

Gender and Ethnic Diversity on Boards and Corporate Responsibility: The Case of the Arts Sector

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Abstract This study provides insights on sector-specific characteristics, challenges and issues that affect corporate responsibility (CR) in relation to ethnicity and gender on arts boards. Using stakeholder theory, the study explores how arts board composition (e.g. gender and ethnicity) sets the scene for dynamics that affect CR. Data analysis is based on interviews with 92 board members and stakeholders sitting on 66 arts boards in Australia. Results suggest that the dynamism of gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards makes them responsive to CR; however, their presence does not always lead to CR. For diverse boards to lead to CR, our findings indicate the significance of board member attributes of passion, skill and capability of developing networks, irrespective of gender and ethnicity. The article advances understanding of the implications and relevance of ethnic and gender diversity on non-profit boards and contributes to an important yet under-researched body of literature.

Keywords Arts · Boards · Corporate responsibility · Diversity · Ethnicity · Gender

Introduction

Research into sector-specific corporate responsibility (CR) is scant but emergent (Beschoner et al. 2013). CR as a business strategy has continued to grow in importance and significance (Carroll and Shabana 2010), particularly in the context of corporate failures and scandals. Further, with the

rise of social activism and more stringent requirements from stakeholders, coupled with weak governance and poor management practices in some sectors, the concepts of CR and corporate governance are increasingly seen as strongly correlated and connected (Bhimani and Soonawalla 2005; Jamali et al. 2008). CR expands and broadens the concept of corporate governance to include accountability to a range of stakeholders—customers, suppliers, employees, volunteers, government and community—including shareholders, for survival, competitiveness, and success of a business (MacMillan et al. 2004). Hence, scholarly interest in the topic of both CR and corporate governance has recently expanded, with a focus on the role of diverse boards in the context of well-publicised governance failures (Chapple and Humphrey 2014; Adams and Ferreira 2009). Nevertheless, scholars stress the need for new research directions that examine diverse boards serving in non-profit (NP) settings, to better understand processes and dynamics for responsible governance (Australian Institute of Company Directors 2011; Forbes and Milliken 1999).

We respond to this call by focussing on board diversity in the arts sector in Australia. Australia's art sector is unique, sitting at the crossroads of the creative industries, government and the NP sector, drawing on the “creative skills and talents of the workforce driving new ideas and change” (Attorney-General's Department et al. 2011, p. 5). Despite sharing common legal underpinnings with the for-profit sector—in its oversight role, decision-making power and members' fiduciary duties—the NP sector has attracted increasing scrutiny in recent years in Australia (Rosenthal 2012). As a part of the NP sector, the composition, governance and funding arrangements of arts boards have undergone significant transformation in the last three decades. These changes have made arts boards in Australia more diverse than boards in other industry sectors (Stean

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and Christie 2001), as they mimic more closely the communities which they serve. Although these changes have garnered interest recently, many early studies on arts boards were conceptual and focussed on museum boards in the arts (Ames 1985; Dickenson 1991). Empirical work in the last ten years on arts boards (Griffin and Abraham 2000; Rentschler 2002) has focussed on aspects which include the key work of the executive officer, board member performance, recruitment and training, reputation, decision-making, arts organisation financial and growth crises, and power (e.g. Reid and Turbide 2012; Ostrower and Stone 2010; Turbide et al. 2008; Urice 1990). This research has been useful, yielding valuable insights into many aspects of board processes and dynamics. However, although board diversity and its effect on performance (Chapple and Humphrey 2014; Adams and Ferreira 2009), reputation and social responsibility (Hafsi and Turgut 2013) have been studied in various sectors, studies of arts boards and CR have been less researched (Rentschler and Radbourne 2008). Further, little empirical research has been carried out to analyse the demographic changes that arts boards have undergone in Australia, their link with CR and the implications of these changes for the arts and other industries. We contribute to this under-researched body of literature.

Diversity on boards is viewed as multidimensional with board members having different demographics—age, gender, ethnicity, religion—and human, social and cultural capital (Ayuso et al. 2014; Johnson et al. 2013; Stahl et al. 2010). In this article, we explore the demographic diversity of arts boards and focus on gender and ethnicity rather than age, class, sexual orientation or other aspects of demography, for four main reasons. First, from the 1970s, women have been progressing through multiple levels in the Australian workforce, assisted by government legislation, peak body mentoring and monitoring, and workplace policies facilitating their advance (Du Plessis et al. 2014). Women have also increased their education, skills and abilities levels. Changes to the role of women, who comprise 51 % of the Australian population, have reshaped much of the workforce and they now represent 45.8 % of the total workforce, but less so in the board room (Du Plessis et al. 2014). Similarly, Australia has the world's highest proportion of migrant settlers with over a quarter (26 %) of Australia's population born overseas and a further one-fifth (20 %) having at least one overseas-born parent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). As a result of this changing demographic composition, firms are under pressure to attract and manage gender and ethnic diversity, making these demographic aspects important for Australia. Issues of gender and race are seen as topics of importance for firms today as gender and ethnically diverse boards are perceived as better equipped to deal with the needs of a

diverse market and to boost firms' reputations (Miller and Triana 2009).

Second, despite significant changes, the dearth of women and people from ethnic backgrounds on corporate boards in Australia remains. Although female representation of ASX 200 directorships has increased from 8.70 % in 2007 to 18.2 % in 2014, it remains below international best practice of 40 % representation of each gender (Du Plessis et al. 2014). In contrast to corporate boards, NP arts boards in Australia have 50 % gender diversity and 25 % ethnic diversity (Rentschler 2015). Hence, gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards provide lessons for corporate board diversity.

Third, although gender diversity has been studied on corporate boards, it has received little attention on arts boards (Rentschler 2015). Ethnic diversity, overall, has received even less attention due to the low levels of ethnic diversity on most boards (Johnson et al. 2013; Van der Walt and Ingley 2003). Therefore, by focussing on gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards, this article addresses a gap in the literature.

Fourth, recent research demonstrates a link between women's leadership on boards and firm performance, as firms with female directors show higher returns on investment than those without female directors (Desvaux et al. 2010a, b; Devillard et al. 2012). Similarly, ethnic minorities who internalise more than one cultural profile are more likely to possess unique skills as compared to individuals from monocultures, thus enabling them to be more successful in global business environments (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Tadmor et al. 2009). However, the link between ethnic and gender diversity on arts boards—which are more diverse than corporate boards—and CR remains under-researched. Our study aims to fill this gap. We shed light on collective issues and nuances important for CR in the arts industry and how arts board composition—in terms of gender and ethnicity—is responding to these issues. We do so by answering the following research questions, using a qualitative study involving 92 participants from 66 different arts boards:

How do men and women on arts boards respond to CR requirements?

How are gender and ethnic aspects of demographic diversity on arts boards linked to CR?

The study makes several contributions to corporate responsibility and diversity literature. First, it adds to the growing body of CR literature by analysing the link between board diversity and CR in the arts sector using the perspectives of stakeholder theory. As part of the NP sector, arts organisations have a primary focus on serving their diverse stakeholders on whom they depend for donations; hence, stakeholder trust is critical for their survival and

sustainability. Ethnic and gender diversity on boards provide legitimacy, credibility and integrity which are important for earning stakeholder trust, as stakeholders are now more demanding in the current context of economic uncertainty. Thus, we rely on stakeholder theory to generate insights and new knowledge on arts sector-specific CR that can inform other industries in both the for-profit and NP sectors.

Second, the paper makes a contribution to the diversity and corporate governance literature by analysing how gender and ethnic diversity on boards make them more responsive, a topic that remains under-researched (Rentschler and Radbourne 2008). Whilst confirming that arts boards are more diverse than corporate boards, our findings highlight that barriers to diversity still exist on arts boards which have potential policy implications.

