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President’s State of the Field Address

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My presidential address to ARNOVA [Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action] last year focused on how we, as a community of scholars, define our field of study. What exactly is it that we study, and how do we go about studying it? Alas, I concluded that there was no obvious singular or time invariant answer to that question but that we had to consider characterizing our field of interest in a number of different ways and to be open and inclusive of a wide spectrum of participants and intellectual perspectives. This year, I want to say something about one of the important issues raised by this view—what is it that can hold a diverse group of scholars and professionals like ourselves together?

My strategy here is to review some of what we know about the ways that knowledge is organized in our society and to ask what lessons these patterns may hold for how we organize knowledge in our own field and ultimately what we ask of our supporting institutions such as ARNOVA. Taken with full seriousness, this is a gargantuan task whose surface I can only scratch. But, I am fortunate to be able to draw on inquiries of this nature by scholars in other fields of study, though again, I am only scratching the surface of this literature.

I’d like to start this inquiry by branching off from the discussion of the Presidential Advisory (Blue Ribbon) Task Force that we created last year to consider new directions for ARNOVA. Specifically, I am prompted by the task force’s discussion of whether we are involved in a field that is multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary. Clearly, members of the task force recognize that we embrace scholarship and scholars from a wide spectrum of disciplines. What is less clear is how these disciplines actually come together. Do they merely complement or supplement each other? Do they integrate with one another into an interdisciplinary approach to issues and problems? Do they meld together into new approaches? Do they have the effect of splintering each other into a variety of subspecialties within existing disciplines? Or, are we simply a group of scholars with common interests for which our individual disciplines have proved inadequate, so that we come together to search...
or collaborate in “a”-disciplinary or nondisciplinary ways? (That is, do we tend to take a sort of a meta-grounded theory approach to our work?)

Let me start by reviewing a number of different scenarios that characterize how our society has organized and reorganized knowledge over time. One overriding theme in the literature is that of specialization. Looking back two or three millennia, David Easton (1991) observed that the extant body of knowledge used to be much more unified:

In the West the history of social sciences and humanities, indeed of all knowledge . . . is one of increasing specialization and fragmentation. At one time all knowledge about human, social and physical nature was viewed as one. Scholars continue to refer to such encompassing thinking by Plato and Aristotle as philosophy, as though it were an indivisible unity. Over time, however, this single skein of knowledge divided into two basic strands, initially called natural and moral philosophy.

With increasing acceleration in the 20th century, the social sciences and humanities began to specialize with a vengeance so that today the basic disciplines have not only clearly identified themselves, but have subdivided internally into many subfields. (p. 11)

In reaction to this increasing specialization of knowledge, certain integrative and holistic processes have also been set in motion. These include general, descriptive, journalistic approaches to address issues not easily amenable to analysis along disciplinary lines (e.g., area studies), as well as synergistic processes that enable the disciplines to help one another grow, develop, work in tandem, and borrow ideas and methods from one another. For example, Stan Katz (1995) describes how history has informed economics and vice versa, while Clifford Geertz (1980) explains how interpretive, metaphorical methodology from the humanities has contributed to the social sciences. Paradoxically, however, such synergy among disciplines often leads to further specialization through the creation of new subfields such as economic history or organizational ecology.

Over time, the pressures for specialization have been manifold and overwhelming. As Goldin and Katz (1999) observed in their study of higher education between 1890 and 1940,

In industry after industry, in the late 19th century, there emerged a growing importance of chemistry and physics . . . . With greater demand for trained scientists, universities expanded their offerings. With new research findings, the classical scientific disciplines became increasingly fragmented. . . . Analogous changes appeared in the agricultural sciences . . . . Here part of the impetus was the expanding crop variety in the United States as the railroad spurred cultivation clear across the continent . . . . Even the social sciences expanded and splintered in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. They were given a mission by the
growing social problems of industry, cities, immigration, and prolonged depressions. . . . They were shaped by Darwinian thought, Mendelian genetics, and later by the increased role of statistics, testing, and empiricism generally. (pp. 38-39)

Obviously, the pressures and processes of specialization continue unabated through the present day. One need only monitor the new journals coming out every year, the periodic formation of new scholarly societies, even the specializations that our own field of interest has stimulated within existing disciplines—such as the concentrations in nonprofit organizations within the professional fields of management and public administration. At this point in time, it is probably fair to say that most of the disciplines created by specialization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are too broad to be fully encompassed by most contemporary university departments, so that any given department now must concentrate on selected subdisciplines in order to remain competitive.

As I have already noted, the overwhelming forces of specialization have stimulated various compensatory processes for overcoming the problems associated with knowledge fragmentation. David Easton (1991) describes the “Humpty Dumpty Problem” that leads us to search for ways to put the disciplines back together again:

To understand the world it has seemed necessary to analyze it by breaking it into many pieces—the disciplines and their own divisions. . . . But to act in the world, to try to address the issues for which the understanding of highly specialized knowledge was presumably sought, we need somehow to reassemble all the pieces. Here is the rub. Try as we may, we have been no more able than all the king’s horses and all of the king’s men to put our knowledge together again for coping with the whole real problems of the world. (pp. 12-13)

Despite its apparent intractability, several different strategies have emerged to address the Humpty Dumpty problem:

1. The definition of educational and research fields, in response to practical real-world needs, which of necessity require the inclusion and coordination, if not integration, of a variety of disciplines. Examples include professional fields such as management, social work, and public policy, as well as topically defined fields such as area studies, women’s studies, urban studies, ethnic studies, and so on. University departments in these fields, which are driven by demands for certain broadly defined labor market skill sets or by social issues not fully encompassed within narrow disciplinary boundaries, are typically faced with a dilemma: to employ faculty specialized in the disciplines who must in turn demand that their students carry the burden of knowledge integration or to employ faculty whose
knowledge spans the disciplines and who can present an integrated approach in the classroom or in research but whose skills may not meet the highly developed standards for work in any one contributing discipline.

2. The latter issue highlights the vulnerability of a second possible solution to the Humpty Dumpty problem: educating scholars on a multidisciplinary basis. It is the rare individual that can achieve a high level of excellence in this way. We can celebrate “renaissance scholars,” and there are some educational institutions that produce excellent multidisciplinary researchers and teachers. But they are few, and the span of the disciplines they traverse is typically narrow.

3. The limitations to integration at the level of the individual scholar point to the creation of another mechanism of knowledge integration—the development of team structures that bring experts from different disciplines together to work on complex problems or broad subjects of common concern. This is what professional schools and area or ethnic studies departments sometimes try to do—to the degree that teamwork is viable among independent-minded, autonomous faculty. Research institutes and academic centers also commonly assemble multidisciplinary teams, often on a national or international basis, to address broad issues of interest. Hence, cross-disciplinary research and teaching teams are a partial answer to the Humpty Dumpty problem, at least where diverging incentives and differences in language and conceptual frameworks can be overcome by willing and able participants.

4. Another solution to the knowledge integration problem, discussed wistfully if not wishfully by David Easton (1991), is the notion of ultimately developing some sort of grand theory. Certainly, we all wish our physicist-friends the best in synthesizing a general theory to integrate relativity and quantum theory. In economics, as A. W. Coats (1985) has pointed out, the development of general theory has indeed had an integrative effect:

The growth, specialization, and compartmentalization of knowledge...as early as the 1920s, led some leading economists to wonder whether their subject was disintegrating. That danger was partially offset by the revival of interest in general theory during the 1930s, reinforced by the mathematization of the discipline. (p. 1721)

However, in the social sciences as a whole, I suspect we’re much further from achieving that kind of unification. In Easton’s (1991) words,

It cannot be denied that if a general theory could be discovered...it would by definition provide a common body of concepts and even of theorems as a starting point for all analysis and application....To date, however, the few but substantial efforts in this direction have
commanded the confidence and commitment of only small segments of the social science or, for that matter, humanistic communities. (pp. 17-18)

Well, what does all this business about differentiation and integration of knowledge have to say about how we here can approach our common areas of interest—philanthropy, volunteering, nonprofit organizations, civil society, voluntary collective action, and so on? Clearly we are a field of interest inclusive of many different disciplines and individuals with a wide variety of skills, educational backgrounds, and substantive concerns. How do we bring all this together in a sensible and productive way? How do we solve our Humpty Dumpty problem? Let me approach this question by again considering the foregoing solutions to knowledge integration.

First, we probably cannot effectively come together in a common quest for a general theory of the nonprofit sector and philanthropy, much as that might suit and inspire some of us. Let us encourage all such theorizing, across disciplines if possible. But this is unlikely to be the glue that holds us together. For those of you who have not yet read it, I recommend to you Ralph Kramer’s (2000) recent article in *Voluntas* where he discusses four different possible theoretical frameworks, which he encourages us to pursue in their own rights and in tandem with one another. We need to encourage more such theory development and more cross-fertilization across the various discipline-based theoretical frameworks. But we are unlikely to move our best disciplinary scholars from their specialized moorings in order to jointly pursue this quest for a grand theory. Nor is it clear that we should try. At this stage in our development at least, we are probably most productive by encouraging our constituent disciplines to continue to flex their own intellectual muscles in pursuit of their albeit narrower theoretical insights.

Second, it is unlikely that we will be successful by downplaying the disciplines and trying to create a community of scholars who are either a-disciplinary or effectively interdisciplinary. Most of us come from the disciplines—economics, political science, sociology, law, history, and so on. Even those of us trained within the context of multidisciplinary professional or other programs are facile in, at best, one or two disciplines and not all the same ones at that. We cannot all be expected to leave our disciplines behind in order to work on a common basis, nor can we educate the next generation of scholars to do so. Nor should we, because the disciplines are, to a large extent, our nourishment. We benefit from advances in methodology and theory within our respective disciplines, just as we can contribute to those disciplines by our special insights from study of the nonprofit sector, civil society, and philanthropy. So ARNOVA, or its sister association ISTR [International Society for Third Sector Research], or other such scholarly societies around the world are unlikely to become umbrellas for a new breed of a-disciplinary or interdisciplinary scholar but rather are likely to remain somewhat untidy, multidisciplinary crowds! My colleague Antonin Wagner (2000) was right when he observed as president of ISTR,
The ethos of collaborative research requires that we be open to new ideas and ready to extend the boundaries of academic disciplines in view of a truly transdisciplinary approach. (p. 2)

Well, what about multidisciplinary teams? Is this a way to bring our multidimensional knowledge base together and bridge the gaps among our disciplines and subdisciplines? The answer here is only a qualified yes. Our research institutes and academic centers have indeed compiled a modest track record of multidisciplinary project work on broad cross-cutting issues such as nonprofit commercialism, nonprofit-government relations, global civil society, or the future of philanthropy. And less formally, our scholarly and professional associations such as ARNOVA, ISTR, and INDEPENDENT SECTOR have served to build national and international multidisciplinary networks of scholars, some of whom have begun to work together in small groups across disciplines on research issues of common interest. In general, these efforts have been modest, ad hoc, and transitory. They face all the logistical nightmares of creating and managing effective multidisciplinary teams in an academic environment. Team members do communicate with each other, often in mutually beneficial and insightful ways, but they generally achieve only a very modest degree of interdisciplinary coordination and synthesis.

More importantly, the concept of teams begs a larger question: Teams for what? What should be the focus of scholars from different disciplines working together, talking together, studying together, under a common organizational framework? Is the opportunistic identification of cross-cutting interdisciplinary issues enough? Unless there are compelling team goals or purposes, the team approach holds only limited promise. So I think we can’t talk about teams until we talk about goals, and if we can identify goals then we need ultimately to return to the question of whether teams are really needed to pursue those goals.

This brings us back to the first integrative solution to the Humpty Dumpty problem—defining our field in a way that drives us together for a common purpose, that leads us to want to bring our respective skills and perspectives to bear in a way that will make us all more effective in achieving what we collectively value or what is demanded of us. But what is that common goal or purpose? How similar are we to fields that seem to successfully apply this model, such as the professions, or areas studies, or women’s studies, or ethnic studies? This is a puzzle to me because I don’t think we are exactly like any of these other fields.

Although we encompass various professions—management, social work, public policy, and so on—and although we may be effective in encouraging the development of certain new professional subspecialties such as nonprofit management, we are not as a whole a community of people in a particular profession. We are not here primarily as promoters of specific career paths or developers of particular methodologies or standards to carry out a certain set of societal jobs or tasks. Nor are we a socioeconomic group seeking to
understand our own problems or promote societal solutions to ameliorate those problems. We differ from women’s studies and ethnic studies in this way, although as Evelyn Brody has pointed out to me, we need to guard against becoming a research community whose purpose is to argue uncritically for the merits of nonprofit organizations.

Perhaps we come a little closer to the concept manifested by area studies. In that set of fields, people and knowledge are drawn together because of a common interest in a particular part of the world, just as we are gathered together by a common interest in a particular segment or aspect of society as defined along certain economic, legal, political, and social dimensions. Obviously, however, the boundaries of this societal segment that presumably pulls us together are hard to identify—much harder than a geographic region of the globe. Indeed, given our diverse backgrounds and origins, we have not yet come to any agreement among ourselves about our conceptual territory—be it the social economy, the nonprofit sector, civil society, voluntarism, or something else. But we do have a sense that there is a territory out there that is ours.

So the similarity to area studies is worth pursuing further. What is the glue, the common goal or purpose, that holds area studies together as a field? Is simple interest in a common piece of geography enough? According to Richard Lambert (1991), area studies have been driven largely by an external demand by government for experts in different parts of the world who can help with foreign policy, international commerce, and other transnational issues. Despite this common driving force, Lambert indicates that areas studies is not a particularly integrated field and as such bears considerable resemblance to our own:

It is a mistake to think of areas studies as predominantly an interdisciplinary enterprise. It is not inherently interdisciplinary if that term implies individuals from different disciplines joining in a common intellectual endeavor. On most occasions, it would better be described as trans-disciplinary. If one looks at the set of scholars who have a long-term professional concern with a particular part of the world, it spans many disciplines. But that does not mean that scholars from these disciplines are engaged in intellectual collaboration across disciplinary lines. They happen to be working on the same geographic area, but each scholar’s perspective is usually bound by his or her discipline. Area studies programs are predominantly non-disciplinary; the topics of research are usually chosen because of their importance for an understanding of a society. The conceptual and methodological superstructure of Western-oriented disciplines is not often very helpful in this endeavor. (pp. 188-189)

Our field is similar to area studies in some of the ways we try to integrate our knowledge from different disciplines. Like area studies, we hold conferences and symposia, promote thematic sessions within other professional and
disciplinary meetings, encourage multidisciplinary research projects, and have our own journals, et cetera. Nonetheless, I think our field differs from area studies, perhaps in the demand for its specialists (we have less demand than area studies, although this may now be changing) and in the applicability of the traditional disciplines to furthering our understanding (the relevance of the disciplines to our work is less contested, although this may be subject to debate). What I think we really need to figure out, however, is what substitutes in our field for the strong pressure in area studies to produce experts with knowledge in particular parts of the world. What is the common frame of reference and driving force that can be the integrating principle along which we build our scholarly community and supporting institutions such as ARNOVA?

Interestingly enough, perhaps the answers lies right back at the beginning of this analysis—in the forces leading to knowledge specialization and differentiation in the first place. I was struck by the following insight from Clifford Geertz (1980):

> Science owes more to the steam engine than the steam engine owes to science; without the dyer’s art there would be no chemistry; metallurgy is mining theorized. (p. 165)

Geertz is calling for both empiricism and for allowing the problems of the real world, and those who practice in the real world, to inspire our agenda, stimulate our thinking, enlarge our conceptual framework, deepen our information and techniques, in whatever ways we are capable—but ultimately toward common ends—to improve the steam engine, refine the possibilities for the dyer, improve upon the technology for producing metals.

We seem to need a steam engine for our endeavor. What is our steam engine—literally and figuratively? I don’t really know the answer, and it would be presumptuous of me to suggest anything very specific. But it seems to me that we can be problem driven and real-world relevant in a manner that can clarify, galvanize, and integrate our field more effectively for the future and in a manner that is embraced by society at large. There is no lack of societal problems and issues to which our skills and ideas can contribute in a valuable and unique way. Is it the refinement of democratic governance? Is it achieving social justice in a market economy? Is it enablement of institutions that elevates the human spirit? Is it helping socially oriented enterprises and voluntary groups to understand and improve their place in the new social order? What is it that we as a collection of social scientists, professionals, practicing managers and leaders, researchers and scholars can do as a group that would be socially valuable and unique and would drive us to integrate our skills and exchange our knowledge in a way that overcomes the limitations of our separate specialties? I suspect that we may have answers to this puzzle within our own membership, but they are not yet articulated in a way that we ourselves clearly understand or which can be effectively communicated to others.
What is our steam engine? Answering this question could be the difference between prospering as a productive field in the years to come or eventually dissipating in a puff of smoke. Or maybe we will go the way of other fields of knowledge as they have evolved through history—becoming more specialized and fragmented over time—into civil society studies, nonprofit organization studies, volunteering studies, and so on. Whether on separate tracks or one main line, we will still need our steam engines.

So there you have it—a 19th-century metaphor for the 21st century!

Note

1. This speech was given on November 16, 2000.

References


This special issue of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* features articles delivered at the 29th ARNOVA (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action) Annual Conference, held November 15 to 18, 2000, in New Orleans, Louisiana. In keeping with the conference goal—to reflect the full breadth and depth of nonprofit and voluntary action research—the articles selected for this volume provide a panorama of the wide range of concerns, issues, and questions about which researchers and practitioners seek to increase our knowledge and understanding. The papers presented at the conference and those submitted for publication consideration in this conference issue of *NVSQ* represent many important and timely themes of concern to nonprofit scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. These themes include:

- globalization of the nonprofit sector and the factors accounting for and affecting the evolution of nongovernmental organizations across the world,
- the nature of the third sector and its place in society,
- the management of nonprofit organizations,
- volunteerism and forms of civic participation, and
- nonprofit sector developments in subsectors, such as health, social services, religion, culture, education, and advocacy.

Conference participants represented a number of nations, including the Netherlands, Great Britain, Japan, Canada, and the United States; their papers provided diverse perspectives about the growth, development, and status of the nonprofit sector in different parts of the world.

After careful review by external reviewers, four papers and three research notes were selected for inclusion in the conference issue. These papers and research notes focus on the following topics:

- an examination of the role of congregations in the provision of social services;
- the use of the concept of legitimation as a way of understanding changes in the nonprofit sector in different countries, using France and Japan as case studies;
- the study of the relationship between cultural status and the socialization of youth into civic roles, using data from the greater Los Angeles area;
Introduction

- the impact of personal and family experience on a scholar’s approach to nonprofit sector research;
- an exploration of the effect of community variations on the scope and structure of the nonprofit sector;
- a description of the nature, strengths, and limitations of the Nonprofit Program Classification System to classify programs, services, and activities of charitable organizations; and
- a study of the existence of a small but dedicated civic core for the voluntary domain and for patterns of citizen engagement in Canada.

These themes are explored within several different societal contexts: Canada, Great Britain, Japan, France, and the United States.

APPROACH

These separate contributions also suggest the methodological sophistication and diversity that now characterize the approach to the study of the nonprofit sector. The articles included in this volume include studies and theoretical explorations using

- qualitative and quantitative approaches;
- both large and small data sets;
- historical and contemporary analyses;
- experiences of the self, ethnographic case history;
- longitudinal and single point-in-time designs; and
- surveys, interviews, and secondary data analyses.

Three of the articles in this issue draw on large data sets to document and explain nonprofit phenomena. Chaves and Tsitsos use data from the 1998 National Congregations Study to provide a portrait of congregations’ social service activities, and Reed and Selbee draw on the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation in Canada. Grønbjerg and Paarlberg use county-level data on Internal Revenue Service (IRS)–registered nonprofits and metropolitan census data on corresponding social, economic, and political characteristics. Also, Lampkin, Romeo, and Finnin report the development of the new Nonprofit Program Classification System, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses and detailing the ways in which the system can be used to enhance nonprofit sector research.

The nonprofit sector is far from static; the nature of its growth and development reflects the nature of changing societies. This development can be seen in the composition and character of volunteerism, a form of civic participation on which the nonprofit sector relies to varying degrees. It is, therefore, not surprising that several of the articles in this volume provide a close look at the
degree of responsiveness of nonprofits to changing societal conditions. The article by Raskoff and Sundeen explores a microcosm of changing societal conditions with specific regard to the dramatic influx of immigrants to Southern California and provides an analysis of the relationship between cultural statuses and the socialization of youth into civil roles. The article draws on a longitudinal study of high school community service in Los Angeles County to investigate how youth are socialized through community service activities into civic participation roles and whether (and to what extent) race and ethnicity influence the nature of students’ community service experience. Using survey and interview methods, data were collected from 285 high school students from 27 high schools.

The findings of the study of cultural diversity and community service suggest that certain factors, such as social class, religious values, and educational achievement, are associated with level of civic participation. Furthermore, feedback from high school students suggests that some volunteer activities, such as those involving direct work with client populations, are considered more rewarding. The experience and outcomes of service experiences also differ on the basis of race, ethnicity, and religious ties. Such information can help in designing youth programs to encourage future civic participation and to target volunteer recruitment efforts in ways likely to yield the highest return.

Issues of social heterogeneity are also addressed in the article by Louella Moore, “Legitimation Issues in the State-Nonprofit Relationship.” From a historical/theoretical perspective, Moore conducts a comparative analysis of the contextual conditions that affect the recognition and promotion of the nonprofit sector by government. These conditions include history and tradition, the dominant political form of a country, status of the economy, and social perceptions of legitimacy. A multidimensional legitimation construct is used to identify and clarify the factors that explain the relative growth of the nonprofit sector, using the experience of the nonprofit sector in France and Japan as case examples. In particular, Moore suggests that the role of the nonprofit sector in a country can shift, sometimes quite significantly, if societal conditions create an environment conducive to change.

Grønbjerg and Paarlberg examine the relationship between community characteristics and the size and scope of the nonprofit sector among charitable nonprofits, advocacy and other social welfare nonprofits, and mutual benefit nonprofits, focusing on data from Indiana. Using several data sets, including county-level data on IRS-registered nonprofits and census data on county social, economic, and political characteristics, the authors test whether measures of demand, supply, and community structure relate to the overall prevalence of nonprofits and, more specifically, to the prevalence of charitable, advocacy, and mutual benefit nonprofits. Their findings provide support for theoretical perspectives emphasizing the availability of resources and community structures as the key factors in the density of nonprofits in local communities.
Moving from the local perspective, “Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom,” by Chaves and Tsitsos, examines the provision of social services by congregations. The article was written during the U.S. presidential contest of 2000, when faith-based social services emerged as a topic of debate. The subject of faith-based services, and the role of government in supporting and encouraging this approach, has since moved to the forefront of the political agenda with President Bush’s “Faith-Based Initiative.”

Chaves and Tsitsos draw on data from the 1998 National Congregations Study to provide a portrait of the social service activities of congregations from a nationwide perspective. Two claims often made about religiously based social services are explored: that religious organizations specialize in holistic service delivery to address long-term solutions to the problems of individuals and that collaborations with secular organizations, including government, can undermine the extent to which congregations offer these services. Neither claim was substantiated, a finding of particular import at a time of national debate on the potential expansion of governmental contracting with faith-based groups.

Reed and Selbee draw on a national Canadian study to address the level and intensity of citizen participation in their study, “The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation.” The social and demographic characteristics of those active in the civic core are examined and then compared and contrasted with the profile of those less active in civil affairs. The authors found that age (35-40 and older), religiosity, education, a history of informal as well as formal helping and giving, and household income were among the factors associated with higher levels of civic participation. They also conclude that a relatively small percentage of the total Canadian population accounts for most of the civic participation.

“The Place of Self and Reflexivity in Third Sector Scholarship: An Exploration,” by Margaret Harris, draws attention to the importance of self in research processes and recognizes the reflexive nature of knowledge construction. Using her own personal experience, Harris suggests that nonprofit sector research is powerfully influenced by one’s family and personal history with the nonprofit sector. The entire research endeavor should be understood as at least in part a reflection of complex personal experiences. Knowledge construction is thus not an entirely value-free endeavor but instead reflects decisions and values formed earlier in one’s life.

EXPANDING OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

These seven articles highlight the importance of methodological diversity in our exploration of the nonprofit sector and in the development of knowledge concerning the role, function, and status of this sector. Empirical and theoretical examinations of phenomena collectively add to our understanding of
the complexities of the nonprofit sector and the factors that account for changes in nonprofit status, help formulate new areas of inquiry and specific research questions, and suggest different applications of methods to the study of nonprofit institutions and practice. These various methodologies, when tested, provide guidelines for future duplicative or extended research and a framework to better design studies and construct theory to continue knowledge building. Moore, for example, highlighted the importance of using current research as a base for future studies. In regard to her area of inquiry, she notes that the “development of a cohesive theory of the impact of legitimation issues on changes in the state-nonprofit relationship will require additional cross-national and longitudinal historical analysis” (p. 715). Moore’s identification of expanding the repertoire of research questions based on initial studies and beginning theoretical frameworks is echoed in many of the articles appearing in this volume.

The findings of these investigations provide highly useful insights that can be applied, in several cases, to the planning, management, and evaluation of nonprofit sector organizations and activities. For example, findings that provide information about the factors associated with higher levels of civil participation can aid nonprofits in fund-raising and volunteer recruiting by targeting those more likely to contribute money and time. The studies herein reported also suggest fruitful areas of inquiry for future research. Harris’s work should help researchers clarify how they approach the research process, including the development of the research design and the underlying assumptions of their work. The Nonprofit Program Classification System described by Lampkin, Romeo, and Finnin easily lends itself to use in current and future studies of the nonprofit sector, altering the database and methodological approach heretofore used.

More generally, the authors of the conference articles make important contributions to our understanding of nonprofit organizations and their role in society. In particular, Chaves and Tsitsos suggest that congregations in fact may have limited capacity to offer longer term holistic services and indeed need government help and support to do so. The work of Grønbjerg and Paarlberg offers important and valuable new theoretical insights concerning factors that influence the prevalence of nonprofits. Moore’s article provides evidence to suggest that the nonprofit-government relationship in different countries is more changeable than prevailing theories might suggest. Overall, the articles are timely and especially valuable given the ongoing debate in the United States and abroad on the relationship between nonprofits, government, and their local communities.
Gil Clary is a professor of psychology at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota. He has published extensively on volunteerism, with a particular emphasis on people’s motivations for participating in volunteer activities. He and his colleague Mark Snyder have developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory, a measure of volunteers’ motivations.

Margaret Gibelman is a professor and director of the doctoral program in social welfare at Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, New York City. Her teaching areas include social policy, child welfare, and administration. She has researched and is widely published in the areas of ethical issues in publishing, research production and integrity, nonprofit management, government–private sector relationships, and gender and ethnicity issues.

Susan Ostrander, a professor of sociology at Tufts University, has published widely on social justice philanthropy, gender and philanthropy, grassroots social-change organizations, and nonprofit advocacy in civil society. She is author of Money for Change: Social Movement Philanthropy at Haymarket People’s Fund (1995) and Women of the Upper Class (1985), both published by Temple University Press. She has served on the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action’s board and is immediate past cochair of the national board of the Women’s Funding Network.
The charitable choice policy initiative has renewed attention to religion’s role in the U.S. social welfare system. The authors use data from the 1998 National Congregations Study to provide a portrait of congregations’ social service activities, emphasizing features of this portrait that are relevant to ongoing policy debates. In particular, they assess two claims often made about religiously based social services: Religious organizations represent an alternative to secular or government organizations by providing “holistic” and personalistic services focused on long-term solutions to individuals’ problems, and collaborations with secular, especially government, organizations threaten to undermine that approach to social services. Results support neither of these claims. Congregation-based social services are not an alternative to the world of secular nonprofit or government-supported social services; they are part of that world.

In the opening days of his administration, President George W. Bush signed two executive orders, one that established a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and one that established Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in five federal agencies (Bush, 2001a, 2001b). These orders advanced the movement to give religious groups expanded access to government funding for social service programs, a movement whose most visible prior achievement was the inclusion of “charitable choice” language in Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work

Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The charitable choice language in this legislation required states to include religious organizations as eligible contractees if states contract with nonprofit organizations for social service delivery using funding streams established by this legislation. States may not require that a religious organization alter its form of internal governance or remove religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols as a condition for contracting to deliver services, and the law asserts that contracting religious organizations shall retain control over the definition, development, practice, and expression of their religious beliefs. Similar language has since been included in legislation affecting other funding streams.

More significant than legal change, however, may be the administrative actions inspired by the charitable choice movement. Beyond the executive orders mentioned above, several states have created “faith-based liaisons” or established programs to encourage religious organizations to apply for government funding or somehow develop partnerships with government antipoverty programs. The most dramatic developments along these lines have been attempts to create public funding streams for which only religious organizations are eligible to apply. California recently launched a “Faith-Based Initiative” that dedicated up to $5 million for grants to religious organizations’ employment assistance programs (Workforce Development Branch, 2000). Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) created a $4 million fund to support prevention of substance abuse and HIV infection, and they initially limited applicants to religious organizations or organizations collaborating with religious organizations (DHHS, 2001a). The California initiative is being challenged in court, and the DHHS initiative was changed, after it was publicized, to expand eligibility beyond religious organizations and their collaborators (DHHS, 2001b).

Whatever the eventual fate of these efforts, the charitable choice movement has renewed attention to normative and empirical questions concerning church-state relations in general and to religion’s role in our social welfare system in particular. In this article, we offer a portrait of religious congregations’ social service activities, addressing four specific questions:

1. What kinds of social services do congregations do?
2. Do they engage in social services in particular kinds of ways?
3. Which congregations do more social services?
4. With whom do congregations collaborate in social service delivery, and with what consequences?

The portrait we paint by answering these questions would be intrinsically interesting whatever the political context, but its significance is heightened by the policy debate sparked by the charitable choice movement. Participants in this debate have offered many claims and counterclaims about religious organizations’ social services, and we will use evidence about religious
congregations’ social services to address two of the most common, and important, of these claims.

The first claim to which we pay special attention is the notion that religious organizations specialize in, or are particularly well suited for, a certain kind of social service activity: holistic service delivery that focuses on personal transformation and that provides long-term, lasting solutions to poor people’s problems. This assumption is evident in the Ur-text of “compassionate conservatism” (Olasky, 1992), and it often is made explicit by those who advocate an expanded role for religious organizations in our social welfare system. For example,

People and communities in crisis need assistance that is challenging and inspiring, that connects them to social networks and resources, that invites them to examine their approach to life and if necessary to cast away attitudes and patterns that are unproductive. Such relational, morally compelling, and even openly religious help is . . . the natural mode of operation of nongovernmental groups, from nonprofit organizations and neighborhood clubs to congregations and ethnic associations. (Carlson-Thies, 1999, p. 30)

One attraction of religion-based social-service groups is that they tend to be more personable than their secular counterparts. . . . At its heart, a religion-based service provider aims to transform lives. (Sherman, 1995, pp. 60-61)

Perhaps most prominently, this claim was used to justify the creation of the White House Office mentioned above:

Faith-based and grassroots organizations . . . are a vitally important resource in our communities, reaching out to needy neighbors and neighborhoods in thousands of ways. And when they do so, they often help in ways that government programs cannot, providing love as well as services, guidance and friendship as well as a meal or training. (White House, 2001, p. 4)

Without diminishing the important work of government agencies and the wide range of nonprofit service providers, this initiative will support the unique capacity of local faith-based and other community programs to serve people in need, not just by providing services but also by transforming lives. (White House, 2001, p. 5)

The prevailing image here is of a distinctively religious approach to social services, one that—even when there is no explicit religious content involved—is “relational,” “morally compelling,” and “personable”; provides “love,” “guidance,” and “friendship”; and helps people “transform their lives.” This laudable approach to social services is assumed to come more naturally to
A second common claim is related to the first: The holistic approach characteristic of religious organizations constitutes an important alternative to social services delivered by nonreligious, especially government, agencies, and this alternative approach is potentially undermined by collaboration with such agencies. We are told that “religious nonprofits that contract with the state may, as a result, shift their purpose from the transformation of lives to the mere delivery of services” (Sherman, 1995, p. 58), or that the “drawbacks of state funding go deeper than the loss to welfare recipients of the benefits of a spiritual ministry” (Sherman, 1995, p. 60), or that charitable choice “is an innovative public policy measure intended to ensure that when churches and religious nonprofits cooperate with government, they will remain alternatives to it” (Carlson-Thies, 1999, p. 31).

