



Corporate Governance

Understanding control in nonprofit organisations: moving governance research forward?

Terri Byers Christos Anagnostopoulos Georgina Brooke-Holmes

Article information:

To cite this document:

Terri Byers Christos Anagnostopoulos Georgina Brooke-Holmes , (2015), "Understanding control in nonprofit organisations: moving governance research forward?", *Corporate Governance*, Vol. 15 Iss 1 pp. 134 - 145

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/CG-06-2014-0072>

Downloaded on: 14 November 2016, At: 22:08 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 64 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 696 times since 2015*

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2015), "A critical review of relationship between corporate governance and firm performance: GCC banking sector perspective", *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society*, Vol. 15 Iss 1 pp. 18-30 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/CG-04-2013-0048>

(2015), "A social norm perspective on corporate governance soft law", *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society*, Vol. 15 Iss 1 pp. 31-51 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/CG-07-2013-0096>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:563821 []

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

Understanding control in nonprofit organisations: moving governance research forward?

Terri Byers, Christos Anagnostopoulos and Georgina Brooke-Holmes

Terri Byers is based at Faculty of Kinesiology, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.
Christos Anagnostopoulos is based at Molde University College, Business Administration & Social Sciences, Norway and University of Central Lancashire, School of Business & Administration, Cyprus.
Georgina Brooke-Holmes is based at Coventry University, Coventry, England.

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to introduce the concept of organisational control and both its importance and utility for understanding nonprofit organisations.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper uses a critical realist (CR) methodology to discuss the concept of control and its utility to research on governance of nonprofit organisations.

Findings – The current study offers a conceptual framework that presents a holistic view of control, relevant for analysing nonprofit organisations, and a methodological lens (CR) through which this framework can be implemented.

Research limitations/implications – This paper suggests that studies of governance should consider different levels of analysis, as suggested by examining the concept of control using a CR framework. This notion has yet to be tested empirically and a framework for examining governance from a CR perspective of control is suggested. Context is highly relevant to understanding control, and thus, this model requires testing in a wide diversity of nonprofit sectors, sizes of organisations and time periods.

Originality/value – The literature on organisational control provides useful insights to advance our understanding of nonprofit organisations beyond the notion of governance, and this paper proposes both conceptual and methodological underpinnings to facilitate future research.

Keywords Control, Non-profit organizations, Governance

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Governance, a key theme in research on nonprofit organisations, is often explored at an organisational level of analysis (Andres-Alonso *et al.*, 2008; Blair, 1995; Cornforth and Edwards, 1998). Focussing on the organisational level has led scholars to conceptualise governance as primarily concerned with the board's role and function (Andres-Alonso *et al.*, 2008; Ferkins *et al.*, 2009). This view is understandable, given the central role boards play in nonprofit organisations; however, Andres-Alonso *et al.* (2008) and Ostrower and Stone (2010) highlighted the problem with this narrow approach to understanding nonprofit organisations and demonstrated how research from *outside* the nonprofit sector can advance our understanding of managing *within* the sector. This extends this argument by suggesting that the concept and nature of governance itself overly constrains our understanding of nonprofit organisations. A solution is to examine organisational control, a concept primarily studied in the context of large commercial and public sector organisations, but which can offer needed new inspiration to the notion of governance. Little attention has been paid to control in the nonprofit organisational context, which is rather surprising given the growing contribution the sector makes both socially and economically in the USA (Billis, 2010), the UK (NCVO, 2000, 2009) and Europe (Osbourne, 2008).

The way in which the concept of control has been treated in organisational studies literature is not without its problems; therefore, this paper presents a critical view of control and attempts to resolve some of the inadequacies in this literature before demonstrating its

Received 23 June 2014
Revised 23 June 2014
Accepted 15 August 2014

application and utility to nonprofit organisations. Consequently, this paper has four sections: First, the concept of governance as used in research on nonprofit organisations and its relationship to organisational control is examined, followed by a critical analysis and review of the concept of control in organisations. Next, the unique features and challenges of nonprofit organisations are briefly highlighted and a framework analysing control is presented. This section concisely highlights the nonprofit organisations' contextual features that are particularly relevant to understanding control, as we assume that readers already have a significant knowledge of this area. Following this, critical realism (CR) as an appropriate methodology for using the proposed framework and its implementation are discussed, and suggestions for future research are given. Finally, alongside the concluding remarks related to the proposed framework, a number of key challenges for future research are postulated.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on nonprofit organisations in three ways. First, building on the calls and criticisms presented by [Cornforth \(2003\)](#), [Ostrower and Stone \(2010\)](#) and [Speckbacher \(2008\)](#), the study provides a new perspective on “governance” through the concept of control, which advances research on governance and nonprofit organisations. Second, the theoretical view of control presented here is a multilevel theory that has yet to be fully tested using empirical research, despite some initial works revealing its powerful and explanatory ability ([Byers *et al.*, 2007](#); [Byers, 2013](#)). Finally, the methodology of CR has received scant attention in the literature on nonprofit organisations, and this paper is the first to explore the utility of this unique and powerful methodological lens.

