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Research Articles

New Voices

Book Review

JPNA
JOURNAL OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT AFFAIRS
a journal of the Midwest Public Affairs Conference

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Statement of Purpose

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 Note

Christopher R. Prentice – University of North Carolina Wilmington
Richard M. Clerkin – University of North Carolina Wilmington

This issue marks our first as Editors-in-Chief of *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs* (JPNA). We'd like to thank Deborah Carroll for her leadership of the journal and commitment to ensuring a smooth transition. We extend our appreciation to the Associate Editors, Section Editors, and Editorial Board members whose service concluded at the end of 2023: Davia Downey, Olha Krupa, Helen Yu, Jamie Levine Daniel, Nicole Elias, Seth Wright, Rajade Berry-James, Christine Martell, Tina Nabatchi, Ileana Steccolini, and Wie Yusuf. Deborah and her editorial team's impact will continue to be seen through the beginning of our tenure. All of the articles in this issue and several articles in the next issue (Volume 10, Issue 2) were shepherded through the review process by the previous editorial team.

We also thank the Midwest Public Affairs Conference board – publisher of JPNA – for entrusting us to serve the public and nonprofit affairs scholarly community in this shared role. We accept the responsibility that comes with the position and look forward to building on the excellent work of our predecessors. JPNA is growing and maturing as a respected outlet for scholarship on "the affairs and management of public and nonprofit organizations." Manuscript submissions are up, the journal's CiteScore is climbing, and JPNA obtained its first Impact Factor last year.

We intend to continue this growth trajectory by maintaining and enhancing the quality of the journal and have established a few short-term goals towards these efforts. First, we will expand the size and breadth of the Editorial Board. Jesse Lecy, Rebecca Nesbit, Kirsten Kinzer, and Laurie Paarlberg are new additions to the board; more new members will be announced in subsequent notes as we work to identify emerging scholars to bring on to the board. Second, we will continue to introduce (and reintroduce) the journal to scholars via regional, national, and international conferences related to public and nonprofit affairs. Finally, we will focus on expanding manuscript submissions among scholars in our networks and through general and targeted calls for papers.

In the longer-term, as we continue to build the reputation and standing of the journal, we would like to see JPNA as the first target for public and nonprofit affairs scholars seeking to publish their research. Acknowledging the newness of the journal relative to others and the competitive landscape, we maintain one significant advantage over many peers: JPNA is completely open access with no fees for making your work available to scholars around the globe. So, bookmark our website (www.jpna.org), frequent the journal often to read online first articles, and send us your best work!

Prentice, C. R. and Clerkin, R. M. (2024). Editor's Note. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *10*(1), 4–6. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.ssr1cy78

This issue offers six research articles, one new voices article, and a book review covering a variety of relevant and timely topics. Those articles are introduced below, starting with Dula and Hansen's (2024) contribution.

Checkout charity is the name given to the commonplace and ubiquitous practice of asking consumers to give charitable donations – e.g., round-up for charity – when paying for goods at a retail store. Dula and Hansen (2024) conduct a national survey of individuals to investigate the demographics and determinants of this type of impulse giving and analyze these phenomena through the social heuristics hypothesis. Their findings suggest the factors associated with checkout charity at the register may differ from traditional giving, with women, middle class individuals, and those who are married or divorced all more likely to give.

Nonprofits adopt and implement social media to boost stakeholder engagement and raise community awareness. Literature over the last two decades have focused on identifying the factors associated with social media adoption – e.g., mission, capacity, professionalization, etc. – and has primarily focused on nonprofit use of Facebook and Twitter. In this mixed-methods analysis, DeMasters et al. (2024) explore three related research questions: nonprofit use of TikTok, alignment of TikTok content with stated social media strategies, and the impact of this content on user engagement. Findings suggest nonprofits producing authentic, community-building content generate greater user engagement.

Interorganizational collaboration is commonplace across multiple policy areas as a means for overcoming organizational limitations to produce greater public good. Roberts (2024) conducts an in-depth case study of three refugee-serving nonprofit organizations with similar missions and goals that collaborate to provide services. Her findings illustrate the benefits to interorganizational collaboration for nonprofits with limited capacity and specifically for those entities providing refugee resettlement services. Results also highlight collaborative challenges facing these organizations.

While the work of many NGOs decolonizing their structures and processes has been in process for over 25 years, pressures to continue this work have reemerged with the rising focus of inequities not only in the global south but within the global north in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, the COVID-19 crisis, and the disparate impacts of the climate crisis. Cascant-Sempere's (2024) case study analysis of the UK NGO, ActionAid examines the progress it has made to date, as well as some of the headwinds it faces in continuing to decolonize their structures (where they have been more successful) and putting the needs of addressing poverty both internationally and in the UK on more equal footing (where they have been less successful). She normatively argues, that if NGOs are going to continue their decolonizing work, they need to seek out ways to tie their work to a global justice narrative, but that it will take time to build those alliances.

Fiscal federalism in the context of primary, secondary, and higher education touch on factors including financing, spending, intergovernmental coordination, decentralization of authority, and accountability. In their case study, Zamirbekkyzy, Saparova, and Bulakbay (2024) investigate education financing and interbudgetary relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The authors reviewed state regulations, long-term state planning documents, republican (i.e., federal) and local budgets, and scientific output to analyze the current state of education financing in Kazakhstan. They conclude with recommendations for practice, including improving interbudgetary relations to increase the efficient distribution of financial resources, enhancing opportunities for educational institutions to generate additional funds, and allowing for greater decentralization to account for regional variation.

Given the relative predominance of people of the various Christian traditions in both the US overall and among public administrations, we know relatively little about how an individual's faith impacts how they think about and engage in their public service work. Horne (2024) engages in primary data collection to explicitly explore how Christian public managers engage in faith-work integration. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, Horne (2024) develops a model that lays out how a public manager perceives the religious liberty they have to express their fair tin the workplace and how firmly they perceive a sacred/secular divide ought to be, impacts how they engage in faith-work integration. The findings from this research indicates that the ways that Christian public administrators integrate their faith and work lives and very consistent with public administration goals and values. This research as suggests some implications for practice; public administrators should receive training that help managers understand the legal boundaries of faith-work integration as well as normalize employees expressing their religion-based motivations within those boundaries.

Governments adopt the Open Government Partnership (OGP) process as a structured process to engage civil society voices in each stage of the policy process. Using in-depth case studies, Khutkyy & Carmichael (2024) examine the evolution of OGP principles in Canada and New Zealand in developing National Action Plans (NAP). While their comparative case studies find similar levels of public participation, involve – on a scale of no consultation, inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower – in voting for open government policy proposals, the levels of open government outcomes were very different. From their research, the authors surmise that the political culture of the government impacts how the cocreation processes are implemented and can lead to divergent outcomes across governments.

Finally, in her review of the book, *Understanding Nonprofit work: A Communication* Perspective, by Koschmann & Sanders (2020), Steimel (2024) describes the important insights achieved by taking a communication perspective on nonprofits and the mission-oriented work they engage in over the more traditional transmission perspective. Steimel's (2024) review of the book highlights the importance of relationships as fundamental to all nonprofit work, whether it be analyzing their leadership, management, and governance; navigating beyond the market/mission dichotomy of nonprofit work; and engaging in collaborative work within and across sectors and even internationally. She argues the communication perspective of the book challenges readers to consider how these relationships and interactions are what create nonprofits and the work that they do.

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Research Article

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Who Will Spare a Dime? Impulse Giving Decisions at the Checkout

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Campaigns asking for donations at the checkout of retail stores through rounding-up, donating an amount, or purchasing a token are becoming ubiquitous. The concept of "checkout charity" is really one of impulse giving, i.e., a prosocial activity done under time constraints. Industry reports inform us how much money the corporate campaigns are generating, but we have yet to develop a philanthropic profile of an "impulse giver" or compare them with traditional donors. Using the social heuristics hypothesis, this research helps us to better understand impulse giving and the individuals who engage in it. Women, the middle class, and those who are married or divorced were all more likely to give at the register. In contrast with formal giving, education levels had little relation to giving, and those approaching and over 50 years old were less likely to give. Familiarity with the charity and being Black or African-American correlate with greater amounts donated.

Keywords: checkout charity; impulse giving; charitable giving; social heuristics hypothesis; survey research

Introduction

Businesses are increasingly inclined to ask customers for donations to a charity at the register, providing little time for the donor/customer to identify the organization or decide on the benefits of giving. This practice, often called "checkout charity," is becoming more and more ubiquitous (Sudbury & Vossler, 2021; Thurston, 2013; Engage for Good; 2021, 2023). Engage for Good (2023) does a biennial market study of point-of-sale fundraising campaigns that raise at least $1 million. At least 77 point-of-sale fundraising campaigns in 2022 met this threshold; total funds raised by these campaigns at the checkout in 2022 exceeded $749 million. However, little is known about individuals' actual perceptions of and involvement in "impulse giving" or who is likely to give. This study uses data from a national sample of individuals aged 18 or older (N = 1,373) to explore the phenomenon of "impulse giving," i.e., spontaneous prosocial giving, in this case, prompted at a store checkout, such as rounding up the total of your purchase, adding an additional amount on to your charge, or purchasing a token to be displayed within the store to show evidence of donation to a cause.

In this paper, we first address research in terms of impulse giving from the business, psychological, and behavioral economics perspectives. This leads to five key questions. First, how common is giving at the register? What are the most popular methods of giving at the checkout? Who participates in this kind of giving? Are certain groups more likely to impulse give? How well

Dula, L., & Hansen, R.K. (2024). Who will spare a dime? Impulse giving decisions at the checkout. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *10*(1), 7–26. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.hjym2r29

do donors know the organizations that will be receiving the donations? The discussion highlights the evolving nature of checkout charity as an impulse decision and what the future may hold for this type of giving strategy. We provide initial findings regarding these questions and pose avenues for continued research in the discussion and conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

The Phenomenon of "Checkout Charity"

Being asked is one of the primary reasons people give to charity (Neumayr & Handy, 2019). Point-of-sale (POS) fundraising, or asking customers to donate in some fashion to a nonprofit cause either selected by the company or the customer at the time of checkout, is being implemented by businesses online and off as a means of corporate impression management.[1] Business consultant research reports have shown that businesses displaying a strong social purpose are rewarded with customers and customer loyalty. For example, Zeno's (2020) consumer survey found that customers are four times as likely to make a purchase from a company they perceive as having a strong social purpose and six times as likely to defend such an organization that experiences public criticism.

"Checkout charity" is conceptually distinct from cause-related marketing, another means of combining a market product or brand with a charitable outcome. While some take a broad view of cause-related marketing (Stole, 2006), its most popular meaning is a donation triggered by a purchase—in other words, a commercial co-venture, reportable on an organization's IRS form 990, and a regulated activity in several states (National Council of Nonprofits, 2023). For example, if Build-a-Bear workshop has an agreement with World Wildlife Fund, the company will give a specified donation to the charity each time specific branded products are purchased. While triggered by consumer behavior, this is a donation from the corporation to the charity. In contrast, "checkout charity" provides a prompt at the checkout asking customers whether they would like to make a gift to a charity selected by the retailer (Zaretsky, 2020). The consumer gets the tax benefits, as opposed to the business. There is evidence that cause-related marketing can have a negative effect on charitable donations (Krishna, 2011); to our knowledge, the effect of "checkout charity" on other giving to charity has not been determined.

The amounts donated at the checkout can vary widely. One can round-up their total charge by a few cents to the nearest dollar, can add a specified dollar amount, occasionally as high as they'd like, or purchase a token to be displayed in the store. Rounding-up results in a gift that never exceeds $1, while the other means often ask for higher donation amounts. This paper reviews all three methods.

Not only are businesses embracing checkout charity for their corporate social responsibility efforts, but it also benefits recipient nonprofits. In 2014, 71% of respondents in a sample of 3,030 U.S. citizens reported donating at some time at the point of sale (Good Scout Group, 2015). Engage for Good's (2023) survey found that the top 77 point-of-sale campaigns raised over $749 million for charities in 2022, which was an increase of 24% from 2020. In 2022, Engage for Good found that 64% of campaigns used the checkout pin pad to solicit a donation, while 17% asked the cashier to directly ask the customer. Year over year since 2012, the returns from point-of-sale campaigns have grown. However, what is not known is whether more people are giving, or whether they are giving more money. Nor do we have a good, recent review of the demographics of those who choose to give at the checkout to understand who is most likely to give. This is

[1] While accounting literature often imparts a deceptive motive to impression management (e.g., Brennan & Merkl-Davies, 2013), we follow a view of impression management as "tactical, but not necessarily deceptive" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 41).

important, both from a practical standpoint as well as from a theoretical standpoint. Understanding your donors is an important aspect of fundraising, and, while companies organize and facilitate POS campaigns, it is their customers who decide whether or not they will make a gift. From a conceptual standpoint, our current understanding of donors is based on the best evidence we have available typically measuring "formal" giving directly to charities, as detailed below in the "Demographics and Giving" section. Evidence of who gives at the POS may help us broaden or refine our ideas of who is generous in the United States and how they engage in charitable giving (Osili et al., 2019).

There has been some backlash to POS charity campaigns. In 2013, the *Tampa Bay Times* interviewed customers about their feelings toward checkout charity. One woman said she was "uncomfortable being solicited every time" (p. 4). Others have argued that checkout charity campaigns increase anxiety among consumers, with making a donation serving to mitigate that anxiety (Hepworth, Lee, & Zablah, 2021). Being asked to donate in person increases social pressure to act prosocially (DellaVigna, List, & Malmendier, 2012); even being observed while making a decision to give or not increases social pressure to be seen doing good things (Bhati & Hansen, 2020; Powell, Roberts, & Nettle, 2012; Ariely, Bacha, & Meier, 2009). Perhaps in response to this, Catalist (2017) found that 78% of customers prefer being asked to donate electronically at the register via the pin pad rather than by a person, limiting giving to those paying with a card. Another less flattering factor has been dubbed the "loose change effect" (Sudbury & Vossler, 2021). This concept highlights the convenience of giving whatever loose change the individual might have to reduce guilt upon being asked for a small donation (Fielding & Knowles, 2015). This may also play into POS rounding-up approaches. Bernholtz (2021) argues that asking for donations at the checkout commodifies concern, provides little transparency as to what is happening to the money, and "fails on every front when it comes to good giving" (p. 142). The amount and customer experience of POS donations have been reviewed in business and marketing literature. Behaviorally, this giving may also have a relation to the speed with which customers must make their decision to give, which is explored more in the next section.

Giving on Impulse, Giving upon Deliberation

According to a Children's Miracle Network (2023) report on a survey of 4,000 respondents in 2022, rounding-up has increased in popularity, with respondents stating by a 2:1 ratio that this is how they prefer to give. This "change" may be viewed as similar to the "loose change" effect. Customers may be asked to donate directly by the checkout attendant or electronically through the POS system, avoiding any verbal request. There are a number of survey reports from marketing consultant groups that ask questions about consumers' "checkout charity." Each finds slightly different results in the percentage of survey recipients who agree to donate. These are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Surveys Assessing Checkout Giving

Year of survey	Company researching	Survey size	Percentage of individuals reporting giving at the checkout
2014	Good Scout Group	3,030	71%
2016	Catalist	1,700	72%
2019	YouGov	1,242	32%
2020	Engage for Good/ Accelerist	Not reported	86%
2023	Children's Miracle Network	4,000	55%

The preference for being asked to donate electronically may indicate that elements of anxiety from being observed are alleviated. The request appears on the POS machine for only a few seconds during the checkout process, similar to the time it takes to be asked directly. When considering the behavioral motivations behind POS giving, it is good to understand the time-frame a consumer generally has to make the decision to give. It takes a customer an estimated 13.4 seconds to pay with cash (Abad et al., 2016), meaning the ask to donate would be a fraction of that time. The duration of time required to make the donation ask on a POS machine may be shorter but, in both cases, the process of asking and responding presumably lasts less than 10 seconds. The decision to donate must be made quickly, even impulsively. This becomes important to note as research and theories of economic behavior focusing on impulsive prosocial decision-making, which will be discussed below, often limit the duration of the decision-making time to 10 seconds or less (Capraro & Cococcioni, 2016).

Psychologists and behavioral economists have been investigating impulsive versus deliberative prosocial decision-making for at least the past decade (Bago et al., 2021; Capraro, 2019; Capraro & Cococcioni, 2016; Capraro & Cococcioni, 2015; Carlson et al., 2016; Karlan et al., 2019; Grossman & Weele, 2017; Mrkva, 2017; Rand et al., 2014; Rand et al., 2012). This paper refers to making a decision to donate money to a charity under time restrictions, usually 5 to 10 seconds, as "impulse giving." Impulse givers are not investigating the subjects of their giving. One of the key themes within the literature is Rand's social heuristics hypothesis (SHH), which relies on a dual decision-making process. This theory asserts that "people internalize strategies that are typically advantageous and successful in their daily social interactions" (Rand et al., 2014, p. 2). This socialization leads to automatic, impulsive responses they may bring to sudden inquiries or decisions they must make in a time-limited situation, especially when they are unfamiliar with the ask. However, if the individual is given a longer amount of time to deliberate, they may change their decision, overriding their impulsive response. The SHH states that people have intuitive and deliberate sets of preferences that are socialized based on the context of the decision to be made, and that these impulses tend to be prosocial rather than egoistic. Rand et al. (2014) also state, "daily life typically involves factors such as repetition, reputation and the threat of sanctions, all of which can make cooperation in one's long-term self-interest" (p. 2). Making repeated prosocial decisions that lead to prosocial behaviors may help us all in the long run.

To test the SHH theory of prosocial, impulsive giving, many lab experiments on impulsive giving focus on the distribution of some amount of money through a variety of games (see Bago et al., 2021; Capraro, 2019; Capraro & Cococcioni, 2016; and Grossman & Van der Weele, 2017, for examples). One game commonly used to test giving impulses is the dictator game. This involves providing an individual with an amount of money and asking them to give some portion of it to charity or another person or keep it for themselves. This structure aligns with donation requests posed at checkout counters as customers have a particular amount of money that they can decide to give to a charity under time pressure. Impulse giving is a real-life dictator game. Rand and co-authors (2012 & 2014) find that people under time pressure significantly chose to give more money—up to 21.5% more—than in deliberative decision-making situations. Carlson et al. (2016) found similar results.

However, there are some contradictory studies indicating that time constraints may not in itself lead to more impulse giving. Tinghög et al. (2016) found that time pressure made no difference in donation decisions. Kohlberg (1984) and later Capraro and Cococcioni (2016) discuss the "rationalist approach," which argues that there is some cognition even in time-limited circumstances. However, having naïve participants, those unfamiliar with the experiment or ask, is often a key element in testing prosocial behavior as the decision to give may change over time

if repeatedly asked. Some research indicates that experienced respondents—those familiar with the ask or prosocial giving game—give more than impulse givers (Capraro & Cococcioni, 2015) indicating that, even given time to change their mind, individuals still give.

Impulse giving at the checkout is a type of dictator game, testing behavioral theories of economics and psychology such as the social heuristics hypothesis. The customer has an amount of money, and they can make a prosocial decision to share that money with a charity or not. As an exploratory study, this current research does not enact an actual dictator game experiment, but understanding prosocial giving decisions as an impulse-giving theory does illuminate the potential motivations for these respondents. Individuals with different backgrounds such as demographic characteristics may have different heuristics and social norms that alter their response to dictator games. For example, Capraro (2019) finds gender is a moderator of impulse giving, with women being more generous during dictator games, especially under intuitive, time-limited situations. We explore this and other demographics further in the next section.

