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Research Articles

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Social Media: A Visual Communication Analysis
*Stephanie Dolamore, Jessica E. Sowa,
Laura Hamilton Edwards*

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Governance
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Social Equity

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Book Review

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The *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs (JPNA)* focuses on providing a connection between the practice and research of public affairs. This is accomplished with scholarly research, practical applications of the research, and no fees for publishing or journal access. *JPNA* publishes research from diverse theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary backgrounds that address topics related to the affairs and management of public and nonprofit organizations.

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Editor's Introduction: Collaboration, Advocacy, and Accountability in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

Deborah A. Carroll 165

Research Articles

Depicting the Work of Police Foundations on Social Media: A Visual Communication Analysis

Stephanie Dolamore, Jessica E. Sowa, and Laura Hamilton Edwards 168

Social Enterprise Legitimacy: Application of Accountability Mechanisms as a Multi-Institutional Context Strategy

Robert W. Kolodinsky, William J. Ritchie, and Nejat Çapar 195

The Significance of 501(c) Status Among Environmental Nonprofits Engaged in Oil and Gas Policy Debates

Jennifer A. Kagan 217

The Varieties of Nonprofit Organizations and Local Hazard Mitigation Efforts

Hyunjung Ji, Jungwon Yeo, and Won No 239

Rethinking Perspectives of Power in Collaborative Governance

Joseph Hafer, Bing Ran, Md Sharif Hossain 260

Social Equity

Meanings Matter: The Relationship Between Constitutional Values and Social Justice

Maren B. Trochmann and Mary E. Guy 281

Book Review

Researching Voluntary Action: Innovations and Challenges, Edited by Jon Dean and Eddy Hogg

Seth Meyer 294

Editor's Introduction: Collaboration, Advocacy, and Accountability in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

Deborah A. Carroll – University of Illinois Chicago

In this new issue of *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, we offer a collection of *Research Articles* focused on collaborative governance, advocacy, accountability, and communications within the public and nonprofit sectors. Our *Social Equity* article offers an historical analysis of constitutional values and social justice with a focus on messaging for public service professionals. In addition, we offer a *Book Review* of important recent work focusing on research methods for nonprofits and voluntary action.

First, through the use of visual imagery, Dolamore et al. (2022) analyze the content of messaging conveyed through social media images by police foundations in the United States. By focusing on police foundations created to support local police departments, the authors collected Facebook banner images and demographic data over a period of two years. Through both inductive and deductive coding processes focusing on first impressions, images of police, and images of police activity, the authors reveal some expected and surprising findings. Ultimately, the authors provide practical advice for public service organizations adopting strategic communication plans that utilize visual curation for important messaging.

Recognizing the unique communication and governance challenges of hybrid, dual-mission social mission organizations, Kolodinsky et al. (2022) use institutional theory to examine the legitimacy of social enterprises. Through their comprehensive framework applying context-specific accountability mechanisms, the authors illustrate how social enterprises can strengthen perceptions of organizational legitimacy and performance, thereby strengthening their relationships with stakeholders. In doing so, the authors offer important findings related to improving legitimacy perceptions of social enterprises in different institutional contexts.

Amid the current environment of elevated fuel costs, Kagan (2022) offers a timely analysis of the advocacy activities of environmental nonprofits engaged in hydraulic fracturing policy debates. Extending our knowledge of nonprofit advocacy beyond 501(c)(3) service providers and 501(c)(4) advocacy organizations, the author utilizes both qualitative comparative analysis and quantitative statistical analysis to explore the types of advocacy activities these nonprofits use to influence policy. Overall, the author finds that these types of nonprofits actively participate in advocacy and are relatively effective at doing so, while also revealing new advocacy tactics than has been established by prior research.

Further focusing on the connection between the nonprofit and government sectors, Ji et al. (2022) examine a variety of nonprofit organizations and how they influence local governments' hazard mitigation efforts within the context of disaster management. Through

quantitative analysis of three main categories of nonprofits, the authors find that counties with more nonprofits dedicated to improving the community's social welfare are more likely to adopt hazard mitigation projects; however, counties with more nonprofits focused on select constituents are less likely to develop such projects. Overall, these findings reveal important distinctions in the types of nonprofits associated with local government disaster response efforts and activities.

Our final research article offers a variety of perspectives of power and its role in understanding collaborative governance. Specifically, Hafer et al. (2022) analyzed the content of articles recently published in the top 48 public administration journals to determine how such research views the concept of power. The authors find that extant research conceptualizes power from functional and critical perspectives, which is somewhat limiting our understanding of power dynamics and potential imbalances. As such, the authors also suggest greater attention be paid to social construction and pragmatic definitions of power. In doing so, the authors offer helpful practical advice for public administrators to better understand the power dynamics in collaborative governance efforts.

In this issue's *Social Equity* section, Trochmann and Guy (2022) offer an historical analysis of American constitutional values and democratic beliefs and how they mark the progression toward social equity. By recognizing the current political climate of divisiveness, the authors emphasize the importance of messaging from public service professionals that is relevant for the challenges of today in order to bring about necessary social change. Specifically, the authors contend that meanings drive narratives that justify administrative action. As such, it is imperative for public administration leaders to infuse the concepts of freedom, liberty, equality, and justice into the national narrative in such way that brings about shifts in policy and practice to advance social justice.

In his *Book Review of Researching Voluntary Action: Innovations and Challenges*, edited by Dean and Hogg (2022), Meyer (2022) evaluates an important contribution to advancing research in the area of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action. Meyer (2022) describes the content of the book's 15 chapters and its emphasis on first-person narratives that each contributing author provides to help explain their respective research method and how it can be applied through real-world examples. In addition, Meyer (2022) offers some critical suggestions that might aid in the development of future editions of the book and its use for doctoral level classes in research methods.

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Depicting the Work of Police Foundations on Social Media: A Visual Communication Analysis

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Visual imagery is a fundamental element of our communication systems. Unlike spoken or written words that deliver meaning one word at a time, images convey multiple messages instantly with powerful impact. This study explores the content embedded in the social media images used by nonprofit police foundations in the United States through archeological visual analysis. Findings reveal that public service organizations navigate curation choices when selecting images for social media accounts, such as how best to depict the mission of the organization. The prioritization of image curation is imperative, especially with the growth of social media as a space for promoting encounters with, not just information distribution to, citizens. In the public service, the importance of image curation lies in the potential to reinforce the work of organizations, but the risk is miscommunication with consequences for public trust.

Keywords: Communication, Visual Analysis, Police, Social Media

Introduction

The public receives messages about the role of public servants from many sources—media, the internet, politicians—on an almost continuous basis. Politicians and members of the media may tell stories of government failure, using charts, images, and other symbols for emphasis. Certain images and stories may become archetypes that symbolize problematic public service or the role of government in society, such as ‘red tape,’ the ‘welfare queen,’ or the ‘outrageous spending’ on toilet seats and coffee pots by the U.S. Department of Defense (Bozeman & Feeney, 2011; Hancock, 2004; Hartung, 2016). Whether or not these images or stories capture the full truth or even any truth becomes immaterial—they convey a story that can become institutionalized and hard to overcome, almost to the point of myth (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Carefully curated images of the good that public and nonprofit organizations do for society also resonate and often become indelible symbols; picture the American Red Cross helping people after a hurricane devastated a town, firemen raising the flag at Ground Zero after September 11th, or a police officer carrying a young child away from a tragic accident. The phrase ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ is a common adage in society and the power of images to convey meaning in the public service is an under-explored aspect of how public service organizations¹ communicate with the public and other important stakeholders (see

recent work by Alon-Barkat, 2020; Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2017; Teodoro & An, 2018). The choice of images on the outward-facing communication channels of a public service organization, whether through social media platforms or the organizational website, quickly conveys a message to interested stakeholders, such as funders, clients, citizens, politicians, and interest groups. Failure to choose these images carefully or consider how the images align with the organization's purpose could lead those interested stakeholders to form mistaken opinions or to take their support or interest elsewhere.

In this study, we explore the role of visual images in the communication of public service organizations through the case study of image use at nonprofit police foundations. We conducted an exploratory study of these nonprofits that play a role across the public and nonprofit sector: nonprofit police foundations created to support local government police departments. As public funding declines across jurisdictions, the nonprofit sector has been stepping up to fill this gap, with nonprofits created to buttress public spending on what are often considered core public services (e.g., parks, schools) (Addonizio, 2000; Gazley et al., 2018; Nelson & Gazley, 2014; Yandle et al., 2016). In the case of foundations created to support the operation of a school district or to maintain a state or local park, these are public services that may not engender a lot of controversy, as these services involve positively constructed target populations, such as children and families, and common goods, such as public education and green space. Nonetheless, questions about equity and transparency in funding arise when nonprofits are driving a portion of public service funding. This becomes even more paramount in the case of nonprofits involved with local police functions. The target population (i.e., police) and the common goods (i.e., public safety) do not have a positive construction due to documented connections to systemic racism (Walker & Archbold, 2019).

Police foundations are private nonprofits that raise money and provide other forms of support for municipal police departments (Lippert & Walby, 2017; Walby et al., 2020). Therefore, while supporting a public organization, these foundations operate in the nonprofit sector and must consider how to raise money and tap into charitable inclinations and behaviors. In seeking community support for police departments, which has challenges in 21st century American society, these nonprofits are conveying messages about the role of police departments vis-à-vis the public and the community. The role of the nonprofit police foundation as a broker between these two groups and their choices about how to visually convey their operations is compelling and worth study. The images these nonprofits select to represent the organization's work may accomplish multiple purposes—generating financial support, conveying legitimacy on the police department's role in the community, and so forth.

Drawing on an analysis of visual images on the Facebook pages of a sample of police foundations, we explore the content of the images with observations across the size and age of the organizations. From our analysis, we discuss the implications of content choices for public service organizations. This article asks the following research questions: what messages are conveyed by the central banner image on these nonprofits' social media pages? What public service values are conveyed in the images? Finally, more broadly, how do visual images give public administration scholars a lens to examine the outward communication of organizational mission and purpose? This article concludes by developing theoretical propositions for analyzing visual images in the public service, along with future research questions on the role visual analysis can play in public administration research to understand the interface between public service organizations and various stakeholders.

Power of Images, Curation, and Choice in the Public Service

People communicate through language, behavior (e.g., facial expressions, hand gestures), and through images, both static and moving pictures. Visual imagery is a fundamental element of our communication systems (Cram et al., 2016). For as long as humans have been

communicating, we have also been creating visual images to convey information to others (Ayiter, 2005; Cram et al., 2016). Before the invention of the camera, images were drawn, painted, sculpted, or printed for sharing. Following the turn of the 20th century, imagery could more easily include photographic representations for communicating. Today, digital technologies have increased the amount and type of images we can generate and share quickly and often instantaneously or in real-time. As a result, images are a persistent element of our culture.

Defining imagery as a concept of study in public administration requires a look at a broad range of literature across fields, including but not limited to sociology, archeology, and marketing. Scholars in these fields find images are the visual mode of “discourse and meaning construction” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 287). That is, visual images are one method for constructing, conveying, and organizing information for others. Scholars note that images are representations (Bailey & McAtee, 2003, p. 48), and care must be taken to understand the context in which the image was created, curated, and displayed. Visual images are also not neutral transmissions of information; visual images have a point of view that must be acknowledged in processing the meaning conveyed. In other words, visual images are “subject to the influences of their social, cultural and historical contexts of production and consumption” (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 341). Researchers assert “the idea that valid scientific insight in society can be acquired by observing, analyzing, and theorizing its visual manifestations” (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011, p. 1). Still, the study of images is under-researched and, consequently, under-theorized (Meyer et al., 2013).

In terms of communication, images are not secondary to text. They are a primary mechanism for communicating information (Meyer et al., 2013) and implicitly communicate complex concepts with a single glance from the viewer (Rindova & Schultz, 1998). Unlike written or verbal messages, which are processed piece by piece (i.e., word by word), an image contains multiple points of information conveyed “instantaneously and memorably” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 494). However, as with written and verbal communication, visual images can be individualized or curated in ways that reflect the context of their creation and meaning to convey a complex story, albeit one processed quickly and then examined with further reflection (Meyer et al., 2013). Written, spoken, and/or visual imagery can tell a story or communicate a message to a recipient. These forms of communication are powerful tools in the arsenal of a public service organization looking to convey messages to its stakeholders (Cram et al., 2016). At a time when images are quickly transmitted to the public and can lead to a lasting impression, how those images are curated—how they are selected and distributed—has become an essential part of the external facing nature of public service organizations.

Still, because images convey information differently from other modes of communication (Magliano et al., 2016) and the interpretation process can be subjective and hard to capture (Meyer et al., 2013), there exist challenges and opportunities for image-based research. Scholars have begun turning their attention to this question in public administration research. The scholarship of images in public administration is diverse but still emerging. In their work exploring how the imagery of older adults shapes public policy responses, Keyes and Dicke note “images are pervasive, shaping political views, human interactions, bodily images, and consumer choices” (2016, p. 116). Zavattaro (2012, 2013) chronicled the connection between the public branding of cities and imagery, pulling extensively from the theoretical work of Baudrillard (1994, as cited in Zavattaro, 2012; 2013). As Zavattaro explains, Baudrillard theorizes that all “objects lose their reality value” and the world will instead rely on “symbols and signs of reality” (2012, p. 216). This is accomplished by images moving through various phases, where images become divorced from their actual origins and instead become symbols with a different type of relationship to viewers. If an image is chosen to represent a brand for a public service organization, understanding the relationship between that image and ‘reality,’ and in what phase the image exists, is critical for processing the impact of the brand in relation to that which it is signifying.

The process by which images and symbols become recognized brands for public service organizations and jurisdictions has been the focus of much of the research on visual images in public administration (e.g., Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2017; Teodoro & An, 2018), with scholars focusing on the relationship between aspects of branding (such as favorability or negative images) and outcomes such as trust and public support. While branding plays an essential role in the perception and opinions of public service organizations, images may convey meanings separate from the designed (or anticipated) brand, depending on how they are used. The meaning of transmitted images may change over time, such as those posted and archived on a social media account over time. In that case, it is important to understand how this happens and what the implications may be.

Social media images have important considerations beyond branding. Public administration practitioners and scholars explore how government uses social media to form and sustain relationships with the community. Government agencies and citizens can exchange real-time images in the case of emergencies to manage crises (Kavanaugh et al., 2012; Graham et al., 2015). Government agencies can use social media channels to try to improve citizen satisfaction with services and influence citizens' trust in government (Porumbescu, 2016). Social media can be used by government to encourage action and behavioral change on the part of citizens, with a current example being public health departments seeking to encourage the COVID-19 vaccine.² Social media content can be used to cultivate coproduction in an online space (Criado et al., 2013, 2017; Mergel, 2013; Zavattaro & Brainard, 2019). As a tool to expand transparency and bi-directional communication with government, Mergel (2013) explains that social media, when conceptualized with the lens of coproduction and as a function of e-government services, supports the goals of Open Government. Keying into these insights, Zavattaro and Brainard (2019) explore how social media is a frontier of government-citizen interaction that can be classified as encounters at the micro-level (see also, Stout & Love, 2017). In this sense, social media interactions as micro-encounters greatly influence the perception and realization of government activities and outcomes.

Images in public administration are not limited to government entities. For those focused on nonprofits, research has been conducted about the role of imagery in nonprofit fundraising appeals, though this remains an emerging area of research. Examples include studies on the impact of imagery in fundraising, looking at the impact of negative images on donor's motivation to give (Jordan et al., 2019), processing of negative images (Bae, 2019), or increased attention paid to advertising (Santos et al., 2017). Many of these studies are experimental and increasingly complex, involving data collection of eye movements and cognitive processing of images. Findings generally show negative images increase the likelihood of a donation. However, the size of the impact can vary, suggesting other variables may also play a role, such as the name and reputation of the organization. These studies show that the curation of images by nonprofits, whether for use in marketing, fundraising, or accountability purposes, becomes an intentional decision that conveys great depths of information to the viewer.

Police Foundations and Images on Social Media

For this study, we consider a specific type of nonprofit organization: police foundations established to provide monetary aid and gifts-in-kind to support police departments. Police foundations are nonprofit organizations formed to support a local police department, including county or municipal departments (Lippert & Walby, 2017). These foundations generate resources that can be used for various purposes, such as supplementing the department's budget, supporting the police families, or helping the department in charitable endeavors (Walby et al., 2020). Scholars differ on the first established police foundation, but the most prominent one was the New York City Police Foundation, established in 1971 (Walby et al., 2020). This foundation was created during a period of publicly recognized corruption in

the police force as a way of funding reforms and innovative programming to improve the operation and reputation of the police force (Walby et al., 2020). Police foundations have continued to be established at the city, region, state, and national levels for decades and increasingly are under scrutiny for channeling large donations to support controversial purchases for police departments without public oversight (Paul, 2020).

Police foundations can materially support the police in doing the fundamentals of policing or purchasing larger, capital-type equipment, essentially providing resources not in the government budget. During the COVID-19 pandemic, foundations helped departments secure the necessary protective gear such as facemasks (Philadelphia Police Foundation, 2020). Foundations can also sponsor community events and initiatives for officers to support the community, such as ‘Shop with a Cop,’ where officers take children shopping for holiday presents (Metropolitan Police Department, 2020). Programs like these help the police navigate their relationship with their communities and provide citizens with the opportunity to show their support of officers. In this sense, the foundations function as brokers to bring the two sides together to promote better community relations, engaged youth, and other positive community outcomes.

When thinking about the role of images in the work of police foundations, as well as connecting the above discussions about the role of images in branding and coproduction, we anticipate: (1) visual images can be found on police foundation social media pages and (2) the images used by police foundations likely connect to broader narratives of police culture, harnessing those police narratives through the images to convey the narrative visually. There are three common narratives found in the literature: police as communitarians, police as guardians, and police as warriors (see Community Policing Consortium, 1994; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Wood & Groff, 2019). Police as communitarians is grounded in the notion that police promote social order through relationships with the community (Community Policing Consortium, 1994). Police as guardians is the concept that police promote social order through the protection of citizens (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Wood & Groff, 2019). Lastly, the police as warriors achieve social order through battle training, accoutrements, and weaponry (Rahr & Rice, 2015). In the brokering role between police departments and the community, we anticipate these narratives being present to gain resources that can be given to the police departments to support their work. However, the brokering role could operate differently depending on the existing relationship between police and the community, the challenges and issues facing the community in terms of crime and citizen well-being, and other factors such as high-profile police/citizen interactions. When these nonprofits use images to convey their work and the work of the police departments in the community, they must be thoughtful about the narrative conveyed. The foundations need to consider—how do we want stakeholders to respond? What messages about police departments and our work in supporting them do we want to communicate? And are we being successful at this?

In summary, there are several important observations across the body of literature on social media in public service and how social media images are used in practice. First, images are pervasive and powerful. While we have explored a selection of the work on the use of imagery in public service organizations, we assert more attention is needed. Especially considering the 24-hour news cycle and the growth of live streaming on social media, as well as images’ ability to reach the public and democratize communication channels in the public sphere (Cram et al., 2016), these forces shape the imperative of attention to images for public service organizations. If public service organizations are not consciously curating the images they transmit, they are underutilizing this communication channel and its power. This is the second important observation: images are powerful tools that connect organizations to the individuals they serve. If public service organizations overlook this important outlet for collaboration and communication, they risk forgoing rich opportunities. This could possibly impact the ability to gain multiple sources of resources, including financial resources, human resources, and

public support. We turn now to a discussion of the methodology used for our visual image analysis of police foundation depictions on social media.

Image Analysis Methodology

This article adopts an exploratory approach to understand the use of visual images by nonprofit police foundations and the messages these images communicate or transmit about the police. Specifically, we explore individual images through archeological visual analysis. Meyer and colleagues describe this approach as a “window” to understanding the cultural systems in which an image is produced (2013, p. 509). As the most recent comprehensive review of visual analysis research of organization theory within business administration, Meyer et al. (2013) present how this conceptual orientation categorizes the content of the images relying on tools from an established and cross-disciplinarily body of work (Anderson & Imperia, 1992; Benschop & Meihuizen, 2002; Campbell et al., 2009; Dougherty & Kunda, 1990; Duff, 2011; Friedel, 2008; Hancock & Tyler, 2007; Hardy & Phillip, 1999; Kuasirikun, 2011; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004; Sørensen, 2010). The review by Meyer and colleagues argues archeological visual analyses enhance “our understanding of the specific meaning structures that are created and maintained through visual means” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 509).

An archeological approach to visual analysis employs content analysis of the visual imagery. The unit of analysis is individual images, and the content being analyzed are specific components within the picture. Table 1 contains the logistical elements of our research approach. Adapted from Meyer et al. (2013) and their distillation of dozens of archeological visual analyses, this table summarizes essential elements of our approach to the visual research of police foundations.

The archaeological approach is appropriate for this research because it aligns with the specifics of our image database and coding structure, which is described below. For example, the research team collected and interpreted the social media images that are produced by police foundations themselves. The images were generated for use on social media, not for research, and have been curated by field actors and not researchers. We collected the images using an archival technique to standardize the images for analysis. Finally, while we have created a complete dataset, the total number of images (n=201) is large enough to draw conclusions but small enough to apply the archaeological approach.

Compiling the Police Foundation Database

To understand how images can be studied as a method of communicating organizational roles and purposes, it is crucial to briefly return to the public service organizations examined in this research: police foundations. As nonprofits, police foundations are established with a mission that aligns with the standards established for nonprofit entities and exist outside the realm of traditional police department budget and purchasing oversight. Therefore, as with other ‘Friends of’ nonprofit organizations, police foundations generally exist to support local police departments with funding to cover expenses for purchases outside the scope of the public budget (Walby et al., 2020).

This article draws on a researcher-compiled dataset of Facebook banner images and demographic data for police foundations in the United States. A single source of all the registered police foundations in the United States was not readily available; therefore, the research team built this database through a combination of web searches, searches of GuideStar, an information service on nonprofits in the United States³ and the Nonprofit Explorer by ProPublica. To build this database, the research team first conducted several searches using the key term ‘police foundation.’ These searches took place over two years

Table 1. Overview of Archeological Approach to Visual Analysis

Domain of Visual Research	Definition in Archeological Research Design
Relevance of visuals	“Visuals are artifacts that ‘store’ and ‘transmit’ the social knowledge of a specific community or society and, thus, retrospectively allow for a reconstruction of the meaning structures they materialize”
Nature of data	Natural (not produced for research)
Producer	Field actors
Interpreter	Researchers
Research focus	“Content and/or meaning of visual elements of discourse; reconstruction of the meaning structures in which the visual artifact is embedded”
Conceptual focus	Identity; categorization; construction; translation of legitimacy, credibility, authenticity, ideology, truth, and power
Typical visual artifacts	Primarily photographs and composite visuals photograph/picture and text; can also include artificially created images, schematic visuals, drawings, cartoons, and visual art images
Data collection methods	Archival material collected from various media outlets
Methods of data analysis	Content analysis, rhetorical analysis, deconstruction, critical analysis
Amount of data	Based on the qualitative nature of most research designs using visual images, total data are often smaller

Note: Adapted from Meyer et al. (2013), p.503–505

(May 2017–May 2019), with periodic update searches to determine if any new police foundations were created and, therefore, appearing in our searches. The team eliminated foundations from the list of foundations that focused solely on memorial fundraising (i.e., soliciting donations to provide them to families of deceased or injured public safety officers) or those targeted for highly specialized police purposes (e.g., K9 Foundations to support police dogs). These foundations maintain an inherently different mission orientation than those intended to be observed in this article. Our search yielded 335 foundations.⁴

We used the list of 335 foundations to capture information on the websites and social media information for those organizations with an active Facebook page. Facebook was selected because it was the most prominent form of social media used by the foundations and afforded the greatest number of comparable images. After an initial capture of images from websites and Facebook pages, the research team performed a preliminary review of the images to determine a coding structure. During this review, the research team encountered tremendous difficulty comparing images from different websites and Facebook pages due to the variety of styles, layouts, size, amount of content, and curation of images across different platforms. The research team decided it would be important to obtain a collection of images that are more directly comparable in size, location on the page, and purpose to ensure comparability. This resulted in selecting 201 organizations with an active Facebook page to compare the banner images. These images are consistent in size, shape, and reflect a comparable curation decision made by each organization.

In addition to the visual data, each of the 201 organizations with Facebook images were

Table 2. Summary of the Inductive Coding Process (Adapted from National Archives, 2017)

Stages of Coding	Description of the Coding Stage
Step 1	<i>Pre-coding.</i> Which artifact are you reviewing? (Name of Foundation) Who is reviewing it? (Researcher Initials)
Step 2	<i>Meet the image.</i> Close your eyes, open them. Describe what you see first in the image.
Step 3	<i>Observe the image.</i> List the people, objectives, and/or activities you see. Use commas to separate each concept. In one sentence, summarize the photo as if you were explaining it to someone who can't see it.
Step 4	<i>Make sense of the image.</i> What message does this image convey to you? Why do you think this image was chosen for the Facebook banner? What cultural or national memories does this image trigger?

examined on GuideStar or ProPublica to determine the tax-exempt ruling year, NTEE code⁵, and any financial data from the form 990s that may be available. In some cases, we located organizations with a Facebook page but were no longer active nonprofit organizations in their respective states according to state database searches (n=5). As a result, we excluded those organizations from analysis, and our findings yielded 201 'active' police foundations with relevant Facebook banner images and nonprofit administrative data available for analysis.

Coding the Images

The research team manually collected images through a PDF copy of each Facebook page. Following this, the research team developed an inductive coding protocol to reflect tools available at the National Archives and Records Administration (National Archives, 2017). Table 2 contains a summary of the coding process, including the steps and a description of each stage of coding. The inductive protocol follows three substantive steps: identify the most prominent part of the photo, identify all the many parts, and make sense of the photo from cultural or national memories. Several questions guided the coding process, and responses were collected using a survey in Google Forms. Coding was iterative, and reviews of coding strings were conducted after every 20 organizations. Each member of the research team coded a selection of images. One member of the research team conducted coding across all the organizations to ensure consistency in coding. Checks were conducted by the other members of the research team for conceptual and practical consistency.

Following our inductive coding process, the research team then engaged in a deductive coding process. The coding guide developed utilizes the responses from the prior inductive coding process. A summary of the questions and response options are presented in Table 3. Images were coded using a new survey in Google Forms to standardize and expedite the coding process. Qualitative data analysis software is often time-intensive because it predominately relies on point-and-click tools to assign coding values. The Google Forms survey allowed for coding to be compiled in a more streamlined fashion. The survey is also available to all research team members without concerns about differences in operating software, internet platforms, or cost.

For the deductive coding process, the entire research team-performed coding and responses were collected from the entire research team after an initial group coding session to check for interrater reliability. Additionally, each image was coded by at least two research team members with roughly a third of the images being coded by all members of the research team. The final responses were converted into an Excel spreadsheet for data cleaning. Responses that were inconsistent across the research team were reviewed and a final determination was made by one member of the research team after consultation with the research team. In total, less than 15 images required this action. In 90% of the cases, the discrepancy across responses was for 'Step 2' or the emphasis of the image.

Table 3. Summary of the Deductive Coding Process (Adapted from National Archives, 2017)

Coding Stage	Description	Response Options
Step 1	<i>Pre-coding</i>	Write in name of foundation. Write in researcher initials.
Step 2	<i>Meet the image</i> Close your eyes, open them. What is the primary focus point in the photo? [select one]	• Police officer(s) • Person/people (not an officer) • Police service animal(s) (i.e., dog, horse, etc.) • Police vehicle(s) (i.e., car, motorcycle, etc.) • Police memorial (i.e., statue, building, plaque) • Police badge(s) • Logo or words • Sky (i.e., sunset, sunrise, or behind a city skyline) • Building, sidewalk, or street • Tent or table for special event • Uniform • Weapon • Flag • Buildings (i.e., city skyline or municipal buildings) • Other
Step 3	<i>Observe the image parts</i>	
Step 3a	What are the people you see? [select all that apply]	• Police officer(s) • Person/people (not an officer) • Diversity of ages (click if yes) • Diversity of race/ethnicity (click if yes) • Diversity of gender (click if yes)
Step 3b	What are the objects you see? [select all that apply]	• Police service animal(s) (i.e., dog, horse, etc.) • Police vehicle(s) (i.e., car, motorcycle, etc.) • Police memorial (i.e., statue, building, plaque) • Police badge(s) • Foundation logo • Words or phrases (describe below) • Sky (sunset, sunrise, or behind a city skyline) • Building, sidewalk, or street • Inside of a building • Flags • Tent or table for special event • Uniform • Weapons • Other
Step 3c	What activities do you see?	• Fundraising event • Community event • Recognition event • 'Traditional' police activity • Other
Step 4	<i>Make sense of the Image</i>	

Step 4a	Classify the message of this photo. What does this image convey to you? [select one]	• Police as warriors • Police as guardians • Police as communitarians • None of the above
Step 4b	What cultural or national memories does this photo trigger? [select one]	• Honoring our service men & women • Blue Lives Matter • Police in the community • Drama of service • Police officers as ‘the finest’ • Police as fundraisers

Findings

This section provides our findings, beginning with organizational characteristics, followed by the findings from the visual analysis coding. In performing our visual analysis, we identified findings across three areas: first impressions, images of police, and images of police activity. We discuss each of these in the following sections.

Organizational Characteristics of the Police Foundations

Table 4 presents descriptive information of the 201 police foundations with a Facebook banner image that were still operating nonprofit organizations. Our dataset included several descriptive codes for classifying the characteristics of foundations in our sample. This project utilizes geographic regions developed by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Statistics, which divides the United States into eight areas (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019). In our dataset, approximately half of the sample is in the Far West (32%) and Southeast (25%). Within the Far West region, which includes four states, California holds the largest number of foundations (n=44). For context, the next two states with the largest number of foundations are Florida (n=15) and Texas (n=15).

We also collected information on the age of the nonprofits, with a derived value calculated from the number of years that have passed from the tax-exempt ruling year to 2020. The sample includes foundations across the spectrum of organizational age. In our analysis, however, we did find that 88% of organizations (n=176) were founded after 2001, a year with a noticeable increase in police foundations. The year 2001 is notable because the September 11 terrorist attack occurred and scholars have documented how federal grants to support antiterrorism dramatically changed demands and funding structures for police departments (Davis et al., 2010, pp. 19–38).

For added context, this project included both the collected Facebook images and financial data available from the IRS Form 990s collected from both GuideStar and ProPublica. From the 990s, we collected data on revenue, expenses, revenue less expenses, and assets. For our dataset, most organizations with financial data available of the police foundations has revenue less than \$100,000 (See Table 5). Consequently, we also see that the operating budget and expenses less revenues for most organizations with financial data available are less than \$100,000. These distributions fit national research on the average size of nonprofit organizations, as reports by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2018). Interestingly, however, is the persistent percentage of organizations at the top of the revenue and assets. In our sample, 7% of organizations had revenues in excess of \$500,001 and 10% had assets in excess of \$500,001.

Table 4. Distribution of Police Foundations by Organizational Age and Region

Region	Age of Organization in Years			
	0–5	6–10	11–20	21+
Far West (n=64)	41%	25%	16%	19%
Great Lakes (n=16)	38%	31%	25%	6%
Mideast (n=25)	36%	20%	28%	16%
New England (n=6)	50%	17%	17%	17%
Plains (n=14)	43%	21%	36%	0%
Rocky Mountains (n=6)	33%	50%	17%	0%
Southeast (n=50)	36%	24%	32%	8%
Southwest (n=20)	60%	20%	20%	0%
<i>All Organization (n=201)</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>11%</i>

Table 5. Distribution of Police Foundations by Size of Organizational Finances

	Revenue		Operating Budget		Revenue Less Expenses		Net Assets	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
No Financial Data	41%	82	41%	82	41%	82	41%	82
Less than \$0	0%	0	0%	0	15%	31	0%	1
\$0–\$100,000	34%	68	37%	74	36%	73	28%	56
\$100,001–\$250,000	14%	29	10%	21	3%	6	13%	26
\$250,001–\$500,000	3%	7	4%	9	1%	3	8%	15
\$500,001 and up	7%	15	7%	15	3%	6	10%	21

First Impressions of the Images

The second finding from this work relates to first impressions of visual images chosen by these public service organizations on their Facebook banners, specifically, if the images tell a story about the work of the foundation or of police more generally. In analyzing the results of the coding, the first question we asked, which was one of interpretation on the part of the researchers, what is the intention of the visual image? When opening a Facebook page, the viewers' eyes are drawn to the banner image, as it anchors the page at the top of the screen and is central in the visual field. Therefore, this inquiry focused on the first impression received from that anchoring image—was there an image, and did it convey a clear message about the organization? The analysis of the visual images fundamentally began with the question of did the nonprofit appear to take care with the selection of this image to connect it with their mission, or is the image a more generic scene about the police in general?

Table 6 presents the data on this first impression about the degree to which these organizations have curated the first impression received through the focal visual image on the organization's Facebook page. Fourteen percent of the nonprofits either had no image at all or an image with no clear message about the organization and what it does, such as a generic city view or an out-of-context advertisement for a fundraising event. For those that did have a clear image that conveyed a message, that message was more about the role of the police in the community versus the nonprofit's role in supporting the police. For examples of these coding categories, please see Appendix I.