This claim sometimes is offered by critics of the charitable choice movement, who use it to warn religious organizations against partnering with government (as in Treadwell, 2000). It also is sometimes offered by charitable choice advocates, who use it to support the notion that religious organizations partnering with government should be able to do so under more lax monitoring and accountability regulations that will protect their distinctively holistic approach from government meddling. Either way, instances of this claim emphasize the threat to religiously based social services posed by partnering with government agencies.

Although claims of this sort usually emphasize the possible consequences of government collaborations, the underlying logic implies that collaborations with secular nonprofits also risk undermining religious organizations’ distinctive approach to social services. If there is a distinctive approach to social services carried by religious organizations, that approach will not be shared by secular nonprofit collaborators any more than it will be shared by government collaborators. Moreover, many, perhaps most, of the secular nonprofits with whom congregations may collaborate will themselves be funded by government and may transmit the government virus (and its characteristic symptoms of bureaucracy, impersonality, and unresponsiveness) to their religious collaborators, especially if those collaborations involve formal contracts or subcontracts. The basic idea is that collaborations with secular organizations—government or nonprofit—will, if fire walls are not present, place religious social services at risk of losing or dampening their holistic emphasis.

In this article, we examine these two claims—religious social services are distinctively holistic, and secular collaborations dampen that distinctiveness—using data on religious congregations’ social service activities and collaborations. Religious congregations—churches, synagogues, mosques—constitute only a subset of the faith-based organizations that some envision playing an expanded role in our social welfare system. Although advocates of “faith-based” social service often point to congregation-based programs as
exemplars, congregations are far less important actors in the social service arena than are religious social service agencies (McCarthy & Castelli, 1998). Early signs indicate that when states make special efforts to encourage religious organizations to seek public funding for antipoverty work, the vast majority of grants and contracts will go to religious organizations dedicated to social service activity, not to congregations (Anderson, Orr, & Silverman, 2000; Sherman, 2000).

Why, then, examine congregations’ social service activities and collaborations in this context? Congregations are the core religious organizations in American society, and they are the prototypical “pervasively sectarian” organizations whose inclusion in large numbers in our publicly supported social welfare system would constitute a qualitative change in church-state relations regarding social services. Moreover, it is particularly appropriate to look among congregations for a distinctively religious approach to social services, one that might be undermined by collaborations with government and secular nonprofits. If there is a distinctively holistic or transformational approach to social service delivery that emerges from a religious base, it ought to be visible in the activities undertaken by the organizations—congregations—where religion is most central. If that approach is likely to be undermined by collaborations with secular organizations, we ought to see systematically different congregational activity when secular, especially government, collaborators are involved. Congregations are therefore appropriate organizations—perhaps the most appropriate organizations—in which to look for evidence that religiously based social services are distinctively holistic, personable, and so on or that a holistic approach to social service is likely to be undermined by collaboration with nonreligious, especially government, agencies.

Embodying a more holistic approach is not, of course, the only way religious organizations’ social services might be importantly different from secular organizations’ social services. The explicitly religious content of some programs also is sometimes held up as a distinctive and possibly efficacious feature of social services delivered by religious organizations. And, the religious content of an organization’s social service programs might be undermined through collaboration with government or secular agencies even if its holistic approach survives. We distinguish between two features of social service activity that often are conflated: whether they are recognizably holistic—involving substantial face-to-face interaction with clients and/or focused on long-term, cross-cutting needs and personal transformation—and whether they involve explicit religious content. We focus on the first in this article, not the second. We do not examine the extent to which congregation-based social services include explicit religious content, nor do we examine whether the explicitly religious components of such services are dampened by collaboration. Rather, we examine the extent to which congregation-based social services appear holistic, and we examine whether a holistic approach is dampened by collaboration with government and secular agencies. This is only one dimension on which religious and secular social services might differ, but it is
an important dimension, and focusing our attention on it enables us to shine some light on at least one corner of this complex policy debate.

DATA AND METHOD

Scholars have begun to investigate congregations’ social service activities. Most of the literature on this subject is based on case studies of small numbers of congregations (Bartkowski & Regis, 1999; Harris, 1995; Unruh, 1999); on surveys of congregations in only one city, state, or religious denomination (Cnaan, 2000; Grettenberger, 2000; Miller, 1998; Printz, 1998; Silverman, 2000; Stone, 2000; Wineburg, 1992); on surveys of congregations in a particular set of denominations (Ammerman, 2000; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990); on surveys of a subset of older, urban congregations (Cnaan, 1997); or on a national sample of congregations with a very low response rate (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993). This article builds on and moves beyond this valuable work by using data from the National Congregations Study (NCS), a 1998 survey of a nationally representative sample of religious congregations.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The 1998 General Social Survey—a representative sample of noninstitutionalized English-speaking adults in the United States—included a set of items asking respondents who say they attend religious services to report the name and location of their religious congregation. Because organizations attached to a random sample of individuals compose a random sample of organizations, this procedure produced a nationally representative sample of congregations. A congregation’s likelihood of appearing in this sample is proportional to its size. Data about each of these congregations were collected via a 1-hour interview with one key informant, such as a minister, priest, rabbi, or other staff person or leader. Data were collected for 1,236 congregations, with a response rate of 80%.

VARIABLES

Number of social service programs. The NCS asked congregational informants, “Has your congregation participated in or supported social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects of any sort within the past 12 months?” Respondents were instructed to exclude any “projects that use or rent space in your building but have no other connection to your congregation.” Respondents whose congregations participated in or supported such programs were asked to describe these programs in an open-ended way. There was no limit to the number of programs an informant could mention. The maximum number of programs mentioned by any congregation
was 20. Among those with programs, the median congregation mentioned 2 programs; the mean was 3. Interviewers were instructed to probe for each mentioned program’s purpose, and they recorded verbatim each program description offered by the respondent. The total number of social service programs mentioned by each congregation is the dependent variable in our analysis of which congregations are more intensively engaged in social service activities.

Type of social service programs. We used the verbatim program descriptions to code 41 dummy variables, each one indicating a certain program characteristic. Some of these variables indicate program content (such as feeding, clothing, or health care). Others indicate a target group for the activity (such as the homeless or the elderly). A single program description might yield “1” codes on multiple variables. For instance, a program described as a “soup kitchen for the homeless” would be coded 1 on both our “homeless” variable and our “food” variable.

Social service activities also occasionally were reported in response to another open-ended item asking informants to describe any groups of people from the congregation who meet for “religious, social, recreational, or other purposes.” The same set of program variables coded from the social service descriptions also was coded from the verbatim responses offered in response to this item.

The end result of this process was a set of variables coded for each program and group mentioned for each congregation. These variables were then aggregated to create a set of indicators that equals 1 if the congregation has any program or group with that characteristic and 0 if it has no programs with that characteristic. These are the variables underlying our reports of congregations’ specific program types.

Two of our program variables try to capture the distinction between activities that, on one hand, are more personal, far reaching, and long term, involving more than fleeting face-to-face interaction with needy individuals, and those, on the other hand, that are more impersonal, short term, fleeting, and narrowly targeted at a specific need without regard to other needs. The first is coded 1 for programs such as job training, domestic abuse shelters, hospice care, substance abuse programs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, any type of counseling, tutoring/mentoring, and educational programs such as teaching reading or English as a second language. Any program description implying that people from the congregation engaged in these kinds of face-to-face, more intensive kinds of activities was coded 1 on this variable. A congregation would not be coded 1 on this variable if all it does is donate money to an organization that does these sorts of things.

A second variable is coded 1 for programs that appear to involve only fleeting interactions with needy people, or no interactions at all. Simply giving cash to individuals is coded 1 on this variable, as is providing food, clothes, temporary shelter, and anything described as “emergency” or “temporary”
aid. We would not want to overinterpret results based on these variables. Many of the verbatim program descriptions are very cryptic, and many did not contain enough information to code either of these variables. Still, these measures represent a start on the task of assessing the extent to which congregations specialize in a more personal approach to social services.

Collaborators. For each program mentioned, informants were asked whether the congregation administered the program by itself or “in collaboration with other groups or organizations.” In the case of collaborative programs, we asked respondents to name the two most important collaborators. Responses were recorded verbatim. For each collaborator, we created a variable indicating what type of organization it was. This variable was coded for each collaborator for each program mentioned by each congregation. We then aggregated to create four collaborator variables for each congregation, each one indicating whether the congregation collaborated on any program with another congregation, a noncongregational religious organization, a government agency or office, or a nongovernmental secular organization.

We also constructed a data set in which the program, rather than the congregation, is the unit of analysis. This data set, where each record corresponds to one of the 3,728 programs mentioned by a congregation in the sample, allows us to assess whether programs of certain types (rather than congregations of certain types) are associated with collaborators of certain types.

Other variables. Each congregation mentioning any social service programs was asked how many volunteers participated in at least one of these programs, how much money was spent on all of the programs, and whether any staff person devoted at least 25% of his or her time to these activities. These variables enable us to assess the depth of congregational involvement in social services. Two sets of items measure institutional and cultural variations in religious tradition: A set of denominational dummy variables distinguishes Catholic, liberal/moderate Protestant, conservative/evangelical Protestant, and congregations in other religious traditions, and another set of dummy variables indicates whether the informant described the congregation as theologically conservative, middle of the road, or liberal.

Additional measures of both congregational and neighborhood characteristics are used as controls in our regression equations. Congregational characteristics measured include founding date, number of regularly participating adults (logged), annual income (logged), whether the congregation is at least 80% African American, whether the congregation has a clergyperson with a graduate degree, the percentage of a congregation’s people with 4-year college or higher degrees (logged), the percentage of a congregation’s people with household income more than $100,000 in 1998 (logged), the percentage of a congregation’s people with household income less than $25,000 in 1998 (logged), and the percentage of a congregation’s people living within a 10-minute walk (logged).
Neighborhood characteristics are measured with tract-level data from the 1990 U.S. census. These variables include whether a congregation is located in a rural area, whether at least 30% of people in the census tract are below the official poverty line, whether at least 50% of the adults in the census tract have some college education, and whether 5% or more of the adults in the tract are unemployed. We also use a set of dummy variables indicating each congregation’s geographical region.

MODELING STRATEGY

We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression when analyzing variation in the total number of programs each congregation sponsors or participates in, and we use logistic regression when examining correlates of congregational involvement in specific types of programs. All models are estimated using unweighted data, and diagnostic tests recommended by Winship and Radbill (1994) are performed to check for misspecification related to the probability–proportional-to-size feature of the sample.

RESULTS

We have two related agendas in this article. We present a descriptive portrait of congregations’ social service activities, and we use relevant aspects of this portrait to assess whether congregations embody a distinctively holistic approach to social services and whether collaborations with secular, especially government, agencies undermine that distinctiveness. We present our results in four subsections, corresponding to the four specific research questions mentioned above.

WHAT SOCIAL SERVICES DO CONGREGATIONS DO?

Table 1 presents the percentage of congregations participating in or supporting various social service programs. The table also includes the percentage of attenders who attend congregations that participate in or support these programs. Fifty-eight percent of congregations, containing 78% of attenders, participate in or support some type of social service program. A healthy majority of congregations do social services, though this is a smaller majority than that found in other congregational studies, where 90% or more of congregations report social services of some sort (Cnaan, 1997, 2000; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993; Printz, 1998; Stone, 2000, but cf. Salamon & Teitelbaum, 1984). It is worth digressing to clarify the reasons for this difference.

Several extant samples of religious congregations in the United States overrepresent larger, more established, and urban congregations. This bias is directly relevant to an assessment of congregations’ social service activities
because these sorts of congregations are most likely to do social services. If we make the NCS sample comparable to other samples either by weighting the data so that larger congregations are overrepresented to the same extent as they are in other samples or by limiting our attention to subsets of congregations more like the subsets present in other samples (larger, older, more urban), we find participation rates in social service activities that are more in line with results from other research.

One also must consider the different measurement strategies employed in different congregational surveys. It is plausible that the NCS social service item, described above, may lead respondents to report less informal and sporadic social service activity than might be reported with other measurement strategies, such as when informants are simply given a checklist of possible activities or probed extensively for informal activities that they may not immediately conceptualize as social service. In our view, differences in reporting informal and sporadic social service activities are the likely reason that, even when NCS data are made more comparable to size-biased samples, we still observe only about 80% of congregations engaged in social services, compared to the more than 90% observed in other samples. The central point, however, is that those wanting to compare findings from various congregational surveys should carefully assess each survey’s sampling technique, response rate, and measurement strategies before interpreting results about congregations’ social service activities.

Returning to Table 1, it is clear that congregations participate in or support some types of programs more than others. Food programs, for instance, are especially popular, involving 33% of congregations and 50% of attenders. Food programs are followed in popularity by programs for housing/shelter.
(20% of congregations, 34% of attenders) and clothing (12% of congregations, 19% of attenders). Well behind these three program types in popularity are programs in the areas of health, education (excluding religious education), domestic violence, substance abuse, tutoring/mentoring, and work/employment issues. Less than 10% of congregations participate in or support programs of this sort. These results suggest that congregations are more likely to engage in activities that address the immediate, short-term needs of recipients for food, clothing, and shelter than in programs requiring more sustained and personal involvement to meet longer term needs.

Not incidentally, although congregational surveys vary regarding the overall frequencies with which congregations do social services, extant surveys are unanimous in finding that providing food, clothing, and shelter are by far the most common social services engaged in by congregations (see, for example, Printz, 1998, Table 1; Salamon & Teitelbaum, 1984, p. 63; Silverman, 2000, Table V; Wineburg, 1992, p. 112). Other activities, especially activities requiring more sustained, face-to-face contact with the needy, are more rare. This pattern is confirmed by the frequencies associated with our two measures constructed to capture, as best we can, the distinction between activities involving face-to-face, longer term involvement with individuals, on one hand, and shorter term, more fleeting activities, on the other hand. Programs that appear to involve only short-term or fleeting kinds of contact with the needy are far more common among congregations than programs that involve more intensive or long-term, face-to-face interaction with the needy. Only 10% of congregations (composing 20% of attenders) are involved in the more personal kinds of programs. On the other hand, fully 36% of congregations (including more than 50% of attenders) participate in or support the more fleeting kinds of activities.

These results contradict one of the common claims described above. There is indeed a distinctive type of congregational involvement in social services, but it is not the approach envisioned by those who characterize religiously based social services as a holistic alternative to secular social services. Congregational social services are much more commonly characterized by attention to short-term emergency needs, especially for food, clothing, and shelter, than by attention to more personal and intensive face-to-face interaction or by holistic attention to cross-cutting problems.

One might be tempted to argue that the distinctive religious style of social services described above is not a generically religious style but rather is particular to conservative or evangelical religious traditions. In this event, such an approach would occur more often in conservative or evangelical congregations than in others. But this is not the case. Regression analyses (not shown, but available from the authors) predicting, among congregations that do social services, whether they do specific types of activities found that there is no specific type of activity that conservative congregations are more likely than other congregations to do.
DO CONGREGATIONS ENGAGE IN SOCIAL SERVICES IN PARTICULAR KINDS OF WAYS?

The numbers in Table 1 disguise a great deal of variation in the intensity with which congregations are involved in social service activity. The 33% of congregations supporting or participating in food programs, for example, encompass a wide range of involvement levels, from donating money to a community food bank, to supplying volunteers for a Meals on Wheels project, to organizing a food drive every Thanksgiving, to operating food pantries or soup kitchens. Similar variety is evident among housing programs and programs to serve the homeless. Regarding housing, specific activities range from providing volunteers to do home repair for the needy, to assisting first-time home buyers with congregational funds, to participating in neighborhood redevelopment efforts, to building affordable housing for senior citizens. By far the most common housing-related activity engaged in by congregations is participation in a Habitat for Humanity project: 30% of the housing-related activities reported by congregations refer to Habitat projects. Regarding serving the homeless, congregational involvement ranges from donating money to a neighborhood shelter, to providing volunteers who prepare dinner at a shelter on a rotating basis with other congregations, to actually providing shelter for homeless women and children in the congregation’s building. Here, the most common activity is providing money and/or volunteers to shelters administered by other organizations.

The vast majority of congregations are involved in social services only with low intensity. Only 6% of congregations have a staff person devoting at least 25% time to social service projects. Focusing on the subset of congregations reporting some degree of social service involvement, only 12% have a staff person devoting that much time to social service projects. The median dollar amount spent by congregations directly in support of social service programs is about $1,200, approximately 3% of an average congregation’s total budget. This estimate does not take into account the value of staff time, volunteer time, or donations to denominations (compare the estimates in Biddle, 1992). Even volunteer involvement in social services is small scale for most congregations, with the median active congregation involving only 10 volunteers in these efforts.

Whatever the quantity or depth of congregations’ social service activity, we also can examine the nature of that participation. A pattern emerges. The most common types of housing-related activities engaged in by congregations, for example, are those in which congregations take on home repair or renovation projects for the needy, providing both materials and volunteers to do the work. Another common type of activity is at the intersection of food programs and serving the homeless: cooking meals for the homeless on a regular basis. Fairly typical of this subcategory is the congregation that has a “red beans and rice ministry to feed the homeless once a week,” or the one that prepares a
“homeless dinner once a week,” or the congregation that “serves breakfast on Saturday and lunch on Sunday to the homeless and hungry.”

These examples suggest that when congregations do more than donate money or canned goods or old clothes, they are most apt to organize small groups of volunteers to conduct relatively well-defined tasks on a periodic basis: having 15 people spend several weekends renovating a house, having 5 people cook dinner at a homeless shelter 1 night a week, having 10 young people spend 2 summer weeks painting a school in a poor community, and so on. Half of all congregations say that they support social service activities via the provision of volunteers. Of congregations engaged in social service activity, 90% report supporting at least one activity in the form of volunteer labor from the congregation. At the same time, although providing volunteers is a common kind of congregational involvement in social services, the total number of volunteers provided by the typical congregation is rather small, as we noted above. In 80% of the congregations engaged in these activities, fewer than 30 volunteers were mobilized for social service work in the past year. In this light, it probably is not an accident that the highest levels of congregational involvement are in arenas—such as food and housing—where organizations have emerged that are able to take advantage of congregations’ capacity to mobilize relatively small numbers of volunteers to carry out well-defined and bounded tasks. Programs or projects able to adapt to this model are likely to be more successful at drawing congregations into their efforts than programs or projects in which this model is not appropriate.

The results described in this subsection and the previous one suggest that congregations do indeed engage in social services in a particular sort of way: Small groups of volunteers are enlisted for well-defined, periodic tasks that mainly focus on a very specific need and do not tend to involve more than fleeting personal contact with needy people, nor entail a particularly holistic approach to individuals’ cross-cutting needs, nor aim at character transformation. There is an approach to social service work that is likely to be found in religious congregations, but it is not the approach some might expect to see there.

WHICH CONGREGATIONS DO MORE SOCIAL SERVICES?

Table 2 contains an OLS regression model where the dependent variable is the total number of programs mentioned by each congregation. There are many interesting results in this table, but we limit ourselves to emphasizing four patterns. First, congregations with more resources do more social services. Controlling for other things, larger congregations and congregations with larger budgets do more social services. This is not surprising, but the extent to which social service activity is concentrated among the largest congregations should be emphasized. Looking at the money spent on social services, for example, the largest 1% of congregations spend one fifth of all the...
Congregations and Social Services

Second, the social class of both the neighborhood and the congregation influences social service activity. Congregations in poor neighborhoods do more social services than congregations in nonpoor neighborhoods, and congregations with more college-educated people do more social services. Interestingly, controlling for other variables, congregations with particularly high-income constituents do fewer social services. This result, combined with the null coefficient on the variable measuring the extent to which a congregation has low-income constituents and the strong positive effect of a congregation’s college-educated constituency, suggests that, other things controlled, middle- and professional-class congregations do more social services than congregations with more well-off or more poor constituents.

Table 2. Regressing Congregations’ Total Number of Social Service Programs on Selected Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious tradition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denomination (reference: conservative/evangelical Protestants)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>1.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological orientation (reference: liberal)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>–0.59**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>–0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage poor ≥ 30</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage age 25+ with some college education ≥ 50</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage age 16+ unemployed ≥ 5</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size (logged number of regular participants aged 18+)</td>
<td>1.73***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income (logged total dollars received from all sources)</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage African American ≥ 80</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy person with graduate degree</td>
<td>0.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders living within 10-minute walk (logged)</td>
<td>–0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class indicators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with household income &gt; $100,000 per year (logged)</td>
<td>–0.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with household income &lt; $25,000 per year (logged)</td>
<td>–0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with at least 4-year college degree (logged)</td>
<td>0.71***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 = .27 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n ) of congregations = 1,230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This equation also includes three types of variables not shown in the table: (a) five dummy variables indicating a congregation’s geographical region; (b) one dummy variable indicating a denominational affiliation other than mainline/liberal, Catholic, or conservative/evangelical; and (c) nine dummy variables indicating missing values on the independent variables that had missing data.

\*p < .1. \**p < .05. \***p < .01.

money congregations spend on social services; the largest 10% spend more than half.
Third, religious tradition matters in ways we have come to expect. Congregations associated with mainline Protestant denominations do more social services than conservative Protestant congregations. Catholic congregations are neither more nor less active than conservative Protestant congregations. Beyond denominational affiliation, self-described theologically liberal congregations also do more social services than self-described conservative congregations. This pattern is consistent with previous research on both congregations and individuals showing that mainline individuals and congregations are, in a variety of ways, more connected to their surrounding communities than are individuals and congregations associated with more evangelical or conservative traditions (Ammerman, in press; Chaves, Giesel, & Tsitsos, in press; Wuthnow, 1999).

Fourth, there is no significant race effect. Predominantly African American congregations do not, on average, do more social services than predominantly White congregations. African American congregations are, however, more likely than White congregations to engage in certain important types of activities: education, mentoring, substance abuse, and job training or employment assistance programs (results not shown but available on request).

WITH WHOM DO CONGREGATIONS COLLABORATE IN SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY, AND WITH WHAT CONSEQUENCES?

Congregational social service activity is mainly done in collaboration with other organizations. Table 3 presents basic facts about the extent of collaboration with various types of organizations. Eighty-four percent of congregations that do social services have at least one collaborator on at least one program. Seventy-two percent of all programs are done in collaboration with others. Although other congregations are the single most common type of collaborator, congregations that do social services are as likely to collaborate with some sort of secular organization (59% of congregations, 37% of programs) as with some sort of religious organization (58% of congregations, 40% of programs). Although only 3% of congregations in this sample receive government financial support for their social service activity, about a fifth of those with programs collaborate in some fashion with a government agency. Clearly, when congregations do social services, they mainly do them in collaboration with others, including secular and government agencies in nontrivial numbers.

Congregations are not equally likely to collaborate. A logistic regression (not shown but available on request) predicting, among congregations with programs, whether they have a collaborator on at least one program shows that large, mainline Protestant, theologically liberal congregations with more college graduates are significantly more likely than others to collaborate on social services. The religious differences in collaboration are consistent with the point made above about the enduring differences among religious traditions regarding many different manifestations of civic engagement. Interestingly, although there are no race differences in the likelihood of collaborating
in general, predominantly African American congregations are significantly more likely than White congregations to collaborate with secular organizations on social services.\textsuperscript{7}

Tables 4 and 5 present evidence more directly relevant to the relationship between the nature of a congregation’s collaborators and the nature of the social service programs it supports or participates in. Table 4 presents results from four cross-tabulations using program (rather than congregation) as the unit of analysis. We cross-tabulate our variable indicating whether a program involves longer term, face-to-face interaction with needypeople with a variable indicating whether that program involves a secular collaborator and again with a variable indicating whether that program involves a government collaborator. We also cross-tabulate whether a program involves only fleeting or no contact with the people it is meant to help with the same two collaborator-type indicators. The results are clear. Programs involving secular collaborators are slightly, but significantly, more likely (9.9\% versus 6.8\%) than programs involving nonsecular or no collaborators to involve personal or longer term relationships with the needy, and they are significantly less likely (24.5\% versus 34.7\%) to involve fleeting and superficial relationships. Programs involving government collaborators are significantly less likely to be fleeting and superficial (21.7\% versus 31.6\%), and they are no less likely to be more personal and long term. None of these differences are large, and we are mindful of the limits of our long-term/face-to-face and short-term/fleeting program indicators. We would not want to argue on the basis of these results alone that secular collaborations encourage more holistic kinds of social services. Still, these results clearly do not support the notion that such collaborations discourage holistic social services. The differences are either null or in the opposite direction implied by that assertion.

Table 5 presents two more pieces of relevant evidence. Here, we examine the relationship between program type and collaborators at the congregation level rather than at the program level. The dependent variable in these regressions is our variable indicating programs involving longer term, face-to-face contact, and it is coded 1 for all congregations having at least one program of this sort. The key independent variables indicate whether a congregation has

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborators</th>
<th>Congregations With Programs Collaborating With</th>
<th>Programs Administered in Collaboration With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any collaborator</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any secular collaborator</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental agency</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nongovernmental secular collaborator</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any religious collaborator</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other congregation(s)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncongregational religious collaborator</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at least one secular collaborator on any program (the left equation) and whether a congregation has at least one government collaborator on any program (the right equation). This analysis is limited to congregations with at least one collaborator on at least one social service program.8 It addresses the question, Are congregations with secular or government collaborators less likely to engage in more holistic or personal kinds of social service? The answer is clear: Controlling many things, congregations with government collaborators are in fact significantly more likely to be engaged in longer term, more personal, more face-to-face kinds of social service activities than are congregations without such collaborations. Congregations with secular collaborators are no less likely than congregations without secular collaborators to participate in or support those kinds of programs. Thus, there is no evidence here that collaborating with secular organizations in general, or with government agencies in particular, makes congregations less likely to engage in the more personalistic social service activities some think are more likely to occur within a religious sphere that guards its autonomy. Indeed, such collaborations may even encourage the more holistic types of activities some claim to be the distinctive province of religious organizations.

### CONCLUSION

We have provided a portrait of congregations’ social service activities, and we have argued that this portrait challenges two common claims about “faith-based” social services. Contrary to the claim that religiously based social services are distinctive in their holistic or personal approach, congregations are most likely to engage in social services requiring only fleeting contact, if any at all, with needy people, and they are most likely to participate in or support programs aimed at meeting short-term emergency needs, especially the need for food, clothing, and shelter. Congregations certainly play an important role in many communities’ social service systems, but the role they play, in general, is not one of providing holistic or transformational services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Collaborator</th>
<th>Long Term and Face-to-Face (%)</th>
<th>Short Term and Fleeting (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsecular or none</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ²</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>39.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nongovernment or none</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ²</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>10.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Type of Collaborator by Type of Social Service Program
Contrary to the claim that religious organizations’ holistic approach to social services is potentially threatened by collaborations with secular, especially government, agencies, congregations collaborating with government, or with secular organizations more generally, are in fact no less likely to engage in more intensive, face-to-face kinds of services focused on individuals’ long-term needs than are congregations without such collaborations. Indeed, some of our evidence points to the possibility that collaborations with government and with secular organizations might actually encourage the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of secular collaboration on at least one program</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of government collaboration on at least one program</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denomination (reference: conservative/evangelical Protestants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>0.59**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological orientation (reference: liberal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage poor ≥ 30</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage age 25+ with some college education ≥ 50</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage age 16+ unemployed ≥ 5</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding date</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size (logged number of regular participants aged 18+)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income (logged total dollars received from all sources)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage African American ≥ 80</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy person with graduate degree</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders living within 10-minute walk (logged)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class indicators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with household income &gt; $100,000 per year (logged)</td>
<td>-0.43*</td>
<td>-0.44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with household income &lt; $25,000 per year (logged)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage attenders with at least 4-year college degree (logged)</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of programs supported</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.37</td>
<td>-4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n) of congregations</td>
<td>784.32</td>
<td>779.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This analysis is limited to congregations with programs and collaborators. This equation also includes three types of variables not shown in the table: (a) 5 dummy variables indicating a congregation’s geographical region; (b) 1 dummy variable indicating a denominational affiliation other than mainline/liberal, Catholic, or conservative/evangelical; and (c) 11 dummy variables indicating missing values on the independent variables that had missing data.

* \(p < .1\), ** \(p < .05\), *** \(p < .01\).
kind of social service activities some claim to be the distinctive preserve of religious organizations.

This article will not be the last word on religiously based social services, in part because our evidence is limited in four important ways. First, we have only limited measures of the kinds of social services congregations participate in or support, and perhaps more in-depth case studies of congregational social services will find more holistic social service activity than we have found in this survey.

Second, we have focused on the consequences of collaboration for only one aspect of congregations’ social services. There are, of course, other dimensions of congregations’ social services—such as the presence of explicit religious content—that might be altered by collaborations with secular and government agencies even if those collaborations do not make a holistic approach less likely. Also, it seems likely that collaborations with secular nonprofits and, especially, government could be consequential for congregations and other religious organizations in ways that do not directly involve the nature of their social services. Collaborations with government, for example, especially those involving funding, might prompt structural changes within religious organizations, as they do within secular nonprofit organizations in general (Gronbjerg, 1993; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Our evidence suggests that discouraging cross-cutting, holistic, and personal approaches to social services is not among the consequences of collaborating with secular and government agencies, but we do not mean to imply that such collaborations are without any consequences for congregations. Future research should investigate other ways in which such collaborations might influence what congregations—and other religious organizations—do and how they do it.

Third, we have not compared congregations’ social service activities with the activities sponsored by secular voluntary associations. As rare as holistic or transformational approaches to social services are in congregations, perhaps they are even more rare among secular voluntary associations engaged in social service work. Systematic comparisons between congregation-based social services and social services provided by other sorts of organizations are needed to judge whether a 10% likelihood of long-term or face-to-face programs still might represent an elective affinity, however weak, between an organization’s religious base and this sort of social service work.

Fourth, we have focused only on one type of religious organization. Perhaps a distinctively holistic or transformational approach to social services is more characteristic of noncongregational religious social services than it is of congregational social services. Perhaps among religious nonprofits, as opposed to congregations, collaborations with secular organizations or government agencies will, in fact, hamper the development and maintenance of personal and face-to-face programs focused on fundamental transformations and long-term needs. We think this is unlikely, but systematic empirical research on other types of religious organizations is necessary before we can reach definitive conclusions about religious organizations other than
congregations. This work has begun (see, for example, Chambre, 2001; Smith & Sosin, in press) but more is needed.

These limits notwithstanding, we have shown that two key claims prominently present in the charitable choice debate are not supported by evidence from congregations. A more expansive interpretation of our results might suggest that congregations’ social service activity, especially activity that goes beyond meeting short-term emergency needs, often depends on collaborations with secular and government agencies. Such an interpretation is consistent with our results, and it also is consistent with qualitative evidence from both England and the United States. Margaret Harris (1995, pp. 57-59) described a congregation that was able to shift from providing homeless people “a roof for a night or two” to refurbishing houses and enabling them to “put people into flats for longer periods” as a result of a grant from a local government authority. She also mentioned examples of congregational social service activity that, by its very nature, depends on collaborations with other, mainly secular, organizations: a monthly drop-in session in order “to refer people to other places where they could get the information they needed”; a choir concert to raise money that is given to charity; and involvement in “coordinated local welfare efforts” with several organizations.

