metelsky, 2012; Jameson et al., 2010; Quarter et al., 2009; Trower, 2013). Other scholars, however, (including some who recognize the merits of generative governance) have raised academic and practice concerns about the concept.

Academic-related concerns about generative governance include the following: (a) the lack of a clear definition of the concept (Hough, 2006); (b) the concept appears to have been developed based on “reflection and synthesis rather than formal data collection and analysis” (Hough, 2006, p. 375); (c) the lack of empirical evidence (W. A. Brown, November 19, 2009, personal communication; Hough, 2006); and (d) difficulties observing generative governance in practice, which makes it challenging to study empirically (J. K. Jameson, April 12, 2011, personal communication).

Practice-related concerns have also been raised about the concept. Quarter et al. (2009), for example, suggest that generative governance may be "too demanding and impractical to achieve" (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 230). On the other hand, Bradshaw and Fredette (2009) suggest that generative governance does not go far enough. They state that while nonprofit boards “need to strengthen their collaborative and generative dialogues,” nonprofit organizations need leaders who move beyond the creation of new understandings and innovative solutions (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2009, p. 143). Furthermore, they argue that nonprofit organizations also need leaders who are change agents.

This theory-building study addressed a number of these concerns by furthering the conceptualization of generative governance (with a focus on the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance) and through the preliminary operationalization of the concept (explicitly connecting the conceptualization of the theory
with practice) (Lynham, 2002b; Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b). In addition, by employing critical perspectives to examine the paradox of board social capital, this study sheds light on the political aspects of generative governance including the ways that generative governance can support the status quo or alternately, challenge and change it. Furthermore, the application phase of the current study involved the preliminary design of a CPAR research project. The intended purposes of this proposed, post-dissertation study are to further the development of the theory in collaboration with practitioners and promote the socially-just practice of generative governance.

**Generative governance and the social construction of knowledge.** According to Chait et al. (2005), generative governance requires individual board members to have “a shared sense of the nature of the [governance] work and enough common knowledge to do the work together” (p. 142). Furthermore they suggest that the “collective brainpower” of a board enlightens its “collective mind” enabling the board to govern more effectively (Chait et al., 2005, p. 143). Thus, the significant role that the collective knowledge of the board plays in generative governance suggests the importance of board learning. Therefore, this section of the literature review addresses the social construction of knowledge.

Constructivism is one of the five traditional theories of learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). A constructivist view of learning argues that learning is a process through which people construct meaning by making sense of their experience (Merriam et al., 2007). Constructivism has a variety of perspectives (Merriam et al., 2007; Palincsar, 1998; Phillips, 1995). Constructivists hold differing views on the nature of reality, the role of experience in learning, the knowledge of interest, and whether meaning making is individual or social in nature (Merriam et al., 2007). Constructivists (e.g., Piaget and von Glaserfeld) view learning as an individual, internal cognitive activity (Gergen, n.d.; Merriam et al.,
Social constructivists (e.g., Vygotsky) view learning as a social, shared activity (Gergen, n.d.; Merriam et al., 2007).

The social constructivist view posits that social factors influence learning (Phillips, 1995). Social constructivists state that learning is a process through which “individuals are introduced to a culture by more skilled members” (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, & Scott, 1994, p. 7). They argue that knowledge creation is socially constructed through talk and activities focused on shared problems or shared responsibilities (Driver et al., 1994). Furthermore, social constructivists contend that learning occurs through “engaging, incorporating, and critically exploring the views of others” (Gergen, 1995, p. 34). Therefore, learning is a byproduct of “communal relationships” (Gergen, n.d., p. 4).

Phillips (1995) states that there are numerous variants of constructivism and that each is quite complex. He notes that the varying forms differ along several dimensions or axes and that “forms that may be close along one axis…may be far apart on another” (Phillips, 1995, p. 7). Gergen (n.d.) states that the forms of constructivism vary in terms of their relative emphasis of the dual domains of individual and social. He suggests that constructivism (vs. constructionism) is a variant “that places a strong emphasis on the social” (Gergen, n.d., p. 9).

There is no one feature that identifies a social constructionist position (Burr, 2003). Rather, Burr (2003) states that a social constructionist approach has any one or more of the following assumptions as its foundation: (a) we must take a critical stance “toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves” (pp. 2-3); (b) “the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific” (pp. 3-4); (c) people construct and sustain knowledge through social processes; and (d) “knowledge and social action go together” (p. 5).
A number of scholars have used a social constructionist perspective to study various nonprofit-related topics including nonprofit effectiveness (e.g., Herman & Renz, 1997) and social enterprise and entrepreneurship (e.g., Chell, 2007). Others have used this perspective to inform their research on nonprofit governance and boards (e.g., Diochon, 2010; Pahl, 2006; Papadimitriou, 1999).

In addition to the aforementioned reasons why the social construction of knowledge is relevant to generative governance, I argue that board diversity has implications for the social construction of board knowledge. Board diversity relates to the demographic makeup of the board. It typically focuses on the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups, for example, women and people of color (Brown, 2002). As discussed in Chapter One, the majority of nonprofit boards are predominately comprised of White, middle and upper class males (Ostrower, 2007). In general, boards are neither diverse nor representative of the communities they serve (Ostrower, 2007). If the leaders of nonprofit organizations are primarily or exclusively people from powerful, historically privileged groups, co-constructed knowledge that sustains hegemony may be produced.

Research and practice evidence (e.g., BoardSource, 2012; Bogan & Townsend, 2010; Bradshaw & Fredette, 2011; Buchanan, Buteau, Di Troia, & Hayman, 2005; Fredette, Bradshaw, & Krause, 2016; Metelsky & Jameson, 2013; Walker & Davidson, 2010; Widmer, 1987) suggests that inviting diverse individuals to serve on the board is insufficient. Simply having members of historically marginalized groups at the board table does not guarantee that diverse perspectives will be heard. Widmer (1987), for example, found that some Black board members felt patronized, invisible, used, and pressured “to represent the minority community” (p. 35). Other minority board members stated that they had experienced insensitivity, hostility, and racism. Metelsky and Jameson (2013) found that while board
members from historically marginalized groups felt welcomed, they perceived that boards often ignored their input. Like Widmer, Metelsky and Jameson also found that diverse board members commonly believed that the board expected them to speak on behalf of their entire identity group (e.g., to speak for all women or speak for all African Americans). Buchanan et al. (2005) found that the number of minority board members serving on a board is an important factor in ensuring that diverse voices are heard. They found that when only one or two minority individuals serve on a board, the diverse board members perceived that they had less equality of influence.

I argue that these and similar nonprofit board diversity findings have implications for generative governance. If diverse individuals are not at the table and the voices of less powerful stakeholders are silenced in the governance process then an “opposing body of knowledge” that confronts “official knowledge” may be missing from board discussions (Cunningham, 1988, p. 137). Thus, generative opportunities are lost and generative governance is likely to maintain the status quo rather than challenge it.

Given Chait et al.’s (2005) contention that the collective mind of the board is important to generative governance and my belief that board diversity has implications for the social construction of board knowledge, and in turn, generative governance, I determined that adopting a social constructionist perspective, more specifically a critical constructionist approach, was appropriate for this study. The fact that the social constructionist perspective has successfully framed other nonprofit governance studies supports my decision. Furthermore, my decision is supported by the match between the foundational assumptions of a critical constructionist approach and my advocacy/participatory worldview.
Nonprofit Governance Theory

Leading nonprofit governance scholars suggest that in the future theory should inform more governance research (Cornforth, 2001, 2003; Hough et al., 2005; Jegers, 2009; Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Historically, nonprofit scholars have made limited use of the diversity of governance theories, failed to examine the connections between theories, not taken into account the multi-dimensional role of nonprofit boards, and have failed to consider the relational and group dynamic aspects of nonprofit governance (Cornforth, 2014; Hough et al., 2005; Ostrower & Stone, 2010; Speckbacher, 2008). In recent years, however, scholars have begun to use a broader range of governance theories and an increasing number of scholars have embraced the use of multi-theoretical perspectives (Renz & Andersson, 2014).

There are a wide range of governance theories. Scholars from the disciplines of Economics, Management, Sociology, and Psychology have led theory development (Hough, et al., 2005). Large, for-profit, corporate settings are the predominant context for which governance theories have been developed (Hough et al., 2005).

The wholesale adoption of for-profit governance theories for use in nonprofit research is problematic because for profit and nonprofit organizations exist for different purposes (i.e., owner benefit vs. public good) and have different goals (i.e., profit maximization versus mission maximization). Therefore, nonprofit scholars have begun to adapt governance theories for the nonprofit context.

Five governance theories informed this study. They are agency theory, resource dependence theory, stakeholder theory, class hegemony theory, and paradox theory. For each theory, I provide a brief review of the literature. These reviews present a description of the theory, practice evidence, research evidence, a critique of the theory, and a discussion of the relevance of the theory to generative governance.
**Agency theory.** Agency theory (also called principal-agent theory) is an economic theory of governance. Scholars developed this theory in the context of for-profit corporations. Agency theory is the most commonly used theory in study of corporate governance (Cornforth, 2003) and boards of directors (Hough et al., 2005). It is one of the most cited theories used to explain board roles and functions (Brown & Guo, 2010; Cornforth, 2003; Hillman & Dalziel, 2003; Hough et al., 2005; Ostrower & Stone, 2006).

**Description.** Agency theory assumes that principals (corporate owners or shareholders) and agents (corporate managers) have different interests, and that agents will act in their own self-interest (Brown, 2005; Cornforth, 2001, 2003; Fama & Jensen, 1983; Hillman & Dalziel, 2003; Hough et al., 2005; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Miller, 2002). Seminal works on agency theory include “Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure” by Jensen and Meckling (1976) and “The separation of ownership and control” by Fama and Jensen (1983).

Agency theory “predicts that shareholder wealth and organizational performance will be maximized when an independent board of directors monitors the chief executive’s propensity to behave with self-interest” (Miller, 2002, p. 430). The main function of a board, therefore, is to reduce risk through the control of managers (Cornforth, 2001). Boards address this risk by separating the initiation and implementation of decisions from the ratification and monitoring of decisions, thus assuring stakeholders that the organization’s resources are being used as intended (Miller, 2002). Furthermore, agency theory suggests that the board has the ultimate control responsibility, i.e., to select and evaluate an appropriate administrator (Miller, 2002).

In the nonprofit context, agency theory suggests the use of volunteer board members (as opposed to paid directors) as a means to offer assurance to donors that collusion and the
expropriation of contributions will not occur (Hough et al., 2005). Agency theory recommends the use of fixed-term appointments for managers of complex nonprofit organizations as another mechanism to prevent misconduct by managers (Hough et al., 2005).

**Practice evidence.** Many nonprofit boards have historically operated in accordance with the tenets of agency theory (Miller, 2002). The prescriptive responsibilities of nonprofit boards, therefore, typically include a number of control functions. These responsibilities include providing fiscal oversight, ensuring legal and ethical integrity, and selecting, supporting, and evaluating the chief executive (Metelsky & Jameson, 2009; Miller-Millesen, 2003). Board member job descriptions often include these control responsibilities (Metelsky, 2010).

Evidence of malfeasance by nonprofit executives and management staff has been chronicled in the press (Fremont-Smith & Kosaras, 2003). Well-known examples include the fiscal mismanagement and criminal activity of William Aramony (former CEO of United Way of America) and the Ponzi scheme of John G. Bennett, Jr. (founder of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy) (Fremont-Smith & Kosaras, 2003). In response to these and other cases of managerial misconduct, the Panel on the Nonprofit Sector (2007) developed principles for good governance and ethical practice that address boards’ oversight and control roles. Yet, the problem continues.

**Research evidence.** Empirical research that used agency theory in the study of nonprofit governance includes the following studies: Brown (2005), Callen and Falk (1993), Callen, Klein, and Tinkelman (2003, 2010), Fremont-Smith and Kosaras (2003), Gibelman and Gelman (2001), Miller (2002), Olson (2000), and Viader and Espina (2014). These
studies had mixed results. Some show evidence of the tenets of agency theory in the practice of nonprofit governance; others raise questions about its applicability.

The following studies support agency theory. Callen et al.’s (2003) study of 72 health care nonprofits found a statistically significant association between the presence of the major donors on the boards and board finance committees and key indicators of organizational efficiency, e.g., the ratio of administrative to total expenses. Olson’s (2000) quantitative study, which surveyed the presidents and boards of over 200 private colleges, examined the relationships between board and CEO demographics and organizational revenue and gift income. Olson found partial support for his agency theory based hypotheses. Brown (2005) found empirical support for agency theory in his survey of 304 nonprofit board members and executives. Respondents reported a wide range of monitoring activities related to the ethical and financial behavior of CEOs. Furthermore, Brown’s (2005) findings indicate that board monitoring goes beyond fiscal monitoring and suggest that it is also the board’s role to “ensure adherence to mission, values, and the organization’s social rationale for being” (p. 317). More recently, Viader and Espina (2014) found that agency theory influenced the governance models of 52% of the Puerto Rican nonprofits they studied.

The following studies provide evidence that refutes agency theory. Callen and Falk’s (1993) quantitative study of 125 nonprofits found no relationship between the proportion of insider board members and technical or allocative efficiency. Miller’s (2002) qualitative study of 12 nonprofit boards found that agency theory did not adequately explain nonprofit board monitoring behavior because “nonprofit board members do not expect conflict between the executive director and the purpose for which the organization was created” (pp. 446-447). More recent studies by Steinberg (2010) and Ostrower and Stone (2010) provide mixed support for the tenets of agency theory (Renz & Andersson, 2014).
Critique. Agency theory has been criticized on a number of fronts. First, there is a lack of clarity in the nonprofit context regarding who are the owners of a nonprofit and who bears risk (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Hough et al., 2005; Miller, 2002; Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Are the members of the board the owners? Are other stakeholders such as foundations and major donors also owners (Callen et al., 2003; Carman, 2009)? Are the individuals who receive services from the nonprofit owners? Some might argue that nonprofit service recipients, clients, and patrons bear the greatest risk but typically have the least control.

Second, agency theory exclusively addresses the board’s role in the control of agents. The theory fails to take into account the actions of board members who engage in self-dealing or other inappropriate behavior and the board’s role in controlling such behavior. Yet, a survey of press reports from 1995-2002 conducted by Fremont-Smith and Kosaras (2003) found 152 such incidents involving board members of which 104 included criminal activity. An example is the decision of the board of Yeshiva University to invest $15 million with the chair of its investment committee, who in turn invested the money with board member Bernie Madoff (Leslie, 2009). Another example is the Three Cups of Tea scandal. The scandal involved the Central Asia Institute, which is a nonprofit founded by Three Cups of Tea author Greg Mortenson. Mr. Mortenson, who was both a board member and the CEO of the Central Asia Institute, used the nonprofit’s activities as a platform to sell books and generate significant fees from speaking engagements for personal gain (Chan & Akagi, 2011).

Third, there is a growing recognition that agency theory does not adequately capture all of the ways that nonprofit governance benefits nonprofit organizations nor does it explain all of the roles and responsibilities of nonprofit boards (Brown, 2005). For example, agency theory does not explain a number of historical and prescriptive roles for nonprofit boards.
These roles include determining the nonprofit's mission and purpose, ensuring adequate financial resources, and enhancing the nonprofit's public image.

Fourth, organizational sociologists have criticized the agency theory model of boards “because it overlooks how boards are embedded in structural, political, cognitive, and cultural contexts” (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997, p. 593). This is problematic because nonprofit boards are highly influenced by the contexts in which they operate (Ostrower & Stone, 2006). For example, agency theory is not relevant to all-volunteer nonprofits because of their organizational structures; these nonprofits do not have CEOs (Metelsky & Jameson, 2009). The theory has limited application in nonprofits that are highly dependent on government funding. The boards of such nonprofits have nominal control because of the political context in which they govern. For these nonprofits, public agencies determine, direct, and monitor the flow of their resources (Stone, 1996). In addition, there is a movement toward engagement and networked governance where boards govern in partnership with the CEO, other key stakeholders, and/or collaborators (Freiwirth, 2007, 2014; Freiwirth & Letona, 2006; Renz & Andersson, 2014). Furthermore, in a substantial number of nonprofit organizations the CEO serves as a voting member of the board (Ostrower, 2007).

Fifth, while agency theory is useful for informing agency problems in practice and the study of agency problems, nonprofit organizations have many other problems and challenges that deserve the attention of nonprofit boards and governance scholars (Hough et al., 2005). Therefore, it is unhealthy that one problem drives so much of the discourse on nonprofit governance (Hough et al., 2005).
Sixth, Hough et al. (2005) appropriately question “whether a theory founded in self-interest is the best place to start in analyzing governance in a sector in which other-regarding behavior is common” and often expected (p. 3).

Finally, agency theory fails to consider the range of relationships in nonprofit governance. The theory predominately addresses the board-CEO relationship and assumes that it is antagonistic. Yet, Miller (2002) found that “the relationship between the nonprofit board and the executive director is based on trust and mutual respect” (p. 437). In addition, Buchanan et al. (2005) found that positive relationships between foundation boards and their CEOs are critical to board members' perceptions of board effectiveness. Thus, suggesting that a positive relationship between the board and CEO may be desirable or even necessary for effective governance.

Given the limitations of agency theory to explain and predict governance behavior in the nonprofit context some scholars suggest the use of other theories to inform nonprofit governance scholarship and practice (Brown, 2005; Hough et al., 2005; Miller-Millesen, 2003). However, “recent developments of agency theory have improved its utility in the nonprofit context” (Renz & Andersson, 2014, p. 21). A few recent studies assumed that nonprofits can have more than one principal agent, another study proposed the differentiation between internal and external agency relationships, and an additional study questioned whether unique control issues arise in situations where government is a principal agent (Renz & Andersson, 2014).

**Relevance.** Agency theory has a place in the study and practice of nonprofit governance. When the focus of research or practice is on such issues as preventing opportunism or malfeasance by the CEO or other organizational managers, agency theory
can provide an appropriate framework (Miller, 2002). Agency theory does not, however, describe or explain all aspects of nonprofit governance, nor can it guide all board behavior.

Agency theory is limited in its ability to provide insights into the practice of generative governance. However, generative governance involves governing at the internal and external boundaries of the organization. Research framed by agency theory, therefore, may provide insight into how the board's control functions influence its ability to work at the internal boundary of the organization in partnership with the CEO. This theory may also shed light on the ways in which external actors (e.g., government and the community) influence the board's control functions. However, agency theory seems limited in its ability to help us understand the board’s role in reframing problems, sensemaking, developing creative solutions, and other key characteristics of generative governance.

On the other hand, the literature suggests that governing from an agency perspective may hinder generative governance in two ways. First, by focusing the board’s work on its fiduciary role, governing from an agency perspective draws the board’s time and attention away from generative work. Second, governing from an agency perspective places a focus on distrust and control rather than trust and partnership between the board and managers. Therefore, the unique perspectives of managers, which could help the board to reframe issues, create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions, are lost.

Given the well-documented abuses by CEOs and other managers as well as evidence that cooperation between managers and boards is important, it seems that boards must both control and collaborate with nonprofit managers. This places boards in a paradoxical situation. New theories are needed that address the tensions involved in board - management relationships and the paradox of board control - collaboration.
This theory-building study helped to fill a gap in our understanding of nonprofit governance practice left unfilled by agency theory. Given that board social capital involves board relationships, the study's findings provide new insights into board relationships with the CEO and other managers as well as with external actors. Understanding the tensions created by the paradoxical role that board social capital plays in the practice of generative governance is important because board work conducted at the organizational boundaries “is where conditions are conducive to generative thinking” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 104).

**Resource dependence theory.** Resource dependence theory (also called resource dependency theory) is a sociological theory, which challenges “the individual and intraorganizational focus of most management theory and research” (Hough et al., 2005, p. 33). It is one of the most commonly used theories to study nonprofit governance and boards (Renz & Andersson, 2014).

**Description.** Resource dependence theory contends that organizations are “interdependent with their environment” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 8). The theory suggests that organizations depend on resources from other organizations and external actors for their survival (Cornforth, 2003; Renz & Andersson, 2014). Therefore, organizations must manage their external dependencies as a means to ensure that they obtain needed resources (Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005). The theory offers “insight into the ways in which power and influence have the capacity to bias resource allocation decisions” (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p. 434). “The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective” by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) is the seminal book, which established this theoretical approach.

From a resource dependence perspective, boards serve as a “mechanism to reduce environmental uncertainty” (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p. 533). Toward this end, they play a
boundary spanning role (Cornforth, 2003; Miller-Millesen, 2003) and act as “resource
catalysts” by providing the links needed to obtain essential resources (Brown, 2005, p. 322).
An example of such links is interlocking directorates (Cornforth, 2003). Interlocking
directorates involve individuals who serve on the boards of multiple organizations. Resource
dependence theory posits that interlocking directorships is a means by which organizations
attempt to manage relationships with other organizations that they depend on (Hough et al.,
2005). Research on interlocking directorates (e.g., Vidovich & Curry, 2012) supports this
contention.

In the nonprofit context, Miller-Millesen (2003) suggests that boards perform four
major functions through their boundary-spanning role. Nonprofit boards (a) reduce
“uncertainty by developing 'exchange relationships’” with their organization's external
stakeholders, (b) assure organizational adaptive capacity by collecting and interpreting
externally gathered information, (c) protect the organization from “environmental
interference” by sharing only the information that is critical to the nonprofit's operation, and
(d) represent the organization to its external stakeholders (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p. 533).
Cornforth (2003) states that nonprofits select board members for the “important external
links they can bring to the organization” with the aim of co-opting “external influences” (p.
9). Therefore, nonprofits commonly choose board members based on “their social, political
and economic influence within the community” (Pahl, 2006, p. 28).

**Practice evidence.** There is substantial practice evidence that a resource dependence
view influences nonprofit governance and that nonprofits view boards as a means to
accessing and securing resources from other organizations. The prescribed responsibilities of
nonprofit boards, for example, reflect this influence. These responsibilities include ensuring
adequate resources (e.g., Guidestar, 2012; Ingram, 2009; Robinson, 2006) and serving as an organizational ambassador (e.g., Guidestar, 2012; Robinson, 2006).

Miller-Millesen (2003) suggests that the board's responsibility to recruit new board members also reflects a resource dependence perspective. The practice literature often recommends that boards seek individuals from key external constituency groups for board positions (e.g., Robinson, 2006). Selecting board members who have links to external organizations that the nonprofit works with, or obtain funds from, is a common practice (Cornforth, 2003). Furthermore, grids used by nonprofits to analyze board composition typically assess current and prospective board members in regards to their connections to key stakeholder groups. In some cases, these grids go so far as to support the assessment of current and prospective board members’ “spheres of influence” (Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012, p. 217).

**Research evidence.** While early research on nonprofit boards relied heavily on resource dependency theory, this is no longer the case (Ostrower & Stone, 2006, 2010). Early studies that used resource dependency theory include Zald (1967, 1969), Pfeffer (1973), Provan (1980), Wernet and Austin (1991), and Harlan and Saidel (1994). Many of these studies focused on the board's role in securing access to financial resources. Their findings provide mixed support for the tenets of resource dependence theory.

The following overview presents the results of early studies that support resource dependence theory. Zald (1967 as cited in Hough et al., 2005) found that Chicago YMCA affiliates with “high status boards had higher financial contributions by board members, and had higher perceived organizational efficiency, program quality, and board strength” (p. 35). In a later theoretical piece, Zald (1969) makes the following proposition, which supports a resource dependence view. “In general, to the extent that board members control or represent
salient external ‘resources,’ they are more powerful than if they do not control such resources” (Zald, 1969, p. 100). Pfeffer (1973) determined that board composition and function influenced the ability of nonprofit hospitals to secure resources from the external environment. Provan (1980) found that human service nonprofits “that were able to attract and co-opt important and influential members of the community and its power structure to serve on their boards have the potential to influence fund sources” (p. 234).

Other early studies had findings that are inconsistent with the theory. For example, Wernet and Austin’s (1991) study of human service nonprofits found mixed support for resource dependence theory. In support of the theory, their findings demonstrated that the nonprofits studied adapted to their environments by strategically attending to demands made by external resource providers and managing external dependencies through interorganizational linkages. Wernet and Austin’s (1991) contradictory findings include a deviation in the causal chain of Pfeffer’s model of organizational adaption to external environmental constraints. Another example is Harlan and Saidel’s (1994) study of 400 nonprofits that contract with government, which found that boards played two seemingly contradictory roles in regards to their influence on government contracts. Boards engaged in political advocacy on the behalf of their nonprofit (facilitator role) while also shielding the nonprofit from government intrusion and guarding the organization's values in order to preserve the nonprofit’s autonomy (buffer role).

More recent studies that employed resource dependence theory include Miller-Millesen (2003), Brown (2005), Hodge and Piccolo (2005), Brown and Guo (2010), Callen et al. (2010), Ostrower and Stone (2010), and Viader and Espina (2014). Many of these studies moved beyond a focus on the board’s role in securing financial resources. They aimed to further our understanding of the complexity and contextual nature of nonprofits’ dependence
on the external environment and of boards’ relationships with external actors. Some of these studies used resource dependence theory with other governance theories to examine issues that include board effectiveness (e.g., Hodge & Piccolo, 2005), organizational performance (e.g., Brown, 2005; Callen et al., 2010), and factors that influence board roles and responsibilities (e.g., Brown & Guo, 2010).

Brown (2005) used resource dependence theory with agency theory and group/decision process theory to examine how the governance activities of boards influence nonprofit performance. Brown’s (2005) findings that are reflective of resource dependence theory are: (a) larger boards are more proficient at providing resources, (b) boards’ political and strategic competencies are positively correlated with organizational net revenue, and (c) the strategic competency of boards is “positively correlated with perceptions of organizational performance” (p. 331).

Hodge and Piccolo (2005) used a resource dependence perspective to examine the relationships among board effectiveness, private philanthropy, and financial vulnerability. Their findings supported assertions of resource dependence theory and suggest that a nonprofit CEO's engagement with the board is context specific and “depends in part on the nature and concentration of the organization’s resources” (Hodge & Piccolo, 2005, p. 171).

Brown and Guo's (2010) study of board roles in community foundations also supports resource dependence theory. The nonprofit executives they surveyed identified several ways that boards negotiate their organizations' resource environments, which include using social networks, accessing potential donors, and bringing legitimacy to the organization.

Callen et al.’s (2010) study offers support for resource dependence theory as evidenced by their finding that boards’ boundary spanning role “aids effective fundraising” (pp. 122-123). Furthermore, they found that context matters; specifically, that board size and
the inclusion of donors on the fundraising committee are associated with resource dependencies.

Ostrower and Stone’s (2010) study, which led to the development of a contingency-based framework for nonprofit governance research, examined Miller-Millesen’s (2003) agency theory based hypotheses. Their findings were generally unsupportive of Miller-Millesen’s hypotheses but “more supportive of hypotheses derived from resource dependence theory” (Ostrower & Stone, 2010, p. 908).

Viada and Espina’s (2014) recent study of Puerto Rican nonprofits found that the tenets of resource dependence theory contributed to the governance model of 28% of the nonprofits in their sample. Their findings demonstrate the application of resource dependence theory in nonprofit governance practice.

**Critique.** Despite its extensive use and supporting research evidence, some scholars have leveled criticisms concerning the usefulness of resource dependence theory in the study and practice of nonprofit governance. First, resource dependence theory is “deficient in its ability to explain the full range of board behavior” because it assumes “that the only legitimate sources of power and influence are resource based” (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p. 536). Second, most research that employs this perspective has a narrow focus on financial resources and funding relationships (Ostrower & Stone, 2010). Therefore, other important environmental pressures that affect nonprofits and boards are neglected (Hough et al., 2005; Ostrower & Stone, 2010). Third, resource dependence theory does not commonly take into account the varying contexts in which nonprofits operate, e.g., differing levels of complexity and uncertainty in their external environments (Miller-Millesen, 2003). Recent research and theoretical advances, however, are addressing this concern. Fourth, the theory does not assist with the identification of the coalitions that are most important in reducing the dependencies
of a particular nonprofit (Miller-Millesen, 2003). Finally, Pahl (2006) argues that political benefits are more important outcomes of the board's boundary-spanning role than resources gained because “creating stability for nonprofit organizations should be addressed through political processes in a collective way” (p. 29). Despite these limitations, “numerous nonprofit board studies offer support for the relevance of this theory to nonprofit governance” (Renz & Andersson, 2014, p. 22).

**Relevance.** Resource dependence theory makes an important contribution to the study of nonprofit governance and boards. It does so by focusing attention on the external environment, the dependence of nonprofits on other organizations and actors for access to key resources, and the board's boundary-spanning role. This theory can help us to understand the board’s role in absorbing organizational uncertainty, addressing external dependencies, representing the nonprofit to external stakeholders, facilitating information exchange, and enhancing organizational performance (Renz & Andersson, 2014).

Resource dependence theory has some relevance to generative governance because the board’s boundary spanning role relates to Chait et al.’s (2005) contention that generative governance requires the board to work at the organization’s boundaries; both internal and external. However, resource dependence theory limits its focus to the board’s work at the organization’s external boundary. In addition, some key tenets of this theory are at odds with generative governance. The theory’s focus on managing the external environment by co-opting key external organizations and actors, for example, is counter to Chait et al.’s (2005) aim of the board’s work at the external organizational boundary. In generative governance, the aim is to gain new understandings of problems facing the organization and the people that it serves toward the goal of creating innovative solutions, not to co-opt external actors as a means to advance organizational objectives.
This theory-building study addressed some of the concerns expressed about resource dependence theory and helped to fill gaps left by this theoretical perspective. For example, some scholars consider resource dependence theory to be deficient because it assumes “that the only legitimate sources of power and influence are resource based” (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p. 536). This study addressed this concern by examining issues of power and influence in the governance process that are relationship based rather than resource based. Furthermore, this study helped to fill a gap by moving beyond the traditional focus of resource dependence theory, which is the board’s external role in accessing financial resources. It accomplished this by focusing attention on the board’s external and internal roles in accessing diverse sources of information and perspectives to support generative governance.

**Stakeholder theory.** Like agency theory, scholars developed stakeholder theory in the context of for-profit organizations (Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005; Hung, 1998). This theory brings a different disciplinary perspective to the study of governance, i.e., a management perspective (Hough et al., 2005). The stakeholder perspective has had an increasing impact on the practice of nonprofit governance suggesting the importance of its use as a theoretical framework for nonprofit governance research (Barrett, 2001; Hough et al., 2005; Locke, Begum, & Robson, 2003). While scholars use stakeholder theory less frequently than agency theory for the study of nonprofit governance, interest in this theory is growing (Hough et al., 2005; Renz & Andersson, 2014).

**Description.** Stakeholder theory suggests that an organization has responsibilities to a broad range of societal groups, i.e., an organization is not singularly responsible to its owners as agency theory suggests (Cornforth, 2003; Hung, 1998). The theory focuses on how stakeholder demands can effect organizations and how organizations respond to such
demands (Dunn, 2010). It also addresses how organizations manage important stakeholder relationships (Renz & Andersson, 2014). Instrumental stakeholder theory focuses on how organizations use stakeholder relationships in the pursuit of their own interests (Butterfield, Reed, & Lemak, 2004). The moral obligations of managers to organizational stakeholders are the focus of normative stakeholder theory (Butterfield et al., 2004). Descriptive stakeholder theory seeks to describe the behaviors of managers, organizations, and their stakeholders (Butterfield et al., 2004).

*Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* by Freeman (1984) is the seminal text on stakeholder theory. Freeman (1984) suggests that a stakeholder approach is critical to the effective governance of business and service organizations because their external environments change rapidly. Environmental turbulence, he argues, requires organizations to maintain an outward focus, which helps organizational leaders to focus on the future. Therefore, Freeman suggests that at a minimum the board must be aware of the corporation’s impact on important stakeholder groups and should be responsive to their interests (Freeman, 1984; Hough et al., 2005).

In 1993, Evan and Freeman put forth “a more radical version of stakeholder theory” (Hough et al., 2005, p. 21). This more recent version of the theory goes beyond the idea that a board should be aware of and responsive to stakeholder interests. Evan and Freeman state that boards have a *responsibility* to govern in the interests of *both* the organization and its stakeholders. The organizational goal, therefore, is the maximization of value for the benefit of all organizational stakeholders (Barrett, 2001; Hough et al., 2005). Consequently, stakeholder theory “leads to a political role for the board” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 9). As the board establishes the organization’s strategic direction and sets organizational policy, board members must negotiate, resolve conflicts, and seek compromise to meet the interests of
diverse stakeholders (Cornforth, 2003; Hung, 1998). In the nonprofit context, stakeholder perspectives are particularly important for organizations that have a mission with an exclusive focus on advocacy and for those nonprofits that engage in advocacy to support a service provision mission (Kinney, 2007).

Like resource dependence theory, stakeholder theory identifies a boundary-spanning role for the board (Hough et al., 2005). Recent theoretical developments suggest that organizational stakeholders are not limited to external groups such as funders and collaborating organizations. Organizational stakeholders also include internal stakeholders such as the organization's staff members and volunteers. Some scholars also consider the board to be a stakeholder; specifically, an “interface stakeholder” because the board connects the nonprofit with its environment (Van Puyvelde, Caers, Du Bois, & Jegers, 2012, p. 433).

The interface role of the board has implications for the practice of nonprofit governance. Stakeholder theory suggests that boards should communicate regularly with stakeholder groups on relevant issues (Barrett, 2001; Hough et al., 2005.). The expectation is that regular communication with stakeholder groups will increase organizational responsiveness to broader social interests (Cornforth, 2003). Stakeholder theory also suggests that boards include members of stakeholder groups to ensure that stakeholder interests are represented (Hough et al., 2005). While stakeholder representation in corporate governance remains controversial, it is less controversial in the context of nonprofit governance (Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005). Stakeholder representation on nonprofit boards is an important issue because research suggests that board composition including board homogeneity versus heterogeneity influences “board and organizational culture, emphases, policy, and effectiveness” (Ostrower & Stone, 2006, p. 614).
**Practice evidence.** Nonprofit governance practice shows evidence of the tenets of stakeholder theory. The practice literature addresses the importance of stakeholder perspectives and constituent representation (e.g., Andringa & Engstrom, 2007; Robinson, 2006). Stakeholder issues influence the size and composition of nonprofit boards (Metelsky, 2010). The boards of nonprofit organizations are larger than corporate boards in part to allow for the inclusion of members who represent their multiple constituent groups (Ostrower, 2007; Ostrower & Stone, 2006). Some funders, both government and private, require the appointment of stakeholder representatives on the boards of the organizations they support (Barrett, 2001; Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005; Locke et al., 2003; Metelsky, 2010). In addition, board recruitment practices often address the recruitment of stakeholder representatives and board composition matrices typically include lists of constituent groups (e.g., McNamara, n.d.; Robinson, 2006; Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012). Furthermore, some nonprofits mandate stakeholder representation in their bylaws (Metelsky, 2010).

Nonprofits have developed additional mechanisms to bring stakeholder perspectives into the governance process. Examples include creating task forces (Metelsky, 2010), establishing advisory groups (Saidel, 1998), and inviting organization members to attend board meetings (Metelsky, 2010). In addition, many nonprofits obtain stakeholder input through research conducted as part of their assessment practices (e.g., consumer surveys) and strategic planning processes (e.g., SWOT analyses).

**Research evidence.** A limited number of nonprofit governance studies have used stakeholder theory as a theoretical framework. Interest in this theory, however, is growing (Renz & Andersson, 2014). The following paragraphs present the results of studies that used stakeholder theory as a theoretical frame.
Hardina’s (1993) mixed-methods study of 42 nonprofits that serve three low-income communities found a limited degree of board influence on an organization's choice of service strategies. Hardina attributed this finding, in part, to the power of donors (an important stakeholder group) to demand strategies that reflect their interests.

Kinney’s (2007) mixed-methods study which examined the formation process of 23 nonprofit housing organizations demonstrated that stakeholder orientations are particularly important in new nonprofits and that the focus of stakeholder relations varies as the needs of the emerging organization change. Kinney also found that in the early phases of start-up, the board’s relationship with stakeholders focuses largely on donors because the board’s ability to generate resources may determine the organization’s capacity to survive.

LeRoux’s (2009) study of the management of stakeholder relationships in social service nonprofits found evidence that power differentials influence the time and attention paid to different stakeholder groups. The findings indicate that while nonprofits generally balance the needs of both consumers and funders, some nonprofits provide disproportionate attention to funding agencies at the expense of the organization’s consumers. This suggests the need for boards to be aware of the role of power in stakeholder relationships and the ways that power privileges the needs of some stakeholders over others.

Gazley et al. (2010) explored the impact of board diversity on organizational performance using a multi-theoretic lens, which combined agency, resource dependence, and stakeholder perspectives. Questionnaires were completed by 142 executive directors whose organizations are members of the National Association of Community Mediation. The study found that stakeholder representativeness on boards “to be a limited but relevant measure of organizational effectiveness” (Gazley et al., 2010, p. 618).
Finally, some scholars have recognized the importance of a stakeholder perspective in theory building and model development. Stoetzer, Kepler, and Hilgers (2011) used stakeholder theory to develop a normative model of stakeholder performance reporting. Governance structure is an element of their model. Young (2011) used a stakeholder perspective to consider how “nonprofit governance might be modified to improve the ability of the organization to generate resources through a regime of economic stakeholder governance” (p. 566). An economic model would privilege the appointment of board members from powerful stakeholder groups that have influence with key funding sources. While Young suggests that different organizational contexts would lead to an array of board forms dominated by various stakeholders groups (e.g., consumer groups, volunteers, donors, funders, and government entities), he recognizes that experimenting with an economic stakeholder model comes with risks.

**Critique.** Many organizational theorists have criticized stakeholder theory. Theorists have leveled and refuted criticisms on legal, economic, and moral grounds (Mason, Kirkbride, & Bryde, 2007). The primary criticism relates to the ceding of resources to stakeholders at the expense of shareholders (Mason et al., 2007). Such criticisms, however, are not relevant in the nonprofit context because nonprofit organizations do not have shareholders.

Another criticism of stakeholder theory is that it is a seriously underdeveloped and weak theory (Hough et al., 2005). Learmount (2002) suggests this may be due to a preoccupation with justifying a stakeholder approach at the expense of developing a systematic theory that better describes the governance practices of today’s organizations. Lozano (2005), on the other hand, suggests that the stakeholder approach is too complex for a “single all-embracing theory” and that multiple models are needed (p. 65).
In their analysis of stakeholder theory, Antonacopoulou and Méric (2005) raise concerns about the scientific rigor of the theory. They state that stakeholder theory contains “internal contradictions between, on the one hand, the ideology of social good, and on the other hand, the ideology of control” (Antonacopoulou & Méric, 2005, p. 22). Antonacopoulou and Méric (2005) suggest that underlying organizational values are at stake revealing “the political and value-laden nature of the concept of stake-holder” (p. 22).

Miller’s (2002) study raises specific concerns about the implementation of stakeholder perspectives in the practice of nonprofit governance. She states that nonprofit organizations expect their boards to be accountable to the multiple interests of numerous stakeholders. Miller suggests, however, that fundamental issues are unresolved. She notes that there is no clear agreement about who owns nonprofits or how to assess their organizational performance given competing interests. Brown (2005) raises similar concerns and addresses the resulting impact on governance scholarship. He notes that “different stakeholders provide different perspectives on performance; consequently, the associations between measures of board and organizational performance are often contingent on the respondent” (Brown, 2005, p. 327).

**Relevance.** While stakeholder theory is a less common theory of governance than agency theory, it nonetheless brings an important perspective to the study and practice of nonprofit governance by placing focus on boards’ involvement with organizational stakeholders and on how boards negotiate stakeholder interests. An important contribution of stakeholder theory is that, like resource dependence theory, it sheds light on the boundary-spanning role of the board. Because generative governance involves working at the organizational boundaries (i.e., working with internal and external stakeholders), stakeholder theory holds promise to further our understanding of this form of governance.
Another contribution of stakeholder theory, which is relevant to generative governance, is that the theory highlights the political nature of governance. Findings that demonstrate that powerful stakeholders have a greater voice in nonprofit governance also have implications for generative governance. When the board privileges the perspectives of influential stakeholders, they marginalize the perspectives of less powerful stakeholders. This limits the board’s ability to reframe issues and fully understand the complex problems that come before the board.

Furthermore, I argue that stakeholder power creates a paradox for the practice of nonprofit governance. Which stakeholder perspectives should the board privilege? — The stakeholders that need the organization the most (the people served by the nonprofit) or the stakeholders that the organization needs the most (funders and other powerful stakeholders)?

This theory-building study filled some gaps left unfilled by stakeholder theory. The study’s focus on board social capital furthered our understanding of the influence that board relationships with both internal and external stakeholders have on nonprofit governance, in general and generative governance, in particular. The use of a paradox perspective examined the tensions inherent in managing board relationships with internal and external stakeholders as well as relationships with more and less powerful stakeholders. The use of critical perspectives placed a focus on issues of power and oppression related to the board’s relationships with stakeholders from historically marginalized groups.

**Class hegemony theory.** Class hegemony theory, also known as elite theory, is a sociological theory of governance. The theory is generally Marxist in orientation (Guo et al., 2014; Stiles & Taylor, 2001). Like agency and stakeholder theories, scholars developed class hegemony theory in the context of corporate governance. Class hegemony theory was widely
used to study boards when nonprofit governance scholarship was in its infancy; over time, its use has diminished considerably (Hough et al., 2005).

**Description.** Class hegemony theory has an extensive history in the discipline of Sociology. The theory contends that the upper class dominates key societal institutions (Useem, 1979). Stephens (2007) suggests that the theory has relevance for the nonprofit sector. He states that while de Tocqueville viewed organized social groups as sustainers of American democracy, Gramsci contends that in more advanced capitalist societies “a dense civil society can be a conduit for inculcation of upper class ideologies in lower classes” (Stephens, 2007, p. 34).

The class hegemony theory of governance is concerned with the social nature of governance and board functions (Hough et al., 2005). The seminal work on class hegemony and governance is Michael Useem’s (1979) article, *The social organization of the American business elite and participation of corporate directors in the governance of American institutions*. Useem (1979) studied over 2,000 directors of almost 800 major U.S. corporations. He states that some senior executives in the largest U.S. corporations have a “common culture, informal social cohesion, and even some formal organization” (p. 212). Useem (1979) found that members of the upper class dominate the boards of both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. He suggests that the business elite use their political power to receive board appointments and, in turn, use their power as board members to uphold class interests. Useem gives the role of corporate elites in the governance of prestigious, private institutions of higher education as an example.

Middleton (1987) suggests that nonprofit organizations of various types such as private clubs, industry associations, and charitable nonprofits are sites for building social cohesion among the upper class. Elites meet, share information, and create “common
viewpoints around social, economic and political issues,” thus, furthering class cohesion and building class power (Hough et al., 2005, p. 36).

Class hegemony theory suggests that interlocks (integrative, inter-organizational ties) in governance play an important role in building class cohesion (Useem, 1979). Interlocks offer a range of organizational benefits including inter-organizational knowledge transfer (O’Hagan & Green, 2004). Class hegemony theory, however, contends that interlocks emphasize upper-class participation and control in business and that their main purpose is to support class solidarity (O’Hagan & Green, 2004). “If elite individuals are always appointed to the board of directors, they will continually control corporate [and nonprofit sector] power” (O’Hagan & Green, 2004, p. 120).

**Practice evidence.** While scholars no longer commonly use class hegemony theory as a conceptual framework for nonprofit governance research, evidence of elites' influence in the governance of nonprofit organizations remains strong. For example, the predominance of elites in the governance of private institutions of higher education continues today. In addition, elites commonly serve on the boards of major nonprofit arts organizations (e.g., museums, symphonies, ballet companies, and theaters) (Ostrower, 2002) and large nonprofit healthcare organizations (e.g., nonprofit hospitals, community health systems, and healthcare insurers).

Corporate elites and other elite professionals are highly sought-after board members. Many nonprofits regularly consider wealth and corporate connections as selection criteria for board prospects. In fact, board recruitment best practices suggest that nonprofits evaluate their board capital and recruit board candidates who fill identified gaps. Grids to help boards conduct capital assessments of prospective board members and support board recruitment efforts often include categories related to issues of wealth and corporate connections. For
example, BoardSource’s “Sample grid for evaluating board capital” includes the following categories: “monetary capital,” “historical giving patterns,” and “financial position” (Dambach, Davis, & Gale, 2009, pp. 111-114). In addition, many nonprofits include fundraising in their board member job descriptions and some establish specific ‘give or get’ requirements.

Research evidence. Studies conducted in the 1970s, ‘80s, and early ‘90s, provide evidence in support of the existence of upper class dominance in nonprofit governance during this period. As previously discussed, Useem (1979) found strong support for class hegemony theory. His findings demonstrated that corporate elites dominated a broad range of U.S. social institutions including nonprofit organizations through elite dominance on nonprofit boards. Middleton’s (1987) review of the nonprofit governance literature identified a large number of empirical studies focused on class hegemony. Three overarching types of studies were found, i.e., studies of corporate board interlocks and nonprofit board service, studies on power and elites’ service on nonprofit boards, and studies that examined the influence of elites’ on the allocation of foundation funding to nonprofits (Guo et al., 2014). The studies reviewed by Middleton documented the ongoing presence of elites on nonprofit boards and their strong influence on the governance of nonprofit organizations.

Later studies also demonstrate the involvement and power of elite board members. Ostrower (1995, 1998, 2002) found evidence of elites’ influence in nonprofit governance. Her research on elite philanthropy identified philanthropy as a central and defining component of elite culture (Ostrower, 1995). Wealthy participants reported that individuals buy seats on the boards of prestigious nonprofits as a mechanism to attain (for the newly wealthy) or maintain (for those from prominent, wealthy families) an elite social status. Ostrower's (1998) study documents the important role that cultural institutions play in class
cohesion. A study participant stated that board membership in prestigious arts organizations is considered to be a “virtually mandatory ‘accoutrement’ of being wealthy” (Ostrower, 1998, p. 49). Ostrower’s (2002) study of elite board members from four, major nonprofit arts institutions found that class-related influence shaped the approach of these elite boards. Conflicting organizational influences and constraints, however, mediated the influence.

Abzug’s (1996) panel study of nonprofit board composition in six U.S. cities between 1931 and 1991 found limited evidence of a decline in the number of elite trustees. She cautions, however, that the use of different indicators to determine whether an individual was an elite trustee varied the results. Abzug (1996) noted that while various social register listings “may announce a particular ‘elite,’ they may overlook entirely different elite status based on organizational affiliation or political power” (p. 105).

In a study of 15 diverse types of nonprofits, Abzug and Galaskiewicz (2001) found evidence of board involvement by other categories of elites. They found that individuals with college educations and those who hold professional or managerial positions were significantly represented on nonprofit boards.

Research focused on class issues and nonprofit governance in the U.S. has been reduced considerably (Guo et al., 2014; Hough et al., 2005). However, two studies that are more recent had findings that shed light on the current involvement and influence of elites in nonprofit governance. Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, and Dowell (2006) found that donative nonprofits (i.e., nonprofits that rely heavily on contributions and volunteers) grew at a quicker rate when they “had...more ties to urban elites” (p. 337). In contrast, commercial nonprofits (i.e., nonprofits that depend on fees, sales, and paid employees) grew at faster rates when they “had fewer ties to...local elites” (Galaskiewicz et al., 2006, p. 337).
Findings from the previously discussed nationally representative study of nonprofit governance provide evidence of class disparity in board composition. Ostrower (2007) found that: (a) larger, wealthier nonprofits draw their board members more heavily from members of elite groups; (b) almost one-third of board members from the smallest nonprofits also serve on corporate boards; and (c) the percentage of board members who also serve on corporate boards increases to 80% for the largest nonprofits.