Images of Policing

While collecting and analyzing the Facebook banner images, we quickly noticed that many of the police foundations included images that contained pictures and phrases reflecting the local

Table 6. Police Foundations by Message Type, Age of Organization, and Net Assets

Message Type & Age of Organization	Organizational Net Assets						Grand Total (n=201)
	\$0– \$100,000 (n=56)	\$100,001– \$250,000 (n=26)	\$250,001– \$500,000 (n=15)	\$500,000 and up (n=21)	Less than \$0 (n=1)	No data (n=82)	
<i>Clear Message about Police (n=97)</i>	46%	46%	47%	57%	100%	48%	48%
0–5 years old	16%	8%	7%	0%	0%	34%	20%
6–10 years old	13%	23%	7%	10%	0%	9%	11%
11–20 years old	16%	15%	13%	19%	100%	4%	11%
21+ years old	2%	0%	20%	29%	0%	1%	5%
<i>Clear Message about Organization Mission (n=75)</i>	43%	31%	47%	38%	0%	34%	37%
0–5 years old	13%	12%	13%	0%	0%	21%	14%
6–10 years old	13%	4%	0%	10%	0%	11%	9%
11–20 years old	11%	12%	20%	24%	0%	2%	9%
21+ years old	7%	4%	13%	5%	0%	0%	4%
<i>No Clear Message/No Image (n=29)</i>	11%	23%	7%	5%	0%	18%	14%
0–5 years old	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	6%
6–10 years old	2%	8%	0%	0%	0%	5%	3%
11–20 years old	2%	8%	7%	5%	0%	1%	3%
21+ years old	2%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
<i>Grand Total (n=201)</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

police departments they supported—either on their own (as discussed in Table 6) or in relation to the nonprofit and its mission. These nonprofits exist to support local police departments, but that nature of support may vary. It could be to help the police department get better equipment; it could be to foster better relations between the community and the police department, it could be to honor the service of police officers as public

servants—these nonprofits may reflect multiple public values in relation to their brokering place between external stakeholders and the police departments. In addition, in the time period examined in this study, police departments' relationships with their communities are increasingly complex, as evidenced by protest around the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO in 2014, Freddie Grey in Baltimore, MD in 2015, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, KY on March 12, 2020, George Floyd on in Minneapolis, MN on May 25, 2020, and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement (Hoffman et al., 2016; Jean, 2020; Lebron, 2017; Merkey, 2015; Williamson et al., 2018). This makes understanding images of policing and the choice behind them even more imperative and raises the question of what images and values the nonprofits convey in relation to the police departments they serve.

During our inductive coding of the Facebook images, we utilized three different perspectives of policing to make sense of the values conveyed by the images. Drawing from the scholarship of policing and police culture (Community Policing Consortium, 1994; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Wood & Groff, 2019), as stated earlier, we classified these perspectives: police as communitarians, police as guardians, and police as warriors. Drawing from the literature, we conceptualize the communitarian perspective to mean that the images display how police promote social order through relationships with the community. The research team conceptualized the guardian perspective to include images of police promoting social order through the protection of citizens. Lastly, we conceptualized the warrior perspective to be images of police achieving social order through battle training, accoutrements, and weaponry.

We performed coding for police culture on the Facebook banner images using the three classifications. For banners that could not be classified into the three categories, usually because there was no image to code or no salient police-related content, a fourth category was applied (no police culture classified). Of the 201 banner images, the police cultures were classified with 31% communitarian images, 32% guardian images, 33% no classification images, and 3% warrior images. To further understand the police culture classifications, we crossed the police culture coding categories with organizational assets and the curated message type (see Table 7). Different patterns of curation are reflected across the different police culture classifications, but differences across the asset groupings are not. For examples of these coding categories, please see Appendix I.

We also categorized content within the images to analyze patterns across people and objects within the dataset to unpack the specific image parts that are salient in each police culture classification. For organizations with the communitarian perspective (n=63), most Facebook images contain people, either police officers (62%, n=39) and/or people who are not officers (73%, n=46). Comparatively, in organizations with the guardian (n=64) or warrior perspectives (n=7), most Facebook images do not contain people, instead containing objects such as elements of a uniform, police vehicles, or badges (55%, n=35 and 71%, n=5, respectively). The types of objects coded in each organization type varies. Organizations with the communitarian perspective contain objects that are directly related to people, such as uniforms (43%, n=27), while organizations with the guardian or warrior perspectives contain inanimate object, such as police vehicles (33%, n=21 and 57%, n=4, respectively), flags (23%, n=15 and 14%, n=1, respectively), or weapons (8%, n=5 and 29%, n=2, respectively).

Representing Events

Lastly, our coding involved classifying the representations of activities and national memories within the Facebook images. In both areas, we see differences between the organizations by the policing perspective. In organizations with the communitarian perspective, an unsurprising majority of images include activity representations of community events (60%, n=38) and fundraising for police officers or other similar causes (13%, n=8). Organizations with the guardian perspective include activity representations of 'traditional' police activities, such as driving fast on a highway, (30%, n=19) and national memory representations of the

Table 7. Police Foundations by Message Type, Police Culture Classification, and Net Assets

Police Culture Classification & Message Type	Organizational Net Assets						Grand Total (n=201)
	\$0– \$100,000 (n=56)	\$100,001– \$250,000 (n=26)	\$250,001– \$500,000 (n=15)	\$500,000 and up (n=21)	Less than \$0 (n=1)	No data (n=82)	
<i>Communitarians (n=63)</i>	29%	19%	40%	33%	0%	35%	31%
Clear Message about Police	7%	0%	7%	19%	0%	13%	10%
Clear Message about Organization Mission	21%	15%	27%	14%	0%	18%	19%
No Clear Message/No Image	0%	4%	7%	0%	0%	4%	2%
<i>Guardians (n=64)</i>	32%	31%	27%	38%	0%	32%	32%
Clear Message about Police	27%	27%	13%	24%	0%	24%	24%
Clear Message about Organization Mission	5%	4%	13%	14%	0%	5%	6%
No Clear Message/No Image	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
<i>Warriors (n=7)</i>	2%	12%	7%	5%	0%	1%	3%
Clear Message about Police	2%	8%	7%	5%	0%	1%	3%
Clear Message about Organization Mission	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No Clear Message/No Image	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>No Police Culture Classified (n=67)</i>	38%	38%	27%	24%	100%	32%	33%
Clear Message about Police	11%	12%	20%	10%	100%	9%	11%
Clear Message about Organization Mission	16%	8%	7%	10%	0%	11%	11%
No Clear Message/No Image	11%	19%	0%	5%	0%	12%	11%
<i>Grand Total (n=201)</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

drama of service (36%, n=23). Important to note, 39% (n=25) of organizations with the guardian perspective did not include any representation of activity. Additionally, organizations with the warrior perspective include activity representations of staged photos of police officers (29%, n=2) and national memory representations of the drama of service (86%, n=6).

Discussion

Nonprofit police foundations operate in a space between a public entity—the police department—and the public. These nonprofits, therefore, play an important role in brokering interactions between the police departments and external stakeholders. The mediating role of police foundations involves not just budgetary or program support, but also the messages they convey. These messages include actions in social media spaces, such as Facebook images, and can send messages about the public service value of the police foundation itself, or it can pass on information about the local police department or police in general. The question a public service organization should ask when selecting images is what they want the stakeholders to do when engaging with these images. For example, in the case of a nonprofit police foundation seeking to garner support, including donations or volunteering, when an external stakeholder first encounters the social media page, if the impression that is given is about the police foundation itself, that could be an important determinant in how much further the stakeholder explores or engages with the organization. If the impression is about the local police department or about policing in general, the stakeholder may move on and not engage or connect with the organization further. More research could be done to see what leads people to engage further, including experimental designs that vary the image on a page and determine what leads stakeholders to explore further.

We found that nearly half of Facebook banners contained images related to the police in general (48%, n=97) and fewer contained an image related to the mission of the organization (37%, n=75). A surprising number of banner images contained no clear message to the research team at all (14%, n=29). In reflecting on what we as researchers and observers experienced coding these images, we argue attention to image curation processes for public service organizations is an important area for future research. No clear image or one that was very generic led to questions about the capacity of the nonprofit and how it operated. In those instances, we wondered: Who oversees curating the images of the organization's social media pages? How much discussion occurs as an organization about what message should be conveyed by these pages? What is the frequency of change of these images, and how does that reflect organizational priorities and values? When public service organizations actively enter the internet or social media arena, where messages last beyond the initial transmission, they must be prepared to maintain that presence. Starting and neglecting a website or social media platform with high traffic could be detrimental to an organization's image in the eyes of stakeholders. As seen in the findings, a fair number of nonprofits either did not have any image or did not seem to have carefully selected an image that would convey a precise meaning about their organization. Whether on their website or social media platforms, public service organizations need to select the images they use for outward-facing communications carefully. Government and nonprofits are given a special place in relation to the community in terms of the nature of interactions and the resources and power these institutions hold. Therefore, communication and its effectiveness represent more than simply choices about images; it shapes how stakeholders, including citizens, clients, and funders, understand public service and the meaning they attach to it. Therefore, we propose the following:

P1: Public service organizations should adopt strategic communication plans (including web-based and social media communications) that prioritize image curation.

P2: Communication plans that articulate values and goals for message transmission will lead to curated images with clear and intended messages to the desired stakeholders.

P3: Public service organizations that assign clear responsibility for maintaining outward-facing communication channels will successfully deliver the intended messages through these channels.

The nonprofits at the focus of this research exist to support the police, but how police foundations convey support to others in a social media space may impact the organization in terms of how outside stakeholders understand its mission and work. For these nonprofits, we explored representations of police culture through the categories of communitarians, guardians, and warriors. Many images strongly conveyed a message of police culture; for example, images with people were often coded communitarians, and images with police cars were often coded as guardians. Organizations need to consider the impact of the messages communicated by these images and how these messages may land with recipients. The recipients could have different reactions depending on the content, context, and temporal moment in time—an image designed to convey a guardian message could be interpreted as either a warrior message or negative/aggressive in communities with challenging relationships with the police. It is not enough for the police foundation to consider the intention behind choosing an image; careful consideration should be given to the impact that the image will have on the community and how the image is received. In the nonprofit space, police foundations should consider how the image will impact donations—their main mission and primary way of supporting local police departments. Still, there is also the critical importance of understanding the impact that image selection has on the perception of the police in that community. Like other ‘friends of’ organizations in the nonprofit sector, police foundations operate as de facto extensions of the government agency they support, and particular attention is needed to carefully construct messages that do not undermine or counter the messaging from the government agency. Therefore, we propose the following:

P4: The images selected by public service organizations are not neutral; stakeholders will have a quick and immediate reaction to those images.

P5: Public service organizations must discuss how they want various stakeholders to understand their organizations—their missions and their services—and filter visual images appropriately to foster that understanding.

One of the ways that scholars could further explore these interactions is through research into how stakeholders experience these images. For example, future research could utilize actual nonprofits’ (or government agencies’) social media pages and query the response of those stakeholders along with many crucial public value dimensions that align with promoting trust in government (such as expertise, pluralism, reliability). In addition, as suggested above, future research could also utilize experimental design with hypothetical pictures for this type of nonprofit organization, the ‘friends of’ nonprofit, selected to test what responses or reactions are provoked in different stakeholders and consider what that means for the public-facing dimension of the organization and its effectiveness. Such research could mirror research conducted for cultivating donations but relate instead to cultivating trust in government and could explore what practices best support building relationships with government.

Another way of conceptualizing this research is to explore the micro-encounters created between social media images of public service organizations and the public using social media. Framing Facebook banner images, or other social media images, as an encounter of integrative governance using the work of Stout and Love (2017) and Zavattaro and Brainard (2019), changes the role of these images from a uni-directional form of communication to a bi-directional form of communication. If public service organizations view images as distributing information, the result is, at best, isolation or alienation, or worse, absorption or bondage (Stout & Love, 2017, p. 142). Instead, we push for public administration to explore social media images as the frontier of a new kind of coproduction in a post-2020 world.

Conclusion

We have argued in this article that images are pervasive and powerful tools of communication. In public administration, the realm of online interactions between the public service organizations and the public plays a critically important role in contemporary society. Therefore, we assert that now more than ever, images are a powerful tool that connects public service organizations to the individual they serve. Our inquiry into the curation of images by police foundations is a starting place for future research about the role of visual images to communicate the public value generated by the public service organizations for the public they serve.

This work compiled a collection of images from Facebook for our visual analysis, but other social media and online spaces also warrant exploration. The banner images on Facebook are still images on the account homepage for the organization. However, many organizations create content daily, weekly, or monthly for their stakeholders, involving still images and videos that could reveal entirely different curation patterns. The content created over time could be influenced by local or regional events, trends, and culture. Further, we did not explore webpage content hosted off social media channels, which follow different design rules (i.e., they are not standardized by social media companies) and offer rich opportunities for further archaeological visual analysis. Future research is needed to explore patterns in curation that account for various contexts, whether region, type of media used, and the role of time and events of significance.

In undertaking this work, we hope to have highlighted a much-needed area of research in public administration. While other disciplines, such as anthropology and business management, have embraced exploring the meaning and impact of images, public administration has lagged in attending to this line of inquiry. The role of images in government and the nonprofit sector is paramount. Imagery, when carefully selected, may construct positive meaning about public service organizations for stakeholders and perpetuate public trust through cooperative, integrative exchanges. A lack of curation can have the opposite effect, perpetuating information distribution and shutting down opportunities for collaboration. While this work reveals that public service organizations must pursue care in image curation, additional visual analysis research should explore the interactions between public service organizations and stakeholders.

Notes

1. In this article we use three terms to describe organizations within the field of public administration: public organization, nonprofit organizations, and public service organizations. The latter refers to public and nonprofit organizations together.
2. The Baltimore City Department of Public Health has an amazing Twitter campaign on this topic: see @BMore_Healthy
3. In 2019, GuideStar and the Foundation Center merged to become Candid. The GuideStar database was still readily searchable at the conclusion of this data collection process.
4. As discussed in Walby et al. (2020), there is no one single source for police foundations. Using GuideStar and the NCCS data, they found 251 police foundations. They also found similar patterns of establishment to our research, with many of their identified foundations established between 2014–2016. As stated, we eliminated some specific types within the broader definition of police foundation, but that our numbers are like this previous published article suggests, with a recognition of the limitations of our search strategy, we have found and identified many of the existing foundations. However, we do acknowledge that some police foundations may not have been picked up by the search engines if they are called something distinctly different from a police foundation.

5. NTEE is the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities, a system of classification used by both the Internal Revenue Service and the National Center for Charitable Statistics to classify nonprofits by purpose and activities. See <https://nccs.urban.org/project/national-taxonomy-exempt-entities-ntee-codes>

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The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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Appendix

The following images serve as illustrative examples of our coding categories. While our research relied on publicly available images from public Facebook organization pages, the research team does not maintain the legal rights to the images. Therefore, we cannot provide them in our manuscript due to copyrights. Instead, we have obtained these images that are licensed with Creative Commons and fit our coding scheme. We select images that resonated with the most commonly occurring images in each coding category. However, limitations exist because we cannot verify the purpose of these images and the curation choices. Images were obtained using the search feature of Creative Commons (see <https://search.creativecommons.org/>), and an accompanying citation is provided for each image in our reference list.

Figure 1. Illustrative Example #1: Clear Message about Police (Inventorchris, 2012)



Figure 2. Illustrative Example #2: Clear Message about Organization Mission (U.S. Marshals Service, 2016)



Figure 3. Illustrative Example #3: Police as Communitarians (North Charleston, 2013)



Figure 4. Illustrative Example #4: Police as Guardians (Shankbone, 2011)



Figure 5. Illustrative Example #5: Police as Warriors (West Midlands Police, 2012)



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Social Enterprise Legitimacy: Application of Accountability Mechanisms as a Multi-Institutional Context Strategy

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Social enterprises, as hybrid organizations with a dual-mission focus and diversity of primary stakeholders, have unique communication and governance challenges when compared to other social mission organizations, such as nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations. To address a gap in the social enterprise literature, we offer a comprehensive framework to illustrate how the application of context-specific ‘accountability mechanisms’ (Ebrahim, 2003) can strengthen organizational legitimacy perceptions and, in doing so, strengthen performance perceptions and stakeholder ties. Given multiple principal stakeholders in the plural institutional environments in which such hybrid organizations operate, our premise is that social enterprises bolster such perceptions by applying relevant accountability tools and processes in each of Ingram and Clay’s (2000) four institutional contexts. Importantly, our framework applies to both strategic and institutional social enterprise legitimacy. As an illustration, we performed a qualitative examination of three established social enterprises, each in a different industry. Findings revealed each of these social enterprises had adopted accountability mechanisms in all four institutional contexts, suggesting that practitioner application of, and future research on, our framework may prove fruitful.

Keywords: Social Enterprise, Legitimacy, Institutional Theory, Accountability Mechanisms

Introduction

A relatively recent phenomenon, social enterprises reached mainstream academic and practitioner discourse in the 1990s (Haugh, 2005). This organizational form differs from most public (e.g., governmental), for-profit, and not-for-profit sector organizations, as social enterprises have a dual goal (i.e., ‘hybrid’) focus—contributing solutions to a societal need while also engaging in revenue-producing endeavors to help fund programs and enhance financial sustainability (e.g., Agrawal & Hockerts, 2013). While offering much potential to supplement funds from donors and governmental entities, such revenue-focused activities present “a unique governance challenge: how to handle the trade-offs between their social activities and their commercial ones, so as to generate enough revenues but without losing sight of their social purpose” (Ebrahim et al., 2014, p. 82). Such dual focus also commonly

results in divergent interests of ‘multiple principal stakeholders’ (Ebrahim et al., 2014), including beneficiaries of the enterprise’s social mission, customers of its products and clients of services or products, and funders. Signaling legitimacy to such diverse stakeholders, while important, can thus be quite challenging.

Adding further complexity, social enterprises can differ in primary motive—such as maximizing social impact, environmental sustainability, or wealth generation (e.g., Battilana & Lee, 2014; Dart, 2004). The degree to which social enterprises’ motives diverge—for example, whether their revenue-generating activities are primarily a means to social/environmental impact ends (i.e., ‘value creation’) or more to generate financial wealth (i.e., ‘value capture’; see Santos, 2012)—also can matter to legitimacy perceptions.

Thus, social enterprises commonly are challenged to come up with valid ways to communicate organizational legitimacy to salient stakeholders and maintain public trust (Dart, 2004; Nicholls, 2010a; Yang & Wu, 2016; Yasmin & Ghafran, 2021). This is particularly true for those with ‘liability of newness’ challenges (Singh et al., 1986) and for entities struggling financially (Flockhart, 2005). Moreover, along with social effectiveness and economic performance responsibilities, institutional legitimacy is a critically important facet of social enterprise performance perceptions (Bagnoli & Megali, 2011). As asserted by Deephouse et al. (2017), “Legitimacy matters because it has consequences for organizations” (p. 35). Further, Dart (2004), writing in a social enterprise context, suggests “legitimacy is even the means by which organizations obtain and maintain resources” (p. 415; also see Oliver, 1991).

Social enterprises with positive legitimacy perceptions commonly enjoy greater access to valued resources, as well as stronger stakeholder ties and effectiveness evaluations (Connolly & Kelly, 2011; Dart, 2004; Nicholls, 2010a). An intentional focus on legitimacy perceptions is a particularly important endeavor in the absence of munificent financial resources environments—a condition common to newer organizations but even among many long-standing organizations (e.g., Hager et al., 2004). Whereas impressive financial performance certainly can fuel positive perceptions, signaling legitimacy in ways other than by sharing financial results can be the difference between thriving, simply surviving, or failing (e.g., Dart, 2004; Nicholls, 2010a).

Whereas legitimacy is important to diverse social enterprise stakeholders, and although legitimacy has been a subject of several social enterprise articles (e.g., Dart, 2004; Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013; Nicholls, 2010a), the literature does not adequately address what social enterprises might do to strengthen legitimacy perceptions. Moreover, the literature fails to address ways to influence perceptions in the diverse institutional contexts in which social enterprises typically operate.

In an effort to fill this research void, this research has three specific contributions. First, given that social enterprises operate in “conditions of institutional complexity” (Ebrahim et al., 2014, p. 94), we offer a framework for, and articulate the importance of, understanding the various institutional forms (Ingram & Clay, 2000; Ingram & Silverman, 2002) in a social enterprise legitimacy-influencing context. Having a framework based on a sound theoretical foundation provides an organizing structure for practitioners to act on, as well as a springboard for future social enterprise legitimacy research.

Second, addressing how to navigate such institutional plurality (e.g., Mair et al., 2015), we suggest application of ‘accountability mechanisms’ (Ebrahim, 2003) as helpful in influencing legitimacy perceptions. Whereas Ebrahim’s (2003) much cited article was focused on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations, terms he used interchangeably, we suggest these mechanisms are applicable to legitimacy enhancement in the social enterprise space as well. In addition, Ebrahim’s (2003; 2010) work on accountability mechanisms did not offer specific guidance or frameworks for organizations to influence the

unique set of stakeholders in multiple institutional contexts. We posit application of such tools and processes in each of the four specific institutional contexts (Ingram & Clay, 2000) will fill a critical practitioner and scholarly void to aid social enterprise legitimacy perceptions. Strengthening such perceptions is particularly important given the governance challenges with being accountable to multiple principal social enterprise stakeholders (Ebrahim et al., 2014). In addition to helping an organization conform to external mandates and expectations, accountability mechanisms can also be strategic tools and processes used to gain competitive advantage, increase organizational visibility, improve environmental adaptation and sustainability, and develop stronger stakeholder ties (Ebrahim, 2003; Ebrahim et al., 2014). Furthermore, effectively applying accountability mechanisms can help counter mission drift, a condition resulting from emphasizing revenue production over social mission (Cornforth, 2014; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017).

Third, to explore and apply our proposed framework with real-world organizations, we conducted key informant interviews with executives at three established social enterprises. Qualitative findings presented below reveal validating actions taken by each venture. Next, we briefly provide an overview of organizational legitimacy by major theorists, followed by legitimacy related issues in the social enterprise context.

Organizational Legitimacy—A Brief Overview

Success for all organizations depends in part on the degree to which stakeholders perceive the organization as legitimate (e.g., Phillips, 2003; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017). According to Suchman's (1995) often-cited legitimacy definition, legitimacy "is a generalized *perception* or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574; italics added). Similarly, Nicholls (2010b) offered legitimacy as "the congruence, in multiple stakeholder judgements, of an organisation's *perceived* actions with their expectations of its performance" (p. 94; italics added). Organizations achieve this socially-constructed legitimacy when there is perceived congruence between their activities and "the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122). Thus, stakeholders bestow legitimacy on an organization when its actions or outcomes—or signals sent about its actions or outcomes—are in harmony with stakeholders' values, goals, and expectations (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Suchman, 1995).

There are many potential benefits for organizations viewed as legitimate, including access to resources (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), societal approval, and market acceptance (Agrawal & Hockerts, 2013). Moreover, legitimacy typically increases organizational survival, stakeholder support, as well as financial performance (Deephouse et al., 2017). Attending to perceptions of legitimacy also are important because they can help with an organization's credibility (e.g., believability, predictability, and trustworthiness), an important influence in an organization's stability and continuity (Suchman, 1995). Indeed, the importance of attending to stakeholder perceptions of legitimacy has long been viewed as important to organizational survival (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

The extant literature supports two primary legitimacy approaches, or 'camps' (Suchman, 1995)—strategic and institutional. *Strategic* legitimacy assumes that managers have a large degree of control over the legitimation process (Nicholls, 2010a; Suchman, 1995). Under this perspective, managers are active agents of legitimacy construction or manipulation through the deployment of intentionally evocative symbols geared to gain or improve societal support (Suchman, 1995). *Institutional* legitimacy is a perspective that suggests managers have less power to construct legitimacy; rather, they actively seek understanding of societal or cultural trends and expectations, and then consciously choose to conform to those issues most favorable to gaining stakeholder approval. In contrast to the strategic perspective, conformity

with cultural norms and expectations is viewed by those in the institutional camp as the primary way to achieve legitimacy. It should be noted that legitimacy theorists commonly view both of these approaches as important to perceptions of an organization's legitimacy (Connolly & Kelly, 2011; Nicholls, 2010a; Suchman, 1995). Similarly, Nicholls (2010a) asserts that organizational legitimacy is "the consequence of a dynamic interplay between macro-level institutional structures and micro-level organizational actors" (p. 614).

Social Enterprise Legitimacy

Compared to the more established for-profit and non-profit organizational types, achieving legitimacy for social enterprises may be more challenging because their dual goals—social value creation and revenue-generation for economic sustainability (and in some cases, financial wealth generation)—can be perceived as conflicting and, thus, can be confusing to some stakeholders. This is particularly true since, in addition to their dual mandate, social enterprises "...are also accountable to multiple 'principal' stakeholders" (Ebrahim et al., 2014, p. 83; italics included), a condition that can result in "multiple accountabilities disorder" (Koppell, 2005; found in Ebrahim, 2010, p. 104). As a result, "social enterprises are likely to face an uphill climb in establishing their legitimacy in society and thereby in attracting the resources to sustain themselves" (Ebrahim et al., 2014, p. 96). Further, as noted by Agrawal and Hockerts (2013):

Social enterprises have to show through their actions and communications that their mission to help people is as dominant as their mission to be economically sustainable. Due to the conflicting nature of their activities and operations (social and market), social enterprises have to deal with the issues of legitimacy far more than enterprises that have well defined market objectives. Any act of a social enterprise that stigmatizes the legitimacy of social value creation can activate the fall of its customer base and donor confidence (p. 125).

Indeed, stakeholder legitimacy perceptions are a prerequisite for the community support necessary for social enterprise sustainability (Dart, 2004; Moizer & Tracey, 2010). Further, social enterprises put legitimacy and sustainability at risk if their profit-seeking ventures are more visible and valued than are their social mission activities, as "mission drift may delegitimize social enterprises with external stakeholders" (Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017, p. 321; see also Ebrahim et al., 2014). Hence, social enterprise decision-makers must find ways to manage legitimacy perceptions in ways that keep the social mission at the forefront of stakeholder thoughts. Doing so takes both forethought and execution, given a typical social enterprise's multiple contexts, diverse stakeholders, and criteria used to evaluate a social enterprise's legitimacy.

Plural Institutional Contexts and Legitimacy Criteria

Social enterprises and other such hybrid organizations operate under 'institutional plurality' conditions (Mair et al., 2015) with diverse stakeholders, and thus face formidable tensions in managing their myriad activities just to survive (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). To better understand this environment, we draw upon research related to institutional contexts or 'institutional forms', which has been classified using the following typology: 1) private vs. public initiatives, and 2) centralized vs. decentralized enforcement (Ingram & Clay, 2000). According to Ingram and Clay (2000), "Public or private refers to who makes the institutions,

Figure 1. Social Enterprise Legitimacy Enhancement Framework: Combining Institutional Forms¹, Key Actors^{1,2}, Legitimacy Considerations³, and Accountability Mechanisms (AMs)⁴

	Decentralized Influences¹	Centralized Influences¹
Private¹	Archetypal Form: Industry Norms Paradigm-Building² and Institutional Constraint Actors¹: network builders ² , social groups ¹ , inter-organizational networks ¹ Legitimacy Considerations: cultural-cognitive ³ ; industry consensus (follows norms in an industry) Helpful AMs: Join and/or get involved with industry and community organizations; Earn credentials; Communicate via various media outlets and online platforms	Archetypal Form: Industry Rules Paradigm-Building² and Institutional Constraint Actors¹: private-centralized organizations, including foundations, fellowship organizations ² , groups which govern rights and transactions within an industry ¹ Legitimacy Considerations: pragmatic ³ (smart to do given one's unique situation) Helpful AMs: Join and/or get involved with industry and community organizations; Collaborate; Comply; Earn credentials and certifications; Communicate via various media outlets and online platforms
Public¹	Archetypal Form: Societal and Extant Culture Norms Paradigm-Building² and Institutional Constraint Actors¹: diffused throughout culture impacting multiple actors ² , civil society ¹ Legitimacy Considerations: hybrid of normative-moral ³ (to avoid controversy) and pragmatic ³ (to strategically align with societal values) Helpful AMs: Scan for (and adjust to) societal norms; Collaborate; Comply with self-selected standards; Earn credentials; Communicate via various media outlets and online platforms	Archetypal Form: Laws, Regulations Paradigm-Building² and Institutional Constraint Actors¹: government ² , states ¹ Legitimacy Considerations: regulatory ³ (to avoid noncompliance consequences) Helpful AMs: Comply with laws and regulations; Get certified (if required); Lobby for reforms

¹ Based on Ingram and Clay (2000) and Ingram and Silverman (2002)

² Nicholls (2010a)

³ Based on Deephouse et al. (2017) and Suchman (1995)

⁴ Based in part on Ebrahim (2003)

with public indicating the state and private indicating organizations or individuals. The centralized/decentralized distinction captures the degree to which institutions are codified and responsibility for enforcement is centralized with identifiable functionaries” (pp. 526–527). Building on the foregoing, Ingram and Clay (2000; also see Ingram & Silverman, 2002) articulated four main institutional categories: private-centralized, private-decentralized, public-centralized, and public-decentralized. This framework is summarized in Figure 1. Our premise is that the greater the extent to which social enterprises take action to address salient issues in each of these categories, the greater their likelihood to positively influence stakeholders’ perceptions of legitimacy. Further below, we expand upon these categories in the context of applying accountability mechanisms to strengthen social enterprise legitimacy.

In addition, scholars have articulated “four types of criteria for evaluating legitimacy: regulatory, pragmatic, moral, and cultural-cognitive” (Deephouse et al., 2017, p. 39). Each criterion (also labeled as ‘legitimacy assets,’ Yasmin & Ghafran, 2021) has applicability in both

the strategic and the institutional camps (Suchman, 1995). *Pragmatic* legitimacy “rests on the self-interested calculations of an organization’s most immediate audiences” (Suchman, 1995, p. 578). For example, when a social enterprise achieves objective and valued stakeholder outcomes, such as the receipt of grant funding or by revenues produced by product sales or services rendered, it may be accorded pragmatic (and *strategic*) legitimacy. Pragmatic, *institutional* legitimacy refers to conforming to norms in its environment due to the self-interested belief that the organization will benefit from improving the organization’s fit with common industry practices, such as when an organization decides to voluntarily follow International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 26000 social responsibility guidance. As suggested by Yang and Wu (2016), social enterprises which emphasize commercial over social mission initiatives are likely seeking, perhaps to their detriment (Ramos & Vaccaro, 2017), pragmatic legitimacy.

Normative-moral legitimacy is achieved when an organization operates as stakeholders believe it should and when its policies and activities are judged as “the right things to do” by key stakeholders (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). This typically requires sensitively managing congruence between organizational values and those of society (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Attempts made by social enterprises to achieve moral legitimacy due to normative expectations from constituents, or because competitors have made such prosocial practices (e.g., paying a living wage) the norm, may be viewed as consistent with decisions to conform in order to gain *institutional* legitimacy. Further, normative-moral legitimacy is likely what a social enterprise seeks when emphasizing social mission activities over revenue-producing ones (Yang & Wu, 2016). Alternatively, *strategic* moral legitimacy attempts are those undertaken by organizational decision-makers because they believe in self-crafted normative improvements. For example, when social enterprise proactively makes the decision to be the first in its industry to allow workers to be paid while volunteering during work hours, this strategic decision would not reflect conformity but rather a belief that it is the right thing to do.

Cultural-cognitive legitimacy typically reflects environmental conformity or consistency with established societal structures (e.g., Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). According to Suchman (1995), organizations achieve such legitimacy in one of two ways: comprehensibility or via ‘taken-for-granted’ acceptance. Comprehensibility theorists view the social landscape as chaotic and in need of sense-making, descriptors that depict many social enterprise fields. Organizations can achieve such cognitive legitimacy by *strategically* modeling their activities on available and accepted cultural structures (or ‘models’) in its extant environment. To the extent that an organization’s existence and activities are consistent with such models, then “organizational activity will prove predictable, meaningful, and inviting” (Suchman, 1995, p. 582). For example, when a homeless shelter’s thrift store markets their donated goods on Instagram, it sends multiple positive signals to constituents—it sells well-priced donations that benefit homeless families via a contemporary social media platform. Alternatively, ‘taken-for-granted’ cultural-cognitive legitimacy is invoked when organizational activities fit with accepted beliefs about its existence. This *institutional* form of legitimacy occurs “when an idea corresponds to taken-for-granted beliefs that render it desirable, proper, and appropriate within a widely shared system of norms and values” (Boxenbaum, 2008, p. 239). For example, social enterprises which use Facebook to broadcast newly earned certifications or fundraising successes are applying this widely used platform as a way to attend to ‘taken-for-granted’ cognitive legitimacy.

The last of the four facets, *regulatory* legitimacy, stems from the recognition that legal mandates influence all legitimate organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Deephouse et al., 2017). From a *strategic* legitimacy perspective, organizational leaders may choose to lobby for, or be the first to act on, new laws or industry regulations. For example, a social enterprise with a mission to design and sell environmentally safe clothing may speak out about use of certain unsustainable materials. This may send an intentional signal that organizational

leaders are tuned in to compliance issues and also may help enhance one's social responsibility—particularly if the organization is the first in its industry to broadcast compliance. Of course, from an *institutional* perspective, compliance helps an organization limit negative publicity, while noncompliance can send undesired signals with potentially catastrophic ramifications.

Key Actors and Stakeholder Influences

The four legitimacy criteria—pragmatic, normative-moral, cultural-cognitive, and regulatory—take on special meaning for social enterprises when applied to specific stakeholders within each institutional context (i.e., private vs. public initiatives and centralized vs. decentralized enforcement; Ingram & Clay, 2000). Because social enterprises have multiple principal stakeholders (Ebrahim et al., 2014), decision-makers must have an awareness of the linkages between underlying institutional contexts, the stakeholder actors within each context, and the social enterprise's own legitimacy-influencing activities. According to Ingram and Silverman (2002), the institutional contexts emanate from four primary sources or 'actors,' each of which "produces its own form of institutional constraint" (p. 7). Specifically, *social groups* and *civil society* produce norms, *organizations* produce their own rules, and *states* (government) produce laws and regulations.