Governance, control and nonprofit organisations

The concept of governance is central to understanding how nonprofit organisations operate. [Cornforth \(2003\)](#), who considered organisational governance as the systems and processes which ensure the overall direction and control/accountability of organizations, criticised researchers for focussing too narrowly through positivist perspectives on organisations' boards, ignoring processes, history and contextual features that change over time ([Cornforth, 2012](#)). Taking Cornforth's definition seriously, we suggest that nonprofit organisation researchers also have missed the concept of control and its relationship with governance. [Stone and Ostrower \(2007\)](#) called for research that takes a broader view of governance as a process involving multiple actors at multiple levels, an approach that can be accomplished through examining “control”.

Control is, of course, a central and important component of managing any organisation. But, as we argue in this paper, it is not solely a function of management, but rather a dynamic and reflective phenomenon – a process (involving multiple actors) and a product (influence on behaviour). Perhaps because of the complexity and fluidity of control, researchers have tended to study its components rather than to treat it holistically. Considerable research spanning several decades has examined control as primarily a managerial function used through organisational systems ([Gupta and Govindarajan, 1991](#); [Uchi, 1977](#); [Tankersley, 2000](#); [Tosi, 1983](#)) and exercised through formal mechanisms, such as organisational structure, job descriptions and written policies. However, this dominant perspective of organisations and control is based upon public organisations and work organisations in the commercial sector ([Agarwal, 1999](#); [Ferner, 2000](#); [Gupta and Govindarajan, 1991](#); [Tankersley, 2000](#)). Research conducted on control in public and private sector organisations primarily has focussed on effective control of labour to ensure that management objectives are met ([Alvesson, 1993](#); [Cardinal *et al.*, 2004](#)). Much of this work focusses on administrative mechanisms of control, recognising that a variety of controls operate across these organisations. For instance, some researchers have examined social mechanisms and the role of identity as a personal control that managers use to encourage conformity to organisational values ([Alvesson and Willmott, 2002](#)).

The literature on control suffers from similar theoretical deficiencies as the literature on governance. Both concepts have been examined from narrow, often singular ontological perspectives: control viewed as one person or group directly influencing another and governance as represented by boards, their composition, structure and behaviour. However, the concept of control can be more widely defined and examined from different (but singular, in isolation) ontological perspectives, which can be useful to understanding nonprofit organisations. Control has primarily been viewed from a positivist ontology, as a function of management (Jaussaud and Schaap, 2006; Langfield-Smith, 1997; Meira *et al.*, 2010), where managers actively control employees' multiple interests and actions. Other research on control in organisations has examined control as problematic and oppressive (Jermier, 1998), ideological (Oliga, 1989) or as a socially negotiated process in which employees actively attempt to control individuals and groups (Inkpen and Currall, 2004). These different perspectives of control demonstrate that a broad ontological view allows for greater consideration of the concept rather than simply the observable elements, such as actions of management and boards.

A more inclusive ontology of control not only considers the rational perspective as noted above and the issues of domination, power and oppression but also recognises that control may be more dynamic, changing, contestable and complex. For instance, control can be examined on many levels of analysis from the individual, organisational, inter-organisational, field or ideological. Arguably, a framework to guide a theory of control must consider these different levels to create a holistic view unrestricted by narrow perspectives from which governance (and control research in other contexts) has historically been examined.

Many authors have argued that organisations can be understood only when considering the contextual determinants that influence their function and structure (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Cardinal *et al.*, 2004; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). The environment and context in which nonprofit organisations operate are different from those of private and public sector organisations. Speckbacher (2008) noted that these nonprofit organisations possess specific characteristics that are significant in shaping the organisations' adoption of control mechanisms, such as performance incentives.

Because of the different contextual features of nonprofit organisations and the context-dependent nature of organisational control (Bernardi, 1995), we can conclude that control in nonprofit organisations is different from that in private and public sector organisations. As evidence of this difference, Moxham and Boaden (2007) discovered difficulties in applying principles of private and public sector organisations to the nonprofit sector when they examined performance measurement in the voluntary sector. Similarly, Chenhall (2003) found incentive mechanisms to be counterproductive when applied in different contexts from those for which they were designed.

Organisational control is a dynamic phenomenon, sensitive to temporal, agential and structural components, yet research that has a focus on identifying mechanisms of control operating in organisations has paid little attention to how these mechanisms evolve and develop over time. Cardinal *et al.* (2004) is one exception – a longitudinal study on the factors that drive changes in control mechanisms, which examined the creation and dynamic of these mechanisms during a company's first 10 years. Their case study research identified triggering events that contributed to the development of input, behavioural and output controls within the context of a commercial organisation, which confirmed the dynamic nature of control in organisations. Their findings suggested that imbalance in control is a key driver in the development of effective control, which leads to increased organisational performance, but continued overemphasis of one type of control can seriously jeopardise an organisation.