**Critique.** Scholars have criticized class hegemony theory for a number of reasons. First, domination of boards by elites is not true in all nonprofit organizational contexts, e.g., grassroots and small, community-based nonprofits (Middleton, 1987; Ostrower, 2007). Second, increases in government funding reduce the dependence of some nonprofits on the financial resources that members of the upper class can bring to an organization (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990). Third, the professionalization of nonprofit managers reduces the need for business acumen in nonprofit board members (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990). Fourth, class hegemony theory suggests that all elites have similar motives for board service. Yet, elites serve on nonprofit boards for a range of personal reasons (Auerback, 1961; Useem, 1979) and career motives (McSweeney, 1978; Useem, 1979). Furthermore, there are upper class board members who have demonstrated a strong commitment to social justice values and have worked to effect social change (Hough et al., 2005). Fifth, rapid growth of the nonprofit sector has led to a significant increase in the number of board positions resulting in large numbers of board vacancies (Ostrower, 2007). This situation has provided opportunities for individuals from all social classes to serve on nonprofit boards (Hough et al., 2005). Sixth, class hegemony theory assumes the co-optation of nonprofits by elite board members but fails to consider that nonprofits might co-opt the upper class members of their boards (Hough et al., 2005).
Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that some of these criticisms are unfounded. For example, as previously noted, Ostrower (2007) and Abzug & Galaskiewicz (2001) found evidence that upper class individuals still dominate nonprofit boards. In addition, as previously discussed, changes in the external environment (e.g., the downturn of the economy, decreases in philanthropic giving, and government funding cutbacks) have placed financial pressures on nonprofits, which favor the appointment of elites to the board. Finally, corporate downsizing, the dramatic increase in the number of nonprofits organizations, and increasing nonprofit salaries (particularly in certain nonprofit subsectors) have led numerous former corporate executives to seek CEO and senior management positions in nonprofits. Not surprisingly, anecdotal evidence suggests that these new CEOs use their corporate social networks to fill board vacancies.

Relevance. The previously presented information on board recruitment practices and evidence concerning board composition makes it clear that elites continue to play a significant role in the governance of nonprofits. In addition, while the distribution of wealth in the U.S. has historically been disproportionally concentrated in the top net worth households, recently, wealth and income inequality have increased dramatically (Domhoff, 2013). This trend suggests that the role of elites may increase as nonprofits continue to face tough economic times. Therefore, governance scholars should revisit class hegemony theory.

Class hegemony theory is relevant to generative governance because the social nature of governance and board functions is the focus of this theory (Hough et al., 2005). It is important for us to understand how the presence of elites on a nonprofit board influences the board's ability to govern generatively. Given the power inherent in elite status, when elites serve on a nonprofit board, the perspectives of less powerful individuals may be marginalized or ignored.
Class hegemony theory is relevant to this dissertation study because it provides an example of how critical perspectives can illuminate the influence of privilege and power in nonprofit governance practice. In turn, this study shed some light on the influence of social class in the generative governance of nonprofits. Furthermore, this study’s use of CRT as a theoretical frame helped to fill a gap left by class hegemony theory. It did so by exploring the intersections of race and ethnicity and social class.

Paradox theory. Like stakeholder theory, paradox theory is a management theory of governance. Unlike the previously discussed theories, scholars developed paradox theory in consideration of the contexts of both for profit and nonprofit organizations (Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005). Despite the use of this theory by a few nonprofit governance scholars, most notably Cornforth, it is not widely used in the study of nonprofit governance particularly in the U.S. (Hough et al., 2005). Because the theory places a focus on the complexity of organizations and the paradoxes that boards face in their governance work, a paradox perspective can help the nonprofit sector to “engage the ambiguities, tensions, and paradoxes” that exist in nonprofit governance (Renz & Andersson, 2014, p. 23).

Description. Nonprofit scholars can use paradox theory to help them unravel the complex nature of nonprofit governance. Many governance theories are one-dimensional (Cornforth, 2001) and have a rational-linear epistemology (Hough et al., 2005). Such theories focus on linear thinking by boards and view board decision making as either/or choices (Cornforth, 2003; Hough et al., 2005). These theories fail to explain adequately the complexity of nonprofit governance including board roles that are paradoxical in relationship to traditional monitoring roles (Reid & Turbide, 2012). At the same time, a paradox perspective holds promise to inform nonprofit governance practice because board members
need to “confront and manage contradiction and paradox,” which is inherent in organizational governance (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15).

Demb and Neubauer (1992) identified three paradoxes in the context of for-profit governance. First, the board is the “fountain of power;” yet, it is top management that naturally exercises power (Demb & Neubauer, 1992, p. 13). Second, board members need intimate organizational knowledge to monitor the performance of managers; yet, detachment from management is necessary to ensure independent judgment (Demb & Neubauer, 1992). Third, boards must build their collective strength. They must be close knit and trust one another; yet, they must resist groupthink and challenge each other with critical questions (Demb & Neubauer, 1992). These paradoxes are equally applicable to governance in the nonprofit sector.

Cornforth (2003) suggests that there are three main tensions facing nonprofit boards. The first tension focuses on who should govern the organization, i.e., “the tension between representative and professional boards” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15). Different theories provide differing perspectives regarding who should serve on boards (Cornforth, 2003). Stewardship theory suggests the need for professional boards comprised of members who have expertise and experience, which adds “value to the performance of the organization” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15). Other theories, democratic theory and to a lesser degree stakeholder theory, suggest that board members serve as representatives of their respective stakeholders groups (Cornforth, 2003).

The focus of the second tension is the role of boards, i.e., “the tension between conformance and performance” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15). The conformance role of the board emanates from an agency perspective. Therefore, monitoring is the board’s major responsibility. On the other hand, stewardship theory suggests a performance role for the
board. The board’s primary responsibility from this perspective is to drive performance by “adding value” to the organization’s strategic decision-making (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15).

The third tension relates to the board’s relationship with management, i.e., “the tension between controlling and partnering” (Cornforth, 2003, p. 15). Several theories, particularly agency theory, suggest that the board’s relationship with management is one of control and oversight (Cornforth, 2003). Conversely, stewardship theory suggests a partnership relationship with management as a means toward informing and improving managerial decision-making (Cornforth, 2003).

This discussion of the tensions that face nonprofit boards supports the contention that paradox theory can help us to understand the complexity of nonprofit governance. Furthermore, it supports the idea that the board’s ability to manage paradox is important for effective nonprofit governance practice.

**Research evidence.** Research that employs a paradox perspective addresses tension that comes from “conflicting demands, opposing perspectives or seemingly illogical findings” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760). While scholars have identified the need for paradox studies, few empirical studies examine paradox in either the context of corporate or nonprofit governance. However, a number of studies on related topics have found the tenets of paradox theory useful in explaining findings.

Demb and Neubauer (1992) found evidence in support of paradox theory in their mixed-methods study of more than 200 corporate board members. Their findings led to the development of strategy recommendations designed to assist boards in dealing with the paradoxes of governance. Recommendations include balancing the number of insider and outsider directors, offering opportunities for outside directors to interact on strategy and providing them with access to good information through frequent formal and informal
mechanisms, conducting frequent meetings, and having regular discussions of board purpose and organizational mission.

In their qualitative study of the boards of private institutions of higher education, Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993) found that effective boards “were more inclined to think ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’ and to describe board actions with multiple objectives derived from the use of multiple frames” (p. 60). These boards found ways to manage the paradoxes involved in their oftentimes, competing objectives.

Goldschmid (1998) examined three cases of serious nonprofit governance failures from a legal perspective. He found that nonprofit board members must wrestle with “a series of problematic paradoxes” (Goldschmid, 1998, p. 631). For example, nonprofit boards are primarily concerned with the effective performance of the organization’s mission, but they must also “keep economic matters in mind” (Goldschmid, 1998, p. 641). At times, this creates a paradox between fiscal sustainability and mission attainment (Goldschmid, 1998).

In a mixed-methods study of the paradox of accountability in eight nonprofit economic development organizations, Campbell (2002) found that nonprofit leaders face a paradox related to pressures for results-based accountability. He found that if outcomes assessment focuses exclusively “on the project-level outcomes over which they have the most control or for which indicators are readily available, they risk default on the larger question of accountability to publicly valued goals” (Campbell, 2002, p. 243).

Gabrielsson and Huse’s (2002) study of the boards of small and medium Swiss enterprises found a high correlation between the board’s control and service roles. This suggests that the roles are not mutually exclusive and that it is possible for boards to manage this seemingly intrinsic paradox.
Sundaramurthy and Lewis’s (2003) study supports Gabrielsson and Huse’s (2002) findings. They examined the paradoxes that are inherent in the differing perspectives of the agency and stewardship theories of governance. Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003) identified a range of underlying tensions, particularly tensions around the board’s role in managing control and collaboration. They concluded that boards must govern in ways that are both distrustful and trustful of management (Hough et al., 2005; Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003).

More recently, Carroll, Ingley, Levy, and Inkson’s (2011) study of the discourses of governance in for-profit and nonprofit organizations identified core tensions in board discourse that “may lead to board paralysis,” where the dominant conformance discourse paradoxically impedes board enterprise and consequently, suppresses innovation (p. 1).

Reid and Turbide’s (2012) longitudinal study of cultural sector nonprofits used a paradox approach to examine the evolution of board-staff relationships. They found evidence that the emotions of trust and distrust are important in a governance relationship and that “the two emotions can paradoxically coexist in a relationship and can ensure a checks-and-balance style of governance” (Reid & Turbide, 2012, p. 95).

Most recently, Chelliah, Boersma, and Klettner (2016), used a survey and interviews to explore the characteristics of Australian nonprofits and the resulting governance paradoxes. They developed a contingency approach for nonprofit governance based on their findings.

**Critique.** Hough et al. (2005) present two criticisms of paradox theory. They suggest that paradox theory is not a specific framework for governance theory building and research. They view paradox theory as a way to “understand complexity” in nonprofit governance and “as an approach to resolving contradictory theories and evidence” (Hough et al., 2005, p. 25).
Furthermore, Hough et al. (2005) suggest that the lack of empirical tests on paradox in nonprofit governance that use quantitative methods is problematic.

While these critiques bear further consideration, the evidence of paradox in the practice of nonprofit governance seems clear. Additional studies that use a paradox perspective to explore the types of paradoxes that nonprofit boards face and how boards can effectively address them hold promise to inform nonprofit governance practice. While more quantitative studies as suggested by Hough et al. (2005) could provide important evidence, others have suggested that different research designs and methods are needed to study paradox in governance (Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995 as cited in Hough et al., 2005). Studies that employ qualitative, critical, and mixed methods to examine paradox could broaden our understanding of the complex nature of nonprofit governance. The use of action research methods (e.g., participatory action research) could support the development of strategies that help boards manage paradox.

Relevance. Paradox theory contributes to the study of nonprofit governance because it “reminds researchers to move beyond oversimplified and polarized notions and to embrace the possibilities of complexity and contradiction” (Hough et al., 2005, p. 24). The theory contributes to governance practice by its implication that effective governance requires boards to grapple with inherent governance paradoxes by drawing upon multiple perspectives.

Another contribution of paradox theory, which is relevant to this dissertation study, is its capacity to help us understand the tensions involved in board relationships. As previously noted, this theory sheds light on the paradoxical relationship between the board and managers (Cornforth, 2003; Demb & Neubauer, 1992). The theory has also uncovered paradoxes that
are inherent in relationships among and between members of the board (Demb & Neubauer, 1992).

Paradox theory supported this study. At the same time, this study contributed to paradox theory by furthering our understanding of the paradoxical role that board social capital plays in the generative governance of nonprofits. An additional contribution involved the study’s innovative design, which paired Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method of exploring paradox and Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method as a means to conceptualize the preliminary theory.

**Conclusion.** Some nonprofit scholars seek a single, overarching theory of nonprofit organization governance. However, given the complexity of nonprofit organizations, the varied contexts in which nonprofit boards operate, and the wide range of questions to be answered, it seems unlikely that one theory could explain, predict, and help us to understand all aspects of nonprofit governance (Hough et al., 2005). Despite this, nonprofit governance is under researched and under theorized. Theory grounds a limited number of governance studies, few theoretical perspectives frame them, and multi-theoretical perspectives are relatively uncommon (Cornforth, 2001; Hough et al., 2005; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Speckbacher, 2008).

This review of the nonprofit governance literature supports Cornforth’s (2014) argument that “there is a need for theoretical frameworks that can integrate the insights of different theories” (Cornforth, 2014, p. 7). In addition, it supports his contention that new theoretical perspectives are needed which can offer insights into a broader range of governance phenomena including “how boards learn, how they work in groups, and how they relate to other stakeholders” (Cornforth, 2014, p. 7). Furthermore, the review supports the assertion that theory focused on the relational and group process aspects of nonprofit
governance has been limited (D. Beck, W. Brown, C. Cornforth, M. Freud, J. Jameson, W. Reid, & P. Salipante, personal communication, February 23, 2010). Therefore, it is appropriate for nonprofit scholars to assess the relevance of additional governance theories for the nonprofit context, explore how combinations of theories can further our understanding of nonprofit governance, and develop new theories that aim to explain the unique aspects of nonprofit governance and its complex nature.

Social Capital Theory

This section of the literature review addresses social capital theory. It discusses the social capital literature that is relevant to this study. Literature that provides readers with basic information on social capital including a historical overview of the concept, definitions of social capital, as well as a review of its forms and key elements was included to assist readers who are unfamiliar with the concept. Such background information is particularly important given the study’s critical focus and my intent to further theory-building through a CPAR study conducted collaboratively with diverse practitioners. The literature review also addresses social capital benefits as they relate to the study’s context, i.e., organizations (nonprofit organizations), groups (nonprofit boards), and individuals (nonprofit board members). Literature relevant to this study because of its relationship to the key characteristics (e.g., new learning) or desired outcomes (e.g., innovation) of generative governance is also discussed.

The section begins with an introduction to social capital theory. Definitions of social capital are presented next. A discussion of the key forms and elements of social capital follows. Next are overviews of the literature on social capital and nonprofit organizations and social capital and nonprofit governance. A discussion of the benefits of social capital that are relevant to the practice of generative governance concludes the chapter.
**Introduction.** L. Judson Hanifan who was an American Christian educator and social reformer of the Progressive Era first defined the term ‘social capital’ almost a century ago (MacGillivray & Walker, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002). For Hanifan, social capital referred to

Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individual and families who make up a social unit…The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself…If he comes into contact with his neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. (Hanifan, 1916 as cited in Putnam, 2000, p. 19)

In the ensuing century, scholars from diverse disciplines have independently reinvented the concept of social capital multiple times (Putnam & Goss, 2002). Key early theorists include Seeley (a Canadian sociologist), Jacobs (an American urbanist), Loury (an American economist), Bourdieu (the French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher) and Scholcht (a German economist) (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002). In the late 1980s, Coleman (an American educational sociologist) is credited with firmly planting the concept into the “intellectual agenda” though his examination of the concept in the context of education (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p. 5). Putnam (an American political scientist) is acknowledged for making social capital “a popular focus for research and policy discussions” (Smith, 2009) and for bringing the concept to the attention of the mainstream media and the public (Farr, 2004).

Social capital is commonly viewed as “the value of connections” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 98). Today, a range of academic disciplines consider social capital to be a core
concept as evidenced by an increasing number of research articles, literature reviews, and books dedicated to this topic (Burt, 2000). Academics in fields that include economics, psychology, business, communication, sociology, political science, public health, urban planning, and human resource development have come to recognize the important role that social capital plays in advancing individual, organizational, and societal goals (Burt, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002). These scholars “have appropriated the theories of social capital to explain or predict a number of organizational, community, and global phenomena” (Storberg-Walker, 2007a, pp. 312-313).

HRD scholars have increasingly recognized the relevance and importance of social capital theory for HRD research and practice. While I did not find any HRD studies that address social capital in the context nonprofit governance, I did identify some conceptual articles on social capital and HRD, which informed this study. They include the following articles: Storberg-Walker (2007a), which addresses whether and how HRD should borrow social capital theories from other disciplines to achieve various, and at times contested, HRD outcomes; Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007), which explores how a social network perspective can further our understanding of the process involved in achieving HRD outcomes and the resulting recommendations for HRD practice; Gubbins and MacCurtain (2008), which considers the role of trust and social capital in collective learning; Nakamura & Yorks (2011), which explores the role of reflective practices in building social capital in organizations from an HRD perspective; and Ehlen, van der Klink, Roentgen, Curfs, and Boshuizen (2014), which tests a model on the relationships “between organisational innovation, knowledge productivity and social capital” (p. 54).

**Definitions.** According to Bartkus and Davis (2009), “a theoretically meaningful definition of social capital is essential” if social capital research is to be grounded on a firm
foundation (p. 2). Yet, scholars from various academic disciplines have developed numerous definitions of this complex concept. Therefore, scholars should make explicit the definition of social capital, which grounds their research.

While some commonalities exist among social capital definitions, the definitions reflect disciplinary perspectives as well as the focus, values, and understandings of the individual scholars. The following are several definitions of social capital developed by well-known scholars from a range of disciplines.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 19).

Putnam (1993) defines social capital as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action” (p. 169).

Coleman (1994) defines social capital by its function. “It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (p. 302).

Adler and Kwon (2002) define social capital as “the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its efforts flow from the information, influence and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (p. 23).

Given the exploratory nature of this dissertation study and the fact that it emanates from an HRD perspective, I used Storberg-Walker’s (2009) broad definition of social capital for this study. This definition is the following: “social capital is a set of resources made
available to us because of and/or through our social relationships” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 98).

**Key elements and forms.** A discussion of the benefits of social capital requires an understanding of its key elements and forms. The foundation of social capital is social networks (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Both the structural features of social networks and the resources embedded in them are “defining elements of social capital” (Lin et al., 2001, viii). Additional key elements include values and trust, which “affect the ability of a collective to function effectively” (Stickel, Mayer, & Sitkin, 2009, p. 205) and norms, which improve efficiency by “facilitating coordinated action” (Putnam, 1993).

Putnam’s work on social capital has particular relevance to this study given its focus on civic engagement and association life in America. This study’s exploration of board social capital focused on two distinct forms of social capital conceptualized by Putnam, i.e., ‘bonding social capital’ and ‘bridging social capital.’ These concepts are useful in distinguishing “between the strength of relationships within a group or community (bonding) and the extent and strength of relationships beyond the group or between different groups or communities (bridging)” (Leonard & Bellamy, 2010, p. 446). Works by Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1995b) and Gittell & Vidal (1998) include early discussions of these concepts. Gittell and Vidal (1998) cite Putnam for the first description of these concepts, while Putnam (2002) credits Gittell and Vidal (1998) for creating the terms ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging.’ Oh, Kilduff, & Brass (1999 as cited in Adler & Kwon, 2002) were also among the first scholars to discuss these forms of social capital; however, they used the terms ‘communal’ and ‘linking.’ Today, scholars commonly differentiate the term linking social capital from bridging social capital. Linking social capital refers to “relationships that cross power relations” (Schneider, 2009, p.
654), i.e., connections between individuals and institutions with less power to those with
greater political or financial power (Dahal & Adhikari, 2008).

Bonding social capital is inward focused (Kalu & Remkus, 2010) and created by ties
within collectivities (Adler & Kwon, 2002). This form of social capital typically reinforces
“existing identities and homogeneous groups” (Kalu & Remkus, 2010, p. 137). Dense, multi-
functional network ties are a characteristic of bonding social capital (Leonard & Onxy,
2003).

The concept of bonding social capital is largely consistent with Coleman’s (1988)
concept of closed network structures and related to Burt’s (1999) concept of closed structural
holes and Granovetter’s (1983) concept of strong ties. Strong ties can generate bonding social
capital. The close relationships that create bonding social capital are commonly found among
people with “similar social identities, who are relatively equal and who share common bonds
such as profession, ethnicity, family, status, and even recreational interest” (Ashman, Brown,
& Zwick, 1998, p. 154). Thick trust lies within the strong network ties of bonding social
capital (Gelles et al., 2009) along with shared norms and values (Leonard & Bellamy, 2010),
which promote in-group solidarity and expectations of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000).

Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is outward focused (Kalu & Remkus, 2010)
and created by external relations (Adler & Kwon, 2002). This form of social capital “is more
inclusive of people across social distinctions” (Kramer, 2009, p. 244) and “creates crossover
networks transcending social cleavages” (Kalu & Remkus, 2010, p. 137) that commonly
divide society such as race, social class, and religion (Saguro Seminar, n.d.).

The concept of bridging social capital is largely consistent with Coleman’s (1988)
concept of open network structures and is related to Burt’s (1999) conceptualization of
bridging network holes and Granovetter’s (1983) concept of weak ties. Weak ties can create
bridging social capital (Weisinger & Salipante, 2005). Thin trust exists within the weak ties of bridging social capital. “Bridging across social distances requires exploration of norms and can proceed only if the norms are sufficiently similar for the particular purposes of the connection” (Leonard & Bellamy, 2010, p. 447). Bridging social capital can generate broader, group identities and promote reciprocity at the collective level (Putnam, 2000).

A number of scholars have criticized Putnam’s work on social capital for its functionalist approach (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000) and conceptual deficiencies (Maloney et al., 2000; Szreter, 2000) that include the failure to address power issues and conflict (Schuller et al., 2000). Other scholars have challenged Putnam’s research. Ladd (1999), for example, claims that Putnam ignored data that demonstrate a thriving civic life in America. Arneil (2006) argues that Putnam’s conclusions would be very different if his findings were viewed from “the vantage point of either women or cultural minorities” (p. 2).

Putnam’s (2007) later work on the implications of immigration and ethnic diversity for social capital has also been criticized. He argues that while ethnic diversity is an important social asset over the long term, immigration and ethnic diversity will “challenge social solidarity and inhibit social capital” in the short to medium term (Putnam, 2007, p. 138). Putnam (2007) states that in the medium to long term, “immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities” (p. 138). He concludes that a major challenge for diversifying societies is “to create a broader sense of ‘we’” (Putnam, 2007, p. 138).

Many dismissed Putnam’s data analysis, findings, and controversial conclusions, while others praised this work as important and thought provoking (Ruesga, 2007). Despite these and other criticisms leveled against Putnam’s scholarship, his perspective on social capital is deemed to have “great utility” (Maloney et al., 2000, p. 224). Furthermore, his
work is generally respected and his conclusions are valued even when they are not wholly accepted (Fienberg, n.d.).

Today, Putnam’s contention that social capital is important to civic engagement and association life is commonly accepted and his concepts of bonding and bridging social capital are widely used in social capital research. This is demonstrated by the numerous publications that cite his work and empirical studies that use his concepts. Nonprofit scholars who have used these concepts to examine phenomena related to nonprofit organizations, boards, or governance or who have used Putnam’s data include Baggetta (2016), Coffé and Geys (2007), Fredette and Bradshaw (2012), Leonard and Bellamy (2010, 2015), Mano (2014), Numerato (2008), Numerato and Baglioni (2012), Saxton (2007), von Schnurbein (2014), and Weisinger and Salipante (2007). HRD scholars who have used these concepts include Clarke (2012), Cunningham and Moorhouse (2010), Ehlen (2013), Hatcher (2004), Hewapathirana (2014), O’Donnell et al. (2007), Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007), and Symon (2000). Critical scholars who have used Putnam’s concepts include the following: Arneil (2006); de Haas (2010); Hébert, Sun, and Kowch (2004); Mulcahy et al. (2010); Poteat, Scheer, Marx, Calzo, and Yoshikawa (2015); and Rusch (2010). Given the continued scholarly use of Putnam’s concepts of bonding and bridging social capital and their particular relevance to the subject matter of my dissertation, I deemed it appropriate to use these concepts in this study.

**Nonprofit organizations and social capital.** Burt (2000) suggests that social capital is a “goal for non-profit organizations” (p. 2). Social capital theory and research, however, have been predominately developed and conducted in the for-profit context, and some scholars question its applicability in the context of nonprofit organizations. Despite such
questions, a small but growing number of scholars from a range of academic disciplines have used social capital theory to frame research on nonprofit organizations.

In a review of the literature, Schneider (2009) found that the theoretical understanding of social capital in nonprofit organizations was “in its infancy” (p. 643). She found less than 20 articles that explicitly identified social capital as a theoretical concept. These articles used varying perspectives and definitions of social capital. Schneider (2009) notes that more than half of the articles she found address the mechanisms by which individuals develop personal social capital through their affiliation with nonprofit organizations versus how nonprofit organizations benefit from the social capital of individuals and groups associated with the organization.

Putnam (1995a) first linked social capital and nonprofit organizations more than 20 years ago in his article, “Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital” (Schneider, 2009). Since then an increasing number of scholars have found social capital to be an important and useful concept for nonprofit research and practice. Scholars who have studied social capital in the context of nonprofit organizations include the following: Antoni and Portale (2011); Ashman et al. (1998); Bekkers, Völker, van der Gaag, and Flap (2010); Baggetta (2016); Brown and Ferris (2007); Brown, Hillman, and Okun (2012); Coffé and Geys (2007); Fredette and Bradshaw (2012); Galaskiewicz et al. (2006); Gelles et al. (2009); Graddy and Wang (2009); Isham, Kolodinsky, & Kimberly (2006); Leonard and Bellamy (2010, 2015); Kapucu, 2007; King (2002, 2004); Mano (2014); Moore and Whitt (2000); Numerato (2008); Numerato and Baglioni (2012); Paik and Navarre-Jackson (2011); Passey and Lyons (2006); Pedrini, Bramanti, Ferri, and Minciullo (2016); Saxton (2007); Saxton and Benson (2005); Schneider (2007, 2009); Strauss (2010); von Schnurbein (2010, 2014), Weisinger and Black (2006); and Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007). These scholars
examined social capital at various levels including the individual, group, organizational, and societal level. They explored the role of social capital as it relates to a range of issues of concern to nonprofits including the growth of the nonprofit sector, building ties with diverse communities, volunteerism, philanthropy, leadership, organizational effectiveness, public relations, organizational development, and governance.

**Nonprofit governance and social capital.** Despite the growing interest in social capital and nonprofits, attention to social capital’s role in nonprofit governance is largely absent from the literature. When social capital and nonprofit leadership is studied, scholars typically examine it from the perspective of CEOs (the professional leaders of nonprofit organizations). Yet, King (2004) suggests that nonprofits are a model of social capital in action because groups of individuals come together on a voluntary basis to collectively address a community needs. Therefore, the study of social capital and nonprofit boards (the volunteer leaders of nonprofit organizations) seems warranted. Few scholars, however, have explicitly studied social capital in the context of nonprofit governance and ever fewer have explored the role of board social capital in the governance process.

The following studies examined social capital in the context of nonprofit governance or had related findings. Ashman et al. (1998) explored the use of social capital in the founding and governance of nongovernmental resource organizations. They found that “social capital, in the form of social relationships within and between diverse social groups, is pivotal for success” (Ashman et al., 1998, p. 153). Backman and Smith’s (2000) findings on the commercialization of nonprofits suggest that commercialization influences board size, composition, or involvement, resulting in weaker ties to the community. Weaker ties reduce the capacity of nonprofits to contribute to the social capital that “enhances the ability of communities to solve social problems” (Backman & Smith, 2000, p. 355). Moore and Whitt
(2000) examined how gender influenced access to and participation in networks of nonprofit board members in Louisville, Kentucky. They found that men had an advantage in structural networks and that women had an advantage in social networks. Moore and Whitt also found that a small number of women held leadership roles, whereas no people of color held leadership roles. King’s (2002) case study of how a nonprofit develops and leverages social capital to advance its mission includes findings on the role of boards toward this end. An important finding is that board members successfully leverage their personal and professional relationships in support of fundraising efforts. Kapucu’s (2007) case study employed social network analysis to examine the effectiveness of nonprofit governance. Key findings include the following: the importance of appropriate ties amongst board members, staff, and volunteers; appropriate ties were established within the structural dimension of social capital, and social capital leads to the creation of value for the nonprofit. Numerato (2008) studied the nature of social capital in the context of Czech sports federations with a focus on the barriers that weaken the functioning of their governing bodies. He found that “sport governing bodies have to struggle with a wide range of barriers undermining their functioning with regard to the cognitive, structural and relational dimensions of social capital” (Numerato, 2008, p. 31).

More recently, Brown et al. (2012) examined the role of board capital (“the human and social capital of directors”) on board members’ participation in monitoring and resource provision (p. 146). They found board capital to be a strong predictor of board members’ confidence and participation in the board’s monitoring and service roles. Fredette and Bradshaw (2012) explored the role that social resources play in increasing nonprofit board effectiveness. Their study focused on “the positive implications of social capital” (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012, p. 391). They found that social capital contributes to the capacity of
nonprofit boards to govern effectively. Bradshaw and Fredette (2013) examined the determinants of ethnocultural diversity on Canadian nonprofit boards. They suggest that a relationship between board social capital and board diversity may exist. Furthermore, they state that there may be an opportunity to learn more about the constraints that limit board diversity through the development “of a social capital view of diversity” (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2013, p. 1128). Perez and Murray (2016) conducted a social network analysis of five major Latino advocacy nonprofits as a means to examine interlocking directorates among them. They found that Latino board members are both embedded in ethnic-based networks and entrenched within elite organizational webs (Perez & Murray, 2016).

I found one study that used a critical social capital perspective to examine nonprofit governance, i.e., Baglioni and Numerato (2012). This study is discussed in the next section of the chapter, which addresses critical theory including critical social capital perspectives.

**Social capital benefits and generative governance.** This review of the social capital literature found that few studies have explored the role of social capital in the context of nonprofit governance. No studies that examine the role of social capital in generative governance were found. The mainstream social capital literature, however, provides evidence of social capital benefits that hold promise to support generative governance. They include the following benefits: (a) developing human capital (Coleman, 1988); (b) providing access to new knowledge (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2000); (c) improving the flow of information between groups (Burt, 1997); (d) facilitating access to broader sources of information (Adler & Kwon, 2002); (e) improving information quality, relevance, and timeliness (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997); (f) enhancing cognitive learning (Dal Fiore, 2007); (g) resolving problems of collective action and binding communities (Putnam, 1993); (h) facilitating entrepreneurship (Chung & Gibbons, 1997); (i) fostering interfirm learning (Kraatz, 1998);
(j) developing intellectual capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998); (k) creating competitive advantage (Burt, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998); (l) creating shared vision (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998); (m) generating new learning (Wallis et al., 1998); (n) improving knowledge sharing (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); and (o) facilitating innovation (Adler & Kwon, 2002; King, 2004; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). These findings suggest that board social capital may support the practice of generative governance.

The findings of this review of the mainstream social capital literature suggest that there is a relationship between board social capital and improved nonprofit governance practice. In addition, the review identified a wide range of social capital benefits that are relevant to this study because of their relationship to the key characteristics (e.g., new learning) or desired outcomes (e.g., innovation) of generative governance. Yet, my prior research and practice experience led me to believe that board social capital might also lead to a range of negative outcomes for nonprofit governance, including the practice of generative governance. Furthermore, Bradshaw and Fredette’s (2012) contention that a social capital view of board diversity might help us to understand the constraints of board diversity lends support for a critical examination of nonprofit governance. Therefore, this study used critical perspectives to explore the potential detriments of board social capital in the practice of generative governance, particularly those detriments that effect racially and ethnically diverse individuals and groups. The next part of the literature review addresses critical theory.

**Critical Theory**

This section of the literature review begins with an overview of critical theory. Next is a discussion of critical human resource development (CHRD). An introduction to critical social capital perspectives follows. I present an overview of critical race theory (CRT) next.
The section concludes with a discussion of the social capital detriments that are relevant to generative governance.

**Overview.** Critical theory is reflective theory that produces knowledge, which is inherently enlightening and emancipatory in nature (Guess, 1981). It sheds light on social inequities and the systemic exploitation of the masses by the privileged few (Brookfield, 2005). Critical theory’s strength stems from its critique of economic and social structures and the power dynamics that emanate from them (Merriam et al., 2007).

Critical theory is challenging to describe because (a) there are numerous critical theories, (b) the critical theory tradition continues to change and evolve, and (c) critical theory avoids too much specificity to accommodate differing perspectives among critical theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). At the heart of critical theory, however, is a critique of ideology, i.e., “the beliefs the agents of a society hold” (Guess, 1981, p. 7).

Critical theory has a number of different traditions. These traditions draw on the work of a broad range of theorists including Marx, Kant, Hegel, Weber, the Frankfort School theorists, Foucault, Habermas, Freire, and Vygotsky (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). More recently, feminist theorists, critical race theorists, and queer crit theorists have created new critical traditions that respectively focus on issues of gender inequity, racism, and oppression based on sexual orientation. Despite the differences among these various traditions, critical theories share the following three distinguishing features: (a) “they are ‘guides for human action’ focused on enlightenment and emancipation,” (b) “they are forms of knowledge,” and (c) “they differ epistemologically from theories in the natural sciences,” i.e., critical theories are “reflective” whereas natural science theories are “objectifying” (Guess, 1981, p. 2).

Critical perspectives challenge scholars to (a) question assumptions; (b) ask questions “that are not meant to be asked;” (c) foreground processes of power and note how power
inequities intersect with social constructions of identity, e.g., race, gender, or class; and (d) identify “competing discourses and the sectional interests reflected in them” (Trehan, 2007, p. 73). The ultimate aim of critical perspectives is to create social and organizational environments that are “characterized more by justice than by inequality or exploitation” (Trehan, 2007, p. 73).

Critical human resource development. Historically, the discipline of HRD has not been as vigorous as other related disciplines (e.g., adult education, management studies) in examining oppression in organizations (Bierema, 2002) or in the larger societal context (Fenwick, 2004). While diversity is considered to be an HRD value and HRD “claims a leadership role in diversity management and intervention,” in actuality, HRD resists and ignores diversity issues (Bierema, 2010, p. 567). The field has commonly disregarded the experiences of women, people of color, and other members of historically marginalized groups (Bierema & Cseh, 2003).

An analysis of over 600 Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) conference papers presented between 1996 and 2000, conducted by Bierema and Cseh (2003), supports the contention that the field of HRD has historically disregarded critical research. They found that (a) HRD research provides little focus on social justice issues; (b) the experience of diverse groups and unequal power structures are ignored; (c) gender as well as race/ethnicity are not used as categories of analysis; (d) organizational undiscussables (e.g., racism, sexism) are largely ignored, despite their significant impact on organizations; and (e) advocacy for social change has been weak.

The concept of critical HRD (CHRD) has been developed has a means “to challenge current notions of HRD” (Sambrook, 2009, p. 62) and “to question the interests served by HRD interventions” (Callahan, 2007, pp. 77-78). CHRD foregrounds “questions of power,
emotions and political dynamics” in the analysis of organizational learning and human resource development activity (Trehan & Rigg, 2011, p. 276). CHRD challenges “the subjugation of human knowledge, skills and relationships” to organizational gain and focuses on transforming organizations and the practice of HRD “toward justice, fairness, and equity” (Fenwick, 2004, p. 193). CHRD examines and addresses these concerns in such areas as reward systems, employee training, leadership development, organizational learning, organizational culture, as well as stakeholder and community relations.

Drawing on her extensive review of the literature, Sambrook (2009) used concept analysis to clarify the understanding of CHRD. She identified the antecedents, attributes, consequences, and empirical referents of CHRD. Table 2.3 provides an overview of her findings.
Table 2.3

Concept Analysis of Critical HRD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Empirical refers</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple truths</td>
<td><em>Personal factors:</em> Motivation to change practice</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Use of ‘we’ rather than ‘them &amp; us’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemological diversity/different</td>
<td>Political awareness</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>forms of knowledge construction</td>
<td>Understanding &amp; acceptance of one’s role</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Negotiate learning needs and solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Willingness to allow learners control</td>
<td>Improved relationships</td>
<td>Voice of the learner is heard</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emancipation</td>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
<td>More effective &amp; relevant learning</td>
<td>Tolerance of diverse views</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to challenge</td>
<td>Trust &amp; respect</td>
<td>Enhanced transfer of learning</td>
<td>More qualitative and innovative research studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>Rejection of positivism as dominant research philosophy</td>
<td>Improved creativity &amp; productivity</td>
<td>More CHRD in practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconoclasm</td>
<td>Rejection of performance paradigm as dominant purpose</td>
<td>Acceptance of alternative approaches to research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Challenge cherished beliefs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Organizational factors:</em> Structure &amp;</td>
<td>Open, blame-free culture</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>job design</td>
<td>Appropriate reward system, rewarding learning, risk, change as well as</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>performance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate resources e.g. time, money to provide space for critique</td>
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</table>


Fenwick offers guidance to CHRD scholars and practitioners. She states that the study and practice of a CHRD should address the following dimensions: (a) “political purpose: organizational reform for justice, equity, and participation;” (b) “epistemology: workplace as contested terrain;” (c) “inquiry: focused on power and history;” and (d) “methodology: exposure, iconoclasm, and reflexivity” (Fenwick, 2004, p. 198). Furthermore,
Fenwick (2004) suggests that “because both HRD practices and critical perspectives themselves are so diverse, critical HRD studies must be formulated in sufficiently broad terms to encourage wide-ranging conceptual developments by focusing on discursive, gendered, materialist, anti-racist, or other lines of analysis” (p. 197).

The results of my search for CHRD literature demonstrate an increased interest in CHRD. In recent years, a number of conceptual articles and empirical studies that support the use of critical perspectives in HRD research, practice, and education have been published (e.g., Armitage, 2010; Bierema, 2010; Brendon, 2011; Callahan, 2007; Collins, 2013; Diehl and Duzbinski, 2016; O’Donnell, Maguire & Cross, 2006; Sambrook, 2009). In addition, the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) established a Critical HRD and Social Justice Perspective SIG (special interest group). Among other activities, this group solicits and reviews critical and social justice focused papers for presentation at the annual AHRD conference and publication in the conference proceedings. In 2014, the journal Advances in Developing Human Resources published a special issue titled “Critical perspectives and the advancement of HRD.” The issue covers a range of important topics. Two articles that are particularly relevant to this study focus on critical race theory and HRD (Rocco et al., 2014) and the exploration of diversity through multiple lenses (Byrd, 2014). Despite these encouraging advances, few HRD studies systematically apply critical approaches (Trehan & Rigg, 2011) and the number of CHRD studies published in HRD journals, while increasing, remains low.

A CHRD approach was selected for this study because it aligns with my advocacy/participatory worldview and is consistent with the intent of the study, i.e., to uncover the paradox of board social capital in the practice of generative governance. CHRD is particularly relevant to this study because scholars who use a critical approach recognize
and pay attention to “context, interests and patterns of inter-relationships” among
organizational stakeholders (Trehan & Rigg, 2011, p. 276). Such relationships are important
to generative governance.

While the search for CHRD literature did not find studies that explicitly relate to the
topic of this dissertation, a number of theoretical and empirical studies were identified, which
held promise to inform the study. These studies include the following: Elliott and Turnbull
(2003), which addresses the paradoxical role of HRD in reconciling autonomy and
community; Cunningham (2004), which focuses on the implications of critical pedagogy for
HRD; Vince (2005), which offers ideas for critical practitioners; O’Donnell et al. (2006),
which focuses on challenging HRD assumptions; Valentin (2006), which provides insights
into critical approaches in HRD research; Callahan (2007), which addresses critical
constructionist HRD; Githens (2009), which examines the influence of leadership and power
in fostering a collaborative community in a nonprofit organization; Harvey (2011), which
explores the role of CHRD in community settings; and Trehan and Rigg (2011), which
explores the paradox of intricacy and discrepancy in theorizing CHRD.

Critical social capital perspectives. While mainstream social capital theory
identifies a range of social capital benefits that hold promise to support the practice of
generative governance, this critical study aimed to build theory that helps us to understand
the paradox of board social capital. Thus, it was also necessary to explore the potential for
negative outcomes attributable to board social capital. This section of the literature review,
therefore, addresses critical social capital.

Scholars developed critical social capital perspectives as a reaction to the dramatic
increase in the use of the concept of social capital and the recognition that the enthusiasm for
its theoretical use and practical application should be tempered by critical reflection (Baron,
Field, & Schuller, 2000). In the context of HRD, traditional social capital theory places an emphasis on economic well-being. A CHRD social capital perspective, on the other hand, recognizes that social well-being is as relevant as economic well-being and that social action is as important as economic action (O'Donnell et al., 2007). Therefore, the field of HRD needs alternative interpretations of social capital concepts “to counterbalance the managerialist appropriation of social capital in pursuit of largely economic ends” (O'Donnell et al., 2007, p. 413).

Critical social capital perspectives draw on various critical theory traditions to explore the potential negative outcomes of social capital. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is attributed with developing a “critical perspective on social capital and civil society” that has roots in the work of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci as well as Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato’s analysis of civil society (Arneil, 2006, p 7). Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of social capital was first published in a book chapter titled, “The forms of capital.” The chapter appeared in *The Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Richardson, 1986). In this chapter, Bourdieu defined social capital and explained how it is accrued, exchanged, and reproduced.

Two early, influential critiques of social capital came from the sociologists Alejandro Portés and Michael Woolcock. Portés (1998) wrote a review of the social capital literature that focused on the origins and implications of the concept. His seminal article includes an extensive discussion of the negative consequences of social capital and provides examples of the ways that social capital marginalizes and oppresses diverse individuals and groups. Woolcock’s (1998) article synthesized the literature on social capital in the context of economic development and presented the policy implications of his findings. He concludes that a particular form of social capital will simultaneously lead to benefits and negative
outcomes, and furthermore that the balance of benefits and detriments will vary across differing contexts (Schuller et al., 2000). Thus, Woolcock’s findings lend support for my argument that social capital can create a paradox for nonprofit boards.

The seminal book, Social capital: Critical perspectives (Baron et al., 2000), demonstrates the usefulness of critical perspectives in social capital research. The chapters of this edited volume provide critiques of the concept of social capital, which move beyond issues of economics to explore its social impacts. Many of the authors draw from the basic tenets of critical theory in their critiques, while others draw on the work of specific critical theorists including Bourdieu, Habermas, and Marx. None of the authors, however, use more recent critical perspectives (e.g., feminist theory or CRT) to frame their critiques. Issues examined in this book include the role of social capital in civil society and democratic renewal, social capital’s influence on innovation and competiveness, and the relationship between social capital and human capital.

Several chapters in the volume focus on the ways that social capital marginalizes historically oppressed individuals and groups. These chapters address issues that include exclusion in schools, supporting refugees, and immigrant youth and schooling. A chapter by Maloney et al. (2000) examines a topic related to this study, i.e., social capital and associational life. The chapter addresses the role of social capital in various forms of associations including nonprofit organizations. The authors conclude that critiques and remedies related to ‘civicens’ may be “better aimed at identifying the causes, consequences, and possible for cures for facilitating the meaningful engagement of the politically, socially, and economically disadvantaged” instead of simply focusing on the amount of civic activity and “who takes part and who does not” (Maloney et al., 2000, p. 225).
My search for literature on HRD and critical social capital found a study by O’Donnell et al. (2007) which used insights from critical management studies to evaluate social capital in the context of HRD. Drawing on the work of the critical theorists Foucault and Habermas, the authors developed critical interpretations of three social capital concepts, i.e., weak ties, structural holes, and social resources. O’Donnell et al. (2007) suggest that these alternative interpretations demonstrate the usefulness of critical social capital perspectives for HRD theory, research, and for the development of social capital-based HRD interventions. Their findings provide support for my decision to use critical social capital perspectives for this theory-building study.

In addition, a search of the literature on social capital and nonprofit governance found one study that used a critical social capital approach. Numerato and Baglioni (2012) examined the dark side of social capital in nonprofit sports governance. Their study uncovered three forms of dark side social capital (discussed in the next section), which are created both in and through nonprofit sports associations. Thus, their findings lend support for my contention that board social capital can produce negative outcomes in the practice of nonprofit governance.

The critical social capital literature identifies a wide range of negative outcomes attributable to social capital. The mainstream social capital literature also provides evidence of the detriments of social capital. The following section discusses the negative social capital outcomes that are relevant to generative governance.

**Social capital detriments and generative governance.** The critical examination of the social capital literature points to a range of detriments associated with social capital. Negative outcomes of social capital that are relevant to the socially-just practice of generative governance include the following: (a) unequal power relations (Campbell, 2000)
and abuses of power and influence (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Putnam, 1993); (b) exclusion (de Haas, 2010; Mulcahy et al., 2010; Portés, 1999; Szreter, 2000); (c) pursuit of self-interest (Schneider, 2009); (d) conflicts of interest (King, 2004); (e) unquestioned loyalty (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); (f) instrumental manipulation of the ties of others (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012); (g) conspiracies (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998); (h) manipulation of trust (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012); (i) unethical behavior (Brass et al., 1998); (j) misuses of social networks for economic or political interests (Numerato & Baglioni, 2012); (k) demands for conformity (Portés, 1998); (l) “asymmetry of information and its processing” (Szreter, 2000); (m) lack of creative abrasion (Cohen & Prusak, 2001); (n) reduced flow of new ideas (Adler & Kwon, 2002); (o) blacklisting (O’Donnell et al., 2007); and (p) fear of alienation (O’Donnell et al., 2007).

Critical social capital research also demonstrates that opportunities to accumulate social capital and benefit from it are not equally available to all members of society. Arneil’s (2006) critical examination of Putnam’s work, for example, revealed that the past accumulation of social capital greatly influences its current and future accumulation. Therefore, existing power structures that favor the majority are reinforced. Furthermore, Arneil (2006) found that social capital “can represent an enormously threatening force for those groups that have historically been excluded from or assimilated to American society based on the values or attributes of the dominant cultural group” (p. 7).

Various studies have identified a range of negative social capital outcomes for historically marginalized individuals and groups that are relevant to generative governance. They include the following consequences of social capital: (a) reinforcement of economic, social, and political divisions (Maloney et al., 2000); (b) reproduction of dominant gender ideologies (Mulcahy et al., 2010); (c) the exclusion of others (Li et al., 2003; Mulcahy et al.,
(d) the historical exclusion of women in fraternal organizations (Arneil, 2006); (e) “norms that keep members of a downtrodden group in place” (Portés, 1998, p. 17); (f) skewing of public policies in favor of certain participant groups as opposed to the broader public interest (Maloney et al., 2000); (g) conflict between groups (Foley & Edwards, 1996); (h) social control and inequality (Lin, 2001; Portés, 1998); and (i) “relatively worse outcomes for racial minorities” (Hero, 2003, p. 113). These findings support Powell and Smith-Doerr’s (1994) assertion that “the ties that bind may also turn into ties that blind” (p. 393) and support Putnam’s (2000) acknowledgement that social capital has a “dark side” (p. 350).

The literature also suggests that negative as well as positive outcomes are associated with the previously discussed bonding and bridging forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000). These benefits and negative outcomes stem from differing norms, levels of trust, and expectations of reciprocity. Strong, localized trust, for example, is a characteristic of bonding social capital (Leonard & Ong, 2003). Trust builds solidarity and cohesiveness but also leads to group homogeneity and the reinforcement of exclusive identities (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, the thin trust of distant acquaintances, which is a bridging social capital characteristic, can lead to broader identities and inclusiveness but also to less solidarity and cohesiveness (Leonard & Ong, 2003; Putnam, 2000). These findings provide additional support for the idea that board social capital may present a paradox for the practice of generative governance.

As previously noted, this study used CRT to further our understanding of the paradox of board social capital as it relates to the marginalization and oppression of racially and ethnically diverse individuals and groups. Therefore, the next section of this literature review addresses CRT.
**Critical race theory.** This study also sought to uncover the ways that board social capital can oppress people from historically marginalized groups through the practice of generative governance. CRT held promise to help us understand how board relationships can marginalize or silence the voices of racially and ethnically diverse stakeholders and to explore issues of intersectionality.