Finally, this study advances our understanding of the importance of board member attributes such as passion, skill and networking capability and management of those attributes. These attributes not only help members to be responsive to CR but also act as a driving force for board members—particularly women and ethnic minorities—to overcome barriers, and be included in mainstream society. This is in line with calls to integrate insights from gender and ethnic diversity literature to explain the improved performance of boards associated with gender (Devillard et al. 2012; Miller and Triana 2009) and ethnic diversity (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Miller and Triana 2009; Tadmor et al. 2009).

We structure our article as follows. The research context is provided by briefly discussing the multidimensional concept of diversity in Australia with a focus on cultural diversity. Using stakeholder theory, we then provide an overview of the NP sector and the changes experienced by arts boards in Australia. In doing so, we look briefly at the changes that arts boards have undergone over the past three decades and discuss arts sector-specific characteristics, challenges and the issues for CR. Next, we provide an overview of our methodological approach, followed by the presentation of our findings that explain the dynamism between board diversity and CR in the arts sector. We conclude by providing theoretical and practical implications as well as future avenues for research.

Diversity in the Australian Context

Since the shift away from the White Australia Policy in the 1970s, Australia has become one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world with migrants arriving from some 200 countries (Salt 2014). This has changed Australia's historical self-image from a largely British-based

nation to a multicultural society, warranting new discourses and policies for a diverse population (Syed and Kramar 2009). Diverse ethnic migrant communities have brought with them diverse cultural practices, which have been absorbed into Australian culture. Due to Australia's diversity, biculturals who internalise more than one cultural profile (Tadmor et al. 2009) represent a large proportion of men and women available for service in organisations. Such people carry mixed cultural identities, possessing knowledge of their own culture and unique skills as compared to individuals from monocultures (Stahl et al. 2010). These unique skills and abilities relate to human and social capital which enable biculturals to function better in the complexity of a global business environment (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Tadmor et al. 2009).

Individuals' diversity encompasses a range of personal and demographic factors such as human, social, and cultural capital as well as demographic issues—age, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation—which together increase the complexity of individuals' social identity. Identities can co-exist in a hierarchy of salience with the “diversity of the person residing in the repertoire of social roles and identities” (Bodenhausen 2010, p. 2). Personal identities within an individual such as demographic issues and human, social and cultural capital are not mutually exclusive but are in continuous and dynamic interaction. For instance, human capital—skills, knowledge and abilities—within teams is found to be an antecedent of the ability to develop ties and networks (Han et al. 2014). Similarly, the knowledge and understanding of different cultures help biculturals to switch between cultural identities, leading to the development of cognitive complexity across different domains (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Tadmor et al. 2009). Biculturals may have increased levels of imagination, intellectual flexibility and “creativity and ability to deal with ambiguity” (Tadmor et al. 2009, p. 134). Nonetheless, not all biculturals are equal and mere exposure to a second culture does not lead to cognitive benefits; rather, it depends on how individuals internally represent different cultures (Tadmor et al. 2009, p. 132). Variation in internalising cultures may explain the diversity and heterogeneity in migrants who differ in skills, education, assets and networks (Azmat 2013).

Ongoing demographic changes have transformed Australian society; however, they have not been associated with increased participation of women and ethnic groups on boards. In this context, there is debate about the need for gender and ethnic diversity on Australian boards, as diverse boards are seen as better equipped to deal with the needs of a “fusion culture” and to boost reputation (Du Plessis et al. 2014; Miller and Triana 2009).

Corporate Responsibility and the Non-Profit Sector

Organisations differ by size, ownership, structure and sector (Beschorner et al. 2013), arguably making the sector important in determining which CR approach to pursue. The sector determines which CR approach is required by analysing the needs, issues and challenges of stakeholders within it, including their interactions, collaborations and windows of opportunity (Beschorner et al. 2013). Such an argument implies sector differences, in terms of needs, characteristics, policies and the challenges which influence CR (Ayuso et al. 2014). Stakeholders in different sectors focus on the specific issues appropriate to their needs (Lindgreen et al. 2012). Stakeholder theory—the underlying theory of CR—acknowledges a duty of care towards a broader group than shareholders (Freeman 1984; Jamali et al. 2008). Maintaining good relationships with stakeholders makes good and ethical business sense and is seen as one of the most effective ways of achieving the organisational goals of efficiency, profitability and success (Ayuso et al. 2014).

As the NP sector's main purpose is to serve the public, the stakeholders are diverse. Given their NP nature, certain stakeholders—community, government, private sector and philanthropists—are important for the arts and are useful in explaining organisational behaviour. As society as a whole is a stakeholder, including for the arts, CR has evolved to pressure organisations to change how they implement business models, and do good for society (Waddock 2004). Governments are not only a potential source of funding but also determine regulations and interventions as well as assisting in dealing with challenges through their roles as “moderators and communicators” (Beschorner et al. 2013, p. 29). Businesses and philanthropists are additional stakeholders for the arts, providing support and strategic partnerships.

Recently, NPs have not only been facing a decline in government funding but also an increase in demand for services, as well as increasing costs associated with regulatory and compliance requirements (Deloitte 2012). In addition, economic and reputational crises have put NPs under pressure, while increasing scrutiny by stakeholders has ensured their interests are taken into account (Sealy et al. 2009). In this context, diversity is important for NP boards as it supports their self-perception as non-discriminatory, credible and legitimate and generates stakeholder trust and confidence.

Traditionally, the focus of CR has been on private companies because of their capacity, wealth and global reach. In recent years, however, NPs have addressed CR (Jamali and Keshishian 2009) as a result of the reduced capacity of the state to meet societal needs (Cornelius et al.

2008). An emerging trend has seen greater NP and for-profit collaboration as no one sector can handle problems in isolation. NPs are not driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders as surpluses are reinvested for social purposes, yet, effective financial management is essential for sustainability (Cornelius et al. 2008). As NPs depend on grants, donations and stakeholder trust for survival, committing to socially responsible business is critical for them to earn the trust and support of stakeholders. Transparency, accountability, commitment to ethical and socially responsible business practices and effective governance are viewed as vital for NPs to build their reputation and attract investment.

Given NPs' focus on social issues, scholars have called for investigation of their CR policies and practices (Cornelius et al. 2008; Emanuele and Higgins 2000). Some suggest that NPs are able to engage in socially irresponsible business practices such as offering lower wages and reduced benefits to employees, and assert that CR pressure should be applied to them, as happens in the for-profit sectors (Emanuele and Higgins 2000). In this context, gender and ethnic diversity on NP boards are important as adherence to diversity norms indicates to stakeholders that the board is well equipped to deal with the needs and challenges of a “fusion culture” which also helps to build reputation (Miller and Triana 2009). Again, reputation is not only linked with CR and governance (Radbourne 2003) but also secures potential funding. Hence, for organisations, board diversity provides legitimacy, credibility and integrity (Fondas 2000; Miller and Triana 2009; Van der Walt and Ingleby 2003). In addition, having people on boards with diverse backgrounds, varied experiences, perspectives and skills, avoids “group-think” (Sealy et al. 2009). Board diversity is also seen to aid performance and competitive advantage by bringing in different perspectives, new ideas and skills that can lead to creativity and innovation (Ayuso et al. 2014; Tadmor et al. 2009).

While not all scholars agree on the value of diversity (Stahl et al. 2010; Turner and Oakes 1989) because of the additional complexity in decision-making and the need to manage board dynamics, its benefits boost reputation, credibility, legitimacy and authenticity. These thrusts align gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards with the objectives of Australia's multicultural policy of creating a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society.

NP Sector in Australia

There are estimated to be 600,000 NP organisations in Australia, representing 2.9 % of all Australian enterprises, 3.3 % of all outlets, 5.7 % of the nation's revenue and

14.5 % of the Australian workforce (Productivity Commission 2010). In Australia, the NP sector includes organisations of all sizes. Many of them are small to medium-sized, including organisations as diverse as museums, charities and sporting clubs, while larger ones include universities, religious institutions and hospitals. In addition to generating revenue and employment, the sector makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy by promoting social cohesion, providing cultural, environmental and other community benefits, and delivering social services. Arts and cultural organisations form an important part of the NP sector, accounting for 20.1 % (8258) of all non-profit organisations, just slightly fewer than the number of religious organisations (21.4 % or 8786) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009).