In the next section, we examine how best to conceptualise and examine control in nonprofit organisations.

Nonprofit organisations: a framework for understanding organisational control

Various researchers (Johnson and Gill, 1993; Maguire, 1999) specifically noted the key influence of contextual variables upon the methods of control adopted in organisations. Although primarily concerned with “management control”, Anthony and Young (1988) also discussed eight different contextual attributes of nonprofit organisations that affect the control process:

1. absence of profit measure;
2. tax and legal considerations;
3. predisposition to be service-oriented;
4. greater constraints on goals and strategies;
5. source of financial support;
6. dominance of professionals;
7. differences in governance and in senior management; and
8. political influences.

While there has been considerable research into mechanisms of control used by management, there has been less conceptualisation of control as a broader phenomenon within organisations. Das (1989) argued that rarely does one homogeneous control mechanism operate across an entire organisation. Therefore, a broader view of control is needed that goes beyond management to focus on individual organisational functions (such as strategic or financial control) or on only one mechanism (such as hierarchical authority). Hopwood (1974) offers such an approach, incorporating three categories of control and encapsulating the range of critiques expressed in the literature. Hopwood (1974) suggested that various control mechanisms operate interdependently and simultaneously in organisations, which he referred to as administrative (job description, operating and disciplinary procedures), social (norms developed through socialisation or identification) and self-controls (internalisation of norms leading to “self” regulation). For example, social control mechanisms may include rules about the use of language, emotion or various types of capital such as “social, cultural or symbolic, physical or economic” (Bourdieu, 1989). If an individual internalises and accepts these rules, the specific mechanism (such as emotion) may act as self-control rather than a social mechanism (although the stimulation of an emotion by another actor would constitute a social mechanism).

Hopwood (1974) believed that for administrative control mechanisms to be effective, they must become social and, ideally, self-control mechanisms. However, this scenario cannot describe how control is achieved in all organisational contexts, especially in small nonprofit organisations with a voluntary board and few if any administrative control mechanisms such as formal rules and procedures. Conceivably, in the nonprofit organisational context, social and self-control mechanisms may be more powerful than administrative mechanisms. Therefore, to understand the existent control mechanisms in a given organisation and how they operate, a theoretical approach is needed which values context and allows for a holistic investigation.

As noted, Hopwood (1974) developed a conceptual scheme to identify types of control within organisations, including administrative control, social control and self-control. Hopwood described administrative control, essentially management controls, as formal rules and standard procedures, such as those found in plans, budgets, standards, operating manuals, formal patterns of organisational relationships and recruitment policies. Granted, these controls are open to organisational members’ interpretation and therefore may not always achieve the desired results. Therefore, rules, procedures and similar mechanisms are a “necessary means to a wider end”, but their intended effect depends

considerably upon the employers' and employees' social pressures and personal motivations/desires (Hopwood, 1974, p. 21).

Social controls, according to Hopwood (1974), emerge from organisational actors' shared values, norms and commitments, which develop through management's formal, planned strategies designed to "regulate systems of beliefs and meaning" (administrative control) and/or through spontaneous social interactions (Johnson and Gill, 1993, p. 30). The literature on singularly focussed studies is useful for this category. For example, concepts that may be important for understanding how control is enacted through social interaction include perceptions of trust and the use of emotion, language and discourse. Emotions are socially and culturally entrenched in patterns of social interaction. Individuals learn what emotions are acceptable to display, when it is acceptable to display them and the cultural conventions that regulate display (Hochschild, 1983). The "spectrum" of rules and punishments within commercial organisations rely on emotions such as anxiety and fear to ensure employee compliance (Sturdy and Fineman, 2001, p. 138).

Underpinning the specific control mechanisms is the context in which they operate. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field are important to consider because they allow analysis of contextual features at three different levels. Capital signifies the situational/local context, habitus provides an explanatory context of why certain capital is held and the field represents a broader context in which the capital and habitus make sense. Thus, Bourdieu's capital, habitus and field provide a thorough set of constructs by which to analyse and understand social capital and its meaning in relation to Hopwood's other control categories of administrative and self. Beyond the notions of culture or values, habitus and field can specify appropriate modes of behaviour and influence social interactions (such as emotion and language) among committee members. Various forms of capital (such as cultural, social, economic and physical) may have different levels of importance within the organisations under investigation. Capital can be a resource that individuals consciously use (for example, networking as social capital) or one that influences a group more generally (for example, insufficient economic capital of a club limits the club's development options). Capital exists only within a field, which is a set of organisations active within a recognized area of institutional life (Powell, 1991) such as education, policing, community services or health provision. A field includes all types of organisations that contribute, in some way, to the existence/operation of the activity or organisation in question (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008).