Demographics and Giving

Several studies examine the relationships between demographic factors and formal charitable giving (e.g., Osili, Clark, & Han, 2019; Osili et al., 2019; Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2010).[2] Many of these studies rely on the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS) of the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID) to help us understand formal giving—that is, financial gifts made to charitable organizations. Among these, demographics commonly associated with charitable giving include age, household income, wealth, level of education, geographical location, marital status (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021), gender (Capraro, 2019; Osili, Clark, & Han, 2019; Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Denton, 2006), race (Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Denton, 2006), and religion (Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2010; Brooks, 2003). According to data collected in 2019, nearly half of all US households made charitable donations of at least $25 in 2018, with the median household giving $850 over the year; the mean average was $2,581 (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021). Older adults are more likely to give to charity, with two-thirds of households headed by an adult of 65 years or older making gifts, compared with one-third of households headed by an adult aged 40 years or less (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021). Those who are married or widowed are significantly more generous than those who are divorced or single (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021), and single women are more generous than single men (Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Denton, 2006; Piper & Schnepf, 2008). Race has some correlation to giving. For example, Osili and Bhetaria (2022) write that while African-American and Hispanic households give less frequently to charity, African-American households give the largest proportion of their wealth. Informal giving is also highest amongst African-American households versus Hispanic, Asian, and White households. A 2015 report by Blackbaud (Rovner, Loeb, Carson, & McCarthy, 2015) states that African-American giving is frequently more spontaneous, and they are more likely to say they donated at the checkout.

Household income level is positively associated with the likelihood of giving and the amount given to charities, as is wealth (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021).[3] Completing a college degree is also

[2] See Bekkers and Wiepking (2011b) and also Wiepking and Bekkers (2012) for a review of studies on this topic.

[3] Studies dating back to Clotfelter and Steurle (1981) have found evidence of a "U-shaped curve," i.e., that, when giving is divided by income, those who are poorer give more generously than those who are middle-income, and that generosity rises again at the highest income levels. However, James and Sharpe's (2007) analysis of data from the consumer expenditure survey finds this is due to the "committed few," i.e., those who are both wealthier and of retirement age. Duffy, Steinberg, Hansen, and Tian (2014) confirmed similar findings using the PPS.

positively associated with incidence and level of giving (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2021). Brown (2005) in the United States argues that higher education results in greater social networks, which affect giving. It should be noted that these relationships are correlations rather than necessarily explaining cause.

Much less is known about informal charitable giving. Osili et al. (2019) suggest that some of the declines in formal charitable giving post the 2008 recession may correspond with increases in less documented, informal ways of helping. We have limited information when we focus on the individuals contributing money at the checkout. To date, the best data available are from marketing consultants (see Table 1).

This study is exploratory, but the literature leads us to the following research propositions. Our first broader research question (RQ1) is what is the percentage of individuals who donate at the checkout? We would assume, given the time constraints and SHH, that it is fairly high. There is quite a bit of variation in previous studies, and we seek to add to this line of research through nonaffiliated academic research. Research Question 2 asks what the most common method of POS giving is used by donors as reported by the donors themselves. While we know that rounding up is now the most popularly used request by companies, we do not yet have much academic research on this topic. Furthermore, based on previous research, we expect that giving patterns will vary across demographic groups. This leads us to research questions 3 and 4:

> RQ3: Will there be statistically significant differences in the likelihood of impulse giving across demographic groups?
> RQ4: Will there be statistically significant differences in the annual donation amounts across demographic groups?
>
> Finally, based upon the research above, we hypothesize that:
>
> H1: Donors who are most familiar with the organizations benefitting will be statistically significantly likely to donate larger sums overall.
>
> We now review our survey research design and data.

Research Design

The questions in this study were part of a larger survey on charitable giving patterns. The survey itself used a Qualtrics platform soliciting respondents via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) through the third-party system CloudResearch from September 9 through September 15, 2021. Two identical surveys were launched, which solicited 700 self-identified women and 700 self-identified men. The respondents (or *workers*) were required to be U.S. citizens over the age of 18. These demographics are controlled for by MTurk. *Workers* who fit these parameters see a solicitation to participate in the survey (a HIT) and the amount of money that will be paid for its full completion (Stritch, Jin Pederson, & Taggart, 2017). The title of the HIT was "Donor Response to Appeals (~27 minutes)." This included the estimated completion time that Qualtrics provided; however, the average amount of time to complete the survey was recorded at about 12 minutes. Using Qualtrics, respondents were also asked to provide a generated completion code to weed out bots or AI. After removing incomplete surveys, those with incorrect or missing completion codes, and those who self-identified as gender nonbinary,[4] the sample was n = 1,373.

[4] Each sample included MTurk-registered men and women, but we gave every respondent the opportunity to self-identify outside of the gender binary. Whenever this analysis reviews men, it included men and transgender men, likewise for the women's sample. While the option to choose nonbinary or genderqueer

There are benefits and limitations to using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. *Workers* have a wide array of survey options and can even take surveys as their full-time job. The amount of money provided and topics displayed may lead to irregular demographics and bias. Inattention and speeding through surveys just to achieve payment are other limitations. The fact this survey had a steady average completion time indicates that this may not be a concern. MTurk remains a popular survey platform in major social science and hard science fields. For example, economists and psychologists have been engaging in its use (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014; Stritch, Jin Pederson, & Taggart, 2017).

Data and Analysis

As stated above, demographics can be skewed in MTurk samples due to self-selection. This research has a balanced sample of men and women, but no other socioeconomic demographics were specifically controlled. To identify representativeness of the general population, basic descriptive statistics were calculated. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2. 75% of respondents are White, versus the national population, which, as of the 2020 Census, was 61.6% nationally (US Census, 2021). The plurality of survey respondents was near the US median age of 38 years old (35%); 43% of this sample have lower than average mean household incomes, and the political leanings of the group are more liberal than the population at large (Saad, 2021). Our sample is less likely to be married and more likely to be divorced than the US national average, although the likelihood of being single was similar across our sample and the national average (Fry & Parker, 2021; Mayol-García et al., 2021).[5]

Our survey asked people to self-report whether they had donated money at a store checkout over the previous year. We asked: "Have you made a donation when prompted to at a store checkout in the last year?" (yes/no). If they answered "yes," we asked five more questions:

- Did you round up your total charge?
- Did you add an additional amount, such as $1 or $5?
- Did you purchase a small token that would be displayed within the store?
- Thinking of the last time you donated this way, how familiar were you with the charity?
- How much money do you think you have donated in this way over the past year?

Prompts such as these are referred to as "input cues," prompting respondents to think about methods of making a donation and tend to reflect an increased incidence of giving, particularly with smaller gifts (Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2007). Giving at the checkout is unlikely to be a strongly memorable event for most people; however, in their study using the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Study, Bekkers and Wiepking (2011a) found that low salience typically did not result in over- or under-self-reporting of past donations.

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was present, so few selected this option, it could not be analyzed separately. They have been dropped from this analysis, though future work will hopefully be able to better capture nonbinary and genderqueer individuals.

[5] Only 13% of respondents reported being married or in a long-term partnership, compared with an estimated 53% of Americans currently married nationally (Fry & Parker, 2021); 40% of respondents reported being divorced; nationally, 17% of women and 15% of men are estimated to be currently divorced, although that number rises to 33% of women and 34% of men who have ever had a divorce (Mayol-García et al., 2021); 36% reported being single, which is generally consistent with national averages (Fry & Parker, 2021; Mayol-García et al., 2021).

Table 2 Survey Participant Demographics

	Freq	%
Donated at Checkout in Past Year		
No	651	46.77
Yes	741	53.23
Age		
18–23	46	3.3
24–29	218	15.66
30–39	486	34.91
40–49	287	20.62
50–59	176	12.64
60–64	97	6.97
65+	82	5.89
Gender		
Man	693	49.79
Woman	682	48.99
Transgender woman	3	0.22
Transgender man	2	0.14
Household Income		
Less than $25K	204	14.73
$25K–$34.9K	155	11.19
$35K–$49.9K	244	17.62
$50K–$74.9K	300	21.66
$75K–$99.9K	222	16.03
$100K–$149.9K	159	11.48
$150K+	101	7.29
Race/Ethnicity		

White	1,047	75.22
Black or African-American	119	8.55
Hispanic or Latina/Latino	70	5.03
Asian or Asian-American	107	7.69
Native American	3	0.22
Middle Eastern	2	0.14
Two or more races	41	2.95
Political Views		
Very conservative	82	5.9
Conservative	182	13.09
Moderately conservative	138	9.93
Moderate	257	18.49
Moderately liberal	202	14.53
Liberal	302	21.73
Very liberal	227	16.33
Education		
<High school degree	7	0.5
High school degree or equivalent	148	10.64
Some college, no degree	286	20.56
Associate degree	156	11.21
Bachelor degree	593	42.63
Graduate degree	201	14.45
Employment		
Employed, working 1–39 hours per week	894	64.32

Employed, working 40 or more hours per week	233	16.76
Not employed, looking for work	99	7.12
Not employed, NOT looking for work	67	4.82
Retired	70	5.04
Disabled, not able to work	27	1.94
Marital Status		
Single	505	36.33
Married	171	12.3
Long-term partnership	12	0.86
Separated	120	8.63
Divorced	559	40.22
Widowed	23	1.65
Has children		
No	746	53.63
Yes	645	46.37

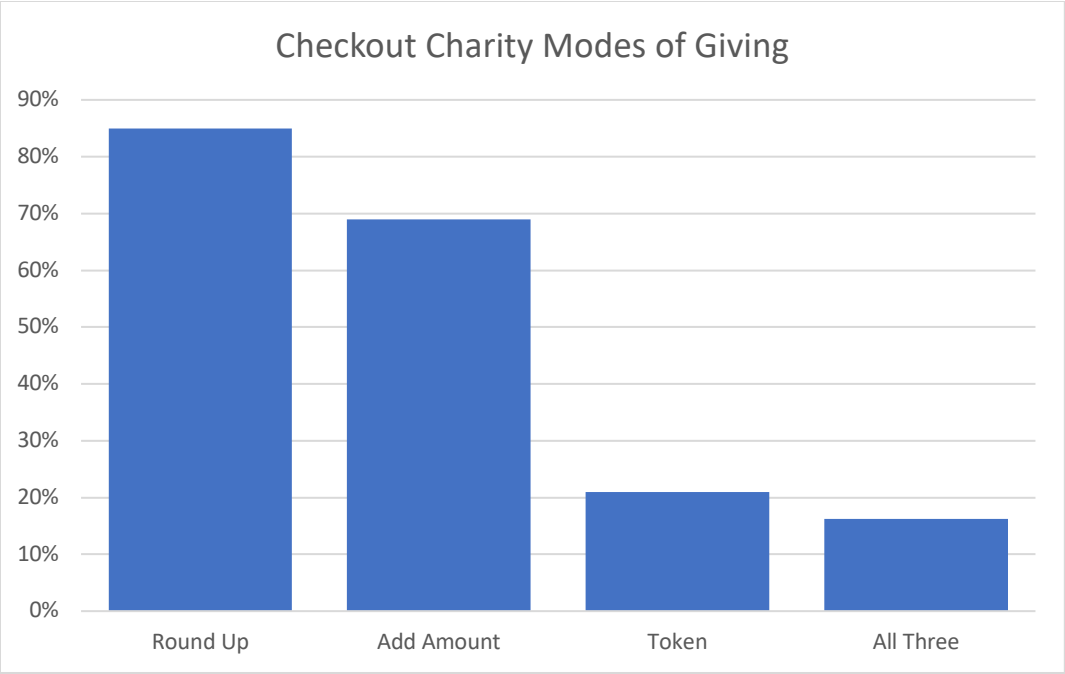
For analysis, research questions 1 and 2 are evaluated through descriptive statistics. We have used a logistic regression model for the third research question because it is a binary dependent variable, and we cannot assume linearity. Marginal effects were run to better interpret the results of the logistic regression. RQ 4 and Hypothesis 1 were analyzed using OLS regression, allowing for direct interpretation of the data.

Findings

Over half—53.23% (741 respondents)—of those surveyed reported impulse giving at a store checkout. This is much lower than the proportions reported in the 2014, 2016, and 2020 marketing reports detailed above. This current research finding is still a higher percentage than what was reported in the YouGov survey of 2019, which was 32% of respondents, but about on par with the Children's Miracle Network survey in 2022.

Of those who reported engaging in impulse giving, 85% reported rounding-up their total charge, 69% added a set dollar amount to their purchase, and 21% reported purchasing a token to be displayed in the store. See Figure 1 for a visual comparison. Finally, 59.5% gave in more than one way and 16.2% gave through all three modes. This addresses our second research question.

Figure 1.



The next research question addresses, based on previous giving research, whether there will be demographic differences in who decides to give at the register. A logistic regression was run on the variable "Donate_yes_no" where "yes" was coded as "1." All collected demographic information was tested, with the variables listed in Table 2. The results of the logistic regression for all statistically significant variables are in Table 3.

Table 3 Statistically Relevant Results: Logistic Regression – Likelihood to Impulse Give at Register

Variables	
Age	
24–29 years old	-0.0523
	(0.345)
30–39	-0.0288
	(0.335)
40–49	-0.101
	(0.349)
50–59	-0.655+
	(0.369)
60–64	-1.034*
	(0.410)
65 or older	-0.610
	(0.443)
Gender	
Women	0.275*
	(0.121)

Household Income	
$25K–$34.9K	0.192
	(0.231)
$35K–$49.9K	0.475*
	(0.211)
$50K–$74.9K	0.429*
	(0.210)
$75K–$99.9K	0.620**
	(0.235)
$100K–$149.9K	0.487+
	(0.257)
$150K+	-0.0214
	(0.292)
Relationship Status	
Married	0.503**
	(0.191)
Divorced	0.559**
	(0.176)
Constant	0.661
	(0.966)
Observations	1,373
Standard errors in parentheses	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$

When it comes to the likelihood of respondents to impulse give at the register, we find that demographics do play a role. Above we see a variety of statistically significant demographic variables. After running their marginal effects, we find that there are some meaningful differences. Respondents who are 50–64 years old are 15%–24% less likely to give at the register than their Gen-Z counterparts, contrary to formal, deliberative giving. Those with a household income over $35,000 but below $100,000 a year were between 10% and 14% more likely to donate, and those who were married or divorced were also more likely to donate by about 12% and 13%, respectively. Similar to other types of giving, however, women are about 6% more likely to impulse-give at the checkout. We find that demographics have significant relationships with impulse giving, in response to Research Question 3.

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the question "Thinking of the last time you donated this way, how familiar were you with the charity?" The question of familiarity with the charity was only visible to those who donated. The majority of respondents were "somewhat familiar" with the charity to which they donated at about 57%. About 30.5% were very familiar with the organization. Those who were not familiar with the organization but still donated were in the minority at about 12.5% of respondents.

Table 4 Givers' Familiarity with Charities

	Freq.	%
Not at all familiar	92	12.48
Somewhat familiar	420	56.99
Very familiar	225	30.53
Total	737	100

Table 5 provides regression results for the amount of money donated amongst those who impulse-gave at the register. This question stated: "How much money do you think you have donated in this way over the past year?" This was an open-ended question only for those who responded that they did impulse-give and the respondent could write their estimated response. The statistically significant regression results are exclusively shared for simplicity's sake. This regression tests demographics and the familiarity of the respondent with the most recent charity to which they donated.

Table 5 Regression of Demographics on Annual Impulse Giving Amounts

Variables	
Very familiar with charity	74.24*
	(35.72)
Income percentage from gig work	0.776*
	(0.380)
	(44.83)
Not employed, NOT looking for work	-100.1*
	(48.45)
	(52.65)
Black or African-American	122.8**
	(37.43)
Constant	-89.08
	(149.8)
Observations	724
R-squared	0.126
Standard errors in parentheses	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$

Table 4 indicates that most respondents who impulse-gave at the register were "somewhat familiar" with the organization. Nearly half as many stated that they were "very familiar." However, as we see in Table 5, being "somewhat familiar" did not result in larger overall donation amounts. Compared with being "not at all familiar" only being "very familiar" had a statistically significant relationship with donating a larger sum over the past year. Those that were very familiar gave approximately $74 more annually than those who were not at all familiar with the organization.

The most drastic impact on giving at the register was being Black or African-American, who reported giving $122.80 more annually than a White respondent. This is in alignment with previous research on African-American giving detailed above.

The most frequent annual amount given was $10 (96 respondents, 13.3%), though 12% of respondents gave $20 annually, and 10% gave $50, which was also the median amount given annually overall. These data address RQ4 and support Hypothesis 1.

Discussion and Conclusion

Compared with previous industry reports, our findings show that about half of respondents engage in impulse-giving at the checkout. Why might this be? We've identified four possible explanations. First, in the psychological and economic literature, studies often look for "naïve" participants, meaning they have no previous experience with this type of dictator experiment. The findings suggest that, as respondents became accustomed to this line of questioning, they tend to donate less than those who were new to the ask (Capraro & Cococcioni, 2015). Given that impulse-giving is essentially a real-life dictator game, and impulse-giving requests at the checkout are so ubiquitous, respondents may now be familiar with the ask. Their prosocial heuristics can change from one of immediate generosity or feelings of pressure to a learned automatic response (Rand et al., 2014). This dual-process decision-making is still in alignment with Rand's social heuristics hypothesis in that deliberation over time regarding whether to donate at the checkout can alter the intuitive response to be donative. Second, over time persistent asks might result in decreasing responses due to the request annoying shoppers (Sakakibara, Kyriazis, & Algie, 2019). Third, there is the possibility of bias in the multiple industry reports. They are targeted at companies and are not subject to peer review. Finally, some report that cashiers bypass the donation question, making it even more simple to ignore a request (Engage for Good, 2023; 2021).

We do find very significant differences by race, with respondents who were Black or African-American reporting much higher giving at the checkout than others—about $100 more per year than White respondents. We have examined our data, and our outliers for high amounts reported were overwhelmingly White. We recommend future research intentionally recruiting a sample split by race to examine racial and ethnic factors. Another variable missing from this study is religious affiliation. Being religious is often correlated with higher levels of charitable giving, and this variable is missing from the current study.

We find that even households at low- to middle-incomes engage in giving at the checkout, with households between $35,000–$100,000 significantly more likely to give in this way; households making between $100,000–$150,000 were marginally significantly more likely to give at the register.[6] This contrasts with findings of formal charity, which show a positive correlation between income and the likelihood of making a gift, especially at the highest income levels.

Our findings on age and education suggest that the dynamics of impulse giving are different from those of formal charitable donations. Households aged 65+ are twice as likely to give to formal charity as households that are aged 40 or under, but our respondents indicated that no one age group was more likely to give at the checkout. Instead, those aged 60–64 were significantly *less* likely to give on impulse, and those aged 50–60 were marginally less likely to give. Education was also not a factor among these respondents, as opposed to formal giving research findings.

[6] Using a family of three to illustrate, a recent study from the Pew Research Center places the median income for a lower-income household at $29,963 per year; for a middle-income household at $90,131; and for an upper-income household at $219,572 (Kochhar & Sechopoulos, 2022).

Some findings align with previous research on formal giving. For example, women were more likely to give on impulse. This is an interesting finding, as data suggests men and women shop at similar rates (CapitalOne Shopping Research, 2023). Data also suggest there are different shopping patterns for different types of goods (e.g., Schaeffer, 2019), but checkout campaigns are ubiquitous across types of companies, from fast food to auto parts to grocery stores (Engage for Good, 2023). Similarly, our findings on impulse giving and previous research on formal giving show that being married or widowed is significantly associated with making charitable donations. We find related but slightly different results: being married or divorced was more strongly associated with impulse giving at the POS.

One limitation of this study is that it is based on self-reported giving at the checkout within the past year. Memory is often inaccurate (Koriat, Goldsmith, & Pansky, 2000), but past research has found strong correlations between the giving people self-reported and the gifts actually recorded, although the amounts recalled were generally larger than the actual gifts recorded by an average 30% (in their case, just under €8) (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011a). In this study, on average, impulse givers state that they give about $15 per month at the checkout. Surveys relying on individual recall are the primary data source for philanthropic demographics of formal giving, with regular iterations of surveys such as Giving and Volunteering in the United States, the General Social Survey, and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2007). Surveys that use input cues, such as ours (see Data and Analysis section), tend to show higher participation in giving and, similarly, higher incidence of small gift amounts (Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2007).