Distinct from corporate organisations and the public sector, NP organisations have a unique set of characteristics, functions and governance frameworks (Table 1). These unique characteristics include their ownership structure; non-distribution constraint and funding sources; a complex governance model with a broader range of economic, environmental, and social objectives; and the necessity to adapt to organisational complexities where success is measured by financial and non-financial indicators.

Sector-Specific Characteristics of NP Arts Boards in Australia

As part of the NP sector, arts boards have been influenced by the political will for change (Hendry and Kiel 2004), while, internally, their organisational culture has supported diversity (Rentschler 2015). In relation to governance, external pressures have set the framework for change in gender and ethnic representation on non-profit and government boards (Hendry and Kiel 2004). Thus, arts organisations are adapting constantly in response to these pressures. As a result, the gender and ethnicity of arts boards have become more diverse in recent decades.

Table 2 illustrates the specific characteristics, challenges and CR issues of the NP arts sector in Australia. The arts industry is a pluralistic domain involving divergent objectives which include aesthetic mission; quality performance; social inclusion; hedonic experiences and the securing of funding from diverse sources for sustainability (such as from merchandise, ticket sales, government, philanthropy and sponsorship). In the context of declining government funding, the arts industry has become more complex with the development of new strategic collaborations and partnerships with different stakeholders which have changed organisational ways of working. Arts board members practise governance in this

complex framework while seeking to maintain the balance between quality, social inclusion and sustainability but without the discipline of the bottom line. In addition, measures of success are elusive and difficult to quantify, as they include both financial and non-financial indicators; and CR and values are integral to strategy and operations.

During economic downturns, arts organisations' major challenge is securing funding on which they are dependent (Deloitte 2012). Whilst securing diverse funding is difficult, arts organisations are also experiencing increased demands for services to support communities, more scrutiny from stakeholders to manage service costs efficiently and effectively (Rentschler 2002), as well as having to ensure product quality (DiMaggio 1987). In brief, arts organisations do "more with less and often from a revenue base that can be largely out of the organisation's control" (Deloitte 2012, p. 19).

In an increasingly multicultural society like Australia, and being a part of the NP sector, CR in the arts is driven by the need for organisations to serve the community and include people from all parts of the community in various aspects of organisational life. Previous studies have outlined the importance of strategic CR as a source of "opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage" for businesses as it creates shared value for them and the community (Porter and Kramer 2006, p. 80; McWilliams et al. 2006). Strategic CR for the arts creates shared value by considering organisations and society as mutually interdependent, with symbiotic relationships where organisation and societal success are mutually reinforcing (Porter and Kramer 2006). In times of economic uncertainty, board focus on strategy creates shared value, that is, it provides benefits to society and adds to sustainability, while board members provide expertise for the organisation (McElhaney 2009; Porter and Kramer 2006).

In this context, some common denominators of CR in the sector include the need for *fulfilling the organisation's mission* by focussing on ensuring quality, social inclusion and managing funding; *determining strategy* that creates shared value with both economic and social benefits; *maintaining vitality* through valuing diversity and representing the community; and *sustaining the viability* of the organisation through NP and for-profit collaborations and strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, as well as by securing funding (see Table 2). With increasing multiculturalism, greater competition for reduced funding sources and increasing scrutiny, CR has a key role in the NP sector, including the arts. Despite the benefits and challenges of diverse boards, it is one of the least researched yet most strategically important issues for sector-specific CR in Australia. We address this gap.

Table 1 Sector-specific characteristics of Australian NP organisations

Differentiating factors	Non-profit organisations
Ownership	NPs do not have owners. People who fund non-profits are not residual claimants to the revenues and assets of the non-profit; they often do not have control rights over the firm at all
Non-distribution constraint and source of funding	NPs do not disburse surpluses to owners or employees. NPs receive income from diverse sources, including government, philanthropists, sponsors and from sales of their own products and services, where applicable
Tax privileges	NPs are exempt from tax burdens; donations to NPs are tax deductible
Governance	Governance is more complex, with a broader range of economic, environmental, and social objectives, and a greater variety of requirements, and public expectations, than businesses in the private sector
Boards	NPs have boards which have the ultimate responsibility for organisation oversight. Boards are elected by the membership or sometimes appointed by government. NP organisations are not subject to takeovers
Accountability	NP board members have fixed terms in most cases. They are accountable to stakeholders. The stakeholders may include government, the community, philanthropists and other constituencies. They also respond to government and other stakeholder priorities, providing service delivery that is accountable for performance
Measures of Success	Measures of success are more subjective, focussing on mission and both financial and non-financial measures of performance; surpluses are not the main yardstick for success as NPs provide social benefits to society. Nonetheless, they require resources to remain viable

Source Adapted from Rentschler and Radbourne (2008)

Table 2 Sector-specific characteristics, challenges and CR issues of arts industry

Definition of arts	Characteristics	Challenges	CR issues
Arts is defined as creative expression, which includes experiences through performances, events, festivals, installations and exhibitions for artists, audiences and stakeholders	Diverse organisational types and sizes	Decline in government funding	Focus on mission fulfilment
Arts organisations are NP charitable organisations with a cultural perspective, which focus on arts in multiple forms (e.g. dance, visual arts, theatre and museums), with a volunteer board and paid executive staff	Multiplicity of stakeholders	Need for diversity of income sources	Community inclusion
	Complex business models	Little money for administration with most money going to the artists and the art forms	Community service
	CR central to values of equity, access and inclusion	Increasing stakeholder scrutiny	Product quality
	Community is the focus	Product is quality	Managing funding
	Success measures (both financial and non-financial)		Strategy focussed on shared value
			Creating both economic and social benefits
			Focus on vitality
			Valuing diversity and being more representative of the community they serve
			Focus on viability
			Collaboration through partnerships to create collective wisdom and shared identities for attracting funding
			Sustainability

Source Modified from Rentschler (2015), Beschoner et al. (2013), Reid and Turbide (2012), Turbide et al. (2008), DiMaggio (1987)

Method

Central to the investigation of people in organisations is the interpretive framework in which analysis occurs (Collinson 1992). Our study explores the lived experience of board members in a manner that facilitated open dialogue through unconventional means, as discussed below.

Sample

We used semi-structured interviews to address the research questions. In total, 92 participants on 66 arts boards across Australia were involved in this study between 2011 and 2014. Participant perceptions were uniform across interviews over this time period. The arts boards reflect

organisations of varying size, types, locations and ages across Australia (see Table 3 in Appendix). We employed a purposive sampling strategy (Mason, 2002) to identify a cross-section of participants—migrant and established, male and female—serving on arts boards, in order to provide holistic insight. We used contacts within arts organisations to provide people whom we could interview.

The participants included two groups: (a) board members ($N = 67$), and (b) stakeholders ($N = 25$). Among the board members, we had representation from male and female as well as members from both mainstream and ethnic minorities. Stakeholders included male and female policy-makers, government, artists and arts executives on arts boards in Australia. Previous research has identified that fewer than 30 interviews provides theoretical saturation (Fitzsimmons et al. 2014). In our study, data saturation was reached with the number of interviews conducted for each group. This also explains the difference in numbers in each group, that is, 67 for board members and 25 for stakeholders. Once data saturation was reached, and it was evident that a sufficient number of interviews had been undertaken.

As the sample was purposive, we conducted a web search of all arts boards in Australia which revealed that the number of male and female board members was equal, and that 25 % of that population was ethnically diverse. The gender and ethnic minority breakdown of participants in our sample is similar to the representation across all arts boards in Australia, as determined by the web search (see Table 3 in Appendix). Further, the representation of men and women on arts boards in our study is consistent with the 26 % of migrants and 51 % of females in the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011) and is, therefore, representative of the community.