The concept of habitus, applied only occasionally to organisational analysis, allows the micro and macro levels of organisational analysis to be examined together. Bourdieu (1990) described habitus as the range of interrelated practical and objective possibilities and predispositions available to an individual. Habitus mostly involves non-reflexive practice, but which may become conscious (Lau, 2004). Habitus exists in the form of a matrix of appreciation, perception and action (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992), giving individuals a set of transposable dispositions by which they may act apart from any conscious reference to social or formalised rules. Foster (1986) equated habitus to culture in its ability to pervade social processes, and Lash (1993) related the term to cultural capital. However, Lau (2004) rejected this notion as simplistic, arguing that a clearer conceptualisation of "habitus" is still needed, which may be unreasonable, given Swartz's (1997) suggestion that the term is difficult to empirically locate and Jenkins' (1992) complaint that the nature and definition of habitus is still unknown. Considering this dilemma, Lau (2004) offered three components of habitus to conceptualize the term more precisely:

1. taken for granted assumptions;
2. perception and appreciation; and
3. a practical sense of objective possibilities.

Like culture, an important quality of habitus is its predisposition to change according to numerous and varied experiences and situations that reinforce or revise the social actor's deeply ingrained identity and less malleable occupational identity, which [Meisenhelder \(1997\)](#) identified as the two components of habitus. In short, habitus can be viewed as the "durably inculcated system of structured, structuring dispositions found within a field" ([Bourdieu, 1990](#), p. 52).

Utilisation of Bourdieu's three concepts (capital, habitus and field) enables this framework to apply empirically the full theoretical strength of his theory. As [Emirbayer and Johnson \(2008\)](#) suggested, organisational analysts have yet to explore the considerable possibilities inherent in Bourdieu's relational perspective. The relationship between "capital, habitus and field" and organisation control is fundamentally linked to the notion of power. That is, capital can neither be produced nor can it exist or function except in relation to a field, whereby it confers power over the field ([O'Brien and Slack, 2003](#)). Bourdieu also noted that capital and a field's structure are interdependent because individuals' and organisations' ability to access preferred forms of capital influences the positions they hold within a field. [Oakes et al. \(1998\)](#) demonstrated this relationship at the field level in their study of changes in business planning practices. Change in the legitimated capital within the field from cultural to economic influenced the language and terminology that were appropriate and necessary for an individual to play a valuable, respected role within the organisation. Specifically, the language of business planning became vital, and individuals who could use this language were able to secure more power and influence to control the organisation's direction and activities.

[Bayle \(2005\)](#) underscored the influence of changes in dominant forms of capital within a field on actors' interests and activities and how these factors may affect change within the field's regulatory characteristics. However, changes in preferred or powerful forms of capital may also be useful to understand the role capital plays in control at an organisational level. More specifically, capital within a field is always contested as actors compete to accumulate it, and, therefore, changes in capital are also significant for understanding organisational control.

Self-control, the third category in the [Hopwood's \(1974\)](#) typology of control mechanisms, constitutes the individuals' personal motives. [Hopwood \(1974\)](#) suggested that to be effective, administrative and social controls must operate as "self-controls". The internalisation (directly or indirectly) of norms embodied in social and administrative controls is important, despite [Kelman's \(1961\)](#) suggestion that "internalisation" is only one type of conformity to social and administrative controls. Kelman noted that "identification" is a powerful conformity because it involves emotional gratification and attachment to "significant" organisational members. That is, people are heavily influenced by social interaction with certain individuals and/or groups that they consider significant ([Johnson and Gill, 1993](#)), and these individuals or groups may serve as a "reference" (act as a control) for appropriate behaviour.

A central premise of Hopwoods' conceptualisation of control mechanisms is that administrative control, social control and self-control do not act independently, but, rather, control is "a much more complex and subtle process than the limitation of behaviour by administrative devices" ([Hopwood, 1974](#), p. 27). [Manz and Simms \(1989\)](#) pointed out that management controls alone do not significantly influence employee behaviour unless the employee internalises the standards and policies that the external control mechanisms promote. Therefore, the anticipated effect of external mechanisms on organisational control is open to the active interpretation of the organisation's members. Indeed, individuals consciously and unconsciously constructed, deconstructed and interpreted all mechanisms – administrative, social or self-originating.

The Hopwood conceptualisation provides a useful framework for holistically examining control. However, because structural controls are difficult to apply in nonprofit

organisations (Johnson and Gill, 1993) and the sector faces different contextual demands, more subtle forms of control (social and self) may play a more pivotal role. Increasing pressure to adopt professional (and perhaps administrative) modes of operation in voluntary organisations (Cunningham, 2000; Saeki, 1994) also suggests that social control and self-control may tend to be prevalent in these organisations.