CRT is a derivative of critical theory, which has racism as its major construct (Closson, 2010a). CRT views racism as a socio-political phenomenon embedded in the founding of American society (Peterson & Brookfield, 2007). It begins with the idea of racism as a normal, rather than as a deviant, part of our society (Delgado, 2000) and assumes “that race and racism are the very center of social and institutional life” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 53).

CRT helps us to understand “the relationships among race, racism, power, privilege, and oppression” and challenges us to “transform these relationships” (Ianinska, Wright, & Rocco, 2003, p. 176). CRT considers “subjectivity and a political standpoint” to be “acceptable and appropriate stances for analysis” because CRT contends that research is never impartial (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009, p. 183). CRT has the following primary goals: (a) present storytelling and narratives as legitimate ways to study race and racism, (b) fight for the eradication of racial oppression, while at the same time, recognizing that race is a socially defined construct; and (c) draw important relationships between racism and other forms of oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

**History of CRT.** CRT builds on two earlier movements; critical legal studies (CLS) and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT borrowed the concept of legal indeterminacy (i.e., the idea that there is not a single correct outcome for every legal situation) from CLS (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). From radical feminism, CRT borrowed
understandings of the relationship between power and socially constructed roles and well as
the oppressive nature of patriarchy and other forms of domination (Delgado & Stefancic,
2001). Drawing on these concepts and understandings, critical legal scholars developed a
form of oppositional scholarship, which critiques the discourse of mainstream legal scholars
(Closson, 2010a, 2010b).

Derrick Bell is considered to be the founder of CRT (Closson, 2010b). Bell was a
professor of law at New York University. He wrote the seminal book, *Faces at the Bottom of
the Well*. Other early contributors include Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Alan
Freeman, Lani Guinier, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams (Crenshaw,
Cotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 1998). Over the years,
CRT evolved and moved beyond legal scholarship. Today, it is a movement of activists and
scholars from a broad range of disciplines.

In 1994, CRT was introduced in education scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 2005). A
call to increase theorizing focused on race and racism made by Gloria Ladson-Billings and
William F. Tate during their groundbreaking presentation at the 1995 American Education
Research Association conference spurred its evolution as an education movement (Zamudio,
Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). Since then, CRT has been used to inform and critique
various aspects of educational research and practice (Ladson-Billings, 2005) toward the end
of uncovering systemic racism and fostering social change (Closson, 2010a, 2010b).

In recent years, new understandings and changing demographics have pushed CRT to
evolve beyond black-white binaries. Today, CRT challenges us to examine “more complex
renderings of race” and helps us to understand how all peoples of color are “positioned in
relation to Whiteness” (Ladson-Billing, 2005, p. 116). In response, CRT subgroups have
formed that include Asian-American jurisprudence, Latina/o-critical race theory (LatCrit), and Tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit).

**Tenets of CRT.** CRT is an interpretive framework that includes a group of related tenets or assumptions (Closson, 2010b). Scholars from various disciplines have described these interdisciplinary tenets (UCLA School of Public Affairs, n.d.). While the number of tenets and their wording varies, their essence is similar. The ensuing paragraphs provide descriptions of these tenets, which draw on the writing of various educational scholars. Each description is followed by commentary regarding their relevance to my work.

Johnson-Bailey et al. (2009) identified two major tenets of CRT. The first is that “the nature of race and racism are ever changing” (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009, p. 182). Thus, socio-historical context is important in studies that use CRT as a frame. The second is that “racism is not necessarily the product of biased actions, but can be the artifact of seemingly liberal, neutral or normed rules and actions” (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009, p. 182). Thus, rules and actions that may seem harmless or even beneficial can actually foster race-based oppression. Therefore, scholars using a CRT perspective must look beyond overtly racist policies and behaviors and seek to uncover hidden and unintentional racism. Furthermore, this suggests the importance of researcher reflexivity in CRT studies, particularly for White scholars, like myself, as a means to help them avoid unintended racism in their work.

Closson (2010a, 2010b) identified the tenets of CRT as the following: (a) experiential knowledge, (b) endemic racism, (c) critique of liberalism, (d) Whiteness as property, (e) interest convergence, and (f) social justice orientation. In research framed by CRT, experiential knowledge gained through personal experience with racism illuminates oppression obscured by color blindness (Closson, 2010). Studies framed by CRT commonly use research methods that support the telling of counterstories (e.g., narrative research) as a
means to refute mainstream understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon under study. Interest convergence (i.e., when the interests of Whites converge with the interests of people of color) is particularly relevant to this study because many nonprofits are being pressured by stakeholders to diversify their boards. In addition, some governmental entities and private funders mandate board diversity as a requirement for the receipt of funds through contracts, grants, and donations. Therefore, board diversification is in the best interest of nonprofits that have exclusively or predominately White boards. The previously discussed research on inclusion, however, suggests that while such mandates are seemingly in the best interest of people of color and diverse communities, the reality often demonstrates otherwise. Thus, research evidence suggests that board diversity requirements may lead to paradoxical outcomes.

Zamudio et al. (2011) identified the central assumptions of CRT as race matters, history matters, voice matters, and interpretation matters. The following descriptions of these assumptions provide insights into the usefulness of CRT to uncover issues of race and racism through research and in practice:

- Race matters – “Race is a central structure in society” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 3). Racial inequality is “embedded in the legal system” and “permeates every aspect of social life” as well as “much of our system of beliefs and ideologies” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 3). Racial inequality is institutionalized through our policies and practices “that impact the daily lives and experiences of all races including whites” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 8).

- History matters – “The process of racialization (i.e., creating social divisions based on race) is a historical one” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 3). This links “contemporary
inequality with past historical practices,” e.g., colonization (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 4).

• Voice matters – “An oppositional voice to the dominant or master narrative…is an effective tool in making visible the structures, processes and practices that contribute to continued racial inequality” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 5). “Critical race theorists understand that narratives are not neutral, but rather political expressions of power relationships…and that history is always told from the perspective of the dominant group” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 5).

• Interpretation matters – “Understanding the complexities of race requires insights from various academic disciplines” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 6). “We also need to rely on diverse racial backgrounds and experiences to interpret and produce knowledge” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 6).

• Praxis matters – “It is not enough to simply produce knowledge, but to dedicate this work to the struggle for social justice” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 7). CRT provides us “with a basis for critical action” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 7).

Furthermore, CRT acknowledges intersectionality, i.e., the multi-dimensional nature of oppression. It “recognizes that race alone cannot account for disempowerment” (UCLA School of Public Affairs, n.d., para. 3). Therefore, CRT supports the examination of how race, gender, social class, and other social constructions of identity interact in various combinations across different settings to foster oppression (UCLA School of Public Affairs, n.d., para. 3).

**CRT in HRD.** A number of leading scholars in the field of HRD have called for the increased use of CRT in HRD practice, research, and theory building, e.g., Byrd and Stanley (2009) and Rocco et al. (2014). “CRT provides a new paradigm to discuss diversity and
equity in the field of human resource development” (Bernier & Rocco, 2003, p. 13). Using CRT moves “HRD toward new areas of inclusion and multiple perspectives in our theoretical foundations” (Byrd & Stanley, 2009, p. 658).

Other HRD scholars have suggested the use of CRT to make issues of race and racism visible, e.g., Alfred and Chlup (2010), Bernier and Rocco (2003), Byrd (2009b), Byrd and Stanley (2009), Closson (2010b), Rocco et al. (2014), and Stanley (2009). However, CRT has had limited use in HRD research (Stanley, 2009). This was evident in my search of the HRD literature for this study, which found very few studies that used CRT as a theoretical frame.

The following are HRD studies that used CRT as a theoretical frame. Bernier and Rocco (2003) examined 16 articles published in Human Resource Development Quarterly using a CRT lens. A special issue of Advances in Developing Human Resources focused on African American women’s leadership experience and issues of intersectionality. The issue includes several studies that were framed by CRT. These studies are Byrd (2009a); Gaetane, Williams, and Sherman (2009); Lloyd-Jones (2009); and Petitt (2009). A later study by Byrd (2012) used CRT to examine social identity diversity among black women in leadership positions.

In addition, I identified several HRD doctoral dissertations that explicitly used CRT as a theoretical frame or drew on the tenets of CRT. Examples include the following: Bristol (2005), which used CRT to examine the experiences of African American managers in learning organizations; Johnson (2006), which explored the challenges and opportunities facing African American school superintendents; and Salters (2013), which used the tenets of CRT to support an exploration of Black, male law enforcement officers’ perspectives of racial profiling and their law enforcement career exploration and commitment. While these
studies demonstrated the usefulness of CRT for examining and discussing issues of race, racism, and intersectionality in HRD research, their subject matter is not relevant to this dissertation study.

**Critical perspectives and nonprofit governance research.** Is nonprofit governance a vehicle for addressing community needs and fostering social change through democratic participation and inclusive practices or is it a mechanism for promoting dominant ideologies, protecting privilege, fostering hegemony, and maintaining the status quo? Research and practice evidence suggests that it is both and that nonprofit governance, despite its role in furthering civil society, also has a ‘dark side’ (Smith, 1995). Therefore, the use of both mainstream and critical perspectives is important in studies that seek to explore the complexity of nonprofit governance and aim to uncover effective as well as unjust governance practices.

Critical perspectives are particularly important to the study of nonprofit governance because the normative governance literature assumes that nonprofits are gender, race, and class neutral, and is typically silent on issues of privilege and discrimination (Bradshaw, Hayday, Armstrong, Levesque, Rykert, 1998). This leaves the assumption that nonprofit governance processes are adequately inclusive unchallenged (Bradshaw et al., 1998). In addition, governance is “paradoxical and inherently political” in nature (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2009, p. 123). Therefore, critical perspectives are needed to uncover the ways that traditional board practices foster oppression and to assess how board social capital can be developed and used strategically to support inclusive and socially-just nonprofit governance practices including the practice of generative governance.
Theory Building

To develop a theory that helps us understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations, I conducted a theory-building study. Theory-building research requires more than an understanding of the phenomenon that is the focus of study. It also requires an understanding of what theory is (Garcia, 2008) and the important role theory plays in the advancement of HRD research and practice (Torraco, 2004). Knowledge of the various research methods that scholars can use to build HRD theory is also necessary (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003; Torraco, 2002). Furthermore, theorists must understand the characteristics of the various methods in order to determine which method holds promise to result in more productive theorizing given their specific research purposes (Torraco, 2002). This section of Chapter Two, therefore, focuses on theory and theory-building research.

Definitions and roles of theory. “Theory is defined in almost as many ways as there are authors on the topic” (Lynham, 2000b, p. 160). It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a lack of consensus on the definition of theory (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Doty & Glick, 1994; Garcia, 2008; Lynham, 2000b; Thomas, 1997), that its level of importance is unclear (Thomas, 1997), and that what each individual calls theory may not actually be theory (Garcia, 2008; Lynham, 2000b).

There are many definitions of theory. Definitions have evolved over time and vary based on disciplinary understandings and the worldviews of the individuals who are defining the term. “The arguments surrounding theory have long turned on whether or not it is something separate from or embedded in the real world” (Turnbull, 2002b, p. 318). Table 2.4 offers a range of definitions of theory developed by well-known scholars and theorists from a number of applied disciplines including adult education, human resource development, and
management. These definitions offer diverse perspectives on what theory is, whether theory is separate from or embedded in the real world, and the purpose of theory (e.g., explanation, control, prediction, interpretation, or understanding).

Table 2.4

Definitions of Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholar</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bacharach (1989)</td>
<td>“A theory is a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints. It is no more than a linguistic device used to organize a complex empirical world” (p. 496).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brookfield (1992)</td>
<td>“The collection of explanatory frameworks, insights, hypotheses, models and propositions which account for a distinctively identifiable phenomenon or set of phenomena” (p. 79).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dubin (1978)</td>
<td>“The attempt of man to model some theoretical aspect of the real world” (p. 76).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gioia &amp; Pitre (1990)</td>
<td>“A coherent description, explanation and representation of observed or experienced phenomena” (p. 587).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuman (2006)</td>
<td>“A system of interconnected ideas that condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world” (p. 8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, &amp; Smith (1994)</td>
<td>“A fundamental set of propositions about how the world works, which has been subject to repeated tests and in which we have gained some confidence” (p. 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storberg-Walker &amp; Bierema (2008)</td>
<td>“Theories are social creations of common understanding between people that shape how we see and understand the world” (p. 434).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauss &amp; Corbin (1998)</td>
<td>“Interpretations made from given perspectives as adopted or researched by researchers” (p. 171).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutherland (1975)</td>
<td>“An ordered set of assertions about a generic behavior or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances” (p. 9 as cited in Weick, 1989, p. 517).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because there are many definitions of theory that reflect a range of worldviews, it is important for theory-building researchers to reflect on their own understanding of what
theory is and to share this understanding with their readers. This helps readers to understand and interpret the scholar’s theory-building research.

The definition of theory used for this study is “theories are social creations of common understanding between people that shape how we see and understand the world” (Storberg-Walker & Bierema, 2008, p. 434). This definition reflects my view that reality is subjective and derives from multiple perspectives. Theorists who believe that knowledge is socially constructed are interested in developing theory that enhances our “understanding of how actors intersubjectively create, understand, and reproduce social situations” (Turnbull, 2002b, p. 319).

Theory has multiple roles. According to Torraco (1997), the roles for theory in HRD include the following: (a) “interpreting new research data,” (b) “responding to new problems,” (c) “defining applied problems,” (d) “evaluating solutions,” (e) “discerning priorities,” (f) “interpreting old data in new ways,” and (g) “identifying new research directions” (pp. 117-118). Lynham (2002b) suggests that the role of theory is “to improve and protect HRD research and practice and does so by providing a means of rigor and relevance for reducing both atheoretical practice (Swanson, 1997) and nonscientific research” (pp. 235-236). Ostrander (1987), a nonprofit scholar, suggests that another role of theory is contributing to the construction of reality. “It defines what is visible and invisible. Theory in this view does more than simply reflect or explain reality. It takes part in actively creating it” (Ostrander, 1987, p. 126).

**Theory-building research.** Building new and better theory is essential for all fields of study and is particularly important for advancing the impact and influence of emerging fields such as HRD (Reio, 2010; Torraco, 2005a). In applied fields like HRD, new theory guides the design of empirical studies that explore the theory in real-world contexts and the
development of improved HRD practices (Reio, 2010). In turn, these studies and practical applications inform future empirical research and theory building (Reio, 2010). This recursive cycle of ongoing theory development and practical application result in new theoretical lenses that help us understand the complexity of issues facing the field of HRD and guide the development of new, innovative interventions to address them.

Theory-building research is a form of scholarly inquiry (Lynham, 2002b) that has the construction of theory as its expressed purpose (Torraco, 2004). Like other forms of research, theory-building research can involve a range of logics-in-use and various research paradigms (Lynham, 2002b).

There are various theory-building research methods that HRD theorists can use to develop theory. The selection of a theory-building method for a particular study is an important part of the research design process. As with other types of research, theorists should not make their selection based on their paradigm (Storberg-Walker, 2003) or method (Lynham, 2002b) preferences. Rather, theorists should base method selection on their research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) as well as their worldview (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Torraco, 2002), values (Torraco, 2002), experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and the particular purposes of their theory building research (Torraco, 2002). Theorists should also consider resource constraints (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

**Theory-building research methods.** Given that the field of HRD is still emerging, research methods utilized in HRD theory building have typically come from other social sciences (e.g., Sociology) and applied fields (e.g., Management). HRD scholars use these methods as designed or adapt them to support the specific needs of HRD theory building. In addition, HRD scholars are developing new theory-building methods that explicitly support the development of HRD theory and can also support theory building in other disciplines.
Because HRD is an applied discipline, the field requires sound theory developed through a rigorous, systematic process (Swanson, 2003). HRD theorists, therefore, commonly use one of three overarching theory-building research methods, i.e., Dubin’s (1978) method of theory building (Dubin’s Method), Lynham’s (2002b) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines (General Method), or Van de Ven’s (2007) engaged scholarship diamond model (Engaged Scholarship Model). These methods provide guiding frameworks for the theory-building process. The following sections respectively provide overviews of each method.

**Dubin’s Method.** According to Dubin (1978), theory meets a human need “to order the experienced world” (p. 7). For Dubin, a theory requires real world grounding and practitioners must play a significant role in theory development and testing (Storberg-Walker, 2003). Dubin argues that theorists and practitioners must have positive working relationships in order to facilitate the development and use of the theory in practice (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

Dubin’s Method supports the quantitative tradition and hypothetico-deductive approach to the creation of knowledge (Torraco, 2002). The method assumes the following: (a) the purpose of knowledge is to explain, predict, and control; (b) theory should serve technical/utilitarian interests by linking means and ends; and (c) generalization regarding phenomena is both desirable and possible (Torraco, 2002).

Dubin (1978) describes his method as a “theory-research cycle” (p. 8). The cycle is comprised of two distinct components, i.e., theory development and research operation (Lynham, 2002a). For Dubin, theory development begins with the creation of a theoretical model. This first component uses a hypothetico-deductive approach to knowledge development, which informs the second component. (Lynham, 2002a). The second
component is a theory to research strategy, i.e., “a strategy for theory development and verification” (Lynham, 2002a, p. 243).

Each component is comprised of four steps. The four steps of the theory development process are (a) “identifying the units of the theory,” (b) “establishing the laws of interaction that govern the theory,” (c) “determining the boundaries of the theory,” and (d) “specifying the system states of the theory” (Lynham, 2002a, pp. 247-256). The four steps of the research operations process are (a) “specification of the propositions of the theory,” (b) “identifying empirical indicators of the theory,” (c) “constructing the hypotheses to test the theory,” and (d) “testing the theory through a developed plan of research” (Lynham, 2002a, pp. 261-269).

Figure 2.1 presents a graphical representation of Dubin's Method as presented by Lynham (2002a, p. 243).

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A strength of Dubin’s method is that it is well articulated, i.e., “the purpose of each phase is clearly specified and interrelated to the other phases” (Torraco, 2002, p. 356). Another advantage is that following the form and substance of Dubin’s method is considered “necessary and sufficient to ensure both the rigor and relevance of the resulting theory” (Lynham, 2002a, p. 244).

Disadvantages include the fact that Dubin does not provide a process for implementing his theory-building method, which can make the method challenging to use (Holton & Lowe, 2007). Holton and Lowe (2007), however, have proposed a seven-step process for implementing Dubin’s Method, which can help new theorists to use it. A more significant disadvantage is that the method lacks flexibility. Therefore, it does not support theory building “on complex, multidimensional, contextual, and temporal social phenomena” (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 218).

**General Method.** Lynham’s (2002b) General Method is an excellent example of theory-building research methodology developed by an HRD scholar (Reio, 2010). HRD theorists (e.g., Bodwell, 2011; Chermack, 2003; Storberg-Walker, 2004) and scholars from other applied disciplines (e.g., Inbal, 2011, Public Policy; Rennaker, 2008, Organizational Leadership; Sjøberg et al., 2008, Software Engineering) have adopted the General Method for their theory-building work.

Lynham (2002b) designed the General Method with the aim of “making the logic used to build a theory explicit and accessible to the user of the developed theory” (p. 2). The General Method integrates diverse paradigmatic perspectives and incorporates practice perspectives into HRD theory building (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003). The five phases of this recursive and iterative method are conceptualization, operationalization, application, confirmation or disconfirmation, and continuous refinement and development.

Note: The General Method accommodates both a theorizing-to-practice and a practice-to-theorizing approach. It is important to note that Lynham’s figure sequences the phases from the perspective of a theorizing-to-practice theory-building strategy.

The benefits of the General Method include the following: (a) its ability to serve as a framework for both building and testing theory (Storberg-Walker, 2006); (b) a clear tie between theory and practice (Garcia, 2008; Lynham 2002b); (c) the ability to incorporate
multiple paradigms (Storberg-Walker, 2003); (d) the accommodation of both theorizing to practice (deductive) and practice to theorizing (inductive) processes (Storberg-Walker, 2003); (e) flexibility, which allows the researcher to begin the process in any phase (Lynham, 2002b); and, (f) the ability to incorporate the researcher’s “intuition, creativity, and curiosity” (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 212).

While the General Method has many advantages, scholars have identified several disadvantages. The General Method lacks specific steps to guide theorists through the various phases of the theory-building process (Storberg-Walker, 2006). It also lacks criteria to assess theory at each phase of development (Storberg-Walker, 2003). An additional disadvantage is that Lynham does not explicitly incorporate abduction in the General Method. Sjøberg et al. (2008), however, adapted the General Method to include abduction as this study did. Furthermore, the General Method does not specifically include the direct participation of practitioners in the theory-building process (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

However, Turnbull’s (2002b) social constructionist theory-building method adapted the General Method to include practitioners and this dissertation study included the planning of a post-dissertation, CPAR study that would directly involve practitioners in the Application phase of the General Method process.

In 2013, Swanson and Chermack published a book, *Theory Building in Applied Disciplines*, which is based on the General Method. Their book addresses some of these disadvantages. Among other contributions, the text describes common inputs to the General Method phases, discusses the pros and cons of various approaches used to complete the phases, describes the outputs of the phases, and proposes a set of indicators for each phase. A drawback of the text is that it does not address adapted versions of the General Method such
as the incorporation of abduction as presented by Sjøberg et al. (2008) or a social constructionist approach as developed by Turnbull (2002c).

**Engaged Scholarship Model.** Van de Ven’s (2007) engaged scholarship diamond model (Engaged Scholarship Model) of theory building also provides an overarching framework to guide applied theory building. Van de Ven argues that scholars in professional schools (e.g., business, education, social work, public administration) have a core mission, i.e., to conduct research that both creates new disciplinary knowledge and advances professional practice (Storberg-Walker, 2003). In turn, theory-building research in related disciplines (including HRD) has two equally important aims, i.e., to advance professional knowledge and guide practitioners in solving problems of practice (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

Van de Ven (2007) defines engaged scholarship as “a participative form of research for obtaining the different perspectives of key stakeholders (researchers, users, clients, sponsors, and practitioners) in studying complex problems” (p. 9). His Engaged Scholarship Model proposes that the creation of basic knowledge of a complex phenomenon can increase significantly when scholars engage people whose perspectives are important in four areas of research activity, i.e., problem formulation, theory building, research design, and problem solving (Van de Ven, 2007). Figure 2.2 offers a graphical representation of the Engaged Scholarship Model.
The benefits of the Engaged Scholarship Model include the following: (a) the model’s clearly articulated relationships between the four research activities (Storberg-Walker, 2003); (b) flexibility, which allows the researcher to begin the study with any of the four activities (Storberg-Walker, 2003; Van de Ven, 2007); (c) the ability to incorporate a range styles of inquiry and specific research methods into the study (Storberg-Walker, 2003); (d) the incorporation of abduction in the research process; (e) the inclusion of assessment criteria for each research activity (Storberg-Walker, 2003); and, (f) the incorporation of stakeholder perspectives.

Criticism of the model includes the fact that despite the model’s focus on engagement, “bias, disciplines, and particularism” remain in applied scholarship (McKelvey,
2006, p. 822); the model relies on linearity (Mahdjoubi, 2001 as cited in Storberg-Walker, 2003; Storberg-Walker, 2004¹); and the “relationship between reality and theory and between model and solution” are not addressed (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 218).

Comparing Dubin’s Method, the General Method, and the Engaged Scholarship Model. There are a range of similarities and differences among and between Dubin’s (1978) Method, Lynham’s (2002b) General Method, and Van de Ven’s (2007) Engaged Scholarship Model. All three methods are similar in that they provide steps to complete the theory-building process, include conceptual development or modeling, offer criteria for the evaluation of good theory, and suggest a relationship between theorists and practitioners (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

On the other hand, the methods have significant differences. Dubin’s Method and the General Method provide a clear framework for the theory-building research process but few details; whereas, the Engaged Scholarship Model provides more in-depth information about each part of the process (Storberg-Walker, 2003, 2004).

The General Method and Engaged Scholarship Model accommodate multi-paradigmatic theory building (Storberg-Walker, 2003), whereas Dubin's Method cannot given its hypothetico-deductive approach (Dubin, 1978; Lynham, 2002a; Storberg-Walker, 2003; Torraco, 2002). Furthermore, while both the General Method and Engaged Scholarship Model accommodate multiple approaches, the Engaged Scholarship Model incorporates an abductive approach but the General Method as originally conceptualized by Lynham (2002b) does not. However, the Engaged Scholarship Model “ultimately suggests that an

¹ Storberg-Walker’s assessment was based on an earlier version of Van de Ven’s Engaged Scholarship Diamond Model called the Diamond Model. Her assessment is relevant to the final version of the model.
empirical/analytical logic should be used to test and apply the findings of the theory” (Storberg-Walker, 2004, p. 42).

Theory building can begin at several points in the General Method and Engaged Scholarship Model providing the theorist with a flexible structure (Storberg-Walker, 2003). On the other hand, Dubin’s Method follows a linear, stepwise structure (Lynham, 2002a; Storberg-Walker, 2003).

The Engaged Scholarship Model explicitly incorporates the direct participation of practitioners. However, Dubin’s Method and the General Method do not (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

Additional theory-building research methods. In addition to these three frameworks for theory building in applied disciplines, HRD theorists use other research methods to build theory. Theorists can integrate these methods within Dubin’s Method, the General Method, or the Engaged Scholarship Model. Alternately, theorists can use them alone. The following provides an overview of several additional methods used in HRD theory-building research. The methods discussed are case study, grounded theory, meta-analytic, and social constructionist.

Case study. Case study research develops new knowledge by examining a phenomenon in a single setting (Eisenhardt, 1989; Torraco, 2002). Theory-building research through case studies is distinct from other case study research. Its expressed purpose is to develop explicit theoretical statements that explain the dynamics of the phenomenon observed in the study setting (Torraco, 2002).

Case studies can build and test theory (Dooley, 2002). However, the point at which the theorist begins these respective parts of the theory development process varies as prescribed by specific theory-building frameworks (e.g., General Method) (Dooley, 2002).
Theory building through cases is consistent with deductive and inductive approaches and can accommodate both approaches in the same study (Torraco, 2002). Theorists, therefore, can use the case study method to support theory-building studies that incorporate a multi-paradigmatic approach (Torraco, 2002).

HRD theorists have used case studies to build theory on a range of topics. Examples include protégés’ learning in mentoring relationships (Hezlett, 2005), best employer studies (Joo & McLean, 2006), competency in HRD (Özçelik & Ferman, 2006), employee engagement (Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011), and the HRD efforts of an Ismaili Muslim community (Budhwani & McLean, 2012).

There are several advantages to building theory from cases. First, is the opportunity that the case study method provides for the use of mixed methods in theory-building research. Second, the case study method “does not rely on existing literature or previous empirical research” (Torraco, 2002, p. 362). Third, case study research provides a “deep understanding of the actors, interactions, sentiments, and behaviors” (Woodside & Wilson, 2003, p. 497) making it well suited to developing an understanding of complex phenomenon (Dooley, 2002). Finally, many scholars consider papers that build theory from case studies to be the most interesting research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) and others have identified a number of challenges to using case study methods for theory building. First, there are differing opinions as to whether case study is a stand-alone, theory-building method. Second, theorists “must take the added step of justifying why the research question is better addressed by theory-building rather than theory-testing research” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 26). Third, case selection can be challenging. Fourth, building theory though case study research is an arduous and time-consuming process (Dooley, 2002). Fifth, in single case studies the presentation of rich,
qualitative data can be difficult. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) suggest, however, that theorists can lessen these and other challenges “through precise language and thoughtful research design” (p. 30).

*Grounded theory.* Grounded theory is a highly developed theory-building method that follows rigorous procedures to create “formal, substantive theory of social phenomena” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 131). This method uses an inductive approach to theory building (Torraco, 2002). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the method and published it in their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Later, they diverged in their methodologies. Their differences involved “conflicting understandings of the relation between data and theory – the concept of ‘emergence’ and the concept of ‘theoretical sensitivity’” (Kelle, 2005, p. 1). Strauss went on to refine grounded theory in collaboration with Corbin (e.g., see Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2000, 2006) developed a constructivist version of grounded theory.

Grounded theorists approach theory building with an open mind concerning “the general theoretical account” that will likely emerge from the study (Martin & Turner, 1986, p. 142). In this method, researchers develop theory through the continuous interchange between data collection and analysis (Garcia, 2008; Torraco, 2002). The theorist provisionally confirms the theory by continually comparing the theory against the data (Torraco, 2002). As data analysis continues, the theory is refined as new understandings emerge from the data (Garcia, 2008; Torraco, 2002).

HRD journals have published few grounded theory studies (Egan, 2002). Examples are career development in HRD (Knapp, 1995), a comparative analysis of the role of strategic HRD leadership (Yorks, 2004), understanding the conceptual development phase of applied theory-building research (Storberg-Walker, 2007a), drivers that influence nurses’
commitment (McCabe & Garavan, 2008), and developing expertise in an applied discipline (Kuhlmann & Ardichvili, 2015).

The benefits of grounded theory include its “faithfulness to the data that closely reflects the meanings and understandings of those involved in the phenomenon being modeled by the theory” (Torraco, 2002, p. 357) and its usefulness for generating novel and preliminary understandings of a phenomenon of interest (Garcia, 2008; Torraco, 2002). Another benefit is that theory developed using this method is “conceptually dense” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 132). Furthermore, grounded theory is particularly useful in organizational research because it can facilitate understanding and identify improvements in work contexts (Martin & Turner, 1986). Grounded theory also holds promise to enhance theory-building partnerships between theorists and practitioners (Egan, 2002).

A disadvantage of grounded theory is that it can be challenging for a novice researcher (Backman & Kyngäs, 2002). It can also be difficult to determine whether to use a fully inductive coding process or to code the data using some preconceived understandings (Bailey & Jackson, 2003).

*Meta-analytic.* Meta-analytic theory building is a unique approach to a literature review (Yang, 2002). In this deductive approach, the theorist uses statistical techniques to find patterns and sum up a body of empirical studies (Torraco, 2002; Yang, 2002). Meta-analysis typically includes the following steps: (a) define the variables of interest and formulate the research questions, (b) conduct a literature search and systematically identify empirical studies, (c) code previous studies and select an “appropriate index of effects size,” (d) analyze data collected from previous empirical studies, and (e) interpret the results and draw appropriate conclusions (Yang, 2002, pp. 297-301).
HRD theorists have used meta-analysis to build theory on a range of phenomena. Examples include the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011) and the career benefits of mentoring for mentors (Ghosh & Reio, 2013).

An advantage of meta-analysis is that it draws on a wide range of existing data to support theory development (Torraco, 2002). A second benefit comes from its ability to allow researchers to reconcile seemingly contradictory results “by controlling for sampling error and other study-specific statistical artifacts that influence findings” (Holton & Torraco, 2004, p. 99). Third, meta-analysis supports the ongoing refinement of theory (Yang, 2002). Fourth, meta-analysis has an excellent record of accomplishment (Holton & Torraco, 2004). Finally, some meta-analytic theory-building studies have had dramatic results, which have changed the way scholars view certain phenomena (Holton & Torraco, 2004).

There are also a number of disadvantages to the use of meta-analysis as a theory-building method. First, existing studies set the parameters of the theory; therefore, the theorist cannot include or test parameters that have not been previously examined (Yang, 2002). Second, meta-analysis limits the operationalization of new theoretical ideas to “the variables and attributes included in existing studies” (Yang, 2002, p. 315). Therefore, it “cannot be used to develop and validate a groundbreaking study” (Yang, 2002, p. 315). Finally, meta-analysis does not always result in the full confirmation of a theory (Torraco, 2002).

*Social constructionist.* Social constructionists seek to develop theory through inductive processes toward the aim of furthering our understanding of how people “intersubjectively create, understand, and reproduce social situations” (Turnbull, 2002c, p. 319). Social constructionists believe that the researcher, study participants, and research
consumers all contribute to the understanding created through the research process and to the
acceptance of new theory (Turnbull, 2002c). The purpose of social constructionist theory-
building research, therefore, is not to model a “theoretical aspect of the real [emphasis
added] world” (Dubin, 1978, p. 76). Rather, its purpose is to develop theory that “interprets
the social [emphasis added] world” in which there is no absolute truth (Turnbull, 2002c, p.
319).

Social constructionist theorists hold two core assumptions related to “the meaning of
theory building and authenticity” (Turnbull, 2002c, p. 319). For social constructionists, the
meaning and focus of theory building is not the ability to generalize. Its aim is the transfer of
ideas as a means to refine existing theoretical frameworks (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002c).
For the social constructionist theorist, increased understanding and the desire for change
spurred through new understandings can be “an end in itself” (Turnbull, 2002c, p. 321).
Social constructionist theorists believe that authenticity is essential to theory building. They
seek authenticity by obtaining direct accounts from those being studied, staying close to the
data, and by making it clear when their own voices are being presented (Torraco, 2002;
Turnbull, 2002c).

Social constructionist theory-building research may require the use of different
methodological approaches, e.g., ethnography and participant observation (Turnbull, 2002c).
Social constructionist theorists often present their findings as narrative accounts that provide
rich interpretations of oftentimes messy and complex situations (Turnbull, 2002c). Turnbull
(2002c), who is an HRD theorist, makes the case for social constructionist theory-building
research and describes the research process in her article, “Social construction research and
theory building.”
There are a number of advantages of social constructionist theory building. One is the aforementioned rich interpretations. Another benefit stems from the previously discussed authenticity, which leads to the development of theory that more closely represents lived experience (Turnbull, 2002c). Furthermore, the contextual focus of social constructionist theory building contributes to the development of more nuanced understandings.

For those who hold a positivistic worldview, a disadvantage of social constructionist theory building is that it does not lead to causal claims or generalizable theories (Turnbull, 2002c). Another disadvantage is that there is no set, formal process by design (Turnbull, 2002c). Therefore, this method offers limited guidance to novice theorists.

This review of the theory-building literature supports Lynham’s (2000b) assertion that there are different understandings of what theory is and varying paradigms for theory building which emanate from “different ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of phenomena and the output and purpose of knowledge in a field” (p. 165). It is imperative, therefore, for scholars who plan to engage in theory-building research to reflect on their worldviews as a means to clarify their personal understanding of what theory is and its purpose. Furthermore, scholars should assess which theory-building method aligns most closely with their worldview, research question, and the intended purpose of the study. Finally, scholars should consider their capacity to undertake a given method and the availability of the resources needed to implement it.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Two provided a review of the literature that informed this study, i.e., the literature on generative governance, nonprofit governance theory, social capital theory, critical theory, and theory building. This literature contributed to the design of the study, the interpretation of the findings, the development and assessment of the preliminary theory, and
to the preliminary design of a post-dissertation study, which aims to examine the application of the preliminary theory in practice. The next chapter presents the study’s methodology.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

*Theories do not solve problems in the world, people do. Nevertheless, good theory is what we need when we get stuck. Theories can help alert us to problems, point us toward strategies of response, remind us of what we care about, or prompt our practical insights into the particular cases we confront.*

(Forster, 1989, p. 12)

Chapter Three addresses the methodology of the study. It begins with an overview of the study. Following is a discussion of the use of theory-building research methods in doctoral dissertations. An overview of the research approach is next, followed by a discussion of the methods and frames used. A presentation of criteria for selecting an overarching theory-building research method follows. A description of the General Method is next. Following is a description of the research process and phases of the study. Next is a discussion of data sources and data analysis. My story follows. The chapter ends with a discussion of trustworthiness.

**Study Overview**

As discussed in Chapter One, nonprofit organizations work in complex, rapidly changing environments. The lingering effects of the last recession and resulting decrease in government and public support require nonprofits to do more with less. In addition, a series of highly publicized scandals raised questions about nonprofit governance, which led to calls for change in nonprofit governance practice. These and other factors make good governance increasingly important for nonprofit organizations.

Generative governance is promoted as a revolutionary means to improve nonprofit governance practice. Many practitioners, consultants, and nonprofit capacity-building organizations have embraced this innovative mode of governance. While some nonprofit governance scholars recognize the merits of generative governance, others have raised
questions and concerns about the concept. Therefore, a small but growing number of scholars are conducting research on the practice of generative governance.

This study aimed to further our understanding of generative governance by building new theory that sheds light on the role of board social capital (i.e., value derived from board relationships) in generative governance. The following research question guided the study:

*How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?*

The study employed a paradox perspective to help us understand both the positive and negative outcomes that board social capital can have on generative governance. To answer this question, the study used theory-building research methods.

**Use of Theory-Building Research in Doctoral Dissertations**

Scholars have a range of methods available to conduct research. The problem addressed, the research purpose, and the question the scholar seeks to answer drive the selection of the appropriate research methods for a given study. The use of theory-building methods is appropriate for HRD research when the need for new theory to inform practice has been established (Torraco, 2004). This dissertation used theory-building methods because of the need expressed by scholars and practitioners for new knowledge that informs nonprofit governance practice and the lack of existing theory to explain the phenomenon that is the subject of the study, i.e., the paradox of board social capital in the practice of generative governance.

Theory-building research methods have been successfully used in dissertation research in a range of fields including the following: business administration (e.g., Sanchez de Valencia, 2008), education (e.g., VanderKwaak, 2008; Woodworth, 2009), information
studies (e.g., Dunbar, 2008), organizational leadership (e.g., Rahschulte, 2007; Rennaker, 2008), political science (e.g., Doberstein, 2014), psychology (e.g., Harmar, 2012; Yedreshteyn, 2008), public policy (e.g., Inbal, 2011), social work (e.g., Brake, 2010), and sociology (e.g., Cliath, 2008).

Over the past fifteen years, HRD doctoral students have completed theory-building dissertations on a broad range of topics. Examples of HRD theory-building dissertations include the following: Beeler (2015; K-12 educator professional learning for technology adoption); Bodwell (2011; organizational ambidexterity in hospitals), Boyum (2012; servant leadership in higher education), Brown, (2014; HRD and people with disabilities), Chermack (2003; scenario planning), Fisher (2000; organizational performance), Garcia (2008; social networks and large group interventions), Lowe (2004; effective computer-based instruction for adults), Lynham (2000a; responsible leadership), Misato (2010; corporate social responsibility excellence), Storberg-Walker (2004; human capital transformation), and Upton (2006; career development).

Theory-building dissertations provide novice HRD scholars with unique opportunities to create new knowledge, which can support their ongoing research agendas. At the same time, the development of new HRD theory and theory-building processes meets an expressed need of the field (Garcia, 2008; Holton, 2002; Lynham, 2000b, 2002b; Swanson, 2000; Torraco, 2004).

**Research Approach**

This study used bricolage as its research approach. Bricoleur is a French word that refers to an individual (a handyman or handywoman) who uses whatever is readily available or ‘at hand’ to construct or create objects or ideas, i.e., the bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005b). Denzin and Lincoln are credited with using the term
‘bricolage’ in their research methods work (Kincheloe, 2011a) and developing this concept (Kincheloe, 2005). In the context of social research strategies and qualitative research, bricolage refers to a multi-methodological form of inquiry that draws on a variety of methods and theoretical frameworks to examine a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005a; Reed, 2008). Bricolage “signifies interdisciplinarity,” i.e., a process in which researchers cross their disciplinary boundaries by using frames from multiple disciplines (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 680).

Researchers can use bricolage as a qualitative, theory-building approach (Turnbull, 2002a). The bricolage approach is “unconventional, resourceful, action-oriented, and synthetic” (Reed, 2008, p. 318). While some question the value of bricolage arguing that it is unfocused and superficial, preeminent scholars (e.g., Denzin, Lincoln, Kincheloe, and Weick) contend that this approach is innovative, rigorous, and particularly relevant today because traditional disciplines are no longer “fixed, uniform, or monolithic structures” (Kincheloe, 2011a, p. 181).

Bricolage is an appropriate approach for this study because emphasis on order and control can handicap theorists “when they want to understand the processes of creativity and innovation” such as those involved in generative governance (Weick, 1998, p. 543). Bricoleurs are aware of the complexity of such processes (Kincheloe, 2001). The bricoleur, therefore, draws on existing knowledge and employs imagination to piece together diverse “raw materials, objects, methods, philosophies, or ideas” toward the end of producing a new, coherent framework that addresses a social problem (Reed, 2008, p. 318). By doing so, the bricoleur seeks to “uncover new insights, expand and modify old principles, and reexamine accepted interpretations in unanticipated contexts” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 687).
Bricolage is emergent and evolving by nature (Wibberley, 2012). To create the bricolage, the bricoleur theorist engages in “disciplined conceptual play” (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991 as cited in Reed, 2008, p. 318). As new insights surface, they are pieced together adding to the emerging theory (Turnbull, 2002a). Thus, the bricoleur theorist gains new and interesting perspectives on the phenomenon (Turnbull, 2002a). The result of the bricoleur’s work is a theoretical bricolage, i.e., “a complex, dense, reflexive, collage like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations” of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3).

The use of a bricolage approach is consistent with the critical nature of this study. Bricoleurs are concerned with issues of power and social justice. They go beyond an interpretive approach by employing “qualitative methods for critical social purposes” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009, p. 53). Bricoleurs “explore the different perspectives of the socially privileged and the marginalized” as an additional means to understand the complexity of the phenomenon under study (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 687).

“The bricolage is an emancipatory construct” (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011, p. 167). The criticality of bricolage is committed to engagement in political action in a variety of venues including social settings (Kincheloe, 2005b). The objectives of bricoleurs are emancipatory consciousness, confrontation of injustice, and transformation (Kincheloe et al., 2011). These aims are consistent with the purpose of this dissertation study, i.e., to not simply explore how board social capital benefits the practice of generative governance but to also uncover its detriments including how it can exclude and marginalize historically marginalized individuals and groups in the process. The aims of the bricolage are also consistent with my ultimate goal, which is future collaborative work with diverse
practitioners toward the end of developing and promoting socially-just practices that support generative governance.

**Methods and Frames**

This section of Chapter Three provides an overview of the research methods and theoretical frames used for this study. Later sections of the chapter provide further details.

As introduced in Chapter One, the General Method served as the overarching theory-building research framework for the study. It provided a flexible structure, which guided the theory-building process. The General Method accommodated the bricolage approach.

Bricolage uses multiple methods and multiple frames to support the theory-building process. In keeping with the bricolage focus on creativity of methods, the study combined two theory-building approaches in the conceptualization phase of the study. These methods are Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) paradox approach and Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination. The concurrent use of these methods allowed me to explore the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance through a series of disciplined imagination thought trials, which examined various aspects of the paradox.

Consistent with the bricoleur-as-theorist’s use of what is at hand, the case study method was integrated into the methodology because case data from an earlier study on nonprofit board communication were readily available. A benefit of using these data was the ability to explore the paradox of board social capital in two diverse organizational contexts.

In addition, because the aim of this dissertation study was to develop a preliminary critical theory and bricolage has an emancipatory focus, critical participatory action research (CPAR) and the critical narrative method played a role in this dissertation. The study incorporated these methods into the preliminary design of a post-dissertation research project, which I developed as part of the application phase of the theory-building process.
The objective of the proposed CPAR study is to continue theory development in collaboration with diverse practitioners toward the aim of revising and refining the theory based on new, co-constructed understandings gained through a theoretically informed, empirical study.

Bricolage also employs multiple frames to examine the complexity of the phenomenon under study. As introduced in Chapter One, social constructionism, mainstream social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT are the frames that guided this study. The tenets of social constructionism, which I presented in Chapter Two, grounded the study. As previously discussed, generative governance is a social process which involves the engagement of the “collective mind of the board” (Chait et al., 2005, p. xxiv). In generative governance, board practices such as reflective practice, reframing issues, and collective sensemaking are a means to bring new perspectives to the work of the board. Therefore, the study assumed that generative governance involves the social construction of knowledge and that social factors influence board learning and innovation.

Mainstream social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT framed a series of disciplined imagination thought trials. New knowledge was constructed using the findings of the thought trials. I analyzed multiple sources of data for each trial. These data represent the understandings and lived experiences of a wide range of individuals, both the historically privileged and the historically oppressed. In addition to supporting a bricolage approach, the use of multiple frames responded to calls by nonprofit governance scholars for the increased use of multi-theoretical perspectives because “nonprofit governance is complex and often paradoxical” (Renz & Andersson, 2014, p. 19).
Overarching Theory-building Method Selection Criteria

Bricoleurs actively construct their research methods from the tools they have at hand rather than “passively receiving the ‘correct,’ universally applicable methodologies” (Kincheloe, 2005b, p. 324). Yet, some structure is helpful to guide and support the research process, particularly for the novice theorist. As previously mentioned, the General Method served as the overarching theory-building method for this study. The following describes the rationale for its selection.

The three previously discussed overarching methods commonly used for HRD theory-building research (Dubin’s Method, Lynham’s General Method, and Van de Ven’s Engaged Scholarship Model) were assessed for their ability to support this study. The following paragraph presents two sets of criteria, which can be used to determine the appropriateness of research frameworks for HRD theory building.

Storberg-Walker (2006) suggests that a framework for theory-building research must (a) be holistic, general, and non-specific; (b) be able to accommodate paradox and multiple perspectives of reality; (c) be applicable in real world settings and able to guide applied research; and (d) require theorists to clearly state the connections between the “ontology, epistemology and axiology of their theory” (p. 228). García’s (2008) selection criteria include the following: (a) the extent to which the theory-building research method's strategy aligns with the purpose of the study, (b) the degree to which the method’s conceptual paradigm aligns with the study’s purpose, (c) the need for the research findings to be accessible and applicable to the field of HRD, and (d) the completeness of the method.

The criteria that I used to assess the suitability of Dubin’s Method, the General Method, and the Engaged Scholarship Model to serve as the theory-building framework for
this study were drawn primarily from Storberg-Walker (2006) and Garcia (2008). These criteria are the following:

- the method requires the theorist to assess and specify the connections between the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of their theory;
- the method’s strategy aligns with the study’s purposes;
- the conceptual paradigms supported by the method are aligned with the study’s purposes;
- the method is flexible, allowing the theorist to begin the theory-building process at any stage;
- the method accommodates paradox;
- the design of the method fosters the production of new knowledge that is applicable and readily accessible to HRD scholars and practitioners; and
- the method is general, holistic, and complete.

One additional criterion, which addressed the specific needs of this scholar, supplemented Storberg-Walker’s (2006) and Garcia’s (2008) criteria. This criterion is

- the method provides guidance on how to complete the various stages of the process.

These eight criteria were used to assess the suitability of Dubin’s Method, the General Method, and Engaged Scholarship Model to serve as the theory-building framework for this study. The following three sections provide the results these assessments.

**Assessment of Dubin’s Method.** Dubin’s Method is holistic in that it is designed to produce both an informed conceptual framework and a verified and trustworthy theory that has been tested empirically (Storberg-Walker, 2003). In addition, this method promotes the development of new knowledge that is applicable to practice (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003) and readily accessible to HRD scholars (Storberg-Walker, 2003).
On the other hand, Dubin’s Method does not explicitly require the theorist to assess and specify the connections between the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of their theory. It does not accommodate multiple paradigms; it solely employs a positivist paradigm (Storberg-Walker, 2003; Torraco, 2002). Dubin’s Method is neither general nor flexible; rather, it involves a highly structured process that is unsuited to the study of complex phenomena. While the method’s traditional, linear, empirically based approach is useful for novice theorists, Dubin provides few details on how to complete the various stages of its process (Storberg-Walker, 2003).

**Assessment of the General Method.** The General Method requires theorists to consider and connect ontology, epistemology, and axiology in their theory (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003). However, it “does not specifically act as a catalyst...for developing a sophisticated understanding of the links” between and among them (Storberg-Walker, 2006, p. 250). The General Method accommodates multiple strategies, including deductive and inductive strategies, as well as multiple paradigms (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003, 2004; Torraco, 2002). It promotes knowledge production that is applicable and readily accessible to practitioners (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003). The General Method is general, holistic, and complete. It is general in that it accommodates various methods, strategies, and paradigms. It is holistic because it covers all aspects of theory building from conceptual development to continuous refinement and development. It is complete in regards to its iterative and recursive cycle of theory building. The General Method is flexible in that theory building can begin at various phases of the process.