In addition to Ingram and Silverman's (2002) institutional constraint-producing actors, Nicholls (2010a) suggested four 'paradigm-building actors' are also relevant to this discussion. Writing in a social entrepreneurship context, Nicholls suggested that each of the following impact such organizations: governmental entities, foundations, fellowship organizations, and network builders. According to Nicholls (2010a), *governmental entities* include governing bodies such as states, cities, and municipalities. Such public and centralized (Ingram & Clay, 2000) actors commonly have instituted legal and regulatory requirements which social enterprises typically must comply with—an institutional constraint. Social enterprises do however have strategic options; for example, to lobby for reforms. *Foundations* are representative of funding organizations which provide grants and other tangible financial resources. These typically private and centralized entities, such as the Skoll Foundation, can obviously make a huge difference to organizations which excel in grant-writing, for example. Such pragmatic legitimacy attempts, even when unsuccessful, can send signals that a firm is acting in expected ways. *Fellowship organizations* have a purpose, through membership, to "build a community of practice" (Nicholls, 2010a, p. 619). Membership in these typically private and centralized organizations, such as Ashoka, can pragmatically increase the likelihood of building new relationships, with many potential benefits. Finally, Nicholls (2010a) identifies *network builders*, such as the Social Enterprise Alliance and the Community Action Network, which may provide some combination of inter-organizational discourse, business support and infrastructure, development of earned income strategies, and sharing of best practices. Social enterprises which attend effectively to key actors (Ingram & Silverman, 2002; Nicholls, 2010a) in each of their unique institutional contexts are, in essence, 'covering all bases.'

Clearly, social enterprise decision-makers have much to consider in their endeavor to bolster legitimacy perceptions. In addition to their complex and competing institutional environments, they also typically have other pressures, including high dependencies on external resource providers (Cornforth, 2014; Ruebottom, 2011) and short-term operational pressures (Dart, 2004). Some social enterprises also have environmental goals that can compete with economic and social responsibilities, a so-called 'triple bottom line' of accountability (Dixon & Clifford, 2007). Adding to the complexity, organizations which face resource constraints and powerful external environmental conditions may unwittingly fall prey to isomorphism. These conditions—including coercive, mimetic, and normative influences (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)—can have a homogenizing effect on social enterprises (and, clearly, other organizations). While these isomorphic influences indeed may be

constraining, Nicholls (2010a) persuasively makes the case that isomorphism can be ‘reflexive’ in certain cases, such as firms in nascent fields with limited competition (see also Mason, 2012). In such cases, strategic (internal) agency can be a more dominant force than external isomorphic influences. This ability to nimbly flex and adjust strategy and activities allows some social enterprises—particularly those which are entrepreneurial and in emerging fields—to be less impacted by isomorphic forces. Thus, legitimacy perceptions can be, in part, shaped through agency and strategic action (Mason, 2012; Nicholls, 2010a).

As the extant literature makes clear, the complex and competing environments that social enterprises must navigate require a combination of tools and processes to enable these firms to be perceived as legitimate by their most salient stakeholders. Such mechanisms optimally will address internal and external accountabilities through both functional and strategic activities.

Accountability Mechanisms for Legitimacy Enhancement

Accountability has been described as “the process of holding actors responsible for actions” (Fox & Brown, 1998, p. 12) and as having an internal dimension and an external dimension (Ebrahim, 2003). Internal accountability involves a felt responsibility (Fry, 1995) to oneself or to one’s own organization. External accountability is viewed as an obligation to meet others’ expectations or “prescribed standards of behavior” (Chisolm, 1995, p. 141). Moreover, accountability-related activities may be initiated proactively (and voluntarily) from within an organization or as a tactical reaction to external demands (Connolly & Kelly, 2011; Ebrahim, 2003). Accountability is a critically important issue facing nonprofits (Ebrahim, 2003; Benjamin, 2008), NGOs (Ebrahim, 2003), and social enterprises (Ebrahim et al., 2014).

In a much-cited article, Ebrahim (2003) suggests that NGOs and nonprofit organizations typically put too much emphasis on ‘upward’ accountability—on patrons such as donors, trustees, foundations, and governments—and not enough on ‘downward’ accountability to beneficiaries; i.e., to the constituents they serve (cf., Chen et al., 2020). In addition, too much emphasis tends to be placed on external accountability, on the short-term, on operational activities rather than strategic initiatives, and on reporting rather than on building learning capacity. Indeed, overemphasis on formal, upward accountability mechanisms can result in worker resentment, as well as valuable time and focus extracted from core service activities, both of which can threaten organizational survival (e.g., Dixon et al., 2006). Ebrahim (2003) concludes with the following: “...the challenge of accountability lies in directly addressing these much neglected components in order to eventually find a balance between external and internal, upward and downward, and functional and strategic approaches” (p. 826). A primary premise of our framework is that social enterprises would be wise to consider how to take appropriate action on all of these accountability facets and in each of a social enterprise’s institutional contexts. Whereas offering specific solutions for all of these facets is beyond the scope of this paper, we suggest Ebrahim’s (2003) work on *accountability mechanisms* is an excellent starting place.

Accountability mechanisms have been the subject of several conceptual and empirical studies. For example, accountability mechanisms have been found to be applied in an unbalanced manner by decision-makers due in part to the disproportionate influence of a few more powerful external stakeholders (O’Dwyer & Unerman, 2008). More recently, accountability mechanisms have also been studied in a Nigerian health financing option implementation program (Uzochukwu et al., 2018), on pay for performance effects (Mayumana et al., 2017), and in the context of education-related Public-Private Partnerships in the United Kingdom (Stafford & Stapleton, 2022). Interestingly, with just a few exceptions (e.g., Mason, 2012; Rotheroe & Richards, 2007), no studies of social enterprises in this context have been widely cited.

Articulated by Ebrahim (2003) in an NGO and nonprofit context, accountability mechanisms are tools or processes used to signal that an organization is meeting or exceeding its obligations. Accountability *tools* refer to “discrete devices or techniques used to achieve accountability” (p. 815). As such, these tools tend to be outcome-focused and “applied over a limited period of time, can be tangibly documented, and can be repeated” (p. 815). Examples of such tools include financial reports, disclosures, and performance evaluations (Ebrahim, 2003), as well more informal mechanisms such as storytelling (Chen, 2013; Chen et al., 2020). Accountability *processes* “emphasize a course of action rather than a distinct end-result, in which the means are important in and of themselves” (Ebrahim, 2003, pp. 815–816), and include such processes as participation, self-regulation, and social audits. We also suggest that work on administrative innovations (Damanpour, 1987; Ravichandran, 2000; Teece, 1980), certified management standards (CMS; Terlaak, 2007), management system standards (MSS; Heras-Saizarbitoria & Boiral, 2013), managerial innovation (Damanpour & Aravind, 2012), and metastandards (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2010; Uzmeri, 1997) all fit well under an accountability mechanisms umbrella, as each addresses either functional organizational imperatives or strategic opportunities which can foster both responsibility and legitimacy perceptions.

Drawing on the foundations above, we next offer examples of specific accountability mechanisms relevant to social enterprises for each of their institutional contexts. *Private-decentralized* accountability mechanisms in the form of management standards have been studied extensively in the literature (e.g., Abdullah & Ahmad, 2009; Naveh & Marcus, 2005; Terlaak & King, 2006) and involve “...initiatives that operate against weak legal backgrounds, maintain that noncompliance is legal, and leave firms with a real choice to comply or not” (Terlaak, 2007, p. 971). For example, Terlaak (2007) classifies CMS in the category of private-decentralized institutions, where ‘private’ refers to organizations and individuals as CMS creators, as opposed to the state. The ‘decentralized’ dimension refers to the CMS’s ability to create order in situations where there are no reinforcing laws and where institutional norms may be ineffective. Hence, CMS are largely *enforced* by “diffuse individuals” (Terlaak, 2007, p. 970) rather than by publicly funded entities. Classic CMS examples of this form of accountability mechanisms include Total Quality Management, ISO 9000 (quality management), and ISO 14001 (environmental management). As noted by Terlaak and King (2007), two unique characteristics of CMS are voluntary compliance and that independent third-party functionaries exist to certify compliance. Another private-decentralized example, not of a standard but rather a new way of managing, is ‘Productive Ward: Releasing Time to Care,’ described as “a new way for hospitals to enable nurses to make changes in their wards” (Van den Broek et al., 2014, p. 5).

In stark contrast is the *public-centralized* context, where regulations, standards, or laws are enforced by a central authority (i.e., municipality, state, or federal government). Where compliance is mandatory, such as following United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines, failure to comply may result in clear punishments (e.g., fines, loss of license) or negative publicity (e.g., from recalls). Certain accountability mechanisms, such as the development of governmental entities (e.g., federal or state departments overseeing social services, housing, or food and drug production) charged with oversight of a social enterprise industry, serve to improve the welfare of society. In instances where compliance with a central authority is not mandatory, earning certifications with an authority (e.g., ISO 9001: 2015 as certified by the International Organization for Standardization) can help differentiate a firm from competitors and hold itself to higher standards.

The *private-centralized* accountability mechanisms category is multi-faceted. It may consist of rules-based certifications monitored and enforced by a particular organization or ‘super-organization,’ such as in the diamond industry (Ingram & Silverman, 2002, p. 13). Thus, primary actors can be certification bodies and other voluntary sustainability standards-setting organizations (VSSOs; Bennett, 2016), but can also include foundations (e.g., Skoll

Foundation), fellowship organizations (e.g., Rotary Club), and membership organizations such as the United Way and the Social Enterprise Alliance. Activities in this quadrant are undertaken largely because they are viewed as smart, brand-building certifications or memberships that differentiate one's organization from competitors. Noncompliance in this case often results in loss of certification or unwanted publicity.

Finally, accountability mechanisms that fall within the *public-decentralized* domain typically have diffuse authority structures for enforcement but impact a wide spectrum of actors. Generally, activities undertaken here are to strategically align with prevailing societal values (e.g., ISO 2600–Corporate Social Responsibility) or to avoid controversy (e.g., with watchdog groups) within the extant culture.

For many social enterprise executives, a primary goal is to ensure that the organization is perceived as legitimate by as many of these stakeholder groups as possible (Dart, 2004; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Nicholls, 2010a), bolstering the case for a multi-institutional context strategic approach. Moreover, as Bennett (2016) notes in her study of Fairtrade International's legitimacy signaling challenges, decisions regarding which stakeholders with whom to most engage can influence an organization's governance structure and legitimacy perceptions. Whether legitimacy is derived from compliance, certifications, savvy use of online platforms, contributions, grants, return on investment activities, special events, sales, or from some combination of these activities, attending to salient stakeholders in each institutional context can raise an enterprise's legitimacy status and help in overcoming some of the challenges they commonly face (e.g., Dart, 2004; Huybrechts et al., 2014; Spear et al., 2013).

Illustrations of the Framework and Preliminary Findings

As a preliminary exploration of the validity of our framework, we conducted interviews with executives from three established social enterprises using a purposive sampling technique (e.g., Emmel, 2013; Mason, 2012; Robinson, 2014). Compared to convenience sampling, where subjects may not be applicable to the research being studied, purposive sampling “is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). This technique is typically helpful in qualitative studies and when well-informed, information-rich participants are available to provide data on the phenomenon of interest. There are several purposive sampling techniques. The technique applied in our study, critical case sampling, is a method “popular in the initial stages of research to determine whether or not a more in-depth study is warranted” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 3). With this method, a few important or ‘critical’ cases are selected and then examined. Such critical cases, if consonant with the theoretical framework, can serve as a springboard for future research.

We deemed this approach particularly useful given that our goal was to explore how a diverse group of social enterprises applied accountability mechanisms in their various institutional contexts. Data was obtained through key informant interviews with one senior executive from each social enterprise. Authors had professional connections with executives in each of these organizations. These executives were selected due to their in-depth knowledge about their respective organization's stakeholders and ability to provide rationale for adoption of firm-specific accountability mechanisms. All interviewed executives were able to provide informative, thoughtful, and reflective insights based on their experience. Secondary data resources were also used and obtained from three sources: 1) internal organizational reports that were requested from the interviewed executives, 2) documents posted on websites, and 3) publicly available information.

In terms of the key informant interviews, we approached executives with several targeted questions, with particular emphasis on Ingram and Clay's (2000) institutional contexts and

Table 1. Interview Questions Posed to Executives in our Sample

“When you think about industry norms, which activities help your organization conform?”
“Which specific laws and regulations do you attend to?”
“Who are your most important stakeholders?”
“Which certifications has the firm earned?”
“Which activities set you apart from others in your industry?”
“On which social media platforms is the firm active? What’s the rationale for being on social media?”
“In which industry organizations is the firm an active member? Why is this important?”
“In which community organizations is the firm an active member? Why?”

Nicholls’ (2010a) actors. As shown in Table 1, these questions involved the following: their most salient stakeholders, activities related to attending to stakeholders or industry norms, and specific questions related to each of the institutional contexts.

From these interviews, we eliminated data that was clearly and exclusively revenue-production focused (i.e., product or service related). All other data was scrutinized for fit with the definitions related to accountability mechanisms. The specific accountability mechanisms activities by the organizations in this study are presented in Figure 2. These established social enterprises, with names changed for privacy purposes, were Community Industries Inc., Grace House, and Social Entrepreneurial Aquaculture Venture. Each, described in more depth below, has home offices near the eastern coast of the United States. Unless otherwise noted as global or international, each of the accountability mechanisms mentioned are based in the United States.

Community Industries Inc. (CII) is a thriving nonprofit manufacturing venture with more than 50 years of providing full employment for persons with disabilities. Along with its core contract packaging business, CII also has growing food repackaging and secure document destruction businesses. As an employer of persons with disabilities, CII has sought and secured government contracts that encourage such employment. CII full-time employment of persons with disabilities has commonly exceeded 70% of its workforce. In doing so, it continuously secures many benefits but also must meet the requirements of many stakeholders. In our interview with the senior vice president for operations, an individual with more than thirty years of experience with CII, it was revealed that CII had intentionally attended to stakeholders in each institutional quadrant. He said CII has learned it continually needs to be attuned to salient stakeholder needs and, given its unique social enterprise workforce, ensure compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. While CII regularly feels “tension between social concerns and business realities,” this executive said he also recognizes its highly successful brand was built on—and continues to benefit from—the social impact reputation it has earned. They also have learned that an active social media presence and strategic membership in key groups helps ward off undesired outside concerns. Even though he had never seen Ingram and Silverman’s (2002) four-quadrant model, he was not surprised CII attended to activities in each quadrant.

For example, to address industry norms and reach social group stakeholders in the *private-decentralized* quadrant, CII is involved with Social Enterprise Alliance activities and membership. To broadcast positive news and employment opportunities, it has active Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts. Each of these online platforms are common accountability mechanisms in the contract packaging industry and also send signals to diverse stakeholders—and particularly for-profit firms and governmental entities needing packaging—that CII is in touch with common social media technologies and is active in aligning with industry expectations. To address and strategically align with changing cultural and societal values—the *public-decentralized* quadrant—CII regularly scans the local and regional environment for both industry issues (e.g., in contract packaging) as well as issues

Figure 2. Social Enterprise Legitimacy and Adoption of Accountability Mechanisms (AM): Multi-Institutional Context Activities of Three Established Social Enterprises

	Decentralized Influences¹	Centralized Influences¹
Private¹	<u>AM adoption—strategic and institutional compliance activities:</u> ² Social Enterprise Alliance; Facebook; LinkedIn; Instagram ³ VA Housing Alliance; Virginia Housing Coalition; Facebook; Instagram; Twitter; Local TV and radio spots ⁴ Global G.A.P certification; World Aquaculture Society; Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification	<u>AM adoption—strategic and institutional compliance activities:</u> ² Contract Packaging Association; Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accreditation ³ National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH); United Way agency; Rotary Club; Elks Club; area food banks ⁴ Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) certification; Friend of the Sea (FOS) certification
Public¹	<u>AM adoption—strategic and institutional compliance activities:</u> ² Watchdog groups within disability community; ISO 26000 (CSR); Dept of Justice ³ Regional collaborations (e.g., with churches) and awards (e.g., from the United Way) ⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)	<u>AM adoption—strategic and institutional compliance activities:</u> ² Dept of Aging & Rehabilitation Services (DARS); AbilityOne; 14(c) Certification (Federal Dept of Labor); ISO 9001: 2015; Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMP); Food Safety Act; Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ³ VA Dept of Housing and Community Development (DHCD); Dept of Social Services; Dept of Protective Services ⁴ Florida Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS); Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Note: Strategic (voluntary) adoptions are in **bold** face type.

¹ Based on Ingram and Clay (2000) and Ingram and Silverman (2002)

² Community Industries Inc.

³ Grace House

⁴ SEAV

related to disabilities employment. As such, it has staff monitoring watchdog groups, is regularly in touch with the state Department of Justice (to ensure the legal and potentially criminal status of workers) and has chosen to comply with ISO 26000 (social responsibility) guidelines. CII believes in the importance of staying 'on the good side' of watchdog groups and also believes social responsibility practices help secure packaging contracts.

To stay in sync with industry rules—the *private-centralized* quadrant—CII stays compliant with primary industry stakeholder groups. These include membership with the Contract Packaging Association, allowing CII to learn best practices and seek partnerships for particularly large contracts. In order to send a signal that it is a quality health and human services provider, CII has chosen to be accredited with the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an international nonprofit organization. Last, in the *public-centralized* sphere, CII carefully monitors its compliance with all applicable laws and governmental regulations and guidelines. In their specific context, this means careful compliance with the Food Safety Act, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and with the Department of Aging & Rehabilitation Services (DARS). It also has been strategic about following applicable statutory and regulatory guidelines via Current Good Manufacturing

Practices (CGMP; enforced by the FDA) and ISO 9001: 2015 (quality management standards) certification. It should be noted there are no legal requirements for CGMP and ISO 9001: 2015 certification; but CII has found these certifications an effective way to send an operational quality and efficiency signals to stakeholders. To enable CII to pay below minimum wage to workers with a disability, and as a way to keep costs lower and still employ less capable workers, it consistently has earned the 14(c) subminimum wage certification designation. For workers with less debilitating disabilities, it consistently has earned AbilityOne designation, a strategic decision which qualifies CII for additional federal contracts.

Grace House, with more than 30 years in business, is a homeless shelter dedicated to providing homeless families residency, life skills, day care, and employment assistance. Many of the adult residents work for one of three Grace House thrift stores. This employment provides security—even long-term employment for some—and work-related skills. Along with fundraising efforts, government assistance, and local donations, the thrift stores provide vital additional funding that enables more families to benefit from Grace House provisions. Each of the thrift stores sells 100% donated items—both new and used items such as furniture, clothing, books, flooring, and appliances. Approximately 20% of the costs of running Grace House activities comes from thrift store proceeds. In addition to providing housing and employment opportunities for homeless adults, Grace House thrift stores also regularly provide free goods to refugees and other economically challenged individuals in the local area.

In interviews with the executive director, it became clear that attending to primary stakeholders' expectations has been a challenging process—due in part to changing standards, to increased online platform expectations, and to Grace House executive management turnover in the past decade. After a brief introduction of our framework, he was easily able to process the quadrants and describe the myriad ways Grace House “touches all the bases” with stakeholders. For example, in the *private-decentralized* quadrant, its membership with the Virginia Housing Alliance and with the Virginia Housing Coalition allows Grace House stay in touch with legislative and policy decisions, aids credibility, and fosters collaborative opportunities to strengthen lobbying efforts. To build its brand and benefit from a larger network—particularly for donations and fundraising—it does regular television and radio spots (which commonly are donated, given its social impact mission). It also has an active Facebook page for both the homeless shelter as well as its thrift stores, and sensitively attends to a Twitter account when warranted. Instagram is also used in a variety of ways, including offering pictures of fundraising successes and for broadcasting certain goods for sale.

Like CII above, Grace House commonly scans its regional environment for threats (e.g., from other used goods retailers, including other thrift stores) as well as opportunities (e.g., large stores closing or remodeling, offering potential donations). These *public-decentralized* quadrant activities aid in dealing with stakeholder complaints and concerns. As a United Way agency, Grace House receives tangible funding as well as other benefits from networking with United Way agencies, which work together on lobbying and collaborative opportunities. It also works with regional bodies (e.g., churches) and benefits from both human and financial resource provisions. From a *private-centralized* (industry rules) perspective, Grace House pragmatically is a member of both homelessness alleviation organizations (e.g., National Alliance to End Homelessness) as well as general service organizations, such as Rotary Club and Elks Club. It also contributes to and benefits from area food banks. Last in the *public-centralized* quadrant, Grace House executives know the importance of attending to all relevant laws and regulations. Given its mission, it ensures compliance with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Department of Social Services, and Department of Protective Services.

Social Entrepreneurial Aquaculture Venture (SEAV) is a social enterprise in the aquaculture industry. The farming of aquatic organisms provides 50% of the world's seafood supply and is valued at \$125 billion annually (Bush et al., 2013). In recent years the seafood industry has

come to realize that the increased demand for seafood can only be met through agriculture of the oceans, or aquaculture. This increased reliance on human means of reproducing, growing, and marketing aquatic organisms has spawned phenomenal growth in associated aquaculture technologies ranging from husbandry methods to water filtration technologies. In the case of aquaculture, sustainability is an important concept due to the interdependence between the cultivation of aquatic organisms and the natural resources afforded by the environment. In addition, overuse of natural habitats can have a devastating impact on a given aquaculture project. Thus, the industry has been moving rapidly toward a model that utilizes self-contained, re-circulating systems, with minimal impact on the environment. This organization was selected for this study as a prototypical social enterprise venture for four key reasons. First, this nonprofit, high-tech entity has a distinct social mission of sustainably producing seafood as well as the goal of channeling all revenues in excess of costs to its sister firm, SEAL (a pseudonym), a marine research laboratory. Second, SEAV was too early in its life cycle to signal strong financial performance to its constituencies, thus necessitating alternative means of signaling legitimacy. Third, this entity was faced with an increasing number of new 'standards' on the market lending to a complex and difficult decision in determining which accountability mechanisms were most viable to adopt. Finally, aquaculture firms, like many other social enterprises, have the potential to leverage accountability mechanisms (and pursuit of certifications in particular) to their benefit in terms of influencing the support they garner from external stakeholders. Recent research in a leading journal, *Science*, echoes the significant potential benefits of adoption:

[Aquaculture] producers have to make strategic decisions about which standards to adopt and, thus, which processors to use and international markets to access. These choices also influence the support that local governments, NGOs, and donors offer (e.g., by underwriting on-farm improvements or management of common resources, such as water) (Bush et al., 2013, p. 1067).

As with the Community Industries Inc. and Grace House examples above, SEAV strategically and sensitively attended to many adoption activities that influence primary stakeholders. For example, after the 2004 introduction of an aquaculture standard, SEAV earned certification with the GlobalG.A.P., an international and widely dispersed organization which certifies firms through 142 independent certification bodies (CBs), including aquaculture. Moreover, SEAV chose to become certified with the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, an independent global nonprofit organization that manages aquaculture certifications and labeling programs. In addition, SEAV values membership in the World Aquaculture Society, a loosely affiliated organization that enables networking at sponsored meetings, as well as providing members with publications which offer industry trends and best practices. These are SEAV's primary *private-decentralized* activities.

With respect to *public-decentralized activities*, SEAV makes every effort to comply with the FAO 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This helps SEAV maintain high standards in ecosystem conservation and biodiversity management and development of living aquatic organisms.

SEAV also values *private-centralized* compliance with several organizations. The Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) is one of the leading standards-setting organizations for aquaculture seafood. Enforcement is through GAA. The other organization, Friend of the Sea (FOS), is a project of the World Sustainability Organization and an NGO focused on conservation of the marine environment. SEAV's membership and certification requires adherence to specific organizational rules enforced directly by FOS.

Importantly, aquaculture organizations also have *public-centralized* rules with which to comply, for the safety benefit of aquaculture consumers. Here, certifications are mandatory and are enforced by laws. In SEAV's case, this means certification and compliance with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) and state statutes. All aquaculture entities in the state must be certified by DACS. In addition, since it is a food source, SEAV must comply with the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Discussion and Future Research

The purpose of this research was to propose a conceptual framework linking adoption of (or compliance with) accountability tools and processes to social enterprise institutional contexts. Applying Ebrahim's (2003) work on nonprofit and NGO 'accountability mechanisms' to social enterprises, a main premise for such adoption is to bolster legitimacy perceptions of social enterprises' diverse primary stakeholders. Enhanced legitimacy perceptions strengthen stakeholder ties and increases the likelihood of enterprise sustainability (Dart, 2004; Deephouse et al., 2017; Suchman, 1995).

Data collected from three established social enterprises provides preliminary validation of our framework. Specifically, each of the organizations indicated voluntarily adopting accountability mechanisms in at least three of their four institutional contexts. When considering nonvoluntary compliance with accountability mechanisms developed and required by outside (typically governmental) organizations—in the *public-centralized* quadrant (Ingram & Clay, 2000)—all three organizations indicated compliance. As can be seen in Figure 2 above, most of the accountability mechanisms these organizations adopted are voluntary and strategic choices that are beneficial in some way, not least of which is to communicate legitimacy to stakeholders. Adoption activities included savvy use of social media platforms to earning relevant certifications, voluntary adoption of the latest industry standards, as well as memberships with influential community organizations and visibility at industry functions. The executives interviewed indicated a belief that their organizations are more competitive and attractive to customers and other stakeholders as a result of applying such tools and processes.

It should be noted also that, even in the *public-centralized* quadrant—typically a compliance accountability mechanisms category—there were several voluntary adoptions in our data. From our interviews and from the documents we examined, it became clear that compliance within this category increased market opportunities for CII especially. For example, its AbilityOne compliance and 14(c) certification with the U.S. Department of Labor both provide CII with the legal opportunity to hire and pay subminimum wages to persons with typically severe disabilities—individuals who would likely struggle to be hired elsewhere. These strategic choices also put CII in a priority status category, and also enabled CII's federal customers to receive advantageous pricing, savings passed along due to the lower worker wages.

Although our framework does not explicitly address recently established ('new') social enterprises, we believe future research on the legitimacy enhancing impact of adoption for such social enterprises could prove fruitful for practitioners and scholars alike. Due to their novelty and typically resource-poor operating environments (Desa & Basu, 2013; Huybrechts et al., 2014), new social enterprises especially confront challenges with communicating and maintaining legitimacy on several fronts (cf., Alexius & Furusten, 2020). Specifically, when viewed through the lens of the Bagnoli and Megali (2011) metrics for social enterprise performance, three critical challenges are apparent. First, the liability of newness (Hager et al., 2004) of these ventures often precludes the presentation of impressive financial performance. Second, mission-critical outcomes for new social enterprises have typically not been optimized and often more closely reflect a concept or dream of the founder than reality

(e.g., Dart, 2004). Third, new ventures commonly have not yet established effective processes and activities required to achieve their stated social effectiveness outcomes. Thus, in practice, stakeholders of such enterprises commonly have little to objectively assess, often resulting in low levels of perceived legitimacy (e.g., Dart, 2004).

Taken in aggregate, these common conditions create formidable challenges for both new and even many established social enterprises. Future research could explore, for instance, legitimacy perception differences between new social enterprises which adopt accountability mechanisms in each institutional context and those which do not. Relatedly, and given the typically sparse resources of new enterprises, it would be fruitful to explore which accountability mechanisms are most impactful on legitimacy perceptions and objective performance metrics, and in which institutional contexts. For example, might a particularly visible certification, both new to the firm and earned as a first-mover advantage relative to competitors, offset legitimacy perception deficits in other areas (e.g., limited social impact; low fundraising)? In addition, studying the relative legitimacy-enhancing value of voluntary (strategic) versus involuntary (mandatory compliance) adoptions should be valuable to both researchers and practitioners.

This discussion of accountability mechanisms would not be complete without consideration of a few caveats and mention of methodological limitations, each of which may also be viewed as future research opportunities. First, our data collection strategy—applying a purposive sampling technique—involved just three established social enterprises. Given the small sample size and our key informant interviews with just three individuals, it would be helpful to collect data with both internal and external stakeholders to make more informed inferences about whether adoption indeed influences legitimacy perceptions. Additional research also needs to be conducted to determine if enhanced legitimacy perceptions due to certain adoptions indeed produce social enterprise benefits, such as increases in funding and lengthier (and stronger) stakeholder affiliation. Further, our data collection techniques did not discern *why* the accountability mechanisms applied by these organizations were chosen. For example, was earning a non-mandatory certification done to enhance legitimacy perceptions, for survival, to gain a competitive advantage to increase revenues, or some combination? Future research is needed to accurately determine the rationale for chosen mechanisms.

Second, the strategic adoption of accountability mechanisms should be viewed as just one way for increasing legitimacy perceptions. More research needs to be conducted on the relative importance of revenue-generating products (or services-related advancements) versus accountability mechanisms. In addition, since “sector-wide structuration dynamics generate cultural pressures that transcend any single organization's purposive control” (Suchman, 1995, p. 572), social enterprises must be attentive to other ways to mitigate legitimacy pressures not addressed by adoption. Moreover, even when legitimacy perceptions are strong, they cannot be taken for granted as institutional dynamics are likely to change (Alexius & Furusten, 2020). Thus, both longitudinal studies—e.g., to ascertain the relative strength over time of a particular adoption on legitimacy perceptions—and studies of changes in institutional pressures and expectations could prove enlightening.

Third, research is needed on the differential effects of certain adoptions (e.g., key standards; social media platforms), and particularly for different industry categories. For example, do particular accountability mechanisms (e.g., certifications) provide a disproportionate boost in legitimacy perceptions? If so, how much of a boost and for which stakeholders? Further, applying Benjamin's (2008) arguments made in a nonprofit context, additional social enterprise research needs to be conducted on legitimacy perception effects when social enterprises provide ‘verification accounts’ when they have used mechanisms to meet accountability expectations, and also ‘explanatory accounts’ when expectations have not been met. Moreover, additional research on different social enterprise types, such as integrated hybrids, differentiated hybrids, and work integration social enterprises (WISEs; see Mair et

al., 2012; Mair et al., 2015) could prove fruitful as a way to determine how to best use resources to strengthen legitimacy.

Fourth, additional research is needed on the potential drawbacks of adoption. For example, it is likely some accountability mechanisms are more costly (in financial and human resources) to adopt than others, so the benefits of adoption, resources trade-offs, and their ability to address a given stakeholder group's concerns must be weighed carefully. Similarly, care should be taken to ensure that adoption does not 'lock' the venture to specific stakeholders beyond the purposes of the intended relationship. Future research exploring both cost-benefit dynamics and temporal aspects of adoption on legitimacy perceptions should prove helpful.

We recognize much more needs to be done in the context of our framework. Nonetheless, we believe adoption of accountability mechanisms, intentionally enacted to influence principal stakeholders in social enterprises' multiple institutional contexts, could prove to be one valuable way to reap benefits from stronger stakeholder legitimacy perceptions.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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The Significance of 501(c) Status Among Environmental Nonprofits Engaged in Oil and Gas Policy Debates

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This paper examines the advocacy activities of 30 environmental nonprofits engaged in oil and gas policy debates. Because 501(c)(3) organizations are restricted or prohibited from engaging in certain types of advocacy, the literature typically considers 501(c)(3) organizations service providers and 501(c)(4)s advocacy organizations. This study looks at whether this dichotomy holds among a group of organizations that actively advocates and examines the implications of 501(c) status. Data come from surveys of organizations active in hydraulic fracturing policy debates, along with organizations' Form 990s and websites. Results obtained through statistical analyses and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) indicate that the environmental nonprofits actively advocate and report doing so relatively effectively. Furthermore, this research uncovers new patterns in advocacy tactics and the organizations that use them by analyzing advocacy participation and effectiveness separately and through QCA.

Keywords: Nonprofit Advocacy, 501(c), Environmental Policy

Recent years have seen a growing interest in nonprofit advocacy, with scholars seeking to understand when and how nonprofits influence policy and practitioners hoping to find the most effective and efficient ways to influence policy given their resource constraints. Much of the literature on nonprofit advocacy focuses specifically on social service providers to explore how nonprofits balance both service delivery and advocacy. To this end, studies often distinguish between 501(c)(3) public charities, which are subject to limitations on their advocacy activities, and 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations. Generally speaking, among social service providers, 501(c)(3)s focus on service delivery, while 501(c)(4)s focus on advocacy, though as discussed below these are blunt characterizations. Studies to date have not examined whether and how 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) status affects organizations for whom advocacy and policy change are essential to their missions, such as environmental advocacy nonprofits. Thus, this study examines environmental nonprofits as a unique organization type and asks, first, whether there are differences in advocacy between environmental nonprofits registered as 501(c)(3) organizations and those registered as 501(c)(4) organizations. Second, through qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), this study explores the combinations of organizational characteristics, including 501(c) status, that associate with different advocacy tactics.

Using surveys of organizations engaged in oil and gas policy, this study zooms in on 30 environmental nonprofits engaged in oil and gas policy debates to explore the types of activities these organizations engage in to influence policy, whether there are differences

between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations in their advocacy, and which organizational characteristics combine and associate with specific advocacy tactics. Of the 30 organizations, 21 are registered under section 501(c)(3) and 9 are registered under section 501(c)(4).¹ The findings shed light on environmental nonprofits and the practical implications of 501(c) status for advocacy. The paper also demonstrates the complexity of factors that lead to advocacy and further elaborates on a more nuanced view that expands our understanding of advocacy and its causes beyond dichotomous measures (Fyall & McGuire, 2015).