We are also unaware whether the stores respondents shopped at were partnering with large, well-known charities or smaller, less well-known ones. Our finding that respondents who were very familiar with the charity gave more may be confounded by the fact these charities with brand awareness are the most commonly chosen organizations by corporations, as the businesses seek to gain a positive reputation (Harrison, 2019; Peng et. al, 2019; Vafeiadis et al., 2021). Finally, this survey was fielded during the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall of 2021, which may have led to fewer individuals being exposed to checkout impulse-giving requests. We did, however, ask specifically for information regarding their practices over the previous year and vaccines for adults became available approximately halfway through that time.

We have a few observations that can help nonprofits and retailers consider a POS charitable campaign. First, whether because of retailer preference, customer preference, or some combination, "buying" tokens was relatively uncommon among participants; rounding up was the most common form of POS giving. Individual transactions are generally small, but in some cases – whether due to individual characteristics, organizational characteristics, or other underlying factors – the amounts given can be quite large over time. Understanding this will help nonprofits manage their expectations.

A charity's brand awareness plays a part in people's POS-giving behavior. More people participated in the campaign when individuals were at a minimum "somewhat familiar" with the charity that would benefit. Individuals who were "very familiar" with the charity that would benefit gave more generously. Organizations and retailers can take advantage of the space at the cash register to make an impression, but they should also consider visibility campaigns outside the retail environment to increase familiarity with the recipient organization and its good work.

Finally, businesses should increase trustworthiness by being transparent about whether customers are funding the donations. A legal complaint filed in 2022 against the pharmacy chain CVS Health Corporation alleged that CVS's POS campaign was merely reimbursing CVS for a

corporate gift to the American Diabetes Association, resulting in negative publicity both for CVS and for the practice of POS fundraising as a practice (Gagosz, 2022). This can be avoided by transparency in communications with consumers by businesses running campaigns.

This study expands our understanding of impulse giving and checkout charity from a donor's perspective. While the Engage for Good reports inform us as to how much money businesses are generating, we have yet to discern a donor profile for someone who may give at the checkout or a possible motivation for giving. This research helps complete that picture: In a national sample, we found that those reporting giving at the checkout tended to be women under age 65 who were married or divorced, with household incomes up to $100,000. This study begins to break new ground in the study of informal impulse giving and importantly recenters the research away from the corporations engaging in the ask onto the individuals who are responding to requests.

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Research Article

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Forging Connections: Nonprofits, TikTok, and Authentic Engagement – A Mixed-Methods Study

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TikTok, a social media platform designed for sharing short videos ("microvlogs"), provides an opportunity to learn how nonprofits adapt and implement social media strategies. Similarly, exploring nonprofits' behavior on TikTok is useful for analyzing the impact that strategy has on the content nonprofits produce and user engagement. Using a mixed-methods design, this study analyzed data from 29 interviews and 575 microvlogs to answer three questions. First, how are nonprofits incorporating microvlogging into their social media strategy? Second, applying the hierarchy of engagement framework, do nonprofits produce social media content aligned with their expressed strategy? Finally, does alignment between strategy and output affect user engagement? The findings indicate that, unlike Facebook and Twitter/X, nonprofits on TikTok harness community-building content to facilitate information sharing and action. Strategy-output alignment significantly increases user engagement, but only for community-building content. Thus, social media strategy may be less important than authenticity on TikTok.

Keywords: nonprofits; social media; microvlogs; TikTok

Nonprofits' adoption and use of social media are informed by a number of factors, including the organization's mission, strategy, and capacity (Seo & Vu, 2020; Xie, 2021; Nah & Saxton, 2013) as well as a desire to raise community awareness (Campbell et al., 2014) and engage stakeholders (Campbell & Lambright, 2020). Such influences on adoption and utilization have been explored throughout the nonprofit literature. Yet, questions remain regarding the extent to which nonprofits are using social media strategically, whether nonprofits' social media behavior indeed aligns with their strategy, and the ways in which strategy impacts user engagement.

The majority of nonprofit social media research to date has focused exclusively on microblogging platforms such as Facebook and Twitter/X[1], leaving to question not only how nonprofits adapt

[1] Though X is currently the name of the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, when this research (as well as the research cited) was conducted, it was known as Twitter. Therefore, we referred to it as Twitter/X for consistency.

DeMasters, C., Morgan, K., Schwoerer, K., & Wiley, K. (2024). Forging connections: Nonprofits, TikTok, and authentic engagement – a mixed-methods study. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *10*(1), 27–51. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.dky82f18

their social media strategy across platforms but also the effectiveness of such strategies on emerging platforms. These are important questions given that user engagement depends upon individualizing one's approach to each social media website (Campbell & Lambright, 2020; Wiley, et al., 2023) and because of the ways new platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram provide users with innovative ways to engage. Nonprofit subsectors behave differently from each other on social media (Campbell et al., 2014; Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020); however, few studies have compared a cross-section of nonprofit subsectors to determine how the sector as a whole engages on social media (Campbell & Lambright, 2020; Guo & Saxton, 2018). Examining a cross-section of nonprofits as they join a new social media platform could explain (1) how strategy develops and (2) the relationship between strategy, content produced, and user engagement.

The emergence of TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram provides an opportunity for nonprofits to rethink their social media strategy. These platforms require users to create short videos including audio and text, which the authors have termed "microvlogs," allowing nonprofits to open new lines of communication with stakeholders. TikTok and Snapchat are especially helpful for targeting younger generations like Generation Z and Generation Alpha (Gottfried, 2024). Over 50% of nonprofits in the U.S. and Canada have Instagram accounts ((Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2019). This indicates nonprofits see value in emerging microvlogging sites and will soon branch out to newer platforms such as Twitch and Patreon, which have yet to fully capture the nonprofit community's attention.

Created in 2016, TikTok has over 150 million users in the United States. (Tiktok newsroom, 2023) and is one of the fastest-growing social networks of all time. A recent study by Wiley et al. (2023) located nonprofits across seven subsectors that used the platform, suggesting a wide acceptance of TikTok among nonprofits. Kim et al. (2023) found that 11% of environmental NGOs had TikTok accounts. Despite a thorough search, the authors could not identify how many nonprofits currently have a TikTok account, but, given the rapid growth in the number of TikTok users, the authors suspect it will not be long before most nonprofits on social media will have a TikTok presence as well. As such, TikTok provides a strong platform for learning how and when nonprofits effectively execute social media strategies and engage users.

The authors ask three research questions: How are nonprofits incorporating microvlogs (TikTok posts) into their social media strategy? Do nonprofits produce TikTok content aligned with their expressed social media strategy? Does TikTok strategy and output alignment affect user engagement? The mixed-methods research design was conducted in three stages. First, the authors analyzed 29 nonprofit TikTok accounts by qualitatively coding the on-screen activity of individual microvlogs employing guidance from Wiley and Evans (2022) and Lybecker et al. (2015). Second, the authors interviewed the accounts' social media coordinators about their strategy for the platform. This allowed the authors to pair the expressed social media strategy with their observed output and then assess the alignment of the two. Finally, the authors conducted an exploratory analysis to examine whether strategy-output alignment affected user engagement. The dataset included a cross-section of seven nonprofit subsectors, including arts, culture, and humanities; education; environment and animals; health; human services; international and foreign affairs; and public, societal benefit.[2] The findings indicate that most nonprofits join TikTok to reach Generation Z. Nonprofits deployed strategies that sharply distinguished this microvlogging platform from microblogging platforms. The exploratory analysis comparing nonprofits' expressed strategy to the social media behavior (output) observed showed that two-

[2] Nonprofits were grouped by their U.S. Internal Revenue Service National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities code.

thirds of the accounts were in strategy-output alignment. Surprisingly, alignment significantly increased engagement but only for certain types of content. Otherwise, alignment did not necessarily affect user engagement.

These findings contribute to the evolving research on nonprofits' use of social media and makes three main contributions to the literature. First, methodologically, the authors developed an original data set from a cross-section of seven aforementioned nonprofit subsectors. Using a combination of qualitative data collected from interviews with 29 nonprofits, further analysis of their social media accounts, and corresponding social media analytics, this mixed-methods study goes beyond observing social media behavior to understand the strategies driving the content nonprofits are making on TikTok. By including an exploratory component with the purpose of better understanding how nonprofit social media strategy may influence important outcomes such as user engagement, the study provides an opportunity to delve into largely unexplored questions about nonprofits' social media strategy. To date, the literature has largely focused on observable outputs such as social media behavior while neglecting to examine the process driving those outputs, creating a gap in understanding the theoretical mechanisms driving the relationship between inputs (strategy) and outputs (content). Therefore, another important contribution of this research is its ability to begin to empirically explore the relationship among nonprofits' social media strategy, observable outputs, and potential links to engagement. This development lays the groundwork for further theory-driven research that can help to identify salient mechanisms at play. After all, user engagement is the currency nonprofits seek on social media (Campbell et al., 2014; Guo & Saxton, 2018), so understanding potential theoretical drivers of social media inputs and outputs is an important avenue of future research for scholars.

Last, this study provides a number of practical strategies for nonprofits. TikTok poses unique challenges that differentiate its adoption from the adoption of Facebook and Twitter/X. In contrast with other platforms, TikTok's video length, messaging popularity, and user engagement metrics determine who sees which posts so users are presented with a stream of content not limited to the accounts they follow. Therefore, authenticity and incorporation of the platform's current trends place TikTok content on the social media feeds of other users with similar interests (Geyser, 2024). The complexity of engagement on TikTok means nonprofits cannot simply repeat messaging from other platforms; thus, content specifically for TikTok is more effective at engaging stakeholders (Li et al., 2021; Wiley et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2019). Furthermore, the findings suggest that social media strategy may actually be less important than authenticity on TikTok, encouraging nonprofits to embrace the community building power of the platform. Isolating these effective uses of social media not only broadens an organization's digital reach but impacts its bottom line in terms of dollars raised, people engaged, and beneficiaries served. As such, the authors expect the findings of this research to be useful for nonprofits, especially those looking to make the most out of new and emerging microvlogging platforms.

Literature Review

Social Media Outputs and Outcomes

Social media activity can be analyzed by (1) the content created and posted, or its *output*, and (2) what the posts produce in terms of social capital, resources, and goal fulfillment, or its *outcome*. Measuring outputs and outcomes on microblogging platforms is less dynamic than microvlogging platforms (Zhu et al., 2019; Wiley et al., 2023), making the evaluation of nonprofit activity on Facebook and Twitter/X more straightforward than on TikTok and Snapchat. Nonprofit social media outputs and outcomes have most often been assessed on Facebook and Twitter/X (microblogging platforms) than on microvlogging sites like TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram (Campbell & Lambright, 2020). Scholars have analyzed longer-form videos (e.g., YouTube) to interpret policy narratives (Lybecker et al., 2015; McBeth et al., 2012) and used YouTube videos

to make sense of a nonprofit's social media strategy. McBeth et al.'s (2012) work supports our argument that what nonprofits produce on social media—in terms of outputs and outcomes—can be just as important as a nonprofit's intentionality behind the posts.

According to the social media hierarchy of engagement framework, nonprofits produce three types of microblog outputs or functions: information sharing; community building; and mobilizing stakeholders through action (Campbell & Lambright, 2020; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). On Twitter/X and Facebook, nonprofits produce mostly information-sharing and action-driving microblogs (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). The microblog type that garners the most attention on Facebook (measured through likes, comments, and shares) is information-sharing. Action-oriented microblogs gain the least attention despite being the most commonly posted type (Klafke et al., 2021). However, action-oriented messaging is more productive for larger interest groups (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Social media makes information-sharing and community-building more efficient for nonprofits and are effective strategies regardless of the nonprofit's size. While each type of social media output is important, different platform styles require individualized strategies for content creation (Campbell & Lambright, 2020). For instance, Wiley et al. (2023) found that microvlogs exhibiting community building were more common and gained the most user engagement on TikTok (measured through a combination of views and likes. Li et al. (2021) and Zhu et al. (2019) found similar engagement results in governmental public health messaging on TikTok.

Nonprofit social media outcomes are often assessed through engagement measures, funds raised, and policy goals achieved. Attention on Twitter/X (measured through retweets and favorites) is also associated with a nonprofit's network, posting frequency, and the number of conversations it joins or engages in (Guo & Saxton, 2018). Action-oriented social media behavior can help interest groups drive public attention and overcome limits in membership recruitment. Attention to this messaging is more valuable than the number of individuals engaged in the interest group (Kanol & Nat, 2021). On the other hand, the strength and size of an organization's network on Twitter/X and posting frequency are positively associated with donations during a fundraising campaign (McKeever, 2017). Larger interest groups can use social media to mobilize stakeholders due to larger resources (i.e., budget, staff, credibility, and political connections) (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020; Schwoerer, 2019; Schwoerer, 2023).

Social Media Strategy

Presence of Social Media Strategy

A comprehensive social media strategy includes stated goals with measurable outcome indicators, designated staff with outlined job duties for social media tasks, and formal policy (Campbell et al., 2014; Choi & Theoni, 2016; Linke & Zerfass, 2012; Xie, 2021). However, scholarship indicates that nonprofits often lack a comprehensive social media strategy. Most organizations, including nonprofits, do not have indicators to measure the performance of their social media activities (Linke & Zerfass, 2012). Social media objectives are often unclear and do not align well with the organization's overall marketing objectives (Choi & Theoni, 2016). In general, social media strategies can be difficult for organizations because they require regulation and flexibility (Linke & Zerfass, 2012). Top and middle management likely do not understand or strongly support social media marketing strategies or new platform adoption (Choi & Theoni, 2016). This absence of vision and strategy serves as a barrier to the use of social media (Campbell et al., 2014) and can mean that outputs and outcomes of nonprofit social media activity will likely be unfocused as organizations master a new social media strategy or platform.

Developing a Social Media Strategy

Guo and Saxton (2020) propose three levels of outcomes for social media use: (1) building social media capital; (2) leveraging social capital to build tangible and intangible organizational resources; and (3) using these resources toward fulfilling their mission, meeting fundraising goals, and the realization of policy efforts. Nonprofits should closely integrate social media communication into organizational public relations and branding communications (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). However, if nonprofits focus simply on building social media capital, organizations will struggle to fulfill their mission through social media (Plowman & Wilson, 2018). Specialists argue that, without an intentional strategy, there is little point in using social media (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). Thus, success depends on leveraging social media capital into resources (Guo & Saxton, 2020).

Given that all nonprofit resources should be devoted to mission fulfillment, nonprofits' activity on social media is of particular interest. Management of a comprehensive strategy is resource-heavy in pecuniary costs such as staffing and technology. Mission-fulfillment activity on social media tends to be indirect and more incorporated into resource development to support the mission rather than actual service provision (Saxton & Wang, 2014). For example, Campbell et al. (2014) found three key reasons human service nonprofits engage on Twitter/X and Facebook: marketing organizational activities; remaining relevant to key constituencies; and raising community awareness. Similarly, organizations join Snapchat to generate awareness of their interests and attract a younger audience (Wilson et al., 2020). Likewise, the opportunity to capture the attention of a significantly younger audience on TikTok in order to engage more young people in their mission was the primary motivation behind the American Red Cross' adoption and continued use of TikTok (Correll & Buckholtz, 2023). These findings suggest that mission fulfillment via social media is a multistep process.

For instance, mission relevance to messaging can be categorized as strategic or supportive. Guo and Saxton (2014) found that Twitter/X messaging by advocacy nonprofits is predominantly supportive. Whereas interest groups translate social media capital into resources to fulfill policy goals, which is much more strategic (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Previous studies reveal that social media strategies of human service nonprofits are not always well-developed to promote or fulfill organizational goals (Campbell et al., 2014).

To date, the literature distinguishes social media strategy from social media outputs and outcomes, with virtually no research that examines the relationship among strategy, outputs, and outcomes. However, determining how and when nonprofit social media strategy aligns with social media outputs and outcomes can help to define success on microblogging and microvlogging platforms, especially as new platforms emerge. Therefore, the authors aim to learn more about how nonprofits' social media strategy aligns with social media outputs and outcomes. Such findings are necessary for later determining how nonprofits across the sector intend to use social media to fulfill their missions.

Managing the Nonprofit Social Media Account

The presence of a designated social media manager or team might indicate that an organization is strategic in its social media activity. This is because the employment of a social media manager would be helpful in the nonprofits' ability to translate followers and user engagement into resources and then mission fulfillment. Additionally, it symbolizes an organization's investment in social media to fulfill a goal or purpose. Unfortunately, many nonprofits lack a designated social media manager. Smaller human services nonprofits, for example, are unlikely to have a staff position dedicated to social media management (Young, 2017). Similarly, charities typically lean on internal staffing for social media management, with a majority (69%) of social media managers

in IT departments and 40% in marketing or public relations departments (Barnes, 2014). Sometimes, it is unclear who manages social media presence and platform accounts. A small minority of organizations (13%) outsource social media management (Barnes, 2014). On the other hand, well-resourced interest groups are more likely to have staff that manage their social media presence and strategy (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Well-resourced organizations will likely have an advantage in the social media space by employing a social media manager and team (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Designated, skilled social media coordinators can help ensure that social media strategy aligns with social media output and outcomes.

To summarize, the conditions determining success for nonprofits on social media are the nonprofits' mission area, the amount of time a nonprofit has been active on the social media platform, and the presence of a designated social media coordinator. Additionally, mission area and platform type (microblogging or microvlogging) are associated with specific social media activities (Campbell & Lambright, 2020; Wiley et al., 2023). However, as the literature suggests, if nonprofits' success on social media is indeed dependent on the presence of a mission-driven strategy and a designated social media manager, nonprofits are in trouble. Studying the intentionality behind nonprofits' social media activity is an important step in building conceptual knowledge about nonprofits' use of new and emerging social media platforms as well as guiding best practices for how nonprofits can use them successfully.

Methods

Using Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) hierarchy of engagement social media framework, the authors assessed the alignment between social media strategy and the actual social media content of 29 nonprofits by (1) studying their TikTok accounts and (2) interviewing their social media coordinators. The authors textually analyzed microvlogs and content analyzed interview transcripts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Wiley & Evans, 2022). The research was completed in multiple stages. First, the team collected, coded, and analyzed the social media activity using a deductive approach and a theory-driven coding schema. Then, the team interviewed the social media coordinators and determined their social media strategy according to the framework. Finally, alignment was determined and tested for its effect on user engagement. The authors anticipated that social media input (expressed strategy) would drive output (social media content) and result in the intended outcome (higher levels of user engagement).

Stage 1: Identifying, Coding, and Analyzing TikTok Accounts

TikTok Data Set

As part of a larger study on microvlogs, the team identified active nonprofit TikTok accounts in the United States (Wiley et al., 2023). Because TikTok was new and few nonprofits had TikTok accounts during data collection (July 2020–March 2021), a random sample was not possible. The team initially identified 147 TikTok accounts by searching the platform using variations of hashtags such as #nonprofit, #fundraising, #charity, or #donate. They also identified accounts or nonprofit names with which they were already familiar. The authors purged inactive accounts, accounts based outside of the United States, and accounts without 501(c)3, 501(c)4, or 501(c)6 status. This dropped the sample to 78 TikTok accounts.

Textual Analysis of Microvlogs

Approximately 20 microvlogs from each account were coded using a theoretically guided codebook (Saldaña, 2015).[3] A sampling schema ensured an even distribution of the coded microvlogs from July 2020 to March 2021. This period occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic

[3] In two cases, 18 microvlogs were coded. In six cases, 19 were coded. In 19 cases, 20 were coded. In one case 21 were coded. In one case, 24 were coded.

and included a presidential threat to shut down the platform, the 2020 Election, the winter holiday season, and the January 6th Insurrection. Spreading the analysis across this period was essential for capturing variations over time and avoiding short periods where national and international events heavily influenced social media behavior. For instance, many nonprofits emphasize fundraising during the holiday season, which may not reflect their broader social media strategy. Additionally, the authors assumed nonprofits would be hesitant to devote resources to building a TikTok presence when the platform was at risk of disappearing in the United States during early fall of 2020 (Swanson et al., 2020). Coders gathered account-level and post-level attributes before theoretical coding.