On the other hand, while the General Method “incorporates...both inductive and deductive logic” (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 212) it does not explicitly support abductive reasoning. However, Sjøberg et al. (2008) have developed an adapted version of the General
Method that accommodates abduction. A significant drawback of the General Method is that it does not provide the theorist with guidance on how to complete the various stages of the process (Storberg-Walker, 2006). This makes its use challenging for novice theorists.

Assessment of the Engaged Scholarship Model. The Engaged Scholarship Model is general, holistic, and complete (Storberg-Walker, 2004). It accommodates multiple paradigms, logics, and methods. One advantage, particularly relevant to this study, is that it explicitly supports abduction (Van de Ven, 2007). The Engaged Scholarship Model is holistic in that its four steps address all aspects of the theory-building process from the formulation of the problem to the application of the findings in practice. In addition, the method is flexible in that the theory-building process can begin with any of its four steps. Furthermore, the method mandates stakeholder participation in all of its theory-building phases. Finally, the Engaged Scholarship Model provides guidance to the theorist on how to complete the various phases of the method, which is helpful to the novice theorist.

On the other hand, while the Engaged Scholarship Model is complete, it does not clearly illustrate its iterative process (Storberg-Walker, 2003). In addition, while it is flexible in regards to the theorist’s ability to begin at any of its four steps, its linear nature reduces its flexibility (Storberg-Walker, 2003). Furthermore, while Van de Ven (2007) suggests that the model accommodates various ontologies, it ultimately suggests the use of a “realist ontology during the data collection and analysis phases” (Storberg-Walker, 2006, p. 251).

Selection of the General Method. None of the three overarching theory-building methods met all of my selection criteria. Therefore, I assessed the relative advantages and disadvantages of each method as they specifically related to this study.

I removed Dubin’s method from consideration because its quantitative tradition and hypothetico-deductive approach are incompatible with my view of reality and
epistemological stance. In addition, this method could not accommodate the study’s qualitative approach and critical aims, which were necessary in order to answer the research question.

The Engaged Scholarship Model had a number of advantages over the General Method. These advantages include its specific support of abduction, the guidance it provides on how to complete the various phases of the method, and the inclusion of practitioners in each phase of the theory-building process. However, the Engaged Scholarship Model’s use of “empirical/analytical logic to test and apply the findings of the theory” (Storberg-Walker, 2004, p. 42) is incompatible with my view of reality and the bricolage’s qualitative approach. Furthermore, the linear nature of the Engaged Scholarship Model made it unsuitable for this study because by definition bricolage involves an emergent and evolving process.

The General Method has a number of advantages, which made it the best choice for this study. These advantages include its

- ability to accommodate my advocacy/participatory worldview (which supported my social justice aims),
- support of an inductive approach (which was aligned with my research question),
- flexibility (which accommodated abduction and supported a paradox approach), and
- iterative and recursive cycle (which supported the creativity of the bricolage).

The key disadvantage of the General Method was that it did not offer guidance on how to complete the various parts of the process. However, this disadvantage was mitigated, in part, by the fact that the bricolage is evolving by nature. Therefore, it was not necessary for me to have all of the methodological details set at the onset of the study.

Based on the results of this assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of Dubin's Method, the General Method, and the Engaged Scholarship Model, the overarching
theory-building framework that I selected for use in this study was the General Method. The following section discusses the General Method in detail.

**General Method**

Lynham’s (2002b) General Method is a five-phase process of theory building. The General Method “provides an overarching theory development construct and language for theory researchers” (Torraco, 2005b, p. 363). It outlines a basic, core method for theory-building research in applied disciplines, which a theorist can use regardless of a study’s theoretical purpose or paradigm (Garcia, 2008; Storberg-Walker, 2004). Doctoral students have successfully used the General Method as a framework for their theory-building dissertations (e.g., Bodwell, 2011; Inbal, 2011; Neil, 2015; Rennaker, 2008; Storberg-Walker, 2004).

**General Method phases.** The General Method has five phases. Its process is iterative and its phases are interdependent (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2004). The phases of the General Method are Phase 1: Conceptual development, Phase 2: Operationalization, Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation, Phase 4: Application, and Phase 5: Continuous refinement and development.

The General Method as conceptualized by Lynham (2002b) accommodates two theory-building strategies, i.e., a deductive to inductive (theorizing to practice) approach and an inductive to deductive (practice to theorizing) approach. According to Lynham (2002b), all five phases of the General Method are completed during the theory-building process. However, the sequencing of phases changes based on the approach used.

Theory-building studies that use a deductive to inductive approach (e.g., quantitative and experimental studies) typically begin with *theoretical* inquiry in Phase 1: Conceptualization. The remaining phases are commonly completed in sequential order.
Theory-building studies that employ an inductive to deductive approach (e.g., qualitative studies) do not typically follow this sequence. Such studies commonly begin with research inquiry in Phase 4: Application. The results of the work completed in Phase 4 are then used to develop an informed conceptual framework in Phase 1: Conceptualization and in some qualitative studies to operationalize the theory in Phase 2: Operationalization.

See Figure 2.2 in Chapter Two for Lynham’s graphical representation of the General Method. It is important to note that Lynham’s (2002b) article and her figure “sequences the phases from the perspective of a theorizing-to-practice strategy of theory building” (p. 231). Following her lead, I present my discussion of the phases from this perspective. I also address alternate sequencing for the practice-to-theorizing strategy, as applicable to specific phases.

Phase 1: Conceptual development involves the formulation of initial ideas that depict the “current, best, most informed understanding and explanation of the phenomenon, issue, or problem in the relevant world context” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 231). The purpose of the conceptual development phase is to create an “informed conceptual framework” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 231). This framework offers a preliminary “understanding and explanation of the nature and dynamics of the issue, problem, or phenomenon” that is the study’s focus (Lynham, 2002b, p. 232). In this phase, “the key elements of the theory are identified, relationships are described, and limitations and conditions are delineated” (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 213). All applied theory-building studies that use the General Method include this phase.

Phase 2: Operationalization involves connecting the conceptualized theory with practice (Lynham, 2002b). Lynham (2002b) states that operationalization is necessary to confirm or test theory “in its real world context” (p. 232). This requires the translation or
conversion of the theoretical framework into “observable, confirmable components/elements” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 232). These components/elements include “confirmable propositions, hypotheses, empirical indicators, and/or so-called knowledge claims” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 232).

Lynham (2002b) suggests that the operationalization phase is an intrinsic element of all theory-building studies regardless of approach. However, other scholars argue that the operationalization phase is irrelevant or only partially relevant for studies that use qualitative theory-building methods. Turnbull (2002c), for example, states that given the predispositions and limitations of social constructionist research, the General Method process can “to some degree feed into the operationalization phase of theory building but is not necessary” [emphasis added] given the social constructionist tolerance for ambiguity” (p. 330). Torraco (2002), in his comparative analysis of research methods for theory building in applied disciplines states that operationalization has a “limited role” in social constructionist theory-building research (p. 361). He also notes that operationalization is not included in theory-building studies that use the grounded theory method. Thus, Phase 2: Operationalization is either partially completed or dropped from the General Method in theory-building studies that use the social constructionist approach and is dropped in studies that use the grounded theory method.

Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation involves “the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of an appropriate research agenda and studies” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 234). The intent of this phase is to inform and purposefully confirm or disconfirm the theory’s central theoretical framework (Lynham, 2002b). More specifically, its purpose is to confirm or disconfirm whether the theory informs practice (Storberg-Walker, 2003). This phase, therefore, assesses the theory’s trustworthiness (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker,
Its outcome is a “confirmed and trustworthy theory that can be used with some confidence to inform better action and practice” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 233).

While Lynham's (2002b) General Method includes Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation in all theory-building studies regardless of the approach used, other scholars do not include it in qualitative theory-building studies. Turnbull (2002c), for example, sees no role for social constructionist theory-building research in the confirmation or disconfirmation of theory. Rather, she argues that social constructionist theory-building research provides “detailed qualitative case-specific data that may be deemed transferable to other settings” (p. 330). Torraco (2002) does not include Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation of the theory as part of the theory-building process for qualitative studies that use a social constructionist approach or those that employ the grounded theory method.

Phase 4: Application involves applying “the theory to the problem, phenomenon or issue in the world” (Lynham, 2002, p. 234). In this phase, the world of practice judges and informs the theory’s usefulness and relevance (Lynham, 2002b). Application helps the theorist to further develop and refine the theory based on new understandings of the theory in practice (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003, 2006).

Application is relevant to both quantitative and qualitative theory-building methods (Torraco, 2002). It is a key phase in qualitative theory-building studies. In social constructionist theory building, “it is the essential contextual starting point of the method” (Turnbull, 2002b, p. 330). The grounded theory method also begins with the application phase.

Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development is a recursive process that involves the “ongoing study, adaptation, development, and improvement of the theory in action” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 234). This phase ensures that the “rigor and relevance of the theory” is
continually assessed, the theory continues to be useful in practice, and that the theory is revised or discarded when it is proven false or is no longer useful (Lynham, 2002b, p. 234; Storberg-Walker, 2003).

Lynham (2002b) includes Phase 5 in all theory-building studies regardless of approach. It is an important phase in quantitative theory-building research. However, other scholars have dropped Phase 5 from the General Method process in qualitative theory-building studies that use the social constructionist (Turnbull, 2002b; Torraco, 2002) or grounded theory method (Torraco, 2002).

In summary, while the General Method as conceptualized by Lynham (2002b) includes five standard phases which are completed in some form in all applied theory-building studies, other scholars have adapted the General Method to accommodate different research approaches and their respective theory-building methods (Torraco, 2002). The General Method and its adapted versions differ in terms of the number of phases completed, which phases are completed, the extent to which the various phases are completed (full, partial, or not at all), and the order in which the phases are completed. These adaptations demonstrate the flexibility of the General Method and thus its ability to accommodate the needs of theorists with various worldviews and its capacity to support theory-building studies which use a variety of logics and methods.

Adapting the General Method. The General Method can accommodate adaptations that “incorporate the intuition, creativity, and curiosity of the researcher in the various phases” (Storberg-Walker, 2003, p. 212). I made several adaptations to the General Method for this study. These adaptations are related to the incorporation of abductive logic, an interpretive theory-building approach, and the use of critical perspectives.
First, the General Method was adapted to accommodate intuition by means of an abductive to inductive theory-building process. It supported an innovative process, which used abductive insights gained through prior practice and research experience to explore the paradox of board social capital in generative governance practice. The incorporation of abduction in this study required an adaptation to the General Method that involved an abductive to inductive theory-building approach. This adaptation is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Four.

Second, the flexibility of the General Method accommodated my beliefs about the nature of reality, i.e., that reality is subjective and is derived from multiple perspectives. Therefore, I deleted Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation from the General Method process because interpretive research assumes that there is no absolute truth. Thus, theory cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed. The deletion of Phase 3 is consistent with changes made for other interpretive theory-building studies that use the General Method. Specifically, for studies that employ the social constructionist (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b) and grounded theory (Torraco, 2002) methods.

Third, the flexibility of the General Method supported my advocacy/participatory worldview. To accommodate my worldview, Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 2: Operationalization and Phase 4: Application of the General Method were partially completed. The partial completion of Phase 2 and Phase 4, with plans to revisit them in post-dissertation work, is consistent with the iterative and recursive nature of the General Method and supports my plans for a CPAR study that will continue the theory-building process. The CPAR study, as conceptualized, includes diverse practitioners as co-researchers in the next part of the theory-building process. Collaborative research with diverse practitioners aligns with the critical nature of the theory, the emancipatory focus of the bricolage, and the social change
objectives of the broader research agenda. The direct involvement of practitioners in HRD theory building is consistent with Turnbull’s (2002b) social constructionist method of theory building, which also uses an adapted version of the General Method.

Finally, Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development was included as an optional phase. This phase is not traditionally included in the General Method process for qualitative theory-building research; specifically, in social constructionist (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b) and grounded theory (Torraco, 2002) studies. However, I contend that the flexibility of the General Method supports my decision to include it.

I incorporated this optional phase because given the size and scope of the nonprofit sector as well as the numerous types of nonprofit organizations and their diverse missions, I suggest that studying board social capital in varied nonprofit contexts holds promise to further and deepen our understanding of its role in the practice of generative governance. Furthermore, given the rapidly changing environment facing nonprofits, future research conducted in Phase 5 would also serve to assess the theory’s continued relevance (Lynham, 2002b).

Thus, the General Method as adapted for use in this study included an abductive to inductive process and the following phases: Phase 1: Conceptual development (development of a preliminary theoretical bricolage), Phase 2: Operationalization (partial completion), Phase 3: Application (partial completion), and Phase 4: Ongoing refinement and development (optional future research).

The next two sections provide further details on the research process. As previously noted the study used an abductive to inductive process. Therefore, the first section (Research Process: Part I) discusses abduction. The second section (Research Process: Part II) discusses induction. Both abduction and induction are grounded in practice. Therefore, my preliminary
theory holds promise to be applicable in real-world nonprofit governance settings and situations (Sjøberg et al., 2008).

As previously discussed, bricolage is emergent and evolving by nature (Wibberly, 2012). It is a non-linear approach to theory building, which is challenging to present following standard dissertation study guidelines. Therefore, it is important for readers to understand that while the study used a process that began with an abduction to inductive process and I present my discussion of the research process in two corresponding parts for organizational purposes, I used both forms of reasoning at various points of the study. Details are provided in the following sections.

**Research Process Part I**

The complex nature of the bricolage approach precludes the use of a standard research process and the “development of a step-by-step set of research procedures” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 689). Thus, the research process used for this study evolved over time in support of the creativity and innovation necessary for the development of the theoretical bricolage.

This section of Chapter Three addresses abduction. I provide an overview of abduction, discuss its role in the study, and explain how abduction was incorporated in the General Method.

**Abduction.** Bricolage is related to abduction (Reed, 2008). Abduction is an intellectual act, which involves a mental leap by the researcher (Bendassolli, 2013) and a creative act, which supports the construction of explanations “to account for surprising observations in the course of experience” (Hansen, 2008, p. 457). Thus, abduction enables the development “of new forms of knowledge” (Bendassolli, 2013, p. 15).
Abduction is the most recently systematized and least known form of reasoning (Shank, 2008). The primary purpose of abduction is to develop an understanding of a ‘new’ phenomenon as opposed to deduction, which aims to test or evaluate theory, or induction, which seeks to develop transferrable theory based on findings derived from empirical data (Kovács & Spens, 2005). Abduction is useful in situations “where knowledge and protocol are lacking and where solutions are neither clear-cut nor easily solved” (Reed, 2008, p. 319).

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) introduced the concept of abduction (Gold et al., 2011; Shank, 2008). Peirce was a chemist and mathematician who secondarily became a philosopher (Burch, 2010). He is considered to be the founder of American pragmatism (Huff, 2009), which is the philosophical tradition focused on linking practice and theory.

Peirce suggests that abduction is “a source of ‘new ideas’” (Gold et al., 2011, p. 231). He described abduction as “an act of insight,” which is produced in “the instant of assembling an explanation of our experience” (Peirce, 1955 as cited in Hansen, 2008, p. 459). Peirce (1955) notes that “the abductive suggestion comes to us like a flash” (p. 304). He contends that abduction can lead to new knowledge and new theoretical explanations (Minnameier, 2004).

Peirce argues that abduction begins with the observation of surprising facts that require an explanation (Gold et al., 2011). He describes abduction as an inferential step which starts with “a hypothesis and the entertaining of it, whether as a simple interrogation or with any degree of confidence” (Pierce, 1955, p. 151). Abduction involves a preference for one potential explanation over others that could equally explain a given phenomenon as “long as this preference is not based upon any previous knowledge bearing upon the truth of the hypothesis, nor on any testing of any hypotheses, after having admitted them on probation” (Peirce, 1955, p. 151).
Peirce (1955) states that abduction entails a degree of guesswork based on observations of a range of characteristics that offer some confirmation (although a weak confirmation) of the preferred potential explanation. He notes that abduction does not suggest, “something must be” or “something actually is operative” (Peirce, CP 5.181 as cited in Arrighi & Ferrario, 2008, p. 79). Rather, it merely suggests “something may be” (Peirce, CP 5.181 as cited in Arrighi & Ferrario, 2008, p. 79). Thus, Peirce views abductive inferences as plausible (Burch, 2010). This is opposed to inductive inferences, which are considered probable, or deductive inferences, which are considered certain (Burch, 2010).

Contemporary scholars have affirmed Peirce’s conceptualization of abduction. For example, they acknowledge that

- “there are no hard and fast rules for making abductions” (Hansen, 2008, p. 462);
- abductive reasoning starts with a surprising observation (Huff, 2009);
- abduction is both logical and innovative (Reichertz, 2010);
- abduction involves intuition (Hansen, 2008) and creative insight (Van de Ven, 2007);
- abduction can be used to conceive or create a theory (e.g., Gold et al., 2011; Reed, 2008; Van de Ven, 2007); and,
- in an abductive theory-building approach, the theorist assumes that the inconsistency is true and seeks to explain it (Van de Ven, 2007).

Current scholars have also advanced our understandings of Peirce’s concept of abduction. For example, they contend that

- abduction is particularly important because it is the only form of reasoning which creates potential explanations (Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008);
- an abductively derived explanation is tentative (Arrighi & Ferrario, 2008; Gold et al., 2011);
• sensemaking (Weick, 1995) is the process involved in abduction (Hansen, 2008);
• in abduction, our existing mental models are used to attend to, make sense of, and order our experiences (Hansen, 2008);
• unlike induction and deduction, which follow a linear logic, abduction is cyclical in nature (Gilbert, 2006);
• new understandings gained through abduction can spur further abductive work or can lead to more formalized theory-building processes that use inductive or deductive reasoning (Huff, 2009; Van de Ven, 2007); and
• an abductive theory-building approach requires boldness (Reed, 2008).

Furthermore, contemporary scholars have linked abduction with qualitative research and a critical approach. Shank (2008), for example, states that abductive reasoning “holds great promise as a potential primary mode of reasoning for qualitative research” (para.1). Reichertz (2010) argues that the grounded theory method (in the tradition of Strauss and Corbin) includes abductive research logic in addition to qualitative induction. Hansen (2008) suggests that scholars consider aligning their abductive “efforts with currently debated perspectives, such as reflexivity, contextualism, critical theory, and aesthetics” (p. 462).

An increasing number of scholars have embraced abduction as a means to develop innovative theory in applied disciplines and the professions (Huff, 2009). Abduction has been promoted for, or used in, theory building research in disciplines that include the following: applied ontology (Arrighi & Ferrario, 2008), business logistics (Kovács & Spens, 2005), management (Van de Ven, 2007), nursing (Gilbert, 2006; Reed, 2008), organization studies (Locke et al., 2008), and software engineering (Sjøberg et al., 2008). Gold et al. (2011) have suggested the importance of abduction for HRD work and scholarship. They state that abductive reasoning “is a key but unrecognized process in HRD work and practice,” which
can “provide a wonderful opportunity for HRD scholars to engage with practitioners in the co-creation of knowledge” (Gold et al., 2011, p. 231).

**The role of abduction in the study.** HRD practitioner-scholars may conduct research for doctoral-level theses as a means to seek innovative resolutions to real-world problems observed in practice (Gold et al., 2011). The use of abduction in theory-building research is particularly well suited for use by such individuals because “the scholar-practitioner is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between theory and practice” (Moats & McLean, 2009, p. 508). Scholar-practitioners, like myself, can use surprising observations and insights gained through practice experience to inform their theory-building research.

Abductive reasoning led to the concept for this dissertation study and the development of the research question. When I initially conceptualized the study, my intent was to explore how board social capital supports the practice of generative governance. Nonprofit practitioners as well as nonprofit scholars typically assume that social capital has a positive influence on nonprofit organizations (e.g., see King, 2004; Schneider, 2009) and nonprofit governance (e.g., see Brown et al., 2012). Furthermore, Chait et al. (2005) base their governance as leadership model on the assumption that nonprofits can strategically use board social capital to enhance their governance work. They view board social capital as working capital for the organization and describe various ways that it supports generative governance.

The assumption that board social capital has an exclusively positive influence on nonprofit governance, however, was at odds with insights gained through my consulting work and observations made during a prior study on nonprofit board communication. These surprising observations suggested that board social capital could also produce negative outcomes and led to an abductive ‘eureka’ moment. A subsequent review of the critical
social capital literature suggested by Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker lent support for my abductively derived conjecture that board social capital could hinder as well as support the practice of generative governance. Therefore, I reframed the study using both mainstream social capital literature and critical social capital perspectives. CRT was added as an additional frame as means to focus attention on issues of power, privilege, and positionality because some of my surprising observations suggested that demographic differences, particularly racial and ethnic differences, might influence the role that board social capital plays in generative governance.

Abduction also supported my selection of methods. Abductive insights led to my decision to pair Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method of exploring paradox with Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method as a means to explore the abductively derived conjecture that board social capital plays a paradoxical role in the practice of generative governance. In addition, abductive insights guided the development of the disciplined imagination thought trials.

Abduction also played a role later in the study, particularly in the conceptualization phase of the theory-building process. During the data analysis process of the inductive phase of the study, surprising findings led to additional abductive 'eureka' moments, which prompted further analysis and the refinement of the conceptualized theory. Thus, while the study employed an abductive to inductive approach, abductive logic also supported the study’s inductive work. This is consistent with the creativity of the bricolage and the cyclical nature of abduction (Gilbert, 2006).

In summary, abduction was foregrounded in the study. It supported the conceptualization of the study, development of the research question, choice of theoretical
frameworks, design of the methodology, and the development of the thought trials. Abductive insights also informed the later, inductive part of the research.

Abduction and the General Method. The General Method as originally conceptualized by Lynham (2002b) does not include abductive logic in the theory-building process nor does it explicitly support theory building that involves abduction. However, given Van de Ven’s (2007) demonstrated use of abduction in his Engaged Scholarship Model, the basic structure of the General Method and its intended flexibility, and calls for the use of abduction in HRD theory-building research, I came to understand that it was possible and appropriate to incorporate abduction into the General Method for this study.

I conducted a literature search to determine whether other scholars had incorporated abduction in the General Method. My search found Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) model for building theories in the applied discipline of software engineering, which uses the General Method. Sjøberg et al. (2008) adapted the General Method by pairing abductive logic with inductive logic. Their model also includes deductive logic and all five phases of General Method. Figure 3.1 presents Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) adapted version of the General Method.

I could not use Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) version of the General Method for this study because their use of deductive logic is inconsistent with my worldview and an interpretive approach. Nonetheless, their adapted version demonstrated that abduction can be successfully incorporated in research that uses Lynham’s (2002b) General Method and provided additional support for the idea that this theory-building study could include the use of abductive logic. Therefore, building on Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) work, I added abductive logic to the General Method. In addition, I deleted deductive logic from the General Method because of its inconsistency with my worldview and incompatibility with the bricolage approach. This modification is consistent with the deletion of deductive logic in other qualitative theory-building approaches including the social constructionist (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002a) and grounded theory methods (Torraco, 2002).
Figure 3.2 presents the adapted version of the General Method that I used for this study. It illustrates the recursive nature of the study’s abductive to inductive approach, creativity of the bricolage (which used abductive and inductive logic at various points in the theory-building process), as well as the interpretive and critical nature of study. The figure also shows the four General Method phases used in this study and proposed for use in post-dissertation research (Conceptualization, Operationalization, Application, and Continuous Refinement and Development). I provide further details on the study phases later in this chapter.

It is important to note that the two-dimensional nature of Figure 3.2 (which follows Lynham’s (2002b) and Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) use of two-dimensional figures as a means of comparison) makes it challenging to depict the evolving, iterative, and complex nature of this study's bricolage approach. Arrows with solid and broken lines convey the use of, and interplay between, abductive and inductive logic and denote the respective foregrounding of these forms of logic during the design of the study and its implementation.
The environment in which we live, observe and experience the world.

Figure 3.2. Metelsky's adaptation of the General Method to incorporate abduction and support interpretive and critical approaches.

Note. The long solid arrows denote the foregrounded logic and primary direction of the reasoning process. The short dotted arrows denote the interplay between the foregrounded logic and the alternative form of logic.

Research Process Part II

As previously discussed, this study used an abductive to inductive approach. The previous section discussed abduction; this section addresses induction. It provides an overview of induction and its role in the theory-building process. It also addresses the role of induction in the phases of the General Method,

Induction. Induction is a type of reasoning used in the natural and social sciences to develop theory from a specific case (Jayanti, 2011) or a collection of empirical observations
Inductive logic comes “from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer” (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). Induction begins with observations and moves to the identification of patterns (Trochim, 2006). “The social meaning inherent in the data” is used as the basis for making empirical generalizations or theoretical statements (Brewer, 2003, p. 157). Thus, induction “shows that something is actually operative” (Peirce as cited in Gold et al., 2011, p. 234) making it useful in applied fields such as HRD.

Induction is typically associated with qualitative research. It supports theory building as opposed to theory testing (Trochim, 2006). Induction is particularly relevant for qualitative studies that “develop understanding and theory where none currently exists” or “extend existing theory into new settings” (Fox, 2008, p. 430). Inductive approaches that have been used to build HRD theory include bricolage (Turnbull, 2002a), grounded theory (Egan, 2002; Torraco, 2002), social constructionist (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b), and qualitative cases studies (Dooley, 2002; Torraco, 2002).

**The role of induction in the study.** A qualitative inductive approach, specifically bricolage, supported the development of the preliminary theory. In this study, induction was used to “develop understanding and theory where none currently exists” (Fox, 2008, p. 430). Consistent with the bricolage approach, a qualitative analysis of readily available sources of data (described later in the chapter) was completed. These data were analyzed through the
previously discussed thought trials to explore the abductively derived conjecture that board social capital plays a paradoxical role in the practice of generative governance. I used the findings of the thought trials to conceptualize the preliminary theory, operationalize it, and plan its application in practice (through a proposed CPAR study).

As noted previously, the General Method guided the theory-building process. The flexibility of the General Method allowed for adaptations that supported the study’s qualitative, abductive to inductive approach. The following three sections discuss the General Method phases undertaken during this study and an optional fourth phase that could be completed as part of a post-dissertation research agenda.

**Phase 1: Conceptualization.** Phase 1 focused on the development of a preliminary theory. In interpretive theory-building studies, common end products are associative explanations, descriptive explanations, narrative/storytelling explanations, and mutual causality explanations (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Therefore, consistent with the interpretive nature of the bricolage, the preliminary theory developed through this study is presented in the form of a descriptive explanation of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). This description, presented in Chapter Five, represents my current understanding the phenomenon based on the study findings. My aim was to create “a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike” description supported by data excerpts, which reflects my understanding of the paradoxical influence of board social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3).

In conventional (positivist/post positivist) theory-building studies, the end products are predictive explanations, causal explanations, and correlational explanations (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Laws or theoretical models are commonly developed. Laws or a formal model were not developed for this study because they have a very low degree of
trustworthiness for interpretive theories given the “complex, unstable, and extremely messy” human contexts they aim to describe or explain (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011, p. 17).

Formal, yet creative processes supported the conceptualization phase. These processes are Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) paradox approach and Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination. I analyzed textual data obtained from four sources in this phase of the study. These sources are the Governance as Leadership text (Chait et al., 2005), select practitioner literature, empirical data obtained through the NCSU Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative, and my researcher reflection journal notes.

Paradox approach. There is a growing awareness that paradox (i.e., tensions, oppositions, and contradictions) is inevitable in the organizational sciences and that “paradoxes are indigenous to effective organizational functioning” (Cameron & Quinn, 1998, p. 1). Various scholars have suggested that a paradox approach can help theorists to build better management, organization, and governance theories (e.g., Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Weick, 1989). Cornforth (2003) has specifically recommended the use of paradox in nonprofit governance theory. Therefore, a growing number of scholars are using a paradox lens to inform their theory-building research (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Poole and Van de Ven (1989) suggest that exploring “tensions, oppositions, and contradictions” among varying explanations of the same phenomenon can lead to significant theoretical advances (p. 562). They note that using theoretical tensions in theory-building research can promote the creation of more comprehensive theories (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Poole and Van de Ven (1989) argue that a paradox approach does not replace traditional theory building. Rather, they state that paradox provides “an additional arrow for the theorist’s quiver,” which can be used to gain new insights from differing perspectives and comparative analyses (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 563).
Poole and Van de Ven (1989) identify four methods, which theorists can use to explore social paradoxes in organization and management theories. They are the following: (a) “opposition” (i.e., “accept the paradox and use it constructively”), (b) “spatial separation” (i.e., “clarify levels of analysis”), (c) “temporal separation” (i.e., “take time into account”), and (d) “synthesis” (i.e., “introduce new terms to resolve the paradox”) (pp. 566-567).

This study used the opposition method. In this method, “the implications of the paradox are actively pursued and used to stimulate theory development” (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 566). I selected the opposition method because it is consistent with the study’s use of bricolage and abduction. Because an abductive insight led to a speculative and tentative understanding that board social capital can both promote and hinder generative governance, it was important to investigate this insight in a comprehensive manner. I accomplished this by exploring both the benefits and detriments of board social capital through the lenses of traditional social capital theory as well as critical social capital perspectives and CRT. The aim in accepting the paradox and using it constructively was to develop a more in-depth understanding of this complex phenomenon.

*Disciplined imagination.* According to Weick (1989), theorists often develop insignificant theories because theorizing processes are bound by methodological restrictions “that favor validation rather than usefulness” (p. 516). These restrictions limit the contributions that “imagination, representation, and selection” can make to theory development. In response, Weick (1989) developed a theory-building method called ‘disciplined imagination.’ Disciplined imagination is a qualitative theory-building method that employs a social construction approach (Swanson & Chermack, 2013). The ‘discipline’ “comes from consistent application of selection criteria to trial-and-error thinking” (Weick, 1989, p. 516). The ‘imagination’ comes from the deliberate introduction of diversity “into
the problem statements, thought trials, and selection criteria that comprise” the trial and error thinking (Weick, 1989, p. 516). Disciplined imagination aligns with the “disciplined conceptual play” required for the bricolage (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991 as cited in Reed, 2008, p. 318). It also supports abduction, which requires imagination to suggest what is possible (Locke et al., 2008).

In disciplined imagination, problem statements drive the theorizing process (Weick, 1989). Problem statements “are a core and important item of the conceptual development phase” of theory-building research (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007, p. 507). Without clear, precise problem statements, solutions derived through theory-building efforts “are misguided and vague” (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007, p. 507). Lundberg (n.d.) notes that Weick’s focus on problems is not about problem definition but about surfacing questions. Questions help the theorist to think creatively and deeply “about what is actually going on - how one thing might resemble another, how representations might be enriched or refined, where explanations might apply, what might be alternative explanations, and so forth” (Lundberg, n.d., para 20). The questions raised by the problems statements become the basis for thought trials.

Thought trials are educated guesses or conjectures about the issues articulated in the problem statements (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007; Weick, 1998). Each thought trial seeks to offer an educated guess developed in response to a surfacing question that emanates from the problem statement. While different thought trials vary in their productivity, each trial furthers the theorist’s understanding of the phenomenon. The quality of the theory produced varies based on the following: (a) the accuracy and detail of the problem statement, (b) the number and independence of the conjectures used by the theorist to attempt to solve
the problem, and (c) the number and variety of the selection criteria used to assess the conjectures (Weick, 1998).

A key strength of disciplined imagination is that it is easy to use (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007). Its simplicity, however, leaves the theorist without specific step-by-step guidance on process (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007). Thus, theorists must design their own process.

I used the previously discussed paradox approach (specifically, Poole and Van de Ven’s opposition method) to develop the thought trials for this study. The “cultivation of paradox” promoted the creation of diverse thought trials (Weick, 1998, p. 522).

I developed a template for the thought trials process. The template served several purposes, i.e., to maintain a consistent approach across the trials, to document each trial, and to promote transparency of method. Appendix B: Disciplined Imagination Thought Trial Example provides an example of the structure and format of the thought trials. Additional information about the thought trials and a thought trial excerpt are provided in Chapter Four.

Phase 1: Conceptualization was completed in full. My aim in independently developing a preliminary theory was to explore, in a comprehensive manner, my abductively derived conjecture that board social capital has a paradoxical influence on the practice of generative governance. The scholar-practitioner theorist’s mind is not a tabula rasa (i.e., a blank slate) because scholar-practitioners gain impressions about the phenomenon (that is the subject of their theory-building efforts) through their practice experience. By completing this study prior to conducting collaborative research with diverse practitioners, it was my intent to surface and challenge the preconceptions and assumptions that initially led me to believe that board social capital is intrinsically positive and supportive of the practice of generative governance. My hope was that this critical examination of the phenomenon would better
position me for an authentic partnership with diverse co-researchers who will bring their own experiences and understandings to the research. Thus, in proposed post-dissertation work, we can work together to refine and add to the theoretical bricolage with the aim of developing a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon.

The Phase 1 findings are presented in Chapter Five.

**Phase 2: Operationalization.** The purpose of the operationalization phase is to make “an explicit connection between the conceptualization phase and practice” (Lynham, 2002, p. 232). It involves translating the conceptualized theory developed in Phase 1 into components or elements, which can be observed in practice (Lynham, 2002b).

As previously discussed, Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 2: Operationalization is not completed or is partially completed in qualitative, theory-building studies (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b). While theorists often drop operationalization from the process because they believe it is irrelevant for interpretive work, I came to believe that the preliminary operationalization of the conceptualized theory would support this study’s critical approach. How I came to this understanding and its broader implications for the use of the General Method is discussed in Chapter Four.

In the context of this study, it is my contention that explicitly connecting the preliminary theory to practice will support the collaborative research proposed for the post-dissertation CPAR study. Practitioners may be unfamiliar with or have limited knowledge of the theory’s key concepts (e.g., bonding and bridging social capital, governance at the organizational boundaries, reframing issues, and collective sensemaking). By linking the theory’s key concepts with the characteristics of generative governance (e.g., governance at the organizational boundaries, collective sensemaking) and relevant board policies, procedures, and practices (e.g., policies regarding board relationships at the organization’s
external boundary and board decision-making processes), it is my hope that practitioners will have a clearer understanding of the preliminary theory and thus, be better positioned to serve as co-researchers.

Therefore, the operationalization of the theory was partially completed for the dissertation study. I began this process independently to surface and clarify my understanding of the theoretical concepts and their relationship to practice as well as to inform the preliminary design of a CPAR project.

The Phase 2: Operationalization findings can be found in Chapter Five: Theoretical Findings.

**Phase 3: Application.** As previously discussed, application involves applying the theory “to the problem, phenomenon, or issue in the world of practice” (Lynham, 2002b). Applying the theory enables the theorist to assess its relevance to practice and its usefulness for enhanced problem solving and improved action.

The application phase began during the dissertation study. The work completed involved the preliminary design of a theoretically informed, post-dissertation CPAR project. The design of a post-dissertation study for Phase 3: Application is consistent with other HRD theory-building dissertations, e.g., Chermack (2003), Garcia (2008), Storberg-Walker (2004), and Tuttle (2003). The purpose of the CPAR study was established and preliminary research questions were developed. The methodology was drafted, which included the selection of theoretical frames, research methods, and proposed data analysis methods. The resources needed to conduct the study were identified.

I present the Phase 3 findings in Chapter Five.

**Phase 4: Ongoing refinement and development.** The last component of my theory-building process is the ongoing refinement and development of the theory. As discussed
earlier, this phase is not traditionally included in qualitative studies that use the General Method. However, I included this optional phase because it could serve as part of a broader post-dissertation research agenda with the dual aims of refining the theory and assessing its transferability. Thus, one objective of Phase 4 would be to explore the phenomenon in various types of nonprofits toward the end of deepening our understanding of the complex role that board social capital plays in the practice of generative governance in a range of nonprofit organization contexts. A second objective would be to assess the theory’s continued relevance because nonprofits are facing rapidly changes environments and socio-historical context matters in critical theories. No work for this optional phase was completed as part of the dissertation study.

**Data Sources**

Empirical materials are essential to qualitative, theory-building research. Qualitative research commonly involves the analysis of data collected through such methods as observation and interviewing. Recently, qualitative research has broadened to include the reading and analysis of texts (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

Empirical data serve as a resource for developing theoretical ideas (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). Theory emerges inductively through “intimate contact with empirical materials, and through the frictions and tension between and within various data sets” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011, p. 2). Breakdowns in empirical materials (e.g., surprises or inconsistencies) push theorists to reconsider conventional understandings, promote creative insights, and support the development of novel theory (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). In addition, empirical materials illustrate theory (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

In the bricolage, the theorist uses imagination and existing knowledge to piece together diverse “raw materials...that are at hand (as opposed to being accessed from outside
one’s immediate environment)” toward the end of “producing a coherent, new structure (conceptual or concrete) to address a problem” (Reed, 2008, p. 318). Consistent with the bricolage, in abduction, the theorist draws on existing “stocks of knowledge” that come from a range of sources (Holstein and Grubrium, 1994 as cited in Hansen, 2008, p. 4).

This study drew on multiple existing sources of knowledge. Four types of readily available empirical materials were analyzed. They are the Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards text (the original source of the generative governance concept), practitioner literature, case data, and researcher reflection journal. Most of the data sources were selected prior to the commencement of the study. Consistent with the emerging nature of bricolage, I selected additional data sources as the study progressed. This allowed for the identification and analysis of practitioner literature that held promise to inform the disciplined imagination thought trials. It also accommodated the analysis of a new practitioner source on the governance as leadership model, which was published after the study was underway.

**Governance as Leadership text.** The foundational source of data for the study was the book, Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards (Chait et al., 2005). All text related to the concept of generative governance served as data. I transcribed relevant passages from the book into a Word document for data analysis. Surrounding text that provided important contextual information was also transcribed.

**Practitioner literature.** At the time that I defended my dissertation proposal, one practitioner source had been selected for analysis, i.e., Culture of Inquiry: Healthy Debate in the Boardroom (Axelrod, 2007). I chose this book because of the reputations of the author and publisher, its widespread use by practitioners, and because it addresses issues related to
social capital (e.g., relationships and trust) and promotes practices supportive of generative governance (e.g., information sharing and challenging assumptions).

In keeping with the bricolage’s emergent and evolving nature, I selected additional practitioner sources after the study was underway. Dambach et al. (2009), Freiwirth (2011), Gill (2002), and Robinson (2006) publications were chosen after I drafted the five thought trials. The Trower (2013) book, which specifically focuses on Chait et al.’s (2005) governance as leadership model including generative governance, was published after the thought trials had been completed but prior to the completion of the theoretical bricolage. Due to the importance and relevance of this text, I analyzed it for each thought trial and added the new findings to those from the previously completed trials. Table 3.1 lists each of the sources and provides my rationale for their selection.
Table 3.1

*Practitioner Publications Analyzed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner Publications</th>
<th>Rationale for Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axelrod, N. R. (2007). <em>Culture of inquiry: Healthy debate in the boardroom.</em> Washington, DC: BoardSource.</td>
<td>This book was chosen because of the reputation of the author, its widespread use by practitioners, and because it addresses issues related to social capital and promotes practices supportive of generative governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dambach, C. F., Davis, M., &amp; Gale, R. L. (2009). <em>Structures and practices of nonprofit boards.</em> Washington, DC: BoardSource.</td>
<td>This book is a leading publication in the field, which is published by the top nonprofit board capacity-building organization. The book addresses the norms of governance practice and expectations of board members including norms and roles relevant to generative governance and board social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiwirth, J. (2011, May 9). Community-engagement governance: Systems-wide governance in action. <em>Nonprofit Quarterly.</em></td>
<td>Dr. Freiwirth is a practitioner-scholar. A key aspect of generative governance is governing at the organizational boundaries. I selected this article, developed from research findings of the Engagement Governance Project, because it addresses engagement with internal and external stakeholders and uses a critical approach. It also discusses issues related to generative governance and board social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill, M. (2002, June 21). Building effective approaches to governance. <em>Nonprofit Quarterly.</em></td>
<td>Gill is a practitioner-scholar. This article was selected because it presents key findings from in-depth case studies on the governance practices of 20 nonprofit organizations. The article provides information on the common responsibilities and contextual differences in nonprofit governance practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, A. (2006). <em>Great boards for small groups: A 1-hour guide to governing a growing nonprofit.</em> Medfield, MA: Emerson and Church.</td>
<td>Context matters in qualitative and critical theory development. Robinson is a practitioner; specifically, he is a consultant and trainer. This book was selected because it held promise to provide insights into the context-related aspects of the governance of the case study organizations, particularly for the all-volunteer organization. The book addresses numerous issues related to generative governance and board social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trower, C. A., (2013). <em>Practitioner's guide to Governance as Leadership.</em> San Francisco, CA: Wiley.</td>
<td>Dr. Trower is a practitioner-scholar, who consults with boards, conducts governance research, and publishes. This book is based on Chait et al.’s (2005) governance as leadership model as applied in practice. I selected it because it includes substantial information about the practice of generative governance and held promise to inform the operationalization of the theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Case data.** As noted in Chapter One, the idea for this dissertation emanated in part from earlier research conducted through North Carolina State University’s Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative (Initiative). The data collected through the Initiative provided stocks of knowledge readily available to this bricoleur-theorist. The analysis of these data led to findings that further our understanding of the paradox of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofits and contributed to the development of the theoretical bricolage. The following provides an overview of the Initiative, describes the cases, and identifies the data generated from the Initiative that were available to support this theory-building dissertation.

**Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative overview.** The purpose of this Initiative was to explore the communication practices of nonprofit boards of directors with a focus on organizational identification, commitment, and collaborative decision-making. The project began in 2007. Studies conducted with the data collected through the initiative continue today.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers collected the data for the Initiative. Jessica Katz Jameson, Ph.D., Professor of Communication led the research team. Additional members of the team include Susan J. Barcinas (formerly Bracken), Ph.D., Associate Professor of Adult Education; Stan Holt, a doctoral student from the Department of Communication (now Dr. Holt); and this researcher, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development. Dr. Barcinas and Dr. Holt are no longer involved in the project, while Dr. Jameson and I continue both collaborative and independent research using data generated through the Initiative. Four 501(c)3 charitable nonprofit organizations, located in North Carolina’s Research Triangle, served as Initiative partners.
The Initiative was funded in part by a North Carolina State University (NCSU), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) Scholarly Project Award and by an award from the CHASS Institute for Nonprofits. The research team also received an NCSU Extension, Engagement, and Economic Development seed grant to continue the Initiative in collaboration with the local county’s Department of Human Services.

Jessica Katz Jameson, the principal investigator of the project, sought and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to the commencement of the research. The IRB has since deemed that this project (IRB #1157) was exempt from further review. The IRB made this exemption because data collection had ceased, current activities were limited to data analysis, and all identifiable information had been removed from the existing data. See Appendix C for a copy of the exemption letter, signed by Carol Mickelson, NCSU’s IRB Coordinator.

Case information. This dissertation study used data from two of the four aforementioned case study organizations. I selected them for the following reasons. First, the datasets for these two cases are more comprehensive and are largely comparable. Second, these nonprofits have key differences in their organizational contexts (e.g., one nonprofit has paid staff members whereas the other nonprofit is an all-volunteer organization and the board compositions of the two organizations are dissimilar). These differences held promise to provide unique insights leading to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the role that board social capital plays in generative governance. They also helped to illuminate the complexities of the paradox of board social capital. Third, these two nonprofits joined the Initiative at the same time that I joined the research team. Therefore, I have greater familiarity with the cases, which assisted me with the interpretation of the findings.
Case # 1: EMPOWERMENT (a pseudonym) is a 501(c)3 charitable, human services nonprofit organization, which was founded in 1978. EMPOWERMENT’s mission focuses on empowering and supporting homeless women and their children. The organization addresses its mission through education and outreach, the provision of direct services, and advocacy efforts.

When the research team collected the EMPOWERMENT data, a 12-13 member board of directors governed the organization (the number of board members varied during the data collection period). When data collection started, the board was predominately White (one person of color served on the board) and predominately female (there was one male board member). Approximately halfway through the data collection process, the EMPOWERMENT board made a strategic decision to diversify its board with a focus on increasing the number of male board members. By the end of data collection period, board composition had changed from almost exclusively female to an approximately 50/50 gender balance. In addition, several individuals who are members of historically oppressed racial and ethnic minority groups joined the board. No consumer representatives served on the board. While social class data are not available, the board members included a lawyer, a judge, an accountant, a college professor, and other high-level professionals suggesting that the board was comprised of middle and upper class individuals. A full-time executive director provided staff leadership and six staff members supported the organization’s operations. EMPOWERMENT’s budget was approximately $640,000.

Case # 2: DIGNITY (a pseudonym) is a 501(c)3 charitable, human services nonprofit organization, which was founded in 1987. It is an all-volunteer nonprofit. The board, therefore, both governs and manages the organization. DIGNITY is the local affiliate of a state and national organization. Its mission focuses on support, education, and advocacy for
people with a specific healthcare issue and their families. The organization addresses its mission through support groups, consumer and community education programs, and advocacy work at the local, state, and national levels.

DIGNITY had 11-12 predominately White and male board members (the number of board members varied during the data collection period). Several women served on the board including one African American woman. She was DIGNITY’s only board member of color. All of the board members had a personal connection to the health issue that is the focus of the organization’s mission. Several consumer representatives served on the board. While social class demographics are not available, the majority of the board members were professionals or managers (e.g., an attorney, a business owner, a retired university professor, and an information technology professional). Two of the consumer representatives on the board were unable to work due to their disabilities and received government assistance. Thus, DIGNITY’s board was more diverse in regards to socioeconomic status. A part-time consultant supported the board with volunteer management. The consultant typically attended board meetings. When we collected the DIGNITY data, the organization’s annual operating budget was approximately $40,000.

See Table 3.2 for further details and a comparison of key organizational and board characteristics for these two cases.
Table 3.2

**Case Organizations: Organizational and Board Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Case #1 EMPOWERMENT</th>
<th>Case #2 DIGNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of nonprofit</td>
<td>501(c)3 charitable nonprofit</td>
<td>501(c)3 charitable nonprofit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTEE* category</td>
<td>Human Services</td>
<td>Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year established</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership organization</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>$640,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff size</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Predominately White and female***</td>
<td>Predominately White and male Several consumer representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No consumer representatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *National Taxonomy of Exempt Organizations (NTEE). **While DIGNITY did not have any paid staff, it did have a part-time consultant who supported the board with volunteer management. *** Approximately half-way through the data collection process, the EMPOWERMENT board made a strategic decision to increase its number of male board members that resulted in its board composition changing from almost exclusively female to an approximately 50/50 gender balance by the end of the data collection period.

It is important to note that while both boards were primarily comprised of White board members when we collected the data, the city where these nonprofits are located and county where they provide services were racially and ethnically diverse. Furthermore, the people served by EMPOWERMENT were predominately poor, Black and Latina women. The people served by DIGNITY included both men and women, who were mostly White. In an effort to increase services to racially diverse individuals, the organization established an
initiative targeted at a local African American community; however, participation was limited. The people served by DIGNITY had varied socioeconomic levels.

Both case study organizations are located in the same rapidly growing city and county. I have not provided the name of the city and county in order to maintain the confidentiality of the nonprofit case organizations and the people who participated in the study. While the number of residents in all racial and ethnic groups is growing, the relative percentages are changing over time. Most notable is the rapid growth in the number of Hispanic or Latino residents. Table 3.3 provides data on the city’s and county’s racial and ethnic demographics.
Table 3.3

*Racial and Ethnic Diversity: City and County Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial and Ethnic Diversity</th>
<th>City Demographics</th>
<th>County Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 403,993</td>
<td></td>
<td>Population: 900,993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Race*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>City Demographics</th>
<th>County Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Native Alaskan</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>City Demographics</th>
<th>County Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* These data are from the 2010 U.S. Census. Z: Value is greater than zero but less than half of the unit of measure shown.