This paper begins by reviewing the relevant literature on nonprofit advocacy and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designation. It then presents general theoretical expectations, followed by a description of the study context: hydraulic fracturing policy debates. Results derive from descriptive and analytic statistics, along with QCA, to shed light on the relevance of 501(c) status to nonprofit advocacy in the environmental policy realm. This research finds that both 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) environmental nonprofits engaged in oil and gas policy advocacy at high rates and report doing so relatively effectively. There is limited support for the notion that 501(c)(4) organizations are more likely to advocate, and 501(c)(3) organizations are more likely to engage in advocacy that requires working with opponents. Furthermore, the QCA uncovers distinct organization types that engage in two specific advocacy tactics.

Overview of Nonprofit Advocacy

Advocacy is “the attempt to influence public policy either directly or indirectly” (Pekkanen & Smith, 2014a, p. 3). As this definition suggests, advocacy is a broad concept that includes direct attempts to influence policy, such as lobbying or testifying before decision-making bodies, and indirect efforts, such as public education or media campaigns. While early studies of nonprofit advocacy focused primarily on rights based and political organizations, more recently, studies recognize that advocacy can take a wide variety of forms and is undertaken by diverse organizations working across fields (Almog-Bar, 2018; Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1998; MacIndoe, 2014). Recent scholarly work has focused on the advocacy activities of human service nonprofits and the drivers of those activities (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014; Mosley, 2010), how nonprofits influence policy and effect policy change (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Fyall, 2016; Fyall & McGuire, 2015; Hula & Jackson-Elmoore, 2001), and ways of understanding and classifying nonprofit advocacy organizations and their activities (Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1998; Child & Grønbjerg, 2007).

Despite this growing body of literature, a few limitations remain. First, though there is general agreement regarding the definition of advocacy, advocacy remains difficult to operationalize. For example, in their definition of advocacy, Pekannen and Smith (2014a) include lobbying, political advocacy, protesting, and public education. Nicholson-Crotty (2009) describes three types of advocacy activities based on legal frameworks, including affiliating with 501(c)(4) organizations, grassroots lobbying, and direct lobbying, and numerous other typologies exist as well (Berry & Arons, 2003; Casey, 2011). While lobbying is typically considered a subset of advocacy (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014), the concepts of lobbying and advocacy are sometimes used interchangeably. Describing these challenges, Prentice (2018) recently called for a focus on lobbying, which can be clearly defined and operationalized based on federal statutes and regulations. Focusing on lobbying certainly has the benefit of clearer definitions and data, but lobbying provides a narrow picture of advocacy and may miss many influential activities, such as public education, research, and media interactions.

A second limitation is that the vast majority of nonprofit advocacy research to date focuses on social service providers. There are good reasons for this: Health and human service nonprofits are far more prevalent than other types of nonprofits (Berry & Arons, 2003), and these organizations balance service provision and advocacy (see Fyall, 2017). As Mosley (2014) describes, these nonprofits provide a critical voice for marginalized communities, but because

their primary mission is to provide services, they face significant barriers to advocacy, including resource constraints, lack of experience, and confusion about the legal limits of 501(c)(3) advocacy. Studies of social service providers have been pivotal in informing our understanding of advocacy and its organizational and contextual determinants. Environmental nonprofits, however, are inherently different from social service providers in that their primary missions and activities often relate to advocacy and policy change. Some environmental organizations perform services, such as trail management and recycling services, but the breadth of many organizations' missions necessitates policy advocacy to achieve broad conservation goals. Environmental nonprofits' focus on advocacy might lead one to assume that these organizations are 501(c)(4)s, but many register as 501(c)(3)s. While some 501(c)(3)s have an affiliated 501(c)(4), most do not. Thus, while much of the information gleaned from studies of social service providers may apply, differences between these organizations warrant additional research.

Furthermore, environmental nonprofits are more likely to advocate than any other type of nonprofit (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007). These organizations also have the potential to aggregate voices, which is particularly important in the environmental realm because those opposing environmental policies are often large corporations with deep pockets. With abundant and significant global environmental issues, including air pollution, water contamination, and climate change and its effects, environmental policymaking is among the most critical tasks for today's leaders, and nonprofits are often key advocates (Sharp et al., 2011). Virtually all major policy process theories, such as the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET), and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), contemplate a role for nonprofits (Fyall, 2017; Weible & Sabatier, 2018). For example, in the MSF, nonprofits may participate in policy communities or act as entrepreneurs (Mason, 2015), and in the ACF, nonprofits participate in coalitions to influence change (Fyall & McGuire, 2015). Studies on environmental policymaking, in particular, often contemplate that nonprofits are involved (Bies et al., 2013; Kagan, 2019), but they typically do not examine the nonprofit sector specifically, focusing instead on coalitions or policy entrepreneurs from across sectors (Heikkila & Weible, 2016; Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

What's in an IRS Designation?

To begin to address the above limitations, this study explores environmental nonprofits as a unique set of actors and empirically examines the advocacy practices of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations engaged in oil and gas policy debates. As described more fully below, there are certainly legal constraints that affect how 501(c)(3) organizations advocate, but how these constraints play out in practice, particularly among a group of nonprofits that actively advocate, remains uncertain.

With respect to legal constraints, because nonprofits provide public benefits, governments confer tax-exempt status on these organizations. Under section 501(c) of the IRS code alone, there are 29 different types of organizations that qualify for tax exemption. Most nonprofits claim federal tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code (Hoyt, 2012). Section 501(c)(3) organizations, which are public charities or private foundations, have an added benefit in that their donors can also take tax deductions for their donations (26 USC § 501(c)(3)). In exchange for this added benefit, there are some restrictions on 501(c)(3) advocacy activities. Specifically, public charities are prohibited from having lobbying as a substantial part² of their activities and from engaging in political campaigns for candidates for public office (26 USC § 501(c)(3)). In contrast, nonprofits registered under section 501(c)(4) are social welfare organizations and generally are not restricted in their advocacy.

On one hand, the literature on social service providers suggests that the distinction between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations is consequential. The literature often characterizes

501(c)(3) organizations as service providers and 501(c)(4) organizations as advocacy organizations. For example, some studies focus exclusively on 501(c)(3) organizations (Berry & Portney, 2014; LeRoux & Wright, 2010), while others use 501(c)(4) status as an indicator of the presence of advocacy (Mason, 2016; Pekkanen & Smith, 2014b).

On the other hand, studies suggest that the implications of IRS designation in practice are less clear and may present a false dichotomy (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007; Fyall & McGuire, 2015). For example, studies suggest that 501(c)(3) staff may be unclear about the laws surrounding advocacy and the extent to which they can advocate (Berry & Arons, 2003). While many nonprofit managers believe they are prohibited from lobbying (Mosley, 2014), lobbying simply cannot be a substantial portion of these organizations' activities, and many organizations regularly lobby below the legal thresholds. Furthermore, advocacy is much broader than lobbying or supporting political candidates for office. For example, Casey (2011) outlines 28 different types of advocacy in eight categories, including research and policy analysis, education and mobilization, and communication and media outreach. These activities extend well beyond lobbying and supporting candidates and include a variety of forms of direct and indirect advocacy. Thus, because the legal restrictions are narrow, and advocacy is broad, additional research is needed to understand the practical implications of IRS designation. This is particularly true as studies move to other types of organizations that may advocate more, such as environmental and civil rights organizations.

Theoretical Propositions

To answer the first research question about differences between standalone 501(c)(3) organizations and 501(c)(4) (with paired (c)(3) entities) organizations engaged in oil and gas policy, this section combines expectations about these organizations based on legal limitations with theoretical expectations derived from the literature. Because of its exploratory and qualitative components, this study uses theoretical propositions, which tend to be more conceptual and have the primary purpose of guiding research designs (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014). This research includes two measures of each of seven types of advocacy, described more fully below. With respect to the first measure, survey responses reflect whether organizations engage in each type of advocacy, and second, for those organizations that engage tactic, a measure of their self-perceived effectiveness is included.

Beginning with advocacy participation, this study generally expects that 501(c)(4) organizations are more likely to engage in advocacy than their 501(c)(3) counterparts. This proposition finds its strongest support in institutional theory, which posits that, in order to survive, organizations must conform to the rules, norms, and social expectations that make up their institutional environments (Guo & Acar, 2005; Velez, 2018). Institutional theory has been widely applied in nonprofit studies and used to explain decisions about advocacy (Schmid et al., 2008; Suárez & Hwang, 2008). As noted above and consistent with the treatment of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations in other studies, 501(c)(3) organizations face legal constraints, or rules, surrounding their advocacy.

The proposition that 501(c)(4) organizations are more likely to advocate similarly finds support in other theories, such as resource dependency theory, resource mobilization theory, and agency theory. Resource dependency theory is also regularly invoked in studies about why and how nonprofits advocate (Fyall, 2016; MacIndoe, 2014; Mosley, 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, 2009), and suggests that organizations interact strategically in their environments to secure necessary resources (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Mason, 2020). Section 501(c)(4) organizations are distinct from their 501(c)(3) counterparts in that they are not restricted in their lobbying or political advocacy and donations to these organizations are not tax deductible. Thus, without the benefit of tax deductions, 501(c)(4) donors purposefully support these organizations with expectations that they prioritize advocacy. Relatedly, in alignment

with resource mobilization theory, 501(c)(4) organizations may have more resources available for advocacy and, thus, are better poised to push their agendas forward as opportunities arise (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Mosley, 2010). Also, under an agency theory approach, nonprofits typically consider themselves the agents of their funders or donors, and as with resource dependency theory, 501(c)(4) supporters expect that their funds will be put toward advocacy (Ebrahim, 2003; Mason, 2016). Responsiveness to funders may be even more pronounced among environmental nonprofits as compared with social service organizations because environmental nonprofits often lack direct service recipients to whom they are also accountable.

A contrary proposition is also plausible, though. This study does not expect to find 501(c)(3) organizations engaged in advocacy at higher rates than 501(c)(4) organizations, but 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations may engage at similar rates in unrestricted advocacy (namely, advocacy other than lobbying and electoral politics). Not only is there no legal basis for 501(c)(3) organizations to refrain from engaging in unrestricted types of advocacy, but as active advocates, these organizations may be better versed in nonprofit advocacy law than their social service counterparts, and knowledge of the law is associated with advocacy engagement (Lu, 2018). Thus, it is plausible that 501(c)(4) organizations engage at higher rates of restricted advocacy, and that 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations engage at similar rates of unrestricted advocacy.

Moving to self-reported effectiveness, fewer studies examine advocacy effectiveness. Effectiveness is a difficult concept to define and measure, particularly with respect to advocacy (Casey, 2004), and thus, those studies that do examine effectiveness tend to focus on factors internal to organizations, rather than on the outcomes of policy advocacy (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014). As with advocacy participation, this study generally expects that 501(c)(4) organizations report higher levels of advocacy effectiveness than do their 501(c)(3) counterparts. Given the limited research on nonprofit advocacy effectiveness, theoretical bases for differences between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations are less clear. Certainly, some of the theories mentioned above may apply both to advocacy participation and advocacy effectiveness. For example, because 501(c)(4) organizations likely have more resources committed to advocacy and stronger expectations about advocacy from funders, they may be more effective advocates (Casey, 2004). Furthermore, organizational ecology theory might suggest that while advocacy is a core activity for 501(c)(4) organizations, 501(c)(3) organizations engage in advocacy as a peripheral or later adopted activity in response to changing environments (Hannan & Freeman, 1989). As with advocacy participation, it is also not clear whether these expectations apply to all forms of advocacy or only to restricted forms.

Furthermore, the second research question in this study is which organizational characteristics, including 501(c) status, combine to produce certain types of advocacy. Through QCA we can examine relevant combinations of conditions leading to advocacy participation and gain a better understanding of the types of organizations that participate in specific tactics. Four conditions are included in this study: 501(c) status, organizational size, geographic scope, and organizational age. These conditions are described in further detail and theoretically justified in the section on QCA below.

Research Context

To analyze the advocacy patterns among a subgroup of environmental nonprofits, this study uses surveys of organizations active in hydraulic fracturing (fracking) policy debates in the US. Fracking is a technique involving the injection of water, sand, and chemical additives into shale rock or other porous formations thousands of feet beneath the earth's surface to release oil or natural gas (Heikkila et al., 2014). In the US and around much of the world, fracking is increasingly used in oil and gas development. For example, between 2007 and 2017, the

amount of natural gas produced from shale formations increased 10-fold from 1,990,145 million cubic feet to 19,018,457 million cubic feet (US EIA, 2018).

Not only has the volume of oil and gas produced through fracking increased, but oil and gas development is also encroaching on high population density areas. Close proximity between population centers and oil and gas operations gives rise to a host of local issues, including NIMBYism (not in my backyard); nuisance issues, like traffic, dust, and noise; and concerns about air and water contamination. Beyond local issues, fracking is part of broader national and global debates about reliance on fossil fuels. While those in favor of fracking often cite natural gas as a cleaner alternative to coal, those opposed claim that fracking impedes transitions to renewable energy sources. As this suggests, fracking is an intensely debated political issue (Heikkila & Weible, 2016), drawing participation from actors across sectors, and provides an ideal policy context for observing environmental nonprofit advocacy.

While fracking represents a particular type of environmental policy issue, the underlying concerns, including air pollution, water contamination, and harm to species and their habitats, are common to many environmental problems. As such, a wide range of environmental nonprofits engage in policy debates, include large generalist organizations, public interest law firms, and groups representing more specific interests or areas, such as particular geographic regions or natural resources. The study also includes a few grassroots groups that developed from the ground up and focus on representing or empowering citizens, particularly in response to development in close proximity to neighborhoods. These local groups have been on the front line of battles for local control over fracking in places like New York State; Denton, Texas; and Longmont, Colorado (Dodge, 2017; Jaquith, 2017).

Summary data regarding the respondent organizations are shown in Table 1. As the table suggests, 70% (N=21) of nonprofit survey respondents are 501(c)(3) organizations, which is somewhat surprising given that all of the organizations in the sample are active advocates. Organizations have been operating for a mean length of 36 years, and organizations are relatively large based on their budgets, although a few very large nonprofits create a notable right skew (see also Figure 1 below for a distribution of organizational expenses). Of those surveyed, 63% of nonprofits have a nationwide scope, 10% have a sub-national but multi-state scope, and the remaining 27% focus on state or sub-state levels.

As noted above, all 501(c)(4) organizations that responded to the survey have an affiliated 501(c)(3) organization. The use of 501(c)(3) status in conjunction with 501(c)(4) status is commonplace, and indeed, “most politically active public interest groups carry both [501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4)] tax statuses” (Chand, 2017, p. 1302). Complex nonprofit structures, such as those including both 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations, have become increasingly common for a number of reasons, including the IRS’s revocation of the Sierra Club’s 501(c)(3) status in 1966 (Chand, 2013). In these complex arrangements, “either the 501(c)(3) or the 501(c)(4) may be the anchor and the additional related organizations serve to enlarge the anchor’s resources and capacities to secure its advocacy goals” (Kerlin & Reid, 2010, p. 804). A dominant and efficient complex structure involves consolidating programming or advocacy activities in an anchor 501(c)(4) organization while relying on a 501(c)(3) entity for funding (Kerlin & Reid, 2010; Aprill, 2012).

In this study, 501(c)(4) organizations were identified as anchor organizations based on their name—affiliated 501(c)(3)s often have names that include ‘Foundation,’ ‘Fund,’ ‘Educational Fund,’ or similar—and review of their websites. In each case, the 501(c)(4) is the primary organization, but has an affiliated 501(c)(3) for tax purposes. While 501(c)(3) organizations may serve as anchor organizations, this was not the case for any respondents in this study. Because the paired organizations in this study share staff members and engage in activities as a single unit, which was determined based on a review of organizations’ websites and Form 990s, the paired 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations were not surveyed separately.

Table 1. Summary Data for Nonprofit Survey Respondents (N=30)

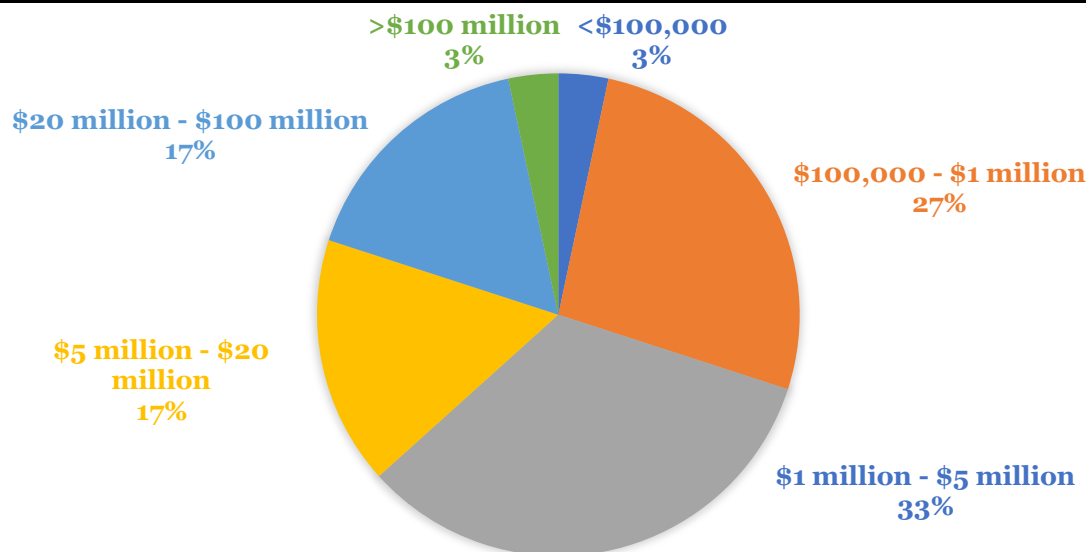
Organization Characteristics	501(c)(3) Mean	501(c)(4) Mean	Overall Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Registered as 501(c)(3)	-	-	0.70	0	1
Organization Age	32 years	46 years	36 years	4	82
Organization Size	\$10.5 million <i>Median=2.2m</i>	\$22.2 million <i>Median=5.8m</i>	\$14.0 million <i>Median=3.6m</i>	\$8,093	\$128 million
National Scope	0.52	0.89	0.63	0	1
Colorado-Based	0.43	0.11	0.33	0	1

Methods

This study focuses on 30 environmental nonprofit organizations active in oil and gas policy debates. Data for this study were collected as part of a larger project via three surveys of policy actors in hydraulic fracturing policy debates: a survey in Colorado in 2015, a national survey in 2016, and a second Colorado survey in 2017.³ The 30 organizations included in this study responded to at least one of these surveys. The survey targeted individuals representing organizations across sectors, such as government agencies, oil and gas companies, and consulting firms, although the focus of this study is specifically on the nonprofit sector. The samples for each full survey were developed through online sources, news media, and snowball sampling based on coincident interviews with policy actors. The majority of respondents—and all respondents in this study—were identified based on their organizational affiliations. In other words, organizations were identified based on policy documents or the news media, for example, and then individuals affiliated with each organization were subsequently identified. For each survey, respondents received an email request with an online link to the survey. The cover letters associated with the survey used the following, or very similar language to indicate that the survey was interested in respondents' activities through their organizational affiliations: "The survey is sent to individuals working for a wide range of organizations involved in oil and gas policy," and the letter instructed, "If you think you are not the best person in your organization to answer this survey, please let us know whom in your organization we should contact."

To be included in this study, respondents must represent organizations that are 990 or 990EZ filers, indicating that they are registered as tax-exempt organizations with the IRS. They also must have at least one major group code of C (environment) in the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system, indicating that they are environmentally focused. Organizations are excluded if they actually represent the oil and gas industry as reflected in their mission statements. In 2015, 11 unique environmental nonprofits responded to the Colorado survey; 20 unique nonprofits responded to the 2016 national survey; and 7 nonprofits responded to the 2017 Colorado survey.⁴ As these numbers suggest, in some cases organizations responded to more than one survey (six organizations responded to two surveys, and one responded to all three surveys). When organizations responded to more than one survey, only their most recent responses are included in the dataset. Also, more than one individual from each of the 11 organizations responded to the survey. In these cases, the mean response across individual respondents was used to create the organization-level variables. Thus, the final sample includes 30 unique environmental nonprofits.

The surveys were disseminated during periods with considerable policy activity surrounding oil and gas issues. For example, in Colorado, during much of the survey period a lawsuit regarding the city of Longmont's fracking ban was pending, and the Colorado Supreme Court ultimately struck down the ban in May 2016. In 2014, to avert contentious and conflicting

Figure 1. Distribution of Organizational Expenses

ballot measures, the Colorado Governor assembled a task force to make recommendations regarding local authority issues. The task force issued its recommendations and the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) proposed new rules in 2015. Dissatisfied with rulemaking at the COGCC and stalemates at the legislature, advocates on both sides of the issue put competing measures on the 2018 ballot. Both measures ultimately failed, but only after the parties collectively spent \$50 million supporting and opposing them. As examples at the federal level, in 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Obama Administration passed new regulations governing methane emissions from oil and gas operations on private land, which were immediately targeted for repeal by the Trump Administration in 2017. Similar regulations applied to public land have been in dispute at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), where advocates also regularly oppose oil and gas permits.

Given the relatively small sample size and that two of the three surveys focused on Colorado, the results in this study are not meant to be generalizable across all environmental nonprofits. Rather, the results in this study illustrate the complexity of factors that lead to different types of advocacy, along with the fact that 501(c)(3) organizations often do emphasize advocacy, particularly in areas dominated by policy, rather than services. Thus, the results in this study are meant to shed light on previously understudied phenomena and suggest areas for future research.

Advocacy by Environmental Nonprofits in Oil and Gas Policy Debates

As a preliminary matter, this study looks at broad categories of advocacy to understand advocacy behaviors by environmental nonprofits active in oil and gas policymaking. Survey respondents were asked the following: “Over the past two years, to what extent have you engaged in the following activities and used them effectively in achieving your personal or professional goals related to oil and gas development that uses hydraulic fracturing?”⁵ The question was followed by a series of tactics, detailed in the results table below. For each tactic, response options were 1=not engaged, 2=engaged but not effective, 3=engaged and moderately effective, 4=engaged and very effective. Thus, responses reflect both whether organizations engage in each activity and, if engaged, whether they believe they do so

Table 2. Participation in Advocacy Activities (N=30)

Activity	Percent Engaged	Mean Effectiveness
Countering arguments made by people you disagree with	100%	3.0
Coordinating political activities with allies	93.3%	3.4
Providing information to the news media	93.3%	3.2
Mobilizing the public	90.0%	3.3
Providing information to government officials	90.0%	3.1
Collaborating with people you disagree with	76.7%	2.4
Brokering agreements between parties	63.3%	2.5

effectively. Results for the sample of 30 nonprofits are shown in Table 2. While some of the activities listed may also be used in relation to non-advocacy activities, the survey specifically focused on oil and gas policy advocacy.

These summary results suggest, first, that these nonprofits participate at high rates in each of the tactics. All respondents report countering arguments made by those they disagree with, and at least 90% of respondents mobilize the public, coordinate with allies, and provide information to government officials and the media. Categories with slightly lower rates of participation among nonprofits (63% and 77%) are those that require working across sectors or with groups with differing viewpoints, suggesting that these are less common or more challenging activities.

Second, results also indicate that these environmental nonprofits report engaging in most activities moderately or very effectively. Table 2 shows mean levels of self-reported effectiveness among those participating, with scores ranging from 2 to 4. Respondents who reported not participating in the tactic (response=1) were not included in the effectiveness analysis. The activity with the highest reported effectiveness is coordinating political activities with allies, and again, the only activities with lower levels of effectiveness are those requiring cross sector or cross viewpoint coordination.

Implications of IRS Designation

This section tests theoretical expectations and asks whether there are differences in rates of advocacy participation and self-reported effectiveness between standalone 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) (with paired 501(c)(3) entities) organizations. As described above, IRS designation is often important in studies about social service providers, and because environmental organizations advocate more than any other type of nonprofit, the relevance of IRS designation is worthy of empirical testing in this context. Table 3 shows the results of t-tests comparing mean responses by 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations about advocacy participation, effectiveness, and a combined measure. Significance is reported at the 0.1 level in light of the small number of cases in the study and to highlight potential differences that may exist between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations and that should be explored in future studies.

Beginning with participation, first, the lack of significant differences between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations is noteworthy. Despite the fact that 501(c)(3) organizations face certain restrictions in their advocacy and that 501(c)(4) organizations have not only more

Table 3. Mean Advocacy Responses by 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) Organizations (t-test results) (N=30)

Activity	Participation		Effectiveness		Combined	
	(c)(3)	(c)(4)	(c)(3)	(c)(4)	(c)(3)	(c)(4)
Countering arguments made by people you disagree with	1.00	1.00	2.93	3.23	2.93	3.23
Coordinating political activities with allies	0.90	1.00	3.38	3.49	3.15	3.50
Providing information to the news media	0.90	1.00	3.20	3.32	2.99	3.32
Mobilizing the public	0.86	1.00	3.17	3.43	2.86*	3.43*
Providing information to government officials	0.86	1.00	3.21	2.98	2.90	2.98
Collaborating with people you disagree with	0.81	0.67	2.57	2.04	2.27*	1.76*
Brokering agreements between parties	0.62	0.67	2.57	2.42	2.0	2.0

Note: *p<0.1

freedom to advocate, but also perhaps a stronger mandate to do so, advocacy between these two types of organizations looks substantially similar. While there may be nuances in their advocacy not captured by these relatively blunt categories of tactics, we generally see that both 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations participate at high rates using a variety of advocacy tactics.

Though none of the results are significant, there is some limited support for expectations that 501(c)(4) organizations may participate at slightly higher rates than 501(c)(3) organizations. With mobilizing the public and providing information to government officials, we see the largest effect size favoring 501(c)(4) organizations. These results conform to broad expectations that 501(c)(4)s advocate more, and they are a logical consequence of legal restrictions on advocacy. Specifically, 501(c)(3) organizations are limited, though not prohibited, both in their direct lobbying, which may include providing information to government officials, and in their grassroots lobbying, which includes mobilizing the public to take actions in support of particular views on legislation. Thus, general expectations that 501(c)(4)s are more likely to advocate are somewhat supported, although regardless of IRS designation, environmental nonprofits are likely to advocate using a range of tactics. The only result potentially contrary to expectations involves collaborating with people you disagree with. Again, though not significant, results suggest that 501(c)(3) organizations may be more likely than 501(c)(4)s to engage in this activity as it relates to advocacy.

Moving to effectiveness, similar patterns are observed. For most categories of advocacy, results suggest similar levels of self-reported effectiveness or slightly higher levels among 501(c)(4)s, though differences are not significant. A couple results are noteworthy. First, as with participation, a notable exception to the general pattern is that 501(c)(3) organizations report higher levels of effectiveness when it comes to collaborating with those they disagree with. Second, while all 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations report countering arguments, 501(c)(4) organizations report higher levels of effectiveness. Furthermore, although 501(c)(4) organizations report higher rates of providing information to government officials, among those engaged, 501(c)(3)s actually report higher levels of effectiveness. Taken together, these latter two results suggest that the same factors that influence participation may not be the same factors that influence effectiveness. Further theoretical development is needed to understand what drives this difference.

Finally, the third set of results shows a combined measure of participation and effectiveness based on survey response categories. Differences between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations are significant in two categories: mobilizing the public and collaborating with

people you disagree with. The QCA in the next section elaborates on the types of organizations that participate in these two categories of advocacy.

QCA Overview

To illustrate the complexity of factors that may lead to particular types of advocacy, this section includes a qualitative comparative analysis of the organizations that engage in particular forms of advocacy. While full analysis of all seven tactics is beyond the scope of this paper, this research zooms in on the two types of advocacy that 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations engage in differently as shown in the prior section: mobilizing the public and collaborating with opponents. Specifically, this section asks, which organizational characteristics, including 501(c) status, combine to produce certain types of advocacy? Four organizational characteristics are examined: IRS status, organizational age, size, and geographic scope.

QCA is a middle ground between quantitative and qualitative analysis (Ragin, 2008, p. 1). It is “a discovery-oriented research tool” (Carboni, 2016, p. 1791) that may be used “to explain the relation between one case property defined as an outcome and other properties defined as conditions” (Wagemann & Schneider, 2010, p. 380). While QCA can be used to analyze datasets of varying sizes, it is particularly useful with medium-N datasets, such as the dataset in this study (N=30) (Schlager & Heikkila, 2009; Wagemann & Schneider, 2010). QCA differs from other analyses in that most research, particularly quantitative research including regression analyses, relies on correlational relationships and seeks to isolate the independent effects of variables. By contrast, QCA relies on set theoretic logic and Boolean algebra to determine which combinations of conditions lead to a given outcome (Fiss, 2011; Li, 2018; Ragin, 2008). Set theoretic logic is often inherent in qualitative research, which may describe the types of phenomena that co-occur or how subsets of a given concept are similar to or different from one another (Ragin, 2008). QCA allows researchers to evaluate systematically the conditions that combine to produce a given outcome.

Also, in contrast to other types of research, causation in QCA is equifinal, conjunctural, and asymmetric (Wagemann & Schneider, 2010). That is, multiple paths may lead to the same outcome (equifinality). Rather than focus on the effect of each individual condition, conditions work in conjunction with one another to produce a given outcome (conjunctural causation). Finally, asymmetric causation means that when a condition leads to a given outcome, the reverse is not necessarily true: X leading to Y does not imply that the absence of X leads to the absence of Y. QCA focuses on the combinations of conditions that are necessary or sufficient to produce a given outcome (Wagemann & Schneider, 2010).

All QCA conditions are assigned values from 0 to 1, and QCA can include both crisp and fuzzy sets (Carboni, 2016; Ragin, 2008). Crisp sets are akin to dichotomous variables, where a value of 1 indicates the presence of a condition and a value of 0 indicates its absence. Fuzzy sets are more akin to continuous variables that are calibrated to values ranging from 0 to 1. For fuzzy sets, 1 indicates full membership in a given category, 0 indicates full non-membership, and values between 0 and 1 reflect the reality that cases may have varying degrees of membership in a given category (Li, 2018; Ragin, 2008). For example, for a fuzzy set reflecting nonprofit size, a 1 may indicate a large nonprofit, a 0 may indicate a small nonprofit, and values in between represent nonprofits are neither clearly large nor clearly small. A crossover point of 0.5 is assigned to cases that are neither in nor out of the set (Li, 2018; Ragin, 2008).

Outcomes

As noted above, this analysis explores the configurations of conditions that lead to two outcomes: 1) engaging in the advocacy tactic mobilizing the public and 2) engaging in the advocacy tactic collaborating with people you disagree with. These two tactics were selected

based on the prior analysis and provide variation through which we can evaluate the causal recipes leading to each. In addition to differences in rates of participation and effectiveness, the two types of advocacy are qualitatively different. That is, mobilizing the public may include activities like door-to-door canvassing, rallying or protesting, and other efforts designed to encourage awareness and action among the public. As noted above, 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from certain types of activities that fall under this category when those activities are oriented around a particular view of pending legislation. Collaborating with people you disagree with, on the other hand, requires working across sectors and viewpoints and at times may require more formal engagement in policymaking. For example, policy proposals may be created through task forces, rules often result from negotiations between groups with competing viewpoints, and implementation requires coordination across sectors. As such, this tactic may require working within government and utilizing negotiation skills.

The two outcomes are analyzed as crisp sets based on whether survey respondents indicated that their organization engages in the advocacy tactic. Non-membership (0) in each tactic is assigned to organizations not engaged. Membership (1) in each tactic is assigned to organizations that report being engaged. Following a discussion of the causal conditions, a summary of all conditions and outcomes is shown below in Table 4.

Causal Conditions

Four causal conditions are included in this study. The first condition reflects whether anchor organizations are registered under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. IRS designation is determined based on organizations' most recent 990 forms. Organizations are assigned a 1 if they are registered under section 501(c)(3) and a 0 otherwise. All non-501(c)(3) organizations in this dataset are 501(c)(4) organizations.

Three additional conditions are included. 'Older organizations' is a fuzzy set based on the year organizations formed according to their Form 990s. Existing research finds conflicting results as to the relationship between organizational age and advocacy (see Nicholson-Crotty, 2009). On one hand, older organizations may succumb to conservative expectations within their institutional environments and become less willing to take risks and engage in advocacy activities (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014). On the other hand, older organizations may be more established as advocates, may assume leadership roles in advocacy, and may be less beholden to external pressures (see Berry & Arons, 2003). Through QCA, we may be better able to understand how organizational age combines with other variables to produce different types of advocacy.

Full membership as an older organization is assigned to organizations formed prior to 1980. The 1970s was the birth of the environmental movement as we know it today, sparked by events such as the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 and the first Earth Day in 1970 (Kline, 2011). Thus, organizations formed before or during the 1970s were influenced by the growth and maturation of the environmental movement during this decade. The 0.5 cut-off point is assigned to organizations formed during the 1990s, which was another significant decade in the environmental movement. Under President Clinton, the US saw a resurgence in environmentalism during this decade, along with the emergence of the environmental justice movement (Kline, 2011). Finally, full non-membership is assigned to organizations formed in 2010 or later. These are newer organizations whose place in the environmental movement may still be forming. Organizations formed in the 1980s were assigned a 0.75, and organizations formed in the 2000s were assigned 0.25.

'Large organizations' is a fuzzy set determined by organizations' expenses as reported in their most recent Form 990. Organizational size is often considered an important variable in studies of advocacy because of the ability of larger organizations to devote more resources to advocacy (Lu, 2018). Consistent with other studies, size is measured by organizational finances. Full

Table 4. Summary of Conditions and Outcomes for QCA

Property	Description	Crisp/ Fuzzy	Full Membership (1)	Cross-over Point (.5)	Full Non- membership (0)
Condition	501(c)(3) organization	Crisp	501(c)(3)	-	501(c)(4)
Condition	Older Organization	Fuzzy	Formed before 1980	Formed between 1990 & 1999	Formed 2010 or later
Condition	Large Organization	Fuzzy	Expenses > \$1 0,000,000	Expenses = \$5 million	Expenses < \$100,000
Condition	National Scope	Fuzzy	National Focus	Multi-State Focus	State or Local Focus
Outcome	Mobilizing the Public	Crisp	Engaged	-	Not engaged
Outcome	Collaborating with Opponents	Crisp	Engaged	-	Not engaged

membership is assigned to organizations with budgets of at least \$10 million. Full non-membership is assigned to organizations with budgets under \$100,000, and the cut-off point is assigned to organizations with budgets of \$5 million. These markers are consistent with cut points used in the literature and by leading data sources and research groups, such as GuideStar and the Urban Institute (Frailey, 2017; McKeever, 2018). Additional values were calibrated using the fsQCA 3.0 software.