Coders used textual analysis to make sense of on-screen activities, which are of higher value to this analysis than simply the words spoken or typed (Wiley & Evans, 2022; Wiley et al., 2023). The authors evaluated the on-screen activity through visual, text, and audio observations, the interactions between the three, and the use of TikTok's unique collaborative features (also see Li et al., 2021 and Zhu et al., 2019). Combining these observations was valuable because teasing out if a post was information sharing, community building, or mobilizing action required a thorough review of these components (see Wiley et al., 2023). Positive wording may be spoken with sarcastic or sad vocal tones and pacing, which changes the meaning of the information shared. Memes, or shared cultural jokes or understandings, in dances or actions, may exclude spoken word or text on screen, leaving traditional content analysis irrelevant (Lybecker et al., 2015). Table 1 categorizes the on-screen observations.

Table 1. Components of Textual Analysis of Microvlogs

Visual observations	**Audio observations**	**On Screen Text**	**Collaborative TikTok Features**
Behavior of person or animal Interactions Attire Choreography Structured absences Proximity of people, animals, and objects Lighting, focus Camera zoom, quality Mismatch between voice, tone, words, or individual on the screen	Music Vocal Tone Speech pacing Number of speakers Silence or lack of speech Voiceovers Robotic voice Mic quality	Captions Transcripts Words on-screen Signage in foreground or background Emojis or semiosis Comments shared on screen from another user	Duetting (split screen of multiple users) Stitching (following another user's video with a video response) Trending audio over new video Memes in the form of quotes or staged interactions

Each account was coded by one team member, who then drafted a brief memo on the primary social media function according to the framework (Saldaña, 2015). The team stopped at 58 accounts when saturation was reached, totaling 1160 microvlogs for the overall project. Saturation was determined by running descriptive statistics of the coding weekly and observing the balance between coding patterns (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The team ceased coding when the patterns or descriptive statistics remained consistent for three coding sessions. Wiley et al. (2023)

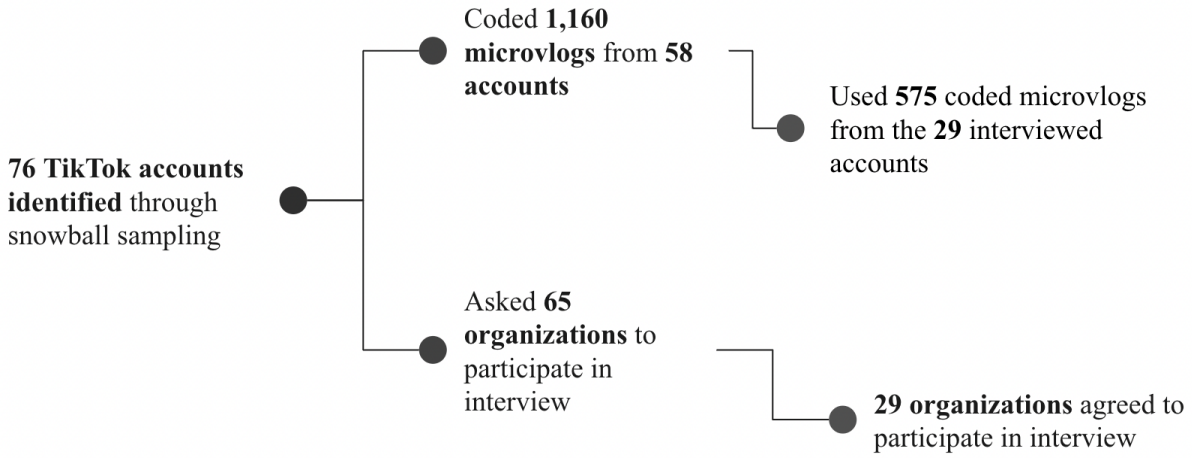
analyzed the full set of 1160 microvlogs and provided additional data collection and analysis description.

Stage 2: Interviewing Social Media Coordinators

Interview Data Collection

After completing the microvlog data collection and analysis, the authors invited the accounts' social media coordinators to participate in an interview. Accounts were pulled from the initial data set, representing a cross-section of seven nonprofit subsectors. First, the authors invited 52 coded accounts to participate in an interview. As accounts responded to participate or decline, the authors noticed an imbalance in the mission area of the accounts agreeing to an interview. The authors expanded their recruitment list to 65 to include more organizations from the environment and animals and arts, culture, and humanities subsectors. The team achieved a strong response rate of 45% (29 participants). The final data set included 29 interviews and 575 microvlogs (approximately 20 microvlogs per account). Figure 1 provides a flow chart of data collection.

Figure 1. Three Stages of Data Set Development



Prior to an interview, the interviewer studied the account, the organization's website, and its recent IRS Form 990. This allowed the interview to focus on TikTok strategy and microvlog production rather than organizational details. The interview instrument is provided in Appendix A. The assigned team member then conducted a semi-structured, 30–45-minute phone interview. In one case, the interview was conducted via Zoom because a team of six social media coordinators and creators wanted to participate. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Content Analysis of Interviews

A three-person coding team used qualitative directed content analysis to code the interview transcript within NVivo qualitative analysis software (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The team developed a theoretical-guided codebook and tested it on three transcripts (Saldaña, 2015). The codebook was slightly adjusted to better fit the flow of the interview instrument and patterns of conversation. The authors added or expanded codes as new concepts arose or developed in the data. Ten interviews were team-coded to corroborate the codebook (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The remaining 19 interviews were coded independently and debriefed as a team. An abbreviated codebook is available in Appendix B.

Table 2 provides three examples of the coding approach. Following the interview transcript coding, the team used qualitative analysis software query tools to interpret patterns and themes.

How the interviewee described their social media strategy in the context of the framework was assessed by the number of mentions and depth of discussion. The primary and secondary social media strategies were identified for each case by comparing the number of mentions and the interviewee's emphasis on the strategy.

Table 2. Examples of Coding Strategy

Organization	Interview Utterance*	Social Media Framework
@theceoofcats	*I also really, really love making **educational videos**. I like **teaching** people about cats and **things that they might not know** and how they can take care of their cats better or better food or things like that.*	Information-Sharing
@embrace	*If you have diabetes or anything else that you're dealing with, you look up to others and try to do the same things. So I feel like, as for diabetes, my thinking for them is to feel motivated, to take care of themselves as best as they can, and also **to know that there is someone they can reach out to so they are not alone**.*	Community-Building
@rainn	*We hope to encourage young people to **create change** and **support survivors** by **utilizing the donation button**.*	Action

Ensuring Credibility in the Qualitative Analyses

Several steps were taken to ensure the credibility of the qualitative analyses. *First*, microvlogs were coded prior to the interviews to *avoid confirmation bias* in the microvlog coding process. Coders practiced coding a set of the same microvlogs to ensure a shared understanding of the codebook and coding strategy using a form of interrater-reliability testing (Wiley & Evans, 2022). The team discussed discrepancies in coding and modified the microvlog codebook where necessary. Second, *member-checking* was used to test the coding of microvlogs during the interview. Before the interview, the interviewer reviewed the account, coding, and memo to draw conclusions about possible strategies for the account. The authors based these conclusions on theory and behavioral observation. Late in the interview, the interviewer shared the assessment with the interviewee and asked if they agreed with it and would add or remove anything from the description provided. This form of member-checking gauged the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations of the nonprofits' microvlogs and accounts (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The authors did not use these member-checking results for their evaluation of alignment.

Third, the *shared codebook for the interviews* included clear definitions and was reviewed as a team prior to coding and multiple times throughout the coding process. If a new concept emerged during the interviews, a code was added to the shared codebook. Previously coded data were revisited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Last, the team used matrices produced by the qualitative analysis software *for theory-checking* (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). When a finding was drawn from the analysis, the team reviewed the data to identify examples of the finding within the data. The matrix tools allowed the team to cross codes and identify all examples of overlapping codes. For instance, the team concluded that nonprofit social media coordinators of smaller organizations were less able to articulate a strategy for their accounts. When the team looked for evidence of this finding, they could not find examples. The team realized *illusory correlation* (when one meaningful or powerful case influences the researcher's perception of the whole

dataset) guided the interpretation of the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The data were then reviewed again to identify the true similarities in coding. These five credibility checks supported credibility in the textual and content analyses.

Stage 3: Merging TikTok and Interview Data and Analyses

Evaluating Alignment

The team then compared coding at the case level. The primary and secondary (where relevant) coding of the interviews and microvlogs were classified as (1) alignment between expressed strategy and account output or (2) misalignment between expressed strategy and account output. For example, the @apexwolves interviewee mentioned prioritizing activities related to information-sharing the most (ten times) compared with those related to community-building (five times) and action (once). Thus, @apexwolves's *expressed strategy was coded as information sharing*. However, all of @apexwolves's posts were coded as community-building, so their *primary output was coded as community-building*. This suggested misalignment between the expressed strategy and the actual content posted by the account and was subsequently coded as misaligned. This process was repeated for all cases to determine the alignment of the entire data set. For cases with secondary coding, the team compared the primary and secondary to evaluate for alignment.

Quantitative Analysis of TikTok Metadata

Whether the goal is to share information or encourage a specific action, organizations of all types typically use social media to engage or interact with their audience in some way. While approaches may vary according to the organization's specific mission, function, and goals, nonprofits can nonetheless use social media more strategically by developing content that is engaging and effectively captures the attention of their target audience.

But developing strategies can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, especially for smaller nonprofits. Social media often requires organizations to experiment with different strategies, especially at first, in order to understand what resonates with their target audience. Experimentation is a necessary part of the process; however, it can be costly in terms of financial and human resources. Engaging stakeholders on different platforms may take many iterations before determining what "works." In this process of trial and error, organizations frequently look to data points such as views, likes, shares, and comments to measure how effective their posts are. Similarly, when assessing the impact of social media, the nonprofit literature tends to focus on levels of user engagement as the main outcome of interest (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Saxton & Waters, 2014). However, little is known about how nonprofits leverage their online platforms to reach larger audiences. The authors wanted to know whether a particular social media strategy leads to greater engagement and whether nonprofits that align the content they post with their strategy receive higher levels of engagement. To address these questions, the authors conducted an exploratory analysis by combining the qualitative data discussed above with quantitative data points on each microvlog to explore the relationship between alignment and levels of engagement.

The quantitative data were collected from the publicly available TikTok profiles using the TikTok API, an open-source application in the Python programming language. Of specific interest to this study was the number of likes, comments, shares, and plays that each TikTok received to date (December 2021). By appending these quantitative measures with each TikTok's respective qualitative analysis, the authors created a new data set consisting of 575 total observations, each representing one individual TikTok. The combined data set allowed the authors to explore the relationship among the social media strategies indicated by the interviewees, the content they produced, and the audience engagement they received on those posts.

The number of likes, comments, and shares a post receives are useful measures of user engagement since these user behaviors capture various real-time digital interactions between an account (e.g., nonprofit) and users on a social media platform. Although not perfect, such measures can help organizations understand what type of content resonates most with their audience (Campbell et al., 2014; Guo & Saxton, 2018) and whether messaging has been effective in reaching the audience (Chen et al., 2021). For example, the number of likes is typically considered an indication of a user's support of a message (Klafke et al., 2021). Likewise, the number of comments and shares measures a more active interaction among a user, the organization, and its message (Chen et al., 2021; Klafke et al., 2021).

Although, mostly due to limitations of the data available to researchers, measuring engagement simply as the number of likes, comments, and shares on a post is insufficient for accurately and consistently measuring engagement in this context. Without including additional data on the total number of times the message was viewed by users, it is difficult to know whether a high number of likes is indeed a measure of high engagement or an indication of the message's reach. In other words, did more users actually like the post, or did more users just see the post compared with others? Instead, when the data permits, engagement can be measured as a ratio of the number of likes a post receives to the number of total views the post receives, providing a more precise and standardized measure of engagement (Wiley et al., 2023).

Therefore, the authors create a new measure of engagement using the ratio of likes a microvlog received to its number of plays. On TikTok, a play is counted every time a microvlog is viewed, regardless of how long a user views it or whether they watched it previously. This allows the authors to measure engagement as the number of times users "liked" a microvlog out of all the times users actually saw the microvlog. For example, if a microvlog received 11,000 likes out of 100,000 total plays, that microvlog will have an engagement measure of 0.11. In other words, for every 100 times a microvlog was played, it received 11 likes, resulting in an 11% engagement rate. This allows the authors to see the rate at which people interact with the microvlog in the context of its total reach.

Results

The nonprofit interview sample consisted of 29 organizations from seven different mission areas. Reported revenue ranged from roughly $23,000 to $500 million or otherwise not publicly available. The organizations' earliest year of incorporation is 1937 and most recently 2020. All but three organizations adopted TikTok in 2020. See Appendix C for a further breakdown of the organizations interviewed.

TikTok's Function in Nonprofit Strategy

Addressing the first research question, interviewees identified two primary reasons for adopting TikTok in their social media strategy. First, TikTok occupies a distinct space separate from other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram. Nonprofits join in order to access features and audiences unavailable elsewhere. Second, nonprofits report adopting TikTok to support their existing organizational management capacities, such as fundraising and brand awareness.

Nonprofits identified distinctive features of TikTok, such as its short-form style and personable tone, as evidence of how the platform creates a lane of its own for stakeholder engagement. The most frequently mentioned characteristic of TikTok is the demographic to which it caters. Whereas Instagram draws primarily millennial audiences and Facebook is occupied by "the older crowd," TikTok is overwhelmingly identified as the platform for and by Gen Z. Nonprofits can access a concentrated number of young people on TikTok in ways they cannot on other platforms.

Nonprofits identified the solely video-based platform as a medium that allowed for easy connection or engagement with audiences compared to other platforms as this social media manager explained:

> It's fun to try a new platform and it's so different from Instagram and Facebook with being very video focused and it's easier to build community or connect with people than it is on other channels. *@dancemarathon*

Nonprofits mentioned instances of engagement, such as younger teens commenting "first comment" on videos immediately after being posted to connect with an account. Interviewees also identified the 'For You' page, TikTok's homepage, which is a curated feed of videos for the viewer, as a unique mechanism to promote engagement.The For You Page allows a nonprofit to connect to new audiences that are likely to consume their content.

Tone and function were motivations for joining TikTok. The tone of TikTok was reported as casual, comfortable, and personal, whereas Facebook was described as "combative." TikTok's video and short-form nature also drew a sharp contrast to Facebook and Instagram's long-form, blog-like style.

The nonprofits compared how they took advantage of each platform to fulfill different needs. Facebook was repeatedly identified as the platform used for fundraising and advocacy; Instagram for education and imagery; and Twitter/X for humor and information sharing. Nonprofits largely identified TikTok as a space for entertainment and community-building. These identified features, tone, and function offer evidence that TikTok occupies a distinct space within nonprofit strategy and is leveraged differently than other platforms.

TikTok promotes existing nonprofit operational capacities

Nonprofits primarily spoke of TikTok's role in supporting existing organizational management capacities, namely fundraising, marketing, and programming. Fundraising was mentioned the most at 75 times in 25 of the 29 interviews. Overwhelmingly, nonprofits indicated that their first priority on TikTok was education and awareness, hoping that money may come later when Gen Z enters the workforce and is more engaged in philanthropy. There is little expectation that this demographic will be generating substantial revenue at this time.

> We're really committed to educating that younger audience about why they should care and then as they grow older, we hope to remain in their minds … and maybe one day they'll become a donor. *@bestfriendsanimalsociety*

Though, evidence indicates that Gen Z philanthropy is strategic and on the rise (Laramore, 2024).

Marketing was the second-most mentioned nonprofit management capacity at 41 mentions in 18 interviews. In the context of marketing, interviewees focused on brand awareness, brand promotion, and "positive marketing." Nonprofits viewed TikTok as a source of free advertising to gain recognition and familiarity among the younger generation. Last, programming (e.g., service provision) was mentioned in 12 interviews. Nonprofits largely spoke about why programming and recruitment efforts shifted online and how that ultimately has allowed them to expand and reach larger audiences.

> COVID hit, and the authors couldn't do anything in person. And so a lot, I would say like 70 to 80% of our recruitment efforts transferred to social media. *@bethematch*

Organizations like *@bethematch* recruit volunteers to donate bone marrow or blood cells to patients with life-threatening blood cancers. Before COVID-19, recruitment efforts concentrated on in-person donor and registration events.

Strategy and Output Alignment

The second research question concerned the alignment between nonprofits' strategy and output. Alignment between social media strategy and social media output was determined by comparing the interviewees' expressed strategy and the observed output produced by the nonprofit's microvlogs. Expressed strategy refers to the interview data capturing what nonprofits said they intended to produce on their account. Observed output refers to the microvlog data analyzed showing what they actually did produce. Alignment refers to whether nonprofits' strategy and output are in agreement in terms of the social media framework. In essence, did the nonprofits make the content they intended to make?

The alignment data show that, while much of the sample was aligned, a considerable portion was not. The authors explored this difference by employing a member-checking methodological credibility test where the researcher asks the study participants if the researcher's conclusions are correct. In this case, the authors used the test to confirm whether the organization agreed with their output evaluation. Only one nonprofit disagreed with their assessment of their content. In this instance, the interviewer misspoke when articulating the evaluation. This finding is interesting because when the nonprofit's description of its social media strategy was coded using the hierarchy of engagement framework, the expressed strategy was misaligned with its output. However, when the interviewer used the framework to describe their behavior, nearly all agreed with the author's assessment.[4] Since the focus of the analysis is on the nonprofit's intention behind its social media activity, the authors used their expressed strategy rather than their description of their content output for the remainder of the analysis.

For half of the 10 organizations that have an executive director or CEO responsible for managing the TikTok account,[5] their stated strategy did not align with what they posted on TikTok. Of the 17 organizations that have a designated employee for social media coordination, 12 were aligned, suggesting that organizations with a social media employee have a higher rate of strategy and output alignment. Alignment across the seven mission area subsectors in the data set had no meaningful differences. The only exception is the human services subsector, where seven of eight nonprofit organizations' strategy and output aligned. These accounts prioritized information sharing and community building content, as did their expressed strategies.

When the authors considered the microvlog and interview data used to determine alignment, they recalled a coding difficulty in both analyses worth exploring. Coders struggled to code for just one component of the social media framework (community building, information sharing, action). For example, in a UNICEF microvlog, young people are depicted doing a trending dance while text related to the COVID-19 vaccine appears on the screen. In this instance, it was difficult to choose between community-building and information-sharing. Rather than force the coder to

[4] One nonprofit agreed with the author's assessment for the time period the authors analyzed but noted that they only posted fundraising content for TikTok's #givingszn campaign, which they would not typically do other times of the year.

[5] The interviewees held the following roles within their organization: social media manager/coordinator (13); executive director/CEO (10); communications or public relations director (6); direct service program staff (5); operations staff (3); volunteer or event coordinator (1). The total number of interviewees is larger than the total number of nonprofits because some interviews included multiple staff members.

choose one component, the coders included the primary and secondary strategies. Community-building was most observed in the single-function microvlogs and as the primary coding in the two-function microvlogs. No clear pattern in secondary coding was observed, demonstrating that nonprofits primarily focused on fostering community on the platform while often simultaneously engaging in other social media functions.

The authors also take into consideration the interview data where interviewees mentioned a similar sentiment of a multifaceted strategy:

> … everything that we do is kind of filtered through that [mission] lens of how we are talking about mental health in an authentic way, creating space for other people to join that conversation, and then making sure that they are walking away with some sense of hope or a tangible resource. *@twloha*

This idea of dual-purpose microvlogs is a theme seen throughout the interview data, and primarily, community-building is the component consistently present and is paired with information-sharing or action. When looking at the frequency of mentions across interviews, the data shows that information-sharing (132) is mentioned the most, followed closely by community-building (122) and then action (57). While it would appear that information-sharing is a greater focus of nonprofits' strategies, organizations expressed that their priority with content creation is to achieve facets of their mission while simultaneously building community. All interviewees described elements of community-building, with all but one account posting community-building content.