Robert Wuthnow studied 20 nonprofit organizations and 60 congregations in Pennsylvania and found many examples of church-based activity that depended on collaborations with secular nonprofits and government. Church-based food banks were common, for example, but “none of the [congregation-based soup kitchens or food distribution programs] would be possible without Second Harvest,” a large secular food bank that itself is tied to the state’s food distribution program. Other examples include church-based child care programs that work closely with secular agencies to coordinate services in various ways (Wuthnow, 2000, pp. 28-31). He concluded that “the effectiveness of church service work is heavily dependent on the presence of nonprofit service organizations with which [churches] can partner or otherwise cultivate close relationships” (Wuthnow, 2000, p. 30; also see Wineburg, 2001, on this point).

After exhaustively reviewing the literature on religiously based social services, McCarthy and Castelli (1998) concluded that “most religion-sponsored social services have extensive and complex connections with other sectors of society, including government” (p. 5). Consistent with this observation about religiously based social services in general, we want to conclude by emphasizing the embeddedness of congregation-based social services within a larger arena of nonprofit organizations and government agencies. An analogy might help here. The relationship between religiously based social services and a larger, secular nonprofit arena seems akin, both empirically and conceptually, to the relationship between the nonprofit sector and government. Empirically, Lester Salamon (1995) has shown that the American nonprofit sector, far from being an alternative to government, flourishes because of the funds government makes available to nonprofit organizations. Conceptually, he has shown
how the common rhetoric portraying the voluntary sector as a substitute for, or even in conflict with, the state—operating most prominently where the state is not—obfuscates the empirical reality of cooperation and mutual dependence between government and nonprofits. Similarly, it seems that the congregational social service arena, far from offering an alternative to secular nonprofit activity, is in fact deeply embedded within and even dependent on the secular nonprofit world. Perhaps ironically, it seems to be most tightly connected to that world precisely when it is doing the social service work some consider most distinctively religious. Religiously based social services are, in general, hardly an alternative to secular nonprofit or government-supported social service delivery. They are, rather, part of that world, likely to rise and fall with it rather than in counterpoint to it. Like the rhetoric portraying nonprofits in general as an alternative to government, the rhetoric portraying religious organizations as carriers of a social service alternative that is peculiarly holistic and transformational obfuscates the empirical reality.

Notes

1. See Chaves, Konieczny, Beyerlein, and Barman (1999) for more detail about the National Congregations Study (NCS) data and methods.

2. The total number of programs is not the only possible measure of the intensity with which a congregation engages in social services. A congregation might engage in only one program, for example, but devote more volunteers and resources to it than another congregation only minimally involved in several types of activity. However, the total number of programs in which a congregation engages is highly correlated both with the total amount of money it spends on social services and with the total number of volunteers involved in any activity. The results we report below concerning predictors of how many programs a congregation reports are only slightly different when we use as the dependent variable the logged amount of money spent on social services, and they are not different at all when we use the logged number of volunteers involved in any of a congregation’s human service activities. See Note 6 for details.

3. Among these 41 variables are items indicating the following kinds of (nonmutually exclusive) programs: domestic violence, political/social action, direct cash assistance, neighborhood beautification, clothing, disaster relief, education, race relations or ethnic identity, food, health, housing, international, job training or employment assistance, mentoring, prisons or crime, recreation, and substance abuse. Other items indicate programs directed at the elderly, families, women, the homeless, immigrants, or children.

4. We did not further define collaborator for respondents. Any group mentioned in response to these questions is considered a collaborator in our analyses.

5. Conservative congregations are defined here as congregations associated with conservative denominations or congregations identified as theologically conservative by NCS informants in response to a question asking them to describe their congregations, theologically speaking, as “more on the conservative side,” “right in the middle,” or “more on the liberal side.”

6. Negative binomial regression is the technically correct modeling approach with a dependent variable of this sort. With one exception, results are unchanged when we use that model, and so we present the more easily interpretable ordinary least squares results. The exception is that the negative coefficient attached to self-identified theologically conservative congregations does not reach statistical significance in the negative binomial model. We also estimated models using as the dependent variable the logged number of programs, the logged amount of money congregations spend on social services, and the logged number of volunteers involved with a
congregation’s social service activities. When the dependent variable is the logged amount of money congregations spend on social services, the coefficients attached to self-identified theological conservatism and location in a poor neighborhood do not reach statistical significance. Otherwise, results are the same in these alternative models.

7. This finding is from a logistic regression (not shown) predicting, among congregations with programs and collaborators, the likelihood of having a secular collaborator for at least one social service program. This result might be related to African American congregations’ greater likelihood of having education, mentoring, substance abuse, and job training or employment assistance programs—programs that may be more likely to involve congregations with secular collaborators.

8. This analysis is limited to congregations with collaborators so that the variables indicating whether a congregation has a secular or a government collaborator do not function as measures of collaboration in general. In addition to the control variables described earlier, these equations also include a variable measuring each congregation’s total number of social service programs. This ensures, as best we can, that a positive effect of secular or government collaboration is not spuriously produced by the fact that a more active congregation is more likely to have at least one program coded 1 on our long-term/face-to-face indicator and is also more likely to have at least one secular or government collaborator.

References


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*William Tsitso is a graduate student in sociology at the University of Arizona. His interests include the sociology of religion and the sociology of culture. One of his current projects draws from both areas by examining the relationship between cultural elements of worship and religious switching behavior.*
Community Variations in the Size and Scope of the Nonprofit Sector: Theory and Preliminary Findings

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Laurie Paarlberg
School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University

Nonprofits reflect and shape community conditions. Understanding the nature of this relationship is important if we are to fully comprehend the role nonprofits play in contemporary society and if policymakers are to make effective use of the sector to implement local responses to community needs. Using data on Internal Revenue Service–registered nonprofits for Indiana counties, the authors examine how theories of demand, supply, and social structure predict the overall density of nonprofits in local communities. The authors find substantial county-level variations in the densities of nonprofits overall and of charitable, advocacy, and mutual-benefit nonprofits. Using multiple regression techniques, they are able to explain 20% to 46% of overall variation (depending on legal category involved) in nonprofit densities. Their findings support the supply and social structure, but not demand, explanations and reveal somewhat divergent patterns for the various types of nonprofits. The authors note several important caveats to the findings.

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR AND COMMUNITY DIMENSIONS

As most observers of the nonprofit sector recognize, the sector is deeply embedded in the society in which it is located—reflecting the nature and intensity of social problems, the opportunities for citizen participation afforded by decision-making structures, the interests and resources of residents, and the configuration of other key community institutions, such as
government. At the same time, nonprofits affect societal conditions through their ability to undertake collective action for public or mutual benefit.

Americans may or may not have a greater penchant for forming voluntary associations (Curtis, Grabb, & Baer, 1992; Tocqueville, 1835/1961) compared to other societies, but knowing whether they do—and comprehending the reasons why—would deepen our theoretical understanding of societal dynamics (Smith & Shen, 2000). Similarly, a better appreciation of regional or community variations in the nonprofit sector would enhance our understanding of the role nonprofits play in contemporary American society. But what factors explain these variations, and what insights do we gain about U.S. communities from such an analysis? And, can we use our understandings of these dynamics to promote effective solutions to social problems and discourage ineffective ones?

The latter question is of growing significance for community leaders as U.S. federal policies of devolution and privatization continue to transfer control and fiscal responsibility for social programming to state and local governments and to shift the delivery of government-funded services to private institutions. Do regional variations in the scope and structure of the nonprofit sector present obstacles or opportunities for implementing these types of initiatives? More broadly, how do community forces shape the capacity of the nonprofit sector to accept new or expanded responsibilities?

Moreover, as the U.S. economy becomes dominated by service industries, the nonprofit sector, traditionally concentrated in such fields, becomes an important economic force in many local economies. For example, the nonprofit sector accounted for half the new jobs generated in the state of Maryland between 1989 and 1996 (Salamon, 1997). How do the growth and capacity of the sector influence community economies? Finally, if nonprofit organizations are to play an important role in socializing individuals to assume leadership roles, what challenges do differences in nonprofit institutional structures pose for developing effective civic leadership in local communities?

Given the theoretical and policy relevance of these types of questions, systematic efforts to carefully document and explain variations in the size and scope of the nonprofit sector across communities or societies have been surprisingly few, with findings that are often contradictory and not easily reconciled (Ben-Ner & Van Hoomissen, 1992; Gamm & Putnam, 1999; James, 1987; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Scherr, 1999; Skocpol, Ganz, & Munson, 2000; Smith & Shen, 2000). Nor is it clear how observed patterns apply to the various components of the nonprofit sector, not just the charitable service nonprofits usually examined but the full range, including advocacy, membership, and religious organizations that are integral to the development of social capital and local civic structures.

To illustrate this point, consider that Stevenson, Pollak, and Lampkin (1997), using data on charities filing financial information with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), reported an average of 7.7 reporting charities per 10,000 residents in the northeast region of the United States, about 43% higher
than the average of 5.4 per 10,000 in southern states, with individual states ranging from a high of 13.8 reporting charities in Vermont to a low of 3.6 organizations per 10,000 in Utah, or by a factor of four. The low density in Utah undoubtedly reflects the strong presence of the Mormon Church in that state because church-controlled institutions are not required to register as tax-exempt organizations with the IRS, let alone file financial information.

Our analysis of IRS-registered nonprofits reveals almost five times as many nonprofits per 10,000 residents as Stevenson et al. (1997), mainly because we include all types of nonprofits, not just charities, and all registered nonprofits, not just the subset filing financial information with the IRS. Like them, however, we find notable regional differences. For example, in the northeast corner of Indiana, rural LaGrange County has 38 registered nonprofits per 10,000 residents, whereas its neighbor, Stueben County (also rural), boasts 74 per 10,000 residents, or almost twice as many.

Artifactsof the IRS-registration system may account for some regional differences in the size of the nonprofit sector, but the theoretical literature raises more interesting explanations. Thus small, stable communities (Gamm & Putnam, 1999) and those with diverse populations (Douglas, 1987; Weisbrod, 1988), strong religious competition (James, 1989), wealth (Jencks, 1987; Wolpert, 1989), limited public sector (Douglas, 1987), or long history of public-nonprofit collaboration (Salamon, 1987) might be expected to have large, well-developed nonprofit service sectors.

As we show in greater detail below, some of these perspectives have their origins in economic theories of how nonprofits satisfy the demand for special goods and services that the market or government fails to meet (Douglas, 1987; Weisbrod, 1988) or how they benefit from the supply of key human and fiscal resources required for nonprofit operations (Ben-Ner & Van Hoomissen, 1992; James, 1989; Salamon, 1987). Other perspectives have emerged out of community studies in sociology and political science (Lincoln, 1977; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Putnam, 1993; Smith & Shen, 2000; Warren, 1975; Wolch & Geiger, 1983).

In this article, we examine the relationship between community characteristics and the size and scope of the overall nonprofit sector, as well as three components of the sector that reflect nonprofit legal status: charitable nonprofits, advocacy and other social welfare nonprofits, and other mutual-benefit nonprofits. Using Indiana as our test case, we use regression analysis and county-level data on IRS-registered nonprofits and on county social, economic, and political characteristics to test whether measures of demand, supply, and community structure relate to the overall prevalence of nonprofits (here defined as the overall number of IRS-registered nonprofits per 10,000 residents) as well as to the prevalence of charitable, advocacy, and mutual-benefit nonprofits. This is the first phase in a larger study of the Indiana nonprofit sector and of the impact of changing public policies and demographic changes on the sector’s scope and structure.
The three broad theoretical perspectives on why and how communities may differ in the size of nonprofit sectors, which we examine here, focus mainly on the overall size of the sector and occasionally on nonprofit industries or service fields. There has been little attention to whether nonprofits of a given legal status may be more or less prevalent in particular types of communities.

DEMAND FOR NONPROFIT SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Theories of market and government failure suggest that nonprofits arise to meet demands for particular types of goods and services that cannot be adequately met by the market or government sectors, whether because the products do not lend themselves to market or political transactions or because tastes are too diverse to constitute large enough aggregate demand to interest commercial or political entrepreneurs. Nonprofits are expected to compensate for these failures and address unmet demands. These perspectives therefore view nonprofits as complementary to market and government entities.

Market (or contract) failure is expected to occur under several circumstances: when the product is a public or collective good for which an appropriate price cannot be established in the private marketplace, when the level of demand is too small to be profitable for suppliers to provide through traditional market mechanisms, or when characteristics of the product or customer prevent the latter from obtaining full information about the product being purchased (Hansmann, 1987a, 1996; Weisbrod, 1988). The latter occurs when services are too complex to be easily assessed in terms of quality and appropriateness of price or when the customer is too young, old, disabled, distant, or otherwise incapacitated to make informed purchasing decisions. In those circumstances, trust in the provider, rather than the assessed product quality, guides purchase decisions. In each of these cases, economic theory suggests that private, for-profit firms will face major disadvantages in supplying the good or service and that government or nonprofit entities will emerge as the only or the preferred providers.

Theories of government failure focus on the different ways in which government and nonprofits respond to these challenges and argue that nonprofits step in to provide goods and services when the political process makes it difficult for government to do so. Weisbrod (1988) argued that government responds to the demands of the “majority,” or the median voter, leaving unsatisfied the more special needs that affect mainly small and/or powerless minorities. Similarly, Douglas (1987) suggested that government is constrained in its capacity to deliver certain public goods and services due to the limits of the political system and concerns for social justice. These constraints reflect the difficulties government faces in meeting conflicting demands of
diverse populations, implementing untested procedures, or bypassing demands for accountability (e.g., red tape and bureaucracy). Nonprofits do not face these particular constraints, or at least not nearly to the same extent, and can therefore compensate for government failures. Indeed, they may do so sufficiently well to prevent the emergence of a political consensus to vest public resources in addressing the needs (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1965).

When applied to communities, these perspectives jointly suggest a positive relationship between population (e.g., demand) heterogeneity and the size of the nonprofit sector. Indeed, some historical studies of the sector argue that nonprofits arose to meet the needs of diverse groups (Salamon, 1987), although contemporary studies on the relationship between heterogeneity and size of the nonprofit sector have been inconclusive. Thus, James’s (1987) cross-national studies found that religious heterogeneity is positively related to the size of the nonprofit sector, whereas Corbin’s (1999) analysis of metropolitan areas found that the relationship only holds for social services and does not extend to racial diversity. Other studies confirm that diversity affects some nonprofit industries more than others. Thus, Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1992) found that racial diversity was positively related to nonprofit educational facilities but negatively to social services. Still other studies suggest that diversity has little impact on the overall size of the sector (Bielefeld, 2000; Wolch & Geiger, 1983).

In addition to meeting the needs of racially, ethnically, and/or religiously diverse population groups, nonprofits have been viewed as responding to the needs of distressed segments of the population who, because of insufficient financial or social resources, cannot make effective use of market or government services. In such cases, Wolch and Geiger (1983) hypothesized, affluent community members will respond to the needs of their disadvantaged neighbors by making donations and other support available to nonprofits serving such target groups. This perspective reflects traditional conceptions of nonprofits as “charities” whose primary purposes are to alleviate distress and disadvantages (Wolch & Geiger, 1983), suggesting that we should find more nonprofits, especially charities, in communities with high levels of social distress.

To date, however, studies comparing levels of community need to the existence of nonprofit organizations have been inconclusive. Corbin (1999) found that poverty levels are positively related to the number of nonprofit social service providers, whereas Zakour and Gillespie (1998) and Marsh (1995) found that distressed urban neighborhoods have fewer nonprofit organizations than more affluent communities. Similarly, Bielefeld (2000) found that community poverty was related to low private (and public) support for human service providers and relatively fewer human service providers. Wolch and Geiger (1983) noted, however, that some of these differences in findings may depend on how distress is measured. For example, some communities with high indexes of certain types of distress, such as crime rates, percentage elderly, and
infant mortality rates, had rich philanthropic resources. Communities with other high stress characteristics, such as low income, minority populations, and service-dependent populations, had smaller numbers of nonprofit organizations.

SUPPLY OF FISCAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Whereas theories of economic and political failure were among the earliest to consider variations in nonprofit development, other efforts have focused on the supply of human and financial resources for stimulating the growth of nonprofit organizations. Like all other organizations, nonprofits must secure resources from their environment to survive, suggesting that they will be most prevalent where resources needed for their survival are plentiful.

Indeed, several studies have found that various types of community financial resources are related to the size of the nonprofit sector. Thus, Corbin (1999) found a strong relationship between per capita income and the number of nonprofit social service agencies. Similarly, Booth, Higgins, and Cornelius (1989) found that effective buying power is positively related to charitable contributions. Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1992) reported that wealth was an important determinant for the size of all sectors, with wealthier communities having more for-profit as well as nonprofit entities.

However, these arguments are most germane to the availability of donations or fees and service charges for nonprofits. Nonprofits rely on other funding sources as well, most notably government funding. As Salamon (1987) has argued, over time a “partnership” has emerged between government and service-providing nonprofits, reflecting their compensating strengths and weaknesses; that is, nonprofits compensate for the government failures outlined above, and government compensates for such nonprofit failures as particularism, amateurism, paternalism, and financial insufficiency. Thus, government provides substantial financial resources through grants and contracts to nonprofits that in turn deliver the services. This suggests that the level of local, state, and federal funding should affect the size of the nonprofit sector—both the number of organizations and the size of individual organizations. Indeed, Bielefeld (2000) found a positive relationship between public generosity, as measured by maximum Aid to Families With Dependent Children share, and a “larger and more secure nonprofit sector” (p. 310). Other researchers, focusing on the financial value of tax exemptions for nonprofits, have found a positive relationship between tax rates and the number of nonprofits (Hansmann, 1987b).

Although much has been made of the importance of financial resources in determining the size of the nonprofit sector, human resources are also significant. Here, attention has focused on how the availability of nonprofit entrepreneurs influences the size of the sector. Some have hypothesized that community socioeconomic status (SES) affects the size of the nonprofit sector by influencing participation rates. For example, Lincoln (1977) suggested that
“metropolitan areas with high status populations should prove to contain large numbers of voluntary organizations given the well documented tendency for organization joining to rise with the SES of individuals” (p. 472). Whereas neither Lincoln nor Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1992) found that the number of organizations is significantly related to the status of community residents as measured by level of education, others have confirmed a relationship between some socioeconomic characteristics (education, age) and involvement in nonprofits (Galper, 1999; Guterbock & Fries, 1997).

There is also evidence that religious motivations affect participation in voluntary organizations. James (1987) found that evangelism is closely related to the formation of nonprofit organizations, although Salamon and Anheier (1998) found little support for a relationship between religious heterogeneity and the size of nonprofit sectors in their cross-national study. Nevertheless, there is much appeal to the argument that the “restless activism promoted by some religious traditions” (Chaves, 1998, pp. 62-63) fuels the supply of nonprofit entrepreneurs and organizations. Perhaps, as some observers argue, shared religious values provide a common tie between community members, allowing them to work together in organizations and form more cohesive communities (Corbin, 1999; Galper, 1999).

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

A third broad avenue of research has documented how community economic and political dynamics influence the formation of civic structures. Although the nonprofit sector has not always been the specific focus of these works, some of the earliest community studies point to close linkages between community social structures and the nonprofit sector. This is clearly evident in the research by Lynd and Lynd (1929, 1937) on Muncie, by Hunter (1953) on Atlanta, by Warren (1975) on Detroit, and by Putnam (1993) on southern Italy.

More directly, comparative analysis has focused on the nature of civic engagement in local communities and on whether size of place or urban/rural distinctions are related to the prevalence of nonprofits. Thus, Lincoln (1977) theorized that high levels of urbanization might interfere with community integration and therefore decrease the ability to support nonprofits. Although he concluded that population density was not significantly related to support for nonprofits, Galper (1999) found that high levels of social capital tend to be found in “small, mature counties with small populations” (p. 30).

A similar conclusion is supported by historical analysis. Using 19th-century data, Gamm and Putnam (1999) noted that smaller and more stable communities had higher densities of locally based membership organizations, reflecting in their view the denser networks and higher levels of trust and familiarity (e.g., social capital) that residents of such communities share. Skocpol et al.’s (2000) more comprehensive data on all types of membership
organizations, including local affiliates of federated associations excluded by Gamm and Putnam, also show that smaller communities historically had higher densities of membership organizations.  

In addition to community size, the community’s age and economic base have also been examined. Booth et al. (1989) and Wolch and Geiger (1983) concluded that communities in which manufacturing is a larger part of the employment base have higher levels of nonprofit resources and thus presumably also a larger nonprofit sector. More detailed analysis by Wolch and Geiger found that nonprofits were concentrated in the “mature inner-ring chartered suburbs, which have been growing or stable during the past decade” (p. 1076). Other researchers confirm important distinctions between the urban and suburban distribution of nonprofit services (Marsh, 1995; Salamon, 1997; Zakour & Gillespie, 1998).

Recognizing that other organizations may serve as resources for new ones to emerge, Wiewel and Hunter (1985) reported that communities with high densities of existing organizations provide more favorable conditions for new ones of a similar type to survive. Similarly, Lincoln (1977) found that the strongest predictor of any one category of voluntary association is the “presence of other voluntary organizations” (p. 480). As he suggested, “By socializing a population in organizational skills and by providing resources and opportunities for the creation of new organizational units, the past and present organizational arrangements may be most explanatory of its potential for new organizational growth” (p. 480). Similarly, operationalizing community cohesion as the degree of religious, ethnic, or racial heterogeneity, Corbin (1999) and Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1992) found a positive relationship between church density and the number of nonprofits. As Corbin concluded, “Individuals congregating in larger numbers in church and in more churches located in proximity to one another . . . contribute positively to the growth of the nonprofit sector in social services” (p. 309).

Some have argued that a final set of community characteristics, political culture, may also encourage or retard the growth of nonprofits. Using Elazar’s (1972) typology of political culture, Bielefeld and Corbin’s (1996) analysis of social services in two states suggests that political culture strongly influences the division of labor between the public and private sectors. However, Corbin (1999) found no statistically significant relationship between individualistic political culture and the size of the social service sector.

As this review of the literature suggests, there is much speculation as to how and why communities may differ in the size and composition of their nonprofit sectors. However, the empirical findings are far from consistent, perhaps reflecting the narrow range of variables considered, the focus on only certain types of nonprofits, the few and limited variety of geographic areas examined, or the particular historical periods considered. We turn now to a description of our data and methodological approach.
DATA AND METHOD

We use county-level data for the state of Indiana to explore how community characteristics relate to the size of the nonprofit sector, both overall and by three types of legal status: charitable, advocacy, and membership organizations. Charitable organizations, registered under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code, are generally expected to benefit the broader community by delivering education, health, religion, culture, charitable, or other programs benefiting the general public. These organizations are eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions (within taxpayer limits established by law) but are prohibited from engaging in substantial advocacy activities or any partisan political action.

Organizations registered under Section 501(c)(4) of the IRS code are organized to promote the social welfare of the community. This category includes most advocacy organizations with a substantial interest in influencing public policy and/or promoting positions on such topics as environmental protection, freedom of speech, reproductive rights, gun control, or the death penalty. These organizations generally are not eligible to receive tax-deductible donations and may not engage in substantial partisan political action but can undertake direct and grassroots lobbying. Mutual-benefit or membership organizations, registered under all other 501(c) sections of the IRS code, provide benefits primarily to their members, are not eligible to receive tax-deductible donations, and may engage in partisan political action.

We use the county as our unit of analysis, although most studies of the nonprofit sector have relied on metropolitan-level data. County-level data have many advantages. First, there is a broad range of demographic, social, political, and economic data available at the county level. Second, in some states, such as Indiana and California, public health and welfare efforts have traditionally been organized on a county basis. As a result of recent welfare reform efforts, counties in other states are also playing an increasingly important role in the planning and implementation of many public policies. Given the virtual absence of any metropolitan-level governmental structure in the United States, analysis at the county level is most relevant for local leaders and policy makers. Finally, analysis at the county level allows us to retain many metropolitan-level differences. Although metropolitan areas more accurately represent economic patterns of commerce and employment, they appear to less reliably capture differences in community “sociopsychological” dynamics, particularly where they include large rural areas (Angell, 1974). Studies using counties as the unit of analysis might therefore be more responsive to socioeconomic characteristics than those at the metropolitan level.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

We seek to explain county-level differences in the prevalence of nonprofit organizations, overall and by legal status. Our data on nonprofits per county
are drawn from the IRS Business Master File (BMF) of nonprofits registered with the IRS under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. We obtained a list of all 1999 BMF nonprofits with Indiana reporting addresses from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) at the Urban Institute. We also obtained the Indiana portion of the so-called core files of the subset of charitable organizations (501[c][3] nonprofits) that filed financial reports (Form 990) circa 1998, exclusive of foundations, developed by the NCCS. The latter file contains more detailed financial information and includes codes for the primary purpose of the organization based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). We merged the two files and removed duplicate organizations, with preference to the core files.

Because there is a very strong, positive correlation \((r = .98)\) between the number of IRS-registered nonprofits and the population of the county (as there is at the state level, see Stevenson et al., 1997), we adjust the count of nonprofits for the size of county population by computing the number of nonprofits per 10,000 county residents. We use four measures of nonprofit density for Indiana’s 92 counties: the total number of IRS-registered nonprofits, the number of (c)(3) registered nonprofits (charitable nonprofits), the number of (c)(4) registered nonprofits (advocacy nonprofits), and the number of all other registered nonprofits (mutual-benefit nonprofits)—all per 10,000 residents. Table 1 describes our variables and presents basic descriptive statistics for them.

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

To examine the extent to which demand, supply, and community structure characteristics of Indiana counties relate to the prevalence of nonprofit organizations in those counties, we identified and collected relevant measures from a variety of sources (see the appendix).

**Demand.** To capture the level of demand for nonprofit services in a community, we include one measure of heterogeneity (number of religious denominations) and one measure of social distress (percentage of children in poverty). We considered, but dropped, other measures of diversity (percentage Black, percentage foreign born) because both are very highly correlated with the number of denominations \((r = .76\) and \(r = .80\), respectively; see also Corbin, 1999) and produce only marginal changes in the regression estimates. Following Corbin (1999), we use the raw count of the number of denominations because the data source allows for only a finite listing of denominations, potentially limiting the total count denominations in larger communities. We use the percentage of children in poverty as a measure of the community’s demand for charitable services.

**Supply.** We included several indicators of the supply of resources to support nonprofit activity. To measure financial resources, we use federal grants and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious diversity</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Number of denominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child poverty</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>Percentage of children below poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal funding ($)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>26.87</td>
<td>Federal grants and contracts per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding ($)</td>
<td>23.69</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>50.95</td>
<td>Library funding per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church adherents</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>Percentage of population religious adherents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>Percentage aged 25 or older with bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>Percentage aged 45-64 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (dummy)</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 if county’s largest city is less than 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally employed</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>Percentage county workers employed in county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>Percentage population change, 1980-1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Indiana Counties
contracts per capita and county library expenditures per capita. We expect the former to have a direct bearing on resources available to nonprofits and therefore the number of nonprofits in the county. We recognize that this particular indicator is far from ideal because the federal funds included here support a broad range of activities, not just those involving funding to nonprofits. We explored, but were unable to locate, any other measures of federal spending at the county level. We use library spending as a proxy for how willing county residents are to tax themselves to support collective activities.

To measure available human resources, for example, potential nonprofit entrepreneurs, we include the percentage of county residents who are church adherents, the percentage of people aged 25 or older who have a bachelor degree or higher education, and the percentage of people between the ages of 45 and 54. We use church adherents to reflect the potentially strong influence that church membership has on voluntary activism. Our measures of college graduates and the size of the middle-aged population are designed to capture the population groups that previous research shows to be most actively engaged in volunteering and civic life (Galper, 1999; Guterbock & Fries, 1997).

Community structure. As indicators of the social structure of local communities, we focus on community size, employment structure, and population change. We considered, but ultimately abandoned, efforts to measure political culture at the county level, in part because Indiana typically is classified as having a “mixed” culture (Elazar, 1972) and in part because it is difficult to develop county-level measures for this concept. For community size, we use a dummy variable to reflect counties whose largest city had a population of less than 10,000 residents. This choice reflects the highly skewed distribution of population among Indiana counties. Thus, Marion County (Indianapolis) has almost 800,000 residents, the next largest county (Allen County, Fort Wayne) about 300,000, whereas the median for the 92 counties is only one tenth that large, or just more than 30,000. In fact, 75% of Indiana counties have a population of less than 62,000. Using a dummy variable for small city reduces the statistical distortions we would otherwise face. In all but 17 counties, the county seat is also the largest city, indicating a centralization of public and social resources. This is consistent with our finding that the largest city in a county typically accounts for more than half of the county nonprofits.

Although most previous studies of the relationship between the size of the nonprofit sector and the local economy have focused on the size of the manufacturing base, we use a measure of local employment: the percentage of county workers who are employed within the county. This measure captures residents’ connections to the local economy and should be related to stronger, more intense commitments to the community and therefore also to greater involvement in or support for nonprofits. We include the rate of population change between 1980 and 1990 as a proxy for community stability, expecting more stable communities to have higher densities of nonprofits, whether
because the stability allows for stronger social capital or because of lags in nonprofit formation (growing counties) or dissolution (declining counties).

RESULTS

Our analysis supports three major conclusions. First, we find notable county-level variations in the number of IRS-registered nonprofits, even when adjusting for differences in population size. The density of nonprofits of different legal status also varies considerably by county. Second, we find support for two of the three theoretical frameworks (supply, community structure), but not the third (demand), in explaining variations in density of all types of nonprofits combined. Third, somewhat distinctive forces account for variations in the density of charitable nonprofits and of mutual-benefit nonprofits. The pattern we observe for advocacy nonprofits differs some from those of the other two types but is less clear-cut.

SUBSTANTIAL COUNTY VARIATIONS
IN NONPROFIT DENSITIES

Our list of IRS-registered nonprofits with Indiana addresses contains 31,636 entities. Almost half (49%, or 15,395) of these are registered as charitable nonprofits, another two fifths (39%, or 12,289) fall under the various types of mutual-benefit subsections, and the remaining 12% (3,952) are recognized as social welfare or advocacy organizations. These percentages suggest that the overall density of Indiana nonprofits is driven largely by factors influencing the distribution of charitable and mutual-benefit nonprofits. Compared to national data (Boris, 1998), Indiana appears to have relatively few charitable nonprofits (49% versus 55%) and relatively more mutual-benefit nonprofits (39% versus 33%).

A raw count of the distribution of all IRS-registered nonprofits across the state’s 92 counties shows substantial variations, ranging from a high of 2,865 in Marion County (Indianapolis) to a low of only 10 in Ohio County in southeastern Indiana, part of the Cincinnati metropolitan area. Even if we adjust for differences in population base, the county variation is substantial, ranging from a high of 79 per 10,000 residents in rural Benton County (bordering Illinois, northwest of Lafayette) to a low of 38 in LaGrange County (bordering Michigan and part of the Fort Wayne metropolitan area)—or by a factor of more than 2:1. The median density stands at 56 nonprofits per 10,000 residents for the 92 counties, with the bottom quartile of Indiana counties at a density of less than 50 and the top quartile at 64 or more, an interquartile difference of 32%.