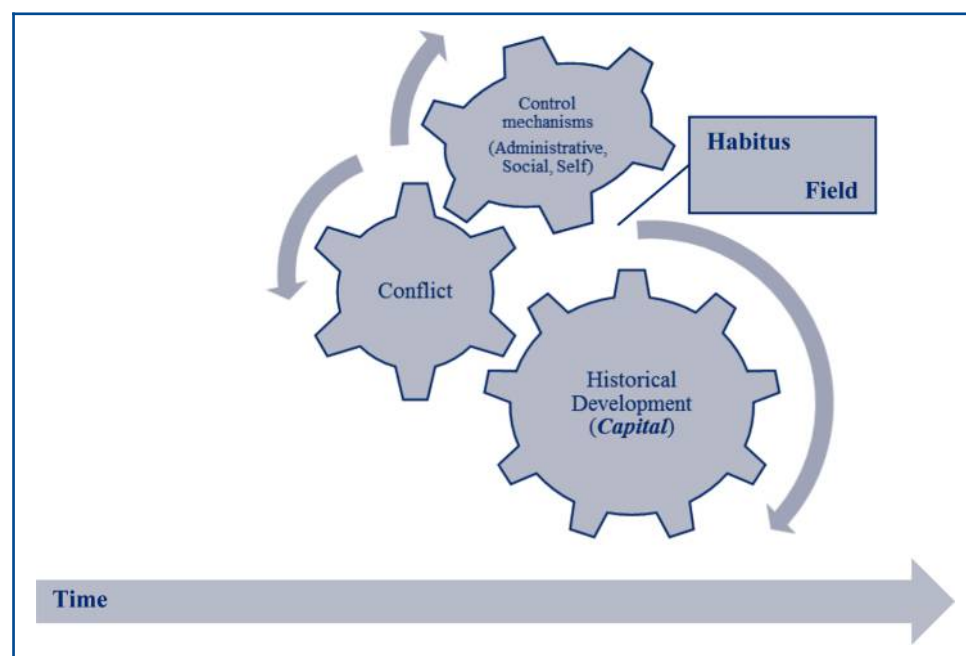
An investigation of social control and self-control mechanisms is needed in the context of nonprofit organisations, accounting for the diverse sizes, structures and modes in which nonprofit organisations operate. When examining control in nonprofit organisations, the framework must be applied with consideration for the pressures for change (internal and external) experienced by the organisation through its history, the types and level of conflict in the organisation and the changing nature and development of control mechanisms and social structure. For example, Reed (2001) analysed trust and control relationships within and between complex organisations in three case studies, demonstrating the significant effect of socio-historical variations within (and between) complex organisations regarding trust, control and power. Figure 1 illustrates a framework for investigating control in nonprofit organisations.

Implementing the framework: a methodology and practical implications

The framework presented above utilises a multilevel method of analysis of nonprofit organisations to capture a holistic view of control. The framework consists of a broad “field” in which values and habitus are embedded, a historical context, inevitable conflict as a result of continuous agent interaction and power struggles, observable and intangible control mechanisms and various forms of capital unique to the investigated field. Control operates not only on an individual, social and a formal/managerial level but also at an even higher level where structures created, re-created and challenged by agents enable and constrain formation and exchange of capital. In addition, at the ideological level, agents are unlikely to be aware of the range of control structures that influence their values and actions.

CR is such a methodology that captures these different levels of reality for researchers to analyse. Byers (2013) successfully applied CR to understand control of volunteers in her

Figure 1 Framework for control in voluntary organisations



analysis of community sports organisations. Her three-year study using ethnographic content analysis revealed the operational mechanisms and how and why these mechanisms differed from those in similar organisations. Although the study focussed on one type of voluntary organisation, the small, community-based “club”, the utility of Byers’ work lies within the application of CR to nonprofit organisations in general. The study presents some preliminary evidence that CR is a powerful and appropriate lens through which to view control and to account for the multitude of contextual variables that influence nonprofit organisations. For instance, CR can be used to analyse multiple levels of reality, ranging from the material, observable reality to deep structures that often are taken for granted (Figure 2).

The CR methodology produced some significant conclusions about organisational control in Byer’s study including identification of several differences in the control mechanisms operating in the three different organisations, acknowledging that further research is needed on different types of nonprofit organisations to examine variability across both heterogeneous and homogenous samples in different contexts. Byers (2013) noted that Hopwood’s categories correspond well to the different levels of reality inherent in a CR analysis, as shown in Table I. The development of the controls over time signifies the deepest level of reality, which the researcher only “observes” through data analysis.

Conclusion

As a significant focus of research on nonprofit organisations, the concept of governance is important (Stone and Ostrower, 2007), but not without limitations (Cornforth, 2012; Ostrower and Stone, 2010). Researchers have examined governance within the narrow parameters of a single level of analysis (the board), often neglecting the wider governance structures and external influences (Cornforth, 2012).