Strategy and Output Alignment and User Engagement

Comparing the nonprofits' expressed strategy to the output observed in the analysis is helpful for understanding the motivations and intentions behind nonprofits' use of TikTok. Additionally, evaluating the alignment between nonprofits' strategy and output is important for assessing whether the nonprofit is indeed achieving what it intends to achieve by adopting and using TikTok. In this way, alignment is normatively good, as it can be an indicator that nonprofits are making content that aligns with their goals and, seemingly, with their mission. However, does alignment between strategy and output actually drive user engagement? Previous studies indicate that certain nonprofit social media behaviors drive higher levels of engagement on Facebook (Nah & Saxton, 2013; Waters et al., 2009), Twitter/X (Campbell et al., 2014; Guo & Saxton, 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), and even TikTok (Li et al., 2021).

However, empirical explorations of whether these observed behaviors (outputs) are intentional and the subsequent impact on user engagement are lacking. To date, there is little to no empirical insight, let alone theoretical insight, into the expected relationships among nonprofit social media strategy, output, and the degree to which stakeholders engage with nonprofits' content on social media. Therefore, the third and final research question is exploratory in nature and concerned with how strategy-output alignment actually influences levels of user engagement. To answer this, the authors first examined descriptive data on the levels of user engagement by expressed strategy, output, and alignment and then, where applicable, used further statistical analysis (i.e., t-tests and ANOVA) to test whether mean engagement differs by nonprofits' expressed strategy, the outputs observed, and alignment. Due to space limits, only significant results for t-tests and ANOVA were reported.

Nonprofits focused primarily on how they were using TikTok to build community and share information. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the mean likes, plays, and level of engagement by each strategy, respectively. In simple descriptive terms, Table 3 indicates notable

differences in likes, plays, and raw engagement scores with those nonprofits with strategies focused on promoting community building generating noticeably higher levels of engagement (*M* = .1463; *SD* = .08957) compared with those focused on information-sharing (*M* = .1333; *SD* = .0716).

Table 3. User Engagement Summary Statistics by Nonprofits' Expressed Strategy

	Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Strategy: Information Sharing (*N* = 16)				
Likes	7648.56	28741.63	5	247000
Plays	71749.27	429674.1	30	7100000
Engagement	.13331	.0716	.01974	.387
Strategy: Community Building (*N* = 13)				
Likes	4752.71	26447.83	4	398900
Plays	21637.46	105308.1	18	1600000
Engagement	.1463	.08957	.00684	.4864

Table 4 reports the user engagement summary statistics by observed output. In other words, Table 4 presents the TikTok-level data on the breakdown of likes, plays, and engagement scores according to the observed social media behavior coded in the qualitative analysis. Here, the authors see a similar descriptive pattern with community-building microvlogs, again, generating much higher levels of engagement (*M* = .1496; *SD* = .0829) compared with information-sharing (*M* = .1179; *SD* = .0675) and action (*M* = .11056; *SD* = .0751). To better understand whether the levels of mean engagement differ statistically across the three groups, a one-way ANOVA was performed and revealed statistically significant differences in mean engagement ($F(df = 2, 572) = 11.30$; ($p = .0000$).

Table 4 also reports the user engagement statistics for the microvlogs that were *aligned* with the nonprofits' strategy as well as those that were *misaligned*. Here, the authors see that mean engagement is actually higher for those microvlogs that were not aligned with the nonprofits' strategy (*M* =.1414; *SD* = .0727) compared with those that were aligned (*M* = .1375; *SD* = .0848). However, a t-test showed that the differences in means between the two groups, aligned or misaligned, were not statistically significant ($p = .5746$).

While this was an exploratory analysis and no specific hypothesis was tested, the finding seems rather counterintuitive. For strategy to be salient, the authors would expect to see a statistically significant increase in mean engagement for those microvlogs that were aligned with the nonprofits' strategy. However, given the significant variation between mean engagement according to the output (Table 4), it could be that the specific type of strategic alignment matters more. In other words, alignment in and of itself may not be as powerful as alignment between a particular strategy and its respective outputs. To parse out this unexpected finding further, the authors used a two-way ANOVA. The results ($F(df = 4,570) = 5.80$; $p = 0.0001$) indeed show significantly higher levels of engagement when there is alignment between a community-building strategy and community building outputs (*M* = .1482; *SD* = .0898) than for information-sharing alignment (*M* = .1160; *SD* = .0691).

Table 4. User Engagement Summary Statistics by Output (Microvlogs)

	Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Output: Information Sharing (*N* = 138)				
Likes	3531.85	11764.75	5	100700
Plays	19917.72	55401.99	66	411600
Engagement	.1179	.0675	.0202	.387
Output: Community Building (*N* = 393)				
Likes	7834.84	32625.45	4	398900
Plays	64285.21	394405	18	7100000
Engagement	.1496	.0829	.0068	.486
Output: Action (*N* = 44)				
Likes	1981.84	8506.95	6	55600
Plays	8280.97	30800.41	31	199800
Engagement	.1106	.0751	.0118	.395
Output Aligned with Strategy (*N* = 355)				
Likes	4579	23986.98	4	398900
Plays	21989.72	97209.7	18	1600000
Engagement	.1375	.0848	.0068	.486
Output Misaligned with Strategy (*N* = 220)				
Likes	9218.83	32793.92	6	247000
Plays	93503.38	513207.1	30	7100000
Engagement	.1414	.0727	.0118	.3953
Output Aligned with Strategy-Community-Building (*N* = 237)				
Likes	5058.62	28004.97	4	398900
Plays	22796.43	111648.9	18	1600000
Engagement	.1482	.0898	.0068	.4864
Output Aligned with Strategy-Information Sharing (*N* = 118)				
Likes	3615.69	12550.44	5	100700
Plays	20369.48	58680.92	66	411600
Engagement	.1160	.0691	.022	.3869

Discussion

It is no surprise that nonprofits joined TikTok for its distinctive features and access to new audiences. However, TikTok's function in an organizational management capacity and adaptation is also noteworthy. Most interestingly, interviewees talked about how TikTok provided a space to transition and expand existing programming from in-person to online, a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, interviewees discussed fundraising and marketing as reasons for joining TikTok, expanding on Campbell et al.'s study (2024), which found that human services organizations join Facebook and Twitter/X for the same reasons. However, these were not always the driving factors. For example, in terms of fundraising, nonprofits viewed donations on TikTok

not as a priority, but as a perk of their presence on the platform. Similarly, marketing on TikTok was used to supplement the organization's universal goal of promoting itself.

These findings suggest that TikTok, like other social media platforms, is not establishing an entirely new framework for nonprofit management. Rather, it appears to serve as an extension of, or added resource, to functions already in place. What remains novel, however, are the ways that TikTok seems to be redefining the type of content nonprofits are producing and how nonprofits are engaging stakeholders, as a result. Similar to the findings of (Wiley et al., 2023), the results of this study support the assertion that microvlogging platforms such as TikTok are creating a new hierarchy of engagement led by community building. This is contrary to previous research that finds that nonprofits on microblogging platforms prioritize information-sharing over community-building and action. Instead, the authors find that it is through community-building that nonprofits are then promoting information-sharing and action on TikTok. This lends itself to a multifaceted strategy that, when guided by community-building, is highly effective for engagement.

The complex nature of multipurpose microvlogs provides insight into why one-third of the sample is misaligned. In principle, alignment might indicate a focused social media strategy that, in return, generates higher levels of engagement with users. However, this finding suggests that alignment is more complex than simply aligned or not aligned for dual-process microvlogs and the multifaceted strategies that guide them. The type of alignment matters; more specifically, alignment between a community-building strategy and community-building content appears to matter most. Users engaged more with community-building content, particularly, when it was aligned with the content creator's intent. Thus, the current framework may be too static to adequately tease apart the multipurpose function of a single microvlog or the account strategy as a whole. For example, while the authors did not find that nonprofits talked about community-building notably more than information-sharing and action, nonprofits did see community-building as a key component of TikTok as evidenced by interviewees' assertion that they incorporated community-building in some way to all their posts to maximize engagement. When nonprofits aimed to build a community online, TikTok users engaged.

Greater alignment among organizations with a designated social media coordinator points to the importance of having someone with the time, skills, and capacity to devote to TikTok account management. The misalignment observed with organizations whose leader managed the account may be because leaders have a multitude of responsibilities to the organization that takes priority over social media strategy. Literature echoes this sentiment that top-level leadership often does not understand or support social media platform adoption (Choi & Theoni, 2016). Further, this finding is supported by the notion that larger, better-resourced organizations have staff dedicated to social media, which yields returns such as donations (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020; McKeever, 2017).

The assessment of strategy alignment and the mission area yielded no meaningful relationship between the two. TikTok is an equal opportunity platform and allows all types of organizations to be successful regardless of mission area and strategy alignment. This was reflected in the descriptive analysis that showed no meaningful relationship between mission area and alignment. Nonetheless, future research should further examine similarities and differences in strategy, output, and outcomes across the subsectors. Messaging on social media can be categorized as strategic or supportive with differences in messaging according to mission relevancy. For instance, Guo and Saxton (2014)found that Twitter/X messaging by advocacy nonprofits is predominantly supportive. Whereas interest groups translate social media capital into resources to fulfill policy goals, which is much more strategic (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Previous

studies reveal that social media strategies of human service nonprofits are not always well-developed to promote or fulfill organizational goals (Campbell et al., 2014). Closely examining the subsectors in this way, including the role of mission relevancy, was outside the scope of this particular analysis but remains an area of important future research, especially for advancing understanding of salient theoretical mechanisms.

This study is one of the few that bridge the intentionality behind social media posts and the actual posts (Guo & Saxton, 2014). As such, the authors offer three methodological contributions to nonprofit social media research. First, the multifaceted nature of a nonprofit's expressed strategy and TikTok's platform itself required both uniformity and flexibility in the analysis. The authors created a somewhat uniform coding process by using the hierarchy of engagement framework to code the interview data and the social media data. Second, the textual analysis provided the necessary flexibility. Textual analysis is a more effective tool for analyzing microvlogs than manual or automated content analysis. Textual analysis goes beyond spoken or written words to capture on-screen interaction and nuance. Third, analyzing the output before conducting the interviews allowed the authors to match the scholarly operationalization of the framework with the day-to-day nonprofit language more efficiently than conducting the interviews first. From a nonprofit researcher's perspective, the operationalization of community-building, information-sharing, and action is intuitive. However, social media coordinators linked their strategies to nonprofit management capacities like fundraising or marketing. Thus, for human subject data collection purposes, what social media content creators said about their social media strategy did not neatly match the framework terminology. Because the interviewers already knew what the nonprofits had posted, they could mentally link the operationalized variables to the nonprofit vernacular and the actual posts in real time, which enhanced communication during the interview.

Conclusion

TikTok's inherent bend toward community-building content is perhaps its greatest distinction compared to other social media venues. The platform's structure and established norms elevate microvlogs that participate in trends and possess a raw, unedited quality. Most recently, TikTok has attracted attention for its ability to capture users' attention in ways that other platforms do not, with many attributing that ability to the algorithm (Hern, 2022). However, computer science researchers with unique knowledge about the algorithm argue that it is not TikTok's algorithm but its user interface that succeeds in keeping users engaged by quickly delivering content that feels as if it was made for them (Narayanan, 2022). Users do not have to spend time searching for similar content since the vertical interface serves to deliver like microvlogs, one after another, with a simple swipe up. This suggests that nonprofits have an opportunity to leverage the unique affordances of the TikTok interface to engage stakeholders in ways that are not possible on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram. At the same time, it also necessitates a new type of strategy on social media aimed at delivering users' attention-catching content, right off the bat, lending itself to more experimentation and authenticity.

This study provides a unique contribution to nonprofit social media scholarship by further developing the hierarchy of engagement framework and directly linking social media strategy and intentionality with output. The study also provides practical guidelines for nonprofits interested in adopting microvlogging platforms or developing a social media strategy. Most notably, TikTok does not require an exhaustive social media strategy or have any set formula for success. Nonprofits should prioritize quick, relevant, and original content that builds community and leverages the unique features of TikTok.

Limitations

Three primary limitations are notable in this study. First, the time period chosen for building the microvlog sample, July 2020–March 2021, likely influenced the microvlog and interview data. As noted in the research design, this period included a presidential threat to the platform, a heated national election, and a "giving season" during the holidays. Nonprofits' social media behavior was more likely affected than not. The authors extended the data collection period to account for these influences in recognition of this limitation. However, the interviewees' descriptions of their strategies from that period may have also been influenced. The second limitation is that the interview data are nonrandom samples. Participants were identified through convenience sampling and opted-in to the interview portion of the study. The authors provide a representative sample of the nonprofit sector rather than a random sample representative of all nonprofit TikTok activity. Third, this study aims to go beyond measuring engagement according to likes, shares, and comments by measuring engagement as the number of likes over plays but even this measure of engagement has its limitations. Principally, TikTok's automatic looping feature causes a TikTok to automatically replay after it ends unless a user immediately continues scrolling. This could skew the total number of plays and affect the engagement ratio. It is also important to acknowledge that user engagement is more complex than a singular quantitative data point. Nonetheless, this measure still captures a message's reach and, when combined with the number of likes, provides insight into how effective a microvlog is at capturing attention long enough to elicit a like, providing a novel opportunity to test what TikTok-level features and organizational-level attributes affect user engagement. Despite these limitations, this study provides a unique contribution to nonprofit social media scholarship, as it further develops the hierarchy of engagement framework and directly links social media intentionality with output.

Disclosures

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

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Appendices

Appendix A: Abridged Interview Instrument

1. Can you tell me about a particular {NONPROFIT} TikTok that stands out to you – could be one that makes you laugh or got the most views?
2. What role do you play in social media strategy, creation, and engagement as it relates to TikTok?
3. We see {NONPROFIT} joined TikTok in {YEAR}, can you tell me what led to your decision to join?
4. How would you describe {NONPROFIT}'s social media strategy for TikTok?
5. Walk us through your day-to-day management of {NONPROFIT'S} TikTok account.
6. What does {NONPROFIT} hope to get out of being on the TikTok platform?
7. What role does TikTok play in mission fulfillment for {NONPROFIT}?
8. We reviewed your TikTok postings from last fall and early this year. Our assessment was that you focus your efforts on [ex: sharing information and building community] in the TikTok space. What do you think of this assessment?
9. In the TikToks we reviewed, we saw that you mentioned {COVID-19, BLM MOVEMENT, and/or THE ELECTION}. Can you tell me how those/that current event(s) affected your social media strategy?
10. What advice would you give to another nonprofit on how to be successful on TikTok?
11. Those are all of my questions for you. Is there anything I did not ask that I should have asked? Is there anything else you'd like to share about your TikTok account or your experience using this platform?

Appendix B: Abridged interview theoretical codebook

Parent Codes	**Definition and Child Codes**
Account Management	Employees and professional relationships involved in maintaining the TikTok account (formality of support provided, team size, outsourced support; position responsible for content)
Social media post attributes	Characteristics of microvlog on TikTok (accessibility, audio, donation sticker, duet, stitch, filter, hashtags, original content, reshared content, reused content, serialized content, trends)
Account management complexities	Decision to adopt; barriers (obstacles in the way of success such as staffing, support, resources, reach); day-to-day tasks (specific, routine activities for account maintenance such as community maintenance, external research, internal research); Relationship with other platforms
Nonprofit Management Capacities	Core capacities of nonprofit management, such as fundraising and marketing; mission fulfillment (overt or observable description of the relationship between social media behavior and fulfillment of the organization's mission)
Hierarchy of Engagement Framework (action, community building, information sharing)	Messages from the organization that try to convince followers to act; instances when the organization interacts, shares, and converses with stakeholders in a way that creates an "online community"; the exchange of information from the organization

Appendix C: Organizations included in the study

Organization	TikTok Handle	NTEE Mission Area[1]	Revenue[2]	Year of Formation	Date of TikTok Adoption	Alignment Status
Apex Protection Project	@apexwolves	Environment and Animals	$242,476	2015	03/16/20	Misaligned
Art Sphere Inc	@artsphereinc	Arts, Culture, and Humanities	$63,721	1998	07/08/20	Misaligned
Battle 22	@officialbattle22	Health	--	2019	03/12/20	Misaligned
Battle Buddy Response Team	@battlebuddyresponseteam	Health	--	2020	02/04/20	Misaligned
Be The Match Foundation	@bethematch	Health	$18,274,388	1992	02/04/20	Aligned
Best Friends Animal Society	@bestfriendsanimalsociety	Environment and Animals	$261,081	1984	12/13/18	Aligned
Blanchet House of Hospitality	@blanchethouse	Health	$2,230,189	1952	09/21/20	Aligned
Catskill Animal Sanctuary Inc	@catskillanimalsanctuary	Environment and Animals	$2,872,879	2001	04/29/20	Aligned
Comfort Cases Inc	@comfort_cases	Human Services	$2,190,700	2013	05/01/20	Aligned
Dance Marathon Inc	@dancemarathon	Arts, Culture, and Humanities	$49,459,637	2000	07/07/20	Misaligned
Dion's Chicago Dream	@dionschicagodream	Human Services	--	2020	10/26/20	Aligned
The Embrace Foundation	@embrac3	Health	--	2017	07/27/20	Misaligned
The Foster Closet Corp	@fostercloset	Human Services	$613,557	2009	05/18/20	Aligned
Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs Inc	@guardianangelsmsd	Public, Societal Benefit	$2,409,683	2010	06/11/20	Misaligned
Habitat for Humanity of Taos Inc	@taoshabitat	Human Services	$880,940	1993	07/06/20	Aligned
Hallie Strong	@halliestrongfoundation	Human Services	--	2019	04/28/20	Misaligned
Hip-Hope Inc	@hiphopeinc	Human Services	$62,533[3]	2016	07/08/20	Aligned
It Gets Better Project	@itgetsbetter	Public, Societal Benefit	$2,215,523	2008	02/12/20	Aligned
The Jordan Porco Foundation	@jordanporcofoundation	Public, Societal Benefit	$676,694	2011	09/04/20	Aligned
One Tree Planted Inc	@onetreeplanted	Environment and Animals	$5,944,371	2013	04/01/20	Aligned
Papayago Rescue House Inc.	@papayago_rescue_house	Environment and Animals	$77,893	2015	04/29/20	Aligned
Pet Angel Adoption and Rescue Inc	@aceengel	Environment and Animals	$116,701[3]	2004	02/28/20	Aligned
Plan International USA, Inc.	@plan.international	International, Foreign Affairs	$65,586,361	1937	02/20/20	Aligned
Princess Program Foundation	@princessprogramofficial[4]	Health	--	2020	07/28/20	Aligned
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)	@rainn	Human Services	$15,833,865	1994	10/16/20	Aligned
Tabby Tails Cat Rescue	@theceoofcats	Environment and Animals	--	2020	04/20/19	Misaligned
Tiny Hooves Rescue and Petting Zoo	@tinyhoovesrescuetexas	Environment and Animals	--	2018	09/06/20	Aligned
TWLOHA Inc	@twloha	Health	$2,921,683	2007	11/16/20	Misaligned
UNICEF USA	@unicef	International, Foreign Affairs	$538,517,959	1947	12/20/19	Misaligned

[1] If no 990 form filed, mission area was determined based on publicly available organization information
[2] Revenue from 2019 990 form
[3] Revenue from 2018 990 form
[4] At the time of data collection, account handle was @theprincessprogram

Research Article

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Loosely Defined Partnerships: A Case Study of Three Refugee-Serving Nonprofit Organizations

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This article uses a case study approach to explore how U.S.-based nonprofit organizations collaborate to serve immigrants and refugees and identifies characteristics that are essential to successful partnerships. While other studies have documented the challenges immigrants and refugees face in relocating to a new community and the ways community-based organizations help them through the integration process, this project brings together migration studies and nonprofit management studies to interrogate the concept of partnerships based on the lived experiences of organization staff. Partnerships are essential to providing programs and services, and this project seeks to explore the tension inherent in partnering with other organizations that have similar missions and goals. This project captures the stories of three refugee-serving nonprofit organizations in a midsouth city. Utilizing in-depth interviews to analyze the interorganizational collaborations that the three organizations have formed to provide holistic support to immigrants and refugees, the findings here suggest that partnerships are essential but often fraught. These organizations, like many nonprofits, face limited capacity and form community partnerships to alleviate these limitations. As defined by improving an organization's ability to fulfill its core missions, successful partnerships rely on relational embeddedness and a shared mission. Findings demonstrate the necessity and benefit of a network of partnerships to meet the needs of this unique population.