Interviews

In our study, board members and stakeholders were often prominent high-profile individuals leading busy lives and were thus hard to access. Therefore, we needed to be flexible in interviewing our sample. Previous studies (Golden-Biddle and Rao 1997; Herman and Renz 2004; Sheridan et al. 2011) have also highlighted the problems of accessing board members when attempting to gain insights from inside the board room. The problem of accessing board members has thus led to studies being conducted outside the board room using CEOs as a proxy for board members, or using large, secondary datasets. Such studies have been criticised (see, for example, Cornforth 2012) for focussing on cross-sectional surveys and secondary data analysis, to the exclusion of interviewing board members to find out what goes on inside the board room. We overcame the problem of accessing board members by having a

flexible approach and conducting interviews in times and places to suit interviewees.

We decided early on not to record interviews, using research notes and the interviewee's own shorthand as a means of creating an informal atmosphere, trust and rapport (Collinson 1992; Kendall and Kendall 2002; Patton and Cochran 2002) and also due to the realisation that recording might not be a suitable option as interviews had to be conducted in times and locations—which were noisy and crowded such as cafes—to access the interviewees. To ensure that nothing important was missed in the note-taking process due to distractions, the author/interviewer made brief analytic notes based on personal reflections. The two roles enabled the note-taker to summarise the issues that came up during the interviews, check whether the interpretations made were correct and also assisted in seeking clarification of ambiguous comments on the spot (Patton and Cochran 2002). Several authors (Fasick 2001; Poland 1995) argue that written field notes taken during an interview or afterwards are superior to the exclusive use of audio recordings that are transcribed verbatim but are subject to interpretations of the transcriber that may not be accurate. Interviews lasted between 40 min and one-and-a-half hours. Variations in length of interviews could have been seen as problematic, but women tend to take longer in discussing personal narratives; hence, differences in interview length are to be expected (Fitzsimmons et al. 2014). In addition, frequent checking between interviewee and interviewer in the note-taking process made some interviews longer, but it also made them interactive, allowing for corrections to be made at the time.

In interviews, we asked questions such as How and why do arts boards differ from other boards in terms of composition (gender and ethnicity)? How has this composition helped organisations be more responsible and efficient? What are the barriers (if any) faced by men and women on arts boards? The approach allowed us to understand individual subjective experiences and perceptions through narrative about what was considered important for CR.

Analysis

To aid analysis, we logged when, where, with whom and how long each interview took. After each interview, we went through interview notes, adding additional analytic notes. This allowed in-depth, rich but concrete, accurate and comprehensible notes for each interview, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The notes were then saved with a unique identification number to keep track of the growing volume of data and facilitate analysis.

The authors read the notes for each interview along with the additional analytical notes multiple times to develop

themes. In going through the interview notes, the authors kept referring to the research questions they were trying to answer. Each author developed their own set of codes, initially by identifying the recurring issues in the data, which were then compared with the codes developed by the other author to provide a ‘reality check’ for each other (Saldana 2008). Although there is no standard for inter-rater agreement in qualitative research, the ‘85–90 % range seems a minimal benchmark to those most concerned with an evidentiary statistic’ (Saldana 2008, p. 28). In the study, the authors reached more than 85 % inter-rater agreement on the development of the codes. In cases of disagreement, the authors discussed them until agreement for main codes was reached. Similarly coded data were next grouped into categories—clusters of codes—that represented the same characteristic or pattern for developing a theme. The themes developed were thus an outcome of ‘coding, categorizing and analytic reflection’ (Saldana 2008, p. 13). This process of coding data and developing themes is supported by a number of authors (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994; Saldana 2008). After the researchers agreed on the themes, data were entered in NVivo for further analysis. This process further improved analytic rigour by validating data interpretations.

Further, we triangulated from different sources such as board members (male, female, ethnic and mainstream) and stakeholders to confirm our findings. We also used method triangulation, that is, one-on-one interviews as well as a review of secondary data (e.g. web searches, annual reports, board observations and board workshops) in our wider study, to obtain answers to our research questions. The triangulation of data from different sources and methods was useful in confirming, complementing or disconfirming perspectives that we obtained from our field study.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the men and women in our study of arts boards is presented in Table 3 in Appendix. It shows the heterogeneous nature of arts boards, with an equal split between men and women on the boards and 25 % ethnic diversity, which is consistent with the representation of gender and ethnicity on arts boards in Australia. To protect interviewee anonymity, we have given them a number, mentioning their gender and ethnicity, i.e. male or female ethnic, for ethnic participants. In other cases, we have just mentioned their gender.

Female board members are somewhat younger than the men; however, both genders have similar education levels, dependent children, time on boards and numbers of board positions held simultaneously. 97 % of the men and only 70 % of the women are partnered. The board members in

our study worked pro bono, except in the case of elite boards where they earned \$15–20,000 per annum.

Table 3 in Appendix also illustrates the summary background information on stakeholders interviewed for the study. Stakeholders were prominent individuals in mid-career or at the peak of their careers in government as bureaucrats, or in elected ministerial positions (or former ministerial positions), with extensive experience and knowledge of the arts and cultural sector. Many of them had served on arts boards in their careers.

Findings

This section answers our two research questions, based on themes derived from the interviews. We discuss the themes using extracts from interviews. Quotes used are representative of the sample, unless otherwise mentioned. However, at times due to limitations of space, we have supported the arguments using a single quote.

RQ 1: How do Men and Women on Arts Boards Respond to CR Requirements?

In response to RQ 1, findings suggest that gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards have helped them to be more responsive by being more focussed on all the common denominators of CR in the arts sector, as identified earlier. These include being (a) mission driven; (b) strategically balanced; (c) vital and (d) viable. As arts organisations are a part of the NP sector, the focus on community provides an overarching influence in all these dimensions.

Mission Driven

“Mission” is a driving force for organisational focus, internally and externally (Turbide et al. 2008). Our findings confirm that as a part of the NP sector, the arts organisations are driven by the need to serve and represent the community; focus on quality experiences and include the community in various aspects of organisational life, including on boards. The notion that, “the arts bring people and ethnic groups and society together”, as male ethnic board member (27) stated, represents a common perception about the overarching influence of arts among both groups of participants. Gender and ethnic diversity have helped the boards to be more sensitive to the issues of diversity and in working towards the mission of being representative of the community. Findings suggest that within the broad focus of community engagement, being mission driven is central to arts boards, as female ethnic board member (3) told us “I was there to help the gallery achieve its mission”. Both

board members and stakeholders in this study perceived being mission driven as important in satisfying the needs of stakeholders, establishing improved relationships with them and garnering their support, with failure likely to result in withdrawal of funding and the breakdown of trust. The majority of board members and stakeholders in this study stressed that if board members do not understand the mission and are not driven by the mission, then the “company will collapse” with board members “putting off the day of reckoning” (Male board member 20). The importance of a clear strategy, mission and vision is further illustrated in the comment:

We have clear strategy, mission, vision, goals and objectives. I am keen on numerate objectives, not waffly ones. Everyone knows exactly what it is that they have to do (Male ethnic board member 14).

Such comments were not limited to men. Female ethnic stakeholders also supported the need to link mission to strategy and vision.

We were told to decide whether the organisation is about the CEO or about the mission and vision, and whether we want it to survive beyond the founding CEO after he leaves. We decided we did want it to survive beyond the founding CEO. It was a powerful moment (Female ethnic stakeholder 6).