More pronounced variations are evident when we look at the three major components of the nonprofit sector. Charitable nonprofits, the largest segment of the total, show differences in densities that range between a high of 38 per
10,000 residents in Benton County (also the highest overall) to a low of only 15 in Fountain County (only one county removed to the south), or by a factor of almost 2.5:1. The median county stood at 24 charitable nonprofits per 10,000, with one quarter of the counties having a density of 21 or less and the top quarter with densities of 29 or more, or a difference of 35%.

The next largest group, mutual-benefit nonprofits, has densities that range between 39 per 10,000 residents in Putnam County (halfway between Indianapolis and Terre Haute) and 13 per 10,000 in LaGrange County (also the lowest density overall), or by a factor of 3:1. Notably, the high of 39 mutual-benefit organizations per 10,000 residents surpasses the maximum density of charitable nonprofits (38), although charitable nonprofits constitute a larger proportion of nonprofits at the statewide level. The median density for mutual-benefit nonprofits was 23, with the bottom quartile at 20 or less and the top quartile at 26 or more, a difference of 32%.

The density of advocacy/social welfare nonprofits is considerably lower, reflecting their relatively small share of the overall Indiana nonprofit sector. Their density ranges from a high of 14 per 10,000 in Pike County in southeastern Indiana to a low of only 5 per 10,000 in Marion County (Indianapolis), or by a factor of almost 3:1. The median density was 8, with the bottom quartile at 7 or less and the top quartile at 10 or more, or a difference of 50%.

Overall, these results reveal notable county-level differences in the prevalence of nonprofits across the state of Indiana. Not surprisingly, the overall sector density is closely correlated with the density of the two largest segments (charities, $r = .71$, and mutual benefit, $r = .85$); however, the three nonprofit components are not especially highly correlated with one another. Thus, densities of charities and mutual-benefit organizations are correlated with one another at $r = .29, p < .01$, and the density of advocacy nonprofits is correlated with the density of mutual-benefit nonprofits at $r = .38, p < .001$, but shows no correlation with the density of charities, $r = –.04$. These observations, along with tantalizing hints from the regional patterns of high and low densities, suggest that efforts to determine which factors may account for such variations are not only important but appropriate. There is clearly enough variation to warrant the effort on empirical grounds, let alone theoretical and policy grounds.

EXPLAINING NONPROFIT DENSITY: DEMAND, SUPPLY, AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

To gain a better understanding of how community characteristics relate to the density of nonprofit organizations within the state, we look first at bivariate relationships between the density of nonprofits (both overall and for each of the three components) and our selected measures of demand, supply, and community structure. We then regress all independent variables on nonprofit densities to determine their joint efforts.
Table 2 shows that all but church adherence is significantly related to at least one of the four dependent variables at the bivariate level. Two of our measures of community characteristics have substantial relationships to the overall density of nonprofits—the percentage of the labor force employed in the county and per capita federal funding—in the predicted directions. Seven community indicators are related to the prevalence of charitable nonprofits: religious diversity, child poverty, educated population, middle-aged population, local funding, local employment base, and small city. Three of these (child poverty, middle-aged residents, and small city) are in directions opposite of our predictions. For advocacy nonprofits, three community indicators are significant: religious diversity, educated population, and small city—only the latter is in the direction we had predicted. Finally, five community characteristics relate to the number of mutual-benefit nonprofits per 10,000 residents: religious diversity, federal funding, population change, small city, and political stability, with all but the first in the predicted directions.

There are some consistent patterns across the four dependent variables, although relationships that apply to the overall size of the nonprofit sector do not necessarily hold for each of the three component parts. There are also several notable differences in patterns among the three nonprofit sector components. Thus, religious diversity is positively related to the density of charitable nonprofits but negatively related to the prevalence of advocacy nonprofits and mutual-benefit nonprofits. The presence of well-educated residents is associated with more charitable nonprofits but fewer advocacy nonprofits. Advocacy nonprofits are prevalent in small cities, whereas charitable nonprofits are more prevalent in counties with larger cities.

To examine how community characteristics may jointly account for county-level variations in the number of nonprofits per 10,000 residents, we

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Characteristic</th>
<th>Total Nonprofits</th>
<th>Charitable Nonprofits</th>
<th>Advocacy Nonprofits</th>
<th>Mutual-Benefit Nonprofits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious diversity (+)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>-.45**</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child poverty (+)</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal funding (+)</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding (+)</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church adherents (+)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree (+)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age (+)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small city, dummy (+)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locally employed (+)</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change (–)</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 92. Signs in parentheses for each community characteristic indicate the direction of the hypothesized relationship. *p ≤ .10 (borderline substantial). **p ≤ .05 (most stringent criteria for substantial relationships).
regressed the community indicators on each of the four measures of the nonprofit density. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis. For each of the four dependent variables, the first column presents the standardized coefficients to allow for more direct comparisons across community indicators than do the regular regression coefficients (second column).

As Table 3 shows, our combination of community characteristics is related to the density of nonprofit organizations and jointly accounts for between 20% and 46% of the variation in the dependent variables. Although our model seems somewhat less able to describe the variation in the density of advocacy nonprofits, the results are quite similar across all four measures of density—in most cases, the signs of coefficients remain the same, although their magnitudes may vary. In addition, although diagnostic tests reveal some outliers among the counties, these do not notably influence the regression model—deleting the outliers changed the coefficients and t values slightly, but not the direction of the regression coefficients.

Overall, we find support for the supply and community structure explanations for differences in the prevalence of nonprofits, but not demand explanations. Contrary to what contract and government failure theories suggest, that nonprofits respond to community needs (demand), we find that communities with higher levels of needs as measured by diversity and/or child poverty have fewer nonprofits per 10,000 residents than those with lower levels of need, and vice versa. This pattern holds for the sector overall and for at least two of the three sector components. For all nonprofits and for mutual-benefit nonprofits, these need variables have substantial but negative coefficients. For advocacy nonprofits, only religious diversity appears to be an important factor, with child poverty at best borderline, but both are negative. The negative relationships are weakest (and fail to meet our definition of a substantial relationship, that is, do not cross the significance barrier of .05) for charitable nonprofits—the component for which we would expect the positive relationship to be strongest, providing us minor consolation.

In contrast, we find some support for a positive relationship between supply factors, especially human resources, and the density of nonprofits, with the exception of advocacy nonprofits, for which none of the supply measures appear to be important. Variables measuring human capital, such as the percentage of individuals with bachelor or higher degrees and the percentage middle-aged, have strong positive coefficients in the multiple regression equations for total, charitable, and mutual-benefit nonprofits per 10,000 residents. The better educated and the larger the size of the population aged 45 to 64 in the county, the higher is the prevalence of all nonprofits, as well as charitable and mutual-benefit nonprofits. For total nonprofits, no other supply variables appear relevant, whereas there is a weak (borderline) positive relationship between the percentage of county residents who are church adherents and the prevalence of charitable nonprofits.

The availability of financial resources appears to be less relevant. Per capita federal grants and contracts has no relationship with the prevalence of
### Table 3. Regression of Community Characteristics on Prevalence of All, Charitable, Advocacy, and Mutual-Benefit Nonprofits (per 10,000 residents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Characteristic</th>
<th>All Nonprofits</th>
<th>Charitable Nonprofits</th>
<th>Advocacy Nonprofits</th>
<th>Mutual-Benefit Nonprofits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardized Coefficient</td>
<td>Regression Coefficient</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficient</td>
<td>Regression Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious diversity (+)</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.314**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty (+)</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.645**</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>-.210*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal funding (+)</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding (+)</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.093</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church adherents (+)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.071*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree (+)</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.861**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.439**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age (+)</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>1.686**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.792**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small city, dummy (+)</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>8.787**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>2.921**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally employed (+)</td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.197**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change (–)</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.204</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-6.472</td>
<td>-12.121</td>
<td>6.556</td>
<td>-0.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 92$. Signs in parentheses for each community characteristic indicate the direction of the hypothesized relationship. *$p \leq .10$ (borderline substantial). **$p \leq .05$ (most stringent criteria for substantial relationships).
nonprofits, either overall or for any of the three components. Local financial resources, as measured by per capita library spending, has a small but notable impact on the density of mutual-benefit organizations, but the relationship is opposite of what we had expected: As the propensity to fund local collective needs increases, the density of mutual-benefit nonprofits decreases.

We find support for the impact of community structure, especially local employment and size of community. As the percentage of county residents who are employed within the county increases, the density of all types of nonprofits increases. Population size has a moderate impact on the density of total, charitable, and mutual-benefit nonprofits. Counties in which the largest city has less than 10,000 residents have a higher density of these types of nonprofits than do counties in which the largest city has more than 10,000 residents, controlling for all other variables. To some extent, this may represent the need for even the smallest community to maintain a minimum number or variety of nonprofits to meet social and service needs. The rate of population change has a negative impact on only the density of membership organizations, confirming the arguments by Lincoln (1977) and Gamm and Putnam (1999) that membership organizations flourish in stable communities, in contrast to “a pattern of organizational barrenness in rapidly changing communities” (Lincoln, 1977, p. 480).

SUMMARY

Our results provide support for several theoretical perspectives that seek to explain variations in nonprofit density. In general, theories that focus on community structures and availability of nonprofit resources appear to provide the strongest explanations for why and how the density of nonprofits varies across communities. Arguments that focus on the demand or need for nonprofit activities are not supported. The latter is consistent with previous analysis of charitable human service nonprofits, which found that only a minority of such organizations focus their mission or major activities on poverty or minority populations or on the problems these groups face (Grønbjerg, 1990).

We interpret these findings as indicating that the nonprofit sector is most sensitive to opportunity structures created by community social and political conditions but that the sector is not particularly responsive to sheer demand factors, in sharp contrast to proprietary organizations. Given the increasingly important roles nonprofits play in local communities, these findings raise major questions about the underlying dynamics of how social, economic, and political characteristics influence the structure of the nonprofit sector in local communities. In particular, we need to understand better the processes by which individual and community resources foster the development of the nonprofit sector and how community size and growth or decline affect these processes. We also need much closer attention to how these processes may vary across types of nonprofits.
If true and supported by further research, our findings raise specific questions about the extent to which policy makers can realistically expect nonprofits to take on major responsibilities for addressing problems of poverty and disadvantage. At the very least, such efforts seem unlikely to occur unless accompanied by substantial investments in the sector’s infrastructure and resource base.

There are several important caveats to our findings. First, we have used counties as our geographic unit. For some purposes, the metropolitan area may be more appropriate. We plan to examine variations across metropolitan areas in a subsequent analysis but will have too few such areas in Indiana to undertake any rigorous statistical analysis. Second, we have less than perfect measures of the three theoretical perspectives we examine, raising the possibility that alternative combinations of variables may show stronger or weaker patterns. Third, our variables do not all measure county conditions at the same point in time. Consequently, some of our results may be artifacts of lags in measuring some conditions. In addition, James’s (1987) study of the formation of private schools suggested that once organizations are founded, they survive long past changes in the original community characteristics that may have influenced their founding.

Fourth, and of greatest concern, we have relied exclusively on the IRS list of nonprofits registered with the IRS under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. We know that this listing is far from perfect, especially with regard to faith-based organizations and small grassroots organizations (Grønbjerg, 1994; Smith, 1997a, 1997b). In fact, preliminary analysis from our efforts to combine the IRS database with two other institutional listings (Indiana secretary of state list of organizations incorporated as nonprofits in Indiana and Yellow Page listings of churches, congregations, and temples with Indiana phone numbers) shows that IRS registrations cover only about 60% of the combined listings from these three sources. We expect this percentage to decline even further as we add nonprofits found exclusively on local lists available from informants and other sources, including small grassroots organizations usually missed by established institutional listings of the type we have relied on here.

In subsequent work, we will examine how community characteristics relate to the full complement of nonprofit organizations in a given community; assess the quality of IRS, secretary of state, and Yellow Page listings for identifying the scope and structure of the nonprofit sector; and significantly expand and enhance measures of community social, political, economic, and cultural characteristics. We will also improve our measures of the scope and structure of the sector by coding nonprofits by major NTEE purpose and including data obtained from surveys of the full scope of nonprofits in selected Indiana communities.
## Appendix
### Sources of Descriptive Statistics for Indiana Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizations: All</td>
<td>Total IRS-registered nonprofits per 10,000 population</td>
<td>IRS data: National Center for Charitable Statistics and IRS Business Master File of tax-exempt organizations with primary addresses in Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable</td>
<td>Total IRS-registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits per 10,000 population</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Total IRS-registered 501(c)(4) nonprofits per 10,000 population</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Total IRS-registered other 501(c) nonprofits per 10,000 population</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious diversity</td>
<td>Number of denominations</td>
<td>Bradley, Green, Jones, Lynn, and McNeil (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child poverty</td>
<td>Percentage of children below poverty</td>
<td>1990 census data available at <a href="http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat">http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>Public library funding per capita</td>
<td>Indiana Business Research Center (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church adherents</td>
<td>Percentage of population church adherents</td>
<td>Bradley et al. (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Percentage of population aged 25 or older with bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>1990 census data available at <a href="http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat">http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age</td>
<td>Percentage of population aged 45 to 64 years</td>
<td>1990 census data available at <a href="http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat">http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (dummy)</td>
<td>1 if population of county’s largest city is less than 10,000</td>
<td>Census data available at <a href="http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat">http://www.census.gov/housing/saipe/estcen89/estCN_IN.dat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally employed</td>
<td>Percentage of county workers employed in county</td>
<td>Indiana Business Research Center (2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: IRS = Internal Revenue Service.*
Notes

1. For the 26 cities included in Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson's (2000, p. 535) analysis, our reexamination of their data shows that larger cities (log value of city size in 1910) had a lower density of clubs (per 10,000 residents) circa 1910 ($r = -0.78$).

2. Our review of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) database shows that some types of organizations with very similar names may be registered under different IRS subsections. Although we have some concerns about how “clean” the legal categories are, we have accepted the official IRS classification system for the analysis presented here.

3. Some local affiliates of national organizations use the address of the national headquarters as the primary reporting address with the IRS, although they operate elsewhere. Our list of IRS-registered nonprofits for Indiana includes affiliates located in other states that use an Indiana headquarters address for reporting purposes and excludes Indiana affiliates of national organizations that use non-Indiana headquarters addresses for reporting purposes.

4. Because most units of local government require their employees to live in the jurisdiction, this particular measure includes local government employees and may bear some relationship to local public spending.

5. We use measures of statistical significance to indicate whether particular statistical patterns are trivial or substantial. The 92 Indiana counties do not constitute a random sample, and our findings cannot be used to draw statistical inferences from sample statistics to universe parameters.

References


Legitimation Issues in the State-Nonprofit Relationship

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Arkansas State University

Current theories on the origin of the nonprofit sector do not adequately explain changes in the relative scale of social welfare service provision by the state versus private nonprofit entities. French and Japanese experiences illustrate that nations can undergo significant change, cycling through periods of expansion then restriction of the legal status and role of the nonprofit sector. This article considers the potential for legitimation strategies to explain the shifts in nonprofit status in France and Japan. The article concludes that although some theoretical foundation exists on legitimation concepts, additional work needs to be done to derive a sufficient theory of how legitimation issues affect change in the nonprofit sector.

Social origins research (Salamon & Anheier, 1997, 1998) has been criticized as not providing an adequate explanation of changes in the relative scale of service provision by the state versus private nonprofit entities (Wagner, 2000). French and Japanese experiences discussed in this article clearly illustrate that nations can undergo significant change, cycling through periods of expansion then restriction of the legal status and role of the nonprofit sector in social welfare functions. The social origins approach seeks to classify specific nations by relating their current state-nonprofit relationship to the prior scale of overall social welfare spending and the proportion of that spending effected through the nonprofit sector. What is missing in this approach is the recognition that nonprofit-governmental relationships can change over time; therefore, there is no single point of social origin. Understanding the prior dominant state-nonprofit relationship is useful in understanding the present, but to predict future relationships, it may be at least as important to understand the processes that caused prior shifts in organizational structures.

This article uses the case study approach to look at specific turning points in the state-nonprofit relationship for France and Japan. The advantage of the case study approach is in its ability to closely examine unique historical phenomena in periods of social change. Its disadvantage is in the potential for results to be nongeneralizable. An attempt is made to partially overcome this
problem by looking for similarities in the change process across two countries with shifts in their government-nonprofit relationship for social services rather than focusing on a single country.

Although the case approach allows a fresh look at unique elements in historical development, it is also important to ground case studies in a specific conceptual or theoretical view to give focus to the examination. Legitimacy is a widely used concept in sociology and nonprofit organizational theory. Nonprofit legal status is widely assumed to give social “legitimacy” to preexisting civil organizations. The word political in the phrase “political economy” is explained by Kramer (2000) as referring to the various processes through which power and “legitimation” are acquired and maintained. Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld (1998) noted that many nonprofits respond to threatened declines in funding sources by increased political tactics and attempts to appear more “legitimate.” Even where the actual word legitimacy is not used, the nonprofit literature is replete with issues that are closely related to the concept of legitimacy. Seidman (1980) and Orlans (1980) noted that shifting government functions to a separate organization is a means of managing appearances, that is, perceptions of legitimacy. Likewise, Hall (1992) suggested that even the terms nonprofit sector and independent sector were invented in the 1970s as a purposive action to forestall government regulations and manage impressions of sector cohesion, that is, legitimacy.

Unfortunately, though widely used, the concept of legitimacy is poorly defined. Most references in the nonprofit literature assume the reader understands the concept of legitimacy and that no definition or theoretical exposition is necessary. Habermas’s (1973, 1976/1979, 1985/1987), O’Connor’s (1973), and Rein’s (1975) works on legitimation issues are the most detailed examinations of the concept to date. Although these works are dated, I believe that they have new relevance with the social origins shift in nonprofit research away from single-factor, abstract economic or legalistic explanations for nonprofit activities toward an examination of social phenomena. I readily admit that these works do not constitute a completely adequate theoretical foundation. Furthermore, a case study of only two countries is inadequate to derive a general theory of shifts in state-nonprofit relations. Thus, this article is neither an empirical test nor a complete theoretical development. The article’s purpose is rather to revisit the Johns Hopkins project histories of France and Japan (Amenomori, 1997; Archambault, 1997; Salamon & Anheier, 1997) as updated with current events in Japan to argue that a longstanding theoretical gap needs to be addressed by a multidisciplinary development of a theory of legitimation issues affecting the state-nonprofit relationship.

The remainder of this article will be organized as follows: (a) elaboration of the basic issue, inability of current nonprofit research to deal with changes in the state-nonprofit relationship; (b) an overview of French and Japanese historical events that illustrates changing levels of nonprofit participation over time; (c) a discussion of existing legitimation literature and its potential for
explaining shifts in state policy toward nonprofits; and (d) an assessment of further theoretical issues that need to be addressed.

THE SOCIAL ORIGINS PARADIGM

Salamon and Anheier’s (1998) analysis of the origins of civil society concludes that single-factor theories such as market/government failure, trust, or the welfare state approach are inadequate to explain cross-national differences in nonprofit status. They posited that the embeddedness of nonprofit organizations in society suggests a need to examine broad social, political, and economic relationships. Their 1998 article proposes a parsimonious two-factor, four-way classification dependent on (a) the level of social welfare spending by governments and (b) the scale of the nonprofit sector. Nations with low government welfare spending and low nonprofit scale are classified as statist. Countries with high government/low nonprofit scale are labeled social democratic. The liberal ideal type has low government welfare spending and high nonprofit scale. Corporatist nations are high for both government welfare spending and nonprofit scale. Under the statist regime, the government restrains the level of direct state welfare spending and simultaneously discourages welfare spending by nonprofits. Both government and nonprofits spend heavily on social welfare under the corporatist model. Under the social democratic model, the state’s heavy spending leaves little room for nonprofit spending.

The Salamon and Anheier (1998) model results in a taxonomy for grouping modern nations with similar phenomena occurring in their government and nonprofit sectors. However, the two-factor, four-way classification approach does not explain why some nations have high welfare spending in both the government and nonprofit sectors, but in other nations, high state spending precludes nonprofit growth. Wagner (2000) criticized the classification system as being without referent meaning and suggested reframing the high/low model used by Salamon and Anheier to focus on the degree of centralization/decentralization in the public sphere versus the degree of government dominance/pluralism in the institutional structure. Wagner’s reframing still skirts the underlying theoretical problem of explaining why one nation has centralized, state-dominated structures whereas another has decentralized and pluralistic means of delivering services. Specifically, no theory addresses what events or factors would drive change from one approach to another. If nations never change in their approach, the Salamon and Anheier or Wagner models are adequate. However, the next section of this article will look at episodes in French and Japanese history that demonstrate that the same nation can adopt a different stance toward encouraging or discouraging the nonprofit sector at different points in time.
Speaking of France, Lord (1973) noted that “few democracies have shown such a strong tendency to swing from authoritarian to republican or parliamentary political regimes, or vice versa, over relatively short periods of time” (p. 1). The central state was very weak at the origin of the French nation in 476 A.D. Power was held primarily by feudal manors and the Catholic Church, which was a dominant owner of real estate and a source of some aid for the poor. By the 11th to 13th centuries, the feudal economy had waned in favor of the state. The Crusades brought a period of international trade accompanied by greater disparity of wealth. During this time, the charity of the Catholic Church came to be in competition with noblesse oblige (royal generosity), with rich citizens having specific charitable clientele (Archambault, 1997).

The Black Death of 1348 killed one third of the French population. This event, coupled with further famines and epidemics in the 16th and 17th centuries, had a lasting influence extending forward to the modern French emphasis on a strong state role in solving social problems. French thinking on solidarity and subsidiarity runs counter to that of many other countries. Many democratic constitutions mandate subsidiarity; that is, the national government will handle only specified activities with everything else handled at the lowest level possible. In contrast, the French solidarity model assumes that the first line of action should come from the central government, with lower levels only involved as requested or allowed by the central agency. A common French philosophy is that not only is public assistance to the poor a sacred duty, but the very existence of extreme poverty is indicative of a failure on the part of the government.

Analysis of French history reveals a pattern of special interest groups forming, becoming active, and then later being essentially squashed by the French central government. The French Revolution stemmed in part from an attempt by the middle class to claim political power through association counter to the Jacobin tradition of centralized authority. Stringent restriction on associations was imposed after the French Revolution of 1789 when the 1791 Le Chapelier Act officially banned guilds and other types of associations. Whereas the Catholic religion was recognized as the official state religion prior to the Revolution, after the Revolution the Catholic Church was suppressed by having its property seized and sold to the middle class. Gradually, however, associations began to reappear. The crime of coalition was abolished by 1864. Labor unions and mutual benefits gained legal recognition by the late 19th century, yet most voluntary associations were not able to fully emerge from the 1791 legal ban until 1901 (Archambault, 1997). The current social economy in France includes associatives governed by the 1901 law, cooperatives governed by a 1947 act, and mutuals legitimized in the 1955 code.
The mid-1960s saw a period of expansion in associations for environmental, feminist, and international concerns. This was followed by the May 1968 movement in which a general strike of universities, blue-collar workers, and white-collar executives led the French government to pass the 1971 act requiring political associations to secure authorization from the state. The 1971 act was later overturned by the French Supreme Court (Archambault, 2001). Still, the 1968 to 1971 events indicate a strong tendency for the French state to take action to reclaim power when threatened by independent groups.

An economic downturn in the 1970s coupled with expansion of medical, retirement, unemployment, and other family benefits during the postwar era resulted in a state fiscal crisis. The socialist government began a policy of decentralization in 1982. Modern partnering of the government with local authorities has resulted in greater contracting with civil society organizations to provide services. Foundations were authorized by acts in 1987 and 1990. Thus, France has come full circle from banning nonprofit entities in 1791 to currently recognizing and working with social economy organizations to help deliver social welfare services.

JAPAN

Japan has most commonly played the role of a paternalistic, strong state. Amenomori (1997) indicated that Japanese charitable organizations traditionally have not carved out a distinct sectoral image for themselves but have been enmeshed within religious, business, and governmental sectors. Records from the 7th and 8th centuries suggest that hospitals and charities were associated with Buddhist temples. The Buddhist temples were often financially sponsored by nobles or powerful clans. Buddhist fund-raising events in this time frame often had both charitable and public/governmental purposes. By the 17th century, every household had to be registered at a Buddhist temple. This indicates a high level of cooperation between religious and feudal administrative systems. In some eras of Japanese history, Christians, Confucians, and Shintoists were very active in forming schools, nursing homes, and hospitals. On the other hand, Christianity was banned from 1638 until the late 19th century as part of Japan’s isolationist policy. After the end of isolationism in 1868, wealthy families began to establish private foundations and to make charitable grants.

Under the military dictatorship of the 1930s and 1940s, all nonprofit organizations were subordinated to the state, with community mutual help organizations treated as instruments of government control. During World War II, the Shinto religion was used to promote nationalism through the myths of the emperor’s descent from the gods and tales of divine intervention in previous wars (Jansen, 2000). The new constitution imposed on Japan during the post–World War II occupation required free association of nonprofit groups. Still, the legal structures soon came to be interpreted to allow only limited numbers of state-approved nonprofit organizations subject to considerable
regulation and administrative oversight. Today, large public benefit organizations, social welfare corporations, private school corporations, and medical corporations serve primarily as arms of governmental agencies.

The past decade in Japan has brought a period of economic slowdown after a long postwar expansion. Public perception of ineffective government response to the Kobe earthquake of 1995 along with other political pressures led to the creation of the 1998 Nonprofit Law (Pekkanen, 2000). This law granted nonprofit associations the right to own property in their own name but did not grant significant tax advantages that are common in many countries. Although it is still too early to assess its full impact, the 1998 Nonprofit Law represents at least a symbolic shift toward greater civil society participation in the Japanese economy.

LEGITIMATION VIEWPOINTS

The concept of legitimacy continues to be referred to in current literature (Galaskiewicz & Bielefeld, 1998; Kramer, 2000) but is seldom closely examined in a systematic manner. The legitimation concept has been examined in greatest detail in prior works by Habermas and O’Connor as relates to the business-government relationship. Habermas (1973, 1976/1979, 1985/1987) maintained that governments attempt to hold public confidence through avoidance of economic decline. Steering mechanisms are used in an attempt to promote economic growth. Should attempts at genuine growth be unsuccessful, other mechanisms may be put in place to temporarily hide the economic decline from the public. Thus, Habermas made a distinction between legitimacy and legitimation. Legitimacy is achieved by taking actions that are for the public’s direct benefit. In contrast, legitimation involves communicative actions aimed at managing the public’s perception that government actions are effective in promoting their desired ends, whether that is in fact true. A legitimation crisis exists when the charade of bolstering the economic appearances can no longer be maintained, the economy falters, and those in control of the state regime risk losing their positions of power. Thus, promoting government legitimacy is ultimately about gaining and maintaining the power to rule. To that end, Habermas saw governments as being interested in maintaining the appearance of legitimacy, even if it means resorting to illegitimate practices to manipulate public impressions.

Rein (1975) referred to three strategies in the search for legitimacy by social planners: elite consensus, rational analysis, and citizen participation. Elite consensus involves gaining the support of major institutions in the community, rational analysis seeks support through presentation of logical solutions, and citizen participation focuses on creation and support of organizations by service recipients. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether these processes would work differently for government social planners as opposed to nonprofit
leadership. And, it is unclear as to whether government or private nonprofit organizations would be likely to have greater success with differing strategies.

O’Connor’s (1973) primary premise is that capitalist governments must attempt to fulfill two basic and contradictory goals: capital accumulation and legitimization. The capital accumulation goal requires state efforts to ensure consistent growth in the business sector. The legitimization goal requires effective measures be taken to promote social harmony. Though big business growth is desired, legitimization goals require the government to appear as though they do not overtly favor big business. Using nonprofit entities as intermediaries in government policy, administration may allow the state to minimize perceptions of business favoritism.

The shifts in state repression versus encouragement of the nonprofit sectors in France and Japan may provide rudimentary data from which to form tentative hypotheses about legitimization issues in the state-nonprofit relationship. The French experience indicates that the state’s usual approach has been to maintain as much direct control as possible. Even with the fiscal problems of the French Revolution, associations and religious organizations were repressed rather than encouraged because they were seen as threats to government power. The French experiences of 1968 suggest that changes in government response to nonprofits may have more to do with threats to power than with fiscal problems. According to Archambault (2001), May 1968 protesters were specifically criticizing the “consumption society,” which indicates legitimacy problems can arise even in periods of economic growth. The French were more willing to reach out to nonprofit entities to solve fiscal problems in the 1980s than had been the case during either the French Revolution or the late 1960s. Issues of legitimacy seem to drive the French government to a policy of noncooperation with associations that disrupt social harmony through collective protests or violence. The French experience also shows that legal status conferred some inherent legitimacy that was important in preventing the state from unilaterally disbanding political associations by the 1971 law. The tendency of the French toward passionate opposition to the government may itself come from social attitudes that hold the government to a very high standard of legitimacy in providing for social needs. The French government’s shifts in its approach to the sanctioning or repression of religion may suggest the use of religion to lend an aura of legitimacy during some time frames followed by periods of paranoia that the church might usurp state power.

Religious issues in France may also be tied to state management of cultural heterogeneity. During times when the French state recognized the Catholic Church, this suppressed other religions and promoted greater cultural homogeneity among its citizens. Until recently, France had relatively greater cultural homogeneity than many other European countries. Recent increases in the Muslim population correlate with the greater involvement of nonprofits in decentralization activities and the loosening of requirements for prior authorization of foreign associations after 1981. Still, the French move to maintain its
traditional culture with slogans such as “France aux Francais” (France is French) indicates social pressure toward homogeneity.

Rather than random events, the shifts in recognition for religious entities in France may represent a political strategy to diminish the number of recognizable subgroups the state needs to appease to achieve social legitimacy. Japan also has experienced significant shifts in state relations with religious organizations. Whereas Christianity was in one time frame banned as a Western threat to economic and state power, the Japanese state has also used religion to enhance its public persona, that is, legitimacy, through the anointing of its leaders as gods. Having a better understanding of the relationship between religion and state legitimacy in France and Japan may have implications for current issues in other countries as well, such as faith-based social welfare initiatives in the United States.

Although Japan has certainly been in an economic downturn in recent years, it does not appear that the 1998 Nonprofit Law is solely related to economic crisis as the government still provides social welfare services mainly through the existing large nonprofits. Grant making to new, smaller nonprofit associations does not appear to be a significant government agenda. The formation of the 1998 Nonprofit Law came about because of growing disillusionment of the Japanese people with patriarchal leaders in matters extending beyond pure economics. Changes in Japanese society predate the current fiscal crisis in Japan. Many of the problems of the current generation of youths and young adults in Japan derive from problems of wealth, not economic impoverishment. Even before the current economic downturn, Japanese citizens were concerned that too many environmental concessions were being made to big business. These concerns led to significant distrust of the government’s stewardship responsibilities in preventing disease and promoting public safety (Nishizutsumi, 2000).

Furthermore, although Japan has long prided itself on racial purity, the presence of more Western and Korean residents has caused problems in accommodating cultural diversity. Part of the difficulty in responding to the Kobe earthquake was attributed to the fact that many of the residents were Korean, but the Japanese bureaucracy did not have staff that could communicate with the Korean citizens. Pekkanen’s (2000) assessment that the public outcry over the Kobe earthquake response centered on the lack of insurance for the volunteers from unincorporated associations seems indicative of a general Japanese anomie (anxiety) related to concerns that the government was not adequately addressing public safety issues.