*Case datasets.* The datasets for the two cases are largely comparable. They include the following: (a) audio recordings of board meetings and retreats; (b) transcriptions of board meeting and retreat audio; (c) board meeting agendas; (d) board meeting supporting documents (e.g. financial statements, written committee reports); (e) researchers’ notes; (f) audio recordings of board and staff interviews; (g) transcripts of board and staff interviews; (h) board e-mail correspondence (DIGNITY case only); (i) board and key staff demographic
data; (j) board and staff surveys; and, (k) key organizational documents (e.g. by-laws, strategic plans, annual budgets).

The data that I analyzed for this study are the board meeting transcripts and board and staff interview transcripts. At least one research team member attended each board meeting and retreat held during the one-year data collection period. The research team members audio recorded the meetings, collected meeting agendas and supporting documents, and prepared researchers’ notes. Research team members also conducted and audio recorded the board and staff member interviews. Researchers’ notes were also prepared. Appendix D: Nonprofit Board Communication Study - Board and Staff Member Interview Protocol provides a copy of the protocol.

The meetings and interviews were audio recorded with a digital recorder. The audio recordings were professionally transcribed. Members of the research team reviewed the transcripts against the audio, corrected transcription errors, identified speakers where needed, and added information about nonverbal cues in brackets when we deemed that the information was critical to interpreting the meaning of a given statement (e.g., where speakers used sarcasm, humor, or expressed strong emotion). As part of the data cleaning process, we removed the first and last names of all speakers and persons mentioned during the meetings. Codes replaced the names. A code key was created for each case organization to assist researchers in identifying individuals as needed to support data analysis and the interpretation of findings. In accordance with IRB standards, the data and the name keys were stored in separate, secure locations accessible only to research team members.

Additional case data were used to provide background and context (e.g., board demographic data and organizational bylaws) or to aid with interpretation (e.g., board
meeting agendas and researcher notes). I did not analyze the board and staff surveys because they provide quantitative data.

**Researcher reflection journal.** The critical nature of the study and the bricolage approach require researcher reflexivity. Therefore, a reflection journal was developed and used over the course of the study. In addition to supporting ongoing reflection, the journal also served as a source of data. I present further information about the reflection journal in the Trustworthiness section of this chapter.

**Data Analysis**

This study employed textual analysis (alternately called text analysis). Textual analysis is compatible with interpretive and critical approaches to theory building (Swanson & Chermack, 2013). Therefore, it was an appropriate analytical method for this study.

The analysis of texts has been employed in a range of HRD studies. Examples include the following: Carliner et al. (2015), which analyzed job descriptions; Ehlen et al. (2014), which analyzed interview transcripts; Morntountak (2013), which analyzed a novel; and Zachmeier and Cho (2014), which analyzed journal articles. It has also been used in HRD dissertation studies; e.g., Chang (2010) and Gundlach (1994), which analyzed interview transcripts and Auluck (2011), which analyzed HRD/training job advertisements.

Textual analysis can focus on different types of textual data. A ‘text’ can be written, spoken, or visual (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015). A wide range of recorded communication can serve as the object of textual analysis, e.g., books, organizational documents, interview transcripts, social media, discourses, audiovisual media, photographs, and paintings. Textual analysis can also focus on varying amounts of textual data “because it is not fixed to specific units of analysis” (Pälli, Tienari, & Vaara, 2010, p. 924).
By its very nature, textual analysis is interpretive (Pälli et al., 2010). It can be used to explore the content and/or the meaning of text. Textual analysis can be particularly useful in interpretive theory building because “finding systematic differences in data from different types of sources may be theoretically important” (Brown-Saracino, Thurk, & Fine, 2008, p. 551). For example, by analyzing the text of organizational documents and the transcripts of board meetings, researchers may find differences between written organizational policy and enacted organizational policy.

Scholars who study organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, “can apply textual analysis to a range of research questions” (Pälli et al., 2010, p. 924). The use of textual analysis requires scholars to make strategic choices concerning their theoretical frameworks and selected texts (Pälli et al., 2010). However, the number of texts selected can vary from single texts to a substantial number of texts.

As previously discussed, I strategically selected four frames for this study’s theoretical framework. They are social constructionism, social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT. I presented my justification for the use of these frames in Table 1.1.

The texts analyzed for the disciplined imagination thought trials came from the previously discussed data sources, i.e., the book Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards, select practitioner literature, case data, and my researcher’s reflection journal. These texts were selected for various reasons, which I described in Table 3.1. Relevant data from these sources (e.g., text pertinent to the questions posed in the thought trials, text related to generative governance and its key components, text relevant to board social capital, and text related to diversity or race and ethnicity) were systematically extracted and used to create new documents for analysis.
Further information on the data analysis conducted through the disciplined imagination thought trials is presented in Chapter Four: Theory-Building Research Findings. I provide an example of a thought trial format in Appendix B and a thought trial excerpt in Figure 4.1.

**My Story**

It is somewhat unusual for HRD scholars to present their stories in their academic writing (Bierema, 2002). However, because I hold an advocacy/participatory worldview (Creswell, 2007) and employed critical perspectives to frame and conduct my research, reflecting on and sharing my story was essential to my work. Reflection and self-reflexivity were necessary to “remain critically attentive to issues of voice, equity, differential interests and the manipulative power” that was embedded in my research (Fenwick, 2004, p. 205).

Sharing my story was a means to foster reflection during the proposal development process. It is also a way for me to begin a dialogue with those who will read my work. Therefore, in this section I discuss my experience, positionality, and assumptions that have influenced the selection of this topic, my understanding of the problem, the development of my research question, my selection of framing literatures, and my research methodology.

**My experience.** I am a ‘scholar-practitioner’ (Moats & McLean, 2009; Short & Shindell, 2009). For more than 25 years, I have had the privilege of working with, serving on, and researching nonprofit boards. During this period, I have seen the bright and dark sides of nonprofit governance. Several factors led me to choose this dissertation topic. These factors include my belief in the importance of the work of charitable nonprofits, my conviction that volunteer boards can and should play leadership roles in nonprofit organizations, my concern that nonprofit governance can (and all too often does) reinforce
systemic oppression, and my commitment to fostering social change through adult education/critical HRD education, research, and practice.

I spent the first half of my career working as an administrator in nonprofit organizations that provide services to people with disabilities; the second half as an administrator in university-based, nonprofit academic centers. Currently, I work as a consultant whose practice focuses on building the capacity of nonprofit organizations and nonprofit academic centers to advance their missions. My work involves organization and human resource development including board development.

I have a Master’s degree in public administration, with a concentration in nonprofit organization management, from Seton Hall University. My master’s thesis, completed under the direction of Dr. Naomi Bailin Wish, was a qualitative study that focused on nonprofit governance. My research furthered our understanding of the influence that board members who live with developmental disabilities have on the governance on nonprofits that serve people with developmental disabilities.

I am completing a Doctor of Education degree. I based my decision to pursue an adult education degree with an HRD specialization because of the discipline’s alignment with my topics of interest, my commitment to the pursuit of social justice, and my applied focus. During my tenure in the program, I pursued three streams of scholarship (nonprofit board communication, anti-racist scholarship, and engaged scholarship) each of which influenced the subject and design of this study. For several years, I had the privilege to serve as a member of an interdisciplinary research team headed by Dr. Jessica Jameson, a professor in the Department of Communication. Jessica is also a member of my committee. Our board communication research increased my interest in generative governance, board social capital, board conflict, and engaged scholarship. Our collaborative research has resulted in the
development of numerous conference papers and presentations on nonprofit governance and engaged scholarship topics. Our book chapter, *Getting it all out on the table: Eliciting diverse perspectives to foster generative governance* was published in the book, *You and Your Nonprofit Board*. Our manuscript titled *Nonprofit governance in action: A study of board meeting communication in an all-volunteer organization* is currently under review.

I also had the privilege to work with fellow students Thomas Easley (now Dr. Easley) and Hassel Morrison (now Dr. Morrison) on research related to issues of race and racism. Our collaborative work has increased my understanding of what systemic oppression *really* means, and the extent and pervasiveness of its impact on all of our lives, both the oppressed and the oppressors. My work with Thomas and Hassel has also helped me to understand the influence that power, privilege, and positionality have on my teaching, research, and practice as well as on my daily life. Because these men have generously shared their professional knowledge and life experiences with me, I am forever changed.

My research with Thomas focused on the preparation of anti-racist scholars. Our work led to multiple conference papers and presentations as well as an opportunity to serve as guest lecturers in a doctoral level, qualitative methods class. In addition, we were invited to write a book review on the *Handbook of Race in Adult Education: A Resource for Dialogue on Racism* for the journal, *Adult Education Quarterly*. It was an honor to review this important work, which was edited by leading scholars in the field and includes chapters from contributing authors whose work we so greatly admire. Subsequently, I used the knowledge gained through my work with Thomas to lead a pilot initiative designed to build faculty members’ intercultural competency for the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). In addition to my leadership role, I
participated in the initiative as a learning community member as a means to continue to my personal journal towards intercultural competency.

My research with Hassel focused on the role of power in program planning and the development of culturally competent planners. Our work, *Multiculturally Competent Program Planning: Planning in the Face of Power*, received an award at the Annual Adult and Higher Education Research Symposium.

These varied experiences led me to combine my interest in governance research and commitment to the use of critical perspectives by collaborating with other nonprofit governance scholars on two book chapters. I co-authored a book chapter titled *Out of the shadows: Non-profit governance research from democratic and critical perspectives* (Guo, Metelsky, and Bradshaw, 2013) and am currently completing an invited textbook chapter titled *Nonprofit governance from critical and democratic perspectives: Challenging and changing the status quo* (Metelsky & Guo, in preparation).

These experiences greatly contributed to my interest in examining issues of race and racism in nonprofit governance. They also served to build my intercultural competency and support my ongoing reflexivity; thus, increasing my capacity to engage in critical research and build a critical social theory.

Finally, my longstanding commitment to service learning has led to work on engaged scholarship. I was privileged to do this work with Dr. Patti H. Clayton (a nationally known expert on the scholarship of engagement), Dr. Jessica Jameson, and Dr. Stan Holt (a member of the nonprofit board communication research team, who at that time was a doctoral candidate in Public Administration). This work includes research and presentations on various service-learning topics including service learning in nonprofit academic programs and research service learning. My work with these scholars has increased my commitment to
engaged scholarship. It also led, in part, to my decision to design a CPAR project for Phase 3: Application of this dissertation’s theory-building process.

Knowledge gained through my doctoral courses also contributed to the development and implementation of this study. Topics of study that informed this dissertation include race and racism in adult education (introduced to me by the late Dr. Colleen Wiessner), the social construction of knowledge (introduced to me by Dr. Tueré Bowles), and social capital and theory building (introduced to me by Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker).

Positionality. Every person is born into socio-culturally defined positions (e.g., gender, race, class, and sexual orientation) that influence her or his life (Misawa, 2010). These aspects of our identity are not essential qualities of who we are, rather they are “relational, complex, and fluid positions” (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002, p. 46). The concept of positionality addresses the contextual and relational factors that contribute to our identity and influence how we come to know and understand the world (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002). Therefore, it is important for scholars who employ critical perspectives and interpretive approaches to reflect on and discuss their positionality.

I am a White, middle-aged, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied female. This complex web of positions privileges me, at times oppresses me, and always influences my life, my scholarship, and my practice. I benefit from a wide range of unearned privileges that come to me because of the color of my skin, my age, my class status, and my sexual orientation. These privileges blind me to the ways in which socially constructed conceptions of race and ethnicity, age, social class, and sexual orientation oppress others. My gender and working class background, however, have provided me with some life experiences that help me to understand issues of oppression and sensitize me to issues of power and privilege. However, this limited understanding is insufficient to counteract the blinders that come with
my privilege, particularly, my white privilege. Therefore, it was imperative that I engaged in ongoing critical reflection during the development and implementation of this study to uncover ways in which my privilege was influencing my work and to develop means to address such influences.

**Trustworthiness**

Good theory informs practice and advances the field of HRD (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Thus, it is important to assess the quality of new theory. Trustworthiness is important in establishing the merit of a qualitative study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It signifies that study findings “are worth paying attention to” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 290). Therefore, this qualitative, theory-building study used two mechanisms to assess the trustworthiness of the theoretical findings, i.e., an evaluation and an audit trail.

**Evaluation.** Theorists must evaluate the quality of their theories and they need criteria to support their assessment (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). A number of scholars including Bacharach (1989), Patterson (1983 as cited in Torraco & Holton, 2002), and Corbin and Strauss (1990) have developed criteria which can be used to assess HRD theory (Torraco & Holton, 2002).

Bacharach’s (1989) criteria are falsifiability and utility. Patterson’s (1983 as cited in Torraco and Holton, 2002) criteria for good theory are (a) importance, (b) preciseness and clarity, (c) parsimony or simplicity, (d) comprehensiveness, (e) operationality, (f) empirical validity or verifiability, (g) fruitfulness, and (h) practicality. Neither Bacharach’s nor Patterson’s criteria are wholly relevant to this study because they emanate from a positivist perspective. Bacharach’s criteria, for example, require theory to go beyond explaining the phenomenon that the theory models. For Bacharach, good theory must also make predictions
about the phenomenon (Bacharach, 1989). In interpretive theory building, however, “there is no expectation that theory will contain predictive power” (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011, p. 9).

Corbin and Strauss’s (1990) criteria for good theory include criteria related to the research process and criteria related to the grounding of the findings in empirical data. While their criteria emanate from an interpretivist perspective, they are not applicable to this study because of the specificity of the criteria to the grounded theory method. For example, Corbin and Strauss’s (1990) criteria include the following: The Research Process, Criterion #5: “What were some of the hypotheses pertaining to relations among categories? On what grounds were they formulated and tested?” (p. 17) and Empirical Grounding of Findings, Criterion #6: “Has ‘process’ [the grounded theory process] been taken into account?” (p. 19).

Lincoln and Lynham (2011) developed 13 criteria for the assessment of HRD theory from an interpretive perspective. Their criteria are not specific to a particular theory-building method. They “reconstructed, reformulated, and renamed” eight of Patterson’s criteria to reflect an interpretive, theory-building approach (Lincoln and Lynham, 2011, p. 3) and developed five new criteria.

Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) eight re-named and re-formulated criteria are (a) meaningfulness and understandability, (b) thick description and insightfulness, (c) narrative elegance, (d) transferability, (e) mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic, (f) empirical verifiability, (g) fruitfulness and provocativeness, and (h) usefulness and applicability. Their five new criteria are (i) compellingness, (j) saturation, (k) prompt to action, (l) fittingness, and (m) transferability and transportability. Table 3.4 provides descriptions of these criteria.
Table 3.4

Criteria for Assessing Theory in Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eight re-named and re-formulated criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness and understandability</td>
<td>... provide explanation and deep understanding of actual events, behaviours, or the meaning-making activities of stakeholders and respondents; be accepted by professionals and stakeholders (co-constructors of the theory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick description and insightfulness</td>
<td>... be understandable and insightful; exhibit reasonable structural corroboration (be internally and contextually consistent); accommodate some ambiguity (a hallmark characteristic of human affairs) inherent in the sense- and meaning-making and socially constructed activities of respondents and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative elegance</td>
<td>... be either simple or complex, depending on the matter or phenomenon being theorized; be understandable beyond the scientific community (i.e. accessible in natural language), narratively elegant, and conceptually rich, provocative and evocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>... be as complete as is possible, given its intended range (local, regional or other), so that other users may see the extent to which the theory may be useful in their own situation/context; enable individuals to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic</td>
<td>... display mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic; be made operational, i.e. the descriptive and explanatory framework (concepts, logic and propositions) are made explicit and thus able to be put into action; be capable of being tested by other researchers, and enjoy stakeholders assent to its usefulness for their lives and contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical verifiability</td>
<td>... be supported by ‘lived experience,’ be verified by the respondents that it ‘rings true,’ or that it reflects some aspect of their experience, meaning-making, or observation; match some element of socially constructed life; generate both new social scientific knowledge, and new respondent learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruitfulness and provocativeness</td>
<td>... be fruitful and provocative, i.e. illuminate some aspect of social life, and suggest new avenues of research and/or description and/or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness and applicability</td>
<td>... be useful and applicable to ordinary persons, suggesting ways of being in the world, or ways of altering one’s circumstances in some context; provide new ways of seeing old situations, such that meaningful human change can occur; provide models for human flourishing, as living knowledge, and for practical application and high organizational performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five additional/new criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compellingness</td>
<td>... demonstrate the ability to move stakeholders to action by satisfying two components: (1) findings that mirror the ineffable experience of respondent audiences (fidelity, or internal validity), and (2) creating a prompt to action on the part of a wider set of audiences/stakeholders (not just the researcher or research funders) who have a legitimate stake in the findings, including for example, other communities.</td>
</tr>
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(continued)
Table 3.4 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturation</td>
<td>... invoke informing social constructions and meaning-making narratives such that little new knowledge is forthcoming, i.e.: (1) narratives and respondents' explanations are exhaustively sampled; (2) multiple examples of the phenomenon can be found independently (other researchers). Be buttressed by multiple examples of the phenomenon: be saturated with exemplars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt to action</td>
<td>... provide a good conceptual understanding of practice; proceeding from compellingness (an inextricably linked criterion) such that researchers and respondents understand where and how to move next in a given context, including how to refine, hone, sharpen, and revise practice, and to alter performance in the light of new information; connect theory with action and learning for continuous refinement and improvement, illustrating practicality of the theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fittingness</td>
<td>... be rooted in local context, native and indigenous perspectives, meanings and narratives, and exhibit ‘fit’ with the notion of equifinality, i.e. recognize that there can be no final solution to any given problem – rather that there are multiple, endlessly creative responses or solutions, any of which might be satisfactory in a given context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability and transportability</td>
<td>... enable transferability – i.e. the ability in individuals (through interaction between the knower and the known) to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other, contexts; and transportability – i.e. the applicability to different populations, of utility in varying contexts, with varying populations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Lincoln and Lynham (2011), criteria for evaluating applied theory should reflect the paradigms used in the development of the theory. While their criteria held promise in assessing the quality of my preliminary theory from an interpretive perspective, I could not use it to assess the quality of the theory from a critical perspective. Therefore, criteria for assessing the quality of critical theories were sought. While no criteria were found that explicitly assess theory from a critical perspective, the adult education literature offered
criteria that could support such an assessment. These criteria are part of Brookfield’s (1992) criteria for formal theory building in adult education.

Brookfield’s (1992) criteria fall within three categories. These categories are epistemological, communicative, and critically analytic. Brookfield’s critically analytic criteria do not explicitly address a critical perspective, as in critical theory. Rather, his critically analytic criteria address the manner in which a theory-building study invites and exemplifies “critical scrutiny” (Brookfield, 1992, p. 79). Yet, in reviewing the descriptions of Brookfield’s critically analytic criteria, they held promise as a means to assess a theory’s critical, social change focus.

Brookfield’s critically analytic criteria are assumptive awareness, ethical attention, contextual sensitivity, reformulative sensitivity, and value judgmental explicitness.

‘Assumptive awareness’ relates to the extent that the assumptions, on which the theory is based, are explicitly stated (Brookfield, 1992). For this critical study, I suggest that the theory should specify assumptions drawn from CRT; e.g., the pervasiveness of racism and the need to present an oppositional voice (Zamudio et al., 2010).

‘Ethical attention’ focuses on acknowledging and naming the ethical dilemmas of practice that are implicit in the theory. For this critical study, the abductively derived conjecture that board social capital has both positive and negative implications for generative governance suggests that the board may face ethical dilemmas in the practice of generative governance. Thus, the theory should specify any ethical dilemmas uncovered during the research process that relate to critical issues, i.e., issues of power, privilege, and oppression.

‘Contextual sensitivity’ relates to the degree to which the “context specific nature” of the theory is acknowledged (Brookfield, 1992, p. 88). For this critical study, as stated in a central assumption of CRT, context matters (Zamudio et al., 2010). Therefore, the theoretical
bricolage needs to describe contextual issues as they relate to the theory. Furthermore, the theory should also address the issue of transferability to other contexts.

‘Reformulative sensitivity’ addresses the extent that the theory evolves over time in response to new empirical findings, ongoing critical analysis, and “the theorist’s own new interpretive leaps forward” (Brookfield, 1992, p. 89). Given that this study’s aim is to develop a preliminary theory, Brookfield’s reformulative sensitivity criterion has limited applicability. However, this criterion has implications for a broader research agenda focused on this phenomenon. Specifically, it has implications for the proposed post-dissertation CPAR study.

‘Value judgmental explicitness’ relates to the extent that the theory can play “in the realization of certain social and political values and in improving social and political conditions,” i.e., affect social change (Brookfield, 1992, p. 90). Therefore, the theory should specify the values that ground and guide the theory and convey the intended role of the theory toward the end of fostering social change. Table 3.5 summarizes these criteria.
Table 3.5

*Brookfield’s Critically Analytic Evaluation Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptive awareness</td>
<td>The assumptions, on which the theory is based, are explicitly stated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical attention</td>
<td>The ethical dilemmas of practice that are implicit in the theory are acknowledged and named.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual sensitivity</td>
<td>The specific contextual nature of the theory is acknowledged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformulative sensitivity</td>
<td>The theory evolves over time in response to new empirical findings, ongoing critical analysis, and interpretive leaps forward by the theorist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value judgmental explicitness</td>
<td>The theory specifies the values that ground and guide it. It conveys the intended role of the theory toward the end of fostering social change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To create a comprehensive evaluative framework for this study, I added Brookfield’s (1992) five criteria to Lincoln and Lynham's (2011) 13 criteria. Thus, the preliminary theory was evaluated against 18 criteria, which assessed the theory from both interpretive and critical perspectives. See Appendix G: Theory Assessment Template for the template I created to support the assessment of my preliminary theory.

**Audit trail.** Quality dissertations provide information that helps readers to understand the steps the researcher took to complete the dissertation research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Such a description provides transparency regarding the research process (Saumure & Given, 2008) and can help readers to understand what led to the research findings, interpretations, and ultimately to the study’s conclusions. It can also inform judgments about the dependability of the procedures used (Schwandt, 2007) and the credibility of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In addition, a detailed description can provide guidance for other scholars who want to employ the same procedures in their own research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).
A researcher can use an audit trail to collect the information needed for such a description. An audit trail is a “systematically maintained document system” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 12). It may include all or some of the following elements: a statement of the study’s theoretical framework, a description of the procedures, the study data, researcher’s notes, the instruments used to collect and analyze data, an explanation of the concepts or models developed, and a statement of the study’s findings (Schwandt, 2007). An audit trail can also document any changes in the research design or data collection strategies (Saumure & Given, 2008) as well as any analytical processes that lead to dead ends or were unsuccessful (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

For qualitative studies, the audit trail serves dual purposes. The researcher uses it as a recordkeeping mechanism as previously described. Equally important, the audit trail serves as a mechanism to promote reflexivity (Schwandt, 2007).

For studies that employ a critical perspective, reflexivity requires the researcher to do more than keep records in a research journal (Dowling, 2006). Reflexivity in a critical study requires the researcher to examine “the political and social processes that inform the research process” (Dowling, 2006, p. 12). Its aim is to “surface issues about the politics of knowledge production” (Orr & Bennett, 2009, p. 86). Furthermore, the critical theorist must seek to gain a consciousness of how her/his “political opinions, religious beliefs, gender role, racial self-concept” have been “influenced by the dominant culture and subcultures” (Kincheloe, 2005a, p. 10).

Therefore, I developed an electronic research journal that includes many of the aforementioned types of information found in a quality audit trial. The journal served as a mechanism for ongoing documentation of process and procedures. It also provided a mechanism for ongoing reflection on critical issues, e.g., positionality, power, oppression,
and their influence on my research. In addition to serving as part of the audit trail, the reflective elements of the research journal also served as data as discussed earlier in this chapter (Janesick, 2011).

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three presented an in-depth description of the study’s methodology. The chapter began with an overview of the study. Following was a discussion of the use of theory-building research in doctoral dissertations. I presented information about the study’s bricolage approach next. A discussion of the selection of the study’s theory-building framework (the General Method) followed. The research process, theory-building phases, sources of data, and the data analysis process were addressed next. Following was the presentation of my story. The chapter concluded with a discussion of trustworthiness. The next chapter presents the study’s theory-building research findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: THEORY-BUILDING RESEARCH FINDINGS

The previous chapter provided an overview of the study’s methodology. This chapter addresses the study’s theory-building research findings. The chapter begins with a discussion of the gaps and inconsistencies found in the HRD theory-building research literature and ways to address them. Next, I present my findings related to bricolage. Given the emerging nature of the bricolage, I document the evolution of my methodology by discussing how the theoretical bricolage was developed. Following is a discussion of my findings related to disciplined imagination. I present a detailed description of the disciplined imagination thought trials. Next is a discussion of the study's theory-building research contributions. A chapter summary follows.

Gaps and Inconsistencies in the HRD Theory-building Research Literature

My review of the literature and experience conducting this study led to the identification of gaps and inconsistencies in the HRD theory-building research literature. These gaps and inconsistencies are related to bricolage, the General Method, disciplined imagination, theory evaluation, and guidance for HRD theorists.

**Bricolage approach.** Turnbull (2002a) made a major contribution to HRD theory-building research by promoting the use bricolage in her article, “Bricolage as an alternative approach to HRD theory building.” Her theory-building work has been cited as an exemplar (e.g., see Storberg-Walker, 2006 and Torraco, 2002, 2004).

Despite Turnbull’s support for bricolage as an alternative HRD theory-building method and recognition of her work by other HRD theory-building scholars, I did not find evidence that HRD theorists have embraced the bricolage approach in the ensuing years. My specific search for ‘bricolage’ in the journals *Advances in Developing Human Resources, Human Resource Development Review, Human Research Development Quarterly*, and
Human Resource Development International found a number of studies that cited Turnbull’s bricolage article (e.g., Fagan, 2014; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; and Grenier, 2015). However, these and other HRD scholars who have cited Turnbull did not use a bricolage approach to build theory or discuss bricolage as a theory-building method. Rather, they discussed the use of bricolage for different purposes or addressed other aspects of Turnbull’s article.

I also conducted a general search for ‘bricolage’ and ‘human resource development.’ This search found an HRD conference poster presentation. The study addressed in the presentation used auto-ethnographic bricolage to examine the cultural influences on learning technologies in the U.S. health care industry (Ekeh, Leitch, & Iyer, 2014). However, the title of the presentation makes it unclear whether this is a theory-building study, and unfortunately, no further information on the study was found.

My search for HRD studies that used a bricolage approach to build theory was not exhaustive. However, its results lend support to my contention that the field has not widely embraced bricolage as a theory-building method. Yet, my experience using bricolage mirrors the experience of Turnbull and supports her finding that the emerging insights were “rich and varied, demonstrating the value of theory building through bricolage” (Turnbull, 2002a, p. 126). This raises the question, ‘Why haven’t more HRD theorists embraced the use of bricolage for building interpretive theories?’ Reasons may include a lack of knowledge regarding bricolage, the limited HRD literature on the bricolage method, and the lack of exemplar studies with the notable exception of Turnbull’s work.

The field would benefit by efforts to fill gaps related to the use of bricolage as an applied theory-building research method. However, bricolage is emergent and evolving by nature (Wibberley, 2012). Therefore, developing HRD ‘how to’ publications on the use of bricolage in applied theory-building research may not be feasible. Furthermore, a key
strength of bricolage is its creativity, which supports the development of innovative theories. Consequently, the development and promotion of a ‘cookie cutter’ bricolage process is not advisable. Therefore, I suggest that the field of HRD needs publications that report on exemplary bricolage studies. These publications could both enlighten scholars and inspire them to use a bricolage approach, particularly when they are planning theory-building research on complex phenomena and when social justice/social change is an objective. Such publications should provide detailed methods sections, report the studies’ findings (both methodological and theoretical), and present the theories developed from them.

The publication of bricolage studies, however, may be challenging given the typical word limits imposed for journal articles. Yet, comprehensive articles would inform both current and aspiring theory-building scholars about the bricolage method and demonstrate the benefits of a bricolage approach. I suggest, therefore, that HRD journal editors and editorial boards consider alternate formats for the publication of exemplary bricolage studies. One option is the publication of multiple articles on the same study, e.g., a detailed methods article and a research report article that presents the study’s theoretical findings. These articles could be published in one journal issue or in consecutive issues. Alternately, given the dearth of HRD bricolage studies, an HRD journal could develop a special issue devoted to the use of bricolage in theory building. The special issue editors could solicit articles on the bricolage method and/or request articles that report on theory-building studies that used this research approach. The editorial board could raise word limits for reports of bricolage studies to provide sufficient space to allow for detailed methods sections and the presentation of theoretical results in the same article. Alternately, multiple articles that report on different aspects of the same study (e.g., methods, theory-building research findings, and/or theoretical findings) could be published in the special issue. It is important to note, however, that unless
more current and aspiring HRD theorists design and conduct theory-building research studies that employ a bricolage approach, there may be insufficient articles for publication. Therefore, as a field we may need to work to provide training, find mentors, and offer financial support for theorists ready to learn and use this productive theory-building method. This would be an important step in advancing CHRD by supporting theory-building research on complex phenomena toward the end of developing HRD interventions that have an explicit social justice/social change aim.

It is my hope that this dissertation study will help to fill some gaps related to the use of bricolage as an applied theory-building method. My presentation of the bricolage literature and the detailed description of my methods were written with this end in mind. I hope others will do the same because I, and other HRD scholars, still have much to learn about this productive theory-building method.

**General Method.** Lynham (2002b) has made a significant contribution to HRD theory-building research with her overarching theory-building method, i.e., the general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. As discussed previously, numerous HRD theorists and theorists from other applied disciplines have embraced this method.

While I found the General Method to be useful, I uncovered some gaps and inconsistencies in the literature related to this method. The gap relates to theory-building strategies. The inconsistencies relate to Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 2: Operationalization, Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation, and Phase 5: Continuous refinement and development.

**Theory-building strategies.** As discussed in Chapter Three, Lynham’s (2002b) General Method incorporates two theory-building strategies, i.e., theory (deductive) to research (inductive) and research (inductive) to theory (deductive) (see Figure 2.2). However, as previously noted, abduction is not included in Lynham’s conceptualization of the General
Method. Yet, as I discussed in Chapters Two and Three, scholars are increasingly recognizing the benefits of abductive reasoning and calling for its increased use in HRD theory building.

As noted in Chapter Three, Sjøberg et al. (2008) adapted the General Method to incorporate abduction into the theory-building process for the disciple of software engineering. Their adapted version of the General Method (see Figure 3.1) includes two theory-building strategies, i.e., theorizing (deductive) to practice (abductive/inductive) and practice (abductive/inductive) to theorizing (deductive).

Neither Lynham’s (2002b) nor Sjøberg et al.’s (2008) theory-building process fit my study. This is because abductive insights led to the development of my research question and informed the study’s methodology. Furthermore, an inductive approach was best suited to answer my research question and supported my philosophical stance. Thus, I uncovered a gap in the General Method’s theory-building strategies. Therefore, I adapted the General Method. My adapted version includes the following strategies: (a) abductive (practice) to inductive (theorizing) to abductive (practice) and (b) inductive (theorizing) to abductive (practice) to inductive (theorizing) (see Figure 3.2). While on paper this appears to be a linear process, in reality, it was a recursive process that involved moving back and forth between the strategies.

**Theory-building phases.** In her discussion of the phases of the General Method, Lynham (2002b) states that each *complete* applied theory-building research effort involves some form of the five general method theory-building phases regardless of the specific theory-building method employed by the researcher-theorist. As previously discussed, these phases are conceptualization, operationalization, application, confirmation or disconfirmation, and continuous refinement and development (Lynham, 2002b). Lynham’s
reference to ‘complete’ means that the theorist performs all five phases of the General Method process. However, the theorist does not complete all the phases at once (Storberg-Walker, 2006). This is because the “recursive nature of applied theory-building research involves the ongoing study, adaptation, development, and improvement of the theory,” which “requires further inquiry in the real world” (Lynham, 2002b, pp. 233-234). Thus, the General Method phases are completed over the course of multiple studies.

While Lynham (2002b) states that all the General Method phases must be completed over time, as discussed in Chapter Three, other theory-building scholars maintain that in studies which employ qualitative methods, certain phases of the method are not completed or are only partially completed. These phases are Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 2: Operationalization, Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation, and Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development. The following sections respectively address inconsistencies related to each of these General Method phases.

**Phase 2: Operationalization.** Lynham (2002b) contends that the operationalization of theory must be completed in some form in all applied theory-building studies. She states that operationalization is necessary so that a theory can be “confirmed and/or tested in its real-world context” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 232). However, other theory-building scholars have stated that operationalization has a limited role or no role in interpretive theory-building studies; specifically, those that use the social constructionist and grounded theory methods (e.g., see Torraco, 2002 and Turnbull, 2002c).

Given this inconsistency, as I planned my dissertation it was unclear to me what role, if any, Phase 2: Operationalization would play in my study. It was unclear because while my study is interpretive, I was not using the social constructionist or grounded theory method. Bricolage is evolving in nature, therefore, I planned for the partial completion of Phase 2
with the knowledge that as the study progressed I could revisit this decision and revise my methodology as deemed necessary.

As my work progressed, it became increasingly clear that operationalizing the theory (i.e., explicitly tying the conceptualized theory to practice) could support the further development of the theory, particularly in the application phase. Furthermore, operationalization seemed necessary for the achievement of my ultimate aim; i.e., social change. As discussed earlier, my hope is to work with diverse practitioners to identify unjust governance practices and to develop and implement socially-just practices that support generative governance. Operationalizing the theory seemed to be an important step toward this end.

This new understanding of how operationalization could advance my dissertation work and inform a broader research agenda supported my decision to include Phase 2: Operationalization in this study. However, it was unclear what operationalization ‘looks like’ in qualitative theory-building studies and I was unsure of how to proceed. Given the flexibility of the General Method, I decided to begin the work of the application phase with the hope that it would either provide insights on how to move forward or lead to me conclude that operationalization was irrelevant to my dissertation study.

The preliminary work for the application phase involved the design of a CPAR study. This work led me to consider operationalization issues because one of my proposed research questions explicitly addresses practice. Therefore, operationalizing the theory by linking the concepts of the theory (e.g., collective sensemaking) to corresponding board practices (e.g., board deliberation processes) seemed necessary to apply the theory in practice.

While I determined that operationalization was important for my dissertation study and broader research agenda, what does this finding mean for other qualitative theory-
building research? Is Phase 2: Operationalization essential for all complete applied theory-building studies including interpretive studies? I am not able to answer this question because I am a novice theorist who has never used other qualitative theory-building methods. However, because HRD is an applied disciplined, operationalization seems prudent and particularly important for critical theory-building studies have that social justice/social change as a goal.

Given that the operationalization of theory can support the dual objectives of informing research and practice, I suggest that all HRD theorists who use interpretive and critical theory-building approaches consider how the full or partial completion of Phase 2: Operationalization might inform their theory-building work and support the use of their theories in practice. Furthermore, I recommend that HRD theorists explore what operationalization ‘looks like’ in interpretive and critical theory-building studies given that operationalization supports the application of theory rather than the confirmation or disconfirmation of theory. This is particularly important in the development of critical theories because critical theories have a social change aim. Therefore, theorists who use interpretive approaches to build critical theories need to determine how to best translate the conceptual elements of their theories for the dual purposes of framing future research and informing social change in practice.

**Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation.** Like the other General Method phases, Lynham (2002b) contends that Phase 3 is carried out in some form in all complete theory-building studies. Yet, other HRD theory-building scholars have stated that Phase 3 has no role in interpretive theory-building studies; specifically, studies that use the social constructionist or grounded theory methods (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002c).
Confirmation or disconfirmation is not applicable to interpretive theory-building methods because the purpose of these approaches is to develop theory that “interprets the social world” in which there is *no absolute truth* [emphasis added] (Turnbull, 2002c, p. 319). If there is no absolute truth, then theory cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed.

This dissertation study’s methods, specifically bricolage and disciplined imagination, are interpretive in nature. Furthermore, the idea of an absolute truth conflicts with the study’s social constructionist frame. Therefore, I deleted Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation from my study.

My finding that confirmation or disconfirmation is incompatible with the bricolage and disciplined imagination theory-building methods is at odds with Lynham’s (2002b) contention that complete theory-building studies require the completion of all five phases of the General Method. This finding lends support to Torraco (2002) and Turnbull’s (2002) assertion that confirmation or disconfirmation has no role in qualitative theory-building research. Thus, I contend this is another inconsistency in the General Method and that bricolage and disciplined imagination are two additional interpretive theory-building methods that are incompatible with Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation.

**Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development.** When I planned this study, early drafts of its methodology did not include Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 5: Ongoing refinement and development. I did not include this phase because prominent HRD theory-building scholars (e.g., Torraco, 2002 and Turnbull, 2002c) state that there is no role for the ongoing refinement and development of theory in theories built using interpretive approaches. However, given the evolving nature of the bricolage approach, I kept reevaluating my methods and eventually concluded that Phase 5 was applicable given the aims of this study. I came to understand that in interpretive theory development, the ongoing refinement and
development of a theory is not solely related to the original conception of the theory. I contend that the completion of Phase 5 is also appropriate when theorists seek to assess the theory’s applicability in other situations or contexts and/or reassess its continued relevance in changing environments. Therefore, I determined that Phase 5 held promise to support the refinement of my theory for applicability to a range of nonprofit organizations. Thus, potentially expanding its applicability beyond 501(c)3 human services nonprofits, which are the focus of this study. It can also support refinement of the theory in today’s rapidly changing environment, particularly as it relates to demographics and the political landscape.

This new understanding led me to consider whether Phase 5 might be applicable to all theory-building studies that employ interpretive approaches. I contend that it depends on the aims of the theorist and the focus on the study. When theorists seek refine their theory, assess its applicability in other situations or contexts, and/or reassess the theory’s continued relevance in changing environments then Phase 5 is applicable. However, some interpretive theorists (e.g., social constructionists) may purposefully choose to build theory that is narrow in scope but “interesting and important in its own right” and rich in its in-depth description and explanation of the phenomenon that is the subject of the theory (Turnbull, 2002c, p. 321). In such situations, the completion of Phase 5 is unnecessary.

Given these findings, I argue, that there is an inconsistency in the General Method related to Phase 5. While Lynham (2002b) states that this phase is completed in all theory-building studies and other HRD theorists state that it is not completed in interpretive studies (e.g., see Torraco, 2002 and Turnbull, 2002c), I contend that Phase 5 is an optional phase for interpretive theory-building studies. Theorists may elect to exclude or include this phase based on the objectives of their studies, their research questions, and their broader research agendas.
For this study, as discussed in Chapter Three, I elected to include Lynham’s Phase 5 (my study’s Phase 4) as an optional phase. I included it because I hope to examine the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofits in other nonprofit organization contexts as part of a broader research agenda on this phenomenon. Such work would serve to both refine the theory and provide evidence related to its transferability.

In conclusion, my theory-building research findings related to the General Method do not take away from the major contribution that Lynham’s method has made to theory-building research in HRD and other applied disciplines. However, they suggest that the General Method as conceptualized by Lynham does not fully consider the differences between various theory-building approaches and the needs of theory-building scholars who hold advocacy/participatory worldviews and develop theories with a social justice/social change aim. Therefore, Lynham and other applied theory-building scholars may wish to revisit the General Method and consider further modifications designed to accommodate a broader range of logics and worldviews. Furthermore, I suggest that HRD theories and theorists in other applied disciplines develop new overarching theory-building methods designed to meet the needs of a broader range of theorists and theory-building approaches.

**Disciplined imagination.** Weick’s (1998) disciplined imagination theory-building process made an enormous contribution to this study. It fit well with the bricolage approach and supported my use of Poole and Van de Ven’s (1998) paradox approach. A challenge, however, was the lack of detailed instructions for completing disciplined imagination thought trials. Other HRD theorists, including Storberg-Walker and Chermack (2007), have previously identified this gap in the literature. Furthermore, I did not find any tools that I could use to support the development and documentation of my thought trials. These gaps in
the literature make it challenging for novice theorists to use disciplined imagination to build theory.

To support my dissertation research, I created a disciplined imagination thought trials template. The thought trials template served multiple purposes. First, to organize and frame the work of each trial. Second, to document my process. Third, to support data analysis. (See Table 4.2: Disciplined Imagination Thought Trials Problem Statements and Questions, Appendix B: Disciplined Imagination Thought Trial Example, and Figure 4.1: Disciplined Imagination Thought Trial Excerpt, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.) Therefore, this dissertation study fills a gap in the literature by illustrating an actual format and outcome of a thought trial. Thus, providing a template for others to follow or adapt for their own use.

Theory assessment. My theory-building research findings include three gaps related to the assessment of HRD theories. These gaps concern the transparency of theory evaluation, tools to support and document theory evaluation, and criteria for evaluating critical theories.

Transparency of theory evaluation. I contend that another gap in the literature involves the general lack of transparency regarding the evaluation of HRD theories. As I completed my dissertation work, I observed that few theory-building research studies specify whether the theorist assessed her or his theory. If an assessment was conducted, few theorists identify what criteria was used and what the results of the evaluation revealed. An example of a published HRD theory-building study that does incorporate an evaluation component is Lowe and Holton, III (2005). However, the results of the evaluation were not provided. I also found evidence of attention to evaluation and evaluation results in several HRD theory-
building dissertations. Examples include dissertations by Lowe (2004) and Garcia (2008), both of which used Patterson’s (1986) evaluation criteria.

These observations lead to several questions. Why isn’t evaluation regularly discussed in HRD journal articles that report on theory-building studies? Are HRD theorists commonly evaluating their theories? What evaluation criteria are they using? How are they using their evaluation results?

Transparency of theory evaluation would provide numerous benefits to the HRD field and beyond. First, this information could assist other theorists with the selection of evaluative criteria as well as the design and documentation of their evaluation processes. Second, assessment results could help HRD theorists doing to similar work by learning from the experience of others and building upon their work. Third, information on criteria used and evaluation results could support scholars from a range of disciplines in the assessment of the quality and appropriateness of HRD theories to frame their own research.

A barrier to the inclusion of theory evaluation information in HRD journal articles is space limitations. Theory-building studies are commonly complex, and thus, articles that report them can be lengthy. However, editors and editorial boards should reflect on the potential benefits that reporting on the evaluation methods used and evaluation results could offer the field. To achieve such benefits, word limits may need to increase for articles that report on theory-building studies.

**Tools to support theory evaluation.** As I planned for the evaluation of my preliminary theory, I determined that I needed a tool to guide the evaluation process and document my results. Over the course of my dissertation work, however, I did not find any tools which were created for this purpose. This suggests that tools to support theory evaluation is another gap in the literature.
To support the assessment of my theory, I developed a template which I used to document the results of the evaluation and identify where evidence of my attention to each evaluative criterion could be found. This template addresses both Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) interpretive criteria and Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria. The template can be found in Appendix G: Theory Assessment Template. This template provides one example of a theory assessment tool. However, a range of tools are required to meet the needs of theorists who build theories using varied methods and various assessment criteria.

**Evaluating critical theories.** Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) criteria for assessing theory in applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective filled a major gap in assessment criteria for HRD theories. However, a significant gap remains in criteria for the assessment of critical HRD theories. This gap is particularly problematic given the increasing recognition of the importance of a critical HRD and recent calls for the use of critical perspectives in HRD research, which were discussed in Chapter Two.

Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria (part of his criteria for formal theory building in adult education) were helpful in assessing my preliminary theory from a critical perspective. These criteria served to remind me of the importance of assumptions (assumptive awareness), ethical issues (ethical attention), context (contextual sensitivity), social change focus (value judgmental explicitness), and the need to critically evaluate and modify my theory in response to new findings (reformulative sensitivity). However, Brookfield’s (1992) criteria were designed to assess how a “body of theoretical work is subjected to constant critical analysis by its own proponents” rather than to specifically assess theory from a critical (as in critical theory) perspective (p. 87). Therefore, while using Brookfield’s criteria, I considered them in light of critical theory concerns including power, privilege, and oppression.
While the use of Brookfield’s (1992) criteria was beneficial, I suggest that the field needs new criteria with an explicit critical HRD focus to evaluate critical HRD theories. Sambrook’s (2009) concept analysis of critical HRD would be a good resource to start thinking about such criteria.

Another means to help fill this gap is to develop criteria that are specifically based on the various forms of critical perspectives. For example, evaluative criteria developed from feminist perspectives (such as feminist theory and black feminist thought), critical perspectives on race and ethnicity (such as CRT and Latina/o critical theory), critical perspectives on social class (such as class hegemony theory), and critical perspectives on sexuality (such as queer theory) would be useful.

These and other new criteria would help HRD theorists to conduct more in-depth, self-assessments of their critical theories. The results of these assessments can guide further theory development and theory refinement. In turn, new criteria would help other HRD scholars to consider the quality of critical HRD theories and thus, the usefulness of the theories for their own research. Furthermore, new criteria and related assessment results would support practitioners in determining the value of critical HRD theories as guides to socially-just HRD practice.

This study helps to fill gaps in the HRD theory-building literature related to theory assessment in the following ways: (a) identifying the lack of transparency surrounding the assessment of HRD theories and offering recommendations to address it, (b) addressing the need for criteria to evaluate critical HRD theories and making related recommendations, (c) identifying the need for a range of tools to support theory evaluation and document assessment results, and (d) developing a tool that documents the assessment of theory based
on Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) interpretive criteria and Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria and demonstrating its use.

**Guidance for HRD theorists.** Theory building is a complex activity that involves challenging work (Chermack & Swanson, 2015). Yet, limited guidance is available to the novice or experienced HRD theorist (Chermack & Swanson, 2015).

In the preface to the August 2002 issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, which focused on theory-building research, Turnbull (2002) stated, “Theory-building research…often appears to be shrouded in mystique” (p. 219). Based on my experience in completing this dissertation study, I contend that in the ensuing years there has been some progress in uncovering the shroud and increased guidance for HRD theorists. Advances include the following:

- the launch of the journal, *Human Resource Development Review*;
- the provision of Academy of Human Resources (AHRD) webinars on theory building and related topics;
- the inclusion of AHRD conference tracks that address theory building;
- the publication of Swanson and Chermack’s (2013) book, *Theory building in applied disciplines*; and,
- the commitment of the journal *Human Research Development Review* to foster “principled pluralism” as a catalyst for HRD theory building in expanded contexts and practice areas, as well as to affirmatively engage with “alternative ideologies, paradigms, and disciplinary boundaries” (Storberg-Walker, 2015, p. 3).

As a field, we have come a long way but we still have far to go. There have been many successes, but there continues to be challenges. For example, while the Academy of Human Resources established an HRD Theory Special Interest Group (SIG), the group has
not been consistently active and the chair position has been vacant for extensive periods of
time.

A more substantive challenge relates to disagreement in the field regarding the drivers
of theory, i.e., problem vs. philosophy. In a relatively recent Human Resource Development
Review ‘Debate and Dialogue’ article, Chermack and Swanson (2015) argue that theorizing
should be problem not philosophy driven. Korte’s (2016) response article counters this claim.
He states that “philosophy is indispensable for theory building” (Korte, 2016, p. 3). This and
other such disagreements create challenges for the field. They can lead to the privileging of
some philosophies and theory-building approaches and the marginalization of others.
However, editors, editorial boards, and individual scholars who are committed to broadening
our understanding of what constitutes rigorous and productive theory-building methods and
sound and innovative theories are making progress toward the achievement of the objectives
of principled pluralism.