Keywords: Refugees; resettlement; nonprofit organizations; partnerships; collaboration

Even before the federal government took responsibility for resettling refugees in 1980, nonprofit organizations have been responsible for refugee resettlement in the United States (Zucker, 1983; Darrow, 2015). Since 1980, the Department of State has shared the responsibility of resettling refugees with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) who partners with nine national voluntary agencies. These national organizations have local affiliates working on the ground to resettle and integrate refugees into their communities. Each individual and family arrives at their newly assigned home with complex needs, expectations, and assets (BenEzer & Zetter, 2015; Cortes, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). While previous studies have examined how nonprofit organizations provide services and programming to refugees and immigrants in the United States (Mott, 2010; Dubus, 2018; Mullins & Jones, 2009; de Graauw & Bloemraad, 2017; Gonzalez Benson & Pimentel Walker, 2021), the strategies and nuances of partnering between and beyond immigrant-serving nonprofits has been less thoroughly documented.

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This study builds on existing research by shifting the focus to nonprofit organizations that support resettlement and integration. Here, I combine literature on the refugee resettlement processes with literature on organizational collaboration to contextualize resettlement efforts in the United States. Because studies have shown that nonprofit organizations face competition over limited resources, as with their for-profit counterparts, the nonprofits tasked with serving refugees face similar challenges as their clients (Darrow, 2015; Bunger, 2013; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Nevertheless, the idea of nonprofit organizations competing with one another in a resource-scarce environment can seem counterintuitive to their benevolent missions; as such, they reframe their relationships with other organizations as collaboration and partnership (Curley et al., 2021). This study focuses on three U.S.-based nonprofits serving immigrants and refugees in the same midsouth city to better understand how these organizational dynamics affect the refugee resettlement process within the context of the United States.

The two questions guiding this study are: (1) *How do nonprofits collaborate to serve immigrants and refugees?* and (2) *What characteristics are critical to successful partnerships?* I explore these questions through in-depth interviews with staff and directors at three nonprofit organizations, two of which are designated refugee resettlement agencies and one of which is a grassroots nonprofit founded by immigrants over 20 years ago. I also interviewed Somali refugees, a group served by all three organizations since the 1990s, to triangulate the data collected during interviews with organization staff.

My approach reveals the importance of partnerships, especially with community partners who could provide services and programs adjacent to but not overlapping with the focal organizations. I argue that supporting organizations collaborate to expand their limited capacity to serve immigrants and refugees, with the most successful partnerships relying on a shared mission and relational embeddedness. My argument aligns with what seminal organizational theorists have suggested are true for profit-seeking organizations (Moran, 2005; Gulati, 2007). However, within the nonprofit sector, these qualities can be particularly problematic considering the risk of mission drift and high staff turnover that undermine shared mission and relational embeddedness respectively. I find that, while nonprofit staff focus on partnerships as a positive consequence of their limited capacity, their definition of *partnership* is loose and ambiguous. Nonprofit staff are typically eager to name any type of collaboration and funding as a partnership (Mendel & Brudney, 2018), but this ultimately opens their organization up to collaborations that may be unproductive or even counterproductive to their work. Thus, this study has significant implications for nonprofits and others working within refugee resettlement and for the ways immigrant- and refugee-serving nonprofits sit at the crossroads of scholarship on migration and nonprofit management.

For this study, it is essential to address some of the terms used. *Immigrant* and *refugee* refer specifically to people who voluntarily migrate to the United States and those who are resettled in the United States upon fleeing conflict in their home country, respectively. When referring to these groups, I use the terms *foreign-born*, *internationals*, or *newcomers* to include various experiences. *Receiving communities* are communities where immigrants and refugees settle. *Supporting organizations* are nonprofit agencies providing direct services to internationals. As integration is a vital part of this study, I differentiate the integration process from assimilation. *Integration* is the incorporation of newcomers into a receiving community without a complete transformation to the receiving community's culture. On the other hand, *assimilation* is a one-sided expected or required transformation to the receiving community's culture by the newcomer. This study focuses on how supporting organizations facilitate the integration process by providing services to newcomers and forming partnerships in the community.

Literature Review

Resettlement and integration into a new community is a widely varied process, even within the context of the United States. As nonprofit organizations facilitate this process, they must adjust their programs and services to meet the diverse needs of refugees and immigrants. Nonprofit organizations face challenges fulfilling this role, often because their limited capacity mirrors the limited capital of migrants, and strategically fill this gap with organizational collaboration.

Refugee Resettlement Processes

Scholars of migration studies highlight the transformative, unique, and often traumatic experiences characterizing refugees' journeys from their home country to a second country (sometimes in a refugee camp) and finally to their host country (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014; Brown & Scribner, 2014). While many studies have focused on how experiences differ for refugees and immigrants (Hein, 1993; Cortes, 2004; Garip, 2008; Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Connor, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014), BenEzer and Zetter (2014) highlight the uniqueness of the refugee journey as a point of study. Some refugees leave their country by boat or makeshift raft; others walk across nation-state borders to make their way to official United Nations-run refugee camps. Each of these journeys is "profoundly formative and transformative" in shaping refugees' psychological, social, and emotional conditions (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 302). Several studies have documented the impacts of trauma through the resettlement journey (Hess et al., 2019; Brown & Scribner, 2014). The amount of time spent and the types of experiences in the second country or refugee camp varies. This study focuses specifically on resettlement in the United States and the variations within the process.

Furthermore, personal characteristics such as gender, age, ethnic ties, and access to capital affect variations in integration. Women and youth often take on new roles within families, particularly in building linguistic, financial, and social capital (Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Hess et al., 2018; Garip, 2008; Albrecht & Upadhyay, 2018; Boyle & Ali, 2010; Forrest & Brown, 2014). Capital, especially social capital, is critical to establishing a life in a new community for migrants (Garip, 2008; Ziersch et al., 2023). However, the refugee process often strips people of all sources of capital as they arrive in a new country without linguistic knowledge, employment, assets, knowledge about accessing resources, and social ties. Nonprofit organizations in the receiving community must fill gaps in capital, helping newcomers become self-sufficient.

Role of Nonprofit Organizations in Refugee Integration

As previously addressed, nonprofit organizations bear the brunt of responsibility for facilitating refugees' integration. Resettlement agencies manage the initial three to six months of resettlement and often strive to promote long-term self-sufficiency (Mott, 2010; Sidney, 2014; Frazier & van Riemsdijk, 2021). The initial resettlement period requires organizations to provide healthcare, housing, English language classes, employment, and education (Dubus, 2018). However, the question remains: What is the goal of refugee resettlement? The Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) publicly stated goal is to "provide people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society" and to "assist refugees with accessing mainstream opportunities and resources" (Office of Refugee Resettlement). Of note, a content analysis of the ORR's actual policy reveals a focus on self-sufficiency and employment rather than integration (Gonzalez Benson, 2016). While each nonprofit agency working with immigrants and refugees has its specific mission and vision, the ORR provides guidelines to define successful resettlement (Forrest & Brown, 2014; Darrow, 2015).

Beyond resettlement, Graauw and Bloemraad (2017) describe migrants' process of establishing roots in their new country as *integration*. Integration rejects Park's assimilation theory, which focuses on a one-way function of erasing migrants' cultures (de Graauw & Bloemraad, 2017). I

would argue that integration is a concept rooted in neocolonialism and may not be a beneficial measurement for migrants or the nonprofits serving them. However, migration studies currently use *integration*, which I cannot thoroughly critique here (see Schinkel, 2018; Saharso, 2019; Dubus, 2018; Phillimore, 2021).

To measure integration, nonprofit organizations look at economic self-sufficiency, secondary migration after initial resettlement, a sense of empowerment and self-determination, and language acquisition (Lumley-Sapanski, 2019; Forrest & Brown, 2014; Mott, 2010; Steimel, 2017; Dubus, 2018). Language and employment acquisition are often the easiest to measure, and Dubus (2018) suggests supporting organization staff focus on these outcomes. In many ways, language and employment acquisition play a significant role in providing migrants with sources of capital; they also demonstrate that the newcomers are not a drain on the economy or community. Steimel (2017) discusses how the idea of "empowerment" is used differently by resettlement agencies and refugees to characterize integration, suggesting that the field—of research and practice—should take a broader and more inclusive approach to defining empowerment, particularly as it may be understood beyond economic self-sufficiency. Regardless of how integration is defined or measured, nonprofits face various challenges affecting the success of their outcomes when supporting refugee integration.

Organizational Challenges

A surge in immigration and resettlement at the end of the twentieth century meant the landscape of welcoming immigrants and refugees has changed (Wilson & Svajlenka, 2014; Stewart, 2012; Winders, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018; Santiago & Smith, 2019). For example, Winders (2014) focuses on new immigrant destinations to argue that the factors informing where immigrants settle are complex; political shifts as well as economic opportunities are critical to understanding who settles where. Restrictive state laws and changes in the political climate at the national level have increased the strain on supporting organizations (Browne et al., 2016; Brown & Scribner, 2014; Santiago & Smith, 2019; Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2018). All refugee resettlement agencies and many other supporting nonprofits receive funding from federal and state governments, which means financial support waxes and wanes with changing administrations (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Of note, a series of executive orders signed by the Trump Administration disrupted the ways nonprofits served refugees and immigrants by changing the climate in which nonprofits operated and the challenges migrants faced (Darrow & Scholl, 2020). Even when there are high funding levels for these organizations, there is competition among organizations.

Competition—and ultimately the threat of extinction—drives organizations regardless of profit-seeking status (Gulati, 2007). For nonprofits, the threat of extinction is less about being taken over by a competing organization and more about competing for limited resources, especially funding and staffing. The nonprofit sector is resource-scarce and has notoriously low staff retention rates. Nonprofits cobble together funding through government dollars, grants, contracts, and donations; nonprofits working toward similar goals or in a similar region are likely to be competing for funding and highly qualified staff members (Bunger, 2013; Curley et al., 2021). Competition has also led to a phenomenon known as *mission drift*, where nonprofits expand, distort, or shift their services and beneficiaries to make themselves more competitive for funding (Bennett & Savani, 2011). From a neo-institutional perspective, mission drift can play an essential role because rational and bureaucratic organizations become increasingly similar over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mission drift and other negative effects of nonprofit collaboration remain understudied phenomena (Gazley & Guo, 2020). As Curley et al. (2021) find, for example, competition feels counter to many nonprofits' missions and ways of operating; as such, nonprofit staff focus instead on the ways they collaborate with other nonprofits as a strategy to help them accomplish their core functions within a competitive environment.

Organizational Strategies

Mirroring how migrants build social capital to navigate resettlement, nonprofits may also look to increase their social capital through resource development, organizational collaboration, and referrals to and from other agencies (Schneider, 2009). Collaboration among organizations involves shared efforts toward a shared goal and can take various forms related to formality, capacity, and trust (Gazley & Guo, 2020; Mendel & Brudney, 2018; Gazley & Guo, 2020). Nonprofit collaboration is the practice of nonprofit organizations joining efforts toward a mutual goal (Gazley & Guo, 2020). Collaboration facilitates resource sharing, capacity building, and enhancing services. Partnership, at varying levels of formality, is a key part of collaboration.

Organizational collaboration can happen internally, externally, and programmatically, but competition can also occur at those levels (Curley et al., 2021). Because cooperation and competition overlap so frequently in the nonprofit sector, organizational scholars use the term "co-opetition" to describe the duality of many interfirm relationships (Bunger et al., 2021; Bunger, 2013; Walley, 2007). Indeed, Bunger (2013) demonstrates how competitors who perceive each other as highly trustworthy are more likely to collaborate, pooling funding, space, and staff, ultimately making them more competitive with other organizations. Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov (2012) also emphasize the necessity for coordination in interorganizational collaborations, which includes an integration of activities, capabilities, and resources. The authors argue that coordination is the key to realizing the benefits of collaboration. Understanding the tenuous relationship between collaborating/competing organizations and how they coordinate activities can help to refine how nonprofits serve newcomers. With this article, I build on organizational theory and relevant concepts, including competition, co-opetition, and partnership, to locate refugee-serving nonprofit organizations within the larger theoretical conversation.

Currently, the literature lacks comparative studies of nonprofits serving immigrants and refugees that could inform nonprofit management and migration studies. I build on studies beginning to locate organizational theory within refugee-serving nonprofits with a case study of three organizations, which have formed an elaborate network of partnerships to fulfill their missions (Kombassere, 2013; Darrow, 2015; Gonzalez Benson & Pimentel Walker, 2021; Yeo 2022; Parada et al., 2020). Still, further research is needed to explore the inner workings of the partnerships supporting organizations form and the consequences of those partnerships.

I explore how nonprofits collaborate to support refugees' integration into the United States and identify successful partnerships' qualities within this context. This article, then, demonstrates how nonprofits have figured out ways to partner to provide the services they claim to provide. While the elaborate network of formal and informal partnerships is not always apparent to the staff working in the field or the population they serve, both groups' success relies on loosely defined partnerships.

Research Methods

To investigate the research questions, I focused on three nonprofit organizations located in a medium-sized city in the U.S. midsouth, where the foreign-born population is at least 7% of the 1.2 million people living in the metropolitan statistical area. The number of foreign-born residents is likely higher than stated due to underestimates of undocumented immigrants and the influx of refugees in 2016. The selection of the city and organizations is a convenience sample, as I had spent a couple of years in the area developing rapport with staff, leadership, and clients of each organization.

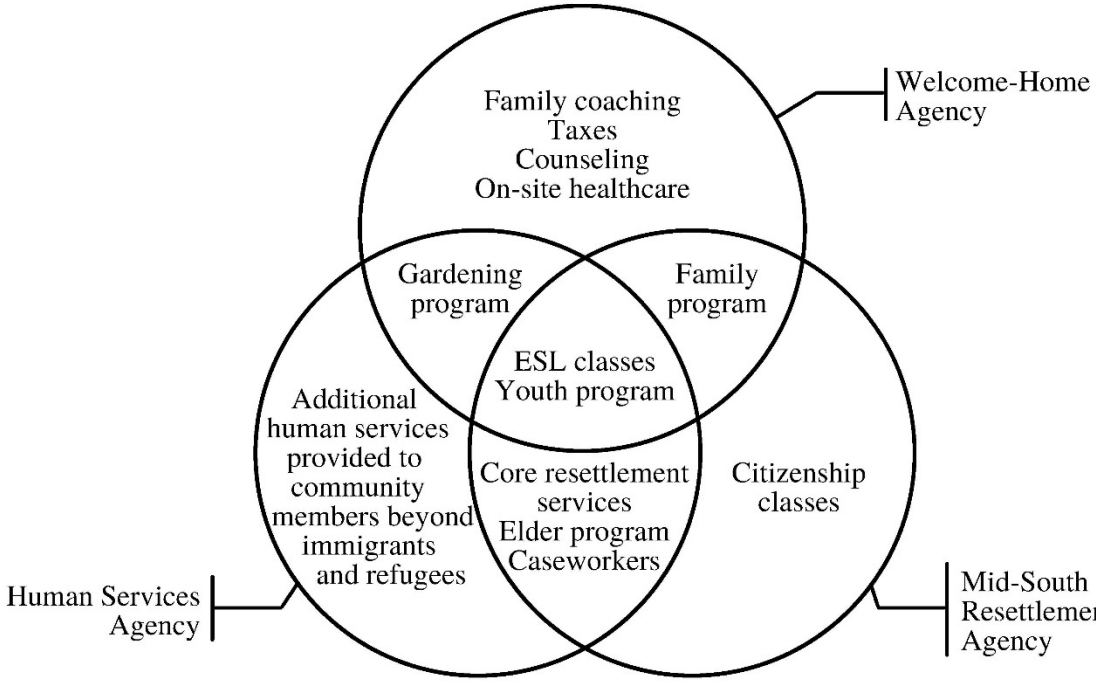
The organizations, which I call Human Services Agency, Mid-South Resettlement Agency, and Welcome-Home Agency, provide services to refugees and/or immigrants during the initial resettlement period, usually the first three to eight months in the United States, or beyond that period. As U.S. government-designated refugee resettlement agencies, their funding agencies limit Human Services Agency and Mid-South Resettlement Agency to serving refugees, asylum-seekers, parolees, and secondary migrants for a limited resettlement period. Their programs focus on immediate self-sufficiency and rely on a team of caseworkers, case managers, and specialists addressing employment, housing, and more. Welcome-Home Agency, an independent nonprofit, chooses to serve refugees, immigrants, and low-income individuals, focusing on foreign-born families. Their services pick up where the refugee resettlement agencies stop, focusing on more long-term self-sufficiency and fewer direct services. Welcome-Home Agency has a smaller staff and provides fewer intensive services.

While the designated resettlement agencies receive funding from a variety of sources, including federal and state governments, grants, and private donors, Welcome-Home Agency receives almost all its funding from grants. Grant-funding is particularly competitive, as the three organizations were often applying for grants from the same foundations and organizations. More research is needed on how different funding streams and related competition may affect partnerships. With this article, however, I focus on more of the programmatic partnerships developed.

Despite foundational and funding differences, all three supporting organizations provide services with similar goals based on the unique challenges of being an international in the United States (see Figure 1). All three organizations provide or host educational programs, including English as a second language classes and after-school/summer programming for youth. Other programs offered focus on key ORR resettlement areas: core services; health (gardening program, counseling, on-site healthcare); employment/economic development (taxes, family program, caseworkers); and integration (elder program, family coaching, citizenship classes). Initially, my interest in this project began as a way to understand the often-overlapping programs and services; however, as I discuss, the focus shifted to understanding partnerships.

The data discussed here are part of a larger study that utilized interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of public-facing documents with the three organizations identified. For this article, I focus on 15 semistructured interviews with staff members at each nonprofit organization and Somali refugees who had utilized services from at least one of the organizations. Each of the 10 semistructured interviews with staff focused on the organization's services, partnerships, and experience with successful and unsuccessful partnerships. I selected staff interviewees using stratified sampling based on their position with one of the three nonprofits. The interviewees included caseworkers, program directors, grant coordinators, program staff, and the directors of Welcome-Home Agency and refugee resettlement department at Human Services Agency. Except for the executive-level directors who were older men, all of the staff interviewees were women, and most were young professionals. These gender and age demographics were representative of the organizations' staff. Interviewees' experience working with newcomers ranged from 18 months to more than 20 years, and many of them had worked at one of the three organizations other than the one where they were currently employed. With just a couple of exceptions, they were white, not Hispanic/Latino, and U.S.-born, unlike the populations their organizations serve.

Figure 1. Comparison of the Services Provided by the Supporting Organizations



I also conducted five semistructured interviews with Somali refugees who had participated in programs offered by at least one of the organizations. Somalis were one of the few refugee groups that all three organizations had served, and focusing on just one country of origin allowed for interesting comparisons across their experiences with the organizations. I used snowball sampling with this population, asking for recommendations from staff at the organizations I interviewed. These interviews focused on experiences coming to the midsouth city, what services were helpful for them, and the challenges they still see for refugees like themselves. The Somali interviewees included two men in their twenties and three women in their thirties who had been in the United States for a range of eight to 21 years. Their English language skills varied, e.g., while I needed an interpreter to interview two women, one of the men was an interpreter for one of the agencies. Because the interviews focused on the participants recalling what programs and services helped them since they initially resettled in the United States, recall bias likely affected the data collected from these interviews. Despite this, the data demonstrates which programs and services are significant enough in their integration experiences to leave a lasting effect.