The passage of the 1998 Nonprofit Law was achieved in part because the longtime liberal democratic ruling party was temporarily replaced by a coalition government seeking to reach out to gain a wider base of support and to weaken the controls of the Ministry of Finance. Hartcher’s (1998) analysis emphasizes that the Japanese Ministry of Finance has evolved to have greater power than the elected legislators. Therefore, any attack on the powers of the Ministry of Finance constituted an attempt to restructure state power
relationships. The 2001 resignation of Japanese Prime Minister Mori because of public outcry over his playing golf after a U.S. submarine accident killed Japanese fishermen shows that Japanese concern for the appearance of legitimacy and proper respect for citizen concerns extends beyond fiscal and economic issues. Still, it is admittedly difficult to separate the two issues, as pure legitimation concerns are certainly exacerbated by economic issues.

As state-nonprofit relationships in Japan continue to unfold, it is difficult to predict the long-term impact of the 1998 Nonprofit Law. Some predict that the Ministry of Finance is likely to reinterpret the 1998 Nonprofit Law over time to include more controls (Pekkanen, 2000), but a nonprofit coalition has been formed to campaign for greater tax exemptions and to provide for an independent body to approve exempt status (Nonprofit Japan, 2000). The reformist prime minister Koizumi was elected in part on a promise to privatize the postal service. It will be interesting to see the final structure this reform will take. The postal system could either remain part of the state, be divested as a private business, be treated as a state-controlled nonprofit, become a quasi-autonomous entity similar to nonprofits in other countries, or evolve into some mixture of these forms.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER THEORY DEVELOPMENT

This article does not conduct a direct empirical test, as no existing theory adequately addresses how legitimation issues affect the state-nonprofit relationship. However, by the examples of Japan and France, the article suggests that legitimation strategies may play an important part in policy shifts from government bans to sanctioning of nonprofit organizations even without the fiscal crisis issues emphasized by prior legitimation theorists. French and Japanese experiences seem to suggest that the state has considerable power to dictate the nonprofit role. The nonprofit-state relationship appears to be especially tenuous in situations where strong constitutional and statutory rights have not been clearly established on a long-term basis. Table 1 gives four examples of how legitimation issues may generate different research hypotheses than prior theories of nonprofit origins. Although these hypotheses are a start, it is premature to propose a full-blown theory of legitimation issues in the state-nonprofit relationship. Development of a cohesive theory of the impact of legitimation issues on changes in the state-nonprofit relationship will require additional cross-national and longitudinal historical analysis. Rather than attempt to delineate a theory based on relationships in just two countries, the remainder of this article will look at potential theoretical focuses, the inherent difficulties, and possible benefits to be gained from developing a more formal theory of legitimation issues affecting the state-nonprofit relationship.

The first task in developing a theory of legitimation issues in state-nonprofit relations might be to identify a list of common strategies used by
states to manage public perceptions of legitimacy. Second, common strategies used by nonprofit entities to manage their own legitimacy need to be identified. Third, a legitimation theory of state-nonprofit relations will need to identify the factors that will drive success or failure of the nonprofit and state legitimation strategies under different situational contingencies. The first and third tasks will likely be the most difficult to achieve because they would ideally stem from interdisciplinary study across the fields of sociology, public administration, political science, historiography, and public relations.

The theory-building tasks above point to an obvious challenge: the need for coordinated, interdisciplinary, longitudinal work. Though a daunting task, the John Hopkins initiative on cross-national studies provides some evidence that it is not impossible to organize such endeavors. However, such a study is unlikely to occur unless a champion emerges to move research toward a multifaceted, multidisciplinary examination of legitimation efforts. Even academic disciplines operate under legitimacy constraints. As professions mature, their research efforts gain more prestige, legitimacy if you will, by gravitating toward parsimonious, mathematically rigorous, and often myopic models (Kuhn, 1970). If nonprofit academicians follow the pattern of other disciplines, greater emphasis on empirical nonprofit research over time will be a likely strategy for increasing visibility and respect as an academic discipline. Legitimation research focusing on historical change over time and across several nations may be risky in terms of the rewards in near-term empirical papers. On the other hand, because it is an emerging field, nonprofit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Hypothesis</th>
<th>Legitimation Hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Similar events or political structures in cross-national settings will result in similar scales of nonprofit participation in the economy.</td>
<td>1. Even in nations with similar political structures, leaders may choose different strategies for dealing with threats to legitimacy that will have differing impacts on nonprofit scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Government, nonprofit entities, and businesses form distinct sectors with respective economic advantages.</td>
<td>2. Government, nonprofit, and business functions overlap. Cooperation, competition, and hybridization of forms may be means of managing public perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. More nonprofits exist under inherent conditions of higher social heterogeneity because the government finds it harder to meet minority needs.</td>
<td>3. Heterogeneity is not necessarily a purely exogenous condition. The state may employ strategies aimed at reducing social heterogeneity, thereby affecting the nonprofit scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nonprofits are increasing in scope because they are a necessary organizational structure for dealing with increased social pressures in increasingly industrialized societies.</td>
<td>4. It is not clear whether the increasing scale in the nonprofit sector will continue even in industrialized societies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
research outlets may remain for several more years at the stage of continuing to encourage multidisciplinary research that is accessible to practitioners.

By the very nature of the legitimation problem, developing a theory that focuses on goals of state steering mechanisms and public relations efforts by either the state or nonprofit entities will pose especially challenging, if not intractable, empirical problems. One benefit from pursuing a theory of legitimation issues in the state-nonprofit relationship is that the legitimation concept has the potential to integrate prior nonprofit theories that have been shown to have insufficient predictive power when taken as separate and distinct models. For example, the welfare state model (Titmuss, 1974) and interdependency models (Salamon, 1995) are at odds with each other in terms of whether nonprofits are a necessary part of the social welfare delivery equation. Legitimation and communicative action concepts seem to suggest that social welfare could be handled by either the state or nonprofit sector depending on the political compromise played out between the two sectors. Likewise, a sound legitimation theory could also tie together government and market failure theories (Weisbrod, 1977) of nonprofit development and the supply-side issues of who will be the social entrepreneur to provide services (James, 1987). A legitimation view would seem to suggest that the impetus for expanding the nonprofit sector does not always come from social entrepreneurs within the nonprofit sector but might also come from a state strategy of jettisoning politically problematic social welfare functions.

Better defined theories of how legitimation issues affect the nonprofit sector may have practical application for several current issues in the state-nonprofit relationship. Although the U.S. constitutional issues of separation of church and state play prominently in arguments for and against the current drive to involve faith-based organizations in social welfare initiatives, there is little theory to appropriately classify the political purposes of this agenda, much less to predict the long-term effect on voter perceptions, on the character of religious organizations, or on social welfare. Legitimation is a concern for both the state and the nonprofit sector. Whereas the nonprofit sector is beginning to collect and share experiences cross-nationally, a unifying theory has not yet evolved to guide emerging nonprofit sectors such as those in Eastern Europe and Japan on the most effective strategies for gaining lasting legal recognition and benefits of significant tax relief. The nonprofit sector has grown significantly in recent years, often due to government revenue sources. As nonprofits come to rely heavily on government funds, they may also find themselves subject to cuts in the fees for service while simultaneously being required to bear the cost for more extensive data aimed at proving organizational effectiveness, that is, legitimacy. A better theoretical understanding of the seemingly unequal power relationships between the state and nonprofit entities may help focus more attention on sector-level attempts to measure and make explicit the costs of producing mandated reports. An important theoretical and practical question is whether having social services provided by a
quasi-independent nonprofit entity, as opposed to through a state-run agency, prolongs the time frame or completely dismantles voter mechanisms for demanding that more funds be directed toward social services.

With some notable exceptions, the world economy has undergone a period of significant expansion over the past decade with few interregional wars. During this time frame, nonprofits have tended to increase in scope. Past increases in the scope of the sector are no guarantee of continued expansion. Without a theory to explain shifts in state-nonprofit relations built on long-term, cross-national analysis, it is not at all clear how the nonprofit sector will be affected by future economic and political change.

References


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Cultural Diversity and High School Community Service: The Relationships Between Ethnicity and Students’ Perceptions

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This article reports the results of an analysis of the relationship between cultural statuses and the socialization of youth into civic roles. The data tell an interesting story regarding perceptions of community service program experiences among students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds and schools with different class and racial/ethnic characteristics. Findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal important similarities and differences among race/ethnic groups in their community service experiences that have direct theoretical, policy, and practical implications.

In recent years, we have seen renewed interest in research regarding volunteerism and other forms of civic participation. Especially in light of the dramatic influx of new immigrants and increased diversity in many of our urban areas, there has been an increased concern regarding the impact of social institutions on the role of civic participation, volunteering, and social capital in promoting and sustaining the values of institutions of democracy. This topic has no greater urgency than in Southern California where it is widely acknowledged that the area, including its schools, has become one of the most socially and culturally diverse urban regions in the United States. This article reports the results of an analysis of the relationship between cultural statuses and the socialization of youth into civic roles through high school community service.

We base this article on research from the past 4 years regarding high school community service in Los Angeles County (Youth Socialization and Civic Participation Through Community Service Among High School Students in Los Angeles County). The purpose of this research has been to investigate how youth are

Note: This research was made possible by a grant from the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation.
socialized through community service activities into civic participation roles within a socially and culturally diverse environment. The first stage involved a mail survey to all public and private high schools in Los Angeles County regarding the community service opportunities available to their students and follow-up interviews with a subsample of school administrators (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998). In the second phase of the project, we examined the roles and relationships of community organizations where students performed service activities (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1997). In the most recent stage of the project, we interviewed 285 high school students from 27 high schools located in seven areas representing the social and cultural diversity of Los Angeles County. We collected the data through face-to-face interviews that included both forced choice and open-ended interviews and provided us with the capacity to use statistical and qualitative analysis (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999).

HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

EXTENT

Most U.S. high school students have the opportunity to be involved in community service programs through their schools. The 1995 Independent Sector Survey of teenage volunteers revealed that 59% of teenagers attended a school that encouraged community service programs and 16% attended schools that required service (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996, p. 57). Furthermore, the number of schools that provide credit for service and/or require community service is increasing. By 1998, among the 50 largest school districts in the United States, nearly 20% required service for graduation for all students, and nearly half included at least one school requiring volunteer service (Dundjerski & Gray, 1998).

In Southern California, the proportion of private schools requiring community service, especially those with religious affiliation, is greater than the proportion of public schools (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998). This is a likely effect of the compatibility of religious values with service, the commitment to social responsibility of many private nonsectarian schools, and the lack of resources to accommodate the larger numbers of students in the public schools. In addition, besides the differences in the likelihood of requiring community service, there appear to be other important differences among the auspices of schools (whether the school is public, religious, or nonsectarian) (cf. Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998, 1999).

PURPOSE/FUNCTIONS

Several purposes have been attributed to community service. For example, Conrad and Hedin (1991, p. 745) asserted that community service approaches could be divided into two categories: “the reform of youth” and the “the
reform of education." That is, community service may be focused on improving students’ character, integration into adult roles, and/or citizenship skills or on improving the schools’ capacity to involve the students actively into their learning (Keith, 1996). Furco (1994) has identified five service program philosophies that include social development, personal and moral development, vocational development, academic achievement, and political development. School administrators in Los Angeles County identified personal growth, educational development, community and civic participation, and altruism (religious and nonreligious) as rationales for offering community service opportunities (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998, p. 79). With respect to civic engagement, there are also differences in whether community service is a vehicle for learning one’s civic responsibilities, including charity and altruistic behavior, or promoting social change (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996, p. 595).

IMPACTS

The success of community service programs in meeting their goals or objectives has been mixed (cf. Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, pp. 80-82, for a review of literature on the impact of school-based service on students’ personal and social development, academic and cognitive development, and political efficacy and civic engagement). Generally, the area of personal and social development receives the strongest support: a positive association between participation in community service and increased self-esteem, social responsibility, identity development, and career awareness (Shumer & Belbas, 1996, p. 217). On the other hand, although there is limited evidence that community service participation increases academic performance, Wade and Saxe (1996) argued that such evidence “is neither extensive nor conclusive” (p. 346). Also, the relationships between community service participation and indicators of civic participation and political effectiveness tend to be mixed or negative. The students in Los Angeles County indicated that community service had enabled them to learn about themselves (55%), about helping (54%), and about various community or social issues (26%) (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, pp. 99-100).

PROGRAM PROCESSES: STRUCTURE, COMPONENTS, SERVICE LEARNING

In addition to the purposes of the community service activity, other program elements and processes can shape the students’ experiences, including if and how students are recruited, trained, supervised, recognized, and evaluated; their opportunity to reflect on their service experience; whether the activity is required; and the nature of the relationship with local organizations where students might serve. In Southern California, most students (86%) stated that they received supervision, but less than half felt that they received training (41%), recognition (36%), or evaluation (44%) for their service. Furthermore, more than two thirds did not feel encouraged to do service by their
high school, and nearly half did not feel encouraged to link service with learning by their school (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, pp. 95-97).

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Students’ perceptions of their community service activities, including their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the experience, are important, yet underresearched, aspects of high school community service. Among the students’ perceptions that apparently increase the likelihood of a positive assessment of their experience are feelings that “they have adult responsibilities at their sites, maintain collegial relationships with site staff, make a significant contribution, and are challenged” (Root, 1997, p. 52); they are “being given important responsibilities, being inspired by the organization’s leadership, knowing what is expected of them, having a chance to participate in key decisions, and seeing the effects of their work” (Do Something, Inc., 1999, p. 1); and they are having a “meaningful experience, making a difference in another person’s life, personal contract, feeling appreciated, taking initiative and pride in what they do” (Wuthnow, 1995, pp. 19-21, cited in Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, p. 87). Nearly half (48%) of the students in the Los Angeles County sample indicated that what they liked most about their community service experience was the service orientation of the program. An additional 36% indicated that they liked the social aspects the most (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, p. 97).

Those aspects leading to dissatisfaction include disorganized activities, unclear expectations on the job, poor relationships with those with whom they worked (Do Something, Inc., 1999, p. 1), and restrictive rules and regulations that reduce direct contact with those receiving service (Wuthnow, 1995, p. 103). Eighty percent of the Los Angeles County students provided at least one negative attribute of their service, including the site and program conditions and rules, time constraints, personal discomforts, a sense of personal inefficacy in their service activity, the presence of annoying persons, and seeing suffering of others (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, pp. 98-99). Also, half (53%) indicated that they had fears and/or concerns about doing community service (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999, p. 99).

RACE AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

As pointed out earlier, the growth of cultural diversity in the United States, especially Southern California, highlights the importance of community service as potential means to socialize relative newcomers in the roles of citizenship. It also raises the question of whether race and ethnicity influence the nature of the students’ community service experience. However, other than studies of teenage volunteers that have shown no difference between Whites and non-Whites in whether they volunteer, that Whites are more likely to volunteer informally, and that non-Whites volunteer more time to religious organizations (Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994), race and ethnicity among high school
community service volunteers have not been the subject of much research. For example, in a study of the relationship between community service participation and Black identity formation among high school students, Youniss and Yates (1997) observed that “the literature on community service does not address how the dynamics of race, class and gender can influence service experience” (p. 148).

Nevertheless, the research literature on adult volunteering, as well as the general topic of philanthropic behavior, provides clues to the significance of race and ethnicity regarding community service. For example, in a study of volunteerism, Musick, Wilson, and Bynum (2000) posited the importance of personal, social, and cultural resources, pointing out that the latter “play a role in making volunteer work possible” (p. 1539). A “culture of benevolence,” based on the values, norms, traditions, and expectations among ethnic groups, can serve as an “important resource upon which to draw for volunteer work” (Wilson & Musick, 1997, p. 697).

Cultural resources may vary from group to group. Smith, Shue, Vest, and Villarreal (1999) found that although knowledge of ethnicity does not enable the prediction of the amount of giving or volunteering outside the nuclear family, it does help to predict the “form and beneficiaries of giving and volunteering” (p. 154). Culturally based traditions of reciprocity, sharing, and helping characterize many recent immigrant and minority groups. For example, family, church, and Black-based charities play an important role in African Americans’ philanthropic practices; religious beliefs and practices, benevolent and protective associations, and respect for elderly and family shape Asian American benevolent practices (Joseph, 1995); and the “primacy of familial relationship,” as well as their ties to their community and religion, influences the benevolence of Latinos (Joseph, 1995). Also, differences occur within cultural groups, depending on factors such as social class and recentness of immigration to the United States. For example, among Asian Americans, more recent immigrants may be using their indigenous voluntary associations and faith-based organizations as a source of social networking and survival. This contrasts with more acculturated Asian Americans who become involved in helping activities through their professional associations and groups working for specific community and noncommunity causes. Furthermore, possibly as a result of greater accumulated wealth, some make a transition from or adopt along with this helping orientation an “investing” mode of philanthropy (Chao, 2001, pp. 69-76).

Besides the expected impact of the volunteer’s ethnic identity on his or her service experience, we assume that the school context, for example, its racial composition, can also affect the individual’s experience. One study conducted by Newman and Rutter (1986), for example, found that schools in which minority students exceeded 50% were more likely than majority White schools to offer one or more community service programs and nearly “three times more likely to offer community service as an elective and award academic credit” (p. 66).
Volunteer and service activities have traditionally been associated with participation in religious activities. Islamic and Judeo-Christian theologies and practices all emphasize the importance of performing good works and helping others in need. Not only do congregations sponsor service projects in which members participate as volunteers, but churches and temples sponsor schools that attempt to perpetuate service values to their youth. In Los Angeles County, for example, more than three fourths of the religious schools require community service for graduation. Also, among adults nationwide, the most frequently identified activity area of volunteering (after informal activity) is to religious organizations (Independent Sector, 1999, p. 4). Furthermore, Sundeen and Raskoff (1994) found church affiliation to be one of the three strongest predictors of teenage volunteering. This association with service, along with its significance as an additional source of cultural variation, makes religion an essential part in the understanding of cultural diversity and community service. Whereas we know that religious factors are strongly associated with service, little evidence exists that illuminates its role in differentiating teenagers’ experience of their service experience.

Social class serves as one other element of cultural diversity. The findings regarding class and volunteering offer solid evidence that “dominant status,” especially as measured by income, education, and occupation, influences whether one volunteers (Smith, 1994, pp. 246-250). Likewise, among teenagers, social class as measured by father’s occupation is positively associated with volunteering in general and informal volunteering (although it is negatively associated with number of hours volunteered to environmental activities) (Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994, p. 389). However, similar to race and community service, the existing research does not inform us adequately as to how social class influences students’ perceptions of their community service experiences.

Summary of the Literature

Given the above overview of the literature, several factors should be incorporated into a study of cultural diversity and community service. Our conceptual framework contains (a) structural-level variables, such as the organizational context of the service experience, including the school’s auspice, its community service policy (mandated or voluntary), and its racial composition, and (b) individual-level variables that include not only the students’ personal and social statuses but also their perceptions of their schools’ practices, the impacts of their service, and the long-term intention resulting from their community service involvement. Our assumption is that the race/ethnicity
status will differentiate between student perceptions but that these perceptions will also be affected by the real and perceived school context of their service. By considering two levels of variables and multiple dimensions of the students’ perceptions and using multiple regression techniques to simultaneously control for the effects of the variables, we will be able to capture the complexity inherent in the interplay between organization and individual, as well as between different stages in behavior.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In 1996, we began the study by surveying high schools in Los Angeles County regarding their community service programs. We selected 27 schools in seven different geographic regions in the county for on-campus interviews. These regions reflect a variety of the diverse sociocultural demographic categories within the county and include the following: (a) White, White ethnic, and Latino middle-class suburb; (b) White and Latino working-class urban; (c) White and Asian American middle-class suburb; (d) African American and Latino working-class urban; (e) Latino inner city; (f) White and White ethnic middle- and working-class suburb; and (g) White upper-middle-class suburb. We selected 3 schools in each region for the interviews, ensuring that at least 1 was private and 1 was public.

The next year, we surveyed (63) and interviewed (11) personnel in the community organizations that work with schools in providing sites for students’ service activities. Following that phase, we surveyed 285 students in the schools mentioned previously. The selection of students at each school was in the hands of the school administrators. Although we requested students who represented a range of academic achievement and extracurricular activity levels, the administrators did not always know how to find those students whose activities were not within their radar. The most successful samples we obtained were from schools who gave us access to entire classrooms rather than those few who called students in when they passed by in the hallway. Overall, we have confidence that the students in each sample represent a range of experiences as their demographic profile reflects such diversity, especially in grade point average (one third of the students estimated their average to be B–, C, or lower; see the appendix).

We analyze the data using both qualitative coding and quantitative analyses. First, we coded the qualitative transcripts (using Atlas/ti software) for issues relating to interview questions (e.g., activity type, training, future volunteer plans); second, we analyzed the text for patterns of answers within each code (e.g., service activity was coded for direct, leadership, and maintenance types of activities); third, we transformed those codes and subcodes into quantitative data to be used in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. For this article, we use logistic regression analysis to understand the factors that lead to different experiences with community service processes.
outcomes, and future plans to volunteer. We return to the qualitative data to supplement and further explain each analysis with quotations from the interviews.

The data tell an interesting story regarding community service program experiences among students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds and schools with different class and racial/ethnic characteristics. Categories of race/ethnicity, social class, religion, and school auspices are salient for understanding (a) community service processes in the schools (service learning activities, structures of implementation, type of service activities, and school encouragement of service), (b) outcomes for the students (elements they liked most and least about the service, fears, and what they learned from the service activities), and (c) future plans for volunteering (see Figure 1). We use a three-stage regression analysis to identify (a) the student and school characteristics that affect perceptions of community service processes, (b) how students and school characteristics and community service processes affect outcomes, and (c) how all of these factors affect future volunteering intentions while controlling for all the various variables.

The main independent variables, student and school characteristics, are used in each regression and are defined as follows. School characteristics include auspices (public, private nonsectarian, and private religious), mandate (service requirement), and majority race/ethnicity. Student characteristics include gender, grade point average, grade level, religious service attendance, father’s education, and race/ethnicity. (See the appendix for coding and further descriptions of all variables.)

For the first analysis, we regressed characteristics of the students and their schools to assess their impact on the perception of community service processes. These processes include service learning modalities (service is discussed at school, service is mentioned in class, and student feels encouraged to link service with learning), implementation structures (e.g., training, supervision, evaluation, and supervision), type of service (direct service versus event, professional, fund-raising, maintenance, and indirect), and encouragement from the school to experience community service. Generally, we are examining the salience of student and school characteristics in predicting how students experience and interpret their community service activities and processes.

The second step in the analysis combines student and school characteristics and community service processes to examine their impact on the outcomes of service for students. In other words, what factors, including students’ personal and social statuses, their school context, and their particular community service experience, lead students to like particular aspects the most or least, to fear, and to develop an understanding of different issues?

The last analysis investigates what factors, among student and school characteristics, community service processes, and the outcomes explored in the second step, affect a student’s decision to volunteer in the future.
FINDINGS

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS ON PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE PROCESSES

Table 1 presents the results of a logistic regression analysis on community service processes, including service learning, implementation processes, type of community service, and school encouragement of service. The models for implementation processes and school encouragement were found to be nonsignificant, and therefore no differences among the groups exist in the way they perceive those processes. The findings regarding service learning and service type only will be discussed.

Service learning, a pedagogy in which community service is linked with classroom material, emerges as a process deeply affected by religion and race/ethnicity. Students more likely to experience service learning modalities (for example, discussing service in the classroom or at school and feeling that the school encourages a link between service and learning) are those in religious schools, who attend religious services more frequently, and who have higher grade point averages. Students least likely to experience service learning modalities attend schools with the greatest cultural diversity (for example, no single ethnic-racial majority) and identify as Asian American, regardless of the diversity of their schools.

Students more likely to do direct service are those in nonsectarian schools, those that require community service activities, and those in schools with a majority White-Latino. These issues will be addressed further in the Discussion section.

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND PROGRAM PROCESSES ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Table 2 presents the logistic regression results on community service outcomes, including those aspects of the experience that the students liked most and least, the students feared, and affected them. One of the models related to what students most liked about their service—whether or not they indicated that they most like the learning experience—is not statistically significant, whereas the other two models (service orientation and social aspects) are significant. Those who stated that they like most the learning experience were fewer in number than those who like most the service and social aspects; considering the rarity of service learning experiences, it is no surprise that students did not notice any learning connected to their service activities. Also, none of the models regarding what students liked least are significant, indicating that no one particular aspect of the service experience was liked least by any racial or other demographic group.
Those students likely to mention appreciating most the service aspects attend schools that have a religious affiliation, require service, and encourage service. Here, we see the importance of the school (and especially religious schools) in promoting a positive service learning experience. Also, contrary to some expectations, students attending mandated programs appreciate the service orientation more than those attending nonmandated programs. Although the school variables (auspice and mandate) make a substantial impact on students’ appreciation of service, student characteristics also make a difference, as students identifying as Asian American were less likely than others to appreciate a service orientation.

In contrast to those students who most appreciate the service aspects of community service, those who value the social aspects include students attending schools that do not require service (which are unlikely to be religious schools), that do not encourage service, and that have fewer implementation procedures. Also, Asian American students, students in lower grade levels, and those with higher church/temple attendance tend to value social

Table 1. Regression of School and Student Characteristics on Community Service Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Service Process</th>
<th>Service Learning</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Direct Service</th>
<th>School Encouragement</th>
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<td>.09</td>
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*p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001.
Table 2. Regression of School Characteristics, Student Characteristics, and Community Service Processes on Outcomes

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*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01. ***p ≤ .001.
aspects of service. When service is mandated or encouraged, students enjoy service, whereas, when service is neither mandated nor encouraged, students most enjoy the social aspects of the experience. Organizational support of service results in more attention to and enjoyment of that service experience for the participants. Opportunity for social interaction and friendships through community service is clearly an outcome with positive consequences for adolescents. Nevertheless, school administrators responsible for community service and service learning programs should not assume that their students will develop a service ethic by providing only an opportunity for service without a considered rationale, necessary structure and support services, and occasions for systematic reflection.

Besides having positive or negative feelings toward specific areas of their community service participation, students vary in their fears or concerns regarding it. The findings in Table 2 show that students do worry about their participation in community service. The variable measuring fear of rejection in their service is positively associated with being African American (to be discussed below) and performing direct service. Engaging face-to-face with the recipients of service and/or the public becomes a real concern and source of personal rejection. Students who fear making mistakes tend to come from private nonsectarian (and often academically demanding) schools and majority White-Latino schools. The race/ethnicity and class concerns here will be dealt with in the following Discussion section.

The last set of outcome variables deals with the types of impacts of service perceived by students—specifically, did they learn about helping others, themselves, current social issues, and work-related skills? Only the model testing whether students learn about social issues did not achieve statistical significance. Students tended not to identify this area of learning as an impact. As a result, or perhaps in addition to this, little differentiation exists among school types and students. This raises the question as to whether service effectively meets a frequently stated function of service learning pedagogy, that is, increased learning about social issues. The types of impact perceived by students vary; yet, within these variations, we find differences among ethnic groups and schools. For example, those students more likely to state that they learned about helping from their community service attended religious schools and majority Latino schools, but not majority African American schools. Also, Asian Americans were less likely than other students to have learned about helping.

Non-White students and those directly interacting with the service recipients experience personal growth and development. Students who state that they learned about themselves tend not to be from majority White-Latino schools but are more likely to be from a minority group and be involved in direct service. A subject for further investigation is to better understand the positive relationships between doing direct service, learning about self, and fearing personal rejection.
The findings with regard to learning about work skills through the service experience are paradoxical because those students more likely to have learned work skills tend to be in majority White, Asian American, or White-Asian schools than in African American, Latino, or White-Latino schools. From these findings, one might conclude that the latter schools, located predominantly in disadvantaged areas, fall short of preparing their students for careers, whereas middle-class schools provide their students with job preparation. However, at the individual level, a positive association exists between learning about work skills and being from lower class backgrounds. They are also more likely to be older students (preparing for employment) and less likely to be Latino. Thus, there emerges a possible contradiction between the findings from the structural and individual levels of analysis that requires further analysis.

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS, COMMUNITY SERVICE PROCESSES, AND OUTCOMES ON STUDENTS’ INTENTION TO VOLUNTEER IN THE FUTURE

Many supporters of service learning and school-based community service assume that it will lead to future civic engagement, including volunteer service as an adult. Without a longitudinal study, this assumption can only be tested here by examining the students’ stated intentions of future participation. Latino students (and those in schools with a majority of White and Latino students) are most likely to state their intention to volunteer in the future. Also, underscoring the importance of a commonly stated goal of community service (i.e., personal development), those students who learned most about themselves stated they would continue to do service in the future. Less easy to understand is the finding that those who most dislike personal issues in their service experience (e.g., tiring or uncomfortable situations, realizing their shortcomings, or seeing a lack of commitment) are more likely to intend to volunteer in the future.

We will now continue with a more in-depth discussion of cultural diversity and community service incorporating qualitative findings of the study.

DISCUSSION

Findings from the quantitative (regression) and qualitative analyses reveal important similarities and differences among race, ethnicity, social class, and religious groups in their community service experiences. The prior analysis shows more similarity than difference among racial/ethnic groups in most community service experiences, although specific groups do emerge as having unique experiences; for example, there are statistically significant relationships between African American, Asian American, and Latino students and
Table 3. Regression of School Characteristics, Student Characteristics, Community Service Processes, and Outcomes on Future Plans to Volunteer

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*p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001.
the dependent variables. Social class is also implicated in the impact of community service programs as students from lower-class backgrounds learn work skills through their service activities. Furthermore, religious affiliation, through attendance at a religious school and more frequent participation in religious services (regardless of school auspices), is tied intricately to service learning.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Figure 1 summarizes the impact of race and ethnicity on the students’ service experience, indicating the statistically significant relationships between school and individual characteristics and the dependent variables.

Asian Americans. Whereas those students attending schools with a majority of Asian American students are no different than those attending other schools, Asian American students (regardless of school) are more likely than other racial-ethnic groups to perceive and value community service as a social, nonacademic activity, one in which they do not learn about helping but do learn about themselves. These students are not as likely as the others to report that they perceive service learning activities occurring at school, for example, discussion or encouragement of service in class or school. Second, as for perceived outcomes of their service activities, they value a social orientation the most and a service orientation the least. Also, in terms of the impact or lessons learned from the experience, they tend to state that they learn more about themselves and less about helping others through their service activities. There are understandable connections between a less positive attitude toward providing service and not learning about helping, as well as between a positive attitude toward social interaction and personal or self-discovery. Students in schools perceived as not encouraging or emphasizing service learning (as opposed to service without a strong learning component) may see the experience as an avenue for being with friends, meeting new people, and having social needs met.

In addition, in light of Chao’s (2001) observations that less acculturated Asian Americans may use their indigenous nonprofit associations as a means of providing social insulation from the wider non-Asian society, school-based community service may provide young Asian Americans with similar functions. However, the data in this study do not contain evidence on their level of acculturation. Alternatively, although not documented in this study, these students may view community service as an opportunity to socialize and “escape” from the rigors of academic pressures and, possibly, family responsibilities. The social opportunities sponsored by the school are quite attractive as 1 Asian American student said,
### School Majority

<table>
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+ = significant positive relationship; – = significant negative relationship; (blank) = no significant relationship.

### STUDENT

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</tr>
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+ = significant positive relationship; – = significant negative relationship; (blank) = no significant relationship.

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**Figure 1. Summary of Race and Ethnicity Impacts**
It’s a good reason for my parents not to nag at me, “Why do you go out so much with your friends?” I go, “Oh, I’m working community service.” So that’d be cool.

Another Asian American student reflects that her service helps her to get through my stress. . . . I’m a senior. I’m going through college applications and the SATs. Basically testing and getting good grades and things like that. . . . Usually when I go to work every weekend, I completely forget about all the academics and I concentrate on helping them out.

Although the quantitative analysis did not address it, the Armenian students, a small subset of the White students (thus no regression was possible), also reflect the same pattern: They also appreciate most the social aspects of service as offering a place to socialize “legitimately” and avoid strictly academic pressures.