Finally, national scope is also a fuzzy set based on whether organizations have a nationwide scope (full membership), a state or sub-state focus (full non-membership), or a multi-state or regional focus (neither in nor out of the set). All nonprofits in the dataset are US based and focused. In policy studies, policy subsystems or policy fields are geographically bound (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018; Sandfort, 2010). Due to the unique characteristics of venues at different levels of government—for example, individual citizen participation is easier and more common at the local level—nonprofits operating at each level much employ different tactics. Summary data for each condition and outcome and QCA calibration are shown in Table 4.

QCA Results

This section presents the results of QCA derived from the fsQCA 3.0 software. Results show configurations of the four conditions leading to each of the two outcomes: mobilizing the public and collaborating with opponents. Configurations are combinations of conditions (or their negations) sufficient to lead to each outcome. None of the conditions in this study are necessary to produce either of the outcomes.

Mobilizing the Public

First, this study zooms in on mobilizing the public. The first step in QCA is to perform a truth table analysis (Fiss, 2011). The truth table analyzes all possible combinations of conditions and their consistency in producing the outcome. The number of possible configurations is 2^k , where k equals the number of conditions in a study. Thus, this study has 16 (2^4) possible configurations. Of 16 possible configurations, 9 appear in this dataset. Following Ragin (2008), a 0.8 cut off point is used to determine whether combinations of conditions are consistent predictors of the outcome. Using this threshold, 6 of 9 configurations consistently predict mobilizing the public.

Table 5. Four Configurations Leading to Mobilizing the Public (N=30)

	Solution 1	Solution 2	Solution 3	Solution 4
501(c)(3)		●	●	⊗
Large organization	⊗	⊗	⊗	●
Older organization	●		●	
National scope	⊗	⊗		●
Consistency	0.95	0.94	0.91	1.00
Raw coverage	0.19	0.29	0.27	0.28
Unique coverage	0.03	0.13	0.10	0.28
Overall solution consistency=0.95				
Overall solution coverage=0.71				

Note: Black circles indicate the presence of a condition. Circles with an “x” indicate the absence of a condition. Blank spaces indicate an ambiguous status.

The intermediate solution that results from QCA is shown below in Table 5, using the notation described in Ragin (2008). The intermediate solution falls toward the middle of the continuum between complex and parsimonious solutions, and is the recommended solution (Carboni, 2016; Ragin, 2008). The complex solution does not permit any simplifying assumptions about cases that do not exist in the dataset, and the parsimonious solution relies on computer generated assumptions that may not be consistent with theory or evidence. Thus, the intermediate solution is the preferred solution because it relies on assumptions only for which theoretical support exists (Wagemann & Schneider, 2010).

Four solutions lead to mobilizing the public. First, older organizations with small budgets and state or local scopes tend to engage in this tactic regardless of whether they are a 501(c)(3) or a 501(c)(4). Second, 501(c)(3) organizations with small budgets and state or local scopes mobilize the public, and similarly, older 501(c)(3)s with small budgets also engage in this tactic. With these first three solutions, we see a similar pattern in that these are smaller organizations, either older or ambiguous as to age, state or local or ambiguous as to scope, and 501(c)(3) or ambiguous as to IRS type.

Results in these first three solutions generally comport with literature suggesting that larger, well-resourced organizations tend to rely on inside tactics that require connections within decision-making bodies, while smaller organizations lacking inside connections rely on outside tactics (Almog-Bar, 2018). While recent research suggests that a range of organizations use both inside and outside tactics, this finding may suggest that mobilizing the public remains common among smaller, older 501(c)(3) organizations operating at state or local levels. Furthermore, when read together with the findings from the previous section, these organizations report lower levels of effectiveness than their 501(c)(4) counterparts, which may reflect their limited resources or legal limits on their grassroots advocacy.

The final solution shows a different pattern. Organizations in solution four are 501(c)(4) organizations with large budgets and nationwide scopes. Regardless of their age, organizations with these configurations consistently report mobilizing the public. Again, consistent with recent research on inside and outside tactics, these large, national organizations likely engage in a wide range of advocacy tactics because they have the resources to do so. When read with the results from the prior section, these organizations also likely report engaging in this tactic effectively.

Table 6. Four Configurations Leading to Collaborating With Those You Disagree (N=30)

	Solution 1	Solution 2	Solution 3	Solution 4
501(c)(3)	●		●	⊗
Large organization	⊗	●	●	⊗
Older organization	⊗	⊗		●
National scope		●	●	⊗
Consistency	0.87	0.89	0.93	0.99
Raw coverage	0.30	0.12	0.27	0.04
Unique coverage	0.23	0.03	0.18	0.04
Overall solution consistency=0.92				
Overall solution coverage=0.57				

Note: Black circles indicate the presence of a condition. Circles with an “x” indicate the absence of a condition. Blank spaces indicate an ambiguous status.

Collaborating with People You Disagree With

The second outcome in this study is collaborating with opponents, which the survey specifically asked about in relation to oil and gas policy advocacy. Again, nine combinations of conditions appear in the dataset, and for this outcome, six configurations also meet the 0.8 threshold for consistently predicting the outcome. The intermediate solution is shown in Table 6.

As with mobilizing the public, four solutions lead to collaborating with opponents. The two most common solutions, based on their coverage scores, are solution one and solution three. Solution one includes newer 501(c)(3) organizations with small budgets. Based on the cases in the dataset, these tend to be organizations located in cities or regions with considerable oil and gas activity. Because of local politics and economic dependence on oil and gas activity, these organizations are often compelled to collaborate and take a more ‘middle of the road’ position. Solution three, on the other hand, includes 501(c)(3) organizations with large budgets and nationwide scopes, regardless of their age. The cases covered by this solution include many large national environmental nonprofits, or “big greens,” that tend to take more centrist approaches and appeal to a wide base of supporters.

Solution two includes younger, large nonprofits with nationwide scopes, regardless of IRS status. Though this configuration is less common, it is similar to the prior solution in that it includes large, national nonprofits that tend to take a centrist approach. Finally, solution four includes 501(c)(4) organizations that are older, small, and have a state or local scope. This configuration is rare, but the results suggest that small, older 501(c)(4) organizations may take a more collaborative stance in state and local politics. Based on the cases in the dataset, this may include state or local organizations similar to those found in solution one, but which are more professionalized or have more resources or connections to decision-makers.

Discussion

The results above present a preliminary effort to understand the relevance of 501(c) status in the oil and gas policy realm where nonprofit organizations are active advocates. In studies of social service providers, 501(c)(3) organizations are typically considered service providers and 501(c)(4)s are advocacy organizations. This study examines this relationship among a group of nonprofits known to advocate. The first set of results confirms that all of the organizations in this study’s sample actively advocate. Nonprofits active in oil and gas policy debates advocate at least as much as respondents from other sectors and report advocating at similar

levels of effectiveness across most categories of advocacy. The only categories where nonprofits participate at slightly lower rates and levels of effectiveness are those that require working across sectors and viewpoints. The high rates of participation and reported effectiveness confirm the active role that nonprofits play in environmental policymaking and the need to include these organizations in studies of policymaking and policy processes.

The first research question is whether there are differences between environmental 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations engaged in oil and gas policy debates in their advocacy activities. Based on legal constraints and theoretical expectations, this study generally expected to find that 501(c)(4) organizations report more participation and effectiveness compared with 501(c)(3) organizations across types of advocacy. The results, however, provide only limited support for this expectation. Across most categories of advocacy, 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) environmental nonprofits report similar rates and levels of effectiveness, including countering arguments by opponents, coordinating political activities with allies, providing information to the news media, and brokering agreements between parties. Results in a couple categories provide some evidence that 501(c)(4) organizations may be more likely to advocate, particularly when it comes to advocacy for which 501(c)(3) organizations face some restrictions.

On the other hand, 501(c)(4) organizations engage at lower rates in advocacy that involves collaborating with opponents. This is especially surprising given that environmental policymaking often involves multi-sector engagement and requires participation in collaborative arrangements (Durant et al., 2017). Thus, with respect to some forms of advocacy, such as advocacy that involves working across sectors and viewpoints, 501(c)(3) organizations may actually be better suited to advocate. Possible reasons for this finding may be gleaned from the literature or from practice. For example, perhaps 501(c)(4) organizations tend to focus more on other types of advocacy at the expense of collaboration. It is also possible that opponents demonize these organizations, making 501(c)(4)s the targets of the ‘devil shift’ and less desirable collaborators (Fischer et al., 2016). To fully confirm and understand this result, future studies should explore possible explanations, perhaps through interviews with 501(c)(4) organizations or other organizations operating in the same policy subsystems.

Furthermore, by comparing rates of advocacy and self-reported effectiveness, this study highlights the need for further research on advocacy effectiveness. In most categories of advocacy, rates of participation and effectiveness follow similar patterns and are consistent with theoretical expectations. However, while all organizations report countering arguments, 501(c)(4) organizations report more effectiveness, and while 501(c)(4) organizations are more likely to provide information to government officials, 501(c)(3) organizations report doing so more effectively. It is possible that as organizations participate more in certain tactics, they become more discouraged about the impact of their participation, or when 501(c)(3) organizations decide to engage in certain types of advocacy, they ensure that they have sufficient resources and capacity to do so effectively, but further research is needed to understand these differences.

Finally, the second research question asks which organizational characteristics, including 501(c) status, combine and associate with specific advocacy tactics. Through QCA, we see that IRS status on its own is neither necessary nor sufficient to produce advocacy outcomes. Rather, the QCA underscores the complexity of organizational conditions that produce outcomes and the diversity of organizations that engage in different types of advocacy. For example, small, local 501(c)(3) organizations and large, nationwide 501(c)(4) organizations engage in mobilizing the public. While we often associate grassroots efforts with smaller, local organizations, this finding lends support to the notion that well-resourced organizations draw on a wide range of tactics. Likewise, results suggest that organizations may collaborate with opponents both because they are embedded in local communities with diverse viewpoints and because their size requires that they appeal to a broad base of supporters. Thus, the QCA helps

uncover patterns of advocacy and suggests that a deeper understanding of advocacy may require examinations of organizational configurations and contexts, rather than individual variables.

This study highlights a couple points to be considered in future studies. First, 501(c) status may have different implications depending on the issue area. The majority of what we know about nonprofit advocacy is based on studies of social service providers that balance service delivery and advocacy. Nonprofits that primarily advocate, though, such as environmental nonprofits, register under section 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and other subparts. Through future studies exploring the implications of IRS status and the behaviors and choices of advocacy nonprofits, we may deepen our understanding of nonprofit advocacy.

Second, the results of this study underscore the importance of breaking advocacy into specific activities. For practical reasons, studies to date typically look at whether nonprofits advocate (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007; Pekkanen & Smith, 2014b). As this study shows, though, advocacy can mean a lot of different things. One organization may advocate by mobilizing the public, and another may advocate by participating in task forces or negotiating with opposing interests. If we only look at whether nonprofits advocate, these organizations look the same. By breaking advocacy into more specific activities, future studies may provide more information regarding differences between organizations, their strategic decisions, and how different activities influence policy.

Of course, there are limitations associated with this study's results and opportunities for future research. First, this study uses relatively broad categories of advocacy that were drawn from prior studies on advocacy coalition strategies. Future studies should improve on these measures by elaborating on the various types of activities that organizations engage in, perhaps across different venues. This study also relies on self-reports, which have inherent biases and validity issues. Effectiveness is difficult to measure, which is why studies often depend on self-reports, but future research should certainly aim to improve these measures. Furthermore, this study focuses on a limited sample of organizations involved in a particular policy context. To improve generalizability, future studies should test this study's findings among organizations operating in different policy contexts, including other environmental contexts, like renewable energy or water conservation, and other policy contexts that draw considerable participation from nonprofit organizations, such as civil rights issues.

Future research might also consider a deeper dive into some of these issues, such as through case studies that would allow researchers to compare the advocacy activities of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations within a particular policy subsystem. Case studies might draw on interviews, rather than survey data, and triangulate informants' reports via the news media, legislative records, and similar public documents. Such studies would be able to develop a more complete picture of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) advocacy and wed advocacy behaviors with context.

A few practical points may be gleaned. For 501(c)(3) organizations, the literature suggests that these organizations are sometimes unclear about limits on their advocacy (Berry & Arons, 2003; Mosley, 2014). These organizations should continue to educate themselves and realize that there are many opportunities to influence policy beyond lobbying, and that they may actually be better suited for certain types of advocacy than their 501(c)(4) counterparts. For 501(c)(4) organizations, because environmental policymaking often requires collaborating across sectors and viewpoints, these organizations should examine their existing limitations, consider whether they may benefit from more collaborative approaches, and possibly partner with standalone 501(c)(3) organizations on advocacy.

This paper has presented an analysis of the advocacy activities of environmental nonprofits active in hydraulic fracturing policy debates, with a particular eye toward the implications of IRS status. As environmental issues persist and problems beg better policy solutions, the advocacy work of environmental nonprofits becomes increasingly consequential. Thus, studies of environmental nonprofits should continue to help inform these organizations about opportunities and constraints associated with advocacy, effective practices, and the potential for strategic partnerships and collaborations.

Notes

1. All nine 501(c)(4) organizations in this study have paired 501(c)(3) organizations. As described in the Research Context section below, these 501(c)(4)s were identified as anchor organizations. For the sake of brevity, throughout this article these nine organizations are referred to as 501(c)(4) organizations. None of the 21 501(c)(3) organizations in this study have paired 501(c)(4) organizations.
2. Section 501(c)(3) organizations sometimes opt to take the 'h election.' To avoid any subjectivity around the meaning of 'substantial' as it relates to 501(c)(3) lobbying activities, organizations can elect to file Form 5768 and have their lobbying measured by an objective expenditure test pursuant to section 501(h) of the IRS Code.
3. While fracking is happening across the US, Colorado is ranked eighth in the US for shale gas production, seventh for crude oil production, and has seen a disproportionate share of policy activity related to the oil and gas development. Fracking policy debates are particularly contentious in Colorado because development occurs close to population centers, and the state is more politically divided than other oil and gas producing states like Texas and Oklahoma.
4. In 2015, a total of 177 people across sectors responded to the survey (47% response rate). In 2016, 102 people responded (28% response rate), and in 2017, 160 people responded (34% response rate).
5. The survey referred to personal goals as well as professional goals because some respondents in the broader sample were not organizationally affiliated. All respondents included in this study were full-time employees of an environmental nonprofit and were contacted as representatives of their organizations.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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The Varieties of Nonprofit Organizations and Local Hazard Mitigation Efforts

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This study examines how different types of NPOs influence local governments' hazard mitigation efforts. Based on Marquis et al. (2013), we categorized NPOs into three types and analyzed a county-level dataset (N=1,626) with fixed-effect Poisson regression. Findings indicate that counties with a greater number of NPOs working for enhancing the overall community's social welfare are more likely to develop hazard mitigation projects. In contrast, the prevalence of elite-oriented NPOs that focus on selective community constituents is negatively associated with local governments' hazard mitigation project development. This study provides important implications for the critical roles of NPOs in facilitating hazard mitigation efforts in relationships with local governments.

Keywords: Nonprofit Organizations and Hazard Mitigation, Local Hazard Mitigation, Types of Nonprofit Organizations, Disaster Management

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play key roles in disaster context (Eller et al., 2015; Gajewski et al., 2011; Syal et al., 2021). NPOs have consistently provided disaster response services and recovery assistance including clean up, debris removal, data collection, mass feeding, mental health counseling, rebuilding and repair, and recovery planning (Gajewski et al., 2011; Gibbons, 2007; Hwang & Joo, 2021; Luna, 2001; Meriläinen, 2020; Tierney et al., 2001). There also has been increasing involvement and roles of NPOs in the mitigation and preparedness cycles such as developing hazard mitigation measures, creating advocacy groups for mitigation, or initiating mitigation projects (Benson et al., 2001; Chikoto et al., 2013; Meyer-Emerick & Momen, 2003).

Despite the well-known roles of NPOs in the general disaster context, their specific influence on local hazard mitigation activities still needs empirical scrutiny. Hazard mitigation efforts require constant contributions of diverse NPOs that often represent and connect diverse segments of the community (Heilbrun & Gray, 2001; Robinson & Gerber, 2007). However, most previous disaster studies often focus on large-scale, disaster-relief NPOs such as the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Otherwise, the nonprofit sector has been often treated as a single homogeneous set in the disaster management context (Brudney & Gazley, 2009; Gibbons, 2007). Despite steady impacts and dominance by such disaster-mobilized NPOs, they do not represent all NPOs working in the context. Furthermore, not all NPOs may equally and actively influence local hazard mitigation efforts as they work in a narrow band of the whole realm of

disaster services based on their organizational missions and interests (Robinson et al., 2013). Rather than considering NPOs as a single homogeneous set or just limiting the research focus to dominant NPOs, there is an increasing need to examine the more nuanced influences of NPOs according to their varying types in a hazard mitigation context.

This study examines the question of how different types of NPOs influence local governments' hazard mitigation efforts. Drawing on Marquis et al.'s (2013) mid-range typology of NPOs, we categorized NPOs into three different types: (1) NPOs addressing the overall social welfare of community constituents, (2) NPOs providing benefits to selective community constituents, and (3) NPOs with greater social impact but having not clearly defined beneficiaries of their services and activities within the geographic community where they are located. Using this typology of NPOs, we analyze hazard mitigation projects proposed by 1,626 U.S. counties applying to receive the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) between 2010 and 2016. We examine the extent to which different types of NPOs are related to local hazard mitigation efforts while controlling for many other county characteristics.

Our results show that counties are likely to make more hazard mitigation efforts when they have more NPOs whose services/activities aim to improve the overall social welfare of community constituents. In contrast, county governments are likely to introduce fewer hazard mitigation efforts when they have more elite-oriented NPOs that serve selective community constituents only or that have social impact but no direct beneficiary within the geographic community. Our findings on the heterogeneous influences of diverse types of NPOs on local governments' hazard mitigation efforts provide important implications for building a whole community approach to local hazard mitigation.

Literature Review

Local Hazard Mitigation Efforts and a Whole Community Approach

Local hazard mitigation efforts include a broad array of activities aiming to reduce long-term hazard risks to property and human health (Godschalk et al., 1998). Hazard mitigation starts with identifying the community's underlying risks and vulnerabilities to known disasters or hazards (Godschalk et al., 1998; Rose et al., 2007), which requires proper understanding of the complex ecology of a community. Local governments are well positioned to identify specific hazard mitigation issues or demands and develop and implement mitigation plans for their communities (Ji & Lee, 2021). In line with hazard mitigation efforts, local governments may participate in multiple external grants or funding programs that support the development and implementation of their mitigation plans (Rose et al., 2007), such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant program, and the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program (formerly Pre-Disaster Mitigation program). Such grant and funding programs usually cover a great portion of the total cost for proposed mitigation activities. Hence, the efforts to obtain external mitigation grants and funding significantly reduce the burdens on local stakeholders while creating opportunities for them to improve long-term disaster resilience for their local communities (Cutter et al., 2008; Godschalk et al., 1998; Ji & Lee, 2021).

However, not many eligible local governments take advantage of the external mitigation grant programs. One of the many possible reasons for not applying for such programs is limited capacity and capability of local government. Most grant programs require well-written proposals that are developed based on careful assessment and understanding of hazard vulnerabilities of local communities. Yet, local governments may not have enough resources allocated to prepare for the application packages. It is particularly challenging for a local emergency management department/division with a few employees to develop such a strong

proposal. Furthermore, effective hazard mitigation measures require the identification of detailed community needs and the constant efforts of a whole community with diverse populations. However, unlike the response or recovery phases that have a well-defined timeline and affected people, hazard mitigation does not have a defined timeframe nor constituents. Rather, mitigation is an adaptive process. As community ecology changes over time, so too does associated community vulnerability. This also limits local government's capacity to develop effective hazard mitigation measures.

Therefore, hazard mitigation efforts cannot be "a government monopoly" but rather, a whole community approach (Kapucu, 2015, p. 3). A whole community approach refers to the collective efforts of all possible actors including, but not limited, to "residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials" for building a shared understanding of and full capacity for hazard mitigation by relying on their resources and capacities (FEMA, 2011, p. 3). A whole community approach supplements the limited capacity of local governments and, further, sets the more effective pathways for local governments to build community resilience (FEMA, 2011). Engaging and empowering "all parts of the community" is one of the key principles for effective local hazard mitigation because doing so could help untangle community complexity, foster relationships among community members, strengthen needed resources and social capital, and thereby empower local hazard mitigation actions (FEMA, 2011, p. 4).

Varieties of Nonprofit Organizations and Hazard Mitigation

The whole community approach explicitly highlights NPOs as integral partners for governments in disaster management activities (FEMA, 2011; Kapucu, 2015). By representing different issues, agendas, interests, and populations of a community, varieties of NPOs have engaged in different parts of the whole cycle of disaster management (Eller et al., 2015; Heilbrun & Gray, 2001). NPOs have been active in providing emergency relief and response services in multiple arenas such as mass care (e.g., sheltering, first aid, distribution of goods/supplies), emergency assistance (e.g., evacuation, support for locating family members), housing (e.g., assistance for rent, home repair, loans, and so forth) (Meriläinen, 2020), and human services (e.g., food stamps, medical, counseling, unemployment insurance, legal services) (Eller et al., 2015; Miyazawa & Kikuchi, 2021). These NPOs assist government emergency management personnel, but they also go beyond the supplementary role by deploying critical resources and services directly to disaster-affected populations (Eller et al., 2015).

To leverage the varying capacities and respond to varying needs, NPOs at both the local and national level have formed Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) which set "a platform for nonprofit organizations to coordinate their activities and share information and resources in helping (potential and actual) disaster-affected people throughout the preparedness, response, and recovery phases of emergency management" (Kapucu et al., 2017, p. 70). Via this structured platform, the varying strengths of each NPO have more effectively communicated with first responders, governments, and the public to identify needs/issues and provide necessary services that sustain life for disaster-affected populations (Kapucu et al., 2017) while avoiding duplication and conflicts in resource/service deployment among NPOs.

Therefore, incorporating a variety of NPOs into the formal mitigation processes would contribute to developing local hazard mitigation plans and advancing a local community's disaster resilience. Some local NPOs may already work towards protecting their clients and properties from potential hazards before local government interventions, thereby reducing demands for hazard mitigation in their communities. Other NPOs may focus on competing issues that serve the broader society rather than focusing on hazard mitigation issues in local communities. Yet, even though many NPOs' core missions and activities are not directly relevant to disaster management, they can contribute to identifying community needs and

demands for hazard mitigation in different areas through their communication and interaction with diverse local clients. Developing mitigation projects to seek out external grants provides a unique context to examine how different NPOs exert varying influence on local governments' hazard mitigation efforts.

Types of Nonprofit Organizations and Local Governments' Hazard Mitigation Efforts

For systematic incorporation of diverse NPOs into disaster mitigation, we relied on a mid-range typology of NPOs developed by Marquis et al. (2013). The typology is primarily based on nonprofit literature within organizational studies (Corbin, 1999; DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; Odendahl, 1990) that identifies three types of NPOs which reflect differences in the scope of defined beneficiaries of NPOs' services and activities (Marquis et al., 2013).

The first type is NPOs focusing on improving the overall social welfare of their local community by providing necessity goods and services to community members in need. These community welfare NPOs serve a wider range of people within the geographic community by addressing their focal community's social and policy problems and focusing on promoting human rights and altruistic motives (Corbin, 1999). Representative NPOs in this type include advocacy, crime, food security, homelessness, housing, and health care organizations (Marquis et al., 2013). The second type includes the NPOs serving elite interests by providing luxury goods to a comparatively limited group of people within the geographic community who could afford the goods and services from such NPOs (Heilburn & Gray, 2001). NPOs of this type focus on promoting the cohesion of privileged groups of community residents and preserving the elite groups' values, interests, and traditions (Marquis et al., 2013). This type includes NPOs related to arts, culture, and private education. The third type includes diverse NPOs that do not have defined beneficiaries of their services and activities within a specific geographic location of a community. While these NPOs may have social and technological impact on community members in the long term, their current services or activities do not have a local focus. Included among these are NPOs concerned with basic research, business trades, or environmental issues (Marquis et al., 2013).

With respect to the distinctive characteristics of different types of NPOs, we argue that a local government's hazard mitigation efforts, particularly developing mitigation projects to apply for external funding, may be highly contingent upon the prevalence of different types of NPOs within the geographic community. First, the social welfare NPOs' day-to-day functions include responding to multiple demands from a wider range of constituents in the community. Their organizational mission to serve the social welfare of a whole community may facilitate their working together in the same direction as local governments working on hazard mitigation. They may also serve as capable and resourceful partners for local governments in identifying disaster risks and vulnerabilities in their communities and implementing hazard mitigation projects.

These organizations often lack resources and tend to depend on a supportive social and cultural infrastructure that spreads information about local needs and mobilizes support/resources (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Marquis et al., 2007; Salamon, 1987). Due to their high resource dependency on supportive social and cultural infrastructure (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Marquis et al., 2007; Salamon, 1987), social welfare NPOs are likely to seek more external resources and are willing to collaborate with the local government to work more on hazard mitigation in communities. With the growing movement of local governments to contract out social and welfare services to NPOs, the growth of this type of NPO has been closely linked to government funds (Marquis et al., 2007; Salamon, 1987).

Moreover, given the nature of social welfare services, their direct beneficiaries are often vulnerable to disaster risks while social welfare NPOs may be less capable of setting aside extra resources for their hazard mitigation activities to protect their clients and properties. In such

situations, this type of NPO may seek external resources or efforts to protect their clients and beneficiaries from potential hazards. Hence, they are likely to motivate local governments to engage in hazard mitigation efforts. Therefore, we present the hypothesis as following:

H1: Greater number of social welfare NPOs in the communities will lead to an increase in local governments' hazard mitigation efforts.

Second, the elite-oriented NPOs may be self-sufficient enough to have their own hazard mitigation programs and activities. Theories explain the disproportionate level of wealth of elite-oriented nonprofits, mostly through corporate support (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; Odendahl, 1990). In addition, serving selective beneficiaries exclusively within a community, this type of NPO may incorporate disaster mitigation components into their services or daily activities to promote the needs of their class (Odendahl, 1990). For example, this type of NPO may have a higher level of property maintenance protocols and practices to ensure the safety of their clients during disasters without a supportive social or cultural infrastructure to fund and implement their hazard mitigation plans (Galaskiewicz, 1985, Marquis et al., 2007). Moreover, since direct beneficiaries of the elite-oriented NPOs often have higher socio-economic status than those served by social welfare NPOs, local governments' hazard mitigation efforts that reduce community-wide vulnerabilities may not accrue direct benefits to them. Rather, elite-oriented NPOs may focus on other competing issues in the aftermath of disasters, such as quick recovery for normal business operations and building a more livable and pleasant community. Therefore, organizations of this type are less likely to motivate local governments to engage in hazard mitigation efforts.

H2: Greater number of elite-oriented NPOs in the communities will lead to a decrease in local governments' hazard mitigation efforts.

Third, we expect that the third type of NPO may differ from the first two types of NPOs because they do not have defined beneficiaries within geographic locations of local communities. On one hand, since their organizational missions and service beneficiaries of this type of NPOs are not bound to local jurisdictions, community-level hazard mitigation efforts may not be in their direct interest. Due to their focus on extensive socio, economic, medical and/or technological issues, this type of NPO may also work more closely with upper-level governments or nationwide/global networks than they work with local governments. Based on their own information and resources, these NPOs may already be equipped with their own hazard mitigation measures and hence do not have many incentives to join or motivate local government mitigation efforts. On the other hand, it is possible that this type of NPO may be supportive of local governments' hazard mitigation efforts by providing supporting data or advocating local governments' action for community resilience. Their impacts on local hazard mitigation efforts may be materialized in the long-term via evidence-based mitigation policy assistance, technological advancements for mitigation measures, and creation of comprehensive data about community conditions. Therefore, the prevalence of organizations of this type may have varying impacts on the local governments' mitigation efforts.

H3: Greater number of NPOs with no defined local beneficiaries in the communities is associated with local governments' hazard mitigation efforts.

Data and Methods

Data

To assess local governments' hazard mitigation efforts, we focus on the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) as a specific case. The HMGP is designed to assist local governments' hazard mitigation efforts (Government Accountability Office, 2015), and most local hazard

mitigation projects are funded by HMGP (Ji & Lee, 2021). In particular, county governments, the primary applicants for the HMGP, are responsible for preparing the project proposals and implementing the project (FEMA, 2020; Rose et al., 2007). They design a series of mitigation projects to improve community resilience, such as retrofitting buildings, purchasing properties in flood-prone areas, rebuilding culverts in drainage ditches, avoiding new development in vulnerable areas, and educating the public about disaster preparedness systems (Godschalk et al., 1998; Rose et al., 2007). Local governments become eligible to participate in the HMGP contingent upon the occurrence of severe and major disasters warranting Presidentially Declared Disasters (PDD) (FEMA, 2020). PDDs warrant the presidential declaration because the severity of the disaster incident(s) merits a governor's request for federal assistance as effective response is beyond the capacity of the state and its local governments (Rose et al., 2007). Since the HMGP funds become available to disaster-affected counties or the counties in the disaster-affected state receiving the PDD (Ji & Lee, 2021), a county's application for HMGP often coincides with its recovery efforts in the aftermath of major disasters.

Even though FEMA has funded selected governments (Kousky & Shabman, 2017) with a relatively high approval rate,¹ local governments' participation in the HMGP varies despite experiencing the same disaster events, with many eligible local governments not participating at all. Therefore, the HMGP provides a useful context within which to examine varying policy efforts for hazard mitigation among local governments despite their same grant eligibility and experience of disasters.

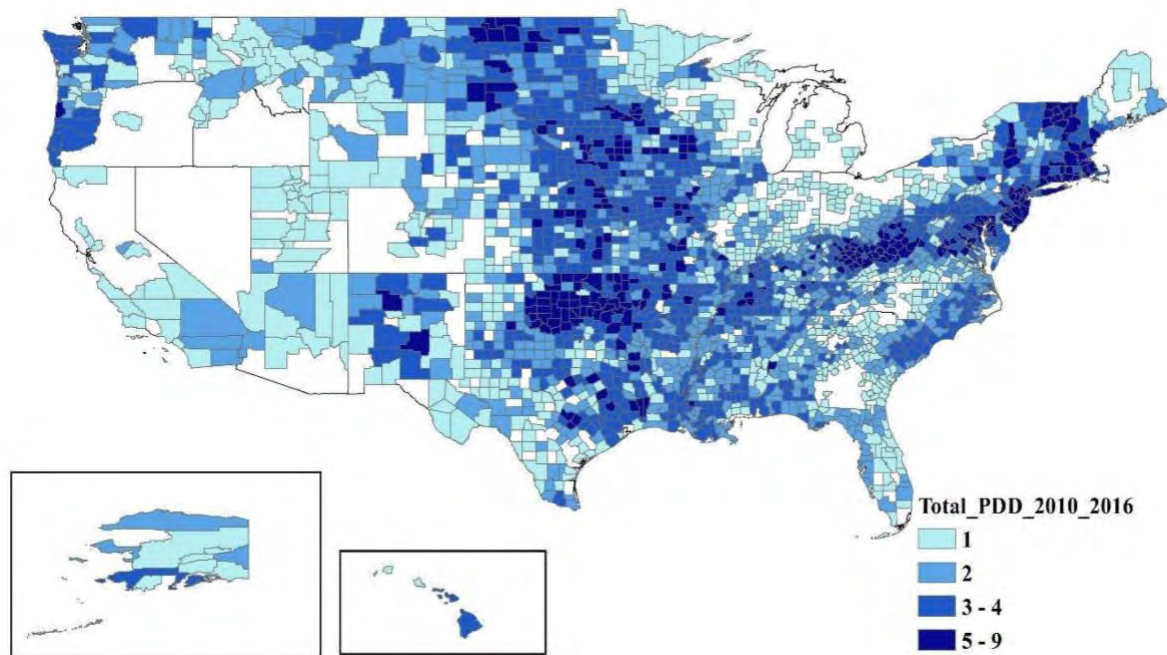
To test our hypotheses, we constructed a county-level dataset for the 2010–2016 period by drawing upon multiple data sources. Relying on the Disaster Declarations Summaries (DDS) of the OpenFEMA dataset, we selected counties that were declared to be eligible for the HMGP due to their experiences with severe natural hazards. We included the selected counties only because we are interested in why county governments show uneven participation in the HMGP despite their common experiences of major disasters. For the selected counties, we collected information on whether the counties applied for the HMGP drawing on the OpenFEMA dataset.² We then coupled the county-level HMGP application data with data from four sources: National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) core files, the Spatial Hazard Events and Losses Database for the United States (SHELDUS), David Leip's Atlas of the U.S. House of Representatives election data, and the U.S. Census data. After the data merge, 3,014 county-year observations and 1,626 unique counties remained in our sample. The data period was confined to 2010–2016 because of the NPO data unavailability issues in the NCCS core files. The specific data sources for the variables are discussed in the following sections.