All interview participants gave informed consent before beginning the interview, and all except one permitted me to audio-record the interviews to transcribe later. I have changed the names and identifiers of the interviewees. I conducted the interviews at the organizations' offices and at a religious organization's office where one of the Somali interviewees worked. These locations allowed me to understand how the supporting organizations deliver their programs and ensure the interviewees were in a familiar and comfortable environment, especially as none of the refugee interviewees had previously participated in a research study. Conducting interviews in these locations also meant that many of the interviews were interrupted by phone calls, clients stopping by with questions, and other everyday occurrences for the organizations.

I used an abductive approach to collect and analyze the data. Initially, my focus was on understanding the dynamics of overlapping programs and services provided by the three

organizations, but a recurring theme—tension around partnerships—became a valuable discovery. I used qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS.ti, to identify codes and themes appearing in the interviews, focusing on the interviews with organization staff. The interviews with the Somali refugees verified and provided an essential perspective on the other interviews' themes. After the initial coding, I grouped similar codes and identified the most prominent themes in my findings below. My discussion integrates the organizational theory, especially relational embeddedness, shared missions, and partnerships, into my findings.

Essential to the context of this study, I collected my data in 2016. The annual ceiling and the actual number of refugees resettled in the United States were at their highest point since 2001 (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Furthermore, immigration was a focal issue in the U.S. presidential election of 2016, not only in the candidates' platforms but also in the rhetoric and media coverage surrounding the election (Darrow & Scholl 2020). Thus, while immigration and refugee resettlement were polarized and politicized issues before the 2016 election, they rose to the forefront of public sentiment. While this context likely shapes interviewees' responses, it is a critical moment to explore what partnership looks like for refugee-serving organizations, as they navigate a fraught political landscape.

Data and Analysis

Out of necessity, supporting organizations leverage a network of partners to expand their limited capacity. I allowed organization staff to define *partnership* in the interviews. To summarize their working definitions, they consistently referred to their partnerships with a loose definition, which included any organization, agency, or individual helping the supporting organization or clients in some capacity and did not necessitate reciprocity or a recognized relationship with the partnering organization. In addition to the importance of partners, the most successful partnerships are grounded in interagency relationships and shared missions. When partnerships lack those qualities, collaboration itself becomes a challenge.

"We cannot run our programs without them": Necessity of Partners

Each organization has an expansive network of partnerships with banks, churches, employers, ethnic community groups, government agencies, healthcare providers, higher education institutions, K–12 institutions, housing entities, local businesses, volunteers and donors, and other nonprofits. These partnerships provide additional resources for the supporting organizations. Partnerships include on-site and off-site partners. Some partnerships are distinctly defined and highly collaborative, such as all three organizations' partnerships with the local school district. In contrast, other partnerships are loose and informal, such as referrals made to a network of health centers.

Critically, nonprofit organizations offer a massive list of services, programs, and types of support they provide to their clients: from the core resettlement services to "providing ongoing education and communication with the community" (Mikayla, Welcome-Home Agency). However, based on their stated missions, the organizations' core functions are to guide newcomers from survival mode to self-sufficiency. To do so, they provide for basic needs like housing and benefit programs, offer services to equip clients with skills like English language acquisition and job readiness/development, and prepare them to be self-sufficient by showing them how to navigate cultural institutions.

When asked about their services, staff interviewees almost always spoke about their partners' services in the same breath as their organizations' internal services. For example, helping newly arrived refugees access healthcare is an essential component of three levels of services: basic needs; skill development; and self-sufficiency. Christine, who was a current program manager at

Mid-South Resettlement Agency but who had worked at two of the organizations, described how critical the healthcare providers were:

> Our healthcare providers are up there, although I think they're better to us than we are to them. [laughs] Yeah, they're just infinitely patient. We're trying to get the Medicaid approved, and they're just taking losses.

Healthcare providers offer a highly specialized service the agencies cannot offer in-house. Christine says that the partnership with the healthcare providers is skewed: The agencies and their clients receive more from the relationship than the healthcare providers. Partners allow nonprofits to provide the services they need and want despite mismatched reciprocity. To respond to the comprehensiveness of the needs of refugees and immigrants, the staff interviewees all talked about how necessary partners were. They frequently made statements like Hailee, a frontline staff member at Welcome-Home Agency, did: "We cannot run our programs without them, and there's a true give and take to running those programs." As necessary as partnerships are in general, the most impactful and beneficial partnerships were rooted in relationships and shared missions.

"They know your history and your story": Interagency Relationships

The relationships among organizations took different forms, and there was no one type of model organizational relationship. Instead, the staff mentioned individuals who worked at partner organizations and the significance of their interpersonal relationships in accomplishing organizational goals. For example, all three organizations described their relationship with the police department as a partnership. Still, the staff at the different organizations specified that the partnership only goes as far as relationships with individual officers and districts. For example, Christine, a Mid-South Resettlement Agency staff member with eight years' experience supporting immigrants and refugees in various capacities, recalled:

> [The police department] is increasingly partnering, but really just with one district. You know, there are all these different districts and each district is like its own universe. So the [Welcome-Home Agency] area, the District 4 officer has been a partner … But we've got a lot of folks in District 6. We've had some contact with them, but nothing as promising.

The partnership with the police department is not longstanding but is increasingly a target for supporting organizations. Christine describes how the relationship with District 4, the area where many internationals live, is good. Still, they have not fostered as much communication and partnership with other districts, like District 6, where newcomers do not have as much of a presence. When the partnership does not flourish with the police, organization staff must intervene on behalf of clients more often than when there is a standing partnership. For Christine, having a partnership with the police department means more than a relationship with staff; it also means responding directly to refugees and immigrants' needs out in the community.

Almost every staff interviewee mentioned a staff member at a partnering organization by name, underlining the frequency of establishing a partnership because of a pre-established relationship with an individual or maintaining a partnership by developing an individual connection. Beyond creating and maintaining partnerships, interpersonal relationships can help in other ways, as Rebecca, who works with refugee youth at Mid-South Resettlement Agency, says:

> When [the health insurance marketplace] was being cut, I think a lot of people individually made phone calls and … healthcare providers coming in the building and saying this is about to happen, you know, you might want to advocate for this.

The relationship with healthcare providers allowed staff at supporting organizations to have a heads up about changes in policies and procedures, which would significantly alter their abilities to fulfill the core functions of their jobs. Furthermore, the healthcare providers were a source of information and advocacy. Interpersonal relationships help nonprofits accomplish their core functions by expanding their social capital (i.e., benefits like information and advocacy derived from relationships).

While relationships with staff at partnering organizations can be helpful, there is a significant drawback to building partnerships on interpersonal relationships: sustainability. Hannah had worked or interned at all three of the supporting organizations in just eight years of professional experience touched on the issue:

> There's been significant staff turnover. But not like at the management level. They switched from having a case management system like ours where you would go to the food stamp office, you have a caseworker, their name is on your documents, when you go back, you talk to that person, they know your history and story, but in the past two years, they didn't want anybody to specialize in anything.

Here, she explicitly talks about the impact of staff turnover at the food stamp office on refugees accessing benefits easily. Still, implicit in her example is that the staff serving refugees also lose a point of contact—and with it a shared history and story—when people at a partnering agency leave. Interestingly, Hannah had been on the other side of the high levels of staff turnover but focused on how people who left partnering organizations had an impact on the core functions of the supporting organizations.

"When the aims are identical": Shared Mission and Goals

Interpersonal relationships are an essential source of resources, knowledge, and connection, but staff interviewees described other successful partnerships rooted in shared mission and benefit. As aforementioned, the three organizations have similar missions and core functions; their similarities likely explain why they do not partner with each other. They seek to form partnerships to fill gaps in services instead. As one staff member at Human Services Agency, Pat, noted, "It just depends on where we feel like the need is, if there's a hole in our capacity, you know, which organization, which company could fill it? We'll reach out if they have not already approached us." The two resettlement agencies participate in quarterly community education and engagement meetings. Still, those meetings focus on developing partnerships with external agencies rather than strengthening a partnership with each other.

At Mid-South Resettlement Agency, Rebecca described a mutually beneficial partnership with the WIC office:

> We all take families to WIC all the time, you know, to register. And it's so much transportation and time. So WIC actually reached out to us to say, hey, we might want to do some site-based registrations, and they actually wrote a grant to do it … like why would they want to do that? … For [the resettlement agencies], it's really beneficial. But then for them, they said it could open up doors where they could do more research to figure out why is this so successful.

Rebecca questioned why WIC would want to put the time and resources into applying for a grant on their behalf. However, she rationalized that there is a mutual benefit since WIC will

evaluate what is successful about the partnership. At Welcome-Home Agency, Hailee described the difference between successful and unsuccessful partnerships using similar terms:

> When the aims are identical or similar, so we both have the same objectives, when we both have the same amount of investment and accountability, that's nice. Like sometimes you find yourself in a situation where you really need somebody, they don't need you that bad, they like will fall apart on you, and it really, it can really affect you but doesn't affect them.

In this example, it is not just mutual benefit but also shared goals and investment. Shared investment is not as essential as shared goals; this interviewee used examples of successful partnerships where the investment is lopsided. For example, Christine spoke about the WIC partnership, and the partnership with healthcare providers is uneven in their investing resources. Still, it works because their missions align with those of the supporting organizations.

Indeed, Hannah at Welcome-Home Agency underlined the significance of shared mission and goals in discussing unsuccessful partnerships. As the person responsible for managing partnerships and overseeing programs, she had a different perspective than some staff members whose jobs involved working directly with refugees and immigrants. Successful partnerships, in her view, must be:

> Based off the needs of the participants … we've turned partners down before because it's just not something that we saw as a need or that our participants thought was a need. What's the point in having that program if no one's going to show up to it?

Turning down a partnership did not align with the staff's wide-reaching definition of partnerships, where they deemed everyone interested in working with them a partner. Nevertheless, as someone managing partnerships, she recognized that maintaining an organization-level relationship takes capacity, particularly staff's investment. It was not worth the investment if the goals did not align with the nonprofits' core function of meeting the needs of their clients.

Mutual investment most often occurred with the public school system, which was, in many ways, the model partner for the three supporting organizations. Hailee, a frontline staff member at Welcome-Home Agency of five years, called the school district an "invaluable partner" and said the relationship with them in terms of providing services is highly reciprocal:

> We do a lot of the coordination with [the Family Education program] with them. So, we set up the waitlist and identify who's going to be in that program, and check-in with them regularly. The local school district teachers are implementing the program … Some of our teachers are doing the homework help, some of their teachers are doing the other parts, so we meet monthly to shore up those things and make sure we're on the same page.

The program Hailee mentions is the most collaborative program interviewees described, with half of the staff employed by the local school district and half employed by Welcome-Home Agency. According to the executive director, this is a long-standing partnership dating back to the founding of Welcome-Home Agency. They maintain the partnership through regular meetings, constant communication, and a formal memorandum of agreement. The partnership works well because of mutual benefit for the organization and school district, expanding both groups' reach.

A beneficial partnership is a delicate balance for these nonprofit organizations, which rely on partners to fill holes in their limited capacity. However, the staff members relied most on

partnerships with a shared mission and benefit and interpersonal relationships with staff at partnering agencies.

"We've gotten burned": When Partnerships Are Unsuccessful

While many of the interviewees highlighted the benefits of successful partnerships, they also had stories about partnerships that had not been successful. As demonstrated above, partnerships are not always institutionalized; rather, they often hinge on interpersonal relationships and taking the time to critically evaluate whether missions and benefits align. In this way, the partnerships, as defined by the organization staff, are precarious. Furthermore, each partnership was an exercise in navigating power differentials, as I discuss here.

A critical power difference is between organizations and the people they serve. Often, organization staff use the social capital they have in the community and with partners to bridge social capital gaps that refugees and immigrants have in their new hometowns. This particular difference in power may be a reason for organizations to develop and maintain partnerships, but it also exposed examples of partnerships that either never got started or were abandoned. Pat, a staff member at Human Services Agency, brought up how one challenge that had seemingly been resolved had reemerged for clients with whom she worked:

> So, after two long years of fighting, I really felt like we were finally at a good system where we had a system in place to make sure that our clients could get through the glitches of the Medicaid and [state healthcare marketplace] system. And unfortunately, all of that just went away this year. Yeah. Which is a real, real travesty.

Pat's frustration is directed at systemic issues, but she brings up her ability to leverage power in a way that the refugee clients cannot. In all of the interviews I conducted, including those with Somali refugees who had utilized the organizations' services, the power differential between organization staff and refugees was described as beneficial and leveraged in support of refugees' well-being.

However, another important difference in power arose between the grassroots, immigrant-founded and run organization, Welcome Home Agency, and the designated resettlement agencies. The executive director of Welcome Home Agency shared several stories from his experiences trying to partner with the Catholic Diocese in the area, local government, and the public library. In each example, he discussed how the designated refugee resettlement agencies received benefits and opportunities to partner that Welcome Home Agency did not. The director felt that his positionality as an immigrant with a heavy accent and more limited connections to the midsouth city often prevented Welcome Home Agency from forming beneficial partnerships and receiving funding, especially from local government and private donors, that the resettlement agencies did.

Most of the organization staff were reluctant to refer to a partnership as "failed," but each interviewee had examples of partnerships that were tense, unproductive, and ultimately no longer a partnership. The program director at Welcome Home Agency shared an example of a local dance studio, which came to teach a dance class during youth programming and then never returned or responded to communication from organization staff. Rebecca, a staff member at Mid-South Resettlement Agency, reiterated the importance of interagency relationships in talking about how their organization's partnership with the local social security office seemed to disappear overnight:

> All of a sudden, everybody we knew at social security doesn't work there anymore. And there's all these new people that don't know how to process social security applications for

> refugees. So nine out of 10 of our refugees are not getting social security cards, which means we can't get their social security number to the food stamp office, which means their food stamp is getting cancelled, and they can't apply for jobs. It's like one little change in the system, this ripples out everywhere else. And for the caseworkers, who are just like going to the airport, doing their home visits, like they can't fight the systems. They've got to just make it work, how it's working.

Partnerships allow organization staff to increase their power within the community, but, when partnerships dissolve, so does the power.

Relying on partnerships can mean more work for already overworked staff, especially when the partnership is unsuccessful. Several staff members talked about how partnering with volunteers could be incredibly valuable; indeed, all three organizations relied on volunteers to support many of their programs and services. However, when volunteers did not have the same level of commitment or a shared sense of mission and values, the staff—and the refugees and immigrants receiving services—found themselves at a disadvantage. Hailee highlighted an example of how an overreliance on volunteers backfired:

> The volunteers came. They didn't have a lot of the resources they said they might. And they said they would plan activities [for the youth], but they didn't. So we kind of scrambled to pull that together last minute because we were really relying on that volunteer group to pull through, and it just didn't happen … we needed to occupy 75 kids for three hours and all the volunteers needed was to get some kind of class credit. There's not a lot of accountability. It was low-risk, low-cost to them, but much higher for us.

Indeed, the executive director at the same organization shared with me that he discouraged his staff from saying "no" to volunteer groups out of fear of losing a potentially valuable partnership. By trying to work with everyone interested in volunteering, it seems that the organization may be opening itself up to more frequent failures. However, the executive director felt that the organization did not have the power or luxury of turning away eager collaborators.

While the staff I interviewed would not use the word "failed" to describe partnerships, they had ample stories about when partnerships caused more work for them or, even worse, caused harm to the people that the organizations sought to serve. In several examples, the staff spoke about how lack of cultural competence, evangelizing activities, and lack of sustained commitment damaged the relationships that staff worked to develop with refugee families and communities. Questions of who has power and how they use that power are important considerations in partnerships, but often nonprofit staff do not have time to sort through those dynamics in their day-to-day efforts to support refugees and immigrants.

Discussion

This study explores how organizations collaborate to mitigate refugees and immigrants' integration challenges based on interviews with staff and Somali refugees. Supporting organizations provide comprehensive services to provide for basic needs, develop skills, and foster self-sufficiency, but many of the services would not be possible without an extensive network of collaborations. Overall, the data demonstrate how essential it is to form and maintain partnerships to increase the organizations' capacity, but there is tension between the lived experiences of partnerships in my data and the definitions used in the literature.

The three supporting nonprofit organizations are similar in their services and how they partner with community agencies, likely from a rational response to the clients and organizations' needs

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Logically, the organizations would compete with one another for grants, funding, volunteers, and other sources of capital, and I had hoped to better understand the relationship among the organizations to see where they fall on a spectrum of competition to collaboration—perhaps with co-opetition at the middle of the spectrum (Bunger, 2013). Instead, the staff focused on the positive consequence of their limited capacity: partnerships. In the process of helping refugees rebuild capital in their new homes, the nonprofits are also building and maintaining capital of their own through organizational collaboration.

The role of organizational collaboration in resettlement and integration efforts needs further exploration. Previous studies looking at partnerships within this area have found that the level of partnerships is low between community-based organizations and resettlement agencies (Kombassere, 2013), a complex web of informal collaborations helps refugee resettlement agencies provide more efficient support to refugees (Parada et al., 2020); further, interorganizational partnerships supporting immigrant integration often form based on interpersonal staff relationships rather than shared organizational traits (Yeo, 2022). It is crucial, however, to understand what partnerships actually look like on the ground of immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations. The partnerships described here suggest that partners provide services and access to resources—both tangible and intangible—the home organizations cannot offer on their own (Gulati, 2007).

For example, sharing information with supporting organization staff regarding a change in healthcare policies is an intangible resource alleviating the work of supporting organizations and relies on interagency relationships, or relational embeddedness (Moran, 2005). A tangible resource provided by partners is the on-site English classes. Partnering organizations provide teachers and curriculum at their own expense, which would be too costly for supporting organizations. Sharing resources in this way relies on a shared mission: The school district's adult and continuing education program needs to provide classes to a wide range of students, and the supporting organizations can provide students who need those classes. As findings from my study demonstrate, collaborative partnerships are thus most robust when there are interpersonal relationships and a shared mission.

As findings from my study demonstrate, the most successful partnerships hinge on interagency staff relationships and shared mission and benefit. In contrast, unsuccessful partnerships lack shared expectations or a shared commitment to serving the population. My data underscore the importance of relational embeddedness and similar goals in navigating networks (Moran, 2005; Gulati, 2007). However, partnerships create opportunities for expanded services without addressing the actual issue at play, i.e., there is not enough money or staff-power for nonprofits to do what they want—and claim—to do. In many ways, organizations have been developing these workarounds for decades and are reproducing a need for their services. The failure of the nonprofits ultimately recreates the need for nonprofits because the work is never fully funded or staffed. Partnerships ensure their survival, but at what cost?

In direct opposition to this explanation of why relational embeddedness and a shared mission are critical to nonprofit organizations providing comprehensive services is the catch-22 that nonprofits have high staff turnover rates and are often plagued by mission drift (Nonprofit H.R., 2019; Bennett & Savani, 2011). High staff turnover undermines the benefit of relational embeddedness because when staff embedded in relationships with community partners leave an organization, the partnership falters. Mission drift undermines shared missions on both sides of the partnership because it can effectively mean that the success of partnerships is constantly shifting. The partnership strategy nonprofits use to address the challenges in limited capital they face ultimately introduces new challenges.

One such challenge is navigating power dynamics steeped in varying levels of social capital. Refugee and immigrant clients have low levels of social capital, which the supporting organizations attempt to mediate with their programs and services. My findings also support the idea that immigrant-led organizations may have less power in their communities than federally contracted organizations (Gonzalez Benson & Pimentel Walker, 2021). Ultimately, organization staff use a loose definition of *partnership* to increase their power and social capital within a community even when that opens them up to unreliable and potentially counterproductive collaborations.

The "loose definition" of *partnership* that the nonprofit staff continued to return to is a critical example of what Mendel and Brudney conceptualize as "partnership hyperbole" (2018, p. 26). In their discussion of the variety of definitions that different fields use to describe collaborations, Mendel and Brudney (2018) suggest that nonprofit organizations are quick to identify any type of collaboration, especially related to funding, as a partnership. The loose definition of *partnership* from which all of the organization interviewees in my study operated aligns with this eagerness. Additionally, my findings expose opportunities for more critical work on the ground to refine standards, expectations, and goals of partnerships and for the literature on migration studies and nonprofit studies to examine disconnects between scholarship and practice.