Latinos. Schools with a majority of Latino students, as well as Latino students (regardless of school), also have distinct service experiences. Students attending mixed White-Latino majority schools possess significantly different attitudes and some similarity compared with those attending Latino majority schools. Similar to students at mixed White-Asian majority schools, the White-Latino school students do not as readily perceive service learning processes as occurring. Also, these students report direct service rather than other forms of service. As for outcomes of their experience, the students in White-Latino majority schools are the only school group likely to fear mistakes. In terms of the impact of community service on what they learned, this group of students was less likely to feel that they learned about themselves. Also, and similar to students in Latino majority schools, there was a feeling of not learning work skills through community service. Finally, the students in the mixed White-Latino schools are more likely to wish to volunteer in the future. These findings, although not providing an answer, raise an intriguing question: What is it about this mix of White-Latino (as well as White–Asian American) school populations that leads to these differences?

Latino students (when controlling for schools’ ethnic mix) perceive similar and different impacts from the other groups in two respects: All minority groups identify “learning about myself” as an impact, whereas Latinos are less likely than others to identify the learning of work skills as an impact of their service. Finally, these students are those most likely to expect to volunteer in the future. Thus, it seems apparent that Latino students, regardless of religious ties or school auspices, become involved with community service that takes on a greater salience for them and that they plan to continue throughout their lives.
As 4 Latino students say,

Doing service has made me aware that there’s other people that don’t have what I have. And that makes me think that I’d like a career to help those people. Or I’d like to treat people who are here in school better.

When you see handicapped people, you’re sort of scared at first. You don’t know how to act. I learned that they’re just like you. They’re just like everybody else.

I’ve learned to take responsibility. I learned that my neighbors could have trust in me; my mom to feel proud of me for helping others.

Each time I do community service, I notice when we all join up together and start cleaning, not only does the place look good, we feel good. We’re all united, you know. . . . Like, I got a lotta friends who are African Americans and Asian and I notice sometimes that there’s conflict between us. But when we do community service or we do something together, how weird, but there’s no conflict. . . . That’s what I like about that, we all get together, we all do something more positive not negative. . . . When we do stuff like that, like them rich, high people, them lawyers and stuff like that, they come down and they look at us and they go, oh, well, you know, these ghetto boys are doing something this good, you know. And then when the news, you know, tells what we did in the community and stuff like that, it makes me feel real good. Not just all those shootings, I’m tired of just bad news. Sometimes you gotta hear some good news.

_African Americans._ African American students’ perceptions appear to be primarily framed around their personal experiences and degree of acceptance by others. For example, they are more likely to say that they learned about themselves through their community service experience. Also, students in schools with a majority African American population (90% are African American) are less likely to learn about helping and work skills and more likely to fear rejection. Two students express how their fears related to their own behavior:

I was scared that I wouldn’t be a good example and I wouldn’t want them to follow the bad things that I do. No one’s perfect. . . . I just want to make sure I do everything right. . . . I have a relationship with God and just asked Him to help me do what’s right. In the hospital I faced my fears, I went up to them and made them feel better which made me feel better.

[I didn’t like] sometimes presenting my ideas because, you know, I fear that other people may reject or think that’s stupid or whatever. But not saying anything because sometimes you have extra critical people that
you may not be able to work with, but you have to work with them anyway. . . . At first I thought people weren’t going to like me since, you know, I’m smart or whatever. . . . You’re always going to have negative people. But the fact is I’ve [always been] scared of negative feedback. . . . I realize that no matter what you do, you’re going to always get criticized whether it’s good, bad, or, you know, in between. Whatever you do, whether it helps someone or whether it helps you, people gonna always criticize you. I was just kind of scared that people judge or comment about me, basically.

Both of these students worked through these fears of rejection by doing the service activities and, subsequently, learning more about themselves as a result.

SOCIAL CLASS

Students from lower social class levels (as measured by father’s education) are more likely than those from higher levels to learn about work skills as a result of their community service activities. Service programs are often seen by schools in lower income communities as an opportunity to gain work experience and skills. A public school principal mentioned that her school requires service because

.volunteering is a way to practice approaching someone for employment in a nonthreatening manner. Once they are out there, they enjoy having responsibility and, hopefully, this will transfer to a regular job. . . . Also, volunteering helps prepare the students for employment, like resumes.

The types of student service (direct vs. all other types) at the different auspices of schools also highlight variations in the activities of students in the upper and lower echelons of social class. Students in the nonsectarian schools are most likely to do direct service compared to other types (see Table 1). However, when breaking down service types into direct, leadership activities; indirect (office work); and maintenance work (cleanups on campus), it becomes clear that the more elite private school students tend to do the more professional work, whereas the students in public schools and religious schools are more likely to do the office or maintenance work. 2

School personnel in struggling communities often define community service as simply some helping relationship with community organizations; their awareness of service learning or any other forms of community engagement is not apparent. These areas often lack resources for getting basic education needs met. One continuation high school principal mentioned that his “students face the basic problem of getting out of high school.” He continued to mention that through service, the students “have a good feeling of themselves and their function in society. Many do not feel they can function.” At this
particular school, only two students were doing service and the principal had personally invited them only following an improvement in their academic work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

Religious ties of the student (as measured by attendance at religious services), as well as the school’s religious affiliation, result in more service learning exposure, learning about helping, and appreciating most the service activities themselves. More academic use of service presents a more comprehensive socializing experience for students, thus integrating service into life skills and their educational experiences. Service learning activities range from class requirements to senior projects, as the following religious school students said,

In religion class we must write a 200-word essay on how the community service has helped you. Community service is part of the grade requirement for the class.

In religion class we must do a summary of what you are doing and at the end of the hours we must do an essay on how we did and how we could change the activity.

In your senior year, you’re supposed to write this paper about your experiences and how you felt during community service hours. You read it to the class and you share.

Also, despite the impact of religious schools on their community service experience, a positive association exists between frequency of students’ attendance at religious services and the likelihood of valuing the social aspects of their experience. Thus, the impact of religious affiliation differs according to whether the student attends a faith-based school or participates in church or temple services. One could argue that religious schools, most of which require community service, place special emphasis on serving others and ensure that students experience a service orientation. Although a student might hear about the importance of service to others in a church service, the opportunity to practice it is not as great as in school-required service.

CONCLUSIONS: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

This article presents quantitative and qualitative research findings about student experiences in high school community service programs that highlight the complex nature of relationships between that experience and diverse student populations. Such an examination of the relationship between cultural diversity and service included consideration of individual and school
characteristics. Whereas the logistic regression analysis results indicate that school students’ religious ties, social class backgrounds, and racial-ethnic identification are associated with distinctly different experiences and outcomes in their service activities, the findings also suggest that more structural variables, such as school processes, characteristics, and policies, affect the students’ experiences. Consequently, understanding cultural diversity in high school–based community service cannot be separated from the organizational context in which it takes place. Furthermore, although most of the findings do not yield consistent differences among groups or types of schools, these findings emphasize the importance of understanding the differential impact on diverse student populations and should be of interest to researchers and practitioners involved in this field.

The one consistent finding related to students’ ethnicity is related to the impact of the community service experience: All four minority groups (African American, Asian American, Latino American, and others) are more likely than White students to state that they learned about themselves through their experience. Community service activities usually take place in impoverished neighborhoods or organizations that serve a disadvantaged and typically minority population. Thus, for White students doing service, the racial contrast between themselves and the service recipients is vast and does not necessarily prompt reflection on similarities between the student and clients. However, for minority students, that contrast may not be so great, and they experience more self-reflection on similarities and differences between themselves and those benefiting from the service. This dynamic further perpetuates the blinders of race privilege when White persons see no connection between their own lives and that of others less well off. The White students who do not learn about themselves through service are less able to relate to those receiving service, and if they reflect on their own situation, they may simply feel lucky that they are not in that situation, neither realizing their own place in society nor getting a full understanding of why people may find themselves in a position to be a beneficiary of community service activities.

The impact variable, learned about self, is also positively associated with students’ perceived likelihood of volunteering in the future. Although the expectation of future behavior does not guarantee actual volunteer behavior, we speculate that such an attitude will have enduring effects and lead to future behavior. Consequently, if we assume that these variables have a time sequence, we can hypothesize for future research that compared to White students’, minority students’ service learning experiences provide them with greater self-insights and understanding that then lead to the expectancy of future volunteering. Future research needs to focus on why non-White students appear to learn more about themselves from community service and how it is related to their intention to continue doing service. We suggest that as these students gain greater insight into themselves through coping with new situations and assuming increased responsibilities, they develop a greater
sense of self-competence, thereby reinforcing their service behavior. (Another pathway, not related to individual cultural diversity, is that students at schools with White-Latino majorities or nonsectarian schools tend to participate in direct service activities that also lead to more learning about themselves and, ultimately, future plans to volunteer.)

In addition, as some critics of community service question its promotion of personal development in contrast to political awareness and social change (Battistoni, 1997; Boyte, 1991), we recommend that further research focus on the question of whether school-based community service serves as a mechanism to divert minority students away from activities in which they can learn about social and political issues and their empowerment.

Regardless of the ethnic composition of their school, the impact of the community service experience appears to be most distinctive with Asian American students. If an organization’s target population includes Asian American students, these findings suggest the importance of recognizing that social aspects of service may attract them, as a counterpoint to the academic or family pressures they normally face or, in the case of recent immigrants, as a source of social relationships. Recruiting techniques could then focus more on attracting friendship groups or emphasizing the social opportunities inherent in service activities. Activities might also be designed to allow more interaction among volunteers and their clients that would enable socializing to take place not just among the volunteers. The example of Asian Americans portrays the complex interplay between structural- and individual-level variables. Because a negative association exists between Asian Americans and the variable service learning, one could conclude that without being exposed to service learning processes, students have fun but place less value in a service orientation.

The results raise further questions regarding the differences between Asian Americans and other student groups, as well as the differences among Asian Americans. For example, how do students of Chinese heritage differ from those of Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino, or Cambodian background? Furthermore, what differences are found between those who have recently immigrated, those who were born and raised in the area, and others?

In contrast to Asian Americans, the findings portray African American students as having experiences not too dissimilar with other students. However, the impact of attending schools with the majority being African American students does have important effects, as their students are more likely to fear rejection and less likely to learn about helping and work skills. These schools reflect the ongoing legacy of the historical status of African Americans in the United States as not fully enfranchised or accepted into mainstream culture. They face tremendous economic difficulties in their neighborhoods, including budgetary problems and a dearth of economic opportunity for their students. Their service programs are often designed to get students into their community in a proactive way and offer opportunities through internships, yet the
students do not report these types of benefits. Future research will delve into this dynamic to ascertain why the fears remain and assess the effectiveness of the service program goals.

Latin students differ from Black and Asian American students in that both student ethnic identification and school ethnic composition are significantly associated with dependent variables. We suspect that the perceived emphasis on helping and the lack of opportunity to learn about work issues in Latino majority schools, as well as the likelihood of Latinos intending future involvement in service, result from reasons beyond ethnicity due to the salience of religion and the predominance of Catholicism among Latinos. The Catholic Church, through its schools, emphasizes the importance of helping throughout one’s life, primarily assisting those in other communities associated with the church. Thus, a greater focus on helping for the sake of service rather than developing work skills makes sense. However, similar to the problem of treating Asian Americans as a single cultural group, it would be important to compare the differences and similarities in community service activities and perceptions among students from the various Spanish-speaking groups.

Religious school practices illustrate that if the school ties the service activities with educational processes, the program gives students an enhanced appreciation for service. Students whose service is tightly linked to the educational material, as is found generally among religious schools, appear to enjoy those activities much more than if it were an extracurricular activity.

Students in the lower social class levels, who are more likely to be of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds, often gain entry into employment through service programs that develop their job skills and socialize them into how to approach and behave within an organization. Their service also is more likely to be linked to maintenance of the school’s physical plant or indirect services in offices, thus supplementing (or replacing) typical occupational positions within the organizations. Students from higher social class backgrounds, who tend to be White or Asian American or attend nonsesterian schools, also learn skills that translate into the white-collar workplace (e.g., leadership and assisting professionals), and their experiences gain them entry into upper-level professional networks. Future research should focus on whether the class structure is perpetuated by both the educational and community service opportunities at schools, with poorer students prepared to work in janitorial or service positions and wealthier students prepared to take on authority and responsibility.

Future research should focus on clarifying the interplay between organizational context, process and impact variables, and race and ethnic status. Part of this would also include further in-depth investigation and analysis of culturally specific understandings of service.
Appendix

Operational Indicators

School characteristics

School auspices
- Religious = 1 if student attends a private religious school ($n = 94$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 187$); $M = 0.33$
- Nonsectarian = 1 if student attends a private nonsectarian school ($n = 45$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 236$); $M = 0.16$
- Dummy variable (if student attends a public school) ($n = 142$)

School mandate policy
- Mandate = 1 if student attends a school that requires service ($n = 153$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 128$); $M = 0.54$

School racial/ethnic composition
- Majority race African American = 1 if student attends a school with the majority race African American ($n = 31$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 250$); $M = 0.11$
- Majority race Asian American = 1 if student attends a school with the majority race Asian American ($n = 12$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 269$); $M = 0.04$
- Majority race Latino = 1 if student attends a school with the majority race Latino ($n = 90$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 191$); $M = 0.32$
- Majority race White/Asian = 1 if student attends a school with the majority population of White and Asian American ($n = 33$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 248$); $M = 0.12$
- Majority race White/Latino = 1 if student attends a school with the majority race White and Latino ($n = 14$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 267$); $M = 0.05$
- Dummy variable (if student attends a school with the majority race White) ($n = 101$)

Student characteristics
- Gender = 1 if student is female ($n = 153$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 126$); $M = 0.55$
- Grade point average = 1 if self-reported grade point average is A ($n = 49$); 2 if A-B+ ($n = 96$); 3 if B ($n = 47$); 4 if B-C+ ($n = 63$); 5 if C ($n = 13$); 6 if C-D ($n = 3$); $M = 2.65$
- Grade level = 9 ($n = 53$); 10 ($n = 37$); 11 ($n = 80$); 12 ($n = 109$); $M = 10.9$
- Religious services = 0 if student does not attend religious services ($n = 78$); 1 if attendance is yearly ($n = 34$); 2 if monthly ($n = 36$); 3 if weekly ($n = 131$); $M = 1.79$
- Father’s education = 1 if father graduated or stopped schooling by high school ($n = 64$); 2 if attended or graduated from college ($n = 118$); 3 if postgraduate work or degree ($n = 50$); $M = 1.9$

Racial/ethnic composition
- African American = 1 if student is African American ($n = 50$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 231$); $M = 0.18$
- Latino = 1 if student is Latino ($n = 85$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 196$); $M = 0.30$
- Asian American = 1 if student is Asian American ($n = 48$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 233$); $M = 0.17$
- Other race = 1 if student indicated mixed or other race/ethnicity ($n = 8$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 273$); $M = 0.03$
- Dummy variable (if student is White) ($n = 94$)

Community service activity
- Direct = 1 if student activities are direct provision of service ($n = 85$); otherwise = 0 ($n = 160$); $M = 0.35$
School encouragement = 1 if student feels encouraged to do service by school 
(n = 219); otherwise = 0 (n = 59); M = 0.79

Service learning (summation of the following variables [0-3]) (M = 1.51)
Discuss = 1 if student indicates service is discussed at school (n = 115);
otherwise = 0 (n = 124); M = 0.50
Mention = 1 if student indicates service is mentioned in class (n = 107);
otherwise = 0 (n = 124); M = 0.46
Encourage link = 1 if student indicates school encouraged a link between learning 
and service (n = 125); otherwise = 0 (n = 103); M = 0.55

Implementation (summation of the following variables [0-4]) (M = 1.97)
Training = 1 if student received training for service participation (n = 126);
otherwise = 0 (n = 152); M = 0.45
Supervision = 1 if student was supervised in service experience (n = 197);
otherwise = 0 (n = 81); M = 0.71
Evaluation = 1 if student was evaluated for service participation (n = 99);
otherwise = 0 (n = 179); M = 0.36
Recognition = 1 if student received recognition for service (n = 127); otherwise = 0 
(n = 151); M = 0.46

Outcomes: evaluation of experiences
Liked most: service = 1 if student likes service orientation of experience most 
(n = 133); otherwise = 0 (n = 145); M = 0.48
Liked most: social = 1 if student likes social aspects of experience most (n = 100);
otherwise = 0 (n = 224); M = 0.36
Liked most: learning = 1 if student likes learning aspects of experience most 
(n = 59); otherwise = 0 (n = 224); M = 0.19
Liked least: time = 1 if student likes least time constraints of the experience (n = 43);
otherwise = 0 (n = 235); M = 0.15
Liked least: personal = 1 if student likes least personal issues (n = 39); otherwise = 0 
(n = 239); M = 0.14
Liked least: inefficiency = 1 if student likes least the feeling of ineffectiveness 
(n = 32); otherwise = 0 (n = 246); M = 0.12

Fears and concerns
Fear rejection = 1 if student indicates a fear of rejection in service experience 
(n = 35); otherwise = 0 (n = 243); M = 0.13
Fear mistakes = 1 if student indicates a fear of making a mistake in service 
experience (n = 22); otherwise = 0 (n = 256); M = 0.08

Impact/lessons learned
Helping = 1 if student indicates he or she learned about helping from service 
experience (n = 150); otherwise = 0 (n = 128); M = 0.54
Myself = 1 if student indicates he or she learned about self through experience 
(n = 152); otherwise = 0 (n = 126); M = 0.55
Issues = 1 if student indicates he or she learned about social issues through 
experience (n = 71); otherwise = 0 (n = 207); M = 0.26
Work skills = 1 if student indicates he or she learned about work-related skills 
through experience (n = 46); otherwise = 0 (n = 232); M = 0.17
Future volunteering = 1 if student indicates he or she plans to volunteer in the 
future (n = 114); otherwise = 0 (n = 164); M = 0.59
Notes

1. We selected community organizations based on those that were mentioned repeatedly by different high schools on their surveys as organizations with which they had worked.

2. This pattern is also reflected when looking at types of service by our best measure of social class, father’s education.

3. Two continuation high schools were included in the study. A continuation high school is one that provides alternative means for students to complete high school when they are not succeeding in mainstream high schools. Many of these students at these schools had been failing, in other types of trouble, or not in high school at all. Some also have their own children.

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The Place of Self and Reflexivity in Third Sector Scholarship: An Exploration

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This article draws attention to two significant strands in the development of contemporary social science scholarship: the recognition of the importance of self in research processes and the recognition of the reflexive nature of knowledge construction. It argues that these two strands should be taken more seriously by nonprofit and voluntary sector scholars. A family history case study is presented: the outcome of the author’s own research into the ways in which the lives of her parents and grandparents, as well as her own life, have been affected by nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The author considers how this has affected her own academic work in the nonprofit and voluntary sector field. The article concludes with a discussion of what, in the light of the case study, social science thinking on reflexivity and on the place of self in research might contribute to third sector scholarship in the future.

At the 1999 Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), David Mason, the recipient of that year’s Distinguished Lifetime Service Award, devoted much of his acceptance address to an analysis of the multiple ways in which his life had been affected and enriched by nonprofit and voluntary organizations of various kinds. He enabled his audience not only to understand his reasons for participating in the development of ARNOVA as a scholarly association but also to recognize the values and perspectives underpinning his research activities (Mason, 1984, 1996) and the ways in which they, in their turn, had affected his life choices.

In constructing his acceptance speech in this fashion, Mason was implicitly reflecting two significant strands in the development of contemporary social science scholarship: The recognition of the importance of self in research processes and the recognition of the reflexive nature of knowledge construction. Although widely debated by those working within the disciplinary frameworks of sociology and anthropology and those who are concerned with the
development of social theory, these strands have not been much in evidence up to now in work in the interdisciplinary field of third sector studies.

This article begins with a brief exposition of these two strands in social science thinking and argues that they should be taken seriously by nonprofit and voluntary sector scholars. A family history case study is then presented: the outcome of the author’s own research into the ways in which the lives of her parents and grandparents, as well as her own life, have been affected by nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The ways in which the author’s academic work has been influenced by these experiences are also addressed. The article concludes with a discussion of what, in the light of the case study, social science thinking on reflexivity and on the place of self in research might contribute to third sector scholarship in the future.

THE PLACE OF SELF IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Commenting on the development of sociology and anthropology during the 20th century, Therborn (2000) noted the way in which, during the latter part of the century, “scientific cognition was brought down from its previously unique pedestal, and related to, but not swamped by or reduced to ‘consciousness’ from everyday practice” (p. 40). In fact, the idea of a positivist social science in which objectivity was striven for and in which personal experience and values were to be excluded as far as possible was challenged (Hammersley, 1999).

The challenges came from a number of sources, including feminist researchers and critics of traditional forms of ethnography that focus on “otherness.” The challengers had in common the idea that the self is a key element in any piece of social research, irrespective of whether this is explicitly acknowledged. Rosaldo (1989), for example, argued that the ethnographer is not “objective” but is “a positioned subject” for whom “life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight” (p. 19). Similarly, Oakley (1979) said that “academic research projects bear an intimate relationship to the researcher’s life, however ‘scientific’ a sociologist pretends to be” (p. 4). The implication of these challenging arguments is that the role of the researcher in the research process must be recognized and not “idealised out” (Reinharz, 1979). The self must be re-placed into social science research.

Writers differ in their views about the practical implications of replacing the self in social research (Denzin, 1997). Some merely argue that the main requirement is for an acknowledgment of self in both the research process and the presentation of data. Others go further and say that the self should not only be acknowledged but may legitimately be used as an additional source of knowledge by the researcher. Thus, Oakley’s (1979) book Becoming a Mother suggests that the research process and the generation of knowledge can be enriched when the principal researcher has similar experiences to those she is studying and can empathize with them.
Some authors have gone beyond the proposition that the experiences of the self constitute legitimate data and that they can provide added value in the knowledge-building process. They have argued that the written, verbal, or visual representation of one’s own experience is the only justifiable representation of social knowledge (see, for example, Church, 1995). This is perhaps the most distant position from the proponents of a positivist scientific approach, for whom personal experiences constitute unacceptable “anecdote.” On the other hand, if case studies are accepted in principle as a legitimate route to the generation of certain types of social knowledge (Yin, 1994), the possibility must at least be considered that case studies of the researchers’ own personal experiences can also provide acceptable data. In fact, they can be seen as a type of ethnographic case history. Thus, Reinharz (1979), in an example of what Denzin (1997) termed “auto-ethnography,” recounted the “case history” of her own socialization as a sociologist and her engagement over time with specific research methods. She referred to herself as “a field site” (p. 48) and to her “experiencing self” as “data” (p. 49). Her work provides an insight into how social knowledge is constructed.

REFLEXIVITY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

The term reflexivity refers to the self-reproducing and recursive nature of human social activities (Holland, 1999). Giddens (1984, 1990) and Beck (1992) saw it as a characteristic feature of the contemporary stage of modernity, and Hertz (1997) saw it as “ubiquitous.”

In the context of social research, reflexivity is reflected in the way in which a researcher “constructs” the research setting that is, in turn, part of the researcher’s own social world (Beck, 1992). It is also reflected in the way in which the researcher affects the research situation. Thus, authors have pointed out, for example, that the ethnicity and religion of researchers are not neutral factors in social science studies but that they affect in numerous complex ways on interview situations—and not just on those who are studied but also on the interviewers themselves (Harris, 1998b; Rhodes, 1994).

In addition to the impact of social research processes on those who are studied and those who do studies, reflexivity is manifested in another important way; research processes and the knowledge generated by research become a means through which the social world is constructed—not just for the researcher but also for research funders and the wider public (Deacon & Mann, 1999). Thus, understanding of what constitutes “social policy” in the United Kingdom has been constructed in large part through research carried out at the London School of Economics where academics such as Richard Titmuss (1974), Brian Abel-Smith, David Donnison, and Howard Glennerster (1995) provided policy and administration advice to national governments concurrently with studying the formulation and implementation of those same policies. Similarly, Hall (1992) has argued that the very idea of a
“non-profit sector” in the United States has been “invented” by researchers and those who fund them. He also showed (Hall, 1994) how, in the United States, “scholarship played a key role in re-framing ideas about philanthropy in ways that addressed public policy concerns” (Hall, 1994, p. 25).

Many writers have expressed concern about the failure to acknowledge this reflexive role of research in social construction. Reinharz (1979) urged a shift from seeing research as “product” to seeing it as “process.” Critical ethnographers have pointed to the way in which research, as well as the very process of recording in writing, “fixes” and “essentializes” the social world and makes it appear as “other” (for example, Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Rosaldo, 1989). They argue that the effect is that research can become an instrument of control and oppression (Denzin, 1997).

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THIRD SECTOR RESEARCHERS**

These two strands in the development of contemporary social science scholarship—the recognition of self in social research and the recognition of the reflexive nature of knowledge construction—are related to one another. A researcher’s concept of self will be influenced by the research she or he carries out. Conversely, choice of research topic and the conduct of research will be influenced by the researcher’s concept of self.

These insights have generally not been reflected in the accumulated body of specialist third sector research to date. All the same, informal comments accompanying third sector conference presentations suggest that participation in voluntary and nonprofit organizations is in practice an important part of the lives of many specialist scholars. In fact, it would appear from informal accounts that it is common for empirical work to be linked in some way to personal and local experiences of third sector activity (Macduff & Netting, 2000; Smith, 1999) and that scholars frequently study organizations of which they themselves have experience as board members, clients, volunteers, or staff members. Or, they study organizations to which they can gain access through personal contacts. Some scholars even join organizations precisely to gain research access. But these involvements are rarely stated explicitly in published research books and articles. At most, they are acknowledged in passing or by implication (see, for example, Hall, 1999; Harris, 1998a; Milofsky, 2000; and see Warner, 1988, and Wineburg, 1999, for exceptions). The effect is to obscure the reflexive aspects of third sector knowledge and to deny the role of self in the research process. It also denies to the reader of the research findings an opportunity to understand how the knowledge described has been constructed and, therefore, the opportunity to interpret it accordingly.

In the following section of this article, I explore the implications of the criticisms and arguments in the article so far for my own nonprofit and voluntary sector research to date. I present a case study of my own life and that of my immediate forebears and try to tease out those memories, events, and
experiences that might bear in some way on my research activities in the fields of third sector management and public policy. I have looked for factors that might have influenced my construction of my social world and therefore my career and research choices, my analysis and interpretation of my research findings, and my own epistemological stance (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). (At the same time, I have tried to avoid the kind of “psycho-dynamic confession” that Reinharz, 1979, warned can be the corollary of attempting to acknowledge the role of self in social research.)

A CASE HISTORY

CHILDHOOD

A synthesis of oft-repeated family stories reminds me that the voluntary (nonprofit or third) sector has loomed large in my life, literally from the start. I was born in a charity hospital in London just at the moment when one of the last German bombs of the Second World War shattered its windows. For my mother, the key benefit of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital was that all its staff and patients were women: a prescient policy that reflected the vision of the hospital’s eponymous founder. She was a suffragette and England’s first woman doctor who founded the hospital in 1872 and raised the money she needed by speaking at 367 “drawing room” meetings.

Just about the time of my birth in 1945, the idea that people in need should have to rely on the vision and entrepreneurialism of people such as Garrett Anderson was subject to radical criticism in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere. During the Depression years of the 1930s, it had become clear that the charity or voluntary sector could not provide adequate amounts, or standards, of care to meet severe social need. New ideas emerged about how to meet the social and health care needs of the nation—stimulated in part by the experiences of citizen solidarity in wartime Britain. William Beveridge’s vision of a welfare state was taken up by the postwar Labour government. Governmental agencies and services funded by tax revenues—rather than old-fashioned charitable activity—became the favored means of meeting social needs in the United Kingdom.

I was born just in time to be one of the first beneficiaries of the promise that the state in Britain would care for its citizens “from cradle to grave.” As a child, I took for granted that governmental organizations provided my schooling; that medicines, spectacles, and dental treatment were given to me as of right when needed; and that you visited governmental offices to obtain them. Candy was only available if you had a ration book, but there were free supplies of orange juice and cod liver oil provided by the Ministry of Food and a free third of a pint of milk at school each day provided by the Ministry of Education. My parents, who still had vivid memories of hungry men fainting in the dole queues of the 1930s, were elated by the new welfare state and
encouraged me to appreciate its universal advantages over patchily provided “charity.”

In those heady days, it was generally assumed that the voluntary sector would just wither away. In fact, although the work of some charities was taken over by the state in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly schools and hospitals, most voluntary organizations adapted so that instead of providing mainstream services they could supplement or complement governmental provision. Many faith-based organizations in the United Kingdom did this: Methodist Homes for the Elderly, The Church of England Children’s Society, Dr. Barnardo’s, and the Jewish Board of Guardians.

The Jewish Board of Guardians (now called Jewish Care) was established like so many U.K. charities in Victorian times—to help keep the “deserving poor” among the Jewish population from the workhouse (Lipman, 1959). But it still had its Victorian name and attitudes when it sternly interviewed my 8-year-old self to assess my eligibility for one of its convalescent homes when I was having difficulty recovering from a bout of pneumonia in the days before antibiotic drugs were available to treat childhood infections. I have vivid memories not only of the assessment process but also of the time spent in institutional care. The staff tried to be kind, but they could not protect us from the cruelties of other children from whom there was no escape or provide the kind of personalized, responsive care that children crave. So, my first encounter with the voluntary sector was not a particularly happy one.

My experience as a sick child reflected the general pattern of postwar social and health care in Britain. The fledgling National Health Service run by the state looked after me in the life-threatening stage of my illness, but it was left to a charity to provide the complementary service necessary for me to make a full recovery. In fact, far from disappearing in the welfare state era, the U.K. voluntary sector grew. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, there was a flowering of pressure groups, community groups, and self-help and mutual aid groups. Within the voluntary sector, pioneering ways were found to meet old needs, such as telephone help lines, advice services, drop-in centers, neighborhood care projects, TV media campaigns, and “intermediate treatment” for young offenders. Mass marches of protest and “sit-ins” became the favored means of political protest in the 1960s and 1970s, and participation in them was a formative experience of my own adolescence. Like so many of my contemporaries, I was confident that individuals acting together through mass movements and voluntary associations could right injustices and change governmental policies.

I was also much influenced by my parents’ stories of their own childhood experiences. Both were born in London but were the children of Jewish refugees from the pogroms of Russia and Poland in the early 20th century. Their stories were about slum living, hunger, competing with siblings for parental attention, and the struggle to get an education in the face of pressures to support their families financially. But there were also stories about the importance of community and family, the obligation to care for the stranger, and the
tremendous contribution to individual lives made by mutual aid associations, religious congregations, and the initiatives of philanthropists and visionaries.

My father came from a background of abject poverty; his own father never earned sufficient as a tailor to support his wife and four children. Nevertheless, my father was educated to the age of 18. This was possible because of the vision of an English philanthropist called Henry Raine who established a London charity school in the 18th century. In the 1920s and 1930s, Raine’s Foundation School managed to turn the children of London’s East End sweatshops, whose alien parents spoke no English, into people of knowledge and sensitivity able to take their place in the white-collar labor market and, eventually, in the British Armed Forces of the Second World War. And when my father became a parent himself, the importance of both education and the charitable impulse was a lesson that he emphasized continually to me and my brother.