In line with prior research (Deloitte 2012), our findings suggest that the pressure to do more with less is due to a decline in funding which sometimes leads to tensions about the mission, necessitating wide consultation and engagement with stakeholders. Focussing on the community and wider consultation with stakeholders provided board members with the opportunity to do something for the community and make a difference to lives, while strengthening stakeholder confidence. This view is reinforced by the quote:

The idea of broadening out the board so that it reflects our community is a massive issue. I can see where the future is. We don't want to be seen as an Anglo-Celtic outpost when the game has changed (Male board member 20).

This perspective is also supported by others, for e.g.

We give people the opportunity to be engaged, to participate, to gain self-confidence, and to improve themselves. Through these means, we achieve significant change for people and the community (Male ethnic board member 27).

Being mission driven is thus a “powerful’ driver” (Male stakeholder 6) due to the fact that non-profit organisations lack the discipline of the bottom line, but are driven by the search for diverse funds.

Strategic Balance

In times of uncertainty with the decline in funding associated with the pressure to do more, being strategic (Brown and Guo 2010) on arts boards is a key construct of strategic CR. CR entails creating shared value that benefits both community and organisation sustainability. Arts boards have recognised the importance of strategy, as board members discussed the ongoing shift on arts boards from being compliance-oriented in the past to being more focussed on strategy for sustainability. However, compliance remains important for legal accountability. Board members emphasised the need for people to be aware of compliance complexities in order to add value. Focussing on strategy, board members were also found to be balancing strategy and operations in a juggling act to “get things moving” (Male ethnic board member 31). The focus on strategy and operations meant balancing diverse skill sets within a community focus, to help achieve the mission of ensuring quality while remaining sustainable. Consistent with earlier research that suggests that diverse boards are perceived to be more legitimate among the stakeholders (Miller and Triana 2009), our findings reveal the pressure on board members to be seen as ‘legitimate’ and ‘credible’ to earn the trust of stakeholders, as seen in this representative quote:

The changing nature of arts boards means there is much more accountability that leads to credibility. To be seen by stakeholders to understand and oversee the organisation and be trusted to oversee the programs, that is important. You have to demonstrate that to stakeholders, especially funders (Male ethnic stakeholder 9).

In this context, board members were found to leverage their diversity to enhance their reputation of being credible and legitimate. Ethnic diversity in particular was perceived as helping them improve their performance. The following quotes support this view:

I have really valuable skills in business that are applied well in an arts context (Male ethnic board member 7).

And again:

Aboriginal board members are fantastic when we need to open doors to government (Male ethnic board member 16).

These views were supported by another female board member, who saw diversity as part of the maturing of the board:

That spread and mix of expertise is enriching. Having those people on the board has been an important

aspect of the board growing up. They are pushing us into the future (Female board member 1).

Implied in these quotes is the assumption that bicultural ethnic board members are likely to draw more attention from funding bodies and government. This is in line with earlier findings that suggest that biculturals can switch easily between cultures and are likely to have unique skills to put towards organisational success and creativity (Tadmor et al. 2009).

An interesting finding is that the focus on strategic balance is being driven by the need for arts boards to keep close to their stakeholders, whether board members are high-flyers or community-focussed. Arts boards, therefore, have some members who are not interested in strategy balanced with those who are, thus creating ‘hybrid’ boards, as a female chair explained. Such balance enables boards to be “representative of the community” they serve, with that mix now accepted by arts boards. One female stakeholder stated

The message needs to filter through to members that we need a skill-based and constituency-based board, with the two needs balanced (Female board member 26).

Further, the need to be open to new ideas as a means of moving forward and innovating is particularly important in the arts sector where securing funding is an issue. Diversity is seen as a strategic issue helping to introduce new ideas and innovation, which is in line with earlier research findings (Ayuso et al. 2014; Tadmor et al. 2009). This is also seen in the following representative quote:

You are dealing with new ideas and thinking outside the box. Both men and women think innovatively on arts boards. They must. There is not much money. They have to solve problems with few resources (Female ethnic board member 33).

Similarly, another male ethnic stakeholder said

The board can’t grow an arts organisation, but they can bring in resources. They use contacts or put up money or bring in money. It is not environmental change but financial change that is critical to board strategy (Male ethnic stakeholder 4).

Strategic balance remains one of the most tenuous yet important drivers on arts boards. It helps boards in balancing diverse skill sets within a community focus, and enhancing their reputation of being credible and legitimate to achieve the mission of ensuring quality while remaining sustainable. The strong responses in both numbers and quality of quotes on this matter are testimony to it.

Vitality

Vitality on arts boards refers to changes that occur at the interface between organisation and audience, as well as organisation and other stakeholders (Rentschler 2002). It includes valuing diversity and changing the hierarchy of the organisation to be more representative of the community it serves. The interviews in this study provide evidence that heterogeneity and diversity make boards more sensitive to diversity issues, in particular, being open to contributions from men and women in equal numbers and people from diverse backgrounds. This contributes to their vitality. As mentioned by female stakeholder 7, arts boards were seen as having changed due to “a mix of changes in the social, legislative, workplace and personal domains, and through women’s own aspirations”. The majority of people we interviewed—both board members and stakeholders—spoke about how as a result of these drivers, arts boards are different from other boards in terms of their hierarchy, being the first to be open to women’s talent and providing opportunities for women and ethnic minorities to be represented, as seen below:

Now there are 50/50 men and women on arts boards. The arts was one of the first industries that was more open to women’s talents. There were far fewer barriers for women in the arts than was the case in other industries (Female ethnic board member 33).

Another theme that emerged was the understanding of the significance of diversity on arts boards in terms of providing a range of skills, points of view and understanding of the communities that the organisation serves. Nevertheless, consistent with earlier findings (Stahl et al. 2010; Turner and Oakes 1989), our findings suggest that barriers to diversity still exist. Approximately 40 % of the board members and 50 % of stakeholders in this study acknowledged the benefits of gender and ethnic diversity, in providing not only an open culture but also a range of skills and experiences that enrich board decision-making and its orientation towards strategic balance. The following comments from a high-profile female board chair are representative:

Diversity, it’s about gender, it’s about age, it’s about contribution, it’s about interests, you know, it’s just so many different skill sets and it will be so much a happier place, so much better chemistry and so much more interesting if you have diversity (Female board member 19).

We also found that some of the younger board members in this study with dependent children perceived that arts boards enabled them to be seen as a mother and a board member, without their professionalism being called into

question. A young female board member and CEO in a regional area said

It's a great atmosphere on the board and very supportive. I can take my baby with me for the meeting. They are able to see me as a professional and as a mother and their attitude to me doesn't change. I am encouraged to bring my baby. It adds a human element (Female board member 26).

This quote implies that women with children are not discriminated against because of their gender, as boards are becoming more accepting of women. In our study, stakeholders had similar views to board members. Their comments illustrated the opportunities for women in the arts for leadership positions and recognition of their ability, as seen in a representative comment:

If you want a leadership role, you can get one in the arts. Some positions (like board positions) in the corporate world are still largely closed to women (Female stakeholder 11).

Overall, findings suggest that gender equality has become a standard feature of arts boards, with ethnic diversity catching up in the last decade but with some way to go. The following comment attests to this:

Gender equality is now an inherent characteristic of boards over 30 years. There may be a few more male chairs. Ethnic diversity is increasing (Male ethnic stakeholder 4).

However, our findings also reveal that more than 50 % (58 %) of board members and 50 % of stakeholders in this study perceived that barriers for diversity still exist on some boards. Male and female participants felt that more needs to be done in a turbulent world of change, with stakeholders such as government funders and philanthropists demanding more from their boards. Representative comments include the need to improve the “current composition of the board” as it was “a real stumbling block with stakeholders” (Female board member 9); the need to move beyond “token female appointments” (Male board member 2) and “gender and age are against women in getting selected for boards” (Female ethnic board member 3). A strong, single female board chair expressed the view that a man still commands more respect than a woman, thus facilitating his career progression. She told us:

People still see the younger man and respond to his vision and aesthetic. They get recruited. They devalue the work of women. They think women are concerned about domestic matters. They are and they aren't (Female board member 15).