An additional challenge involves gaps and inconsistencies in the HRD literature
concerning theory building from an interpretive perspective. Furthermore, there are
significant gaps in the literature related to the development of critical theories. Examples of
these challenges were addressed earlier in the chapter. Another example is the
aforementioned Swanson and Chermack (2013) book. This text makes a significant
contribution to HRD theory building through its complete and detailed guidance on how to
use the General Method to build theories in applied disciplines.

In this book, the authors state that the general method “is not based in a particular
research paradigm” and that the related “techniques, tools, and frameworks” they provide in
the book are accessible to all (Swanson & Chermack, 2013, p. 49). They demonstrate their
commitment to providing guidance for theorists using various paradigms; e.g., they discuss
interpetive and critical paradigms and address two qualitative theory-building approaches, i.e., Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination and Storberg-Walker’s (2007b) five-component approach (2007b). I argue, however, that the text remains grounded in the tenets of positivism. For example, Chapter Six: “Confirm Path,” assumes that all theory-building research involves the completion of Lynham’s (2002b) Phase 3: Confirmation or disconfirmation. Yet, as discussed earlier in the chapter, this General Method phase is incompatible with interpretive approaches to theory building (Turnbull, 2002).

Fortunately, some work is underway or planned which holds promise to support HRD theory-building research from interpretive and critical perspectives. For example, Lynham and Lincoln are currently drafting a book manuscript titled, *The handbook of qualitative theory building in applied disciplines*. A second example relates to the previously mentioned lack of evaluative criteria for critical HRD theories. Lincoln and Lynham addressed this issue at an AHRD conference and indicated that they had plans to develop such criteria. However, they have not published these criteria to date. These and other relevant publications by HRD theorists would make a major contribution to the field and to other applied disciplines.

**Developing the Theoretical Bricolage**

As discussed in Chapter Three, bricolage is emergent and evolving by design. Consequently, the methodology presented in Chapter Three was preliminary in nature. Therefore, this section of Chapter Four picks up where Chapter Three ended. It presents the methodology that I ultimately used to answer the research question, develop the theoretical bricolage, and plan for future theory-building research on this phenomenon.

My aim in presenting the final details of my process is twofold. The first is transparency of method, which is particularly important for critical studies. The second is to
provide guidance for other theorists, particularly those new to theory building, who might find my methods and lessons learned useful for their own work.

Table 4.1 documents my methodology, i.e., how I developed the theoretical bricolage. It presents each element of the methodology beginning with the research question and concluding with the evaluation criteria.

Table 4.1

*Developing the Theoretical Bricolage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>A bricolage approach was used to explore this question. Bricolage is a multi-methodological form of inquiry that draws on a variety of methods and frameworks to examine a phenomenon (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005a; Reed, 2008). Multiple sources of data, which the researcher has readily available or at hand are used to construct the bricolage (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005b).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Multiple Theory-Building Methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple methods were used to support the theory-building process. These methods were employed within the bricolage approach (Kincheloe et al., 2011).</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Method of Theory Building in Applied Disciplines (Lynham, 2002b)</th>
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<tr>
<td>An adapted version of Lynham’s (2002b) General Method guided the theory-building process. The adaptations build on earlier modifications made by Sjøberg et al. (2008) to incorporate abductive logic and to support theory building from interpretive (Torraco, 2002; Turnbull, 2002b) and critical approaches. The version of the General Method for this study includes four phases: Phase 1: Conceptualization (development of a preliminary theory), Phase 2: Operationalization (preliminary operationalization), Phase 3: Application (partial completion involving the preliminary design of a theoretically informed, post dissertation, CPAR study), Phase 4: Continuous refinement and development (optional post-dissertation research).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Using Paradox: Opposition Method (Poole &amp; Van de Ven, 1989)</th>
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<tr>
<td>The study used Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method (“accept the paradox and use it constructively”) of using paradox to build organizational and management theory to guide the development of the disciplined imagination thought trials (p. 566).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 (continued).

| Disciplined Imagination (Weick, 1989) | Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method of theory building was used to support the conceptualization of the preliminary theory, its operationalization, and plans for its application in practice. Five disciplined imagination thought trials were conducted. |

**Multiple Theoretical Perspectives**

Multiple theoretical perspectives were used to focus attention on various aspects of the paradox of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

- **Social Constructionism**
  - The tenets of social constructionism grounded the study.

- **Social Capital Theory**
  - The five disciplined imagination thought trials conducted for the study used Putnam’s (2002) concepts of bonding and bridging social capital to explore the role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance.

  - Two of the disciplined imagination thought trials used mainstream social capital theory to explore how board social capital supports generative governance.

- **Critical Social Capital Perspectives**
  - Two of the disciplined imagination thought trials used critical social capital perspectives to explore how board social capital hinders generative governance.

- **Critical Race Theory**
  - One of the disciplined imagination thought trials used CRT to explore how board social capital oppresses diverse individuals in the practice of generative governance.

**Multiple Sources of Data**

Each thought trial involved the analysis of data that came from the following four sources.

- **Governance as Leadership**
  - This book presents Chait et al.’s (2005) innovative model of nonprofit governance, i.e., governance as leadership. Generative governance is the foundational mode of the model.

- **Practitioner Publications**
Table 4.1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Data</th>
<th>Data collected through North Carolina State University’s Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two cases: EMPOWERMENT and DIGNITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data: Transcripts of one year of board meeting audio recordings and transcripts of board and staff interview audio recordings.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional case data, including board and organizational documents, were not analyzed but were used as needed to support the interpretation of the findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflection Journal</td>
<td>This journal was used to capture insights and new understandings as the research progressed. It was also used for critical reflection on my personal related experiences with nonprofit boards.</td>
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</table>

Data Analysis

Textual analysis

Qualitative textual analysis was used to assess the nature and meaning of the data (Merriam, 2009; Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009) as it related to each of the five thought trial questions.

Multiple Sets of Evaluation Criteria

The preliminary theory was evaluated using two sets of criteria.

Criteria for Assessing Good Theory in HRD and Other Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011) | These criteria were used to evaluate the preliminary theory from an interpretive perspective. |
| Critically Analytic Criteria for Formal Theory Building in Adult Education (Brookfield, 1992) | These criteria supported the evaluation of the preliminary theory from a critical perspective. |

The next section of the chapter documents the process used for the disciplined imagination thought trials.

Disciplined Imagination Thought Trials Process

As discussed in Chapter Three, I used Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination theory-building method to support the conceptualization of the preliminary theory, its operationalization, and its application in practice. The disciplined imagination process
involved the “disciplined conceptual play” required for the bricolage (Weinstein &

I designed the thought trials using Poole and Van de Ven's (1989) opposition method
(“accept the paradox and use it constructively”) of building organizational and management
theory (p. 566). I conducted five disciplined imagination thought trials (Weick, 1989). Each
trial illuminated a different aspect of the phenomenon under study. Drawing on mainstream
social capital theory and critical social capital perspectives, the first four trials focused on the
following aspects of the paradox:

• Thought Trial #1: The positive influence of board bonding social capital on
  generative governance of nonprofit organizations,

• Thought Trial #2: The negative influence of board bonding social capital on the
  generative governance of nonprofit organizations,

• Thought Trial #3: The positive influence of board bridging social capital on the
  generative governance of nonprofit organizations, and

• Thought Trial #4: The negative influence of board bridging social capital on the
  generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

The fifth trial used CRT to focus on issues of race and racism:

• Thought Trial #5: The influence that board social capital has on the marginalization
  and exclusion of diverse individuals and groups in the practice of generative
  governance.

As noted in Chapter Three, a template was developed for the thought trials. Appendix B
provides an example of the thought trial format. Trial #1 is shown in this example.

In accordance with Weick's (1989) methodology, problem statements were developed
for each thought trial. These problem statements drove the theorizing process. The problem
Statements were designed to surface associated questions and explore alternative explanations as a means toward creating a more comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. Table 4.2 lists the problem statement and associated question for each thought trial.

Table 4.2

**Disciplined Imagination Thought Trials: Problem Statements and Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Problem Statement</th>
<th>Overarching Problem Derived Abductively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?</td>
<td>Problem Statement #1: We do not fully understand the positive role of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td>The social capital of nonprofit boards plays both positive and negative roles in generative governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Trial #1: Positive influence of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td>Related Question: How does board bonding social capital positively influence generative governance?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Trial #2: Negative influence of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>Problem Statement #2: We do not fully understand the negative role of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td>Related Question: How does board bonding social capital negatively influence generative governance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Trial #3: Positive influence of board bridging social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td>Problem Statement #3: We do not fully understand the positive role of board bridging social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Trial #4: Negative influence of board bridging social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>Problem Statement #4: We do not fully understand the negative role of board bridging social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.</td>
<td>Related Question: How does board bridging social capital negatively influence generative governance?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 (continued).

_Thought Trial #5:_
Influence that board social capital has on the marginalization and exclusion of diverse individuals and groups in the practice of generative governance.

Problem Statement #5: We do not fully understand the role that board social capital plays in the marginalization and exclusion of diverse individuals and groups in the practice of generative governance.

Related Question: How does board social capital influence the marginalization and exclusion of diverse individuals and groups in the practice of generative governance?

Data analysis involved the textual analysis of the previously discussed data (see Chapter Three), for each thought trial. Figure 4.1 provides an excerpt from Thought Trial #1. To maintain confidentiality, the names of all individuals, organizations, and businesses in the data excerpts are pseudonyms.

**Disciplined Imagination Thought Trial #1:** The positive influences of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

**Research Question:** How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?

**Overarching Problem Derived Abductively:** The bonding social capital of nonprofit boards has both positive and negative influences on generative governance.

**Problem Statement #1:** We do not fully understand the positive influence of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

- Related Question – How does board bonding social capital positively influence generative governance?

**Concept: Bonding social capital**
- Definitions:
  - Links to “people who are similar in crucial respects and tend to be inward-looking” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 2).
  - “The links between like-minded people, or the reinforcement of homogeneity” (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000, p. 10).
- Key Positive Characteristics:
  - “close knit and intensive” relationships (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 227)
  - “dense multi-functional network ties” (Leonard & Onyx, 2003, p. 190-191)
  - strong trust [but localized] (Leonard & Onyx, 2003, p. 191)
  - collective and nonrivalrous good (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 22)
Figure 4.1 (continued).

Conceptually Similar To:
- Closed network structures (Coleman, 1998)
- Strong ties (Granovetter, 1986)

Related Concepts:
- Networks/Social Networks (Putnam, 1993; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Norms (Putnam, 1993; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Trust/Trustworthiness (Putnam, 1993; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Reciprocity (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000)
- Mutual Assistance (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003)
- Solidarity (Putnam, 2000)

Thought Trial #1:
If, then statement – If board bonding social capital positively influences generative governance, then…

- What does Governance as Leadership (Chait, Ryan, & Taylor, 2005) suggest?
  - “In an organizational context, certain characteristics (for example a sense of inclusiveness, trust, shared values, and common purpose) enable people to extract productive value from their relationships. These attributes accelerate cooperation, commitment, cohesiveness, and efficient exchange of knowledge and information, which, in turn, advance purposeful activity and common enterprise. As the group strengthens these qualities, the members’ productivity increases and generates tangible benefits for the organization” (p. 155).
  [Note: This discussion is from a chapter titled ‘Working Capital that Makes Governance Work.’ It was under a heading labeled ‘Social Capital.’ The authors did not use the term bonding social capital; however, the discussion reflects this concept. While this passage suggests benefits of bonding social for governance in general, it does not specifically address how bonding social capital influences generative governance.]
  - “The norm that boards most commonly reinforce through mechanisms of social capital is congeniality. Trustees tend to be agreeable and likeminded colleagues, desirable qualities to a point” (p. 156).
  [Note: Explicit reference to social capital. ‘To a point’ provides a potential clue about a paradoxical influence of bonding social capital.]
  - “Like a top-notch management team... a board of trustees can translate personal relationships and mutual trust into social capital that stresses personal responsibility, collective industry, and improved performance” (p. 157).
  [Note: Explicit reference to social capital. Collective industry could support generative governance, particularly collective sensemaking. Improved performance is an expected outcome of generative governance.]
Figure 4.1 (continued).

• **What does the practitioner literature suggest?**
  
  o “…all board members should keep their eyes and ears open for potential candidates. The governance committee intentionally taps and appraises relationships to gauge the best fit” (Dambach, Davis, & Gale, 2009, p. 23).

    [Notes: Suggests that board use their social networks to identify prospective board members and that ‘fit’ is key. Fit suggests like-mindedness and homogeneity, thereby making it easier to work together and make collaborative decisions.]

  o “…a relationship of trust and transparency that allows for challenges to be addressed openly and managed constructively” (Dambach et al., 2009, p. 48).

    [Note: Trust is an element of bonding social capital.]

  o “*Mutual support and encouragement.* The best boards are ‘learning communities’ where people are encouraged to try new skills, take risks, and share responsibility for both victories and problems” (Robinson, 2006, p. 14).

    [Note: Board learning is a characteristic of generative governance.]

  o “Here’s several places to start your search [for prospective board members]…your members…your committees…your friends…” (Robinson, 2006, p. 33-35).

    [Note: Suggests that bonding social capital can be used to recruit board members and thus, board bonding social capital could be tapped to support generative governance.]

• **What do the case data suggest?**

**CASE # 1: EMPOWERMENT**

*February Board Meeting Transcript*

Board Member:  Okay. I’m Ray [new board member attending first meeting]. I know Amanda. She’s a friend of my wife’s. They know one and other through the Women’s Society. I’m a lawyer with Smith Law Group, which happens to share the building with EMPOWERMENT.

*Board Member Interview*

Interviewer:  Just tell your story about how you got recruited. Who recruited you, how did you get involved in EMPOWERMENT, details of recruitment?

Board Member:  …I used to play rugby for the ABC Rugby Club, and at the time, Jed, he’s a member of the ABC Rugby Club, so I knew him, and his wife Lynne was on the EMPOWERMENT board.

[Note: Demonstrates the role that personal and professional relationships play in appointments to the board. Such appointments provide opportunities for boards to tap the benefits of bonding social capital to foster generative governance.]
**CASE # 2: DIGNITY**

**Board Interview Data**

Interviewer: How did you get involved [with DIGNITY]?

Board Member: Our daughter was diagnosed with [health condition related to DIGNITY’s mission]…

Interviewer: …Did you feel welcomed and included in your first meeting?

Board Member: Sure.

Interviewer: And what types of things made you feel that way?....

Board Member: …I’ve at least been an affiliate for ten years so I know the people…we know each other’s kids and some of their problems and issues and so DIGNITY… is really a family…we talk about issues that you normally don’t talk to a person on the street about probably so we feel welcomed and we don’t hold back…

[Note: Shows evidence of close social relationships - bonding social capital - leading to involvement with the board. Demonstrates that close relationships support deep discussions about issues that would not typically be discussed with strangers. This type of communication can support generative governance.]

- **What does this researcher’s reflections suggest?**

I have personally experienced being invited to serve on boards because of close professional and personal relationships. These relationships were factors…in my deciding to join the boards. The relationships made it easier for me to jump right into the work of the boards because there were individuals with whom I already had relationships with, whom I trusted, and with whom I knew I shared similar views and values….These relationships also gave me the courage to take risks; e.g., sharing thoughts or ideas that I suspected would not be viewed positively by all or in pushing the board to consider taking action that I believed would be deemed somewhat controversial, for example, challenging the board to move in a new direction.

[Note: My experience would be consistent with board bonding social capital supporting generative governance.]

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**Figure 4.1.** Disciplined imagination thought trial excerpt.

I used analytic memoing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to capture key findings. The findings were analyzed to identify “tensions, oppositions, and contradictions” among them (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 562).
Consistent with the bricolage approach, the findings from each thought trial were pieced together to conceptualize the preliminary theory. The thought trial findings supported the conceptualization of the preliminary theory, its partial operationalization, and the preliminary development of a proposed CPAR study as a means to apply the theory in practice. The theoretical findings are presented in Chapter Five.

Theory-building Research Contributions

This study makes several contributions to HRD theory-building research literature. They include the following contributions:

- responding to the call for theory in new HRD contexts (nonprofit organizations) and new HRD practice areas (governance) (Storberg-Walker, 2015);
- answering calls for the use of a bricolage approach to promote creativity and innovation in education (Kincheloe, 2005a) and HRD theory-building research (Turnbull, 2002a), and demonstrating its usefulness toward this end;
- making my bricolage approach transparent (see Table 4.1);
- responding to calls for the increased use of abduction in HRD theory-building research (Gold et al., 2011; Jayanti, 2011) and demonstrating the value of using surprising observations in practice to promote theoretical innovation;
- developing an adapted version of the General Method that accommodates the use of abductive and inductive logic and demonstrates its usefulness (see Figure 3.2);
- designing, using, and documenting an innovative method, which combines Poole and Van de Ven's (1989) opposition method of using paradox to build management and organizational theories with Weick's (1989) process of theory-building as disciplined imagination to support the conceptualization phase of the work (see Table 4.2);
• developing and documenting a rigorous analytical process and creating an associated tool for Weick's (1989) disciplined imagination method of theory building (see Appendix B, Table 4.2, and Figure 4.1);

• demonstrating the usefulness of Lincoln and Lynham's (2011) criteria for assessing good theory in HRD and other applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective (see Table 5.4);

• adapting Brookfield's (1992) critically analytic criteria for formal theory building in adult education for use in assessing theory from a critical perspective (See Table 5.5); and,

• developing a tool that supports and documents the dual assessment (interpretive and critical) of the preliminary theory (See Appendix G), and

• identifying the need for HRD theory developed with interpretive and critical methods and theory developed by diverse scholars in support of socially-just HRD research and practice.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I identified and discussed gaps and inconsistencies in the HRD theory-building literature related to bricolage, the General Method, disciplined imagination, theory evaluation, and guidance for HRD theorists. In addition, I addressed how my theory-building research findings helped to fill some of these gaps. A discussion of how I developed the theoretical bricolage and conducted the disciplined imagination thought trials was provided next. The chapter concluded with a presentation of the study's theory-building contributions. In the next chapter, I present the study’s theoretical findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL FINDINGS

This critical study sought to further our understanding of generative governance by building new theory that sheds light on the abductively derived conjecture that board social capital (i.e., the value derived from board relationships) plays a paradoxical role in the practice of generative governance. The study aimed to explore the ways that board social capital can both support and hinder generative governance. Furthermore, the study sought to uncover the ways that board social capital can exclude or marginalize historically oppressed individuals and groups through the practice of generative governance. The primary objective of the study was to develop a preliminary theory on this phenomenon and operationalize it. A secondary objective was to design a theoretically informed CPAR post-dissertation study, which when implemented will further theory development through the application of the theory in practice.

This chapter presents the study's theoretical findings. The chapter begins with a discussion of the values that ground the study, followed by a presentation of the assumptions upon which the theory is based. Next, I discuss the context of the theory. Following is a report of the results of the conceptualization, operationalization, and application phases of the theory-building process. Next, I present the findings of the evaluation of the preliminary theory. Following is a discussion of the study’s theoretical contributions. I conclude with a Chapter Summary.

Values

The values that ground this study stem from my advocacy/participatory worldview. The basic principle of this worldview is that research should include an action agenda for social change that seeks to improve the lives of those who are oppressed and change the institutions that oppress them (Creswell, 2007).
The key value that grounds this study is social justice. The ultimate aim of this study and the proposed broader research agenda is the socially-just practice of generative governance. Related values are diversity, inclusion, and empowerment.

**Diversity.** This value relates to representation (Metelsky & Guo, manuscript in preparation). I contend that valuing diversity in the socially-just practice of generative governance means that the board is not exclusively or predominately comprised of individuals who are members of historically privileged groups; rather, the board is diverse and includes individuals who are members of historically oppressed groups. Furthermore, I argue that in the socially-just practice of generative governance the board is representative of the diversity of the people the organization serves, those who work in the organization, and the people in its surrounding community (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2013).

**Inclusion.** This value relates to participation (Metelsky & Guo, in preparation). I maintain that valuing inclusion in the socially-just practice of generative governance means that board members who are members of historically oppressed groups are not token representatives; rather, they are functionally and socially included as full and equal board members (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2011). Furthermore, I contend that the socially-just practice of generative governance involves governance beyond the board (Renz, 2006, 2013). This means that the governance process involves the participation of diverse individuals and groups, both from within and outside the organization, who have a stake in the organization’s work (Metelsky & Guo, manuscript in preparation).

**Empowerment.** This value relates to agency (Metelsky & Guo, manuscript in preparation). I argue that valuing empowerment in the practice of generative governance means that historically oppressed individuals and groups have the personal and collective power necessary for active participation in all aspects of the generative governance process.
Furthermore, I assert that the socially-just practice of generative governance requires the nonprofit organization and its board to change oppressive structures and processes and provide training and other supports that build the capacity of historically oppressed individuals and groups, as well as those who are historically privileged, to serve as agents of social change.

**Assumptions**

Critical theories require assumptive awareness (Brookfield, 1992). Assumptive awareness necessitates an explicit statement of the assumptions on which a theory is based. This preliminary theory is grounded in assumptions related to nonprofit boards, social constructionism, social capital, and racism. I discuss these assumptions in the following sections.

**Nonprofit boards.** As noted in Chapter One, boards are legally responsible for their respective nonprofit organizations, and board members must collectively meet the legal standards of a duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience (Renz, 2010). Furthermore, there are prescriptive board responsibilities, which identify the basic duties of boards that are indicative of good governance (Miller-Millesen, 2003).

For this theory, I assume that nonprofit boards intend to fulfill their legal duties and board members aspire to meet their responsibilities. While there is documented evidence of malfeasance by nonprofit boards and individual board members, this theory assumes that, in general, boards seek to be good stewards and board members carry out their responsibilities with the aim of furthering the missions of their respective nonprofits.

**Social constructionism.** This theory is grounded in a social constructionist perspective. As discussed in Chapter Two, a social constructionist perspective assumes that people create and sustain knowledge through social processes (Burr, 2003). Chait et al.’s
The (2005) conceptualization of generative governance involves the board’s collective creation of new understandings of issues facing the organizations and the people they serve. This theory, therefore, assumes that generative governance involves the social construction of board knowledge.

**Social capital.** As addressed in Chapter Two, my review of the mainstream and critical social capital literatures found that social capital has a range of potential benefits and detriments. Mainstream nonprofit governance research and practice typically focus on the benefits derived from board social capital (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012). This study uses a paradox approach (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Thus, the theory assumes that there are both benefits and detriments that can be attributable to board social capital.

**Racism.** As explained in Chapter Two, this critical theory is grounded in the tenets of CRT. Therefore, it makes several assumptions about racism. These assumptions include the following:

- racism is a socio-political phenomenon embedded in American society (Peterson & Brookfield, 2007);
- racism is a normal, rather than a deviant, part of our society (Delgado, 2000);
- racism is at “the very center of social and institutional life” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 53);
- racism is the “product of biased actions” but it can also be the product “of seemingly liberal, neutral or normed rules and actions” (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009, p. 182); and,
- racism can be intentional or unconscious (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).
Therefore, the theory assumes that like our society and our institutions, racism is embedded in the life and work of nonprofit organizations, even those that have explicit social justice, social change missions.

**Social change.** As discussed in Chapters One and Two, this is a CHRD study, which employs critical perspectives. Therefore, this theory assumes that social change is a goal of CHRD practice (Bierema, 2015). Thus, in the socially-just practice of generative governance, oppressive structures and oppressive practices must be identified and changed.

**Context**

Critical theories require contextual sensitivity (Brookfield, 1992). As discussed in Chapter Three, contextual sensitivity relates to the degree to which the “context specific nature” of the theory is acknowledged (Brookfield, 1992, p. 88).

I have previously discussed the theory’s context in Chapters One and Three. In summary, the context is as follows:

- 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organizations,
- human services nonprofits,
- nonprofits with staff members and all-volunteer nonprofits,
- nonprofits serving diverse populations, nonprofits with diverse staff, and/or nonprofits in diverse communities.

While elements of the theory are expected to be applicable in other contexts, the theory as a whole may not be transferrable.

With the study’s values and assumptions made explicit and its context specified, Chapter Five now turns to a discussion of the findings derived from the work of Phase 1: Conceptualization, Phase 2: Operationalization, and Phase 3: Application of the General Method.
Phase 1: Conceptualization

As discussed in Chapter Three, Phase 1 of this study involved the textual analysis of data through the completion of five disciplined imagination thought trials. I used the findings of the thought trials to conceptualize a preliminary critical social theory on the paradoxical role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

It is important to note that the end products of interpretive theories do not include predictive, causal, or correlative explanations (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Rather, the end products of interpretive theories are associative explanations, descriptive explanations, narrative-storytelling explanations, and mutual causality explanations (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Furthermore, laws and models have a low degree of trustworthiness for interpretive theories (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). Therefore, their use for interpretive theories is inadvisable.

The end product for this preliminary theory is a descriptive explanation, which is appropriate given the interpretive nature of the theory. The explanation is presented in narrative form. My aim was to write in a style designed to make the theoretical findings accessible "beyond the scientific community" and in a form that makes it useful to "ordinary persons" (Lincoln and Lynham, 2011, p. 16). However, the formal nature of, and expectations for, doctoral dissertations means that it may be less accessible to practitioners than other publications developed specifically for them.

The conceptualized theory is presented in the form of a theoretical bricolage. It has been pieced together from the findings of the disciplined imagination thought trials. The theoretical bricolage answers the research question that guided this study:
How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations? The theory presents my current understanding and interpretation of the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 as cited in Kincheloe, 2001). It addresses tensions, oppositions, and contradictions that can result from the benefits and detriments inherent in board social capital. Therefore, the theory describes ways that board social capital can support generative governance as well as ways it may hinder generative governance. Furthermore, by design, the study explored issues of race/ethnicity and racism. Therefore, the theory describes ways that board social capital can oppress and marginalize people of color in the process. My discussion of the theory begins with the definitions of the theory’s major concepts and related terms.

**Definitions.** Definitions are an importance means to effectively communicate and engage in dialogue with other scholars and with practitioners about my preliminary theory. Toward this end, Table 5.1 provides a list of the key theoretical concepts used in the theory and their definitions.
Table 5.1

Definitions of the Key Theoretical Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>Tension that comes from “conflicting demands, opposing perspectives or seemingly illogical findings” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generative Governance Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generative Governance</td>
<td>Generative governance is the third mode of Chait et al.’s (2005) governance as leadership model of nonprofit governance. It is a novel form of governance in which boards engage in deeper inquiry, explore root causes of issues facing the organization and the people that it serves, consider divergent values, examine optional courses of action, and create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions. Generative governance involves generative thinking, which emanates from such practices as reflective practice, reframing problems, collective sense making, and governance at the organizational boundaries. It fosters board learning. Its aim is the development of creative and innovative solutions to problem and issues that come before the board (Chait, et al., 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reframing</td>
<td>A practice conceptualized by Bolman and Deal (2008) that involves the intentional use of different frames or lenses to examine an organizational issue or problem. Reframing helps the board to &quot;perceive and understand organizational situations&quot; in new and different ways (Chait et al., 2005, p. 86).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Sensemaking</td>
<td>Sensemaking, a concept introduced by Weick (1995), is &quot;the making of sense&quot; (p. 5). Collective sensemaking as it relates to generative governance involves the board's continued redrafting of an emerging understanding of an issue or problem facing the organization with the aim of creating a shared understanding of the situation and the collective development of potential solutions or courses of action (Trower, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance at the Organizational Boundaries</td>
<td>Generative governance starts and ends in the boardroom but requires board work at the organizational boundaries. Governance at the organizational boundaries includes both work at the “internal border between the board and the organization” and work at the “external border between the board and the wider environment” (Chait et al., 2005, p. 111). Board work at the organizational boundaries promotes generative thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Organizational Boundary</td>
<td>The internal border &quot;between the board and the organization&quot; (Chait et al., 2005, p. 111). Examples include the boundary between the board and the staff or between the board and the organization's clients, consumers, or patrons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Organizational Boundary</td>
<td>The external border &quot;between the board and the wider environment&quot; (Chait et al., 2005, p. 111). Examples include the boundary between the board and the community or between the board and the organization's funders.</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 5.1 (continued).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A set of resources made available to us because of and/or through our social relationships” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 98).</td>
<td>A set of resources made available because of and/or through board social relationships.</td>
<td>A set of resources made available to us because of and through social relationships that &quot;link people together with others who are primarily like them along some key dimension&quot; (Saguaro Seminar, n.d.)</td>
<td>A set of resources made available to us because of and through social relationships &quot;that link people together with others across a cleavage that typically divides society (like race, or class, or religion)&quot; (Saguaro Seminar, n.d.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Perspective Concepts</th>
<th>Board Diversity</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Interest Convergence</th>
<th>Intersectionality</th>
<th>Marginalization</th>
<th>Oppression</th>
<th>Privilege</th>
<th>Tokenism</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board diversity relates to board composition, i.e., the demographic make-up of the board with a focus on the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups such as women and people of color (Brown, 2002).</td>
<td>A group of people who share a similar socioeconomic status (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017)</td>
<td>The majority group tolerates or promotes advances for the historically oppressed when such advances are in its own interest to do so (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017)</td>
<td>The ways in which people are simultaneously oppressed by multiple systems of power including gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and age (Cole, 2016; Merriam et al., 2007), i.e., the multi-dimensional nature of oppression.</td>
<td>The process by which individuals are pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. It is a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored (Business Dictionary, n.d.).</td>
<td>Unjust “institutionalized power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time” (Ignite, n.d.).</td>
<td>Unearned right or advantage granted to some people but not others, typically without examination or good reason (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017).</td>
<td>The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups to give the appearance of equality (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)</td>
<td>The ability of a group of people (e.g., women or African Americans) “to articulate experience in ways unique to it” (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017, p. 186)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section of the chapter provides an overview of the study’s findings.
**Findings overview.** The study’s theoretical findings support my abductively derived conjecture that board social capital (both its bonding and bridging forms) play a paradoxical role in the practice of generative governance. It plays a role in both the board’s readiness for the socially-just practice of generative governance and for the practice of generative governance. An important finding is that certain conditions are necessary for the socially-just practice of generative governance and that board social capital influences board readiness. The findings indicate that board readiness for generative governance is influenced by board social capital’s role in the following: (a) governance at the organizational boundaries, (b) who is at the board table, and (c) whose issues and concerns are brought before the board. The findings also demonstrate that board social capital plays a role in the practice of generative governance by its influence on the following: reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking. It does so by respectively influencing (a) whose frames are presented and privileged in board discussions, (b) whose versions of organizational and board history are presented and privileged in board discussions, and (c) whose understandings of the issues facing the organization and the people it serves are presented and privileged in board deliberation and decision-making. Thus, the findings provide evidence that the various benefits and detriments attributable to board social capital present a paradox for the practice of generative governance as conceptualized by Chait et al. (2005). The discussion now turns to my description of the preliminary theory. Social capital can support generative governance practice (e.g., by fostering trust) but it can also hinder generative governance practice (e.g., by excluding racial and ethnically diverse individuals from board service).

**Descriptive explanation of the theory.** While I had anticipated that the discussion of my theoretical findings would focus on the role of board social capital as it relates to the key
generative governance practices (i.e., reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking), during the data analysis process it became evident that there are barriers to the socially-just practice of generative governance. Upon further analysis, it became clear that these barriers concern where the board conducts its governance work, who serves on the board, and whose issues and concerns are brought to the board’s attention. Thus, three elements of readiness are necessary for the socially-just practice of generative governance. They are the following: (a) governance at the organizational boundaries, (b) diverse voices are at the board table, and (c) issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board.

**Readiness for the socially-just practice of generative governance.** The following discussion provides an explanation of each of the readiness conditions and describes related findings. Data excerpts are provided to illustrate these readiness conditions and the broader nonprofit literature is drawn upon to provide context. All the names used in this discussion are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the respondents as well as the organizations and individuals they mention or talk about.

**Governance at the organizational boundaries.** Governance at the organization’s internal and external boundaries involves board relationships with key internal stakeholders (e.g., board members, staff members, volunteers, funders) and external stakeholders (e.g., clients, community partners, and local residents). Traditionally, the board’s role as it relates to stakeholders focuses on the board as a means to represent the organization to the public. The focus is on building the nonprofit organization’s reputation and involves one-way communication, i.e., information out. The corresponding board responsibility is described in BoardSource’s *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards* as “enhance the organization’s public image” (Ingram, 2009, p. 63) and in the following data excerpt:
Chait et al. (2005) contend that working at the internal organizational boundary provides boards with “unfiltered access to the organizational stimuli that provoke generative thinking” (p. 111). Furthermore, they argue that work at the external boundary provides access to alternative frames which allow board members to view issues and problems that come before the board in different lights. Thus, work at the organizational boundaries is important to the practice of generative governance. Yet, Chait et al. (2005) do not address how boards gain unfiltered access to organizational stimuli at the internal organizational boundary or obtain new insights from diverse stakeholders at the external organizational boundary. The study findings suggest that board social capital supports governance at the organizational boundaries. Access to organizational stimuli and diverse perspectives gained through work at the organizational boundaries is facilitated by social relationships as evidenced by the following data excerpt.

Interviewer: How does the board ensure that stakeholders’ needs and interests are considered in your [the board’s] decision-making process?

Greg: Most of us have networks that deal with the [organization’s] consumers
[DIGNITY, board member interview transcript, Greg]

The findings also suggest that governance at the organizational boundaries can influence both board readiness for generative governance practice as well as the actual practice of generative governance practice. It does so by influencing the following: (a) the inclusion or exclusion of diverse voices at the board table, (b) whether the issues and concerns of diverse individuals and groups come before the board or if they are ignored or marginalized, (c) whose frames are presented and privileged in board discussions, (d) whose
versions of organizational and board history are presented and privileged, and (e) whose opinions or understandings of the issue at hand are presented and privileged. Thus, I contend that governance at the organizational boundaries is the foundational element of socially-just generative governance practice. It strongly influences whether board social capital privileges the perspectives of those with identity-based power and maintains the status quo or conversely, challenges the status quo through the perspectives and lived experiences of those who are members of historically oppressed groups, including people of color.

The case study data demonstrate that board social capital often privileges some internal and external relationships over others. Relationships with powerful individuals and groups who bring resources (e.g., funding, connections to powerful individuals and organizations) to the nonprofit organization are commonly privileged. At the same time, board social capital can hinder relationships with less powerful stakeholders (e.g., staff members and clients), who in turn, are oppressed or marginalized in the governance process. For example, the findings suggest that rather than having direct relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, boards often depend on powerful stakeholders to speak for less powerful stakeholders evidenced by the following interview excerpt, which addresses relationships with internal stakeholders. In this example, the EMPOWERMENT board turns to the nonprofit’s assistant director and executive director to speak on behalf of the organization’s staff members.

To the extent there are specific staff concerns, I think those concerns are pretty well represented by Joan [assistant director] and Julie [executive director].

[EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Shawn]

It is important to note that this example is not an exception. The case data of both nonprofits provide numerous examples of how boards privilege relationships with powerful
stakeholders and use them to obtain information about and speak for less powerful stakeholders. Therefore, based on the study findings, I contend that bonding social capital derived from relationships between the board and powerful others is detrimental to the socially-just practice of generative governance. It is detrimental because it silences the voices those who are less powerful, oppressing them in the process. Thus, the study findings support the need for unfiltered access to stakeholders’ perspectives, particularly stakeholders from historically marginalized group, gained through governance at the organizational boundaries.

I contend that this is essential to the socially-just practice of generative governance. It requires boards to build and use bridging social capital instead of relying predominately or exclusively on their bonding social capital.

The following data excerpt demonstrates the benefits derived from board bridging social capital. It provides contrast to the prior excerpt by addressing how bridging social capital between the board and staff builds trust and in turn, can provide unfiltered information directly to the board.

If you have people in the board who have closer relationships with your staff, who the staff feel comfortable coming to you and saying, “Hey, we’ve got this issue....” Lee [an EMPOWERMENT board member] is very close to a lot of people on the staff...and I think they [the staff] would feel comfortable going to him and saying something if something was going wrong....And also, you got to have some trust between the board and the staff in general that the board is going to look out for them, which I don’t think that they felt -- I think there have been times when they have not trusted the board. So there’s got to be just a good working relationship between the two.
[EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Anne]

Diverse voices are at the board table. The study findings confirm that board diversity is a significant issue for nonprofit governance and support its importance in the practice of generative governance. Relevant evidence was found in the data from the Governance as Leadership book, practitioner publications, case data, and my researcher’s reflection journal.
Yet, many nonprofits face challenges recruiting a sufficient number of board members, nonetheless creating a diverse board. The following data excerpt addresses this challenge and promotes the use of board social capital derived through board member relationships as a solution to recruit prospective board members.

So you can see that this is not where we would like to be at this point in time [with the board member recruitment process], and we definitely need a nominating committee that’s going to get out and beat the bushes with the membership [DIGNITY is a membership organization] and with other people who know people who might be willing to come on to the board to serve, too. So help me light a fire here, folks. [DIGNITY, June board meeting transcript, Kendra].

The practitioner literature commonly instructs board to recruit new members using their social networks as suggested in this data excerpt:

“Here’s several places to start your search [for prospective board members]…your members…your committees…your friends…” [Robinson, 2006, p. 33-35].

The following excerpts of case study data provide evidence that they actually do.

**CASE # 1: EMPOWERMENT**

*Interviewer: Who recruited you, how did you get involved in EMPOWERMENT?*

*Donna: ...I used to play rugby for the ABC Rugby Club, and at the time, Jed, he’s a member of the ABC Rugby Club, so I knew him, and his wife Lynne was on the EMPOWERMENT board. [EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Donna]*

*Interviewer: How did you land on the board, you know, what happened? What’s the story? Who’d you get here?*

*Shaw: Well, Anne Carpenter recruited me. And I know Anne because Anne and my wife are in the Junior League together. And in the Junior League, they have these little sort of core groups of people who get together and whatnot. So Ashley and Amy are in the same core group. And so that’s how I know Ashley, socially. [EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Shaw]*
CASE #2: DIGNITY

Interviewer: How does the board identify potential new members?

Fred: Primarily through personal contacts. Who do you know?
[DIGNITY, board member interview transcript, Fred]

Interviewer: How does the board identify potential new members?

Kendra: This year Fred has done it entirely himself. I asked him to chair the committee...so he's networking using his connections.
[DIGNITY, board member interview transcript, Kendra]

Interviewer: How are new members chosen?

Kendra: We did have [a] Nominating Committee...if they identify somebody that they think would be a good board member...that's pretty much it. The board rubberstamps it.
[DIGNITY, board member interview transcript, Kendra]

Thus, the lack of board diversity can be perpetuated when board members use their close social relationships and the bonding social capital derived from these relationships to recruit new board members.

Case data also demonstrate that discussions of board diversity were uncomfortable. One board member considered board diversity to be an “undiscussable” subject. The following excerpt demonstrates that the board did not know how to talk about board diversity, that board’s bonding social capital was not strong enough to support the board’s discussion of this important issue, and that there was insufficient bridging social capital between the organization’s White board members and its only African American board member.

I will bring up an issue here of something that I thought was discussable that I think other people did not, which is diversity on our board. About talking about we need more African American members or Hispanic members. I certainly didn't feel uncomfortable, I never felt uncomfortable saying that to our board because to me, I mean that's our goal. I mean that's a great thing, that's good, so we should be thinking about that. But I know Debra, and I think she would tell you this, told me that it her made her very uncomfortable to be talking about that in front of Lydia, who was our [only] African American board member at that time....Because some minutes came out that
had been put together and said that in the minutes, which said we are recruiting a few board members and they are African Americans and one that said any American background, blah, blah, blah, and all asked that that be taken out of the minutes.

But I thought well why am I uncomfortable with that being on paper when I'm not uncomfortable saying and I understand. And that caused some conversation and people expressed concern about had we been emphasizing that too much or talking about it in a way that wasn't appropriate? I didn't think so. But I do know that I didn't want our board members who we were...this was an interesting, I thought it ended up being an interesting issue because when we did recruit our board members, I did not want them to think, or to know, that we had wanted to recruit them to have more diversity on the board.

[EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Anne]

On the other hand, data from the DIGNITY case suggest that both bonding and bridging social capital can help bring diverse individuals to the board table. The interview with DIGNITY’s only board member of color, Georgine, indicates that while she was approached by several people the main person who got her involved with DIGNITY was former board member “Josephine Jordan who is also African American” [DIGNITY, board member interview transcript, Georgine]. Georgine knew Josephine because they are from the same part of the city, which is predominately African American. Thus, bonding social capital supported Georgine’s recruitment. Bridging social capital also played a role in the recruitment of Georgine. Ida, another DIGNITY board member who is White, was engaged in work at the organization’s external boundary. In addition to her board service, Ida also did volunteer work at an outreach program in the African American community that Georgine lived in and for which she also volunteered. Ida’s work at the external organizational boundary built bridging social capital, which helped the board to recruit Georgine.
These and similar findings support my abductively derived contention that board social capital plays a paradoxical role in the practice of generative governance as it relates to diverse voices at the board table. They provide evidence of a significant benefit derived from board social capital, i.e., successful board recruitment. Bonding social capital helped the board to recruit many well-qualified board members. Close personal and professional relationships were tapped for this purpose. However, this practice commonly led to the recruitment of individuals who are demographically similar to the organizations’ current board members, particularly as it relates to race/ethnicity and social class. Thus, diverse individuals were excluded from board service. This is despite the fact (as discussed in Chapter Three) that both organizations serve racial and ethnically diverse clients, that EMPOWERMENT has a significant number of minority staff members, and the surrounding communities served by these nonprofits have large and growing minority populations (see Table 3.3: *Racial and Ethnic Diversity: County and City Demographics*).

An interesting issue raised by the findings of the EMPOWERMENT case, which also supports my contention that board social capital creates a paradox for generative governance practice involves the board’s strategic decision to increase board diversity as it relates to gender. At the onset of the study, the board was predominately female. There was only one male board member and this situation had been the case for most of the organization’s history. Board leadership by women was intentional because the organization’s mission involves the empowerment of disadvantaged women.

Predominately or exclusively female boards are not uncommon in nonprofits that serve women. Similarly, many organizations that focus on the needs of members of various minority groups (e.g., racial and ethnic minority groups, sexual minority groups, and the disabled) have boards that are solely or mostly comprised of members of those oppressed
groups. But what do such situations mean for the socially-just practice of generative governance?

The EMPOWERMENT board felt the increase in male board members would benefit the organization by providing new contacts and different perspectives, which could support generative governance practice. However, might these privileged voices crowd out the perspectives of the very people who are the focus of the nonprofit’s mission? Because the newly recruited male board members joined the board late in study period, it was not possible to assess the impact of their board membership on the socially-just practice of generative governance. Thus, future research on this interesting issue of board diversification in nonprofit organizations whose missions focus on a specific demographic group is warranted.

*Issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board.* The study findings provide evidence that the issues of diverse individuals and groups can be brought before the board in several ways. Each is facilitated by social capital gained through board social relationships. First, issues can be brought to the board directly by diverse board members who bring their personal knowledge and lived experience to their governance work. This involves bonding social capital; specifically, bonds created between board members with privilege and the board members from historically oppressed groups that stem from their shared experiences as board members. Second, the issues of diverse individuals can also come to the board via the bonding social capital of diverse board members gained through their social relationships with other diverse individuals and groups. This differs from the all too common expectation that one or two diverse board members can speak for all members of the historically oppressed group, of which they are a member. Third, privileged board members can use bridging social capital derived from their personal social relationships with
diverse individuals and groups as well as relationships developed through their board work with diverse individuals and groups at the organizational margins.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that bonding social capital can insulate board members who are members of historically privileged groups from the needs of the individuals and groups in their communities that have been historically oppressed. The following data except illuminates this problem. It also points to the bridging role, which an EMPOWERMENT board member performed for the EMPOWERMENT board.

*I've been surprised how little people [the other board members] understand about the communities in which they live….when I came on [the board], it was kind of interesting, that I actually had more information at my fingertips than I thought I would have compared to the other board members.*

[EMPOWERMENT, board member interview transcript, Donna]

In summary, this study found that three elements are important for the socially-just practice of generative governance. They are governance at the organizational boundaries, diverse voices are at the board table, and the issues and concerns of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board. Board social capital, in both its bonding and bridging forms, played a role in each readiness element for both case study organizations.

The study findings related to board readiness support my contention that board social capital creates a paradox for the practice of generative governance. The findings from my analysis the case study data demonstrate that socially-just generative governance practice is often stopped before it even starts because the conditions of readiness have not been met. The additional findings, derived from the analysis of the practitioner literature and my researcher’s reflection journal (which includes reflection on my experience with working with and serving on other boards) suggest that this is also true for many other nonprofit boards. Thus, while there is evidence of some ways that board social capital can support
board readiness for the practice of generative governance, in general, board social capital creates barriers which prevent or limit generative governance practice before it even begins.

**Practice of generative governance.** The findings suggest that key generative governance practices (i.e., reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking) are respectively influenced by board social capital’s role in (a) whose frames are presented and privileged in board discussions, (b) whose versions of organizational and board history are presented and privileged in board discussions, and (c) whose understandings of issues facing the organization and concerns of key stakeholders are presented and privileged in board deliberation and decision making. The following sections address the study findings related to the three key generative governance practices. Because, I found significant barriers to the socially-just practice of generative governance (as previously discussed) the case study data provide some, but limited, evidence of the specific ways that board social capital influences each of the practices. Therefore, I provide a more general discussion of the findings and do not include data excerpts because there was insufficient data to assess whether individual data excerpts were truly representative. Specifics on how these three generative governance practices are influenced by board bonding and bridging social capital is proposed as major focus of the post-dissertation CPAR study. This study is discussed in detail later in the chapter.

**Reframing.** As discussed in Chapter One, reframing is a practice conceptualized by Bolman and Deal (2008) which involves the intentional use of different frames or lenses to examine an organizational issue or problem. Reframing helps nonprofit boards to “perceive and understand organizational situations” in new and different ways (Chait et al., 2005, p. 86).
The study findings suggest that board social capital contributes to the privileging of the frames of people and groups with power; both those within (e.g., executive staff and current funders) and those outside of the organization (e.g., government bureaucrats and leaders of other nonprofits with similar missions). During board discussions, board members reframed issues before the board in light of information gained through their personal or professional relationships with these and other powerful individuals and groups. In turn, the frames of less powerful stakeholders (particularly clients) were often disregared simply because they were not presented and instead, their issues were presented by powerful others as previously noted. However, the DIGNITY case demonstrated the benefit of having client representatives on the board. These individuals regularly contributed to board discussions and at times reframed issues based on their lived experiences. This suggests the value of having client representatives on the board and/or having clients attend board meetings so that they can speak for themselves.

*Reflective practice.* As discussed in Chapter One, reflective practice was conceptualized by Schön (1983). It involves reflection-in-action as a means to engage in continuous learning. It involves learning through experience. In generative governance, reflective practice supports board learning through the board’s collective reflection on their governance work.

The study findings provide evidence that bonding social capital can promote reflective practice. It does so by building trust and promoting collegiality which supports board members in collectively reflecting on past and current experiences. The case study findings show evidence of reflective practice that went beyond reflection by the board’s current members. They demonstrate that both boards informally and in some cases, formally, reflected on prior experience with their former board members. For example, the past-
president of DIGNITY remained strongly connected to the organization after her term of office ended. During our data collection period, she attended some board meetings and contributed her insights into issues currently before the board. While the knowledge and experience of past and long-term board members can help new board members to understand the historical context of issues before the board, the study findings demonstrate that at least one new DIGNITY board member, refrained at times from contributing to discussions. He did so because he considered their experience to quite valuable but at the same time his personal understandings of the issues before the board were left unspoken. Yet, because he is the brother of one of the organization’s clients, he is likely to have important insights to share, which have the potential to reframe issues.