My father’s path through late childhood and early adulthood was also smoothed by the efforts of an English-born Jewish philanthropist called Basil Henriques. Henriques was from a family of Sephardi Jews who, being able to trace their arrival in England to the time of Oliver Cromwell, had a sense of noblesse oblige in relation to the working-class Ashkenazi Jews who arrived in England at the turn of the 20th century. Following a custom of educated Englishmen, Henriques established a settlement house in the heart of London’s East End Jewish ghetto, and there my father’s generation of children found a refuge from the streets, a place to study and play sport, and a sympathetic ear from a tall rich gentleman who, unlike their parents, understood the strange ways of English society. Henriques and his wife were known to my father and his friends as “The Gaffer and the Missus,” and they were held in the highest regard by the slum boys they nurtured. The Missus actually accepted an invitation to our home in her latter years; my parents treated her as royalty.

My mother’s childhood was less obviously poverty stricken as her father, a leather craftsman, found it easier to support his family financially, and they lived in the slightly more salubrious environment of London’s West End (Black, 1994). But my mother did not have the good luck to have access to a charity school, and so her formal education ceased when she was 13 years old. She too was heavily influenced and supported as an adolescent by the initiative of a charismatic person who was a part of the British Jewish “establishment.” In the 1920s, Miss Lilly Montague, along with other members of her wealthy and educated banking family, established a Jewish girls club for the daughters of her working-class coreligionists. There, my mother and her sisters found personal space, further education, friendships, and a role model for becoming a polite English Jewess: one who knew the correct way to serve tea and, later, to write appropriate letters to my school teachers.

As a couple, my parents followed the practice in their childhood homes and attached the highest importance to welcoming not only friends and family but also the stranger—as a short account written by my mother in her latter years affirms (Roer, 1981).
Dr X plummeted into our lives with the velocity of the incendiary bombs which plagued our lives. . . . [He] called at the office of my husband, begging to be given a job as a war-time night watchman. He was, he said, a highly qualified medical practitioner—in fact in some obscure town in Germany there was a street named in his honour. But because he had practised in Italy and had married an Italian lady (of blessed memory) it was impossible for him to ask for help from the usual channels. He was, in fact, destitute—without hope. Now as my husband was in a position to engage anyone as night watchman, he somehow became our charge. I am, to this day, quite unable to say how it came about but soon we were sharing with him our modest home, finances and rations—some of our rations became his rightful due, owing to the delicate condition of his stomach. . . . One day, he gave me a little lapis lazuli earring which, he said, had belonged to his wife (of blessed memory). The other earring he said he wore close to his heart. Then, he left, without farewell or warning.

ADULTHOOD

I have spent the whole of my paid-employment career working in governmental organizations. Despite the dramatic public policy changes of the Thatcher years, which exposed them to some market-like forces, U.K. universities remain, with few exceptions, public sector organizations, heavily funded and regulated by central government. For the first 10 years of my working life, before I moved into academia, I was employed by the local governmental authority for London, the Greater London Council. The experience of working in bureaucratic, externally regulated governmental organizations has necessarily affected my interest in, and approach to, organizational analysis and management. My “default” model of organizational structure remains the Weberian bureaucracy. Another legacy is my acute awareness of the necessity for public provision of services to be accountable.

But at least as important an influence on my approach to academic endeavor has been my experience outside of my paid work time in various kinds of nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The stories told to me in my childhood alerted me to the positive contributions that philanthropists and community mutual aid can make to the quality of individual lives. My experience of growing up in the beneficence of a welfare state helped me to understand the complexity of the interplay between the governmental and charity sectors in meeting social need. Two terms on the board of ARNOVA and current involvement in an informal, egalitarian academic network must also be included in the list of my formative experiences of the voluntary sector. But here I will focus on the two organizations that I believe have been particularly important in my own “construction” of third sector management and public policy research.

One is my local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Citizens Advice Bureau service began during the Second World War as a response to the needs of
citizens in wartime conditions experiencing bombing and food rationing. CABs did not cease trading when the war finished. By then, the need was apparent for a place where people could go for independent and impartial advice on a range of issues—not least the benefits provided by the new welfare state.

From the start, the advice provided by CABs has been given largely by volunteers: people who commit themselves to ongoing training and to a minimum number of volunteer hours each week. For many years, I was myself a volunteer adviser. Later, I became a trainer, and for the past few years I have served on the bureau’s board. Ostensibly my aim has been to contribute to my neighborhood. In practice, I know that I myself have been the main beneficiary of my CAB service. I learned about legislation and welfare benefits; I learned listening, counseling, and communication skills; I gained insight into local politics; and I experienced the pleasure of working with other highly committed volunteers from a range of backgrounds. As with my service on the ARNOVA board, my volunteering with the CAB has not been a one-way altruistic street (Van Til, 1988; Wolfe, 1998). Reflective practice has taught me about the complexity of volunteer motivation and management.

The other voluntary organization that has loomed large in my life has been my local synagogue. Ours was the 20th family to join a group that, in 1971, had no more than a dream—to set up a new Jewish congregation in the outer London suburbs. We had no building, no rabbi, nowhere to educate our children, and no wealthy members. But somehow—through evenings and weekends devoted to arguing and planning—we built the community that we wanted.

Some of my own children’s happiest memories are of the first services held in the local scout hut and of the warmth of a tiny congregation where every young person was a precious commodity to be hugged and kissed by all. They also remember the classes held at the local Catholic priory by special permission of the nuns. There, the Jewish festival of Chanukah was celebrated against the rather incongruous background of a Christmas tree and a large crucifix. Nobody seemed too damaged by the interfaith mix. The nuns came along to brush up on their Hebrew, and the children learned an important lesson about the cooperative spirit that can underpin relationships between one local voluntary organization and another.

Nearly 30 years on, our congregation has about a thousand members, a building for services and meetings, a library, a full-time rabbi, a Hebrew school with more than 200 children, and a wealth of activities for all ages, tastes, and levels of spirituality. Some of those precious babies of the early days, including my own son, are themselves now marrying within the synagogue building for which we worked so hard.

What has remained constant during these years of organizational growth and renewal is that the congregation is still largely sustained by the volunteer time of its members, including me and members of my family. Membership subscriptions cover the salaries of the rabbi and the teachers, and the rest has to be done on a shoestring and good will. I know that my life as an adult and
parent has been enriched by my participation in the development of this synagogue. As with the CAB experience, I acquired new skills and knowledge as well as enduring friendships through my synagogue participation. I also acquired my initial interest in third sector management research through my experiences in these two local organizations.

Observation of the interaction between staff and the shadowy “management committee” in my early days as a CAB volunteer led me to focus my master of arts dissertation on the role of voluntary sector boards—despite the fact that (in 1980) only one member of the university’s academic staff seemed to have any notion of what a voluntary organization might be, let alone what it might contribute to a degree in public and social administration. But in the process of doing the dissertation, I found those few other scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom who recognized at that time that nonprofit organizations have some distinctive features that might merit specialist study. Similarly, observation of the periodic arguments between our synagogue board and the rabbi led me to ponder the nature of religious congregations as organizations and to a doctoral thesis on the challenges of managing churches and synagogues. The role of governing boards and the nature of faith-based organizations remain two key threads in my personal program of research in third sector management (see, for example, Harris & Rochester, 2000; Harris & Torry, 2000). Equally, my concern about the impact of public policy change on the work of voluntary and nonprofit organizations stems in part from my own observation of the organizational problems that third sector organizations experience in a turbulent policy environment (see, for example, Billis & Harris, 1992; Harris, 1998a; Harris & Rochester, 2001).

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

In the first section of this article, I argued that insights from contemporary social science about the place of self in research and about reflexivity have generally not been reflected in specialist third sector research—despite the fact that anecdotal evidence suggests that participation in voluntary and nonprofit organizations is in practice an important part of the lives of many nonprofit scholars. Nor do nonprofit scholars usually make clear the nature of their own involvement in, or links with, the organizations they study. The effect is to obscure the reflexive aspects of third sector knowledge and to deny the role of self in the research process. It also denies to the reader of the research findings an opportunity to understand how the knowledge described has been constructed and, therefore, the opportunity to interpret it accordingly.

In an academic environment in which the positivist social science paradigm remains very powerful, the reluctance to be explicit about the position of oneself in a piece of research is understandable. It is especially understandable in a field in which much research is commissioned by the governmental and
third sector funders of those who are studied: funders who are generally expecting “objectivity,” “facts,” and “evidence.” All the same, nonprofit and voluntary activity is too much of an everyday lived experience for specialist researchers to avoid acknowledging and reflecting on the role they themselves play in the conduct of their research and the construction of knowledge.

In discussing the reflexivity characteristic of late modernity, Giddens (1984) said, “To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able . . . to elaborate discursively upon those reasons” (p. 3). It is in the spirit of this proposition as well as of the other works about reflexivity and the position of the self in research referred to earlier that I have written this article.

I have taken a tentative step here toward exploring factors in my personal and family history that may have affected my choice of research projects, the way in which I have conducted and analyzed my findings, and the manner in which I have disseminated them. The family history I have presented is, in effect, a “data source” (Stanley, 1993) for this article. And the data have been collected and analyzed within the tradition of “sociological autobiography” in which writers “relate their intellectual development both to changing social and cognitive micro-environments close at hand and to the encompassing macro-environments provided by the larger society and culture” (Robert Merton, 1988, as cited in Stanley, 1993, p. 43).

My initial motivation to reflect on my own involvement with the voluntary and nonprofit sector was inspired, as referred to at the beginning of this article, by a speech by David Mason. I was spurred on in my explorations by the need to prepare a public lecture in which I was expected to review my academic career (Harris, 2000). The process of researching my own and my family’s history and of exploring in particular its voluntary sector and public policy context was enlightening for me. It was also intellectually challenging because I was forced to confront the numerous, sometimes contradictory, factors that have affected my research choices and my construction of the social world.

I had to acknowledge, for example, that my undergraduate education has been a very strong influence on my approach to research to date. In the early 1960s, the positivist social science paradigm was presented to us as truth, and we were urged to strive to be “value free.” Later on, I did learn at least to “acknowledge” my self in individual research projects and to accept the socially constructed nature of knowledge. But only in preparing this article have I explicitly tried to tease out the interplay between my personal and family experiences of charities and voluntary agencies, on one hand, and the choices I have made about what to study, how to study it, and how to interpret and disseminate my findings, on the other hand. Only now have I embraced the idea that reflexivity “permeates every aspect of the research process, challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture, and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience” (Hertz, 1997, p. vii).

In my reluctance to acknowledge my self in my research, to give value to my own experiences, and to accept the implications of reflexivity, I know that I
am in the company of the majority of third sector scholars today. So, having taken a tentative step down this rocky intellectual road myself, can I recommend it to other third sector researchers? The answer is yes, for two reasons.

First, by acknowledging the role of our own experiences and the role that we have played in research situations, we enable those who read our research findings, if they so wish, to evaluate them fully and to place them into context. This may not be the kind of knowledge that the commissioners of research are seeking, and they may well misunderstand our reasons for making these acknowledgments. Indeed, research that acknowledges the role of the researcher’s self and the constructed nature of social knowledge may well be rejected by some practitioners and policy makers as lacking in “objectivity” and “rigour.” Yet, there is less reason why peer discussions among third sector researchers should be inhibited by pragmatic considerations of this kind. Certainly, discussions in sessions at the conferences of ARNOVA and the International Society of Third Sector Researchers would be much enlivened by some background information about the researcher’s own place within a reported research project.

Second, the process of exploration beyond customary boundaries and into the intellectual borderlands is an energizing experience. As third sector researchers, we are studying organizations that are not “other”; for most of us, they are part of our everyday world. Yet, we have generally conducted and reported our research as though that were not the case, and in doing so, we have necessarily ignored key ingredients in our actual research choices and interpretations. Taking those hitherto hidden ingredients out of the closet and examining them give us new perspectives on our research endeavors for the future. We open up the possibility of not only positioning ourselves in our research as a source of data but of doing so with a reflexive stance that acknowledges explicitly what it is we are doing and how it affects our research. The task is difficult but exciting—as reflected in Rosaldo’s (1989, p. 180) description of the participant-observer as one who “dance[s] on the edge of a paradox by simultaneously becoming ‘one of the people’ and remaining an academic.”

Notes

1. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Rev. Malcolm Carroll, Aston Business School doctoral student, in preparing this article. Many thanks also to Keith Kahn-Harris and Carl Milofsky who advised and supported me in my reflections on reflexivity. I am also grateful to NUSQ editor Steven Rathgeb Smith for challenging questions and for constructive criticisms of my original ARNOVA conference paper.

2. I use here the names these charities had in my childhood. All these organizations have updated their names and images in the past 20 years.

3. The Greater London Council was later abolished during Margaret Thatcher’s premiership but was partially resurrected in May 2000 as the Greater London Authority with an elected mayor, Ken Livingstone.
4. This was David Billis who I later worked with in developing the study of voluntary sector management in the United Kingdom at Brunel University and in the Centre for Voluntary Organisation at the London School of Economics (Billis & Harris, 1996).

References


The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation

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Three principal modes of civic involvement are volunteering, giving to charities, and participating in civic associations. The authors investigate how total effort is distributed in the Canadian population among these three behaviors. Their results show that in each area, there is a small group of individuals who is responsible for the majority of contributory effort. When activity in the three areas is considered all together, the authors find a remarkably high degree of concentration. Six percent of Canadian adults account for 35% to 42% of all civic involvement. This group of individuals represents the “civic core” in Canada. The implications of the existence of a small but dedicated civic core for the voluntary domain and for patterns of citizen engagement are discussed.

Although from a moral standpoint it is considered desirable that such formal civic behaviors as volunteering, charitable giving, and participating in civic organizations be distributed widely in our society, there is no theoretical or empirical basis in social science for expecting any specific distribution of the incidence or magnitude of such behaviors. Tocqueville (1969) remarked a century and a half ago on the elevated levels of civic engagement by Americans relative to Europeans, whereas Wuthnow (1991) queried why so few Americans today engage in acts of caring and compassion. In Canada, the incidences of volunteering, giving, and participating are moderately high at about 30%, 80%, and 50%, respectively. A few countries (the United States among them) are higher and many are lower. There is, however, much greater variation in the magnitudes of these civic behaviors within Canada.

In Canada in 2000, 18% of adults were responsible for 80% of all money donated to organized charities, 9% accounted for 80% of hours volunteered,

Note: We acknowledge with appreciation the professionalism and assistance of Steven Rathgeb Smith and the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly editorial staff in the preparation of this article.
and 21% accounted for 65% of civic participation. The pattern also shows little change over time in recent years. Furthermore, this skew in total effort is not unique to Canada; Schervish and Havens (2001, p. 10), for example, found that in the United States in 1994, 20% of givers accounted for 67% of all the money donated to charities. These statistics are broadly consistent with the 80/20 rule and the “small world” thesis, both of which posit that in the social domain, a large proportion of many behaviors is located within a small proportion of the population. (See Koch, 1998, and Kochen, 1989, for explication of these principles.)

Giving to charities, volunteering one’s time, and actively participating in community organizations are key components of citizen involvement in society. Putnam’s (1993, 1995) discussions of the function of social capital in sustaining liberal democracy highlight the central role of these three forms of contributory behavior as facets of citizen engagement. In this perspective, everyone shares in maintaining the community and social order. Yet, a variety of studies suggest that some do considerably more than their share and many others less (Schervish & Havens, 1995a, 1995b). Moreover, viewed separately, these numbers do not tell the whole story. Although it is obvious that there is a relatively small group—a core—of individuals who account for the lion’s share of effort in each sphere of activity, the question remains as to how much these core groups overlap in terms of the individuals who make each of them up. Is it largely the same individuals who are responsible for much of the effort in each of the three activity spheres? If so, what are the implications for our understanding of society of the existence of a relatively small cadre of individuals who are atypically active in giving, volunteering, and participating? In short, might they represent a civic core in Canada? To answer the question, this article presents details about the size and structure of this civic core—the extent and manner in which the most active participants in one area or sphere are also the most active participants in the other spheres—and provides a profile of the distinguishing traits of people who compose the core. Our purpose is to document the extent of overlap and to discuss the consequences of a civic core for the voluntary sector and for society in general.

DATA AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Our analysis uses data from the 1997 and 2000 National Surveys of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) that were conducted by Statistics Canada in November of each year. The 1997 NSGVP data file contains detailed information from 18,301 individuals aged 15 years and older and the 2000 NSGVP from 14,724 individuals. The research we report in this article focuses mainly on the data from the 2000 survey but, where appropriate, also presents findings from 1997.

The first step in identifying a civic core is to identify the principal contributors in each one of three spheres of activity: volunteering, giving, and civic
A core group is defined as those who are responsible for two thirds of all effort in a particular sphere of activity. For volunteering, total effort is taken to be the sum of hours volunteered for formal associations over the preceding year by all volunteers. For giving, total effort is the sum of all money donated to formal charities in a year. For civic participation, total effort is the total number of types of civic organizations respondents held memberships in, or simply participated in, over the past year. The choice of the top two thirds of total effort as the cut-point in defining the cores is obviously arbitrary—other fractions of effort could equally be chosen to define a core. We settled on the 67% cut-point as one that reflects a substantial but not overwhelming majority of the total contributory effort in each area. Preliminary analysis showed that selecting other cut-points for defining the cores had relatively little effect on the size of the core groups, given the very marked skew in total effort in the population. For example, when the volunteer core is defined as those who account for the top 80% of hours volunteered, the core represents 8.5% of the population. Using the 67% cut-point, the core represents 5.4%, and using the 50% cut-point, the core represents 2.8%. In all three cases, the size of the core group is very small relative to the proportion of total effort they represent.

Core groups identified in this manner are not expected to represent coherent or cohesive social groups in the usual sociological sense. They are simply empirical descriptions of the distribution of formal contributory effort in the population. Nonetheless, the distribution of overall effort—the overlap of these three spheres of activity—is an important indication of the pattern of civic engagement in Canada. Whether these core groups constitute identifiable social groups, particularly in specific geographic locales, is beyond our ability to determine but is an intriguing possibility for further research.

Along with the participation rates for each type of activity in the population in general, Table 1 presents the proportions of the population who belong to each of the core groups at the specified level of effort. Volunteering is the least common form of civic engagement in Canada; from 1987 to 2000, the rate of volunteering was between 27% and 31% of the population. About half the population was involved attending meetings or as members of organizations (civic participation), and about 80% had made a contribution to formal charities. The proportion of the population that forms the core in each area of citizen participation is fairly stable over time. However, the slight decline in the size of the volunteer and giving cores suggests that the skew in the distribution of volunteering and giving is moving upwards: Those who are more active are contributing even more relative to those who are less active. The meaning of the small change in the civic participation core is unclear because the
proportion of total civic participation accounted for by the core is not the same in 1997 (63%) as in 2000 (65%); the increase in the size of the core may simply be due to this difference. The final row in Table 1, the participation rates for “combined,” shows the proportion of the population that participated at any level in any of the three activities. In terms of the level of overall citizen engagement, the participation rates are quite high; more than 85% of the population were involved in at least one of these activities in each reference year. However, as we shall see later, by other measures of citizen engagement, the picture is quite different.

We have been looking at very small changes in these numbers. And, whereas all but the change in the rate of volunteering are within the limits of chance variation across samples, they are suggestive. More certain is the conclusion that the size of the core groups has not changed to any substantial degree over time. Stability appears to be an enduring feature of these entities.

As noted earlier, considering the core groups separately may give some indication of how participation is concentrated in each area. But to understand the overall concentration of citizen engagement requires looking at the overlap of the three core groups. Figure 1 displays the distribution of Canadian adults among the seven sections of a Venn diagram generated by the overlap of three circles representing the core groups for volunteering, charitable giving, and civic participation. Also displayed for each section is the proportion of total time volunteered, charitable dollars donated, and civic participation that are accounted for by the set individuals within that component. By summing variations of these numbers, we can better understand what they mean. Summing the percentage of Canadians for all the sections in the circle labeled Volunteer Core gives 5.4%—the size of the volunteer core in Table 1. Summing the volunteer hours for the same four sections gives 67.1%, the (approximately) two thirds of total volunteer effort given by the volunteer core. More interesting are the levels of effort accounted for by those in each section of the diagram. For example, Section (b) contains the individuals who are in both the volunteer and the participation cores, but not the giving core. These people,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Canadians</th>
<th>Core Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation Rate (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Proportion of Effort (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987(^a)</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving money</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined(^c)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(a\). Data on giving and civic participation were not available for 1987.

\(b\). The core cut-point in 1997 was 63% of civic participation and 65% in 2000. See Note 2 for a detailed explanation.

\(c\). Combined reflects participation in any of the three areas.
about 1.7% of the population, account for 21.6% of all hours volunteered and 5.7% of civic participation—well above their population proportion. In contrast, the fact that they are not in the giving core is evident in that they account for only 1.3% of all money given to charity. Compare this to a section that is one quarter their size, Section (d) with 0.4% of the population but that accounts for three times as many dollars donated (3.8%).

Taken together, we have characterized the three core groups as the civic core. In its entirety, this core comprised 29% of adults in 2000; they account for 85% of total volunteer hours, 78% of total charitable dollars donated, and 71% of civic participation, as shown in Figure 2. Sections (a), (b), (c), and (d) in Figure 1 represent the individuals who were members of at least two of the three basic core groups—those in Section (a) are in fact members of all three cores. Individuals in Sections (e), (f), and (g) represent those who are members of only one of the core groups. If we introduce the distinction between a primary core, consisting of individuals who are involved in two or three of the areas of activity, and a secondary core, consisting of individuals who are involved in only one of the three areas, we find that the primary core comprises 6% of the adult population and the secondary core 23% (see Figure 2). There is a much higher concentration of effort in the primary core, which provides 42% of all volunteer hours, 35% of all charitable dollars donated, and 20% of all civic participation. The secondary core, which contains 23% of the adult population, accounts for 42% of total volunteer hours, 43% of donated dollars, and 50% of all civic participation. The impact of this distinction for the pattern and density of civic engagement is clear when we compare the level of activity in the

Figure 1. Components of Canada’s Civic Core, 2000
civic core as a whole with those who are not in the core, those we have labeled the noncore—the 71% of adult Canadians who provide 15% of total volunteer hours, 22% of charitable dollars, and 29% of civic participation (see Figure 2). These three sets of numbers and the extreme contrast between the core and the noncore reveal the wide disparity in levels of engagement. On one hand is the one quarter of Canadians who account for about three quarters of all civic engagement and, on the other, the three quarters of the population who account for the remainder.

PROPORTIONALITY AND THE CIVIC CORE

The idea of a civic core rests on the notion of degree of proportionality in contributory activities. If contributory effort is evenly distributed across the population, any particular group’s effort will be proportional to the size of the group relative to the total population. The group can then be said to undertake “its share” of contributory activities. The idea of proportionality clearly shows some important features of the distribution of citizen engagement in society. Proportionality is expressed as the ratio of the amount of effort a group accounts for (numerator) to their proportion of the population (denominator). For example, in Section (e) of the civic core in Figure 1, 28.9% of volunteer hours are provided by 2.3% of the population, giving a ratio of 12.6 to 1. This group does nearly 13 times its share of volunteering. In contrast, the 70.8% of the population in the noncore account for about 15% of hours volunteered—this is about two tenths their share. When the share a group does is very
different from their expected share (which always equals their population proportion), we can speak of disproportionality in contributory activities.

Table 2 presents both the information used to construct the Venn diagram in Figure 1 and the proportionality ratios for Canada as a whole. Table 2 also gives subtotals for the primary and secondary civic cores and, in the total column, the overall contribution of each sector to total contributory effort.

Table 2 shows that the greatest disproportionalities exist for volunteering, followed by charitable giving and civic participation, respectively. In the primary core, 9 of the 12 ratios are far greater than 1.0. As a group, those who are actively involved in two or more activities tend to account for between 3 and 13 times their share of effort in each activity category. The three cases where the ratios are equal or close to 1.0 reflect those sections of the primary core where the individuals are in two of the base core groups but not the third; when this occurs, these groups are contributing close to their expected share of effort. When the contributions to each area are combined in the total effort, all sectors of the primary core contribute much more than their share—from about 4 to 8 times more.

In the secondary core, the picture is distinctly different. Because these people are in only one of the base core groups, we would expect their contributions to the effort of the other two core activities to be lower. The data reveal this pattern; whereas the level of contribution for their core activity is distinctly above their share, for activities outside their base core, they generally do substantially less than their share. Nonetheless, in terms of their contribution to total effort, they all do more than their share.

On average, the primary core does about 5 times its share of total effort, whereas the secondary core does twice its share. The civic core in total (primary and secondary) does about 3 times its share. This contrasts sharply with the noncore that accounts for less than one third of its share. The data also show that the total share accounted for by the primary core is 16.7 times larger than the noncore’s share, and the total core accounts for 8.2 times as much as the noncore.

To the extent that hours volunteered, money donated, and civic participation indicate levels of civic engagement, these numbers clearly show the degree to which engagement is unevenly spread across the Canadian population. Even granting that low levels of participation do represent engagement of a kind, the disparity in levels of engagement implies the existence of very different levels of civic activity in Canada. If the overall social capital thesis (Putnam, 1993), that the health of democracies depends on elevated levels of citizen participation and engagement, is correct, finding that high levels of engagement are typical of only a small fraction of the population either bodes ill for democracy in Canada or suggests that the engagement thesis must be revamped.

Earlier, we found that the base core groups had not changed appreciably between 1997 and 2000 (see Table 1). Table 3 shows what happened to the civic core as a whole over that period. Given the short span of 3 years, we would not
Table 2. The Civic Core and Proportion of Contributory Effort in Canada, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>% Population</th>
<th>% Hours</th>
<th>% Giving</th>
<th>% Participation</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>Proportionality Ratio</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(B + C + D)/3</td>
<td>Hours (B/A)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>12.71</td>
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a. The cut-point for the volunteer core is 224 or more hours per year, for the giving core the cut-point is $475 or more per year, and for civic participation it is two or more types of organizations.
b. V = volunteering; G = giving; C = civic participation.
c. Ratio of primary core to noncore = 16.5. The ratio of the total core to the noncore = 6.7.
<table>
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</table>

Basic core groups

| V     | 6.5 | 5.4 | -1.1 |
| C     | 20.3 | 21.3 | 1.0 |
| G     | 10.6 | 9.6 | -1.0 |

a. V = volunteering; G = giving; C = civic participation.
expect large change in the core’s overall size, and this is borne out by the very small increase in the core totals and the small decrease in the noncore totals. Yet, within the core there were changes of interest. As a proportion of the population, the primary core shrank a little (–1.5%), whereas the secondary core grew (2.2%). This means that among those responsible for two thirds of effort in each contributory area—the base core groups—there was a decline in the proportion of core people who were highly active in more than one area. Some appear to have restricted the breadth of their participation. By restricting their effort to only one core activity, the size of the secondary core grew. This was most pronounced in giving and less so in volunteering and civic participation.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Research on the voluntary sector in Canada has shown marked variation across regions and provinces in many of the characteristics of volunteering, giving, and civic participation (Caldwell & Reed, 1999; Reed & Selbee, 2000). Whether these translate into differences in the character of the civic core in different locales is the next question we address. Table 4 presents the distribution of effort and the proportionality ratios for 3 of Canada’s 10 provinces, Quebec, Ontario, and Saskatchewan. We chose to highlight these 3 because they tend to reflect each end and the middle of the spectrum of contributory activities in Canada. Quebec typically has the lowest rates of formal volunteering, giving, and civic participation; Saskatchewan typically has the highest; and Ontario usually lies in the middle of the range.

Starting with the size of the total core in each province, Quebec’s is the lowest at 26% of the population, Saskatchewan’s is the highest at 40%, and Ontario’s is between these two at 29%. Because Quebec has the smallest civic core, each person in that core contributes a larger proportion of volunteering, giving, and civic participation than is the case in the other provinces and in the nation as a whole. This is evident in the fact that the proportionality ratios in Quebec are the highest of the three provinces. In other words, the concentration of contributory activities is greatest in Quebec and lowest in Saskatchewan. The lower proportionality ratios for Saskatchewan imply that contributory activities are more evenly distributed throughout the population than elsewhere, not surprising given the size of that population (764,000 age 15 and older) and that the population lives mostly in small cities, towns, and rural areas.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE IN THE CIVIC CORE

The large disparity in overall effort that typifies those in the civic core raises the question of who these individuals are and why they invest so much more effort compared to others in Canadian society. Are they in some way different
Table 4. Civic Core Effort and Proportions, Quebec, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>% Population (A)</th>
<th>% Hours (B)</th>
<th>% Giving (D)</th>
<th>% Participation (C)</th>
<th>Total (B + C + D/3)</th>
<th>Hours (B/A)</th>
<th>Giving (D/A)</th>
<th>Participation (C/A)</th>
<th>Total (total/A)</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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a. V = volunteering; G = giving; C = civic participation.
from others and, if so, how? Other research suggests that there could be important differences. In a comparison of the characteristics of active volunteers (those who give an above-average number of hours per year) to nonvolunteers, Reed and Selbee (2000) found that active volunteers do possess a number of characteristics that distinguish them from nonvolunteers. Why this is so is a complex question, but as an initial attempt at understanding the civic core, we used discriminant analysis to compare individuals in the civic core in general with those in the noncore and then those in the primary core with those in the noncore.

Discriminant analysis produces a linear model that maximizes the difference between two groups in terms of a set of individual traits. The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients (see Table 5) reflect the relative importance of the independent variables in differentiating between the two groups of interest. The larger the coefficient, positive or negative, the more the particular variable discriminates between the groups. (The full list of variables used in the analysis is in the appendix.)

Table 5 presents the results of our analysis for Canada. The first model compares the civic core as a whole to the noncore. The model is relatively effective at distinguishing between the groups. It accounts for about 25% of the variance in discriminant scores between the groups and correctly classifies 50% of core members and 88% of noncore members. The second model compares those in the primary core with those in the noncore. This model does less well in discriminating between the two groups. It does account for about 23% of the variance and correctly classifies 98% of the noncore, but it correctly classifies only 32% of the primary core. The results of this model must be viewed with caution.

The factors that strongly discriminate between noncore individuals and either those in the entire civic core or the subset in the primary core tend to be the same. In both models, for example, 8 of the 10 strongest effects are the same, although their rank order changes somewhat.

Individuals in the core tend to be older; in higher education, occupation, and income categories; and more religious than individuals in the noncore. These results are broadly typical of other research results on all three types of activity (cf. Smith, 1994). Those in the core tend to be more socially active than noncore people, a fact that supports the importance attributed to social networks in the analysis of contributory behavior (cf. Schervish & Havens, 1997; Sokolowski, 1998; Wilson & Musick, 1998). Not only are those in the core more active in formal contributory behaviors, but they are also more active in nonformal ways of helping and giving. People in the core also show a distinct tendency to have been active in both religious and secular youth groups and in student government or to have had parents who were volunteers. The presence of children older than 6 years of age is associated with being more active, a pattern identified before in the rates of volunteering in general (Reed & Selbee, 2000). In general terms, women are less likely to be in the civic core but are as likely as men to be in the primary core. Finally, there is a tendency for
those who live in the Canadian west (the prairie provinces and British Columbia) and for those who have lived longer in their community to be in the civic core.

This constellation of factors that distinguish the core from the noncore is consistent with prior research that examines separately the characteristics of those who are most active in each of the three areas of activity, so it is not surprising that the same factors appear here. But this does show a strong degree

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of consistency, across the types of contributing, in the traits that distinguish active people from the less active. This provides some initial evidence that all three forms of civic engagement spring from a similar set of social conditions, whether these involve attributes of personal history, subcultures of benevolence, or communities of participation.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence of a civic core in Canada likely does not come as a surprise, certainly not for people familiar with the voluntary sector. Yet, it is not an explicit element in the average citizen’s mental map of our society, and it is not a recognized component in social science. What do the existence and properties of this civic core, especially the primary core, imply about the character of the voluntary domain and the nature of Canadian society?