Measures

Dependent Variable. To measure a county's participation in the HMGP, we used two different measures. First, we counted the total number of hazard mitigation projects of each eligible county, contingent upon Presidentially Declared Disasters (PDDs), which applied for the HMGP funding each year. Second, we used the submission per disaster ratio calculated by the number of hazard mitigation projects divided by the number of declared PDDs in a given county in each year. The submission per disaster ratio standardizes the aggregated hazard mitigation efforts by the number of disaster incidences in a given year as more disaster declarations can lead to more applications.

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the total number of presidentially declared disasters during our study period between 2010 and 2016. Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of the number of hazard mitigation (HM) projects proposed by counties during our study period. Counties that experienced more disasters do not necessarily propose a greater number of HM projects to receive the federal grant. On average, participating counties

Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of the Total Number of Presidentially Declared Disasters Between 2010 and 2016



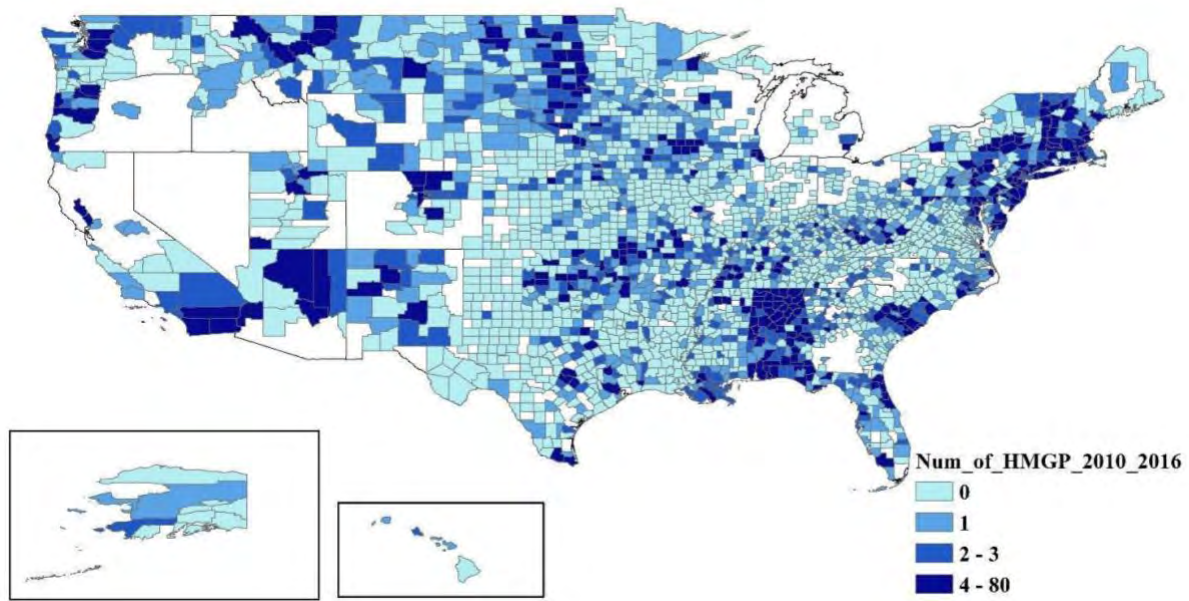
proposed about 4.84 projects, with a minimum of two and a maximum of 47 project proposals. Across study periods, participating counties submitted the lowest number of proposals (2.41) on average in 2016 whereas 2011 showed the greatest number of proposal submissions (6.74) on average.

Independent Variables

Types of NPOs. The county unit NPO data was drawn from county identifiers (Lowry & Potoski, 2004) provided through the NCCS data which is based on information listed on the Form 990.³ To examine impacts of different types of NPOs on local hazard mitigation, we counted the number of NPOs in each distinctive service area from the Form 990 data. The number of NPOs has previously been used as a proxy for the nonprofit sector's overall social influence in a given jurisdiction (Anheier, 2003). Following the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) codes (De los Mozos et al., 2016) that assign a unique code to each NPO according to their different activities and services, we identified a total 26 categories of NPOs⁴: animals, food, general health, mental health, housing, human services, public safety, religion, civil rights/advocacy, employment, public/societal benefit, philanthropy, arts, community improvement, crime/legal-related, education, sports/leisure, membership benefit, youth development, environment, medical research, social science research, science & technology, international affairs, voluntary health associations, and others.

While all 26 categories of NPOs are included in our analysis, we grouped those NPOs into the three types classified by Marquis et al. (2013) for a more systematic discussion of results. For example, religion and employment were not discussed in their typology, but we included them as NPOs for the social welfare of the whole community because they address community social problems and altruistic motives. The specific types of NPOs falling into the three types of the typology are presented in Table 1.

Figure 2. Geographical Distribution of the Total Number of HMGP Applications Between 2010 and 2016



Control Variables

We controlled a set of political, governmental, and community characteristics. First, we controlled the political characteristics of each county. When determining whether to participate in the HMGP, county governments may consider the political characteristics of their community constituents (Hall, 2010) because hazard mitigation activities are based on political support (Prater & Lindell, 2000). To control overall political interests, we included *voter turnouts* in each county for the presidential elections in 2008 and 2012,⁵ as proxies for general interest in politics in the county. Moreover, how a county population voted for a presidential election could reflect some unobserved region-specific political characteristics of the region (Levernier & Barilla, 2006). In addition, we controlled for the extent to which a county's voters were aligned with the political characteristics of the U.S. House of Representatives (Hall, 2010; Lowry & Potoski, 2004), as it may affect whether the county governments are pushed to participate in the HGMP. A county's representation by a member of the party in control of the House of Representatives is expected to lead to greater federal grant receipts (Hall, 2010). Also, it reflects political ideology, which affects opinions regarding the role of government (Hall, 2010), thus indicating whether the county population would push their local government to leverage more federal funds. In this regard, we considered two variables. One is *control party in house*, the agreement of county voters with the party in control of the House scaled from 0 (0% of the voters were registered to the controlling party of the House) to 100. Another is *representative in control*, a binary variable of whether or not a county was served by a House representative whose political party was the controlling party. Information for both variables were drawn from David Leip's Atlas of the U.S. House of Representatives' election data.

Second, we considered the financial capacity of the local government. We included the total amount of own-source revenue (defined as general revenue excluding intergovernmental revenue) in each county government, *total revenue per capita*, by drawing on the U.S. Census data.⁶

Third, we also controlled for a set of various community characteristics such as population *density*, *race* and *median income*, average *age*, and the percentage of county residents whose

Table 1. NPOs by Scope of Direct Beneficiary in a Community

Types of NPO	Social Welfare NPOs	Elite-Oriented NPOs	Other NPOs
Defined beneficiaries within a geographic community	Yes	Yes	No
Scope of Beneficiaries	Any/all people in need of the service/goods	Limited group of people who can afford the service	No set scope
Type of services /goods	Necessary goods/Services	Non-necessary (luxury)good/services	Goods/services that have long-term, positive effect
NPOs	· Animals · Civil rights/advocacy · Employment · Food · General health · Housing · Human services · Mental health · Public safety · Public/societal benefit · Philanthropy · Religion	· Arts · Community improvement · Crime/legal-related · Education · Membership benefit · Sports/leisure · Youth development	· Disease, disorders · Environment · International affairs · Medical research · Social science research · Science and Technology

Source: Adapted from Marquis et al. (2013)

education was equal to or higher than a *bachelor's degree*. All community characteristics were drawn from the U.S. Census' American Community Survey data.

Finally, we controlled for the vulnerability to natural hazards (Devlin & Rowlands, 2019; Ji & Lee, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017): *the frequency of presidentially declared disasters* each county experienced for the last five years (from $t-6$ to $t-1$) drawing from the DDS of the OpenFEMA dataset and *total property damage* caused by natural hazards (severe storms, atmospheric and hydrological hazards⁷) per 1,000 residents of county population relying on the SHELDDUS.⁸ Furthermore, *disaster duration*, calculated by the total number of days each county is exposed to natural disasters each year, was included by drawing from the DDS of the OpenFEMA dataset.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the NPO and control variables used in the analyses.

During our study period between 2010 and 2016, a total of 2,667 counties were presidentially declared eligible for the HMGP, leading to 5,644 observations. However, in the process of merging them with control variable information (e.g., county government revenue, demographic information, and property damage from natural hazards, and so forth), 1,041 counties (2,630 observations) were dropped due to missing variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
<i>NPOs</i>				
Animals	3.45	(8.28)	0	164
Civil Rights/Advocacy	0.86	(3.19)	0	51
Employment	1.61	(5.27)	0	91
Food, Agriculture & Nutrition	1.61	(3.64)	0	44
General Health	9.69	(24.17)	0	367
Housing & Shelter	6.83	(21.40)	0	502
Human Services	17.59	(48.09)	0	888
Mental Health	3.54	(11.38)	0	271
Public Safety	3.16	(7.33)	0	66
Public & Societal Benefit	1.60	(5.12)	0	75
Philanthropy	6.03	(18.75)	0	307
Religion	9.80	(32.38)	0	696
Arts	15.16	(50.12)	0	1,022
Community Improvement	6.54	(19.55)	0	325
Crime & Legal-Related	2.45	(7.83)	0	134
Education	26.27	(82.79)	0	1,646
Membership Benefit	0.43	(1.56)	0	25
Sports, Leisure, Athletics	13.09	(36.06)	0	505
Youth Development	3.30	(9.94)	0	215
Disease, Disorders	4.08	(14.80)	0	235
Environment	3.15	(8.40)	0	94
International Affairs	3.02	(12.49)	0	195
Medical Research	1.07	(5.44)	0	98
Science & Technology Research Institutes	0.85	(3.49)	0	73
Social Science Research Institutes	0.31	(1.33)	0	21
Other (e.g., Unknown)	0.20	(0.89)	0	16
<i>Covariates</i>				
Voter Turnout	0.59	(0.09)	0	1
Control Party in House	0.56	(0.20)	0	1
Representative in Control	0.71	(0.45)	0	1
Total Revenue Per Capita (\$1,000)	1.31	(1.48)	0	13
Density	261.99	(823.74)	0	14,481
White (%)	83	(17)	9	100
Median Household Income (logged)	10.73	(0.28)	10	12
Bachelor's Degree (%)	19.22	(10.47)	0	70
Age	40.12	(4.55)	23	66
HM Declarations Last 5 Years	3.08	(1.38)	0	10
Property Damage Per Capita, Hydrological Hazards	111.27	(913.23)	0	102,629
Property Damage Per Capita, Storms/Hurricanes	3.29	(16.56)	0	342
Property Damage Per Capita, Atmospheric Hazards	56.65	(702.07)	0	25,810
Disaster Duration (Days)	28.76	(36.66)	0	268

APP_{it} is a vector of HMGP application outcomes of county i in year t . For the total number of HM applications, we use a fixed-effect Poisson regression model. For the average number of HM applications per disaster, we used linear regression models. Since Poisson regression

models the logarithm of the expected count variable on various parameters, it drops observations with zero values of the outcome variable and measured only one time point, thereby using a smaller sample in analysis compared to linear regression. NPO_{it} is the number of active NPOs in different categories, which are located in county i in year t . X_{it} indicates vectors of county-level characteristics for county i in year t . i_i and t_t are county- and year-fixed effects.

The county fixed-effect model may be desirable to examine how each county government makes its HMGP participation decisions in response to changes in NPOs within a county over time. Each county has its own unique characteristics resulting from its geographic, climatic, and cultural conditions, which may significantly affect the community's vulnerability to natural disasters and, thus, its awareness and needs for hazard mitigation. For example, counties in the Gulf Coast region historically have been more prone to hurricanes and tropical storms than other counties. Local governments and community members (e.g., NPOs, residents, local businesses) in those counties may be systematically different from those located in other counties that are less prone to extreme weather events in their perceived needs and consequent efforts for disaster risk mitigation to adapt to and cope with their climatic conditions. To examine the relationship between NPOs and local governments' hazard mitigation efforts, it is important to account for such unique, endogenous county-level characteristics in the estimation. However, data for such characteristics usually do not exist due to difficulty in observation and measurement.

To account for those important but unobservable county-level characteristics, we employ the county-fixed effects models that examine changes in outcome variables in response to changes in independent variables within the same county over time. Inclusion of county dummies would control for unobserved county-specific characteristics that do not significantly change over time, such as geographical, socio-cultural, and institutional characteristics of counties (e.g., county-level weather, community culture, local government autonomy granted by state laws), that may also influence a county government's participation in the HMGP. That is, estimators from our county-fixed effects models indicate to what extent a county government's HMGP participation is likely to be associated with a change in NPOs within a county over time, while controlling for any time invariant, unobservable characteristics in that county.

Results

Table 3 presents the estimation results of fixed-effect models on two outcome variables across all county samples.

Results show that NPOs in the sectors related to animals ($p < 0.05$), general health ($p < 0.01$), food ($p < 0.01$), and human services ($p < 0.01$) are positively associated with the number of HM projects a county proposes to receive the grant. Similarly, NPOs in the sectors related to general health ($p < 0.05$), mental health ($p < 0.01$), and public safety ($p < 0.01$) are positively associated with the ratio of HM project applications per disaster. Contrary to our expectation, NPOs in housing shelters ($p < 0.05$) are negatively associated with the number of HM projects. Those NPOs are categorized as type 1 NPOs addressing the social welfare of the whole community. Overall, the results provide evidence supporting H1.

By contrast, NPOs in the sectors related to sports/leisure ($p < 0.05$) are negatively associated with both the number of HM project applications and the ratio of HM project applications per disaster while NPOs for youth development ($p < 0.01$) are negatively associated with the number of HM projects. Those NPOs are categorized as type 2 NPOs serving benefits of limited and/or selective community constituents. Therefore, the results provide evidence supporting H2.

Table 3. Estimation Results by NPOs

NPOs by Sector	Number of Applications	Applications per Disaster
<i>Social Welfare NPOs</i>		
Animals	0.054** (0.023)	0.085 (0.062)
Civil Rights/Advocacy	0.070 (0.047)	0.092 (0.135)
Employment	-0.035 (0.039)	0.001 (0.108)
Food, Agriculture & Nutrition	0.116*** (0.039)	0.056 (0.110)
General Health	0.036*** (0.011)	0.089** (0.036)
Housing & Shelter	-0.040** (0.016)	0.013 (0.043)
Human Services	0.047*** (0.011)	0.044 (0.032)
Mental Health	0.020 (0.026)	0.193*** (0.073)
Public Safety	0.036 (0.022)	0.200*** (0.061)
Public & Societal Benefit	0.012 (0.029)	-0.156* (0.084)
Philanthropy	0.009 (0.017)	0.095* (0.049)
Religion	0.012 (0.010)	-0.026 (0.029)
<i>Elite-Oriented NPOs</i>		
Arts	0.015 (0.011)	0.057* (0.030)
Community Improvement	-0.009 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.048)
Crime & Legal-Related	-0.017 (0.029)	-0.117 (0.087)
Education	0.004 (0.007)	0.015 (0.017)
Membership Benefit	-0.035 (0.061)	-0.399** (0.173)
Sports, Leisure, Athletics	-0.022** (0.011)	-0.089*** (0.032)
Youth Development	-0.067*** (0.024)	0.030 (0.065)
<i>NPOs With No Direct Local Beneficiaries</i>		
Disease, Disorders	-0.023 (0.020)	-0.025 (0.064)
Environment	-0.186*** (0.028)	-0.298*** (0.076)
International Affairs	0.001 (0.021)	0.008 (0.060)
Medical Research	-0.218*** (0.051)	-0.452*** (0.149)
Social Science Research Institutes	0.206** (0.082)	0.009 (0.226)
Science & Technology Research Institutes	-0.099**	-0.089

	(0.045)	(0.110)
Other (e.g., Unknown)	-0.157**	-0.312
	(0.065)	(0.193)
Observations	1,432	3,014
R-Squared	NA	0.167
Number of Counties	535	1,626

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Control variables and time dummies are included for estimation.

The results also show that NPOs in the sector of the environment ($p < 0.01$) and medical research ($p < 0.01$) are negatively associated with both the number of HM projects and the HM submission ratio per disaster in a county while NPOs in science & technology research ($p < 0.05$) are negatively associated with the number of HM projects only. By contrast, NPOs in social science research ($p < 0.05$) are positively associated with the number of HM projects. Those NPOs are categorized as type 3 NPOs having no direct beneficiary in a community. The varying influences among NPOs in this category provide evidence supporting H3.

Related to control variables, the results suggest that county governments are likely to propose a greater number of HM projects when their jurisdictions have higher voter turnout, voters for the political party in House control, household income, and vulnerability to disasters. By contrast, county governments' HM applications are negatively associated with per capita total government revenue and the average age of residents while their negative associations are no longer significant in the highly vulnerable county sample. Due to limited space, we included a table of the results on the control variables in the Appendix.

Discussion

The roles and functions of NPOs have become more evident in contemporary American society (Powell & Steinberg, 2006; Salamon, 1995), especially in a disaster management context. A significant body of research has identified the importance of NPOs responding to community needs and providing goods and services to multiple areas of society including health, human service, public benefit, religion, and others. However, few studies have explored the potential impact of diversity within the nonprofit sector on disaster management (Robinson & Gerber, 2007).

This study identifies a diverse set of NPOs that are associated with local governments' hazard mitigation efforts in a varied manner even though some of their services or activities are not directly related to disaster management. This suggests that considering the nonprofit sector as a homogenous single factor may mislead decision makers regarding the role NPOs play in the hazard mitigation process. The results of our analysis present empirical evidence of the need to distinguish the types of NPOs to promote understanding of their roles. In addition, based on how they influence hazard mitigation, a more targeted approach to engaging NPOs in mitigation project developments is needed.

Our results support our argument that local government's hazard mitigation efforts, particularly applying for external grants and funding, may be highly contingent upon the prevalence of different types of NPOs with varying capacities and beneficiaries within their jurisdiction. As we hypothesized, when there is a greater number of social welfare NPOs in a community, a local government is likely to put more effort into hazard mitigation. NPOs providing services related to animals, food, general health, mental health, human services, and public safety are particularly influential. Community engagement, community coalition, and cross-sector partnerships between government and NPOs, and between NPOs in the

community are critical components to the whole community approach to hazard mitigation (Eisenman et al., 2014).

Among social welfare NPOs, NPOs in general health show particularly robust associations with local hazard mitigation efforts, with significantly positive associations with both of our outcome variables. These NPOs have worked closely with local health agencies and first respondents to determine risk factors to community health, create “public health social networks,” and develop their own strategies to protect their essential facilities from disaster risks (Eisenman et al., 2014, p. 8477). As public health NPOs often serve as a central agency in emergency management networks by connecting various NPOs and public health departments (Eisenman et al., 2014), their roles become more salient in fostering community resilience by building on community assets and partnerships.

In contrast, when there is a greater number of elite-oriented NPOs in a community, a local government develops fewer projects to seek federal grants for hazard mitigation. Our results find significant negative influences of NPOs in the sectors related to sports and leisure. Considering their regular activities and target population, these NPOs are more likely to be self-sufficient due to their closer relationships with local businesses and privileged community constituents (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; Odendahl, 1990), indicating that they may be more capable of operating hazard mitigation programs and activities on their own. Moreover, they may be tempted to focus on more high-profile activities, the benefits and/or consequences of which are immediately observed and experienced by their target population, such as disaster relief and recovery. In particular, since sport clubs extensively use outdoor sport facilities (e.g., golf, motor sports, equestrian) that often suffer from long recovery after disasters (Wicker et al., 2013), they may focus more on getting back to normal business operations and building a more livable and pleasant community. In addition, leisure activities have been considered helpful for psychological relief and recovery of affected individuals (Kono & Shinew, 2015). Under these conditions, these sports- and leisure-related NPOs may encourage local governments to focus more on disaster relief and recovery, which may divert limited post-disaster administrative efforts and resources from hazard mitigation.

Finally, the last type of NPOs, which do not have clearly defined beneficiaries in a given local jurisdiction, show inconsistent influence on local hazard mitigation efforts. More specifically, NPOs operating in the field of medical research and science and technology research had a negative association with local government’s hazard mitigation efforts whereas NPOs related to social science research had a positive association. NPOs in the former category often rely on funding and support from upper-level governments or private organizations, and their activities and operations hinge on capital investments (e.g., equipment, laboratory, monitoring stations). Such resource affluent NPOs may channel external resources into their local communities to implement hazard mitigation measures even during non-disaster periods to protect their properties and further reduce existing disaster risk and vulnerability factors in their community. In contrast, social science research institutes may provide local governments with grant application support and assistance (e.g., cost-benefit analysis of hazard mitigation projects) contingent upon government requests or as community service in the aftermath of disasters.

It is somewhat unexpected that environmental NPOs were consistently associated in a negative direction with county governments’ hazard mitigation project submissions because hazard mitigation is closely aligned with some environmental NPOs’ activities, such as natural resource/land conservation and protection. Given the fact that a strong cost-benefit ratio is both desired and required for project submission, it is possible that county governments having more environmental NPOs in their jurisdictions may need to go through a more rigorous process for reviewing and assessing environmental benefits and risks of their proposed projects. Indeed, the most funded mitigation projects are often engineering-based

mitigation measures (e.g., infrastructure protection, property retrofits/acquisition) (Ji & Lee, 2021), which need to prove that such projects would leave no significant environmental harm.

For effective hazard mitigation and, further, disaster management, a whole community approach is a must. Yet, evidence from existing studies may not be sufficient to develop practical policy strategies to incorporate a wide range of NPOs and their services and clients into the whole realm of disaster management (Robinson et al., 2013). Our findings on the varying influences of diverse NPOs on local governments' hazard mitigation efforts contribute to enhancing scholarly understanding of NPOs in a disaster context and developing practical policy and administrative strategies to enhance a whole community approach and improve disaster resilience at the community level.

Conclusion

The central contention of this paper is that diverse NPOs influence local government's hazard mitigation efforts in different ways. The results show that according to the types we developed based on the literature, different types of NPOs have different influences on local government's efforts to seek external grants for hazard mitigation. We suggest that such different directions and significance of relationships may occur based on whether or not the NPOs have well defined beneficiaries in the community and to what extent beneficiaries are relevant to hazard mitigation.

This study provides both practitioners and scholars with important implications regarding the role of NPOs in hazard mitigation areas. Earlier, we noted that previous studies often focus on prominent disaster-associated NPOs such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army, or treat different nonprofit sectors as a single homogeneous set (Brudney & Gazley, 2009; Gibbons, 2007). We found that NPOs may differ based on whether or not they have defined beneficiaries in the community and in the way they engage in hazard mitigation efforts. Based on our findings, we suggest practitioners involve not only prominent disaster-associated NPOs but also diverse 'seemingly-unrelated' NPOs in their hazard mitigation efforts. From the local government's perspective, NPOs focusing on the overall community's welfare could be considered as a good resource to work with, even if their missions are not directly related to disasters. These NPOs include the NPOs providing services related to animals, food, general health, mental health, human services, and public safety. Moreover, from a whole community approach perspective, we suggest local governments engage with elite-oriented NPOs despite their negative association with local governments' mitigation efforts. These NPOs' negative associations may indicate their self-sufficiency in implementing mitigation measures via resources from their loyal clients such as local businesses and privileged community constituents. Through the engagement of elite-oriented NPOs, local governments could connect their resourceful sponsors of such NPOs to the local mitigation efforts. Their engagement, therefore, can lead to expanding local governments' hazard mitigation capacities and resources.

Despite its contributions, our research is not free from limitations. First, as our sample only includes counties that received presidential disaster declarations, those counties that were not declared disasters were not included in the analysis. Even though this filtering process was deemed appropriate so that we could focus on the varying HMGP participation among eligible counties, consideration of the full population (i.e., all counties in the U.S.) may show a different picture regarding local governments' hazard mitigation efforts in general. Moreover, it should be noted that our sample is limited to understanding of counties' HM efforts within the HMGP context only. While the HMGP is the oldest and the largest federal grant program designed to help HM projects at the local level (Ji & Lee, 2021), it could be possible that counties may undertake hazard mitigation projects by relying on their own finances or other funding sources (e.g., state funds) rather than participating in the HMGP. Therefore, it is

worth noting that HMGP participation is not a perfect proxy to account for the entirety of hazard mitigation efforts within a county, and our findings should be limited to local hazard mitigation efforts funded through the HMGP.

Second, our data also have a limited ability to distinguish hazard mitigation projects that were developed via collaboration of multiple jurisdictions. It is possible that multiple counties may develop a large-scale, comprehensive mitigation project to apply for the grant. However, even for those multi-jurisdictional projects, the HMGP data indicates a single county as a subgrantee that is responsible for submitting the proposal and once selected, redistributes the hazard mitigation funds to other involved counties. In this case, those non-subgrantee counties were still involved in hazard mitigation efforts in practice but were not included in our sample. Future research may benefit from deconstructing the HMGP data and applying more rigorous coding for different types of HM projects according to the geographical scope of the projects.

Constructing data for a longer period may provide a more complete picture as more counties are likely to be included over a longer time period. However, our analysis was confined to a relatively short time period (2010–2016) due to data availability issues related to NPOs and other county-level information. In particular, the NPO data constrained our ability to examine more recent trends of local governments' HMGP participation. The lack of data in recent years may be because many NPOs report to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on a one- to two-year delay, and their information has not yet been updated in the data repository. In addition, those organizations that did not file the full form were not included in the original dataset (NCCS, 2018).

Data limitations also constrained our ability to identify the specific mechanisms underlying the relationship between NPOs and local governments' hazard mitigation efforts. We regret that there is no full data available to consider NPO's revenues or expenditures which could complement the prevalence of NPOs. When considering revenue or expenditures of NPOs in the NCCS data, the number of missing values increases to a great extent. Despite the limitation, we still believe that the prevalence of nonprofits in the community serves as a good proxy of their influence on their community's affairs. First of all, the counts of nonprofits in a community show how much the community could work to address their own issues. If there were no issues or needs for services and activities, then the prevalence of such nonprofits in a community would be less likely. The greater number of a type of nonprofits in a county indicates the prevalence of more relevant social needs in the county, and this leads to more potential interaction/communication/advocacy activities of such nonprofits with local government in order to address the relevant social issues.

Our findings on NPOs that are significantly associated with local HM projects pave the way for future research examining different aspects of the nonprofit sector and delving into specific mechanisms by which given NPOs engage in local HM process and activities. By developing more comprehensive data, we hope to see future studies empirically testing how actual NPO engagement makes a difference in local government's hazard mitigation efforts based on our findings. Local governments may benefit from engaging NPOs in their disaster management planning processes (Brudney & Gazley, 2009) in which they assess their local conditions and identify needed activities to reduce disaster risks along the disaster cycle (Sweikar et al., 2006). NPOs may help local governments utilize their limited resources and expertise more effectively (Kapucu & Van Wart, 2006) and gain more support and participation from community members for local governments' hazard mitigation efforts. Furthermore, NPOs can play critical roles in institutionalizing a culture of hazard mitigation by which community members share perceptions of disaster risks and facilitate policy discourse for reducing risks in their communities on an ongoing basis. Future research may benefit from exploring these mechanisms more closely with NPO activity and financial data or conducting in-depth case studies.

Notes

1. In our HMGP application data between 2010 and 2014, 82% of county government applicants received funding. Section 501(c)(3) organizations sometimes opt to take the 'h election.' To avoid any subjectivity around the meaning of 'substantial' as it relates to 501(c)(3) lobbying activities, organizations can elect to file Form 5768 and have their lobbying measured by an objective expenditures test pursuant to section 501(h) of the IRS Code.
2. Accessed on April 23, 2019, at <https://www.fema.gov/data-feeds>.
3. Form 990 is the U.S. IRS reporting form that federally tax-exempt organizations must file each fiscal year. It provides the public with the organization's financial information.
4. Descriptions and examples of NPOs in the 26 categories of NTEE are available at <https://nccs.urban.org/publication/irs-activity-codes>.
5. We used the Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) provided by the census to calculate the voter turnout. The CVAP 2005–2009 was used for the 2008 election data, and the CVAP 2008–2012 was used for the 2012 election data.
6. We relied on the census data collected and integrated by Pierson et al. (2015).
7. While the FEMA category includes geological natural hazards, such as earthquakes and landslides, the only geological natural hazard available in the SHELATUS during our analysis time period was landslide, which accounted for less than 1% of the total natural hazard records. Therefore, we excluded the geological natural hazard from our analysis.
8. The SHELATUS provides information on county-level natural hazard losses (i.e., property, crop, human damage) from 16 types of natural hazards.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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Appendix A. Estimation Results of Covariates

Covariates	Number of Applications	Applications per Disaster
Voter Turnout	8.321*** (2.170)	9.182** (4.034)
Control Party in House	0.533*** (0.198)	1.206** (0.523)
Representative in Control	-0.150* (0.087)	-0.256 (0.207)
Per Capita Total Revenue	-0.295** (0.140)	-0.157 (0.167)
Density	0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)
White (%)	-5.078* (3.020)	-5.169 (8.188)
Median Household Income	2.745** (1.294)	0.342 (1.993)
Bachelor's Degree (%)	0.020 (0.017)	0.030 (0.025)
Age	-0.217*** (0.082)	-0.114 (0.141)
HM Declarations Last 5 Years	0.094*** (0.031)	0.176*** (0.068)
Property Damage Per Capita by Hydrological Hazards	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Storms/Hurricanes	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.008 (0.006)
Atmospheric Hazards	0.000*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
Disaster Duration (Days)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.005 (0.003)
2011	-0.033 (0.107)	0.010 (0.239)
2012	-0.004 (0.138)	0.225 (0.298)
2013	-0.100 (0.175)	0.004 (0.339)
2014	-0.075 (0.189)	-0.031 (0.377)
2015	-0.238 (0.193)	-0.013 (0.356)
2016	-1.422*** (0.335)	-0.278 (0.497)
Constant		-2.241 (23.473)

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Rethinking Perspectives of Power in Collaborative Governance

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Power is an important concept in understanding collaborative governance, however, the existing research is largely dominated by the functional and critical perspectives of power. Aided by a conceptual content analysis of power used in collaborative governance literature in the top public administration journals, we viewed power as a family resemblance concept that should be conceptualized through four perspectives: functional, critical, social construction, and pragmatic. We provide elaboration of each of these four perspectives and propose counterarguments to assumptions that have arisen due to the reliance on a functional or critical perspective of power. We conclude that viewing power as a family resemblance concept with at least four perspectives offers collaborative governance researchers the ability to adopt the best perspective that is the most useful for their analysis and most helpful for public administrators to understand power in their collaborative efforts.

Keywords: Power, Collaboration, Collaborative Governance, Content Analysis

Interorganizational collaboration in the public sector has become the norm. Rarely is a single, traditional government agency solely responsible for addressing a public policy problem. Such collaboration involves working with multiple agencies within the same layer of government, with agencies at different layers of government (Mullin & Daley, 2010), and with private and nonprofit organizations (Bryson et al., 2015). In response to what has been happening in practice, the concept of collaborative governance has flourished within public administration literature in the past thirty years. It has been studied across a wide range of public administration contexts, such as U.S. federal energy policy (Purdy, 2012), marine aquaculture partnerships (Calanni et al., 2014), mental health services delivery (Broer et al., 2012), homelessness service systems (Hafer, 2018), and emergency management (Kapucu, 2005). Such research has created a substantial body of knowledge regarding public sector collaboration—it has provided multiple collaborative governance frameworks (e.g., Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012) and expounded upon numerous concepts that are essential to collaborative endeavors, such as leadership (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Silvia, 2011), trust (Calanni et al., 2014; Moynihan, 2009), and antecedent conditions to collaboration (Chen, 2010; Cigler, 1999).

The concept of power is also closely tied to collaboration—particularly in collaborative arrangements involving traditional government agencies (Provan & Lemaire, 2012)—but has received less attention than that of other essential concepts. This is contrary to calls of some public administration researchers who claim the concept of power is central in understanding

the dynamics of collaborative public management (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001) and collaborative governance (Purdy, 2012). Additionally, the importance of understanding how power is understood and exercised in collaborative governance endeavors has been demonstrated in many empirical situations, including establishing performance measurement systems (Lavertu, 2016), regulatory oversight (Purdy, 2012), and rural economic development (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). This article provides insight on how public administration researchers have interpreted and conceptualized power in collaborative governance endeavors by using a conceptual content analysis methodology and adopting multiple perspectives of power.

Classic public administration research has stressed the importance of understanding the relationship between power and public administration in general, as best illustrated by Long (1949) who asserts that “the lifeblood of administration is power” (p. 257). Such classic research on power has also provided conceptualizations of how power is largely used to influence or control others. For example, the widely cited typology of French and Raven (1959) categorizes power into five bases (i.e., reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power). This view of power considers it generally as a tangible resource that is a property of a relationship (Ran & Qi, 2019). Research that directly addresses power in collaborative endeavors tends to follow this line of reasoning and also tends to focus on the idea and process of balancing power among the actors (individuals or organizations) involved, which frequently involves empowering weaker stakeholders to participate (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2006; 2015). Purdy (2012) suggests that analyzing the sources and arenas of power of collaborative governance endeavors sheds light on potential power imbalances that may be a concern and require balancing. Additionally, power and power imbalances are important considerations in understanding the antecedents, process, and outcomes of collaborative governance endeavors since the interplay of power mechanisms among actors in the collaboration can impact each (Thomson & Perry, 2006). For example, the creation of “mandated” collaborative governance situations—which form “...when bureaucratic or hierarchical mechanisms are used by a third party to bring separate organizations together to pursue complex objectives” (McNamara, 2016, p. 68; Rodríguez et al., 2007)—is a governance mechanism that is focused on spurring collaborative governance but originates through a top-down power structure. Such arrangements have appeared frequently as service delivery models in the human services field (e.g., Hafer, 2018). Scholars in collaborative public management research often consider public managers as key actors who are critical in ensuring ongoing interorganizational collaboration, thus making them key to power balancing (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; O’Leary & Vij, 2012; O’Toole, 2015; Silvia, 2011).