In addition, research on governance, if it is to offer more insightful knowledge of nonprofit organisations, must take into account the great heterogeneity within the sector and access

Figure 2 Critical realism: levels of reality in understanding control

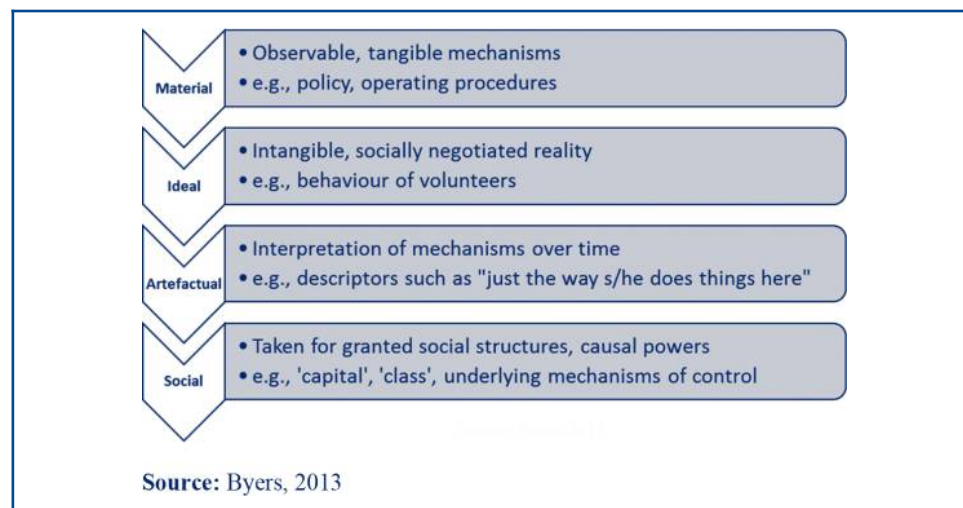


Table I Hopwood and CR realities

<i>Hopwood theoretical categories</i>	<i>CR levels of reality</i>
Administrative	Material
Social	Ideal
Self	Artefactual
*Development over time	Social

wider representative data to provide greater explicit consideration of an organisation's external environment (Stone and Ostrower, 2007, 2010). We argue that indeed governance has been treated rather narrowly, and the focus on boards to explain nonprofit organisations' operations neglects the importance of context, history and the development of control over time.

The Hopwood (1974) framework is a useful tool for a more holistic study of control than that found in the literature and can offer a much-needed broader perspective from which to examine nonprofit organisations. However, Hopwood's framework does little to consider the social context of an organisation, and the literature places great importance on context in understanding control (Cardinal *et al.*, 2004; Johnson and Gill, 1993; Maguire, 1999). Combining Hopwood's categories with Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field allows for consideration of the diversity of the nonprofit sector and a rich array of contextual features, including time and historical development of control (particularly of capital), resulting in dynamic theories of control in nonprofit organisations.

This paper's critical consideration of the concept of control adds value to understanding the nonprofit organisations' operations, which research on governance has omitted. Viewing organisational control through the lens of CR can generate theories of nonprofit organisations that extend beyond the positivist or interpretivist realm and actually integrate different ontological levels to reveal relationships between structures and agents. This approach may improve our understanding of governance, as one of the key criticisms of the relevant literature is overreliance on theories of agency. A greater inclusion of structure and how agent – structure relations evolve may advance our understanding of the nonprofit sector and its management practices. Agents have the potential to be both powerful and vulnerable at times, and agents' role and impact can be understood only when placed in context and questions of how and why regarding agents' actions are posed.

Given the size, diversity and complexity of the nonprofit sector, a substantive theory is needed that can explore more fully the similarities and differences among different types of organisations and how these characteristics relate to control within and between organisations. One of the key challenges is the sheer number of contextual factors and different control mechanisms that must be considered, compounded by the fact that these are constantly changing. The literature on control consists of more than a hundred years of studies focussing on a wide range of control mechanisms and contexts, a volume of work that poses the need for two actions: first, a comprehensive synthesis and meta-analysis of this knowledge and, second, greater consideration of intangible concepts such as trust that have received little attention in comparison with more formal controls.

The role of trust is different in voluntary organisations and public or private firms, and requires considerably more investigation in the context of nonprofit organisations (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2014). Trust is vitally important because it can be a control mechanism operating at different ontological levels, but it is also a contextual factor that influences how organisations portray themselves. Trust in the public sector, political arena and in business is delicate and, in some cases, declining, but reports indicate that trust in the media is strong and increasing (Edleman, 2013), and trust in charities is also increasing (nfpSynergy, 2012). This information offers a clear and interesting starting point for future research on control in nonprofit organisations, which indicates they have unique qualities and can offer a fresh perspective on "governance" compared with their public and private sector counterparts.