Creating vitality on arts boards is complex, then, both supported and not supported by the diversity code, with gender outstripping ethnicity in success so far.

Viability

Viability on arts boards refers to a focus on all those activities that are essential for the sustainability of organisations and, at the same time, make them responsive to a wider group of stakeholders (Rentschler 2002). These activities are multiple and, as our findings suggest, can range from securing funding to being efficient and effective, restructuring, and creating strategic collaborations. Among these activities, not surprisingly, the dominant view on securing “difficult to raise” finances as a “strategic resource” is consistent with prior research (Deloitte 2012). The focus on securing finance is justified due to the decline in government funding and is further confirmed in a representative quote:

It is difficult to raise money for sponsorship and publicity—it is really something you have to be at all the time. You can't just do it in bits and pieces (Male ethnic board member 8).

His view is reinforced by others:

You have a responsibility to do the best if you get government money. You need to get the best out of it. You mustn't abuse the government purse (Male board member 11).

In this context, gender and ethnic diversity on boards proved to be valuable in building the trust of stakeholders, securing potential funding and creating strategic partnerships for sustainability. These views are also supported by stakeholders in our study:

Arts boards are getting better. The funding bodies have ensured that. Governance is improving. Another layer of knowledge is being added year by year. Directors are overseeing complex organisations. They are doing governance well. There is a higher degree of skills. Boards are being used as a career path (Male ethnic stakeholder 4).

An interesting theme, particularly among women in our study, was the perception that women put in more work on arts boards. An experienced arts board chair reflected this view when she said

Women are more generous in their time on boards. Women see the value of the arts. There are educational boards in the arts and women outnumber men in education too (Female ethnic board member 33).

This supports earlier findings which examined how organisations may benefit more from female board member appointments (Adams et al. 2011), including the impact they have on board dynamics and processes, leading to better returns on investment (Desvaux et al. 2010a, b) and having better attendance records than men (Adams and Ferreira 2009).

Board members and stakeholders in our study discussed how boards had to focus on strategic collaborations and partnerships for funding, community engagement and the building of innovative pathways for change. Ethnic and gender diversity on boards again played a vital role in this regard to establish better relationships with stakeholders, create a positive image and gain access to funding. Male stakeholder 7, a former elected government official, told us “the arts need shared partnerships and growth through funding opportunities” which must be “driven” by “breaking down silo thinking” in order for change to occur. Hence, restructuring, technological developments and performance measurement (Turbide et al. 2008) as part of change contribute to viability. Similarly, male stakeholder 2 shared his experience of “governance structures, strategy, structure of the board, repertoire, future vision and positioning” being part of the change process that board members engage with. He saw this approach as a means of improving performance where thinking needs to be “shaken up” so that people on arts boards “do not park their brains at the door” and become overwhelmed by the “star factor” of some colleagues in the arts. Taken together, these factors provide the basis for viable arts organisations overseen by the board.

RQ 2: How are Gender and Ethnic Aspects of Demographic Diversity on Arts Boards Linked to CR?

The majority of the participants, both stakeholders and board members, unanimously agreed that in order to make arts boards more responsible, certain attributes of board members were essential, which led to three themes. In other words, our findings suggest that diversity on boards will only respond to CR if the board members have the attributes of (a) passion; (b) skill factors and (c) capability to network. These attributes, particularly skill factors and capability to network, are related to the human and social capital aspects of diversity. This highlights the co-existence of different types of diversity—human, social and demographic—within an individual which can influence each other. As biculturals operating in a fusion society, the ethnicity of the participants in our sample may be influenced by their biculturalism, knowledge, skills and understanding of different cultures, all of which are likely

to make them skilled and connected (Tadmor et al. 2009). However, this only applies to those biculturals who have integrated themselves into the host society.

Passion

Passion entails a strong inclination towards an activity that people “love, find important and in which they are prepared to invest time and energy” (Vallerand et al. 2010, p. 291). A major theme that emerged from the interviews was board member passion. The majority of board members in this study talked about their intense passion for the arts that led to their joining an arts board. In a highly competitive industry sector where organisations vie for people’s time and commitment, passion explains their motivations for serving on a board where they have to work mostly pro bono. Passion as an attribute was seen as essential as it motivated them in the face of challenges. “The passion drives me through” was a common response from male and female board members. A quote from a female board member is representative:

You need to be “passionate about the arts, it’s not an easy road” (Female board member 6).

Her views are supported by a representative quote from a male board member:

Passion is essential, and an understanding of the sector is vital as it is under attack. You have to be driven by passion. You get knock-backs. You need passion to take you through all that (Male board member 13).

Passion, as revealed in the findings, emerged as a driving force for board members to build skills as well as develop networking capabilities helping them to raise funds, and liaise with stakeholders. Passion emerged as particularly crucial for ethnic board members as it helped them overcome personal and contextual barriers to up-skill, and become connected through networks, thus making them more likely to access sources of funding and facilitate organisation sustainability. This is reflected in the following comment:

I am a migrant. I grew up in the migrant hostel first and then in [a working class suburb]. I went to the local high school, one of the most disadvantaged in the state. Migrants overachieve because what is the benefit of sacrificing if you don’t improve your position? Passion helps you to move on and improve your position (Female ethnic board member 27).

It is supported by a male viewpoint:

Trying to harness that passion and energy so you can build something sustainable is really important (Male ethnic board member 18).

Passion was found to be a motivator, provided it is harnessed appropriately. Board members in our study spoke of serving on an arts board as it was a “thing of the heart” or “close to my heart” (Female board member 19) or even “living the dream” that made them “fired up” (Male board member 9). Of course, there were occasions where it demotivated people when it was not balanced with strategy and structure, skills and capabilities. It became destructive, “bitchy”, as female board member 9 told us when her board was being restructured. It was inwardly focussed on the individual rather than on how it could move the organisation forward. The duality of passion is also supported in the literature which argues that passion can be a positive experience that develops the individual and the organisation, or it can be destructive where emotions overflow (Vallerand et al. 2010), causing people to work for their own interests rather than for those of the organisation. This is seen in the comment from a female chair:

We have distilled the papers to the essence. It has helped to manage the passion. Part of arts boards is having passion, the other part is managing the passion (Female ethnic stakeholder 2).

A male board member also recognised the duality of passion:

Passion is a two-edged sword. It needs to be managed by rational discourse and enlightened debate (Male board member 24).

In short, passion was found as both a driver and an inhibitor for men and women on arts boards, needing to be harnessed in order to facilitate diversity and develop CR of the boards.

Skills/Credentials

Skill is commonly used to denote the ability coming from knowledge, practice or aptitude to do something well. A key finding voiced by a majority of board members and stakeholders in our study was the importance of the skills and credentials of board members and how boards were shifting towards skills. “There has been a tendency on arts boards with a push to having skills-based governance”, (Female board member 15), which illustrates this shift. Participants saw the need for people with skills, be they women or people from different backgrounds, in a sector with few resources, and with a mission to produce quality experiences for arts board diversity and responsibility. Comments that illustrate the importance of skills and credentials (as well as networks) in being appointed to arts boards were proffered by a female board member:

I didn’t go seeking to be appointed to an arts board. I was approached. People saw that I had a strong interest in management and governance because of what I had done. I had good relationships (Female board member 2).

A female ethnic board member held similar views:

I’ve been asked to join the board because of the need for my skills (Female ethnic board member 28).

Further, a male board member shared these sentiments:

We’ve got to have more expertise... people other than those from the organisation itself (Male board member 10).

Findings suggest that being strategically focussed on the aesthetic mission and on securing finances has driven the need for employing diverse members who are skilled and have expertise to understand the complexities and can be more innovative and creative. The significance of having skilled members is typified in the response, of female board member 23, who told us “Who is on your board makes a statement to your funding bodies”. The focus on skills is likely to place those ethnic minorities who have internalised both cultures in a better position to be appointed to boards as they are likely to possess unique skills and capabilities (Tadmor et al. 2009).