While this research has laid a foundation of how power is conceptualized in collaborative governance endeavors (and highlighted the importance of understanding how it operates in such), power is not a simple concept and has been studied in multiple social science disciplines. Borrowing from theory and research on power in sociology and organization studies offers insight into how power can be further conceptualized in collaborative governance endeavors. For example, in organization studies, Hardy and Clegg (2002) detail the struggle behind conceptualizing power and reach the conclusion that a general or single theory of power is not desirable. Indeed, viewing power from multiple perspectives assists in preventing the reduction of the concept of power to a single conceptual definition, which limits the potential usefulness of the concept when studying organizations. While some scholars studying organizations have suggested categorizing power as an ‘essentially contested concept’ (e.g., Lukes, 2005), some sociology scholars have claimed that this categorization limits the usefulness of the concept (Haugaard, 2010). By engaging in continual contestation of the multiple conceptual perspectives of power, we are implicitly suggesting that there is one ‘best’ conceptualization. Such a position does not embrace the rich conceptual idea of power and runs the risk of disregarding multiple perspectives as ‘not-the-best’ while they may provide useful insight into how power impacts different social phenomena (Haugaard, 2010).

An established way to move forward with this dilemma, as suggested and demonstrated by Haugaard (2010), is to consider power a family resemblance concept—this is a philosophical notion developed by Wittgenstein (1967) that multiple conceptualizations or categorizations of a concept do not share a single essence and are best viewed as having overlapping characteristics, yet there is not a set of characteristics which all the conceptualizations have in common. In other words, a family resemblance concept will have multiple amorphous conceptualizations with fuzzy boundaries between them. This differs from classical views of categorization where “a category was assumed to be homogeneous in content and separated from other categories by distinct boundaries (Lakoff, 1987)” (Ran & Duimering, 2007, p. 161). When using and describing family resemblance concepts, it is imperative to convene to the receiving audience how the word is being used based on the linguistic and social context of the user (Ran & Duimering, 2007). The quintessential example of the family resemblance concept is that of the concept of ‘game’ (Haugaard, 2010; Wittgenstein, 1967). Leunbach (2021) summarizes this example:

Games have many things in common. There is not, however, any one distinguishing feature or set of features in common to all and only games. Games, in other words, resemble each other in the same way that blood relations might resemble each other—through a series of ‘overlapping’ and ‘crisscrossing’ similarities, but not through a single distinguishing characteristic that runs through the entire family (p. 3).

In addition to the concept of power, the family resemblance approach has been applied to multiple other fuzzy concepts, such as law (Bix, 2003), religion (Harrison, 2006), and entrepreneurship (Leunbach, 2021). Adopting power as a family resemblance concept “give[s] the theorist or scientist freedom to create their own conceptual tools best suited to the task at hand” (Haugaard, 2010, p. 436).

Despite the complexity of the concept of power, this article will reveal that scholars studying collaborative governance endeavors have largely relied on a small family of only two perspectives of power. While not typically expressed by name, both the functional and the critical perspectives of power (Haugaard & Clegg, 2009) are evident in collaborative governance literature. However, limiting the concept of power to functional and critical perspectives restrains both researchers and public administrators in understanding and managing power relations between actors in collaborative arrangement. Our analysis that follows expands the family to that of four perspectives to include a social construction perspective and a pragmatic perspective, two perspectives of power that originate in the organization studies and sociology literature (Hardy & Clegg, 2002; Haugaard, 2010; Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). We elaborate these perspectives and provide evidence of how such perspectives have been applied in collaborative governance literature in public administration by providing results of a conceptual content analysis of articles within public administration journals. It is important to note that we are not intending to draw concrete conceptual lines between these perspectives. Each perspective offers a separate but related way to understand power. Through our analysis we expand the current limited conceptualization of power and increase the usefulness of the concept to understanding collaborative endeavors by discussing and bridging four perspectives of power (Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). This affords future researchers the ability to adopt the perspective(s) of power that is most appropriate for their analysis of collaborative governance (Haugaard, 2010) as such collaborative endeavors vary substantially (Ran & Qi, 2018; Williams, 2016). We argue that both collaborative governance researchers and practitioners ought to remain open-minded about the nature of power and power imbalances and to not preemptively judge whether power imbalances are inherently bad, or good.

We begin the analysis in the following section by providing the methodology of the conceptual content analysis. The results of this analysis are used to inform the discussions of the four perspectives of power that are provided in turn in the subsequent sections. We end with concluding thoughts that, despite the fractured and dispersed nature of collaborative governance literature (Williams, 2016) and consequently the dispersed placement of power in the literature, convene multiple streams of thought and explores potential avenues for knowledge extension (Whetten, 1989).

Conceptual Content Analysis Methodology

The authors conducted a conceptual content analysis—“a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18)—to analyze how power is conceptualized in collaborative governance research. Conceptual content analysis has been employed for a variety of reasons in public administration, including interpreting term obscurity (Li et al., 2015); evaluating the state of research (Sabharwal et al., 2018; Sun & Lin, 2014); and inspecting concepts within academic curriculum (King et al., 2021). For this study a qualitative conceptual content analysis was conducted (i.e., a focus on use of content) in which the authors followed a structured search of journal articles, which included inclusion and exclusion criteria, that resulted in a final sample size of articles that were reviewed and coded for findings.

Step A: Search Method

Web of Science was used to search for journal articles that involved discussions on power in collaborative governance. The authors searched for articles that have the keyword ‘power’ and ‘collaborative governance’ in the Topic field. The Topic field in *Web of Science* covers Title, Abstract, and Author Keywords of all the articles indexed in *Web of Science*. The assumption behind this approach is that articles that have the words ‘power’ and ‘collaborative governance’ in their titles, abstracts, and keywords, provide a confined and definitive frame for the subject of this article. Using this criterion, multiple search rounds were conducted since the articles are expanding continuously, with the last search conducted in January 2021. This resulted in a total of 574 articles from *Web of Science*.

To the authors’ understanding, a conceptual content analysis such as this that focuses on bridging these two concepts has not been completed, thus a logical starting place is to utilize a honed focus on these two terms specifically. There are two limitations to this approach worth noting. First, given the fungible nature of power there may be relevant articles that were not captured in the current search method that use power-synonymous terms such as influence, strength, or capacity. Second, there may be articles where the two search terms do not both occur in the title, abstract, or keywords but may include discussion of power and collaborative governance in the full text of the article. In response to these limitations, the authors were most interested in articles dealing with collaborative governance where the specific concept of ‘power’ was the central focus; thus, such tangential articles were not intended to be part of this initial analysis, but may be worthy of including in further exploratory research.

Step B: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Following the initial capture of 574 articles in Step A, the authors filtered this result to retain only peer-reviewed articles. The authors believe peer-reviewed articles provide better objective perspectives compared to reports, conference papers, etc. having been scrutinized by editors and reviewers in the field of public administration. This reduced the number of articles to 512.

Table 1. Top 48 Journals in Public Administration Category in 2019 Incites Journal Citation Report and the Number of Articles Retrieved

Full Journal Title	2019 Journal Impact Factor by InCites	5-Year Impact Factor by InCites	Articles Retrieved
Public Administration Review	4.063	6.115	5
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	3.289	5.464	6
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management	5.018	5.178	0
Public Management Review	4.221	5.049	6
Journal of European Public Policy	4.177	4.366	0
Policy Studies Journal	3.797	4.224	6
Governance—An International Journal of Policy Administration and Institutions	2.899	4.176	0
Climate Policy	4.011	4.061	0
Regulation & Governance	3.375	3.862	2
Policy Sciences	3.609	3.797	2
Public Administration	1.825	3.664	6
Journal of Accounting and Public Policy	2.351	3.560	0
Journal of European Social Policy	2.631	3.379	0
Review of Public Personnel Administration	2.837	3.276	0
Policy and Society	3.050	3.029	0
Policy and Politics	3.069	2.936	3
International Public Management Journal	1.672	2.865	2
Journal of Social Policy	2.592	2.786	0
International Review of Administrative Sciences	2.129	2.692	0
Environment and Planning C-Politics and Space	2.601	2.691	2
American Review of Public Administration	2.168	2.671	7
Public Performance & Management Review	1.510	2.463	0
Public Policy and Administration	1.811	2.437	0
Public Personnel Management	0.897	2.155	0
Science and Public Policy	1.730	2.114	0
Administration & Society	1.564	2.085	7
Journal of Public Policy	1.750	2.011	0
Review of Policy Research	1.548	1.946	0
Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis	1.414	1.938	0
Social Policy & Administration	1.908	1.910	0
Nonprofit Management & Leadership	1.672	1.842	0
Local Government Studies	1.909	1.819	0

Public Administration and Development	1.550	1.686	0
Public Money & Management	1.377	1.619	2
Human Service Organizations			
Management Leadership & Governance	1.145	1.390	0
Contemporary Economic Policy	1.087	1.316	0
Policy Studies	1.200	1.178	0
Australian Journal of Public Administration	1.057	1.129	0
Canadian Public Policy—ANALYSE DE POLITIQUES	0.776	0.897	0
Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences	0.603	0.812	0
Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	0.394	0.780	0
Canadian Public Administration—ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE DU CANADA	0.765	0.778	0
Lex Localis—Journal of Local Self-Government	0.688	0.741	0
Gestion y Politica Publica	0.222	0.396	0
Revista del CLAD Reforma y Democracia	0.213	0.314	0
Amme Idaresi Dergisi	0.020	0.142	0
Civil Szemle	0.093	0.099	0
Critical Policy Studies	1.868	Not Available	0

Note. Table sorted by Impact Factor, and bolded journals indicate at least one article was retrieved from that journal.

Then, the filtered pool of articles was further filtered by only including the top-ranked journals in the public administration subject category listed in the 2019 Incites Journal Citation Report by *Web of Science* to filter the results (Clarivate, 2019). Forty-eight journals in public administration were ranked in the report. Following this screening process, a final 56 articles were retained and included in the review (see Table 1).

The authors conducted a full text appraisal of the articles with the pre-determined goal of understanding how researchers in the field have interpreted and conceptualized power in collaborative governance endeavors. Upon review of the articles, it was discovered that five of the articles did not provide enough detail or discussion to evidence any clear perspective of power and were deemed not appropriate for this analysis. For example, a comparative case study article by Heikkila and Gerlak (2005) contained ‘Northwest Power and Conservation Council’ in their keywords, but the concept of power was not a focus within the article itself. As another example, the essay by Rosenbloom (2013) focused on constitutional separation of powers and not power within collaborative governance endeavors. The remaining 51 articles served as the final set of articles that informed the following analysis.

The authors then coded these 51 articles based on the coding schema consisting of four perspectives of power described in Table 2. These four perspectives were drawn from research and theorizing on power in sociology and organization studies (Hardy & Clegg, 2002; Haugaard, 2010; Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). The authors coded each article as one that predominantly adopts a functional, critical, social construction, or pragmatic perspective of

Table 2. Four Perspectives of Power

Perspective	Primary Focus	Language	Level of Analysis	Power Imbalances in Collaborative Governance
Functional	Power as a tangible resource	Power over; how much power	Micro	Determining primary causes of imbalances
Critical	Power as an imbalanced resource to be shifted	Power for; who ought to have power	Micro or macro	Uncovering strategies to limit or rectify imbalances
Social Construction	Construction of power structures through social interaction	Power to; collective network power	Micro	Examining imbalance changes through collaborative interactions
Pragmatic	Power as a web of relations impacted by context	All the above	Meso	Immersing in the particular context to understand how legitimacy relates to imbalances

power; documenting evidence (i.e., quotes) of such perspective; and classifying the method of analysis used in the article (e.g., case study). The conceptualization of power was scrutinized in the articles by examining explicit arguments or implicit implications of power, such as through article discussions of power imbalances, resource dynamics, and roles of actors in the collaboration. Each author coded a selection of articles, and each author reviewed each other's coding and discussed any discrepancy to ensure consistency. It is important to note that such conceptual coding is subjective, but the authors were more interested in framing a conceptual analysis than obtaining quantitative counts (although the counts are provided in the following section). Additionally, while the perspectives are different ways to view power and power imbalances within collaborative endeavors, they are related, and multiple perspectives can be displayed or adopted during a single article or analysis. However, the authors coded each article as only one perspective to best understand the most dominant perspectives adopted. For example, some articles that discussed power from a critical perspective also adopted a functional perspective of power (e.g., by viewing power as a resource); however, such articles focused primarily on understanding such concepts as the process of stakeholder disenfranchisement or how to empower such stakeholders, thus articles such as these were coded as adopting a critical perspective.

General Results of Conceptual Content Analysis

The conceptual content analysis demonstrated that public administration research aligns with general social science research regarding its approach to power—it views power as primarily from either a functional or critical perspective (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). Of the 51 articles, 47% (n=24) were coded as functional, 33% (n=17) were coded as critical, 10% as social construction (n=5), 10% as pragmatic (n=5). This distribution, while aligned with general social science research, serves as a motivating signal for further research exploring how collaborative governance scholars conceptualize power (such as exploring additional articles as noted in the

Search Method section); it also suggests that collaborative governance scholars may benefit from adopting lesser-known perspectives of power. Relying on only the common functional and critical perspectives to understand power in collaborative governance endeavors limits the conceptual usefulness of power as a tool to understand collaborative governance dynamics (Haugaard, 2010). The functional perspective focuses primarily on conceptualizing power as a tangible resource to be discovered, manipulated, and managed. The critical perspective focuses primarily on understanding how power is used as a form of domination and how power can be transferred to the less powerful (e.g., balancing power). The following sections use the results of the conceptual content analysis as well as the wider sociology and organization study literature on power to elaborate these two common perspectives as well as expand upon the two lesser utilized perspectives of social construction and pragmatic perspectives of power.

Functional Perspective of Power

A functional perspective of power is what commonly comes to the front of the discussion of power in public administration and policy—how “power ‘stored’ in individuals or organizations allows them to influence policymaking processes” (Broer et al., 2012, p. 800). In interorganizational theory studies, functional power is based in interorganizational (or interpersonal) resource dependence—how power and action is constrained or gained through interdependence between organizations (or individuals) within the same institutional environment (Huxham & Beech, 2008). Conceptualizing power in this manner treats power as a tangible object that can be lost, gained, and exchanged (Huxham & Beech, 2008)—understanding who is in control of relationships, which aligns with the classic bases of social power offered by French and Raven (1959). For example, Fischer and colleagues (2012) conceptualized power as a measurable construct via reputational power—“...our interview partners were asked to mention which actors were, in their view, very influential. Based on these answers, we calculated the reputational power score of each actor, which corresponds to the mean of the total judgments from all survey participants” (p. 444). Adopting this perspective of power implies a perception of collaborative endeavors that focuses on understanding how to improve production (French & Raven, 1959), or how to improve efficiency and effectiveness of organizations involved and/or the collaborative itself (Lotia & Hardy, 2008).

Analyses that adopt the functional perspective tend to be interested in the micro-level aspects of power—who has ‘power over’ who within a collaborative endeavor. The unit of analysis within this perspective includes any entity that has interactions within a collaboration and that is thought to be able to possess power (e.g., individual, organization). This perspective was often found in articles using a case study research approach that included an exploration of the level or type of resource-based power that collaborative actors possessed and how that related to collaboration (e.g., Cain et al., 2020; Painter, 2001). Typical collaborative governance concepts that are mentioned in relation to a functional perspective of power include individual-level concepts, such as identity. This is demonstrated by Conner (2016) who explored how the micro-level variable of identity impacts collaboration. He argued that collaborative partnerships are stronger when the partners have more frequent interactions (Kickert et al., 1997). Using frequency of interaction as a proxy for successful collaboration, he demonstrated that public school officials—the powerful—engaged more frequently in collaborative behavior with the local Native American communities they service—the less powerful—when the official had a shared racial and tribal identity with the Native American nations in their service area. Thus, power imbalances may not be as noticeable, or impactful, when individual attributes of actors involved in collaborative governance are aligned.

A functional perspective of power throughout collaborative governance literature follows an implicit assumption that power is a resource. They suggest that most collaborative endeavors have power imbalances between actors, and this imbalance needs to be managed for

collaborative endeavors to be successful. For example, in the framework of Ansell and Gash (2008) a power asymmetry is illustrated as a problem that requires rectifying before a collaborative endeavor is to begin. Emerson et al. (2012) describe the role of power in a collaborative governance regime as an unevenly distributed resource that may facilitate joint action when redistributed as a shared resource. In their cross-sector collaboration framework, Bryson et al. (2006; 2015) portray power imbalances as ongoing sources of conflict that impact both the collaborative process and the structure of the collaboration. Purdy (2012) attempts to tackle the entire power infrastructure of collaborative processes by constructing a framework that concentrates on functional aspects of power. The framework attempts to capture where (i.e., ‘arenas for power use’) and how (i.e., ‘sources of power’) power is exercised. The framework conceptualizes the ‘where’ as participants, process design, and content (Booher, 2004), and the ‘how’ as authority, resource-based power, and discursive legitimacy (Hardy & Phillips, 1998). She suggests that the framework may be a valuable power management tool by its ability to assess power and identify power imbalances.

Reliance on the functional perspective of power within collaborative endeavors leads to an assumption that an imbalance of power is undesirable and harmful to collaboration. Many times, this comes across in a manner that suggests an imbalance of power undermines success in collaborative governance. For example, Bryson and colleagues (2015) note that “cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed when they build in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalances and shocks” (p. 663). Purdy’s (2012) framework of power that is specific to collaborative governance was designed specifically to identify power imbalances in order to prompt directed action to balance power. In contrast, having a power imbalance may not necessarily preclude success when other elements of the collaboration—such as perceived benefits (Cowan et al., 2015) or goal congruence (Cuevas et al., 2015)—are at desirable levels (Ran & Qi, 2018).

A functional perspective has also been criticized for falling into the trap of attempting to identify an infinite list of sources of power that change depending on the context under analysis (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). While collaborative endeavors may share similar characteristics (Thomson & Perry, 2006), they are by no means standardized across contexts (Williams, 2016). In addition, the perspective has received criticism for describing inherent managerial or hierarchical as legitimate or ‘good’ without question (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). The same problem applies to collaborative governance endeavors: adopting a strict functional perspective of power tends to overlook the potential illusion of neutrality of power among actors, which may provide misguided justification for continuing collaboration (Lotia & Hardy, 2008).

Critical Perspective of Power

In contrast to a functional perspective, critical theorists do not take legitimated power structures for granted. These theorists instead view power through the lens of the process of domination by those legitimated organizational structures (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). Denhardt (1981) asserted that there exists a need to adopt a critical perspective of public organizations to challenge the status quo. Questioning the dynamics of social processes is particularly pertinent for collaborative governance contexts—there are typically many different individuals from many different organizations interacting in varied manners to address a complex social problem. This perspective holds that in collaborative endeavors there are structural power imbalances where domination has developed through resource or status inequality, which dismantles the ability of weak actors to participate in decision making (i.e., some actors hold coercive power; Amsler, 2016; French & Raven, 1959). For example, Crompton and colleagues (2018) note, “We believe that these epistemological differences both reflect and recreate underlying power and status inequalities that were evident throughout the process” (p. 1637). A critical perspective of power assumes that social arenas (e.g., organizations) are inherently

political, thus it is necessary to scrutinize power relations to understand how power enacted impacts the dominated (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Such scrutinizing provides practical value—it assists public managers by affording the opportunity to engage in critical thought about the power dynamics in collaboration and avoid simple solutions (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). An example of such a simple solution is creating policy that mandates interorganizational (including cross-sector) collaboration based on the assumption that collaboration is the gold standard for any policy context.

Critical examinations of power in collaborative governance focus on either structural power imbalances at a macro-level or micro-level power dynamics. At the macro-level, critical theorists studying collaborative governance have questioned whether policies that mandate collaboration are truly distributing power within collaborative governance or are such power distributions merely an illusion providing a cover for continued traditional government control (Hafer, 2018). Such control of collaborative processes paves the way for nominal participation of actors set by ‘governmental actors’ where power is seen as top-down and hegemonic construct (Berardo, 2009). Prior collaborative governance research identifies micro-level power imbalances a primary concern (Purdy, 2012). It is feared that collaborative endeavors have the potential to appear collaborative but may be masked displays of powerful actors dominating those that are less powerful (e.g., Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Purdy, 2012). This concern of a critical perspective takes ‘power over’ as the starting point—determining where there is an imbalance of power—and moves to the concern of how to shift power to the less powerful.

The shifting of power in interorganizational relationships has been referred to as ‘power for’ (Huxham & Beech, 2008). The shifting of power and correcting power imbalances is the primary concern of studies of power in collaborative governance (Purdy, 2012). This is evidenced by how collaborative governance researchers conceptually frame power and view power imbalances as inherently undesirable. Some scholars suggest that a power imbalance is a source of mistrust and a threat to effective collaboration: “Power imbalances between members are characteristic of collaboration structures and can (if not managed) contribute to loss of trust...power imbalances could cause the trust loop to fracture hindering the achievement of collaborative advantage” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 170). Most scholars agree that these imbalances require action. For example, Ansell and Gash (2008) suggest:

If there are significant power/resource imbalances between stakeholders, such that important stakeholders cannot participate in a meaningful way, then effective collaborative governance requires a commitment to a positive strategy of empowerment and representation of weaker or disadvantaged stakeholders (p. 551).

To address power imbalances some scholars have recommended using traditional management techniques, such as strategic planning and scenario development (Bryson et al., 2006). Many others have suggested that public managers need to utilize specific collaborative network management techniques, such as mobilizing individuals and organizations and unifying diverse perspectives (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Silvia, 2011). In their discussion of power in inter-organizational relationships, Huxham and Beech (2008) suggest to adequately address and manage the entire power infrastructure requires “...understanding what is going on at both the macro- and micro-levels” (p. 573). They suggest using power management strategies such as diagnosing sources of power (e.g., Purdy, 2012), implementing collaborative leadership styles (e.g., Silvia, 2011), and building capacity for the less powerful (e.g., Ansell & Gash, 2008). Thus understanding power imbalances from a critical perspective in collaborative governance endeavors requires understanding how power is interwoven throughout the entire endeavor: power imbalances at the onset (Ansell & Gash,

2008); power imbalances that place constraints on collaborative structure and governance (Bryson et al., 2006); power imbalances that shape the content of discussion (Purdy, 2012); and power imbalances in the environmental context that may influence the collaborative endeavor (Emerson et al., 2012).

Reliance on the critical perspective of power in collaborative governance endeavors leads to the normative assumption that public managers *ought* to manage power imbalances. As noted earlier, Ansell and Gash (2008) state “...effective collaborative governance requires a commitment to a positive strategy of empowerment and representation of weaker or disadvantaged stakeholders” (p. 551). Such a stance is grounded in the critical perspective of power, which holds the assumption that “others know the real interests of people better than the people do themselves” (Gordon, 2009, p. 265). While engaging disenfranchised stakeholders is certainly well-intentioned, this also highlights a weakness of the critical perspective—if public managers attempt to manage power imbalances, the act of managing the imbalance is itself an assertion of power that may harm the position of other stakeholders engaged in the collaborative process. Such an assertion of power may also harm the internal legitimacy of the collaboration (Ostrom, 2000) and conflicts with the underpinning democratic ideals of collaborative governance. Some stakeholders may perceive the use of certain management skills within a collaboration as a technique to perpetuate the current power imbalance (Gordon, 2009). Indeed, managing power in collaborative governance endeavors may require managing actors’ perceptions of power. This is like Pettigrew’s (1977) idea of managing meaning by which individuals construct legitimacy of their own claims while de-legitimizing the claims of those who oppose. Utilizing such an approach may be perceived negatively as it portrays management using power in a seemingly underhanded manner (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). Thus, on one hand there is reason to question, however discordant it may feel, whether public managers ought to be involved in power balancing in the first place. On the other hand, it would behoove public managers to at least consider how their power-balancing management actions impact all stakeholders involved in the collaboration, not just the disenfranchised, to best understand how their actions may impact collaborative endeavor outcomes.

Social Construction Perspective of Power

Much of the framework-based collaborative governance literature suggests that collaborative processes themselves are best conceptualized as dynamic systems (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). A social construction perspective of power requires researchers to view power as dynamic and a product of contextual social construction: “A person is not ‘powerful’ or ‘powerless’ in general, but only with respect to other social actors in a specific social relationship” (Pfeffer, 2005, p. 290). A social construction perspective of power does not view power as a resource (i.e., functional perspective) and does not focus on the balancing of power in collaborative endeavors (i.e., critical perspective). Instead, it is understanding the process of power construction that is principal—how the interactions within the collaborative endeavor construct a power structure; or in other words, how “power is seen as produced in a relationship” (Broer et al., 2011, p. 801). This perspective incorporates the dynamic nature of social interaction between collaborative actors and holds that any meaning derived from interactions and negotiations between actors hinges on context (Blumer, 1986). Thus, analyses adopting this perspective tend to focus on micro-level interactions between actors engaged in a collaborative endeavor. For example, contemporary research methods such as computational agent-based model simulation have been used in prior collaborative governance research to capture the relation between power and social interaction on collaborative decision-making (Choi & Robertson, 2014a).

Collaborative governance endeavors are built largely around social interaction involving numerous stakeholders to address complex public problems, which leads to frequent change (Popp et al., 2014)—long-term stakeholders leave the arrangement, new stakeholders enter, others are forced by organizational constraints to limit their involvement, and so on. From this perspective collaboration can be associated with understanding diverse levels of power sharing, cooperation, and trust (Ran & Qi, 2019). The usefulness of a social construction perspective of power within collaborative governance is highlighted by Purdy (2012). She suggests that static power assessments may be helpful in identifying power imbalances but are ultimately limited in their usefulness: “Because power is an emergent phenomenon that is shaped by interaction, the static representation of power in [this study] is limited in its ability to describe ongoing power dynamics in a collaborative governance process” (Purdy, 2012, p. 416). Power in this sense, whether balanced among actors or not, can be viewed as an element of collaborative governance that facilitates action, as opposed to preventing action—describing power as ‘power to’ instead of ‘power over’ (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). In situations of ‘power to’, Huxham and Beech (2008) suggest managing power imbalances involves implementing tools and leadership styles that are “collaborative in spirit” (p. 572).

Certain ‘power to’ situations require accepting the fact that not all power imbalances will inhibit collaborative action (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). For example, collaborative governance arrangements that are operating with mission urgency, such as those responding to crises (e.g., fires, floods), benefit from temporary centralized control to ensure an efficient and prompt response (Moynihan, 2009). While power imbalances are inherent in hierarchical control situations such as these, an imbalance may not be detrimental to collaboration if balanced over time with collaborative inclusiveness (Koliba et al., 2011; Moynihan, 2009). Emergency management operations at local (Bigley & Roberts, 2001) and national (Moynihan, 2009) levels that utilize an incident command system approach to organizing emergency responses have demonstrated the benefits of having flexibility in the system of network control. There is also the consideration that some organizations may be willing to accept an imbalance of power if they continue to benefit from such relationships and be able to obtain what they want. For example, collaborations between for-profits and non-profit organizations may be successful (i.e., the for-profit makes profit or limits loss and the non-profit is able to carry out its mission) even when the for-profit organization is the clear powerholder (Cowan et al., 2015).

Power as facilitating action is closely aligned with the idea of network power: “...a shared ability of linked agents to alter their environment in ways advantageous to these agents individually and collectively” (Booher & Innes, 2002, p. 225). Such power emerges through interaction and communication, which develops shared meaning and highlights interdependencies (Booher & Innes, 2002). The realization of actors of their interdependence between actors in collaboration is invaluable and has been evidenced in a range of policy domains (e.g., environmental (Booher & Innes, 2002), human services (Keast et al., 2004), economic development (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001)). Fostering network power requires network actor diversity, interdependence, and authentic communication (Booher & Innes, 2002).

Pragmatic Perspective of Power

Like a social construction perspective of power, a pragmatic perspective supports the assertion that power permeates all aspects of social life. Social interactions create a web of power where everyone to some degree is both oppressor and oppressed (Hall, 2001). The central focus is “the type of power relations that one is tangled up in” which manifest in numerous ways (Haaugard & Clegg, 2009, p. 444). This is similar to Long’s (1949) analysis of power as multi-directional, in which he blatantly negates the idea that power only flows in a top-down relation suggesting such an idea is “an idealized distortion of reality” (p. 258). The longitudinal

multiple case study approach of three collaborative endeavors used by Rodríguez and colleagues (2007) demonstrates their adoption (although not by name) of a pragmatic perspective: “Finally, the third reading views all organizations as caught up in a systemic web of power relationships that tends to be reproduced over time: In this view, these relationships were destined to block collaboration in one way or another, regardless of the mechanisms put in place” (p. 153).

A pragmatic perspective of power differs from both a functional and critical perspective in that it does not focus on explaining ideal situations of *who ought* to have *how much* power. A pragmatic perspective assumes that “...people cannot divorce themselves from context and time” and that “...having faith in the way things ‘ought’ to be risks blindness to the way things actually are” (Gordon, 2009, p. 266). In other words, adopting a pragmatic perspective of power involves limiting initial preconceptions of what power ought to look like in a certain situation and instead focuses on the how, such as exploring the taken-for-granted assumptions of social systems to understand strategic uses of power (Hardy & Clegg, 2002). Such a perspective has been applied in public administration research by focusing on the role and consequence that techniques of power have for governing a public program and for public managers governing themselves in relation to the program (Broer et al., 2012).

Pragmatic studies of power are similar to what has been termed governmentality studies—those that focus on “the ‘mundane’ and local practices in which governance is done” and how those practices relate to the governing of others (Broer et al., 2012, p. 801). Ethnographic methods—gathering data from multiple sources, such as first-hand on-site field observations and interviews—have proven valuable for studying these types of contexts in public administration and policy (Cappellaro, 2017; Rhodes, 2007). Within single-organization studies, a pragmatic perspective is evidenced by the work of Gordon et al. (2009). They used ethnographic methods to study the everyday practices of the policing of one police station. Through their research they demonstrated how historically constituted structures of power in the police organization were subtly reinforced through supposed organizational change initiatives (i.e., policing reforms), which ultimately led to the initiatives being undermined.

This type of initially unstructured analysis prohibits the researcher from adopting a particular unit of analysis prior to conducting the research. Thus, a pragmatic perspective may focus on micro-level dynamics or macro-level institutional structures and environments. Such an approach affords the opportunity to conduct a meso-level analysis and study how these dynamics and structures interrelate. This is particularly applicable to collaborative governance endeavors as their composition ranges from the individual to the system context (Emerson et al., 2012). For example, adopting a pragmatic perspective of power when studying collaborative governance may help to illustrate the taken-for-granted aspects of power at different levels of construction (i.e., the policy context, the structure of the collaboration, and the multiple participating organizations themselves) that likely have a substantial impact on collaborative processes and outcomes. This is particularly useful for understanding the derivation and influence of governmental mandates to collaborate (Hafer, 2018). Hambleton (2019) takes what may be considered a pragmatic approach to power by exploring the contextual power of place and how it may lead to improving co-created innovation in public policy.

The focus of the pragmatic perspective on the concept of legitimacy coincides well with the collaborative governance context, such that ensuring that actors involved in the collaboration view the collaborative process as legitimate is key to success (Bryson et al., 2006). Establishing internal legitimacy of the collaborative endeavor early within development creates a trusting environment that opens communication among actors (Human & Provan, 2000). Building internal legitimacy is particularly important for interorganizational networks in which a government agency plays a role (Provan & Lemaire, 2012). Thus, if the internal legitimacy of

the collaboration is perceived by members as strong, then power imbalances may no longer be perceived as harmful to collaboration.

Public managers looking to improve perceptions of internal legitimacy of collaborative governance endeavors may benefit by referencing the work of Elinor Ostrom (2000); her design principles for structuring effective collective action have been overlooked by dominant collaborative governance frameworks (i.e., Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2006; Emerson et al., 2012). Based on her empirical research, Ostrom (2000) asserts that "...the world contains multiple types of individuals, some more willing than others to initiate reciprocity to achieve the benefits of collective action" (p. 138), thus certain principles may work better or worse in some situations. The design principles are centered on the idea of having clear rules that guide action related to cooperation among multiple parties for the management of a common-pool resource. Her own words succinctly summarize the first five principles:

When the users of a resource design their own rules (Design Principle 3) that are enforced by local users or accountable to them (Design Principle 4) using graduated sanctions (Design Principle 5) that define who has rights to withdraw from the resource (Design Principle 1) and that effectively assign costs proportionate to benefits (Design Principle 2), collective action and monitoring problems are solved in a reinforcing manner (Ostrom, 2000, p. 151).

She also warns of government overreach: government officials' acceptance of the rules may improve the legitimacy of the rules; yet overreach by officials may be perceived as imposing rules, which will harm rule legitimacy (Ostrom, 2000).

Conclusion

We placed power and power imbalances at the center of discussion in this article to bring needed attention to the importance of this concept in collaborative governance endeavors (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). The concept of power has a long history in social science. As suggested by contemporary sociology and organization study theorists, conceiving power as a family resemblance concept—whereby various conceptualizations of power exist with no one-best conceptualization—is an advantageous way to move forward (Haugaard, 2010; Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). Borrowing from this literature, we view power as family resemblance concept with four different, yet related, perspectives—functional, critical, social construction, and pragmatic. The appropriate perspective to adopt within a conceptual analysis of a collaborative endeavor depends on which perspective is the most useful for each analysis, like selecting the appropriate tool (or tools) to frame a house (Haugaard, 2010). We believe each perspective has its place within research on collaborative governance, and researchers should be clearer about which perspective(s) they are using. Additionally, each perspective may produce different insights when applied to different collaborative governance arrangements, as there are numerous 'interorganizational arrays' in collaborative endeavors (Williams, 2016) that may differ on multiple contingency factors, such as institutional environments (Ran & Qi, 2018).