This paper provides theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on nonprofit organisations and governance. The intention was not to dismiss the wealth of knowledge and insight achieved in research on governance in the sector, but to draw upon the concept of control to offer new insights that may advance our thinking on issues of nonprofit organisations' governance and internal operations. A multidisciplinary, multilevel theory combining the logics of Hopwood (1974) and Bourdieu (1990), using a CR lens

(Byers, 2013) can provide a fruitful methodology for future research that can accommodate the diversity and complexity of the nonprofit sector. The challenge, and resultant spoils of this task, will be to further test the ideas in this paper in nonprofit organisations of different sizes, purposes, histories and social contexts with meta-analysis and systematic reviews of this evidence. We sincerely hope we will not be alone in this endeavour.

References

- Agarwal, S. (1999), "Impact of job formalization and administrative controls on attitudes of industrial salespersons", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 359-368.
- Alvesson, M. (1993), "Cultural-ideological modes of management control: a theory and a case study of a professional service company", *Communication Yearbook*, Vol. 16, pp. 3-42.
- Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (2002), "Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 619-644.
- Anagnostopoulos, C., Byers, T. and Shilbury, D. (2014), "Corporate social responsibility in team sport organisations: toward a theory of decision-making", *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 259-281.
- Andres-Alonso, P., Azofra-Palenzuela, V. and Romero-Merino, M.E. (2008), "Determinants of nonprofit board size and composition: the case of Spanish foundations", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 5, pp. 784-809.
- Anthony, R. and Young, D. (1988), *Management Control in Non-Profit Organizations*, 4th ed., Richard D. Irwin, Homewood, IL.
- Bayle, E. (2005), "Institutional changes and transformations in an organisational field: the case of public/private 'model' of French sport", *International Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 1 Nos 1/2, pp. 185-211.
- Bernardi, B. (1995), "Ideology and loose couplings in management control systems", in Warglien, M. and Masuch, M. (Eds), *The Logic of Organizational Disorder*, Walter de Gruyter, New York, NY, pp. 89-104.
- Billis, D. (2010), *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector: Challenges for Practise, Theory and Policy*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke.
- Blair, M.M. (1995), *Ownership and Control: Rethinking Corporate Governance for the Twenty-First Century*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989), *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, London.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice, Trans., Polity, Cambridge.
- Bourdieu, P. and Waquant, L.J.D. (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Burns, T. and Stalker, G.M. (1961), *The Management of Innovation*, Tavistock, London.
- Byers, T. (2013), "Using critical realism: a new perspective on control of volunteers in sport clubs", *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 5-31.
- Byers, T., Henry, I. and Slack, T. (2007), "Understanding control in voluntary sport organisations", in Parent, M.M. and Slack, T. (Eds), *International Perspectives on the Management of Sport*, Elsevier, London, pp. 269-283.
- Cardinal, L.B., Sitkin, S.B. and Long, C.P. (2004), "Balancing and rebalancing in the creation and evolution of organisation control", *Organization*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 411-431.
- Chenhall, R.H. (2003), "Management control systems design within its organizational context: findings from contingency-based research and directions for the future", *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol. 28 Nos 2/3, pp. 127-168.
- Cornforth, C. (2003), *The Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organizations*, Routledge, London.
- Cornforth, C. (2012), "Nonprofit governance research: limitations of the focus on boards and suggestions for new directions", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 6, pp. 1116-1135.
- Cornforth, C.J. and Edwards, C. (1998), *Good Governance: Developing Effective Board-Management Relations in Public and Voluntary Organisations*, CIMA Publishing, London.