On the other hand, there was evidence from both cases that former board members of color had seemingly fewer ties to the organization. These diverse board members served on their respective boards for a shorter period of time and had little or no involvement with the board after their terms of board service ended. For example, the DIGNITY board had a former president who is an African American woman of color. She was also a consumer of the organization’s services. Her background would suggest that she has a wealth of insights that could assist the board with reflective practice. Yet, she was no longer involved with the board. Similarly, the EMPOWERMENT board had previously had an African American woman on the board but her ties to the board seemed to have been severed prior to the commencement of our data collection period. Thus, important opportunities for reflective practice with these diverse board members were lost.

These examples raise more questions than provide answers. However, they suggest that more study is needed to help us understanding how and why ties with racial and ethnically diverse board members seemed to have been ended once these individuals left
board service. This goes beyond implications for reflective practice but also negatively influences the reframing of issues and collective sensemaking. One possibility is that the bridging social capital that brought these diverse individuals to board was not strengthened with bonding social capital, which should have been created during their terms of board service.

Collective sensemaking. As discussed in Chapter One, sensemaking is a practice which was conceptualized by Weick (1995). In collective sensemaking, individuals give meaning to their experience. Weick describes sensemaking in organizations as a collaborative process through which organizations attempt to make sense of an ambiguous issue or situation. In generative governance, nonprofit boards collectively create new understandings gained though a shared awareness of differing perspectives and varied interests.

The study findings suggest that board social capital both supports and hinders collective sensemaking. When new board members come to board service via social relationships with current board members, the evidence suggests that bonding social capital can support collective sensemaking. However, at the same time, the evidence also suggests that the nature of some social relationships between board members may hinder collective sensemaking. For example, when there are unequal power relations between board members, the board member with less power may hesitate to contribute to the collective sensemaking process if their opinions and experiences differ from more powerful others. This particularly seemed to be the case when board members had connections through professional rather than personal relationships.

There was limited evidence of the role of board bridging social capital in collective sensemaking. This is particularly true as it relates to the participation of board members of
color in the sensemaking process because as previously discussed there were few racial and ethnically diverse board members in the two case study nonprofits. While the one DIGNITY board member of color rarely spoke during board discussions, it was difficult to assess the reason for this. Because she held the position of board Secretary, she was engaged in taking notes during board meetings so that she could prepare the meeting minutes. This finding suggests that boards carefully consider the roles that board members are assigned or elected to. As the only person of color on the DIGNITY board, she could have made a more valuable contribution if she was free to speak, rather than focused on taking notes. She was a leader in local city’s African American community. Thus, she had the potential to serve as a bridge between the predominately White board and this important and underserved group of stakeholders during the board’s collective sensemaking process.

On the other hand, each of the case study boards had one female board member who regularly used their bridging relationships to support the board’s collective sensemaking. Interestingly, both women are academics (a community psychologist and a retired anthropologist) who had strong feminist backgrounds. They regularly used their bridging social capital bring the perspectives of women to the sensemaking process and call attention to the issues racial and ethnically diverse stakeholders and express the need for their perspectives to inform board sensemaking. Thus, I contend that the role of the bridging social capital of feminist women should be a focus of future study. This is proposed for the post-dissertation, CPAR study which is discussed later in the chapter.

*Barriers to the socially-just practice of generative governance.* A number of additional factors, which serve as barriers to socially-just practice of generative governance were identified. These barriers are influenced by board social capital. They include the following: (a) governance by subsets of the board, (b) the expectation of collegiality, (c) the
reticence of newcomers to speak, (d) the fear of confrontation and of offending others, (e) issues that are undiscussable, and (f) trust leading to a dereliction of duties. Each of these barriers stems from bonding social capital. Because these barriers are beyond the scope of this study’s explicit focus on the key generative governance practices they are not discussed further. However, further study on these barriers is warranted.

**Phase 2: Operationalization**

As discussed in Chapter Three, Lynham (2002b) describes the purpose of the operationalization phase as making “an explicit connection between the conceptualization phase and practice” (p. 232). Thus, operationalization involves translating the conceptualized theory into components, which can be observed in practice (Lynham, 2002b). While some scholars state that operationalization has a limited role or no role in interpretive theory-building studies (e.g., Toracco 2002, Turnbull, 2002c), as discussed in Chapter Four: Theory-building Research Findings, I determined that operationalization is important in critical theory-building research because of the social change aims of critical theories. Therefore, I operationalized the preliminary theory as part of the dissertation study to: (a) surface and clarify my understanding of the theoretical concepts and their relationship to practice and (b) inform the preliminary design of the CPAR study.

In order for practitioners to serve as co-researchers in the planned CPAR study and for other practitioners to use the theory in practice, it is necessary to connect the components of theory with common governance practices. Practitioners may be unfamiliar with or have limited knowledge of the theory's key concepts such as bonding and bridging social capital, reframing issues, reflective practice, collective sensemaking, and governance at the organizational margins. Therefore, by linking the theoretical concepts with relevant elements of nonprofit governance practice, practitioners will have a better understanding of the role of
board social capital in common board policies and procedures, and in turn, their influence on
the socially-just practice of generative governance. The following sections address the main
elements of the conceptualized theory and their respective relationships to common nonprofit
governance practices. Examples are provided and their role in the socially-just practice of
generative governance is discussed.

**Readiness for generative governance.** As noted in the theoretical findings presented
in the previous section, the following three elements are important to the board’s readiness
for the socially-just practice of generative governance: (a) governance at the organizational
boundaries, (b) diverse voices are at the board table, and (c) the issues and concerns of
diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board. Board social capital, in both its
bonding and bridging forms, can play a role in each element.

**Governance at the organizational boundaries.** The elements of practice associated
with governance at the organizational boundaries (both internal and external) are policies and
procedures that stipulate who the board can and/or should interact with to inform and support
its governance work. Board policies and procedures related to governance at the
organizational margins may dictate how the board uses existing relationships, who the board
develops new relationships with, for what purposes, and under what circumstances. They
may address both formal (e.g., appointed liaison) and informal (e.g., participation in activities
involving stakeholders) board roles.

Board policies and procedures related to governance at the organizational boundaries
may lead the board to privilege relationships with some internal and/or external stakeholders,
particularly those with power and influence (e.g., the CEO and wealthy donors).
Alternatively, policies and procedures regarding the board’s work at the organizational
boundaries can be developed with a critical perspective that focuses the board’s attention on
relationships with diverse internal and external stakeholders, particularly those who are members of historically oppressed groups. Critically-informed policies and procedures related to governance at the organizational margins can promote the use of board social capital toward the aim of developing a range of relationships with these stakeholders that are genuine and mutually beneficial rather than token or exploitative. See Table 5.2 for further information on the role of bonding and bridging social capital in governance at the organizational boundaries and for related questions, which can inform future research and practice.

**Diverse voices are at the board table.** The elements of practice associated with diverse voices at the board table include board recruitment, board member selection criteria, decision-making on board candidates, and board composition. Policies and procedures related to board recruitment (e.g., nominating committees), board member selection criteria (e.g., externally imposed representation mandates), decision-making on board candidates (e.g., policies that specify who makes decisions on board candidates such as the full board or the executive committee and CEO), and board composition (e.g., the use of board composition grids) influence who serves on the board. Thus, these elements of practice influence whose voices are present at the board table.

Policies and procedures related to diverse voices at the board table can support the socially-just practice of generative governance by promoting the recruitment of individuals from historically oppressed groups for board service, by requiring the appointment of diverse people to the board, and by advocating the use of board social capital toward these ends. Alternately, policies and procedures related to board recruitment, board member selection criteria, decision-making on board candidates, and board composition can lead to the unintentional or intentional use of board social capital to exclude members of historically
oppressed groups from board service. See Table 5.2 for additional information related to the influence of bonding and bridging social capital on whose voices are represented at the board table and for related questions, which hold promise to inform future research and practice.

**Issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board.** The elements of practice that are associated with bringing the issues and concerns of diverse individuals and groups before the board include meeting agendas and meeting participants. Policies on board and board committee meeting agendas delineate such practices as who is responsible for agenda development (e.g., the board president or CEO) and whose input is sought on agenda items (e.g., the full board, key staff, clients). Policies related to meeting participants may stipulate who beyond the board can attend board and board committee meetings (e.g., open or closed meetings) and specify under what circumstances guests may attend meetings (e.g., by formal board invitation only). These and related policies and procedures influence whose issues and concerns are brought before the board.

Policies and procedures related to meeting agendas and who can attend board and board committee meetings can promote and reinforce the agenda of those with power and maintain the status quo. Alternately, critically-informed policies and procedures on meeting agendas and meeting participants can challenge the status quo by ensuring that the issues which concern members of historically oppressed groups are brought to the board’s attention and that members of these groups can voice their concerns directly rather than depend on others (e.g., staff) to speak for them. See Table 5.2 for further information regarding the influence of bonding and bridging social capital in bringing the issues of diverse individuals and groups before the board and for related questions, which can inform future research and practice.
Practice of generative governance. As discussed previously, the theoretical findings presented in the previous section support the contention that three key elements identified by Chait et al. (2005) (i.e., reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking) are important to the practice of generative governance. The findings of this study suggest that these elements are respectively influenced by board social capital’s role in the following: (a) whose framing of the issues facing the organization and the people it serves are presented and privileged in board discussions, (b) whose versions of organizational and board history are presented and privileged in board discussions, and (c) whose understandings of the issues facing the organization and the people it serves are presented and privileged in board deliberation and decision-making.

Reframing issues. The practice elements related to the reframing of issues facing the organization and the people it serves are policies and procedures that influence the board’s consideration of multiple and diverse perspectives. They involve the board’s role in securing information from multiple sources (e.g., clients, staff, members of the surrounding community, academic research, government reports), obtaining information from diverse individuals and groups (e.g., people of color, people living in poverty, and women) and presenting conflicting and opposing perspectives on the issues. Board social capital can be used toward this end.

Related policies and procedures can intentionally or unintentionally favor the frames of those with privilege and thus, their understanding of the issue at hand. Alternately, critically-informed policies and procedures can support the board in viewing the issue at hand from multiple and opposing perspectives, which challenge the status quo and push the board to seek new and innovative solutions. See Table 5.2 for additional information on the
role of bonding and bridging social capital in the reframing of issues before the board and for related questions, which hold promise to inform future research and practice.

**Reflective practice.** The elements of practice related to reflective practice include board memory, reflection in action, and reflection on action. Each of these practices can inform board decision-making and can be influenced by board relationships. Board memory is supported and influenced by board meeting minutes, board documents, board stories, and board terms of office. As discussed in Chapter Two, reflection in action involves reflection on what is happening in the moment (at the time of the activity or interaction; e.g. during a board meeting) and reflection on action is retrospective reflection (after the activity or interaction; e.g., reflection at a board retreat) (Schön, 1983). Both reflection in action and reflection on action support the board with learning through experience. New knowledge gained from these practices can inform decision-making.

Reflective practice, however, can privilege some versions of board history and understandings gained through reflection in action and reflection on action and suppress others. Alternately, critically-informed policies and procedures can promote inclusive reflective practices, which challenge privileged versions of board history and the understandings of privileged individuals. See Table 5.2 for further information on the influence of bonding and bridging social capital in the board’s reflective practices and for related questions, which can inform future research and practice.

**Collective sensemaking.** The practices related to collective sensemaking include board discussion, deliberation and decision-making practices. These practices can be influenced by board social capital. Board policies and procedures on board discussion, deliberation, and decision-making (e.g., consent agendas, Robert’s Rules of Order, and time limits for discussions) can influence whose information, knowledge, and experiences are...
shared and considered by the board and whose are marginalized or ignored. Alternately, critically-informed policies and procedures can foster inclusive practices that support sensemaking that is truly collective, rather than support sensemaking by the privileged few. See Table 5.2 for further information on the role of bonding and bridging social capital in the board’s collective sensemaking and for related questions, which hold promise to inform future research and practice.

Table 5.2 Operationalization of the Preliminary Theory provides further details on how the key concepts of preliminary theory are related to common governance practices. It addresses the three elements of board readiness for the socially-just practice of generative governance (i.e., governance at the organizational boundaries, diverse voices are at the board table, and issues of diverse individuals and groups are brought before the board) and the three key elements of generative governance practice (i.e., reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking). For each of the six elements, representative examples of board policies and procedures that can be influenced by board bonding and bridging social capital are provided. The table also provides one guiding question and multiple associated questions related to the influence of board social relationships on each of the six elements. These questions can be used by scholars to support future research and by practitioners (including board members, CEOs, key staff, and consultants) to help them assess their governance practices with the aim of establishing socially-just generative governance practices.
Table: 5.2

Operationalization of the Preliminary Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness for Generative Governance</th>
<th>Role of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in…</th>
<th>Guiding and Associated Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Governance at the organizational boundaries | Board policies and procedures regarding relationships at the internal boundary  
--Formal and informal liaison roles with internal stakeholders  
--Board participation in meetings, events, and activities that involve internal stakeholders | How do board social relationships influence the board’s work at the internal organizational boundaries?  
--Who establishes policy and procedures related to the board’s relationships with internal organizational stakeholders?  
--For what purposes does the board use its relationships with internal constituents?  
--Which internal stakeholder relationships are privileged?  
--How does the board ensure that its relationships with diverse internal constituents are genuine and mutually beneficial rather than token or exploitative? |
| Board policies and procedures regarding relationships at the external boundary  
--Personal relationships with external stakeholders  
--Professional relationships with external stakeholders  
--Formal and informal liaison roles with external stakeholders  
--Board participation in meetings, events, and activities that involve external stakeholders | How do board social relationships influence the board’s work at the external organizational boundaries?  
--Who establishes policy and procedures related to the board’s relationships with external organizational stakeholders?  
--For what purposes does the board use its relationships with external constituents?  
--Which external stakeholder relationships are privileged?  
--How does the board ensure that its relationships with diverse external constituents are genuine and mutually beneficial rather than token or exploitative? |
Table 5.2 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diverse voices are at the board table</th>
<th>Board recruitment policies and procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--Recruitment plans</td>
<td>--Nominating committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Nominations process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do board social relationships influence whose voices are at the board table?

--Who sets board recruitment policies?
--Who oversees board recruitment?
--Who recruits prospective board members?
--How are prospective board members recruited?
--Whose opinions on board recruitment policies and procedures are privileged?
--Whose opinions on board recruitment policies and procedures are ignored or marginalized?
--How do the organization’s board recruitment policies and procedures support the development of a board that is representative of the diversity of the people the organization serves, its surrounding community, and its staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board member selection criteria</th>
<th>How do board social relationships influence whose voices are at the board table?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--Internally imposed representation mandates</td>
<td>--Who establishes board member selection criteria?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Externally imposed representation mandates</td>
<td>--How are board members selected?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

--What internal mandates are imposed and who imposes them?
--What external mandates are imposed and who imposes them?
--Whose criteria and opinions on board member selection are privileged?
--Whose criteria and opinions on board member selection are marginalized or ignored?
--How does the organization’s board selection criteria support the development of a board that is representative of the diversity of the people the organization serves, its surrounding community, and its staff?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making on board candidates</th>
<th>Board composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--Organizational policies on board member selection</td>
<td>--Policies on client representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Organizational procedures on board member selection</td>
<td>--Policies on the representation of historically oppressed groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do board social relationships influence whose voices are at the board table?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Who makes decisions on board candidates?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--How are decisions on board candidates made?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--How does the organization assure that qualified members of historically marginalized groups have an equal opportunity to be selected for board membership?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--How does the organization build the capacity of interested, but under-prepared, members of historically marginalized groups for board service?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do board social relationships influence whose voices are at the board table?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Who serves on the board? What demographic and/or constituent groups do they represent?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Whose board service is privileged?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Who is excluded from board service?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--How does the organization ensure that members of historically oppressed groups are represented on the board?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do board social relationships influence whose issues are brought before the board?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--How and from whom is input obtained on issues that need the board’s attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Who decides what is placed on meeting agendas?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--How are decisions made about meeting agendas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Whose input on meeting agendas is privileged?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Whose input on meeting agendas is marginalized or ignored?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting participants</td>
<td>How do board social relationships influence whose issues are brought before the board?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Board members</td>
<td>How and by whom are decisions made about who may attend board and committee meetings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Internal constituents</td>
<td>--Who typically attends board and committee meetings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--External constituents</td>
<td>--How does the board support its constituents, who are members of historically oppressed groups, to bring their issues of concern directly to the board?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Others</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generative Governance Practices</th>
<th>Role of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in…</th>
<th>Associated Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reframing issues</td>
<td>Policies and procedures regarding diverse perspectives</td>
<td>How does the board use social relationships to obtain diverse information and perspectives in support of its governance work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--Securing information on issues facing the organization and its constituents from multiple sources</td>
<td>--Where does the board obtain its information on issues facing the organization and its constituents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--Obtaining information on issues facing the organization and its constituents from diverse individuals and groups</td>
<td>--How does the board obtain information from multiple sources?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--Presenting conflicting and opposing perspectives on issues before the board</td>
<td>--How does the board obtain information from diverse constituents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--How does the board obtain conflicting and opposing perspectives?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--How and with whom does the board share information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--Whose information and perspectives are privileged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--Whose information and perspectives are marginalized or ignored?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--How does the board identify and challenge information and perspectives that reflect white or other forms of privilege?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--How does the board reconcile conflicting and opposing views of the issues facing the organization and its constituents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
<td>Board memory</td>
<td>How do board relationships influence the board’s reflective practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--Board meeting minutes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>--Board documents</td>
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<td>--Board stories</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--Terms of office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection in action</td>
<td>How do board relationships influence the board’s reflective practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--When and how does the board reflect in action?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--Whose reflections in action are privileged?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--Who is excluded or marginalized when the board reflects in action?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--How are they excluded or marginalized when the board reflects in action?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--How does the board promote inclusive reflection in action practices?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Reflection on action</th>
<th>How do board relationships influence the board’s reflective practice?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--When and how does the board reflect on action?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--Whose reflections on action are privileged?</td>
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<td>--Who is excluded or marginalized when the board reflects on action?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--How are they excluded or marginalized?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--How does the board support inclusive reflection on action practices?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective sensemaking</td>
<td>Board discussion and deliberation practices</td>
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<td>Board decision-making practices</td>
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With the discussion of the Phase 2 findings completed, the next section presents the Phase 3 findings.
Phase 3: Application

As discussed in Chapter Three, Phase 3 of this study was Application. Application involves applying the theory in practice. It supports "further study, inquiry, and understanding of the theory in action" (Lynham, 2002b, p. 233). Applying the theory in practice helps the theorist to further develop and refine the theory (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003). This dissertation study included the partial completion of Phase 3.

The following discussion presents the preliminary design of a proposed CPAR study, which is intended to further the theory-building process. Consistent with other HRD theory-building dissertations that propose future research (e.g., Garcia, 2008; Tuttle, 2003), I have not addressed background and contextual information, the problem, theoretical needs, and the significance of the study because these issues have been thoroughly addressed in the dissertation study. In addition, while the proposed study also uses a bricolage approach, the General Method, a paradox approach, and disciplined imagination, I do not discuss them in detail in this section, because they have previously been discussed in depth. Furthermore, I do not address evaluation because the same two sets of evaluation criteria that were used to assess the preliminary theory will also be used to evaluate the revised theory.

My discussion begins with the study's purpose and preliminary research questions. Next, I address the theoretical frames, research approach, research methods, data and data analysis, and the resources necessary to implement the study. Consistent with the critical nature of the study and the CPAR method, I plan to conduct this study in partnership with diverse practitioners. Therefore, key elements of the methodology will be finalized with the co-researchers after the participating nonprofit organization has been selected. This is compatible with a bricolage approach, which is evolving by nature.
**Purpose.** The proposed study has two primary objectives. The first is to further the theory-building process in collaboration with diverse practitioners through the application of the theory in a practice setting. The aim is to advance the preliminary understanding, gained through the dissertation study findings, of the role that board social capital plays in the generative governance of nonprofits and the ways it supports or hinders historically oppressed individuals and groups in the process. The second is to design and assess data-driven interventions that can help nonprofit boards to manage the paradox of board social capital. The aim is to develop mechanisms, such as policies and practices, that support the socially-just practice of generative governance.

**Research questions.** Two research questions will guide the proposed study. These questions are preliminary in nature and are aligned with the study's objectives. In keeping with the collaborative nature of the study and consistent with the bricolage approach, the research questions may evolve over time based on input from the practitioner co-researchers.

Because the first objective of this study is to further the theory-building process, the proposed study will be guided by the same question that was the focus of the dissertation study. Therefore, RQ1 is the following:

*How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?*

Because the other objective of the study focuses on practice, the second research question addresses socially-just policies and practices that are designed to support generative governance. Thus, the following question is RQ2:

*What policies and practices support the socially-just use of board social capital in the practice of generative governance?*
Given the complexity of the phenomenon, it is anticipated that a number of subquestions will be developed. These questions may focus on different levels of analysis, which involve the examination of individual (board members and stakeholders), group (board), and/or organizational level issues. The subquestions will be developed in collaboration with the co-researchers.

The organizational context of the nonprofit selected as the site of the study as well as the interests of the co-researchers may influence subquestion development. The following, however, are examples of issues that could form the basis of a subquestion. A subquestion for RQ1 could focus attention on the role that the bridging social capital of female board members who are feminists plays in board diversity and the inclusion of racial and ethnically diverse individuals in generative governance practice. This subquestion would follow-up on a preliminary finding of the dissertation study. A subquestion for RQ2 might explore the supports for and barriers against the socially-just practice of generative governance; e.g., internal (such as the organization’s board recruitment policy) and external (such as board diversity requirements imposed by funders) mandates related to board composition.

**Research approach.** As with the dissertation study, the proposed study will use a bricolage approach. Key elements of this approach will ground the research including the use of qualitative methods for a critical social change purpose and the use of multiple theoretical frames, methods, and sources of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

**Theoretical frames.** The CPAR study is designed to further the theory-building work that began during the dissertation study. Therefore, the four theoretical frames used in the current study (i.e., social constructionism, mainstream social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT) will also be used in the proposed CPAR study. Because these frames were discussed in detail in Chapter Two, they will not be addressed here.
A fifth theoretical frame is proposed for the CPAR study. As noted earlier in the chapter, the findings of the current study provide evidence that gender and social class influence board social relationships and in turn, governance practice. Therefore, a feminist perspective is proposed as the study’s fifth theoretical frame with aim of furthering our understanding of the role of gender in the socially-just practice of generative governance.

Feminist perspectives place gender, and gender as it intersects with class and race, as the focus of critical analysis (Merriam et al., 2007). While there are varying versions of feminist theory (e.g., radical feminism, black/womanist feminism, intersectional feminism, postmodern feminism, and global feminism), they are all concerned with the status of women. Like other critical perspectives, feminist perspectives address systems of power and privilege but with a specific focus gender-based oppression. The focus of critical analysis in feminist research includes gender inequality, gender differences, gender oppression, and structural oppression (Cole, 2016). The specific form of the feminist perspective used in the proposed study will be determined at a later date in collaboration with the co-researchers after the research questions, and in particular the subquestions, are finalized.

**Methods.** During the process of developing the proposal for this dissertation study, CPAR was identified as a potential method to be used in a post-dissertation study. The decision to design a CPAR study for the Application phase of this study was reassessed as part of the dissertation research. Toward that end, as well as to explore other research methods that could help answer the proposed research questions and further the theory-building process, a limited literature search on critical research methods was conducted. Appendix E: Critical Research Methods Resource List provides a partial list of the resources identified in support of this assessment. The appendix contains information on key resources for scholars interested in critical research methods. Topics include but are not limited to the
following: critical management research, critical nonprofit governance research, critical qualitative methods, critical quantitative methods, critical action and critical participatory action research, critical communicative methodology, critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography, and feminist methods. In addition, information on journals that focus on critical methods or publish critical research is provided.

Based on this review of interpretive, critical research methods, I propose the use of several methods to support the bricolage approach. They are CPAR, the case study method, and critical narrative research. Overviews of these methods and their roles in the proposed study follow.

**Critical participatory action research.** CPAR is a form of action research. Action research was developed in response to a crisis in organizational research (Sussman & Evered, 1978). This crisis emanated from the use of increasingly sophisticated research methods that were becoming less useful for solving the practical problems faced by organizational members (Sussman & Evered, 1978). The aim of action research, therefore, goes beyond seeking new knowledge. In action research, the ultimate aim is to create positive, sustainable change through the implementation of data-driven solutions (James, Slater, & Buckman, 2012).

Participatory action research (PAR) is an umbrella term for a number of forms of action research in which researchers and participants work together to examine a problem with the aim of creating change for the better (Wadsworth, 1998). PAR "places a premium on the politics and power of knowledge production and use" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 221). Distinguishing characteristics include cooperation between the researcher and study participants, its democratic nature (i.e., embodying democratic principles), and the dual objectives of producing knowledge that informs action and the empowerment of people
through the construction and use of collaboratively produced new knowledge (Schwandt, 2007). Critical participatory action research is a form of PAR, which is based on critical theory and is emancipatory in nature (Peterson, 2011).

See Appendix F for a draft of the post-dissertation CPAR study’s stages. The Appendix shows the alternating action and reflection stages of the proposed study and outlines the corresponding key activities.

Case study: An overview of the case study method and its use in theory building was presented in Chapter Two. Therefore, the discussion of the case study method in this section is limited to the specific use of case study in the proposed CPAR project.

As discussed previously, the case study method is a “comprehensive research strategy,” which involves the in-depth exploration of an issue or phenomenon within one or multiple bounded systems (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Examples of bounded systems include an individual, a program, and an organization. For the CPAR study, I propose to study bounded systems at three levels, i.e., the organizational, group, and individual level. One organizational case, specifically, one human services nonprofit organization, will be the subject of the study. One group case will be studied; i.e., the organization’s board of directors. Multiple individual cases will be studied; specifically, individual members of the nonprofit’s board as well as select staff members and possibly key stakeholders.

The selection criteria for the case study nonprofit organization may include but are not limited to the following:

- the organization is a 501(c)3 nonprofit (because charitable nonprofits are the focus of the theory);
- the organization is a human service nonprofit (because the preliminary theory was developed in the context of human service nonprofits);
• the board and CEO are currently practicing or interested in practicing generative governance (to support the collection of data necessary to further the theory-building process as well as the design, implementation, and assessment of data-driven interventions);
• the nonprofit is a minimum of five years old (the organization has been in existence long enough to have established board practices and to support reflective practice, which is a key component of generative governance);
• the nonprofit has a paid, professional CEO or executive director (to allow for the further exploration of the dissertation study's findings related to the influence of the CEO’s social capital);
• the board is mid-sized, approximately 10-16 members, which is representative of the average nonprofit board (thus, there are enough members to serve as participants and co-researchers but not so many as to make the coordination of the research activities, data collection, and data analysis extremely challenging, time consuming, and costly);
• the board has some level of demographic diversity (particularly, diversity in race/ethnicity and gender to allow for the further examination of issues related to the dissertation study’s findings on board composition); and,
• the organization is willing to participate in the study over the agreed upon period of time and to provide mutually agreed upon resources.

Diverse individuals from the case study organization will be recruited as co-investigators.

**Critical narrative research.** Narratives are social products, which are produced by people within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts (Uprichard, 2011). Narrative research is grounded in a range of traditions (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008) and includes numerous approaches (Uprichard, 2011). What they have in common is a focus on
“stories lived and told” as a means to understand some aspect of the world, which is the phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Critical narrative research conceptualizes narrative as theory and suggests a relationship between narrative and social change. By studying narratives, critical researchers can examine “how stories are produced,” “who produces them and by what means,” and "how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted" (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2013, p. 2). Narrative does not typically affect change directly but works indirectly “in a material but mediating manner, consolidating, resisting and shifting representational realities” (Squire et al. 2008, p. 4). However, when representation is a political focal point of a phenomenon, as it is in the practice of nonprofit governance, it may be a key element of social change (Squire et al., 2013).

Narratives are “part of the very essence of organizations” (Gabriel, 2004, p. 63). The use of narratives in organizational research has increased over time (Czarniawska, 2007; Gabriel, 2004). Narratives are “important but precarious [organizational] sense-making and communication devices,” which can be used to examine a range of issues including some that are explicitly related to generative governance (e.g., practice and learning) and critical perspectives (e.g., power and politics) (Gabriel, 2004, p. 75).

Narrative enables the researcher to extend her or his analyses “to multiple levels of research” (Squire, 2005, p. 92). Thus, it will support the multi-level analysis (organizational, group, and individual) proposed for this study, which was discussed in the previous section on the case study method. I envision the development of a board-level narrative related to the organization’s current governance practices, individual-level narratives that will provide counterstories to the dominant narrative on current governance practices, and a co-constructed, organizational-level “narrative of the future” (Uprichard, 2011, p. 103) focused
on the socially-just practice of generative governance. The organizational narrative will support the collaborative development of data-driven interventions designed to help the organization achieve this future. The interventions will be implemented and tested.

**Data and data analysis.** Many types of data have narrative qualities, whether or not they meet all aspects of a particular definition of narrative (Pentland, 1999). In organizational settings, researchers can collect narrative data from a range of existing sources; e.g., historical records and organizational publications (Pentland, 1999). New data can be collected through a range of methods; e.g., storytelling, interviews, letter writing, journaling, picture taking, and video recording (Moen, 2006).

The proposed CPAR study will involve the analysis of three types of data. Consistent with the bricolage approach, some of the data will be readily available (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and some will be new data, collected specifically for this study (Turnbull, 2002a). The following are the three proposed forms of data: texts on the governance as leadership model (which address generative governance) and other relevant practitioner literature, case data, and researcher reflection journals. As with the current study, relevant text from the *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Board* (Chait et al., 2005) and *Practitioner’s Guide to Governance as Leadership* (Trower, 2013) books will be used as data as well as other relevant practitioner literature (to be determined). New case data will be collected. Specific types of data to be collected will be determined with the co-researchers. These data may include but are not limited to organizational documents and publications, correspondence (including electronic correspondence), board meeting transcripts, interview data, recorded stories, and photos and other relevant mementos from board and organizational activities. The dissertation data will also be available for further analysis. I
will develop a researcher reflection journal that will also serve as data. My co-researchers will be encouraged to do the same.

Decisions regarding data analysis will be made after the study commences. Data analysis is expected to involve some form of textual analysis. The specific choice of data analysis method(s) will depend on the final decisions made regarding the research questions and other aspects of the methodology. Critical narrative analysis, which involves “the interplay of critical discourse and narrative analyses,” is among the forms of textual analysis that will be considered (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 159).

**Resources.** Given the complexity of the proposed study, the plans to use a CPAR approach, the anticipated length of engagement, and plans to collect multiple sources of data over a significant period of time, various resources will be needed to support the work of the project. These resources include but are not limited to multiple investigators and/or research assistants plus financial support for a range of expenses borne by the research team and its nonprofit partner organization. Financial support would be sought for such expenses that include but are not limited to salaries and benefits, transcription services, travel expenses, supplies, and meeting expenses.

Table 5.3 provides a summary of the study’s methodology.
Proposed CPAR Study Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: What board policies and practices support the socially-just use of board social capital in the practice of generative governance?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As with the dissertation study, the proposed study will use a bricolage approach to explore these questions. Bricolage is a multi-methodological form of inquiry that draws on a variety of methods and frameworks to examine a phenomenon (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005a; Reed, 2008). Multiple sources of data, including data that is readily available, will be used to revise the theoretical bricolage and develop and test data-driven interventions that support the socially-just practice of generative governance (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005b).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Theory-Building Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple methods will be used to support the theory-building process. As with the dissertation study, these methods will be employed within the bricolage approach (Kincheloe et al., 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Method of Theory Building in Applied Disciplines (Lynham, 2002b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An adapted version of Lynham's (2002b) General Method will continue to guide the theory-building process. The proposed study will involve the completion of Phase 3: Application; i.e., applying the preliminary theory in practice. The findings will be used to further the development of the preliminary theory and its operationalization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using Paradox: Opposition Method (Poole &amp; Van de Ven, 1989)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As with the dissertation study, the proposed study will use Poole and Van de Ven's (1989) opposition method of using paradox to build organizational and management theory. Using this method will support the development of disciplined imagination thought trails that further the exploration of the benefits and detriments of board social capital in the practice of generative governance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Participatory Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPAR will be used to co-create new knowledge with diverse practitioners. Critical perspectives will frame the research. The new knowledge will be used to revise the preliminary theory and its operationalization. It will also be used to identify and test data-driven interventions that will support the socially-just practice of generative governance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-level (organizational, group, and individual) case study research will be conducted. One 501(c)3, human services, nonprofit organization will be selected to serve as the case study organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Narrative Research</th>
<th>Multiple board and staff members and possibly key stakeholders will serve as participants for the critical narrative research component of the project in addition to their broader involvement with the study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined Imagination</td>
<td>As with the dissertation study, the proposed study will use Weick's (1989) disciplined imagination method of theory building. I will use the findings of disciplined imagination thought trials to refine the preliminary theory and its operationalization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Weick, 1989)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Multiple Theoretical Perspectives**

Multiple theoretical perspectives will be used to focus attention on various aspects of the paradox of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five theoretical perspectives will guide the CPAR study.</th>
<th>Social Constructionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Capital Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Social Capital Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminist Perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Multiple Sources of Data**

Each thought trial will involve the analysis of multiple sources of data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner Literature</th>
<th>The literature will include but is not limited to Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards (Chait et al., 2005) and the Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership (Trower, 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Data</td>
<td>New case data, which may include but are not limited to: Board meeting transcripts Interview data Organizational documents and publications Other narrative data (e.g., journals, correspondence, recorded stories, reflection journals, photos and other mementos) Dissertation case data will also be available for further analysis: Board meeting transcripts Interview data Organizational documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflection Journals</td>
<td>As with the dissertation study, I will use researcher reflection journal to capture insights and new understandings over the course of the CPAR study period. The practitioner co-researchers may also develop journals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

To be determined. Data analysis will include some form of text analysis, possibly critical narrative analysis.
Table 5.3 (continued).

| Criteria for Assessing Good Theory in HRD and Other Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011) | This set of criteria, which includes 13 criteria, will be used to evaluate the revised theory from an interpretive perspective. |
| Critically Analytic Criteria for Formal Theory Building in Adult Education (Brookfield, 1992) | Brookfield's five critically analytic criteria for assessing formal theory building in adult education will be used to evaluate the revised theory from a critical perspective. |

This discussion of the proposed CPAR’s methodology concludes the report of the Phase 3: Application findings and thus, the end of the presentation of my theoretical findings.

The next section discusses the transferability of the preliminary theory.

**Transferability**

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, the preliminary theory was developed for the following contextual setting:

- 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organizations,
- human services nonprofits,
- nonprofits with staff and all-volunteer nonprofits,
- all-volunteer boards, and
- nonprofits in diverse communities and/or nonprofits serving diverse populations.

There are many types of nonprofit organizations. I expect that the current conceptualization of the theory will transfer in its entirety to the practice of generative governance in some other contexts. For example, other categories of 501(c)3 charitable nonprofits share similar traits with human services nonprofits making transferability likely.
These include but are not limited to the following: education nonprofits, environmental nonprofits, health nonprofits, and arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits.

The preliminary theory may also be transferrable in its entirety to other types of nonprofit organizations such as 501(c)3 public foundations and 501(c)4 social welfare organizations because the legal duties and prescriptive responsibilities of their boards are the same as those for 501(c)3 charitable nonprofits.

On the other hand, there may be limits to the elements of the theory that transfer to other contexts such as nonprofit organizations that pay their board members. Remuneration may affect the board’s duties and practice of generative governance in unknown ways, thus, requiring research in this specific context. In addition, as noted earlier in the chapter, significant elements of the preliminary theory may be applicable in situations where boards or individual board members engage in intentional misconduct. This is because the known detriments of social capital include the abuse of power, pursuit of self-interest, and the exclusion of others. However, some elements of the theory may not be applicable in such situations. Further research would be needed to explore which elements of the theory are transferable to situations where the entire board or individual members engage in intentional misconduct.

The following section addresses the evaluation of the preliminary theory.
Evaluation

In this section, I present the results of my self-assessment of the theory. It is important to remember that this study was intentionally designed to build a preliminary theory and was planned as part of a broader research agenda on this phenomenon. My rationale for developing a preliminary theory was in part related to time and resource constraints. It was also related to the availability of case study data that, when analyzed along with the rest of my readily available data (the Governance as Leadership text and several additional practitioner publications), held promise to answer my research question. Therefore, aligned with the bricolage approach, I primarily used data that was ‘at hand’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005b; Reed, 2008). The only new data was my researcher reflection log, which was essential given the critical nature of the study.

The trustworthiness of theories built using interpretive and critical approaches requires acceptance by practitioners and stakeholders. However, given the scope of the study, its methodology, and the use of data that were readily available, I did not obtain input on the preliminary theory from practitioners and other stakeholders. Such input, however, is planned for the next phase of study; i.e., during the CPAR study. Therefore, I did not expect to have met all of the evaluative criteria at the completion of this dissertation study.

It is also important to note that some criteria were challenging to meet because of expectations of completing a doctoral dissertation. For example, expectations related to formal writing, an academic tone, and scientific language as opposed to presenting the theory in a form that is readily accessible to “those beyond the scientific community” (Lincoln & Lynham 2012, p. 16). I have tried to straddle both the academic and practice worlds. Thus, I took steps to address these challenges; e.g., I provided a list of definitions for the major theoretical concepts and important terms immediately before the presentation of the
conceptualized theory. I also included a lengthy appendix that provides definitions of theoretical-related and practice-related terms. See the previously discussed Appendix A.

As discussed in Chapter Three, I developed a form to guide the evaluation of the preliminary theory. This form is provided in Appendix G: Theory Assessment Template.

**Interpretive perspective criteria.** As discussed in Chapter Three, I used Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) Criteria for Assessing Theory in Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective to assess the preliminary theory. These criteria are the following: (a) meaningfulness and understandability, (b) thick description and insightfulness, (c) narrative elegance, (d) transferability, (e) mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic, (f) empirical verifiability, (g) fruitfulness and provocativeness, (h) usefulness and applicability, (i) compellingness, (j) saturation, (k) prompt to action, (l) fittingness, and (m) transferability and transportability. I assessed the preliminary theory for evidence related to each of Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) 13 criteria. I determined that four criteria were fully met and nine criteria were partially met.

The criteria that the preliminary theory fully meets are fruitfulness and provocativeness, usefulness and applicability, compellingness, and prompt to action. The partially met criteria include meaningfulness and understandability, thick description and insightfulness, narrative elegance, transferability, empirical verifiability, saturation, fittingness, and transferability and transportability.

Table 5.4: *Evaluation results: Interpretive perspective criteria* presents further information on these criteria and my assessment of them. The table lists each criterion and provides their respective definitions. It also documents where supporting evidence, related to whether the criterion has been fully met or partially met, can be found.
Table 5.4

Evaluation Results: Interpretive Perspective Criteria

Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) Criteria for Assessing Theory in Applied Disciplines from an Interpretive Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evidence of Meeting the Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruitfulness and provocativeness</td>
<td>“An interpretive theory should ... be fruitful and provocative. i.e., illuminate some aspect of social life and suggest new avenues of research and/or description and/or action” (p. 16).</td>
<td>Chapter Five:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Six:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Theoretical conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recommendations for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recommendations for practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness and applicability</td>
<td>“An interpretive theory should ... be useful and applicable to ordinary persons, suggesting ways of being in the world, or ways of altering one's circumstances in some context; provide new ways of seeing old situations such that meaningful human change can occur; provide models for human flourishing, as living knowledge, and for practical application and high organizational performance” (p. 16).</td>
<td>Chapter Five:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Operationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Six:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Theoretical Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recommendations for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recommendations for practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compellingness</td>
<td>“An interpretive theory should ... demonstrate the ability to move stakeholders to action by satisfying two components: (1) findings that mirror the ineffable experience of respondent audiences (fidelity, or internal validity), and (2) creating a prompt to action on the part of a wider set of audiences/stakeholders (not just the researcher or research funders) who have a legitimate stake in the findings, including for example, other communities policy circles, legislators, and those who participated in the research” (p. 16).</td>
<td>Chapter Five:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Operationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Six:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Theoretical conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implications for practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.4 (continued)

| Prompt to action | ... provide a good conceptual understanding of practice; proceeding from compellingness (an inextricably linked criterion) such that researchers and respondents understand where and how to move next in a given context, including how to refine, hone, sharpen, and revise practice, and to alter performance in the light of new information; connect theory with action and learning for continuous refinement and improvement, illustrating practicality of the theory” (p. 17). | Chapter Five:  
- Conceptualization  
- Operationalization  
- Application  

Chapter Six:  
- Theoretical conclusion  
- Implication for research  
- Implications for practice  
- Recommendations for research  
- Recommendations for practice |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evidence of Meeting the Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness and understandability</td>
<td>“An interpretive theory should provide explanation and deep understanding of actual understandability events, behaviours, or the meaning-making activities of stakeholders and respondents; be accepted by professionals and stakeholders (co-constructors of the theory)” (p. 16).</td>
<td>Chapter Five: - Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick description and insightfulness</td>
<td>… be understandable and insightful; exhibit reasonable structural corroboration (be internally and contextually consistent); accommodate some ambiguity (a hallmark characteristic of human affairs) inherent in the sense- and meaning-making and socially constructed activities of respondents and stakeholders” (p. 16).</td>
<td>Chapter Five: - Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Narrative elegance | … be either simple or complex, depending on the matter or phenomenon being theorized; be understandable beyond the scientific community (i.e. accessible in natural language), narratively elegant, and conceptually rich, provocative and evocative” (p. 16). | Chapter Five: - Conceptualization  
- Appendix A: Definitions |
| Transferability | … be as complete as is possible, given its intended range (local, regional or other), so that other users may see the extent to which the theory may be useful in their own situation/context; enable individuals to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other contexts” (p. 16). | Chapter Five: - Conceptualization  
- Operationalization  
- Transferability  

Chapter Six  
- Theoretical conclusion  
- Implications for practice  
- Recommendations for practice |
Table 5.3 (continued).

| Mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic | ... display mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic; be made operational, i.e. the descriptive and explanatory framework (concepts, logic and propositions) are made explicit and thus, able to be put into action; be capable of being tested by other researchers, and enjoy stakeholders assent to its usefulness for their lives and contexts” (p. 16). | Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization  
-Operationalization |
|---|---|---|
| Empirical verifiability | ... be supported by ‘lived experience,’ be verified by the respondents that it ‘rings true: or that it reflects some aspect of their experience, meaning-making, or observation; match some element of socially constructed life; generate both new social scientific knowledge, and new respondent learning” (p. 16). | Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization |
| Saturation | ... invoke informing social constructions and meaning-making narratives such that little new knowledge is forthcoming, i.e.: (1) narratives and respondents' explanations are exhaustively sampled; (2) multiple examples of the phenomenon can be found independently (other researchers). Be buttressed by multiple examples of the phenomenon; be saturated with exemplars” (p. 17). | Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization |
| Fittingness | ... be rooted in local context, native and indigenous perspectives, meanings and narratives, and exhibit 'fit' with the notion of equifinality, i.e. recognize that there can be no final solution to any given problem - rather that there are multiple, endlessly creative responses or solutions, any of which might be satisfactory in a given context” (p. 17). | Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization  
-Operationalization  
Chapter Six:  
-Theoretical conclusion  
-Theoretical implications for practice |
| Transferability and transportability | ... enable transferability - i.e. the ability in individuals (through interaction between the knower and the known) to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other, contexts; and transportability - i.e. the applicability to different populations, of utility in varying contexts, with varying populations” (p. 17). | Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization  
-Operationalization  
-Transferability |

Critically analytic criteria. As discussed in Chapter Three, I used Brookfield’s (1992) Critically Analytic Criteria for Formal Theory Building in Adult Education to assess my preliminary theory from a critical perspective. These criteria are the following: (a) assumptive awareness, (b) ethical attention, (c) contextual sensitivity, (d) value judgmental attentiveness, and (e) reformulative sensitivity. I assessed the preliminary theory for evidence related to each of Brookfield’s five criteria. The previously discussed Theory Assessment
Template (see Appendix G) was used to support the self-assessment of the theory from a critical perspective.

The self-assessment results demonstrate that four criteria were fully met and one criterion was partially met. The criteria that the preliminary theory fully meets are the following: assumptive awareness, ethical attention, contextual sensitivity, and value judgmental awareness. The partially met criterion is reformulative sensitivity. Reformulative sensitivity involves the evolution of the theory over time in response to ongoing critical analysis, interpretive leaps forward by the theorist, and new empirical findings. Therefore, during the theory-building process, revisions to the preliminary theory were made when new insights were gained during the data analysis process. New empirical findings are expected from the proposed CPAR study, at which time further revisions

Table 5.5: *Evaluation results: Critically analytic criteria* presents further information on these criteria and my assessment of them. The table lists each criterion and provides their respective definitions. It also documents where supporting evidence for having met each criterion can be found.

Table 5.5

*Evaluation Results: Critically Analytic Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brookfields’s (1992) Critically analytic criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Meets Criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Assumptive awareness | The assumptions, on which the theory is based, are explicitly stated. | Chapter One:  
- Philosophical Assumptions  
Chapter Three:  
- Research Process, Part II  
- My Story  
Chapter Five:  
- Assumptions |
| Ethical attention | The ethical dilemmas of practice that are implicit in the theory are acknowledged and named. | Chapter Two:  
-Nonprofit Governance Theory  
-Critical Social Capital  
Chapter Three:  
-Trustworthiness  
-Evaluation  
Chapter Five:  
-Conceptualization  
Chapter Six:  
-Theoretical Conclusion |
| Contextual sensitivity | The specific contextual nature of the theory is acknowledged. | Chapter One:  
-Background  
-Context  
Chapter Two:  
-Nonprofit Governance Theory  
-Social Capital Theory  
-Critical Theory, CHRD, Critical Social Capital Perspectives, and CRT  
Chapter Three:  
-Theory-building Research Methods  
-Overarching Theory-building Method Selection Criteria  
-General Method  
-Abduction  
-Induction and the General Method  
-Data  
-My Story  
Chapter Five  
-Context  
Chapter Six:  
-Summary of the Study |
| Value judgmental awareness | The theory specifies the values that ground and guide it. It conveys the intended role of the theory toward the end of fostering social change. | Chapter One:  
-Introductory Information  
-Background Information  
-Purpose of the Study  
-Significance of the Study  
Chapter Two:  
-Nonprofit Governance Theory  
-Critical Theory, CHRD, CRT  
Chapter Three:  
-Research Approach  
-General Method  
-My Story |
It is important to note that this is my assessment of the preliminary theory. Ultimately, others will judge the theory for themselves. Given that this is a critical theory with a practice focus, it is important that the theory be evaluated by diverse practitioners who can assess the theory in light of their lived experiences. The proposed CPAR study has been designed to provide diverse practitioners with the opportunity to both assess the preliminary theory and further its development.

The next section presents the study’s theoretical contributions.

**Theoretical Contributions**

In Chapter One of my dissertation proposal, I discussed the significance of the study and stated that it held promise to make contributions to the literature in several areas;
nonprofit governance theory, social capital theory, and CHRD. I also outlined some specific contributions, which were anticipated for each area. Upon the completion of the evaluation of the theory, I revisited these proposed contributions in light of the study findings. The following sections respectively present the contributions made in each of the three areas and denote where evidence of these contributions can be found.