This study has shown that the population is strongly bifurcated between a small proportion who are heavily involved in various civic activities and the overwhelming majority who are not. Furthermore, the population of those who are heavily involved comprises two subpopulations, one made up of individuals active in multiple domains of contributory behavior and the other of individuals active in only one. In light of this, it is inappropriate to treat the population of civicly involved people as a homogeneous entity. Clearly, this distinction must be taken into account in future research on Canada’s voluntary sector and perhaps in that of other societies as well.

This core is evidently a principal source of initiative and action in civic life; we may surmise that it is in the civic core that one would find many of Canada’s civic leaders. The profile of characteristics of people in the civic core includes those that are customarily found among elites: elevated levels of occupational status, education, and income. Others of their characteristics are not associated with elites: a strong religious orientation, multiple forms of personal generosity and supporting a common good, and explicit commitment to the community. Is it appropriate to think of the civic core as a distinctive type of elite, perhaps a moral elite—one that exercises a moral authority or authority in support of some public good? In what ways might the civic core differ fundamentally from other types of elites, in other contexts, such as an economic elite, a political elite, an intellectual elite? The conventional understanding of elites is that they are higher status individuals of influence who act in concert to advance their own interests and those of a dominant collectivity they identify with. The social science literature is almost entirely mute on the matter of civic elites (cf. Heying, 1995, 1998; Lasch, 1995; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), but the fact that some of the defining traits of the civic core’s members are comparable, and others are noncomparable, with those of conventional elites raises the question of what the essence of the civic core is and what its place and function in Canadian society are.
A second issue concerns the social dynamics that underlie the civic core. This core is evidently the product of forces and conditions that vary in different parts of the country and produce civic cores of significantly different size, orientation, and density. To what extent is membership in the civic core the result of personality and socialization factors? A subculture of generosity? A distinctive worldview that couples concern for a common good of some kind with a sense of personal responsibility to support that common good, perhaps buttressed by a particular set of religious beliefs or values? Does the core result from the conjunction of a set of demographic conditions (above-average age and the presence of dependent children) with certain social conditions such as living in nonmetropolitan communities or embeddedness in social networks? Or might today’s civic core be the product of what has been called the “long civic generation” (Goss, 1999)?

As well, the presence and character of the civic core bear directly on current public discussion about the nature of civil society and the challenge of citizen engagement. Contrary to an image of giving, volunteering, and civic participation widely embraced in Canada, we have shown that the majority of Canadians practice them only incidentally or not at all. The civic core, although small, is clearly of major significance in an efficient and fair society. We believe the civic core, once understood, will be recognized as a strategic social resource and a fundamental and consequential component of Canada’s social structure. Although nothing is known of such things as the core’s impact, whether it has an interior structure of its own such as the interlocking relationships one finds in economic elites, or whether a distinctive ethos is found among people in the core, it is certain that if the civic core is made the focus of systematic social inquiry, the resulting understanding will tell us much about Canada’s voluntary sector and about the larger Canadian society.

Appendix

Variables in the Discriminant Analysis

1. Region: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia
2. Community size: size of respondent’s community of residence. Large urban = population more than 100,000; small urban and rural = population less than 100,000
3. Religiosity: respondent’s assessment of importance of own religious beliefs; scale from 0 = not religious to 4 = very religious
4. Age: recorded in years
5. Social participation: social participation score. A scale constructed by counting the positive responses to 12 questions about participation in social activities; score runs from 0 = low to 12 = high
6. Income: grouped household income scale using group medians
7. Household size
8. Own children 0 to 5: number of children ages 0 to 5 living in the home
9. Own children 6 to 12: number of children ages 6 to 12 living in the home
10. Own children 13 to 17: number of children ages 13 to 17 living in the home
11. Own children 18+: number of children ages 18 and older living in the home
12. Education: years of schooling
13. Hours worked per week: 0 = part-time or not working; 1 = full-time
14. Gender: 0 = male; 1 = female
15. Class of worker: paid employees (reference group), self-employed workers, workers in unpaid jobs, not in the labor force
16. Marital status: married (reference group); single, never married; other marital status (widowed, separated, and divorced)
17. Occupation: managers and administrators (reference group); professionals; white-collar clerical, sales, and service; blue-collar skilled and unskilled; not in the labor force
18. Religion: no religion (reference group), Catholic, Protestant, other religion
19. Health: self-evaluation of health; scale runs from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent
20. Immigrant status: 0 = Canadian born; 1 = foreign born
21. Years resident in current community
22. Ethnicity: Canadian (reference group); English or English and other ancestry; French or French and other ancestry; English and French ancestry; other ancestry
23. Language of interview: 0 = English; 1 = French
24. Satisfaction with life: scale runs from 1 = low to 4 = high
25. Voted: respondent voted in last federal, provincial, or local elections; scale runs from 0 = did not vote to 3 = voted in elections at all three levels
26. News: scale measuring how much the respondent follows the news; scale runs from 1 = not much to 3 = often
27. Hours per week spent watching TV
28. Count of pure giving reports: number of types of “pure” informal donations (i.e., not through an organization and where there was no potential benefit to the donor)
29. Count of impure giving reports: number of types of “impure” informal donations where there was potential benefit to the donor, such as in a charitable lottery
30. Number of informal helping types: number of different types of informal volunteering respondent engaged in
31. Give because owe community: reason for donating to organizations is a belief that they owe something to their community
32. Give because personally affected: reason for donating to organizations is because someone they know has been affected
33. Youth experience, volunteer: respondent did volunteer work as a youth
34. Youth experience, role model: someone they admired was a volunteer during their youth
35. Youth experience, sports teams: youth experience in organized team sports
36. Youth experience, youth group: experience in youth groups
37. Youth experience, student government: experience in student government
38. Youth experience, religious group: youth experience in religious organizations
39. Control: control over everyday decisions; scale goes from 2 = some or none to 4 = all
Notes

1. To identify the respondents in each core, we cumulate effort, either hours, dollars, or civic participation types, starting at the high end of the distribution until 67% of the total effort is reached. The annual value of hours, dollars, or civic participation that this point represents is the boundary between the core and the noncore. The individuals at or above this boundary form the core for that particular activity. Those below form the noncore. Specifically, for volunteering, the total annual effort by the sample was 635,975 hours volunteered; two thirds of this is 423,983 hours. Cumulating hours volunteered for individuals in the sample, beginning with those who volunteered the most hours until 423,983 is reached, produces a cut-point of 224 hours volunteered annually. Individuals who volunteered this many hours or more constitute the volunteer core in Canada as we have defined it. As it turns out, only 5.4% of all Canadians volunteered more than 224 hours in the preceding year. The same procedure was followed to identify the core of givers for dollars donated (those giving 475 or more dollars per year) and the core for civic participation (those participating in two or more types of organizations). When the core groups are disaggregated by province, the appropriate cut-points for each activity are calculated on the basis of provincial distributions so that each core group represents the top two thirds of contributory effort in that province.

2. As with many other surveys of participation in organizations (civic participation), the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) did not ask for the actual number of organizations that a respondent was a member of but instead asked whether he or she belonged to, or participated in, any of seven organizational types (e.g., Grabb & Curtis, 1992, pp. 375-376). In the NSGVP, these types were service clubs, union/professional, political, cultural/educational/hobby, sport/recreation, religious affiliated, and school/neighborhood/community. In our analysis, we take the number of positive responses to these seven questions as the count of civic participation. Clearly, this underestimates the actual number of organizations a person is involved with to the extent that a person may be active in more than one organization in a given organizational category (two service clubs, for example). Because the cutoff between those in the core and those not in the core was between one and two organization types, undercounting multiple civic participation events of the same type may incorrectly exclude a person from being in the core group. In the 1984 National Election Study, for example, Curtis, Lambert, Brown, and Kay (1989, p. 152) found that when respondents were presented with a much more extensive list of association types (22), 29% report only one type of membership, whereas 36% report two or more membership types. In our data, 28% report one organization type, whereas 21% report two or more types. So, whereas the number who report one type is about the same, the proportion who report more than one organization type is about 15 percentage points lower. Thus, our data and method may underestimate the number of multiple events by a fairly substantial margin. However, Curtis et al. (1989, p. 152) also showed that in 1984, only 35% of Canadians reported no memberships. By 2000, that number had grown to 50%, a very significant rise. If there has been a general decline in the tendency to join associations, we would expect the number of multiple joiners to decline, whereas the single joiners could remain relatively stable (single joiners become nonparticipants, whereas multiple joiners become single joiners). So, the misestimation in our data would be considerably lower than the 36% versus 21% spread might suggest. To examine this possibility, we investigated the consequences of misclassification for our analysis of the core groups. Because anyone with two or more participation types is included in the core, the possibility of misclassification exists only for those who report one type. We randomly assigned one third of this group a count of two for their level of civic participation and recalculated the size of the membership core, as well as the degree of overlap between the reestimated participation core and the volunteering and giving cores. This in fact reduces the size of the participation core because the two-thirds cut-point moves to between two and three organization types. Moving the one third of those who reported one organization type to having two types increases the total level of civic participation. The two-thirds cut-off point then moves to between two and three organization types, and the size of the core actually declines. Thus, our procedure may underestimate the
size of the core if the undercount of civic participation is small. But, if the undercount is large, approaching one third of those reporting one type, then our analysis actually underestimates the size of this core and thus the size of the overlap with the other cores. For this reason, we take the number of membership types to be very close to the actual number of organizations respondents belong to or participate in.

3. The notion of “doing one’s share” may require qualification when it comes to contributions of money. Because wealth varies greatly across the population, the proportion of annual income, or the proportion of wealth donated, would have to be included in a measure of doing one’s share.

4. Note that in contrast to the 6.3% primary core of highly civically engaged individuals, 13% of the adult population engaged in none of these activities (see Table 1). We emphasize, however, that these statistics are measures of formal civic behaviors, that is, via formal organizations and because so they do not provide a complete picture of the distribution of contributing in Canada.

References


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Introducing the Nonprofit Program Classification System: The Taxonomy We’ve Been Waiting For

Linda Lampkin
Sheryl Romeo
Emily Finnin

National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute’s Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy

The National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute has developed a system to classify the programs, services, and activities of public charities, called the Nonprofit Program Classification (NPC) System. Designed to serve a wide range of potential users, the system has been used to code the activities of each organization, as reported in Part III—Program Service Accomplishments of its Form 990. Currently, codes from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system are used to classify nonprofit organizations according to their organizational purpose. Frequently, however, the questions that are asked by researchers, nonprofit organizations, and the public are focused on what an organization does rather than the type of organization. This article describes the development of the system and its strengths and limitations. Using both the NPC and NTEE systems, researchers will be able to develop a more complete portrait of nonprofit organizations and their activities.

The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) has recently developed a system for classifying the programs, services, and activities of nonprofit organizations. Designed to serve a wide range of potential users from researchers to donors, the system will first be used to classify the Program Service Accomplishments as reported on Part III of a charity’s Form 990, the annual information return required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for most tax-exempt organizations with more than $25,000 in gross receipts each year. For the first time, such a system is feasible because of the availability of the GuideStar/NCCS National Nonprofit Organization Database with Part III information that can be electronically searched and categorized.

Codes from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system (1998) are now used to classify nonprofit organizations according to their organizational purpose. Although essential to research, organizational categories do not always adequately describe the varied activities of the groups.
Many times, the questions asked by researchers, nonprofit organizations, and the public are focused on what an organization actually does rather than the type of organization. YMCAs, for example, are given a single NTEE code (P27) but usually offer a wide variety of programs such as recreational activities, arts classes, literacy instruction, food distribution, and AIDS awareness, just to name a few. The use of additional codes to classify activities will provide a more complete portrait of nonprofit organizations.

WHY DEVELOP A NEW NONPROFIT PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION (NPC) SYSTEM?

NCCS examined a number of existing classification systems for their adaptability for coding the programs of nonprofit organizations. These included the NTEE, the nonprofit standard for organizational classification; the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) (1997); and the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy of Human Services (Sales, 1994), a conceptual framework with standardized terminology and definitions for the information and referral field. Table 1 compares these three systems to the new NPC System.

NTEE

NTEE is a tax-exempt organization classification system designed by a team of nonprofit scholars and practitioners in the 1980s to serve as a common reporting language for statistics on the nonprofit sector (Sumariwalla, 1986). The system is now used by the IRS, as well as by NCCS at the Urban Institute, INDEPENDENT SECTOR, the Foundation Center and many foundations, American Association of Fundraising Council (AAFRC)-Trust for Philanthropy, GuideStar, and many researchers of the nonprofit sector.

NTEE divides nonprofit organizations into types based on their organizational purpose. It uses 10 major categories that can be disaggregated first into 26 major groups and ultimately into about 450 categories. The major categories are

- arts, culture, and humanities (I);
- education (II);
- environment and animals (III);
- health (IV);
- human services (V);
- international (VI);
- public, societal benefit (VII);
- religion related (VIII);
- mutual/membership benefit (IX); and
- unknown (X).
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<th>Statistical Unit</th>
<th>System Structure</th>
<th>Major Users</th>
<th>Issues for Nonprofit Program Classification</th>
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<td>National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE)</td>
<td>Tax-exempt organization classification system designed to serve as common reporting language for statistics on the nonprofit sector</td>
<td>Organization as determined by EIN</td>
<td>10 major categories, arranged topically, further disaggregated into 26 major groups comprising 450 categories</td>
<td>IRS, NCCS at the Urban Institute, Philanthropic Research, Inc., INDEPENDENT SECTOR, the Foundation Center, and many scholars of the nonprofit sector</td>
<td>Multiservice organizations, such as YMCAs, are given a single NTEE code that does not reflect a wide variety of programs across multiple NTEE major group divisions. Organization code does not always clearly describe what an organization does. Not detailed enough to define the myriad of programs provided by nonprofits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)</td>
<td>Industry classification system designed to facilitate economic analysis between United States, Mexico, and Canada</td>
<td>Establishment as based on a production-oriented conceptual framework</td>
<td>20 major economic sectors, divided into 108 subsectors representing 1,170 industries</td>
<td>Federal government agencies</td>
<td>NAICS is broken down into 20 economic sectors; 67% of nonprofit organizations fall into only 2 of them</td>
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<td>Classification System</td>
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<td>Taxonomy of Human Services</td>
<td>Classification used to index and access community resources; primary intent is to help match individuals with needed services</td>
<td>Individual services</td>
<td>10 major service categories, arranged alphabetically, then hierarchically from the most fundamental types of services required through the most general services provided; more than 5,000 separate classifications; include community groups and services as well as target populations</td>
<td>Information and referrals service throughout the country, various local and state government agencies</td>
<td>Most programs of human service organizations would be placed in the other services category Environmental, animals, advocacy, and societal benefit organizations do not fit easily into NAICS Present IRS usage limited to only 23 codes Coverage outside the nonprofit sector, including public programs and for-profit establishments such as restaurants Very detailed, more than 5,000 categories Provided of philanthropic organizations, research institutes, advocacy and civil rights organizations are hard to classify</td>
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Structure does not reflect broad sub-divisions within the nonprofit universe; for example, arts and culture are subsets of leisure activities.

Nonprofit Program Classification System: A system designed to classify the programs and beneficiaries of nonprofit organizations.

Program classes representing discrete categories but not lists of individual activities.

Three facets—program codes, generic codes, and beneficiary codes; program codes are divided into the same 26 major groups as the NTEE, consisting of 1,000 individual categories.

Still in the development phase; potential users are NCCS, PRI, scholars, and donors.

Created specifically for nonprofit program-level classification. Works in tandem with NTEE.

Note: IRS = Internal Revenue Service; NCCS = National Center for Charitable Statistics; EIN = employer identification number; PRI = Philanthropic Research, Inc.
There are also common codes that describe activities common to nonprofits across the major group areas. For example, nonprofits in all of the major categories may include those with the same purpose of research, management and technical assistance, and fund-raising.

NTEE is an organizational classification system designed to capture the purpose of organizations and group them by type. Sometimes the type of organization reflects its programs and activities, but sometimes it does not. For example, the 100 Black Men of America, Inc., was founded in 1963 to “improve the quality of life of our communities, and enhance educational and economic opportunities for all African Americans” (www.100blackmen.org). According to the classification guidelines of NTEE, the organization would be coded as a men’s service organization (S82). What the organization does, however, is provide programs for youth and economic empowerment of minorities. This activity is not reflected in its organizational code.

This example illustrates that NTEE is designed for a different purpose than capturing programs, services, and activities. Therefore, NCCS concluded that a system more focused on activity descriptions was needed to supplement the NTEE code that indicates organization type.

NAICS

The NAICS is an industry classification system that groups establishments into industries based on the activities in which they are primarily engaged. It is comprehensive, covering the entire range of economic activities. NAICS was developed by the U.S. Economic Classification Policy Committee; Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Infomática; and Statistics Canada to provide common industry definitions for the United States, Mexico, and Canada to facilitate economic analysis of the three countries covered under the North American Free Trade Agreement. It replaced the Standard Industry Code System in January 1999.

The NAICS system consists of 6 digits and five levels of hierarchy, with the first 2 digits representing the major economic sector. The first 5 digits are standardized among the three participating countries; below the agreed-upon level of compatibility, each country may add additional detailed industries, provided that this additional detail aggregates to the NAICS standard. Eleven of the 22-digit major economic sectors in NAICS contain nonprofit organizations. They include agriculture (11); information (51); finance and insurance (52); professional, scientific, and technical services (54); administrative and support and waste management (56); educational services (61); health care and social assistance (62); arts, entertainment, and recreation (71); accommodation and food services (72); other services (81); and unknown (99).

According to research conducted by Linda Lampkin and Nicholas A. J. Stengel (1999, 2000), the majority of nonprofit organizations fall within only two areas—almost 32% in health care and social assistance (62) and 35% in religious, grantmaking, civic, and professional and similar organizations.
(813), a subcategory of other services. In addition, some of the organizations
that provide services and pursue activities that are typically found within the
nonprofit sector, such as animal and environmental groups or societal benefit
organizations, do not fit easily into NAICS. Because NAICS was created on a
strict production paradigm, it is difficult to classify organizations that do not
have a strict economic output.

AIRS/INFO LINE TAXONOMY
OF HUMAN SERVICES (TAXONOMY)

The Taxonomy is a classification system used by organizations maintaining
human services databases. It is used to index and access community resources
based on services provided and target groups served. Developed by INFO
LINE of Los Angeles and used by information and referral programs throughout
the country as well as state and government offices, the latest version con-
tains more than 5,000 terms that are organized into 10 major service categories
and a separate target group section. The major service categories are arranged
alphabetically then hierarchically within categories from the most fundamen-
tal types of service required by individuals through the most general services
provided for the community at large (Sales, 1994). The structure includes the
following categories:

- basic subsistence,
- consumer services,
- criminal justice and legal services,
- education,
- environmental quality,
- health care,
- income security,
- individual and family life,
- mental health care and counseling,
- organizational/community services, and
- target populations.

The structure and content of the Taxonomy are constantly modified to accu-
rately capture the ever-changing service delivery system and meet the needs
of users (Sales, 1998). The system was created from the bottom up, taking a
large and disparate group of activities that individuals had inquired about
over the years and making the information meaningful by organizing it in a
logical and consistent manner. The Taxonomy’s primary intended function is to
help match individuals with needed services. As such, it does not classify ac-
tivities of nonprofits for research purposes very well. For example, it is very
broad in coverage, including government programs as well as organizations
and programs of for-profit establishments such as restaurants. It is also very
detailed, with more than 5,000 separate classifications.
In addition, some programs playing a significant role in the nonprofit sector, such as those of philanthropic organizations, research institutes, and advocacy and civil rights and liberties organizations, are difficult to classify. Finally, the overall structure of the Taxonomy does not reflect the division of broad subsectors that is typically found in the nonprofit universe. For example, arts and culture, an important fundamental component of the nonprofit sector in this country and a major group division of NTEE, is merely a subset of leisure activities in the Taxonomy.

Because of the Taxonomy’s development of very detailed activities and focus on services to individuals and families, the need for a different system for research on nonprofit programs was clear.

THE NPC SYSTEM

The NPC System is not intended to be a replacement for the NTEE but rather an added dimension to help in understanding what nonprofits do. Although it can stand alone, its major groups are linked to NTEE. It is broken down into the same 26 major groups as the NTEE and then further divided into about 1,000 program descriptions in those areas. Researchers familiar with NTEE major group divisions will easily recognize how individual programs fit into the NPC structure. Combined with the NTEE, NPC codes will provide a detailed description of the wide range and number of nonprofit programs. Analyses based on the NPC System will provide an immensely useful tool for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers who are concerned with the role of the nonprofit sector at national, regional, and local levels.

NPC was developed to reflect the manner in which nonprofit program data are organized, collected, and reported, using categories that can capture the vast majority of programs. NPC program descriptions are intended to represent discrete categories into which appropriate data can be placed, but not an exhaustive list of individual organization activities. Essential taxonomic principles of comprehensiveness, mutual exclusivity of elements, and logical consistency were followed throughout. NPC basic structure includes the following:

- **Three facets.** Terms are divided into three distinct categories or facets that can either be evaluated individually or combined. This creates a multidimensional system with a minimum number of codes. The NPC uses (a) program codes—the heart of the classification system designed to capture the subject focus of the programs performed; (b) general codes—modeled on NTEE’s common codes, these include cross-sector activities such as advocacy, fund-raising, and research; and (c) beneficiary codes—population groups the programs intend to serve.
Subject hierarchies. These are lists of standardized terms, displayed in hierarchical arrays, using the same major types as NTEE. Arranged from broader to narrower concepts, subject hierarchies were created using the NTEE and actual Form 990 program services descriptions. The lists of appropriate terms were supplemented by various subsector thesauri in different disciplines.

Definitions, lists of broader and narrower terms, and extensive cross-references. Users will access the classification system either by keyword searches or browsing through the system’s tree structures. Extensive lists of cross-references and broader and narrower terms to allow choices of terms from “drill down menus” in a logical manner have been created.

USING THE NPC SYSTEM

Used in conjunction with the NTEE, the NPC System can help provide much more detail on the programs, services, and activities of various types of charities and yield a much more accurate picture of the role played by the sector. The availability of the GuideStar/NCCS National Nonprofit Organization Database with its Form 990 information on programs now permits the development of a computerized matching system. For the first time, it is feasible to analyze activities for the more than 220,000 charities that file the form each year.

LIMITATIONS OF FORM 990 DATA

Although the IRS Form 990 data are the most comprehensive available on the sector, there are a number of limitations when they are used for this type of analysis. These include the following:

- Not all charities file the Form 990. The data do not include organizations with less than $25,000 in gross receipts annually, as they are not required to file. Religious congregations are also not required to file, although some do. Some charities do not comply with the requirement to file, although the increasing visibility and easy access provided on the Internet should work to improve compliance.

- Not all charities filing the Form 990 complete the Part III descriptions. In the samples examined in this article, more than 8% of the organizations had no entries on their forms for this section. Although the instructions call for descriptions of their “exempt purpose achievements for each of their four largest program services (as measured by total expenses incurred),” most charities described two programs. Although it is possible that most charities have fewer than four programs, an alternative explanation is lack of attention to this part of Form 990.
• The quality of the program descriptions on Form 990 is uneven. The organizations are given four small blank spaces for their entries on the form, with instructions to describe “program service accomplishments through measurements such as clients served, days of care, therapy sessions, or publications issued” and “the activity’s objective, for both this time period and the longer-term goal, if the output is intangible” and to “give reasonable estimates for any statistical information, if this information is estimated.” The last instruction in this section (“Be clear, concise, and complete in your description”), given the space constraints, is a necessity.

Another factor in the quality of responses is that the words used to describe the programs may most often be chosen by the accountant or bookkeeper completing the form, rather than by those more familiar with the activities of an organization. Again, the quality of the descriptions should improve as charities realize the increased scrutiny these forms are receiving. As Form 990 increasingly serves as the first introduction of the organization to a potential donor, volunteer, or funder, the programs, activities, and services should become more accurately portrayed.

The future holds great promise of improved data quality. Electronic filing of the form and the self-selection of NPC codes from drop-down menus will help standardize the responses. The IRS is beginning the process of moving to electronic filing, and NCCS is launching a pilot program with a number of states to help identify potential problems and speed the transition. (See http://nccs.urban.org for additional information.)

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The number of Web sites concerned with nonprofits has grown dramatically in the past few years, and more are being created every day. A standard way of describing the programs, activities, and services is essential to matching donors, volunteers, and funders—and those just seeking information—with charities providing programs of interest. The NPC System can be a valuable resource in providing this necessary link. Several Web site developers have contacted NCCS about the use of NPC codes to help classify and categorize the vast array of nonprofit activities in an organized fashion for Web searching.

The NPC codes for activities can also be used to help check the appropriate NTEE classification for organizations. With computer assignment of codes to the Part III descriptions, an automated review of the NTEE classification is also possible. This will help improve the quality of the organizational coding and also indicate when the purpose of a charity has changed.

For researchers, the NPC System can provide detail on programs offered by different types of charities within the subsector. For example, questions such
as “To what extent do organizations not classified as arts organizations offer arts programs?” and “How many YMCAs offer day care?” can now be addressed. The types of programs offered can also be analyzed, such as “How many performing arts organizations offer ethnic/cultural awareness programs?” In fact, an initial study revealed that 25% of arts programs in four communities were offered by organizations other than arts organizations (Romeo, Lampkin, & Twombly, 2001).

Investigations about programs can be completed using keyword searches in the database (day care/child care, grassroots*, advocacy*, lobby*, etc.). Detailed knowledge of the system and its hierarchies is not needed as keywords and cross-references have been extensively developed. Another useful aspect is that there can be a better tracking of common activities such as advocacy, increasing public awareness, technical assistance, and research that cut across all major groups.

Over the next year, another important field will be added to the Form 990 database—the program services expenses associated with each of the program services accomplishments listed on Part III. This step will allow researchers to investigate the size and scope of the programs by NPC code and greatly enrich the portrait of programs, services, and activities of charities using the expenses associated with them.

SUMMARY

The NPC System being developed by NCCS provides a way to greatly enrich the information available on nonprofits and use the newly available NCCS/PRI (Philanthropic Research, Inc.) National Nonprofit Organization database from the IRS Forms 990 filed annually by charities. It provides a method to organize the programs, services, and activities, with an appropriate level of detail for analyses. And more important, the resulting analyses will yield a more complete understanding of nonprofit activities to help inform discussions about their role in civil society.

References

References marked with an asterisk were used in creating the Nonprofit Classification System.


*A user’s guide to popline keywords. (1999). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Population Information Program, Center for Communication Programs.
Linda Lampkin works closely with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), key nonprofit groups, and the scholarly community to maximize usage of nonprofit data to promote and conduct research on the sector. Recent research projects include studies of charitable giving and data sources for nonprofit research, evaluation of the effectiveness of nonprofit programs through outcome measurement, and development of a system for classifying the program, activities, and beneficiaries of nonprofit organizations based on the information in the IRS Forms 990. She is a coauthor of numerous publications and holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in economics from Cornell University.

Sheryl Romeo joined the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics as a working group member revising the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities for adoption by the Internal Revenue Service and inclusion in the North American Industrial Code. She oversaw the publication of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities—Core Codes manual and created the index for the same volume. At present, she is heading up a team who is creating a system for classifying the programs and activities of nonprofit organizations. The Nonprofit Programs Classification System, as it is known, will provide both a user interface for accessing data and an artificial intelligence package for automatically classifying program services.

Emily Finnin conducts research and analysis on data related to nonprofit organizations, primarily financial data from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990. She was primarily responsible for building and error checking and correcting the digitized database system of seven congruent databases, which together contain more than 650 variables for more than 228,000 organizations. In addition, she compiled the 1999 National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) Core File, which contains descriptive and financial information from the IRS Form 990 for more than 200,000 nonprofit organizations. She is responsible for maintaining other NCCS databases (Return Transaction File and Business Master File) and has assisted in the creation of several smaller databases used for specific analysis of program services and advocacy.
2000 ARNOVA Conference Awards List

Gabriel G. Rudney Award for an Outstanding Dissertation in Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Research:

Mark A. Hager: *Explaining Demise Among Nonprofit Organizations*
(Abstract)

Emerging Scholar Awards:

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Award for Outstanding Article in the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*:


Award for Outstanding Book in Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Research:


Award for Distinguished Lifetime Achievement in Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Research:

Robert L. Payton
Explaining Demise Among Nonprofit Organizations

Abstract

Mark A. Hager

*The Urban Institute*

*Explaining Demise Among Nonprofit Organizations* reports on a study of closure of nonprofit organizations in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan area from 1980 to 1994. The theoretical literature focusing on the behavior of individual and populations of organizations suggests eight reasonably distinct theoretical explanations why nonprofit organizations close. These theories include the liabilities of newness and small size, the inability to reproduce commitment, intraorganizational conflict, inability to mobilize human resources, lack of legitimacy, inability to compete for scarce or depleted financial resources, lack of connections to other organizations, and the completion of the organization's mission.

Longitudinal data collected by Joseph Galaskiewicz on organizational characteristics provide the opportunity to determine which theories have the most fidelity in terms of explaining the closure of nonprofit organizations. Of a random sample of 229 public charities interviewed in 1980, 73 had exited the panel by the end of the study period in 1994. Of these, 37 closed their doors. This study focuses on those 37 organizations that closed. Several kinds of data contribute to a final accounting of which theories are supported in the sample studied. Exit interviews with representatives from 31 of the closed organizations yield factors that interviewees believe were most important in explaining the closure of their organizations. Formal analyses of the organizational narratives provide initial insights into the reasons that organizations closed.

In addition, the dissertation presents an analysis of longitudinal survey data. Rather than analyzing cause on a case-by-case basis, this approach yields probabilistic explanations about the relationships between variables hypothesized to vary with organizational closure. Results from the various analyses show consistent support for the liabilities of small size and youth, as well as the liability of competing in a sparse resource niche. Analysis of the open...
interview data also points to the liability of the loss of key personnel and the liability of expanding programs and organizational infrastructures beyond the capabilities of managers. Finally, the data indicating that many organizations closed due to the successful completion of their mission call into question the common assumption in organization science that the disappearance of an organization from a population signals the failure of the organization.

Mark A. Hager is a research associate in the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. After leaving graduate school, he spent the 1998-1999 academic year as a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Following that, he was director of research at Americans for the Arts, a national arts advocacy organization. In his current job, he has been able to best pursue his research interests in studying the behavior of nonprofit organizations. With Joe Galaskiewicz, he is currently working on a monograph based on the dissertation. The monograph is due out from Indiana University Press in 2002.

Organizing God’s Work makes significant and timely contributions to our knowledge of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action. Its accessible style will engage many leaders and laypeople as well as scholars.

Organizing God’s Work focuses on practical problems facing religious congregations in four religious traditions that are usually thought to be very distinct—Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal, and Jewish Reformed. Locating congregations very broadly as part of civil society, and approaching them with questions drawn from a sophisticated mastery of organizational theory, Margaret Harris shows that all of these apparently very different British religious communities must cope with similar temporal challenges. She approaches questions of race and gender with admirable ease and directness. Her discussion of the realities that all congregations face has important implications not only for organizational theory but also for the current American debate over religious congregations and publicly funded services.

In form, Margaret Harris’s Organizing God’s Work is very much a series of accessible, down-to-earth conversations, enriched by excellent quotations from the people she interviewed. Scholars will learn much from this book—not least, that an exceptionally well-informed researcher can produce excellent results from a very manageable number of interviews. More significantly, people in many congregations, not only in Britain but in the United States and other countries as well, are also likely to find Organizing God’s Work exceptionally topical, stimulating, and useful.

Note


ARNOVA Book Prize Committee
David C. Hammack, Chair
Richard Magat
Susan A. Ostrander
Edward L. Queen III
Stefan Toepler

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