While the majority of participants recognised the importance of skills in making boards efficient and responsive, some board members voiced their concerns, as is seen in the comment:

I have concerns about how boards have gone from community to corporate models. While it has had its strengths in bringing in skills, it has had its pitfalls” (Female board member 15).

Findings suggest that the strong focus on skills is one of the reasons “arts organisations have a very difficult time getting people of diverse racial backgrounds on their boards”, as female ethnic stakeholder 6 told us. This confirms the findings of Tadmor et al. (2009) that not all biculturals have unique skills, increased levels of imagination and intellectual flexibility, which makes it hard for them to be appointed or to access top positions.

Capability to Develop Networks

Different entities—public sector, private sector and NP sector—use collaborative networks to achieve mutually beneficial and compatible goals. As funding in arts organisations comes from government, philanthropy, sponsorship, merchandise and ticket sales, networks provide a means of broadening influence. A key element of capability to develop

networks, as our findings suggest, is to establish relationships with strategic partners to explore sources of funding and areas of common interest, as well as to address common challenges in a mutually beneficial way. “Relationships are the most important thing” was a common response among the participants in our study. All of them agreed that networking was essential as it helped with building strategic relationships and reputation, harnessing passion, obtaining finances and “moral support” as well as engaging with the community. “The success of [the arts organisation] shows the power of networking and relationships”, said female ethnic board member 32. She advised “You need relationships”. Her views are supported by female ethnic board member 13, who told us:

“Networking...enhances your career. Learn from others. Talk to them. Get to know them. Learn from their lessons. Don't make their mistakes. Use continuous improvement.”

Similarly, male ethnic board member 27 told us that his network in multicultural communities was a plus in seeking appointment to board roles:

Connections with multicultural communities and bipartisanship saw me invited to become chair of an arts board. I also have significant NGO and government connections.

The importance of networks was also supported by stakeholders in the study. Female ethnic stakeholder 3 explained

We need board networks and they become strategic for us; that is the most important value of the chair. He is well networked and strategic. He can help us.

Such comments on connections and networking abilities from ethnic participants in our sample who were well connected, educated and experienced may also be explained by the unique skills and attributes that biculturals bring to the table in a “fusion society” (Tadmor et al. 2009). Further, the importance of widening and broadening networks beyond the local multicultural community was emphasised by female board member 16, as she advised:

Remain engaged in the community and outside your immediate sphere. Keep up your contacts especially with senior practitioners. Maintain your presence so it is known you can contribute to the community.

Male board members had the same perspective. The following is a representative quote:

It's a networking thing. Getting appointed is about being known, being out there, being seen, but having the right credentials. (male board member 2).

Networks, then, need to be built both within and beyond the communities of practice for best effect, so that they support the intent to obtain prestigious board positions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although board diversity and, particularly gender diversity, have emerged as central themes of governance reform efforts worldwide, the consequences of changing board gender diversity have received less attention (Adams and Ferreira 2009). Even less research exists on ethnic diversity on boards (Johnson et al. 2013). In this context, we analysed how gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards provide opportunities for responsiveness to CR dynamics and how these aspects of demographic diversity are linked to CR in the arts sector. In doing so, we provide insights on the specific characteristics, challenges and issues that affect CR within the arts sector have not been examined in this way previously.

Sector-specific analysis suggests that stakeholder influences and changes, internally and externally, have forced arts boards to be more diverse (in gender and ethnicity) than corporate boards (Hendry and Kiel 2004). Previous work has found the arts sector to be diverse in its organisational size, type, scope and focus, involving multiple stakeholders, for example, community, government, philanthropists, businesses and sponsors (Rentschler 2002). Our study confirms these findings and adds knowledge from the board perspective in the arts. We also found that arts board composition responds to CR under the umbrella of being accountable to key stakeholders. Given the nature of the arts as industry, the community emerged as a major stakeholder along with government, philanthropists and sponsors. Although the community remains significant and identifiable, government and other organisations are potential sources of support, and are important for securing funding and for mutually beneficial and strategic collaborations and partnerships. Further, our findings are also in line with earlier studies (Turbide et al. 2008; Ostrower and Stone 2010) reporting that the practice of governance in the arts sector is complex. The sector has a broader range of economic, environmental and social objectives, and faces greater requirements and public expectations than in the private sector, while maintaining a focus on both financial and non-financial indicators of success (see Table 2). We highlight the sector-specific challenges within the arts which complement the findings of earlier research (Deloitte 2012; Rentschler 2002; DiMaggio 1987). For example, the decline in government funding has led to the need for diversity of income sources and increased scrutiny by stakeholders. An even bigger challenge for the arts sector in this context is to assure the quality of the hedonic experience despite funding challenges and the continuing pressure to do more with less.

We extend earlier research in the arts by identifying certain common denominators of CR in the arts industry based on sector-specific issues. These include *fulfilling* mission; *determining* strategy that creates shared value with both economic and social benefits; *maintaining vitality* through valuing diversity and representing the community and *sustaining the viability* of the organisations through collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders while securing funding. Data provide evidence that diverse boards respond to CR thus facilitating these denominators through a focus on their mission, balancing strategy with operations to create shared value, achieving vitality through embracing diversity, and using inclusive practices which, in turn, lead to viability and sustainability. Our study confirms that gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards put them in a better position to be responsive to these denominators of CR in multiple ways. First, it creates a climate for gender and ethnic equality, sending signals to stakeholders that organisations are adhering to diversity principles, which portrays them as credible and legitimate (Miller and Triana 2009). Second, ethnic and gender diversity on boards helps them to build a positive image and boosts reputation which is important for arts organisations to secure funding, develop strategic partnerships and earn stakeholder trust and confidence. Third, both gender and ethnic diversity on boards can be linked to better performance. Past studies have found that organisations may benefit more from the effect of the dynamics of female board members as they are likely to lead to better return on investments (Desvaux et al. 2010b) and that women have better attendance records than men (Adams et al. 2011; Adams and Ferreira 2009). Similarly, ethnic individuals on boards as biculturals are argued to possess unique knowledge, skills and increased levels of imagination, and are more likely to experience success and creativity (Tadmor et al. 2009). Finally, ethnic and gender diversity on arts boards helps them to better understand the market place, be creative and to manage effective relationships with stakeholders (Ayuso et al. 2014). We found that although men and women on arts boards sometimes struggle to retain an appropriate focus on mission, strategy and vitality, nevertheless, they recognise the importance of these issues to sustainability. Arts boards are finding it harder to obtain sufficient funds for viability, which requires them to focus on their mission and social purpose to justify their existence, which is where ethnic and gender diversity on boards play a vital role. Strategy must be balanced with operations at board level to create shared value by providing meaningful benefits to the community and to stay true to values, while also focussing on the bottom line. Despite the move towards diversity, we found evidence that there were still barriers to ethnic and gender diversity on arts boards which have policy implications.

Our study extends existing research on the arts sector by adding knowledge on how board ethnic and gender diversity is linked to CR. Findings suggest that diversity of board composition will only lead to CR if board members have the attributes of (a) passion; (b) skill factors and (c) the capability to network. These attributes relate to the human and social capital aspects of diversity, reinforcing that different types of diversity can co-exist in an individual. In fact, the pressure to do more with less, to focus on quality and the decline in funding necessitate that these attributes are held by board members, irrespective of gender and ethnicity. Board members with constructive passion, business skills and networks extend the opportunities to raise funds and locate opportunities for organisational development. Networking with relevant economic and non-economic actors also enables board members to bring skills and capabilities as well as contacts to the boardroom. Ethnic participants in our study provide examples of biculturals who span two worlds in a fusion society (Brannen and Thomas 2010; Tadmor et al. 2009). They use their skills and knowledge of two cultures to develop capabilities which have allowed them to take their place at the peak of an organisation: an arts board. However, as argued by Tadmor et al. (2009), not all biculturals are equal and their cognitive benefits only result when they are able to internalise both cultures consistently with an integration/accluration strategy (Berry 1980). Although the attributes of passion, skills and networking capabilities are essential for everyone, they are more important for women and ethnic individuals. These attributes help them to overcome the barriers and drive them to advance in their career. Therefore, it is important for both policy-makers and members of society (interested in being board members) to focus on ways to integrate migrants into mainstream culture and to develop the attributes of passion, skills and networking capability to assist in their social inclusion.