We demonstrated that the current collaborative governance literature that relies on only the functional and critical perspectives of power offers a limited conceptualization of power. Reliance on a functional perspective leads to the assumption that it is possible to determine all the 'where' and 'how' of power in a collaborative endeavor. In other words, a functional perspective assumes that power is an observable resource that can be manipulated to remove

power imbalances. It also leads to the assumption that these imbalances are harmful to collaboration and need to be rectified via management techniques for collaboration to be effective, an assumption perpetuated by a strict critical perspective of power. While we believe this to be well-intended, we also believe that balancing power is problematic given the dynamic nature of power and the complex context of collaborative governance. For example, since there are typically a wide variety of actors in a collaborative governance arrangement there is a strong potential for actors to have varying perceptions of power—who has power and how much (Huxham & Beech, 2008). Instead, it may be enlightening to both researchers and practitioners to strive to reach an understanding of how taken-for-granted power and policy structures that underlie collaborative governance endeavors have been socially constructed (Gordon, 2009). This is particularly relevant for future research that focuses on the impact of stakeholders entering and exiting collaborative governance endeavors and could explore how such social constructions of power within the group change during these events. Additionally, conducting historical narrative analyses of why certain organizations and policies and their connected power and knowledge structures are in place may prove useful (Hall, 2001). For instance, beginning in the 1990s the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) tied federal homelessness assistance funding to efforts of regional collaboration between nonprofit organizations and subnational governments. This spurred the creation of hundreds of collaborative governance arrangements across the United States that were formed through ‘mandated’ collaborative governance. While certain power imbalances clearly exist, many of these collaboratives have been successful in reducing homelessness (Hafer, 2018).

Additional research has suggested that certain power imbalances may be acceptable given their impact on effectiveness (Choi & Robertson, 2014b; Milward & Provan, 1998; Provan & Kenis, 2008). Collaborative governance endeavors are not simple solutions and require deliberation, compromise, and sacrifice. Ostrom (2000) highlights the possibility for give-and-take in collective action by suggesting that “Individuals who think a set of rules will be effective in producing higher joint benefits and that monitoring (including their own) will protect them against being a sucker are willing to undertake conditional cooperation” (pp. 151–152). An appreciation and acceptance of inevitable power imbalances in collaborative governance is required (Vangen & Huxham, 2014). If actors in collaborative governance endeavors attempt to create implausible distributed power scenarios that result in stagnation and inaction (i.e., collaborative inertia; Vangen & Huxham, 2014), stakeholders may become frustrated with the process and leave the collaboration or exert dominating power to make things happen. Perhaps what is important is to understand how much of a power imbalance is acceptable within the context of specific endeavors to still obtain positive outcomes. In other words, a power structure that has achieved an agreed level of social consensus among collaborative stakeholders (i.e., the collective institutionalism of a power structure), may lead to effective collaborative interactions and outcomes. For example, Milward and Provan (1998) demonstrated that in collaborative governance endeavors that are based in interorganizational networks of mental health service delivery having power concentrated in the hands of a single stakeholder rather than in the hands of the many may lead to improved effectiveness. Future collaborative governance research that explores group consensus on imbalanced power structures may benefit from adopting a pragmatic perspective of power to best understand how on-the-ground, “mundane” practices lead to such consensus. Ethnographic (Cappellaro, 2017) or grounded theory methodologies (Hafer, 2021) are particularly applicable for such research.

We suggest that when considering the concept of power in collaborative governance, it is best for both researchers and public manager practitioners to remain open-minded about the nature of power and power imbalances. To best understand the collective institutionalism of a power structure within collaborative governance arrangements requires adopting multiple perspectives of power, such as the four proposed in the current article, and to not preemptively judge whether power imbalances are inherently bad, or good. As detailed earlier, the often-adopted critical perspective of power supports a normative assumption that power imbalances

are inherently bad, and that public managers ought to use management techniques to manage power (e.g., Ansell & Gash, 2008; Crosby & Bryson, 2005). On the other hand, Miller (2005) has argued that the perhaps well-intentioned actions of the state that attempt to empower the disempowered stakeholder may be acts of government overreach and a threat to the value of personal liberty. In more metaphorical words, “A government that cultivates civic space is, from another perspective, a trespassing government that drives its big clumsy tractors through the gardens of supposedly free property owners” (Miller, 2005, p. 113). Adopting a single perspective of power, such as the critical perspective, may lead to misguided conclusions about the nature and impacts of power within unique collaborative endeavors. Using multiple perspectives of power to consider how power has evolved and how power imbalances have shifted throughout the duration of a collaborative endeavor will lead to well informed conclusions.

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Meanings Matter: The Relationship Between Constitutional Values and Social Justice

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Social upheavals are punctuation marks in the progression toward social equity. The American democratic mythos has evolved since the first days of the republic. Those who were ‘in the room’ when the Constitution was signed drove the interests that were represented and protected. Those in the room now are different, infusing old words with new meanings. Today’s fissured political culture, combined with the ripple effects of a global pandemic, offer another upheaval and create the opportunity to impel social justice. The ongoing process of meaning-making transforms power and advantage. This essay urges public service professionals to adopt a message that champions the mythos while acknowledging lived reality.

Keywords: Regime Values, Social Equity, Historical Analysis, Linguistics

Of course all words are just containers on some level, but that is really the point...Words are crafted by human beings, wielded by human beings. They take on all of our flaws and frailties. They diminish or embolden the truths they arose to carry. We drop and break them sometimes. We renew them, again and again (Tippett, 2016, p. 16).

Public administration is responsive to the political community it serves. Truths are claimed and recast by whomever is ‘in the room.’ In the US, the Constitution is supposed to be the steadying influence as its words shape and constrain policies and programs. But the meanings of its words shift with the times, reflecting who has advantage. How can public administration revere the Constitution while simultaneously grappling with its contradictions? Beard (1936), Bearfield (2009), and Alexander and Stivers (2020), among others, have thought deeply about the paradoxes between constitutional liturgy and political reality. This article argues that these paradoxes exist because words that enshrine the American dream—freedom, liberty, equality, and justice—assume different meanings over time.

The administrative challenge is to honor constitutional traditions and a democratic republic while bearing in mind that the meaning of words evolves as the political community transforms from homogeneous to heterogeneous. Contemporary social problems and cries for social justice accelerate the challenge to broaden this community beyond those well-heeled

European American men who wrote the founding documents and created a political culture in their image.

Contrasting myth with reality, this argument traces how values are interpreted and re-interpreted during four eras of social tumult: the nation's founding in the 18th Century, the Civil War and Reconstruction in the 19th Century, the Civil Rights Era in the 20th Century, and the current era. Social change is accompanied by redefinition—meaning-making—of constitutional values; as meanings evolve, privilege shifts. The first section uses examples of executive actions to demonstrate how meanings evolve. The next section contrasts values attributed to the American democratic mythos to a more complex reality in which meanings evolve over time. Finally, the evolution of meaning in four eras of sweeping administrative change is unpacked by examining the primary narrative and counter-narratives. We conclude by connecting these eras of social upheaval to the present to offer lessons for administrators striving toward more just and equitable public service.

Meanings Are Levers of Change

Meanings drive narratives and narratives justify administrative action. Voices heard or not heard, history remembered or aggressively forgotten, impact the shape of the narrative (Hannah-Jones, 2020). Abigail Adams' entreaty to her husband to 'remember the ladies' went unheeded as the Constitution was crafted (Roberts, 2005). It would not be until the 20th Century that women would be allowed to vote or have their civil rights protected. The men who wrote the founding documents revered freedom, liberty, equality, and justice for themselves, but the meanings of those words were not applied to enslaved persons, indigenous peoples, or women.

Meanings translate into rights and privileges, and from an economic standpoint, they translate into dollars. In 1864, it was thought progressive for women's salaries in federal jobs to be set at \$600 a year, about half that of men for similar work (Van Riper, 1958). Paying women half what men are paid is now unthinkable but paying them three-fourths what men earn is the norm. Today, to every White man's dollar earned, White women earn 78 cents, Black women earn 63 cents, and Latina women earn only 55 cents, despite the 1963 Equal Pay Act (Hegewisch & Tesfaselassie, 2020). The political/cultural meaning of equal is not the dictionary meaning of equal.

Despite passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883, a law designed to ensure that federal employees would be hired on the basis of merit and protected from discrimination, the administration of Woodrow Wilson purged African American employees (O'Reilly, 1997). One of President Eisenhower's earliest executive orders excluded lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) employees from federal employment because those with "sexual perversions" were thought to be security risks (Newland, 2015, p. 48). The list could go on. Interpretations of what is fair, who has privilege, and what 'equal' means, gets redefined and reinterpreted as a result of who is in the room. The words remain the same; their meanings change. Fast forward to today and #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, #StopAsianHate, LGBTQ Pride, and movements for environmental, racial, and immigrant justice stand in contrast to the Capitol mob of January 6, 2021. Social movements are contests over meanings.

Words are not the levers of change; meanings are, and they are reified through administrative actions. At the founding, the Constitution was not written to ensure inclusivity, rights, and freedoms for *all* people, despite what the words say. The fact is that the administrative state bends and expands to adjust to new meanings.

Mythos versus Reality

The Greek word *mýthos* refers to the underlying system of inter-related beliefs that characterize a culture. Mythos provides meaning through narratives. The American democratic mythos is the origin story, offering a narrative arc and guiding beliefs about the nation's position in the world, its government, and its future. It is the story school children are taught about national ideals, founding principles, and exceptionalism.

The democratic mythos centers around concepts of freedom, liberty, equality, and justice. Mythos lulls Americans into complacency and conceals contradictions. Moreover, those who draw attention to this imperfect reality are castigated as radicals until altered meanings become the norm. While Americans uphold freedom as a principle, reality demonstrates that a *positive* vision of freedom—one in which individuals are free to pursue the American dream and to attain education, property, and wealth—is out of reach for most, as inequity and declining social mobility trend upward (Chetty et al., 2014). Although the U.S. has the highest level of inequality among G7 nations (Schaeffer, 2020), American norms do not treat this as contradictory to the meaning of equality. Rights of citizenship imply a one person, one vote standard, and yet this was far from the case at the founding, under the Black Codes, or today as voter suppression efforts persist and accelerate (Epperly et al., 2019; Gooden & Faulkner, 2020). While Americans pledge allegiance to liberty and justice for all, the justice system favors the wealthy and imprisons the poor (Alexander, 2020).

The contrast between constitutional litany and political reality exists because words that enshrine the American dream—freedom, liberty, equality, justice—assume different meanings over time, just as regime values evolve (Rohr, 1989). Table 1 shows how these value-laden words convey meanings at odds with the lived experience of many.

The Administrative State

The administrative state took root in the nation's earliest years. For instance, the 1790 Indian Trade and Intercourse Act allowed broad administrative discretion in federal control of indigenous affairs. Drafted during Washington's administration, it gave deference to bureaucrats. Westward expansion forged a complicated bureaucracy that performed complex tasks in politically charged environments. Administrative decisions ultimately dispossessed and marginalized American Indians (Blackhawk, 2019). The interpretation of democracy's words was reflected in administrative actions then just as they are now.

Four eras punctuate the evolution of meanings: the nation's founding in the 18th Century, Reconstruction in the 19th Century, the Civil Rights Era in the 20th Century, and the post-COVID era (see Table 2). Narratives during these eras offer lessons for public service professionals who strive to make public services more just and equitable. Current contests over voting rights, policing practices, and critical race theory provide the newest context for showing how meanings evolve and how privilege shifts. Differences between narrative and counter-narrative reflect the contest for meanings.

Martin Luther King, Jr. borrowed his famous quote about the arc of the moral universe being long, but bending toward justice, from 19th-century abolitionist Theodore Parker (Block, 2010). That arc is the throughline that connects these eras. History teaches that narratives have counter-narratives, progress is possible only with deliberate action, and justice is always a work in progress. Each era teaches something about the contest between forces, as the following descriptions explain.

Table 1. Words, Mythos, and Contradictions

Word	American Democratic Mythos	Contradictions
Freedom	The quality or state of being free; the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice; liberation from the power of another	Differential levels of arrest and incarceration based on race and socio-economic status; laws that restrict women's freedoms while not affecting men's
Liberty	The power to do as one pleases; the positive enjoyment of social, political, and economic privileges; the power of choice	Choices are constrained by political and economic reality: the impact of immigrant status and zip code on educational and career opportunities and on health status
Equality	The quality or state of being equal; the extent to which persons have an equal voice over decisions that affect them	Unequal pay for equal work; voter disenfranchisement; labor versus management hierarchy; corporate power versus individual power
Justice	The impartial adjustment of conflicting claims	Justice system that disproportionately penalizes the poor and targets people of color

Narrative 1: The Founding

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution contain lofty language of freedom, liberty, and justice. Those ideals were shrouded in White supremacy, applicable to the well-read, educated, landed, White male colonizers rather than *all* people. Those who crafted the documents were guided by the thinking of philosophers who were also bound to socioeconomic, racial, and gender privileges and hierarchies. For instance, John Locke had authored *Two Treatises of Government* (1698), from which Thomas Jefferson derived the call for life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Locke himself was a stockholder in the Royal African Company, which held a monopoly over the British trade in enslaved Africans (Isenberg, 2017).

Viewing governing as the province of those like themselves, the Framers were skeptical about the ability of ordinary people to govern themselves (Stivers, 2008; White, 1948). Governing was the province of the elite. Scholars of administrative constitutionalism argue that elected officers and public administrators were the ones who drove the interpretation and implementation of the Constitution and enacted the mythos, at least until the Civil War (Lee, 2019; Mashaw, 2012). Lee (2019) refutes the view that either the legislative or judicial branches played much of a role in meaning making in the early years: "For every congressional debate over...constitutionality...or presidential message on federal authority over the states, there were many more instances of ordinary administrators, from Secretaries of State down to local customs collectors, who decided what the Constitution meant in practice" (pp. 1714–1715). Thus, founding principles were reified primarily through public administrators: first the 'gentlemen' of the Federalist era, followed by the 'common men' of the Jacksonian era. The founding mythos they relied on was in service to a small, elite portion of the populace.

Counter–Narrative

The Founding Fathers constructed a governmental system that ensured they would have dominion over their homes, their property, and their political lives. As Charles Beard (1913) asserted in his revisionist interpretation of the Founding, the Constitution incorporated protections for private property that served the economic interests of the Framers. Their property consisted of real estate, wives, and enslaved people. The Constitution was based on their worldview, one grounded in White supremacy and male privilege. To view founders as

Table 2. Eras, Narratives, and Counter-Narrative

Era	Narrative	Counter-Narrative
The Founding	Freedom, liberty, equality, and justice are primary motivations of the founding	Nation founded on white male hegemony, chattel slavery, and inequities that advantaged property owners
Reconstruction	Constitutional expansion of freedoms and equality reshaped federalism and promoted a more active federal government	The first experiment in multiracial democratic governance was short-lived; separate but equal laws and customs resulted in separate and unequal communities
The Civil Rights Era	Enshrining of equality, nondiscrimination, and expansion of freedoms and rights via legislation and judicial decisions pointed toward a more just nation	Explicit forms of discrimination were replaced with implicit forms; burdens are placed on the oppressed to file suit against the privileged
Post-COVID	Continued faith that civil rights laws and market dynamics will correct socioeconomic, health, housing, and education disparities	Citizen protests rebuke discrimination and economic inequality, giving rise to multiple movements: #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ Pride, #StopAsianHate, immigrant rights

purely motivated patriots and Founding documents as embodiments of democratic principles is to neglect a reality built on domination and economic exclusion (Brown, 2015; Zinn, 1980).

In many respects, the Constitution is silent on the subjects that are infused into it. When it was written, women were the property of their fathers and then their husbands; and enslaved people were minimized as three-fifths of a person. There was no confidence that ‘common men’ were competent to participate in matters of governance (Van Riper, 1958). And there are gross contradictions between words and actions. For instance, as Thomas Jefferson wrote of the “political and moral evil” of slavery in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (2006, p. 96), he enslaved hundreds of people at his plantation and opined about their physical, mental, and moral inferiority. The lived experiences and philosophical leanings of the founders shaped the meanings of the American mythos, infusing inequality and constructing racial, gender, and class hierarchy into the very words that proclaim the opposite. In other words, contradictions between the words of the Constitution and today’s inequities were also apparent at its ratification in 1788.

A recent counter-narrative brings the year 1619 back into the American lexicon and demonstrates the contrast between mythos and reality. Hannah-Jones (2019) demonstrates that the US is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie. In 1619, twelve years after the English settled Jamestown, one year before the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock, and well over a century before colonists revolted, early colonists bought and enslaved African men and women. While the Declaration of Independence proclaims that all men are created equal and endowed with unalienable rights, the White men who drafted those words did not believe them to be true for the Black people in their midst.

Narrative 2: Race and Reconstruction

At the close of the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era—from the mid-1860s through 1877—was dedicated to stitching together North and South, integrating formerly enslaved persons and Black free men into the body politic, and revising the notion of who is competent to govern and who is entitled to rights and privileges enumerated in the Constitution. The progress that was made was swiftly met by resistance as southern states passed Black Codes to create *de jure* segregation and northern states engaged in *de facto* segregation (Anderson, 2017). Freedom from slavery and involuntary servitude as guaranteed in the 13th Amendment, equal protection of the laws as guaranteed in the 14th Amendment, and the right to vote as provided by the 15th Amendment, required the enforcement power of the federal government as states resisted changes (Foner, 2019).

The Reconstruction Era marks the first attempt to change the meaning ascribed to who is entitled to citizenship rights. Meaning-making affected decisions about who is competent to govern. The administrative state played an active, though embattled, underfunded, and short-lived role in supporting this effort via the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Land—better known as The Freedmen’s Bureau—from 1865 to 1872 (Cimbala & Miller, 1999). This bureau created new precedents, feeding millions, building hospitals, schools, and higher education institutions, serving to assist Black veterans, legalizing marriages, settling labor disputes, and redistributing land (Anderson, 2017). The administrative apparatus of the federal government strived to enact the new meaning of equality and liberty.

Until Reconstruction, the federal government had been viewed as the greatest threat to individual liberty. But during this era, states became the greater danger (Foner, 2019). Federal government became the instrument of enfranchisement for all men, rather than the instrument of enfranchisement for only White men. Ironically, the Civil Rights Amendments expanded authority of the federal government rather than curtailing or restraining governmental power in the service of freedom. Administrative capacity was also enlarged. In 1870, the Department of Justice was established, and its immediate function was to preserve civil rights as the Department set forth to prosecute members of domestic terrorist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan.

Even with civil rights laws and the power of the state, meaning-making was halting. The newly established Department of Justice lacked the manpower, budget, knowledge, or, in some cases, the political or judicial support, to prosecute racially motivated violence prohibited by the Enforcement Act (Foner, 2019). The swift undoing of Reconstruction’s gains, and the subsequent decades of legalized segregation demonstrated the resistance to new meanings of who was worthy of rights of citizenship (Foner, 1988). Echoes of this equivocation appear today in administrative shortcomings of programs whose purpose is to secure justice for the disadvantaged while being underfunded, understaffed, and unsupported by those in power.

Counter–Narrative

The Reconstruction Era, though short-lived, was successful primarily because of *who* was at the table—legislating, leading, and administering governance of the expanded democracy. In the period from 1863 through 1877, more than 1,500 Black elected officials and officeholders have been identified (Bailey, 2006; Brown, 1998; Foner, 1996; Rabinowitz, 1982). This time period expanded universal, free education not just in the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) but also for impoverished White people across the nation (Davis, 2013). Moreover, it laid the foundation for the ongoing fight for affordable healthcare and universal access to medical care (Interlandi, 2019).

An accurate historical accounting, not one that treats representation as a mere nod to diversity and inclusion, is testimony to how democratic self-governance can change meanings. To

restrict the telling of Reconstruction as a tale of political debates among White elected elites is to obscure the active role that Black people played in securing and legislating their own freedom. These soldiers, spies, freedom fighters, and orators refused to let the issue of slavery be pushed under the political rug (Davis, 2013; DuBois, 1935; Foner, 2010). While Black people had to rely on White politicians to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, pass constitutional amendments and civil rights laws before they were allowed to hold office, the persuasive oratory of Frederick Douglass, the political activism of Harriet Tubman, the compelling words of Sojourner Truth, and the actions of many more kept these aspirations alive.

The reactionary backlash to these gains was swift and harsh. As soon as General Oliver of the Freedman's Bureau issued Circular 13 granting 40 acres to free Black men, President Andrew Johnson overturned it. Like a hydra, White supremacist regimes sprang up throughout the South. State legislators defied and dismissed federal authority and reimposed White supremacy through Black Codes (Anderson, 2017). These Codes enforced racial segregation and were legitimated by the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which decreed that separate facilities were constitutional. At the national level, this definition would limp forward until 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education* would decree that separate is not equal. Citizenship rights granted to formerly enslaved people were halted by laws that restricted access to the polls and barred them from the freedoms, public spaces, and benefits that Whites enjoyed. Under the radar was the plight of indigenous peoples, who were not granted the right to vote until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

Narrative 3: The Civil Rights Era

The Civil Rights Era of the 1960s and 1970s was a period of social upheaval that expanded the meanings for freedom, liberty, equality, and justice once more. Propelled by civil rights and antiwar protests, Second Wave feminism, and the Stonewall riots for LGBTQ rights, government responded with legislation enshrining freedom from discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, all served to establish a more active role for the administrative state to advance freedoms and equality for Black and indigenous persons of color (BIPOC), women, and other marginalized groups. Meanwhile, judicial decisions chipped away at masculine advantage. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) established reproductive freedom; *Frontiero v. Richardson* (1973) removed sex discrimination from benefits for military spouses; and *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld* (1975) declared it unconstitutional to determine who is eligible to receive social security benefits for childcare on the basis of sex.

In the cauldron of social unrest that was upending meanings about *whose* rights matter, the first Minnowbrook Conference sought to bring concepts of equity to center stage. The question turned from asking whether a program is effective and efficient, to asking *for whom* the program is effective and efficient (Frederickson, 2005). Rather than focusing on the mathematical principle of equality espoused in the founding documents, debate moved to questions of fairness and justice, balancing an uneven playing field that had marginalized rather than equalized opportunity (Denhardt, 2004; Gooden, 2015; Guy & McCandless, 2012).

Counter-Narrative

Civil rights, while necessary, do not, of themselves, guarantee substantive rights in regard to jobs, education, healthcare, housing, and a justice system that is just for all. As Davis (2013) explains, the expansiveness of freedom was narrowed into a smaller frame enumerating civil rights. Legislative victories obscured the ongoing battle for equity, serving a vision of White benevolence over harsher truths of lingering racism and sexism. The Civil Rights Movement was conscripted into the story of how Americans, in their inherent goodness, had perfected

the Union and overcome divisions (Davis, 2013). History was bent in service of the mythos, while brutal police killings of African Americans continued, and sex harassment had a chilling effect on women's career opportunities.

The Fair Housing Act proved toothless and ineffective, and new tools of more subtle discrimination, such as zoning laws, perpetuated and exacerbated patterns of segregation (Rothstein, 2017). While segregation in public schools was outlawed with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973) decision permitted school funding differences based on local property taxes and values. The outcome substituted economic segregation for racial segregation, while effectively upholding both. While housing and educational opportunities remained segregated, so too did employment prospects. Although employment discrimination was outlawed under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, testing requirements and other hiring practices perpetuated unequal systems alongside a myth of bureaucratic neutrality and meritocracy (Portillo et al., 2019).

A parallel story of forgotten pioneers and progress echoes in academia. While the Minnowbrook Conference refocused the field's attention on social equity, there were no women or people of color present at that original conference (Ricucci, 2018), and until recently few scholars have credited Frances Harriet Williams as a pioneer of these causes decades earlier (Gooden, 2017). Williams, an African American woman, a public servant in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration, and an intellectual leader, championed social and racial equity in practice as she led the Office of Price Administration and in her scholarship (Williams, 1947).

Narrative 4: Meaning-Making in the Post-2020 Era

The fourth era to examine is the present, as the meaning of freedom, liberty, equality, and justice are under the magnifying glass once again. This era is a perfect storm where #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, #StopAsianHate, and the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic magnify economic and health inequities for BIPOC, caregivers, women, and exacerbated prejudice and hate against the Asian community. This moment, driven by political and social unrest, economic uncertainty, widespread disinformation campaigns, and a predictable backlash of White rage (Anderson, 2017), comes on the heels of a neoliberal free-for-all that saw economic inequality skyrocket.

When the pandemic arrived in the US, governors and mayors asked residents to join together to combat further spread of the virus. The refrain 'we are in this together' rang hollow against the narrative of individualism and unfettered self-interest of the American economy. The juxtaposition of obligation to community against individual rights has resulted in an uneasy truce between those who wear a mask and get vaccinated and those who refuse to wear a mask or declare 'my body, my choice' in regard to vaccinations.

Decades of faith in limited government and the power of the market—a pervasive and dominant narrative—has resulted in extraordinary economic inequality. The top one percent of households have more capital than the combined wealth of the bottom eighty percent (Editorial Board, 2020). #MeToo protests challenge toxic masculinity and Black Lives Matter and #StopAsianHate protests amplify the disparate treatment and violence that disproportionately impacts those who are not of European extraction. Videos of unwarranted police killings of African Americans challenge the mythos of a well-intentioned and benevolent state that treats everyone justly. Health and income disparities mean that persons of color and low-wage earners are more likely to be exposed to the virus at the workplace and less likely to receive the healthcare they need when they contract it. Like picking a scab, the bleeding of prior eras occurs again.

The gulf between mythos and reality means that the narrative races to catch up. There are structural inequities that policies and programs have either cemented in place or failed to resolve. Meaning-making that advances toward greater inclusion and equity is where hope resides, and the administrative state could be the vehicle to advance it. Local governments are revising police protocols, and public programs are revisiting policies and procedures to address systems that produce disparate impacts on the marginalized.

While the confluence of social inequity, economic inequality, health disparities, and the persistent spread of COVID magnify ironies and hypocrisies of the narrative, faith in the constitutional liturgy continues. Protestors make calls for justice with the refrain: 'No justice, no peace.' There is sufficient faith in the promises of the mythos to keep trying, as social movements grapple with the definitions of freedom and liberty, equality and equity, and justice.

Counter–Narrative

As COVID-19 moves from a pandemic crisis to an endemic virus, the nation reckons with the new normal. Congress and the national media continue to grapple with truth-telling, blame, and the narrative of the insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 (Tucker & Balsamo, 2021). These events rendered visible the otherwise hidden rips and tears in the national mythos. Videos of police brutality remove deniability that persons of color are treated differently from Whites. Meanwhile, images of an ill-prepared, sometimes complicit Capitol Police taking selfies with insurrectionists underscore this disparate treatment and beg Americans to reexamine this harsh, complex reality instead of the sugarcoated ideal of a nation marching steadily toward justice (Kendi, 2021).

All these realities take the shine off the narrative of a persistent march toward freedom, liberty, equality, and justice. The pushback against equal rights and opportunities—and the reaction to a reckoning to tell our nation's history in a more honest manner—is daunting. In public administration, the emphasis on social equity as an imperative strains under the weight and realization that crises deepen inequities at the intersections of identity.

Conclusion

While these eras might feel like distant history, the throughline that connects them is prominent. Progress often feels like three steps forward and two steps back, particularly for groups vying for a seat at the table. But it is worth remembering the lessons of history: Narratives have counter-narratives, and progress is not inevitable. It is possible, however, with deliberate action.

The work of public administration is not just 'running' a constitution. It is about infusing the words of the national narrative—freedom, liberty, equality, justice—with meaning. Commitment to this challenge requires deep reflection if it is to lead to shifts in policy and practice in a way that advances social justice. As history shows, meaning-making is a continuous process, taking place after periods of tumult, to be followed by self-satisfaction until equilibrium fails and meaning-making happens again. Even when there is reliance on evidence-based decision making, evidence is always used as part of a narrative and it is the narrative that alters the constructed images that guide administrative action (Schlauffer et al., 2018).

Administrative agencies, through rulemaking and program design, are interpreters and implementors of mythos, as are protestors in the streets. While representative bureaucracy is essential, rarely is it sufficient to ensure that all voices are heard. Similarly, coproduction efforts bring more voices to the table, but that, too is insufficient (Gazley et al., 2020). It is the

combined effect of three factors—administrative action, representative participants actively engaged in decision making, and a guiding narrative—that impels social justice and equitable policy implementation.

Social tumult is like a mirror. From the nation's founding to the Civil War; from reconstruction to the Civil Rights Acts of the twentieth century; from the Black Power movement to Black Lives Matter, the body politic draws attention to the gap between mythos and reality. In 1985, Frederickson and Hart called for a benevolent public service that is guided by "the moral truths embodied in the enabling documents" of the nation (p. 548). Shortly thereafter, Frederickson (1990) pointed out the reality that government had failed in its promise to provide equal protection to everyone. These contradictions continue. To ensure social equity and advance social justice, public service professionals must adopt a two-pronged approach, one which champions the mythos, upholding and relying on the founding documents, while acknowledging lived reality and the evolution of meaning.

A taut rubber band, when released, returns to its original form. In the case of American political culture, this means that White men's interests take precedence over others, just as they did in 1789. Demands for social equity are revising this and driving meaning-making. A grander, more inclusive, more just, and more equitable mythos is possible. Being explicit about meanings facilitates re-evaluation of who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged by government action. In doing so, forces for and against freedom, liberty, equality, and justice, become explicit.

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Researching Voluntary Action: Innovations and Challenges, Edited by Jon Dean and Eddy Hogg

Seth Meyer – Bridgewater State University

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Keywords: Nonprofit Research, Research Methods, Voluntary Action

Though research methods is an important topic, it is hard to keep up with all of the different methods which can be used to examine the nonprofit sector. Jon Dean and Eddy Hogg's new edited volume, *Researching Voluntary Action* fills an important void in nonprofit studies by leading the discussion on research methods for nonprofit researchers. This book, which provides first-person narratives of experiences with new and unique research methods, allows students of nonprofit studies to think about how to move the field forward. While many nonprofit researchers would benefit from this book, this would be useful in a PhD classroom for research methods.

This book is divided into 15 chapters, each of which looks at a different method used in nonprofit studies. Through a first-person narrative, each author provides guidance into how they did research using the method they are describing. By using a first-person narrative approach, the authors allow the reader to get a feel for how individuals can use these methods through a real-world example. As this is an edited volume, some chapters are better than others. The best include chapter 9 looking at television and media (by Kimberly Wiley) and chapter 11 on regulatory data (by Diarmuid McDonnell and Alasdair C. Rutherford). The authors of these chapters not only talk about their experiences doing their research, they also provide tables and charts to help guide the reader. These tables help the reader grasp the main ideas of the chapters and allows the reader something easy to go back to when using these new methods. While some of the chapters focused more on how to do methods, a few chapters felt more as an academic article focused on theory rather than practice. While theory is important, this text makes a valuable contribution by providing a guide for readers to model in their own studies.

These 15 chapters are varied in the methods discussed. Although they do not cover all of the newer methods which are used (experiments are noticeably absent from this book), it is still fairly comprehensive. Following an introduction, chapter 2 looks at focus groups. Chapter 3 explores interpretive ethnography, using a charity shop as the case study. Next, chapter 4 explains how (and why) to do research on giving circles. Following this, chapter 5 explores peer research. In nonprofit research, where we often do research with nonprofit organizations,

this provides guidance into how to coproduce research with these nonprofits. The next two chapters (6 and 7) explore how to use advertising and visual images for research, followed by archive research. Chapter 8 discusses using the Mass Observation dataset and program, followed by using television media as a method in chapter 9. Chapter 10 looks at using reporting as a method, followed by regulatory data as a research tool in chapter 11. Following this, chapter 12 explores merging survey and register data, with a focus on volunteering (chapter 14 also looks at volunteerism but focuses more on volunteer theory than research practice). Chapter 13 explores using spatial data, and chapter 14 is a conclusion of the book. Overall, this text provides an extensive introduction to nontraditional methods, pushing the field forward methodologically.

One of the strengths of this book is the personal style in which it is written. As each chapter was written from a first-person perspective, the authors give you a strong idea of what it was like to use these methods in research, which is both interesting and refreshing. Authors provide specific examples of their research so that the reader can see, from start to finish, what it is like to use the methods that the authors are discussing. This personal perspective provides something that is not often seen in a methods section; it is a step-by-step view into how to use the methods, including the challenges that people may face when doing this type of research.

I offer a few suggestions to strengthen future additions of this text. Though each chapter has an additional readings section, each section only has three additional readings. It would be useful if there was a more extensive 'additional resources' section at the end of each chapter. A longer list of additional resources would be helpful for researchers who are attempting to use new methods. A second way that this book could be improved, which mimics an issue present in many nonprofit studies, is the focus on only a few countries, mostly in the Global North. The editors do acknowledge this issue in the conclusion of their book. More work on the complexities of doing some of these research methods in diverse settings, especially for countries with multiple languages, is needed in the field. Lastly, it would be helpful for all authors to address common challenges or pitfalls in research design and execution. Some chapters provided this perspective, such as chapter 10, 'Annual Reporting in Voluntary Organizations: Opportunities for Content Analysis Research' by Carolyn Cordery and Danielle McConville which explored the challenges of using reporting data from nonprofit organizations or chapter 8, 'Using Mass Observation as a Source of Qualitative Secondary Data for Interdisciplinary Longitudinal Research on Voluntary Action' by Rose Lindsey, who acknowledged the demographic problems that were present in the Mass Observation study. These challenges help the reader plan when using these new methods.

I recommend this book to all researchers of nonprofit studies (and public administration in general), specifically those pursuing PhDs. The narratives on how to do new methods within nonprofit studies is valuable; it allows the field to think creatively about the questions we are asking and the way we are collecting data.

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