**Contributions to nonprofit governance theory.** This study makes the following contributions to nonprofit governance theory:

- responds to calls for nonprofit governance theory that addresses the relational and group dynamic aspects of governance,
- demonstrates the benefits of incorporating paradox in nonprofit governance theory,
- responds to calls for nonprofit governance theory that helps us to understand the role of social capital in nonprofit governance,
- demonstrates the unique perspectives gained from a critical social capital theory of nonprofit governance,
- illustrates the value of using critical perspectives in nonprofit governance theory to help us understand oppressive nonprofit governance practices,
- develops theory on an under-researched governance practice, i.e., generative governance, and
- plans for further theory development through the application of the preliminary theory to nonprofit governance practice and drafting a CPAR study toward this end.

Evidence related to these contributions can be found in Chapters Three, Five, and Six.
Contributions to social capital theory. The following are the study’s contributions to social capital theory:

- adds to the growing body of social capital theory influenced by heterodox economic foundations,
- furthers our understanding of the role of social capital in the largely unexamined context of nonprofit governance,
- contributes to the critical social capital literature through the use of critical perspectives to examine the largely unexplored dark side of board social capital in the practice of nonprofit governance, and
- demonstrates the usefulness of a paradox perspective in developing social capital theory that seeks to explain both the potential benefits and detriments associated with social capital as it relates to a specific phenomenon.

Evidence of these contributions can be found in Chapters Three, Five, and Six.

Contributions to critical human resource development. The study’s contributions to CHRD include the following:

- responds to calls for the use of critical constructionism in HRD theory building and its use in HRD theory-building studies that address diversity issues, and
- develops a new critical theory to help us understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance.

Evidence of the study's contributions to CHRD can be found in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.
Chapter Summary

The chapter began with a discussion of the values that grounded the study, the assumptions upon which the theory is based, and the context in which it is relevant. Next, I reported the theoretical findings of the conceptualization, operationalization, and application phases of the theory-building. Then, I discussed the results of the transferability of the preliminary theory. Subsequently, I discussed the results of the self-assessment of the theory and presented the study’s theoretical contributions. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the study’s theoretical contributions.

The next and final chapter summarizes the study, presents its main conclusions, and discusses their related implications and recommendations.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the final chapter of the dissertation. It begins with a summary of the study. Next, I present the study’s main conclusions (one theory-building research conclusion and one theoretical conclusion) and their respective implications and recommendations. A chapter summary follows.

Summary of the Study

This dissertation study focused on generative governance. Generative governance is the foundational and unique mode of Chait et al.’s (2005) governance as leadership model of nonprofit governance. This model of governance was developed in response to calls for change in nonprofit governance practice. In generative governance, boards engage in deeper inquiry, explore root causes of issues facing the organization and the people it serves, consider divergent values, examine optional courses of action, create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions.

Generative governance has been widely embraced by practitioners and a growing number of scholars use the concept of generative governance in their research. Yet, some scholars, including those who recognize the merits of generative governance, have raised academic and practice concerns about the concept. Thus, further research on generative governance is needed.

Rationale for the study. This study explored generative governance with the aim of theory development. When I began to conceptualize the study, I believed that board social capital played an exclusively positive role in the practice of generative governance. However, abductive insights suggested that board social capital might also lead to negative outcomes, particularly for members of historically oppressed groups, including people of color.
Therefore, I wanted to understand if, and if so how, board social capital plays a paradoxical a role in the practice of generative governance. Furthermore, I wanted to understand if, and if so how, it oppresses people of color in the process. So, while I initially planned to conduct an interpretive study, I revised the design of the study to incorporate both interpretive and critical perspectives, with the aim of understanding the paradox and its implications for the socially-just practice of generative governance.

**Purpose.** The main purpose of this study was to develop a preliminary, critical social theory to help us understand the paradoxical role that board social capital plays in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations. A secondary purpose was to plan for the further development of the theory through the application of the preliminary theory in practice.

**Research question.** The research question, which the study was designed to answer is the following:

*How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?*

**Methodology.** A bricolage approach was employed to answer this question. Bricolage uses “qualitative methods for critical social purposes” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009, p. 53). This approach supported the use of multiple methods and frames (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005a; Reed, 2008) and the analysis of data from multiple sources, which were readily available (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005b).

The frames that guided the study are social constructionism, social capital theory, critical social capital perspectives, and CRT. The data analyzed for this study are the Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards text (the original
source of the generative governance concept), select practitioner literature (six sources that explicitly address generative governance or related topics), case data (from two 501(c)3 human services nonprofit organizations collected through North Carolina State University’s Nonprofit Board Communication Initiative), and my researcher reflection journal.

An adapted version of the General Method (Lynham, 2002b) guided the theory-building process (See Figure 3.2). These adaptations are related to the incorporation of abductive logic, an interpretive theory-building approach, and the use of critical perspectives. Three General Method phases were addressed during this study. They are the Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Application phases.

In Phase 1: Conceptualization, I used Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method of exploring paradox and Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method to conceptualize the preliminary theory. Five disciplined imagination thought trials were conducted. Each trial explored a different aspect of the paradox. I used textual analysis to analyze the data. In Phase 2: Operationalization, I operationalized the preliminary theory by linking the key elements of the theory to common nonprofit governance practices. In Phase 3: Application, I drafted the design of a theoretically-informed, post-dissertation CPAR study.

The CPAR study has two objectives. The first is to further the theory-building process in collaboration with diverse practitioners through the application of the theory in a practice setting. The second is to develop and assess data-driven interventions that can help nonprofit boards to manage the paradox of board social capital. My aim is to develop mechanisms (e.g., policies and processes) that support the socially-just practice of generative governance.

The preliminary theory was evaluated using two sets of criteria. The first is Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) criteria for assessing good theory in HRD and other applied disciplines
from an interpretive perspective. The second is Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria for formal theory building in adult education.

**Findings.** The study had both theory-building research and theoretical findings. The theory-building findings relate to gaps and inconsistencies found in the HRD theory-building research literature. These gaps and inconsistencies involve the bricolage approach, the General Method (Lynham 2002b), disciplined imagination (Weick, 1989), theory evaluation from a critical perspective, and guidance for HRD theorists. I suggest ways to fills these gaps and explained how my dissertation study helps to fill some of them. My theory-building research findings also provided detailed descriptions of how I developed the theoretical bricolage, conducted the disciplined imagination thought trials, and evaluated the preliminary theory. The templates, which I developed in support of the thought trials and theory evaluation process were provided and discussed. Finally, I addressed the contributions this study made to the theory-building research literature.

The study’s theoretical findings were used to develop a preliminary conceptualization of the theory, operationalize it, and to plan for the application of the theory to practice. The theoretical findings support my abductively derived conjecture that board social capital can lead to both positive and negative outcomes for the practice of generative governance and thus, creates a paradox for nonprofit boards. The findings also demonstrate that bonding social capital can exclude diverse individuals, including racially and ethnically diverse people, from board service and can marginalized them in the governance process. Thus, opportunities for generative governance are lost because the voices of members of historically oppressed groups are often silenced, ignored, or discounted. However, the study also found that bridging social capital can help to address the potential detriments of board social capital and thus, it can support the socially-just practice of generative governance.
Contributions. The study made both theory-building research contributions and theoretical contributions. Contributions to the HRD theory-building research literature include the following: (a) responding to the call for theory in new HRD contexts (nonprofit organizations) and new HRD practice areas (governance); (b) answering calls for the use of a bricolage approach to promote creativity and innovation in education and HRD theory-building research; (c) making my bricolage approach transparent; (d) responding to calls for the increased use of abduction in HRD theory-building research and demonstrating the value of using surprising observations in practice to promote theoretical innovation; (e) developing an adapted version of the General Method that accommodates the use of abductive logic, an interpretive approach, and the use of critical perspectives; (f) designing, using, and documenting an innovative method, which combines Poole and Van de Ven’s (1989) opposition method of using paradox to build management and organizational theories with Weick’s (1989) process of theory-building as disciplined imagination; (g) developing and documenting a rigorous analytical process and creating an associated tool for Weick’s (1989) disciplined imagination method of theory building; (h) demonstrating the usefulness of Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) criteria for assessing good theory in HRD and other applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective; (i) adapting Brookfield’s (1992) critically analytic criteria for formal theory building in adult education for use in assessing theory from a critical perspective; and (j) developing a tool that supports and documents the dual assessment (interpretive and critical) of the preliminary theory, which could be adapted for use by other theorists.

The study also made theoretical contributions to nonprofit governance theory, social capital theory, and critical human resource development. The contributions to nonprofit governance theory include the following: (a) responding to calls for nonprofit governance
theory that addresses the relational and group dynamic aspects of governance, (b) demonstrating the benefits of incorporating paradox in nonprofit governance theory, (c) illustrating the value of using critical perspectives in nonprofit governance theory to help us understand oppressive nonprofit governance practices, (d) responding to calls for nonprofit governance theory that helps us to understand the role of social capital in nonprofit governance, (e) demonstrating the unique perspectives gained from a critical social capital theory of nonprofit governance, (f) developing theory on an under-researched governance practice, i.e., generative governance, and (g) planning for further theory development through the application of the preliminary theory to nonprofit governance practice and drafting a CPAR study toward that end.

The contributions to social capital theory include the following: (a) adding to the growing body of social capital theory influenced by heterodox economic foundations, (b) furthering our understanding of the role of social capital in the largely unexamined context of nonprofit governance, (c) contributing to the critical social capital literature through the use of critical perspectives to examine the largely unexplored dark side of board social capital in the practice of nonprofit governance, and (d) demonstrating the usefulness of a paradox perspective in developing social capital theory that seeks to explain both the potential benefits and detriments associated with social capital as it relates to a specific phenomenon.

The contributions to CHRD include the following: (a) responding to calls for the use of critical constructionism in HRD theory building and its use in HRD theory-building studies that address diversity issues, (b) developing a new critical theory to help us understand the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance, and (c) identifying the need for HRD theory developed with interpretive and
critical methods and theory developed by diverse scholars in the support of socially-just HRD research and practice.

In the next section, I address the conclusions that I have drawn from the work completed during this study.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This section presents and discusses the study’s major conclusions (one theory-building research conclusion and one theoretical conclusion) and their respective implications and recommendations. The conclusions are aligned with my participatory-advocacy worldview and grounded in the study’s theoretical framework. They are based on the study findings. The theory-building research conclusion and its corresponding implications and recommendations are addressed first, followed by the theoretical conclusion and its related implications and recommendations.

Theory-building research conclusion. The study’s theory-building research conclusion is related to the concept of CHRD (Sambrook, 2009). CHRD challenges current thinking about HRD (Sambrook, 2009) and questions whose interests are served by HRD interventions (Callahan, 2007). Furthermore, CHRD requires the transformation of HRD research and practice toward issues of fairness, equity, and justice (Fenwick, 2004). While insufficient, some progress has been made toward socially-just HRD research and practice. Evidence of this progress was presented in several sections of this dissertation. The most comprehensive evidence was presented Chapter Two, in the section on CHRD. In summary, the literature review findings demonstrate that leaders in the field of HRD have accomplished the following: advocated for the development of a CHRD (e.g., Bierema, 2002; Callahan, 2007; Fenwick, 2004), offered guidance on the concept (Sambrook, 2009) and dimensions of CHRD (Fenwick, 2004), and have written conceptual articles and published empirical studies
on the use of critical perspectives in HRD research, practice, and education (e.g., Armitage, 2010; Bierema, 2010; Brendon, 2011; Collins, 2013; Diehl and Duzbinski, 2016; O’Donnell, Maguire & Cross, 2006). In addition, AHRD has established both a Critical HRD and Social Justice Perspective SIG.

But, what does CHRD mean in the context of HRD theory-building research? I contend that it means the field needs to develop HRD theories that describe and explain the interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression in organizations (Fenwick, 2004) and in the boundaries of organizations and communities (Harvey, 2011) that lead to the exclusion and marginalization of historically-oppressed individuals and groups in HRD practice.

While some progress has been made, a key challenge for the field is the unmet need for a broad range critical theories on HRD phenomena that can both inform critical research and guide HRD practitioners in the development and implementation of socially-just practices (Gedro, Collins, & Rocco, 2014). Therefore, I contend that CHRD requires HRD theorists who are adept in the use of common interpretive and critical research methods to support their theory-building work, who can adapt other theory-building research methods to accommodate interpretive and critical perspectives, and who develop new theory-building research methods that explicitly support the building of CHRD theories.

Another challenge is the lack of diverse HRD theorists. CHRD theory can and should be developed by theorists who are members of historically-privileged groups. These theorists can use their positions of privilege to not only conduct critical theory-building research but to call attention to oppressive HRD practices and promote socially-just practices. However, CHRD also requires diverse theorists, who bring both their research expertise and lived
experiences to their theory-building work. Theory-building research conducted by diverse theorists is essential for CHRD.

Therefore, based on the results of this study (including the literature review and the study’s theory-building research findings), I have drawn the following theory-building research conclusion:

_Socially-just HRD research and practice require theory developed with interpretive and critical methods and theory developed by diverse scholars._

The next two sections respectively address the first and second parts of this conclusion.

**Interpretive and critical methods.** There are an increasing number of HRD scholars who understand the need for and usefulness of interpretive and critical research (e.g., Gibson & Haynes, 2003; Gedro et al., 2014; Grenier, 2015; Mabey, 2003; Storberg-Walker, 2015). Using a range of interpretive and critical lenses and research methods helps HRD scholars to develop more holistic understandings of HRD phenomena and in turn, informs the development of more comprehensive and inclusive HRD interventions (Mabey, 2003). However, my review of the HRD theory-building research literature, presented in Chapter Two, found that a limited number of interpretive and critical methods are commonly used to build HRD theories.

Fifteen years ago, Torraco’s (2002) comparative analysis of theory-building methods for applied disciplines included three interpretive methods. They are the case the grounded theory, social constructionist, and the qualitative case study methods. No critical methods were included in his analysis. In the ensuing years, a small number of HRD scholars have promoted and/or used additional interpretive to build theory, e.g., autoethnography (Grenier, 2015; Grenier & Collins, 2016) and narrative (Glibkowski, McGinnis, Gillespie, & Schommer, 2014). In addition, a few HRD scholars have promoted and/or used critical
theory-building methods, e.g., bricolage (Turnbull, 2002a), feminist deconstruction (Storberg-Walker & Bierema, 2008), and critical narrative (Byrd, 2009b). Yet, I did not find evidence that HRD theorists have widely embraced these or other interpretive and critical methods for their theory-building research. On the contrary, the field remains firmly rooted in a “positivistic scientific management paradigm” and some HRD scholars, including well-known and influential theorists, continue to privilege positivistic approaches to theory building (Lee, 2015, p. 6). In response, Storberg-Walker (2015) wrote an editorial for *Human Resource Development Review* that warns of the inherent danger in a positivistic approach to HRD research. She states the following:

> I believe that the implicit acceptance of objectivity and neutrality for evaluating knowledge is a challenge for the discipline of HRD….If HRD is a discipline that aspires to transformational changes in its vision for who it serves, how it serves, and why it services then it is critical for all of us to examine the relationship between knowledge and power. Without developing this critical awareness, HRD will be stuck in the post-positivist paradigm and unable to attend to the grand problems facing the world.

(Storberg-Walker, 2015, p. 357)

**Diverse scholars.** Over the course of my work on this dissertation study, I noted that few HRD scholars who are members of historically oppressed groups are engaged in theory-building research. Yet, HRD scholars have noted that diversity issues are important in HRD research (e.g., Alfred & Chlup, 2010; Gedro et al., 2014) and the field has historically had White, male, and straight biases (Gedro et al., 2014).

Some progress has been made regarding gender diversity. I observed that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of female HRD theorists (e.g., Marilyn Byrd,
Tonette Rocco), female theory-building research scholars (e.g., Susan Lynham, Sally Sambrook) and female editors of the field’s theory-focused journal, *Human Resource Development Review* (e.g., Jamie Callahan, Julia Storberg-Walker). Each of these women and other female HRD theorists have made significant contributions to CHRD. However, I also observed that HRD scholars who are members of other historically oppressed groups are grossly underrepresented among the ranks of HRD theory-building scholars (e.g., people of color). Thus, I contend that CHRD needs greater diversity in its theorists including but not limited to HRD scholars who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups and scholars who are members of sexual minority groups. HRD scholars who are members of these groups (e.g., Marilyn Byrd and Joshua Collins, respectively) have demonstrated the value of diversity in HRD theorists by the important phenomena they study, the quality of their theory-building work, and their commitment to socially-just HRD practice.

Diverse scholars will bring insights to their theory-building research gained from their lived experiences with oppression, exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination. This is important because the lived experiences of those theorists who receive unearned privileges based on one or more elements of their identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and ability status) influence how they come to know, know, and experience the world (Milnar, 2007). This does not mean, however, that scholars who benefit from unearned privileges should not engage in theory-building research; their insights and calls for social change are important to CHRD, too. Rather, it suggests that scholars with privilege must possess or pursue deep knowledge of themselves and of the people or community which are the subject of study (Milnar, 2007).

**Theory-building research implications and recommendations.** My theory-building research conclusion has implications for HRD research and practice. The focus of these
implications is evident in the two components of the conclusion, i.e., the importance of interpretive and critical theory building approaches and the need for diverse theorists for CHRD. The following two sections respectively address the implications of each component. Related recommendations are provided.

*Interpretive and critical methods.* The implications of this first part of my theory-building research conclusion are the following:

First, CHRD requires theory developed using interpretive and critical theory-building approaches. This includes the use of methods and theoretical frames that support interpretive and critical research.

Second, interpretive and critical theories are needed to inform both HRD research and HRD practice. Informing research is insufficient. CHRD must also illuminate lived experience and uncover privilege and oppression in order to guide practice and promote social change.

Third, building CHRD theory that aims to inform the socially-just HRD practice requires theorists with the knowledge of, and capacity to use, a range of interpretive and critical methods.

The following recommendations address this first part of my theory-building research conclusion.

- Provide supports (e.g., training, mentors, technical assistance, funding) to new or aspiring HRD theorists whose aims are to build HRD theory that guides socially-just HRD practice and whose research questions are best suited to the use of interpretive and critical theory-building research methods.
- Offer supports (e.g., funding, mentors, facilitate connections to publishers) to HRD theory-building research scholars for the development of new resources (e.g., journal
articles, texts, training curriculum) that guide novice HRD theorists in the use of interpretive and critical perspectives to build HRD theories.

- Provide technical assistance (e.g., training, mentors, journal articles, texts) and financial support (e.g., funds for training and travel) to HRD theorists in order to build their intercultural competency and develop skills in cross-cultural and intercultural research.

- Develop academic curriculum and teaching resources on the use of interpretive and critical methods in HRD theory-building research as well as related subjects such as cross-cultural research, intercultural research, and intercultural competency (e.g., syllabi, course materials). Provide stipends to content experts to develop master syllabi and complementary course materials.

- Secure funding and in-kind donations to support the above recommendations. Leadership will be needed to undertake this capacity-building work. The AHRD Theory SIG would be an appropriate group to further consider needs and recommendations. Collaboration with the Critical HRD and Social Justice Perspectives SIG, Qualitative Inquiry SIG and/or the Workforce Diversity SIG should be considered. AHRD might also take a leadership role in planning such efforts and securing funding. Alternately, or in collaboration with the AHRD, a group of HRD theory-building research scholars and their home institutions could further develop and/or support the implementation of these recommendations. The editorial board of *Human Resource Development Review* could also play a key role.

**Diverse scholars.** The implications of the second part of my theory-building research conclusion are the following:
First, CHRD requires theory developed by diverse individuals. As discussed previously, while some progress has been made particularly as it related to gender, most HRD theory is developed by theorists who are members of historically privileged groups. The field needs theory developed by people who are members historically oppressed and marginalized groups, who bring their lived experiences to their theory-building work. Thus, efforts are needed to promote theory-building research among diverse HRD scholars and graduate students.

Second, diverse scholars who are new or aspiring theorists would benefit from supports to building their capacity to build CHRD theories. Thus, a range of capacity-building efforts need to be planned and implements.

The following recommendations address the second part of my theory-building research conclusion. They are related to need for diverse scholars to build CHRD theories.

- Identify diverse HRD scholars who have experience or interest in HRD theory-building research.
- Identify diverse HRD doctoral and masters level students who have experience with or interest in HRD theory-building research.
- Provide education, training (e.g., sessions on theory-building research at the AHRD conference), and supports (e.g., mentors, a subsection of the AHRD Theory SIG, financial support) for diverse scholars interested in theory-building research.
- Secure and provide funding for CHRD theory-building research conducted by diverse HRD scholars.
- Develop a special issue of *Human Resource Development Review* or other publications that present articles on CHRD theory-building research studies conducted by diverse scholars.
Leadership will be needed to plan and implement this capacity-building effort. Once again, AHRD, leading HRD theory-building research scholars (with a focus on diverse theorists) and their home institutions, and the editorial board of *Human Resource Development Review* should be considered to take on leadership roles.

**Theoretical conclusion.** This study also had a theoretical conclusion. This conclusion is the following:

*The paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance creates an ethical dilemma for nonprofit organizations.*

This conclusion is based on my holistic view of the study findings, which suggest that an ethical dilemma faces nonprofit boards that engage in generative governance and use board social capital to support generative governance practice as recommended by Chait et al. (2005). This dilemma relates to the various benefits and detriments that are attributable to the use of board social capital in the practice of generative governance as well as its role in other board functions. The study findings demonstrate that the influence of board social capital goes well beyond the positive impact suggested by Chait et al. (2005) in *Governance as Leadership*. They provide clear evidence of the detriments attributable to board social capital including the ways it negatively affects board readiness for the practice of generative governance as well as its negative impact on the key generative governance practices. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that board social capital can result in the exclusion and marginalization of historically oppressed individuals and groups in the process. This study found this to be particularly true for people of color and members of the lower class.

**Theoretical implications and recommendations.** My theoretical conclusion has implications for practice. (Implications for research were previously presented in the relevant
sections of Chapter Five.) The following two sections respectively address the study’s practice implications and provide related recommendations.

The following are implications for the socially-just practice of generative governance:

- nonprofit organizations need to expand their criteria for board member selection beyond access to money and influential people,
- when assessing board candidates, nonprofit boards need to consider issues of representation based on such factors as client and community demographics as well as assessing candidates’ level of bridging social capital as it relates to relationships with diverse groups and communities,
- nonprofit boards need to strategically engage in governance at the organizational margins by building social relationships with internal and external stakeholders, particularly those who are members of historically oppressed groups who can help to ensure that the issues of diverse individual and groups come before the board and support the board in reframing issues, and
- nonprofit boards need to use their social capital in ways that empower rather than oppress the people and communities they are called to serve.

The following are related recommendations for the socially-just practice of generative governance. Nonprofit board need to:

- build and use board social capital to strategically govern at the organizational margins;
- develop and use board social capital toward the aims of forming a diverse board and ensuring that the issues of diverse individual and groups are brought before the board;
• use bonding social capital to build relationships and foster trust among board members including those who are members of historically privileged groups and those who are members of historically oppressed groups, in support of the key generative governance practices (reframing issues, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking);

• develop and use bridging social capital to build relationships and promote trust between the board and diverse stakeholders; and,

• build the intercultural competency of board members in the support of developing authentic relationships with diverse board members and diverse stakeholders.

Nonprofit organizations will need resources (e.g., board training) to build the capacity of their board members to use their individual and collective social capital in ways that empower rather than oppress the diverse people and communities they are called to serve. The work of the proposed CPAR study will provide further insights into the types of supports needed.

Chapter Summary

This was the final chapter of the dissertation. It began with a detailed summary of the study. The study’s two main conclusions were presented next. They are the following:

• Theory-building research conclusion: Socially-just HRD research and practice require theory developed with interpretive and critical methods and theory developed by diverse scholars.

• Theoretical conclusion: The paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance creates an ethical dilemma for nonprofit organizations.

Implications and recommendations for each conclusion were presented.
In conclusion, is the practice of generative governance a vehicle for addressing community needs and fostering social change through democratic participation and inclusive governance practices or is it a mechanism for promoting dominant ideologies, protecting privilege, fostering hegemony, and maintaining the status quo? The results of this dissertation study provide evidence of the paradoxical role of board social capital in the practice of generative governance. This paradox creates an ethical dilemma for nonprofit organizations. Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon and to support the development of interventions aimed at the socially-just practice of generative governance.
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Appendix A: Definitions

The following is a list of key terms used in this dissertation and their corresponding definitions. The terms selected for inclusion are those that scholars who are unfamiliar with the phenomenon that is the focus of this study may not commonly understand. In addition, the list includes key terms, particularly research terms, which may be unfamiliar to some practitioners. I have included these definitions because of my advocacy/participatory worldview (Creswell, 2007) and my related aims of making my work transparent and accessible to both academic and practitioner audiences.

Abduction: “The creative act of constructing explanations to account for surprising observations in the course of experience” (Hansen, 2008, p. 457).

Application: Application is the fourth phase of Lynham’s (2002b) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. It involves “the application of the theory to the problem, phenomenon or issue in the world” (Lynham, 2002, p. 234).

Axiology: Axiology involves the assumptions concerning the relationship between research and values. For the qualitative researcher, assumptions include “that all research is value laden and includes the value systems of the inquirer, the theory, the paradigm used, and the social and cultural norms” of the inquirer and the participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 247).

Board diversity: Board diversity relates to board composition. It typically refers to the demographic make-up of the board with a focus on the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups including women and people of color (Brown, 2002).

Board members: Board members are leaders of a nonprofit organization who are typically volunteers. Board members have both individual and collective responsibility for governing their respective nonprofits.
**Board social capital**: Board social capital is the value derived from board relationships. It includes value derived from relationships among and between board members, value derived from the board’s relationships with other internal and external actors, as well as value derived from the social relationships of individual board members, which can be utilized to advance the board’s work. Thus, it is both a collective and individual good (Stevenson & Radin, 2009).

**Bricolage**: Bricolage is a multi-methodological form of inquiry that draws on a variety of methods and theoretical frameworks to examine a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005a; Reed, 2008).

**Case study**: Case study is a strategy for conducting social research, which involves “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

**Conceptual development**: Conceptual development is the first phase of Lynham’s (2002b) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. Conceptual development involves the formulation of initial ideas that depict the “current, best, most informed understanding and explanation of the phenomenon, issue, or problem in the relevant world context” (Lynham, 2002b, p. 231).

**Critical constructionist HRD**: A critical form of HRD which combines “the essence of critical theory with the aim of creating new understandings that lead to changed practice within social contexts, especially organizations” (Callahan, 2007, p. 79).

**Critical participatory action research (CPAR)**: A form of participatory action research that draws on critical theory toward the aim of creating new knowledge designed to inform the change of unjust practices through emancipatory work (Kincheloe, 2009; Peterson, 2011).
Critical race theory (CRT): CRT is a theoretical framework that “begins from an assumption that race and racism are at the very center of social and institutional life” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 53). It sheds light on issues of race, racism, positionality, power, and oppression (Closson, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Merriam, Cafarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Critical social capital perspectives: The incorporation of critical perspectives into social capital theory to focus attention on issues of power and privilege and the ways that social capital can oppress historically marginalized individuals, groups, and communities.

Critical social theory: A theory that focuses on power and justice and the ways that economics, demographics, ideologies, discourses, social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to create a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Deduction: A method of reasoning that “works from the more general to the more specific,” and is “concerned with testing or confirming hypotheses” (Trochim, 2006, para. 2).

Disciplined imagination: Disciplined imagination is a theory-building process developed by Karl Weick, an organizational theorist. The ‘discipline’ in disciplined imagination involves the “consistent application of selection criteria to trial-and-error thinking” (Weick, 1989, p. 516). The ‘imagination’ involves the intentional introduction of diverse “problem statements, thought trials, and selection criteria that comprise” the trial and error thinking (Weick, 1989, p. 516).

Epistemology: The relationship between the researcher and the research subject, i.e., how people know. The qualitative researcher seeks to reduce the distance between himself or herself and the subject of the research (Creswell, 2007).

General Method: The General Method is a theory-building method developed by Susan Lynham, a human resource development scholar. The complete name of the method is the
‘general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines.’ The five phases of this recursive method are conceptualization, operationalization, application, confirmation or disconfirmation, and continuous refinement and development (Lynham, 2002b). The General Method accommodates the integration of diverse paradigmatic perspectives and incorporates practice perspectives into theory-building research (Lynham, 2002b; Storberg-Walker, 2003).

**Generative governance:** Generative governance is a mode of governance in the governance as leadership model of nonprofit governance conceptualized by Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2005). In generative governance boards engage in deeper inquiry, explore root causes of issues facing the organization and the people that it serves, consider divergent values, examine optional courses of action, create new understandings, and develop innovative solutions. Generative governance involves such activities as reframing problems, reflective practice, and collective sensemaking, which foster board learning and in turn, the development of creative and innovative solutions to issues that come before the board (Chait et al., 2005).

**Governance:** “The umbrella term for the ultimate accountability, authority, and responsibility for an organization” (Cole & Swartz, 2010, p. 5).

**Hegemony:** “Conventions and constructs that are shared and naturalized throughout a political community. Hegemony works both through silences and through repetition in naturalizing the dominant worldview” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 330).

**Induction:** A form of reasoning that moves from “specific observations to broader generalizations and theories” and is “more open-ended and exploratory” than deduction (Trochim, 2006, para. 3).
Methodology: Methodology is “a theory of how research should proceed. It involves the analysis of assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry” and “in turn, governs the use of particular methods” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 193).

Narrative inquiry: Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method “for narratively inquiring into experience” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542). Narrative inquiry “allows for the intimate study of individuals’ experiences over time and in context” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542). It is a recursive and reflexive process, which involves collaboration between the researcher and participants. Participants’ stories are analyzed and research texts are developed that situate and promote understanding of each story told “within larger cultural, social, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542).

National Taxonomy of Exempt Organizations (NTEE): The NTEE is a classification system developed by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) of the Urban Institute. The IRS and NCCS use the NTEE to classify nonprofits.

Nonprofit board: A nonprofit board (also called a board of directors, board of trustees, or governing board) is “the primary group of people entrusted with and accountable for the leadership and governance of a nonprofit corporation” (Renz, 2007, p. 7).

Nonprofit governance: Nonprofit governance is “the process of providing strategic leadership to a nonprofit organization. It entails the functions of setting direction, making policy and strategy decisions, overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and ensuring overall accountability. Nonprofit governance is a political and organizational process involving multiple functions and multiple stakeholders” (Renz, 2007, p. 1).

Nonprofit organizations: Nonprofits are organizations that are organized and operated for tax-exempt purposes as defined by the IRS. They are formal, private, self-governing,
voluntary, and provide a public benefit (Hammack, 2002). Nonprofits use surplus revenue to achieve organizational goals rather than distribute such revenue as profits or dividends.

**Ontology:** Ontology is the philosophical assumption about the nature of reality. When is something real? (Creswell, 2007).

**Operationalization:** Operationalization is the second phase of Lynham’s (2002b) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. Operationalization involves the development of an “explicit connection between the conceptualization phase and practice” (p. 232).

**Paradox:** Paradox is tension that comes from “conflicting demands, opposing perspectives or seemingly illogical findings” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760).

**Public charities:** Public charities are a class of 501(c)3 nonprofit organization as designated by the IRS. The IRS defines public charities as those nonprofits that:

- are churches, hospitals, qualified medical research organizations affiliated with hospitals, schools, colleges and universities;
- have an active program of fundraising and receive contributions from many sources, including the general public, governmental agencies, corporations, private foundations or other public charities;
- receive income from the conduct of activities in furtherance of the organization’s exempt purposes; or,
- actively function in a supporting relationship to one or more existing public charities (IRS, n.d.).

**Qualitative research:** Qualitative research is the study of things in their natural settings in the attempt “to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings that people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).
**Reflective practice:** Conceptualized by Schön (1983), reflective practice involves reflection-in-action as a means to engage in continuous learning; learning through experience.

**Reflexivity:** A procedure used in qualitative inquiry that involves the “critical self-reflection of one’s biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 260).

**Reframing:** A practice conceptualized by Bolman and Deal (2008) which involves the intentional use of different frames or lenses to examine an organizational issue or problem in different ways.

**Sensemaking:** Sensemaking is a practice by which individuals give meaning to their experience. Weick (1995), an organizational scholar, describes sensemaking in organizations as a collaborative process through which organizations attempt to make sense of an ambiguous issue or situation. It involves creating shared awareness and new understandings gained from differing perspectives and varied interests.

**Social capital:** “A set of resources made available to us because of and/or through our social relationships” (Storberg-Walker, 2009, p. 98).

**Stakeholders:** Stakeholders are “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

**Theory-building research:** Theory-building research is a form of scholarly inquiry (Lynham, 2002b) that has the construction of theory as its expressed purpose (Torraco, 2004). Theory-building research can involve a range of logics-in-use and various research paradigms (Lynham, 2002b).

**Trustworthiness:** Trustworthiness is important in establishing the worth of a qualitative study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It signifies that study findings “are worth paying attention to” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 290). Trustworthiness involves the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.
**White privilege:** A social relation that provides White people with advantages over non-White people (Clark, n.d.) which come from unearned assets that are available to Whites because of the color of their skin, and about which they are oblivious (McIntosh, 1988).

**Worldview:** A worldview is “the philosophical stance taken by the researcher that provides a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Creswell, 2007, p. 248). This includes the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, methodological, axiological, and rhetorical assumptions (Creswell, 2007).
Thought Trial #1: The positive role of board bonding social capital on generative governance of nonprofit organizations

Research Question: How can a paradox perspective, which includes both mainstream social capital theory and critical perspectives, help us to understand the role of board social capital in the generative governance of nonprofit organizations?

Overarching Problem Derived Abductively: The bonding social capital of nonprofit boards has both positive and negative influences on generative governance.

Problem Statement #1: We do not fully understand the positive influences of board bonding social capital on the generative governance of nonprofit organizations.

- Related Question – How does board bonding social capital positively influence generative governance?

Concept: Bonding social capital

- Definitions:
  - Links to “people who are similar in crucial respects and tend to be inward-looking” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 2).
  - “The links between like-minded people, or the reinforcement of homogeneity” (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000, p. 10).

- Key Positive Characteristics:
  - “close knit and intensive” relationships (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 227)
  - “dense multi-functional network ties” (Leonard & Onyx, 2003, p. 190-191)
  - strong trust [but localized] (Leonard & Onyx, 2003, p. 191)
  - collective and nonrivalrous good (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 22)
Conceptually Similar To:

- Closed network structures (Coleman, 1988)
- Strong ties (Granovetter, 1986)

Related Concepts:

- Networks/Social Networks (Putnam, 1993; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Norms (Putnam, 1993; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Trust/Trustworthiness (Putnam, 1993; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000)
- Reciprocity (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000)
- Mutual Assistance (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003)
- Solidarity (Putnam, 2000)

If, then statement: If board bonding social capital positively influences generative governance, then…

- What does Governance as Leadership (Chait, Ryan, & Taylor, 2005) suggest?
- What does the practitioner literature suggest?
- What do the nonprofit board communication data suggest?
- What do this researcher’s reflections suggest?
Appendix C: Exempt from Further IRB Review Letter

From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator
      North Carolina State University
      Institutional Review Board

Date: October 25, 2010

Project Title: Communication with and among the Board of Directors: Exploring Organizational Identification, Commitment, and Trust

IRB#: 1157

Dear Dr. Jameson:

As per the information provided on your protocol renewal form dated October 20, 2010, the research proposal named above is exempt from further IRB review. This status reflects that all study activities are currently limited to data analysis only and that all identifiable information has been removed from your existing data. If this status changes for any reason, please notify our office as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carol Mickelson
NC State IRB
Consider Goal of BOD Interviews:

- To understand board members’ perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of their communication practices overall (including issues related to their perception of governance and diversity).
- To understand board members’ perceptions of communication that facilitates or shuts down good deliberation/discussion.
- To understand board members’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their decision making process.
- To understand the relationship between the BOD and organizational operations and effectiveness.

I. Introduction of self to include:

Name

Research team member

Reintroduce the study

Talk about current phase of data collection

Get release signed (if do not have a release already from observations)

Remind about confidentiality, despite voice recording (if they feel strongly about not being audio recorded but are still willing to participate, take notes only)

II. Background information:

What is the mission of [name of organization]?

How does the board identify potential new members? How are new board members chosen?

How did you get involved in this organization?

How long have you been on the board?

Who recruited you? Why did you say yes?
III. Your introduction to the [name of organization] board:

*How did you learn what was expected from you as a [name of organization] board member?*

How did you learn to be prepared for the meetings/board? What training did you receive?

Did you feel welcomed or included in your first meeting? What type of things made you feel welcome or included?

Who helps you fulfill your role as a board member? Other board members? Friends? Outsiders? Insiders?

IV. Perception of meetings:

Describe the typical meeting

What happens at the meeting?

Is there an agenda? How does it promote or hinder discussion?

What do you notice about the board dynamics?

Are there any topics that always come up?

Are there any topics that never come up that need to be addressed?

Any undiscussables?

Do you ever feel frustrated with the way a meeting is going? Can you describe a typical frustration you experience at board meetings?

Can you think of a time you played a specific role in a meeting strategically (i.e., devil’s advocate, harmonizer)

What kinds of ethical issues come up in the meetings? Can you provide any examples? How are they handled?

V. The ideal board:

Suppose you have an ideal board. What is the ideal board’s purpose? How do you rate the board of [name of organization] with regard to being the ideal? What’s this board’s purpose? How do you compare the ideal vs. this board?
Think about an ideal team. What does an ideal team look like? How do you rate the board of [name of organization] with regard to being an ideal? Is there something in the meetings that is done to promote team work? Is there any sort of “social maintenance” aspect to the board meetings that promotes getting to know each other? What is that?

VI. Governance: [Note that this term might come up in an earlier section – it might make sense to raise these questions as soon as they bring up “governance.”]

   How would you define governance?

   How would you define a board’s role in nonprofit governance?

   How did you learn to govern as a board member?

   How does the [name of organization] board fulfill its governance role?

   Can you describe a time the board did an excellent job of fulfilling its governance role?

   Can you describe a time you feel the board failed to fulfill its governance role?

VII. Perception of decision making process:

   Can you reflect on the most recent major decision the group made? What happened? Is that typical?

   How does the board make a decision?

   Do you typically have all the information available for making decisions? If yes, can you give an example of a recent decision and where the relevant information came from (internal/external sources)?

   What happens when you don’t have the information?

   Do you use voting or consensus?

   What happens when you have different opinions?

   How does the group allow for different opinions?

   Can you remember a time when there were different opinions and discussion went well? When it didn’t go well?

   What happens when there is conflict?

   Who has a stake in the decisions that are your organization makes?

   Can you prioritize them?
How do you ensure that stakeholders’ needs and interests are considered in your decision making process?

VIII. Perception of Board Members and their participation:

Who has influence on the Board?

Who decides what needs to be discussed?

How is that influence exerted?

Is it visible at the Board meeting?

What type of influence does the board chair have? Have you seen two different chairs? What was each of their influence like?

Type of influence from Executive Director, Treasurer, Committee Chairs, long-timers vs. newcomers?

Do you notice if others are hanging back? If yes, think about who that is, do you have any perspective as to why they are hanging back?

Can you share a time you felt like you were a part of the group?

Is that typical? Can you share a time you felt like an outsider?

Do you feel like your contribution is valued?

Do you feel listened to?

If insider…what does the board do to help you feel connected?

If outsider…what does the board do that doesn’t help you feel connected? Is there something that would help?

Can you tell us about a time you felt free express your opinion? What about a time you did not feel free to express your opinion?

IX. Organization and Board Effectiveness

In your opinion, what does the organization do well? In your opinion, what does the board do well?

How do you know when the organization has done well? How do you know when the board when you all have done well?

In your opinion, what does the organizational NOT do well? In your opinion, what does the board NOT do well?
Does the organization embody its values/purpose? Does it walk its talk??

**X. Final Thoughts**

What have you learned from your experiences as a board member?

Based on what you have learned, what advice would you give to a new member?

If you were to serve on another board, what would you do differently?

Thank You. Do you have anything else to add? Do you have any questions for me?
Appendix E: Critical Research Methods Resource List

Critical Research


Critical Management Research


Critical Nonprofit Governance Research


Critical Research and Qualitative Methods


Critical Research and Quantitative Methods


**Bricolage**


*Note: While this article does not specifically address the use of bricolage to develop critical theories, it provides an example of how bricolage could be used toward this end.*

**Critical Action and Critical Participatory Action Research**


**Critical Communicative Methodology**


Critical Discourse Analysis


Critical Ethnography


Critical Hermeneutics


Critical Narrative Research and Critical Narrative Analysis


Feminist Research Methods


**Phenomenology**


**Miscellaneous Resources**


**Critical Journals**

*Critical Discourse Studies.*

*Note: This is an interdisciplinary journal for the social sciences. Its primary aim is to publish critical research that advances our understanding of how discourse figures in social processes, social structures, and social change.*

*Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies.* Published by Sage.

*Note: This peer-reviewed journal, which is published quarterly, is an interdisciplinary publication drawing from the scholarly traditions in the social sciences and the humanities that are premised on a critical, performance-based cultural studies agenda. While the focus of the journal is not critical methods, the articles published provide examples of studies that use a broad range of critical methods and critical perspectives.*

*Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry.* Published through the Open Journal Systems.
Note: This open-access, peer-reviewed journal is published quarterly. The journal draws on critical management theory and postmodern organization science and is based in story/narrative and other qualitative study. It combines critical theory as well as postmodern theory and postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy with praxis. The journal encourages interdisciplinary dialogue on theory, method, and social action. http://tamarajournal.com/
### Appendix F: Critical Participatory Action Research Study Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Identify potential collaborating nonprofit organizations (researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss dissertation research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore potential benefits and barriers to participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify available and needed resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Individually reflect on interest in collaborating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collectively reflect on interest and partnership “fit”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Assess interest and select nonprofit partners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish relationships</td>
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<td>Discuss communication mechanisms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively outline the scope of the project and identify desired outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop a common agenda among the board members and between the board and CEO (if applicable)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively determine how needed resources will be obtained</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutually establish timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Individually and collectively reflect on power relations, ethical issues, and research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutually identify roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively develop ethical procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create a Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively design the research process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Individually and collectively reflect on working relationships, research questions, and research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Collaboratively implement research process and collect data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enable and support the participation of other stakeholders (internal and external) as appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively analyze data</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin collaborative action planning</td>
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Appendix F (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Individually and collectively reflect on the research process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collectively evaluate participation and representation of others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively assess need for further research and/or various action options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Plan research-informed action that includes feedback to participants, other key stakeholders, and influential others as deemed appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Collaboratively evaluate action and process as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Identify needs for further participatory research and action that could be conducted with or without academic researchers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The work of Kindon, Pain, and Kesby (2007) informed this draft of the post-dissertation study stages.
## Appendix G: Theory Assessment Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evidence of Meeting the Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen criteria for assessing theory in applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective Lincoln and Lynham (2011)</td>
<td>“An interpretive theory should...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness and Understandability</td>
<td>…provide explanation and deep understanding of actual understandability events, behaviours, or the meaning-making activities of stakeholders and respondents; be accepted by professionals and stakeholders (co-constructors of the theory)” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick description and insightfulness</td>
<td>…provide explanation and deep understanding of actual understandability events, behaviours, or the meaning-making activities of stakeholders and respondents; be accepted by professionals and stakeholders (co-constructors of the theory)” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative elegance</td>
<td>…be either simple or complex, depending on the matter or phenomenon being theorized; be understandable beyond the scientific community (i.e. accessible in natural language), narratively elegant, and conceptually rich, provocative and evocative” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>…be as complete as is possible, given its intended range (local, regional or other), so that other users may see the extent to which the theory may be useful in their own situation/context; enable individuals to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other contexts” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic</td>
<td>…display mutuality of concepts and descriptive logic; be made operational, i.e. the descriptive and explanatory framework (concepts, logic and propositions) are made explicit and thus able to be put into action; be capable of being tested by other researchers, and enjoy stakeholders assent to its usefulness for their lives and contexts” (p. 16).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empirical verifiability</td>
<td>…be supported by ‘lived experience,’ be verified by the respondents that it rings true: or that it reflects some aspect of their experience, meaning-making, or observation; match some element of socially constructed life; generate both new social scientific knowledge, and new respondent learning” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruitfulness and provocativeness</td>
<td>…be fruitful and provocative. i.e. illuminate some aspect of social life, and suggest new avenues of research and/or description and/or action” (p. 16).</td>
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### Appendix G (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evidence of Meeting the Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lincoln and Lynham’s (2011) 13 criteria for assessing theory in applied disciplines from an interpretive perspective.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usefulness and applicability</strong></td>
<td>... be useful and applicable to ordinary persons, suggesting ways of being in the world, or ways of altering one’s circumstances in some context; provide new ways of seeing old situations, such that meaningful human change can occur; provide models for human flourishing, as living knowledge, and for practical application and high organizational performance” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compellingness</strong></td>
<td>... demonstrate the ability to move stakeholders to action by satisfying two components: (1) findings that mirror the ineffable experience of respondent audiences (fidelity, or internal validity), and (2) creating a prompt to action on the part of a wider set of audiences/stakeholders (not just the researcher or research funders) who have a legitimate stake in the findings, including for example, other communities policy circles, legislators, and those who participated in the research” (p. 16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturation</strong></td>
<td>... invoke informing social constructions and meaning-making narratives such that little new knowledge is forthcoming, i.e.: (1) narratives and respondents’ explanations are exhaustively sampled; (2) multiple examples of the phenomenon can be found independently (other researchers). Be buttressed by multiple examples of the phenomenon; be saturated with exemplars” (p. 17).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prompt to action</strong></td>
<td>... provide a good conceptual understanding of practice; proceeding from compellingness (an inextricably linked criterion) such that researchers and respondents understand where and how to move next in a given context. including how to refine, hone, sharpen, and revise practice, and to alter performance in the light of new information; connect theory with action and learning for continuous refinement and improvement, illustrating practicality of the theory” (p. 17).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fittingness</strong></td>
<td>... be rooted in local context. native and indigenous perspectives, meanings and narratives, and exhibit ‘fit’ with the notion of equifinality, i.e. recognize that there can be no final solution to any given problem - rather that there are multiple, endlessly creative responses or solutions, any of which might be satisfactory in a given context” (p. 17).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transferability and transportability</strong></td>
<td>... enable transferability - i.e. the ability in individuals (through interaction between the knower and the known) to carry propositional and/or tacit knowledge from one context to inform another, or multiple other, contexts; and transportability - i.e. the applicability to different populations, of utility in varying contexts, with varying populations” (p. 17).</td>
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Appendix G (continued).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evidence of Meeting the Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptive awareness</td>
<td>“The principle of <em>assumptive awareness</em> refers to the extent to which the assumptions underlying formal theoretical elaborations are made explicit” (p. 87).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical attention</td>
<td>“The criterion of <em>ethical attention</em> refers to the extent to which a theory takes into account the ethical dilemmas implicit in the practices which derive from its theoretical formulations” (pp. 87-88).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual sensitivity</td>
<td>“The criterion of <em>contextual sensitivity</em> refers to the extent to which theoretical elaborations contain within them acknowledgements of the context specific nature of their origins” (p. 88).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformulative consistency</td>
<td>“The criterion of <em>reformulative consistency</em> refers to the extent to which a theory changes over time in response to the conduct of new research, to critical analyses, and to the theorist’s new interpretive leaps forward” (p. 89).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value judgmental attentiveness</td>
<td>“The criterion of <em>value-judgmental explicitness</em> refers to the extent to which formal theorizing is informed by attention to the role which theoretical understanding can play in assisting in the realization of certain social and political values and in improving social and political conditions” (p. 90).</td>
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