In brief, a diverse board is likely to be more responsible if the board members have the attributes of constructive rather than destructive passion, appropriate skills and useful networking capabilities. Although the need for passion, skills, and networking capability as requirements of diversity is understandable, these attributes also have the potential to act as barriers, if they “boil over”. Our findings suggest that passion needs to be managed as it can turn destructive, while too great a focus on skills can be a barrier to gender and ethnic diversity.

Theoretical Contributions

Although aspects of board processes and dynamics in the arts sector have been researched (for example, Reid and Turbide 2012; Turbide et al. 2008; Ostrower and Stone

2010; Urice 1990), board diversity and CR, underpinned by stakeholder theory, have been less researched. Further, none of the research has focussed on sector-specific CR in the context of the arts. By explaining the dynamism between gender and ethnic diversity on arts boards and CR, our study adds to the existing discourse on sector-specific CR in the arts. In addition to complementing research on the arts, these findings contribute to the literature by advancing knowledge on (a) sector-specific characteristics, challenges and common denominators of CR in the arts industry; (b) how gender and ethnic diversity on boards facilitate CR and (c) the importance of board member attributes such as passion, skill and networking capability for CR, which can act as a spring board for future research on the topic.

Practical implications

This study provides multiple policy implications for managers and practitioners. First, the findings provide insights into the changes that have taken place in the arts sector, as well as the arts sector-specific characteristics, challenges and issues required to facilitate CR. Our findings signify the importance of stakeholders—the community, government, sponsors and philanthropists—to secure external funding for survival, to create strategic partnerships and to earn trust and confidence for continued cash-flow and support. Second, the study highlights the significance of diverse boards—in terms of gender and ethnicity—and how they facilitate CR. While arts boards are more diverse than corporate boards, our findings reveal that barriers to diversity still exist on arts boards, providing policy implications to create awareness and training about diversity for potential board members on both NP and corporate boards. Third, our findings have implications for arts organisations, stakeholders and policy-makers as well as community members who aspire to become board members, as the importance of certain board member attributes is demonstrated. This has implications for policy-makers to devise strategies for professional development in a domain that is changing rapidly. Importantly, the findings also alert policy-makers to the potential barriers these attributes may create for the inclusion of disadvantaged community members, as well as reinforcing the importance of

integration strategy, as proposed by Berry (1980). Our findings are also useful for community members aspiring to be arts board members so they can reflect on their skills, capabilities and passion, and focus on developing these attributes. Fourth, although our findings are specific to the arts sector, they can also inform other NPs, as well as for-profit sectors, who may be interested in board diversity and CR. Finally, the study highlights the significance of sector-specific CR which necessitates a better understanding of the essential features, characteristics and dynamics in an industry to improve CR practices, rather than focussing on a one-size-fits-all approach (Beschorner et al. 2013).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are some limitations to our study. Although our findings provide insights on arts sector-specific CR and gender and ethnicity on boards, they have not considered other elements of demographic diversity such as disability, socio-economic background and sexual orientation of board members, as well as human, cultural and social capital diversity. As different types of diversity—human, cultural, social and demographic—can co-exist in the same individual, the focus on gender and ethnic demographic variables may be influenced by these factors in a fusion culture like Australia's. For example, ethnicity could be affected by ethnic participants being biculturals. Board member attributes of skills and networking capabilities may also be influenced by the human and social capital aspects of diversity. Hence, there is a need to extend this research to other dimensions of board diversity, and explore their links to CR. Another potential research area could include studying the effects of board diversity in the arts and their links with financial performance which, to date, has proved inconclusive. Notwithstanding its limitations, this study is the first of its kind to provide insights into sector-specific CR in the arts, linking it with the two major dimensions of demographic diversity—gender and ethnicity.

Appendix

See Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of the background information of board members and stakeholders (N = 92)

	Board members		Board member code		Stakeholders		Stakeholder code	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
No. of participants	34	33	1–34	1–33	16	9	1–16	1–9
Ethnicity								
Australian	25	25	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33	12	6	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
Other	9	8	3, 10, 11, 13, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34	7, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 27, 31	4	3	2, 3, 6, 16	2, 4, 9
Age (mean)	40+	50+			50+	50+		
25+	7	4	9, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 30, 26	5, 12, 25, 29	1	0	5	
40+	9	6	4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 22, 27, 29, 32	3, 4, 6, 7, 16, 18	3	0	12, 13, 15	
50+	9	13	1, 2, 3, 6, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25	1, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 31, 32	6	4	2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16	4, 5, 6, 8
60+	9	10	10, 11, 18, 19, 24, 30, 31, 33, 34	2, 8, 9, 13, 19, 23, 26, 28, 30, 33	6	5	1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 14	1, 2, 3, 7, 9
Education								
Postgrad	20	24	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 33	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32	8	6	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13	1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9
Undergrad	13	8	6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 23, 29, 31, 32, 34	10, 19, 21, 22, 23, 27, 31, 33	6	2	3, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16	4, 7
No degree	1	1	24	8	2	1	8, 14	5
Partnered	70 %	97 %			81 %	89 %		
Yes	24	32	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33	13	7	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
No	10	1	9, 11, 15, 17, 18, 21, 24, 29, 31, 33	9	3	2	11, 12, 14	8, 9
Children	61 %	81 %			81 %	78 %		
Yes	21	27	3, 5, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 34	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33	13	6	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
No	13	6	1, 2, 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 28, 31, 32, 33	6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 25	3	3	5, 8, 15	2, 8, 9
Dependent children	33 %	31 %			12 %	11 %		
Time on current board (mean)	4 years	4 years			6 years	6 years		
1–2 years	7	6	3, 5, 9, 17, 21, 26, 28	4, 5, 14, 17, 24, 25	1	0	15	
3–5 years	16	11	1, 2, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32	1, 6, 10, 11, 12, 21, 23, 30, 31, 32, 33	0	1		5

Table 3 continued

	Board members		Board member code		Stakeholders		Stakeholder code	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	5+	7	15	4, 6, 8, 12, 19, 23, 33	2, 3, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29	11	5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16
10+	4	1	7, 10, 14, 34	7	2	0	8, 14	
15+					2	3	6, 7	2, 3, 9
Time on boards (mean)	12 years	12 years			18 years	14 years		
5+	4	14	4, 11, 12, 20	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 27, 29	4		5, 9, 10, 15	
10+	5	2	7, 10, 22, 25, 34	25, 32	3	4	8, 12, 13	5, 6, 7, 8
20+	13	15	3, 5, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 30, 31, 33	1, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31	9	5	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14, 16	1, 2, 3, 4, 9
Types of arts organisations								
Galleries and museums	8	10	3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 22, 25, 28	1, 2, 7, 13, 14, 15, 24, 28, 30, 31	1	3	5	1, 5, 9
Performing arts	12	7	2, 6, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31, 33, 34	5, 9, 10, 18, 20, 22, 33	8	2	2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15	2, 8
Arts and society	7	7	13, 15, 16, 23, 27, 29, 32	11, 12, 21, 25, 27, 29, 32	4	3	1, 10, 12, 16	4, 6, 7
Peak body	3	4	1, 9, 26	16, 17, 19, 26	1	0	8	
Others (festival, film, venue)	4	5	5, 24, 30, 4	3, 4, 8, 23, 6	2	1	3, 7	3

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