- Cunningham, I. (2000), "Managing employee commitment in the UK voluntary sector: a frontier for further research", *Management Research News*, Vol. 23 Nos 9/10/11, pp. 45-47.
- Das, T.K. (1989), "Organizational control: an evolutionary perspective", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 459-475.
- Powell, W.W. (1991), "Constructing an organizational field as a professional project: US art museums, 1920-1940", in Powell, W.W. and DiMaggio, P.J. (Eds), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, pp. 267-292.
- Edleman (2013), "Trust barometer-executive summary", available at: www.scribd.com/doc/121501475/Executive-Summary-2013-Edelman-Trust-Barometer (accessed 17 May 2013).
- Emirbayer, M. and Johnson, V. (2008), "Bourdieu and organizational analysis", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 1-44.
- Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D. and McDonald, G. (2009), "Board involvement in strategy: advancing the governance of sport organisations", *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 245-277.
- Ferner, A. (2000), "The underpinnings of 'bureaucratic' control systems: HRM in European multi-nationals", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 521-539.
- Foster, S. (1986), "Reading Pierre Bourdieu", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 103-110.
- Gupta, A.K. and Govindarajan, V. (1991), "Knowledge flows and the structure of control within multinational corporations", *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 768-792.
- Hochschild, A.R. (1983), *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, University of California Press, London.
- Hopwood, A.G. (1974), *Accounting and Human Behaviour*, Prentice Hall, London.
- Inkpen, A.C. and Currall, S.C. (2004), "The coevolution of trust, control and learning in joint ventures", *Organization Science*, Vol. 15 No. 5, pp. 586-599.
- Jaussaud, J. and Schaap, J. (2006), "Control mechanisms and their subsidiaries by multinational firms: a multi-dimensional perspective", *Journal of International Management*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 23-45.
- Jenkins, R. (1992), "Pierre Bourdieu and the reproduction of determinism", *Sociology*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 270-281.
- Jermier, J.M. (1998), "Introduction: critical perspectives on organizational control", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 235-256.
- Johnson, P. and Gill, J. (1993), *Management Control and Organizational Behaviour*, Paul Chapman Publishing, London.
- Kelman, H. (1961), "The processes of opinion change", *Public Opinion*, Vol. 25, pp. 57-78.
- Langfield-Smith, K. (1997), "Management control systems and strategy: a critical review", *Accounting Organizations and Society*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 207-232.
- Lash, S. (1993), "Pierre Bourdieu: cultural autonomy and social change", in Calhoun, C., LiPuma, E. and Postone, M. (Eds), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, University Press of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Lau, R.W.K. (2004), "Habitus and the practical logic of practice: an interpretation", *Sociology*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 369-387.
- Lawrence, P.R. and Lorsch, J.W. (1967), *Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration*, Harvard University Press, Boston, MA.
- Maguire, S. (1999), "The discourse of control", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 109-114.
- Manz, C.C. and Simms, H.P. (1989), *Super Leadership: Leading Others to Lead Themselves*, Prentice – Hall, Berkeley, CA.
- Meira, J., Kartalis, N.D., Tamenyi, M. and Cullen, J. (2010), "Management controls and inter-firm relationships: a review", *Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 149-169.
- Meisenhelder, T. (1997), "Pierre Bourdieu and the call for a reflexive sociology", *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Vol. 17, pp. 159-183.
- Moxham, C. and Boaden, R. (2007), "The impact of performance measurement in the voluntary sector: identification of contextual and processual factors", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 27 No. 8, pp. 826-845.

NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) (2000), "The A to Z of the voluntary sector", *Research Quarterly*, Vol. 9.

NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) (2009), *The UK Civil Society Almanac 2009*, The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, London.

nfpSynergy (2012), available at: <http://nfpsynergy.net/public-levels-trust-charities-and-royal-family-increase-political-parties-still-bottom-pile-new-1> (accessed 17 May 2013).

Oakes, L.S., Townley, B. and Cooper, D.J. (1998), "Business planning as pedagogy: language and control in a changing institutional field", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 257-292.

O'Brien, D. and Slack, T. (2003), "An analysis of change in an organizational field: the professionalization of English rugby union", *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 417-448.

Oliga, J.C. (1989), *Power, Ideology and Control*, Plenum Press, London.

Osbourne, S.P. (2008), *The Third Sector in Europe: Prospects and Challenges*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.

Ostrower, F. and Stone, M.M. (2010), "Moving governance research forward: a contingency-based framework and data application", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 901-924.

Ouchi, W.G. (1977), "The relationship between organizational structure and organizational control", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 95-112.

Reed, M.I. (2001), "Organization, trust and control: a realist analysis", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 201-228.

Saeki, T. (1994), "The conflict between tradition and modernization in a sport organization: a sociological study of issues surrounding the organizational reformation of the All Japan Judo Federation", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 301-315.

Speckbacher, G. (2008), "Nonprofit versus corporate governance: an economic approach", *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 295-320.

Stone, M.M. and Ostrower, F. (2007), "Acting in the public interest? Another look at research on nonprofit governance", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 416-438.

Sturdy, A. and Fineman, S. (2001), "Struggles for the control of affect? Resistance as politics and emotion", Sturdy, A., Grugulis, I. and Willmott, H. (Eds), *Customer Service: Empowerment and Entrapment*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, pp. 140-156.

Swartz, D. (1997), *Culture and Power*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Tankersley, W.B. (2000), "The impact of external control arrangements on organizational performance", *Administration and Society*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 282-304.

Tosi, H. (1983), "The organizational control structure", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 271-279.

Corresponding author

Terri Byers can be contacted at: terri.byers@unb.ca

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

This article has been cited by:

1. Jonathon Robert Edwards, Ross Leadbetter. 2016. Collaborative governance in a sport system: a critique of a “one-size-fits-all” approach to administering a national standardized sport program. *Managing Sport and Leisure* 21:3, 142-163. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Dr Tim Breitbarth, Dr Stefan Walzel, Dr Christos Anagnostopoulos, Mr Frank van Eekeren Tim Breitbarth Department of Sport Management, Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK Stefan Walzel Department of Sport Economics and Sport Management, German Sport University Cologne, Cologne, Germany Christos Anagnostopoulos Faculty of Business Administration and Social Sciences, University College Molde, Molde, Norway AND Department of Sport Management, UCLan, Larnaka, Cyprus Frank van Eekeren School of Governance, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands . 2015. Corporate social responsibility and governance in sport: “Oh, the things you can find, if you don’t stay behind!”. *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society* 15:2, 254-273. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]