Conclusion

The findings analyzed here have programmatic and policy implications. For example, organizations serving immigrants and refugees should identify the ways their capacity is limited and form partnerships to address those gaps. Alternately, agencies and businesses in communities with significant migrant populations should consider the ways they can form partnerships with supporting organizations to expand their capacity.

Furthermore, while the supporting organizations may not intentionally compete for resources, they are inevitably doing so, even as staff reframe competition as collaboration. Instead of directly and efficiently supporting refugee and immigrant integration into U.S. communities, the federal government has, at least in this midsouth city, tasked multiple refugee resettlement agencies and, to a lesser extent, grassroots agencies with a monumental goal and limited resources that do not match the task at hand. As opposed to a shared mission, this overlapping mission undermines an organization's ability to partner with others in healthy and meaningful ways. Ultimately, the organizations compete for limited resources, devoting precious capacity to managing partnerships, making them less effective at serving people like the Somali refugees featured in this study.

Suppose local, state, and federal governments continue to task nonprofit organizations with supporting the integration of newcomers. In that case, they must create policies with the actual challenges and assets of immigrant and refugee populations in mind. Local governments should provide additional resources and support to enable agencies to make linguistically appropriate services available in the community. All community agencies and businesses must understand and attempt to address the challenges newcomers face because, as studies show, a welcoming community is more likely to thrive (Majka & Longazel, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2018).

As noted, I was initially interested in the relationship among the three supporting organizations. Organizational theory would have predicted that, if they were structurally embedded, there would be higher levels of trust among them (Moran, 2005). However, my findings related to structural embeddedness are limited, and I could not analyze the effects of this embeddedness on interorganizational relationships, specifically regarding collaboration among the three supporting

organizations. The lack of detailed data about their relationships would indicate they tend toward competition rather than collaboration with one another. Still, there are not enough data to make this conclusion.

Throughout the study, questions and topics for potential future research emerged. Closely related to my research, future research must deepen the understanding of the partner networks through network analysis. Similar studies should be conducted in other cities to compare how supporting organizations collaborate to offer programs and services in different locations, which will help identify best practices. Future research should seek to understand how family dynamics shift as children learn English faster than parents and as many women work outside the home for the first time, ideally longitudinally. Furthermore, my research suggested ethnic leaders naturally arise in the communities, as some integrate more quickly and help others navigate language and cultural systems, thus forming a microcosmic representative democracy. However, these leaders often have one foot in the ethnic community and one in the world of supporting organizations, limiting the community's trust. Exploring the dynamics of ethnic leaders in the communities from multiple perspectives is vital to innovate ways supporting organizations form partners and offer programs and services.

Challenges for newcomers have shifted in small ways throughout the past century. Still, even as administrations and rhetoric around immigration have changed, we continue to see that the needs of refugees and immigrants have primarily remained the same. We must understand the role of supporting and partnering organizations in helping refugees and immigrants integrate into their new hometowns. We must be aware of and sympathetic to the difficulties internationals face, and we must be committed to fostering welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees.

Disclosure Statement

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

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Race Matters: The Long Walk to Decolonizing Development NGOs

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Development NGOs have long been under scrutiny for their colonial legacy. Decision-making structures are predominantly white or European. There is little racial equity analysis of staff, programs, and campaigns. Poverty and development are understood as happening "there" in low-income countries. This article analyzes the UK-born NGO ActionAid and its steps toward decolonization. In the 2000s, country directors and international board members diversified beyond British nationals to give more decision-making power to African, Asian, and Latin-American countries. Other advances, yet recent, include an antiracism audit and the start of a large racial equity program. International campaigns are often critical toward the UK's role in low-income countries or include UK domestic aspects requiring "development" (poverty, climate justice …). The paper shares practical measures to the sometimes-theoretical debate on decolonization and development. It suggests that this process is not in contradiction—but rather promotes—the mandate of addressing poverty where it is most severe worldwide.

Keywords: NGOs; organizational change; racial equity; poverty; postcolonialism

Introduction

Large development NGOs have been under scrutiny from scholars and media for decades in terms of racism and colonialism.[1] Some have noted how decision-making and working frameworks in the development sector are predominantly white (Bheeroo et al., 2020; Cornish, 2019; Pailey, 2020). Others remind of the invisibility of "race" analysis in development studies and practice (Mohanty, 2002; White, 2002). Still others have questioned the "global poverty" vision of development NGOs, based on a shared mission to eradicate poverty exclusively in the world's poorest countries but not in the high-income countries where the international organisations are often based. This vision implies "othering" poverty and development elsewhere while overlooking poverty and development in richer ones (Luetchford & Burns, 2003; Pickering-Saqqa, 2019a).

For their part, development NGOs have sought to decolonize their structures, for instance, with the introduction of human rights approaches, more equal footing in decision-making between poorer and richer countries, and by diversifying the country origins of staff members. Today, the urgency of the matter remerges with realities such as the Black Lives Matter movement and a new geography of poverty shaped by emergent global powers, the COVID-19

[1] Large NGOs are defined as those with an annual expenditure over 100 million British pounds.

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crisis, and the climate crisis.

This paper studies the evolution of an NGO in terms of racial equity and decolonization—from what was a UK white-driven, race-blind, and poor-country-oriented charity toward more race-aware and decolonized manifestations of it. "Racial equity" refers to a situation in which race is no longer a statistical predictor of unequal conditions among individuals and groups (CAPD, 2022). Thus, it involves both equal access to resources and equal outcomes from processes. In this article, race equity is understood as addressing three levels of racism—institutionalized (cultural, social and economic barriers); personally mediated (prejudice and behaviours of others); and internalized (own prejudices and behaviours of racialized people) (C. P. Jones, 2000). Thus, racial equity affects racialized and nonracialized individuals, cultural and material aspects. The realization of racial privilege is crucial, since many institutional and mediated decisions are often taken by those in positions of power. This illustrates my own case, as a white person writing about racial justice (see the methodology).

In the context of development NGOs and international relations, racial equity intersects with a second axis of colonialism and coloniality (McEwan, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). "Colonialism" refers to the process in which some countries exert political control over others through the undemocratic occupation with settlers and the exploitation of economic resources (Rodney, 1972). Further, "coloniality" refers to the unequal patterns of power that emerged because of colonialism and that persist beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. In that sense, decolonization involves democratizing organisations that are racially and geographically unequal. For instance, where decisions are made by white (or even racialized) staff in former colonizing countries. This can take place in development NGOs as well as in international collaborations between governments, companies and universities (e.g., Cascant-Sempere et al., 2022).

The paper starts with a review of two criticisms experienced by development NGOs concerning their racial equity mission. The first criticism explores the human map of *who* decides about work on poverty and development as related to staff's origin, race, and geography. This often reveals a hierarchy of power relations and decision-making. The second dimension looks at *where* poverty and development work are implemented—whether in the world's poorest countries or in both poorer and richer countries. It then introduces a framework to analyze both material and discursive aspects in the process of organizational change, in this case, a change process aimed at reaching racial and geographical equity in an organization. It then presents the case of ActionAid, a large UK-born development NGO, which has been considered one of the most radical organizations in the application of human rights and organizational decentralization in the sector (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013; Newman, 2011). The case study approach draws on ethnographic work carried out in Nigeria and the UK in 2013 and 2014, including a review of documents, participant observation, and interviews, which has been complemented with more recent data. Findings explore how the charity made big steps toward racial equity and decolonization when democratizing its structures and decision-making yet how there is still a long road to walk in making racial issues more visible and permanent in its work. This is followed by a debate about implications for the broader development sector.

First Criticism: The Racial and Colonial Legacy in Decision-Making

The development aid sector was born after the Second World War but has its roots in colonial times (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Some NGOs have been part of anticolonial struggles such as the South African antiapartheid movement (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Yet, historical, commercial, and linguistic bonds remain between former colonial and colonized countries that are highly unequal—a criticism long raised by critical and postcolonial scholars (e.g., Esteva & Escobar, 2017; Pailey, 2020; Schöneberg, 2016). At the organizational level, development NGOs often

reproduce these inequalities. Strategic resources and decision-making remain racially and geographically unequal, staying in the hands of white staff working for aid donors and large NGOs in headquarters, often based in high-income, former colonizing countries.

In 2021, the UK Parliament ordered a report on "Racism in the Aid Sector" in the UK (IDC, 2022). Results from the 2018 UK Civil Society Almanac published by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) found that 9% of charity sector staff were from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) (here, "racialized" backgrounds is used, as compared with white backgrounds that are not racialized). This percentage is compared with 12% of the private sector, 11% of the public sector, and 14% of the UK population who are racialized citizens.

Similar results were found for decision-makers. Surveys for 2017–2018 by the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) revealed that racialized senior management teams and trustees represented 10% in the UK charity sector. This percentage went down to 3% for CEOs (Merrylees, 2018). Similarly, another study by the Green Park Foundation (Green Park, 2018) noted that 34 of the UK's 100 largest charities had all-white senior leadership teams, while only 8% of senior positions were held by ethnic minority leaders. At chair, CEO, and CFO positions, a decrease was again confirmed, i.e., to 6%.

Within the charity sector, the situation of development NGOs was slightly more positive. The Green Park report included a subsector analysis of charities. Animal charities displayed the lowest level of ethnocultural diversity at under 2% of the senior leadership, while NGOs (mainly foreign aid charities) had the highest level of ethnocultural diversity (15.8%) amongst leaders (Green Park, 2018). While this could be read as matching the percentage of racialized population in the UK (14%), some suggest that this percentage should go up to 40%, in line with the racialized population in London, where most of these organizations work (IDC, 2022). It could also be argued that the expected percentage needs to be set higher to reflect the majority percentages of the populations in the countries where these international organizations work. Finally, while development NGOs have a relative fair level of ethnocultural diversity, the analysis does not indicate at which decision-making positions these staff are located. Moreover, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the UK government, which often has an influence in the development agenda and funding of large organisations, still had 7.5% of racialized senior management in 2022 (IDC, 2022).

Some voices have raised doubts about whether it is correct that staff who may come from UK aid recipient countries take part in funding decisions (IDC, 2022). Yet, surprisingly, it does not apply the same argument on decisions taken by European/UK white decision-makers who may have limited knowledge about these countries.

Other indirect factors may prevent racialized people from accessing decision-making positions. In a study by the British Overseas NGOs for Development organization (BOND), 85% of those who identified as racialized staff in the development sector felt that getting promoted in the sector was not accessible to them; 68% said to have experienced racial discrimination at work within the past year—or had supported someone else who had (Bheeroo et al., 2020). This is despite 73% reporting to have diversity and inclusion policies at work.

A consequence of not accessing decision-making positions is that racialized workers earn less than white people with the same degrees on average (TUC, 2016). Save the Children UK was one of the first large international NGOs to publish its ethnicity pay gap data in 2020 (IDC, 2022). Racialized people in the development sector were paid 5% less based on the mean average while the median pay gap across the country was of 4%. Black women earned a mean average of more than 23% less than White men and 13% less than White women (IDC, 2022).

Second Criticism: The Colonial Legacy in the Mapping of Poverty

In a context of development NGOs, racial equity cannot be read only in national terms, as could be the case of a racialized community in a given country. Its historical connections to colonialism and coloniality and the particular country bonds that emanate from them compel the analysis to take an international, intercountry lens as well.

The original mission of development NGOs is to work on poverty in poor, often former colonized countries, and they continue to do so nowadays. The challenge with this gaze, according to some scholars, is that it makes an epistemic and normative judgement on whose poverty (and development model) is relevant. A process of "othering" the poor takes place where the poor are consistently identified as distant (Pickering-Saqqa, 2019a). This "othering" has a racial reading, as the "others" were, and are, racialized populations.

Discussions about the unequal geography of development work are not new. Public debate in the UK development sector already questioned whether distinctions made between "poverty here and poverty there" were artificial or not in the early 1970s (Luetchford & Burns, 2003, p. 81–82). This tension has lingered in academia, the news and the third sector for decades (e.g., Gentleman, 2013; P. S. Jones, 2000; Whyte in Lewis, 2015). For instance, a situation of "parallel worlds" happens in which professionals and academics addressing poverty in low-income countries and poverty in high-income countries do not talk to each other, thus limiting comparative learning for improved action against poverty (Lewis, 2009, 2015).

Moreover, if the structure of poverty has changed worldwide, how would it be justified that clear-cut north–south maps of poverty are maintained in the imaginary of development? According to Sumner (2010), new economic powers such as Brazil, China, India, and Russia, most of which are not predominantly white, have now turned donors. World inequality has raised, with few countries and people concentrating more wealth, and middle-income countries now holding most of the bottom billion poor people in the world.

As a result, new understandings in development have emerged that challenge the traditional "global poverty" vision, in which the role of white, richer countries is silent, and poverty solutions are limited to work in the poorest countries, i.e., "poverty there"). For instance, the "blame us" frame illustrates causes of global poverty that are created by rich countries and elites, that require work in both the global north and the global south. An illustration would be denouncing oil spills of multinationals from the global north that ruin the environment in the global south (Vossen & Van Gorp, 2017). Highlighting this responsibility breaks with the colonial past by naming the power of high-income countries. This approach offsets stereotyped frames such as the "bad governance" frame studied by the same authors in which only governments of poor countries are inherently seen as corrupt and responsible, and where development work is only deemed necessary "there" (Vossen & Van Gorp, 2017).

Similarly, the global village frame emphasizes global interconnectedness and is now becoming a mainstream narrative with the sustainable development goals, where the need of rich countries to tackle cross-border aspects and to develop sustainably (e.g., international crime and conflict, climate crisis, and the environment) is required if wealth and development are to be possible for all countries (Vossen & Van Gorp, 2017). This global village frame resonates with the global justice frame (St. Clair, 2006), which considers that all poverties in the world matter regardless of the country, and that common causes such as neoliberal policies cause them, widening the distance between a global elite and the rest. These new frames are in opposition to the vision of global poverty, naturalized in the missions of many development NGOs to end poverty worldwide there where it is most acute.

Table 1 Framework to explore racial and decolonial change in development NGOs

Organizational structures Material aspects of organizational change	**Organizational culture** Cultural aspects of organizational change
• organograms and decision-making • strategic planning • resources and budgets • networks and partnerships	• leadership • comms: language, narratives, visuals • learning: adaptation, training, rewards • practices: values, emotions

Source: own elaboration[2]

A Framework to Analyze Racial and Decolonial Change in Development NGOs

Development NGOs and other international organizations are "neither straightforward tools of empire or neocolonialism, nor natural instruments for 'Third World' liberation" (Muschik, 2022). To avoid teleological and preconceived understandings, it is important to define a framework that enables the analysis of diverse realities. Two categories of analysis are used: material and cultural aspects, which are necessary to achieve racial equity (C. P. Jones, 2000).

Material aspects relate to organizational structures and include organograms, hierarchies of leadership and decision-making, strategic planning, budgets, and the types of networking and partnerships of an organization (Table 1). The number and type of campaigners, volunteers and staff, the creation and demise of teams and departments would also fit in this category.

Cultural aspects relate to the organizational culture and include aspects such as language and narratives and visuals used as well as the daily practices. This category also includes emotions felt, for example, how staff or campaigners feel when it comes to changes related to decolonization. In processes of cultural change, emotional attachments by staff, volunteers, and decision-makers develop (della Porta, 2014). Analyzing emotions such as motivation and diverging voices in an organization helps us to understand how ripe that cultural change may be.

Using this dual framework helps prevent partial visions of what may constitute organizational change, that is, only looking at either cultural or material aspects of (racial) change. For instance, there have been criticisms about seeing the decolonization process in NGOs as a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issue or an HR issue (Green, 2020). This means that decolonizing is not only about hiring staff from different backgrounds and ensuring there is equality in recruitment and inclusion. It implies a change in power relations and decision-making and an acknowledgment of the colonial roots of international development. It involves the whole organization, not only the human resources department. Others have instead criticized how change processes in any organization must address cultural changes, and not only more visible changes in organizational structures (Elbers & Schulpen, 2015). Cultural change is, according to this view, one of the hardest aspects to achieve.

Methodology and the Case of ActionAid

ActionAid was founded in 1972 in the UK as a charity focused on eradicating poverty through child sponsorship and service-delivery.[2] Today, ActionAid keeps its poverty eradication mission in the poorest countries intact, but its processes and structures have changed. What has made ActionAid different in the eyes of academics and peer organizations has been the radicalness with which internal policies such as human rights and organizational decentralization have been applied (Newman, 2011, ch. 5). The NGO has also stood out for

[2] For a review of ActionAid's mission and history, see the evolution of global strategies in Newman (2011, ch. 4)

developing its own popular, community-based version of human rights, which has permeated the local work of the organization (Plipat, 2006). In this study, ActionAid was chosen as an *extreme* case study as human rights and decentralization processes are likely to support decolonization goals—we return to assess the strength of this premise in the discussion. Unlike *paradigmatic* cases that illustrate average features, extreme cases illustrate a phenomenon that has reached an advanced or differential position than similar entities in a given area (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Fieldwork took place in Abuja and London between January 2013 and December 2014. During that period, I compared the ways of working of ActionAid Nigeria and ActionAid UK, and how they implemented programs and campaigns. A key campaign that I observed was the Tax Justice Campaign, an initiative that involved several country teams, including ActionAid Nigeria and ActionAid UK. I interviewed several staff members (see Appendix 1 for a list)

After that period, I analyzed more recent ActionAid campaigns (2021–2023) as presented on the organization's website and analyzed the narratives used. I reviewed archives, internal reports, and publications. Archives reviewed included the national organizational strategies in Nigeria and the UK, the global strategies (ActionAid's strategies 2012–2017 and 2018–2028), annual reports (from 2015 to 2021), and mission and vision statements (see Appendix 1).

To strengthen a longer comparative perspective, the primary work I carried out back in 2013 and 2014 was compared with secondary data of other researchers on ActionAid, spanning from 2006 to 2013 (Plipat, 2006; Ebrahim & Gordon, 2010; Newman, 2011; Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013). In Newman's case (2011), her PhD has archival and ethnographic data since the start of ActionAid as an organization in 1972. I have also compared ActionAid with other development NGOs of similar budget, mission, and size (Findings 1, 2, and 3).

ActionAid's meso-processes of democratizing organizational structures and decision-making is well documented in the literature, so I mostly used secondary sources for that section (Finding 1). Observation and a review of annual reports, strategies, and media were most useful to study race and decolonization at a more microlevel in programs and campaigns (Findings 2 and 3). A public version of an antiracism audit that ActionAid UK carried out in 2022 was not available at the time of research, nor aggregate statistics on race and staff. Interviews served to explore global poverty as poverty "over there" narratives (Findings 2 and 3).

An advantage and a limitation of this research is that I worked as a consultant for the international offices and some country teams of ActionAid at the time, which gave me insights into the internal ways of working but only partially. Similarly, being a staff member could have helped me in booking certain interviews of staff I did not know personally in the organization. Data selected were reviewed by the interviewees before publication.

Finally, the fact of being white and European gave me more access to higher education and global work opportunities than other racialized people, especially those from low-income countries. This includes the capacity to write papers; being familiar with the academic writing styles, publishing platforms and processes; and being privileged enough to save the time to write and improve a paper after revisions.

Finding 1: Democratizing Structures and Decision-Making Yet Not Racializing Strategic Priorities

ActionAid had been devolving power from the UK to country programs since the early 1990s through partnerships in which local work was transferred to local associations and regionalization with the setup of regional offices (Newman, 2011, ch. 4). These partnership

processes were common at the time in the sector, and ActionAid was at first less ambitious than other NGDOs (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013). The breaking point arrived in 2003 when ActionAid turned into a federation through its internationalization process (Newman, 2011).

Until 2003, ActionAid had been led from AAUK, ActionAid's country founder since 1972. Deliberate efforts were made to separate ActionAid, as the federation's headquarters, from AAUK to make the latter just one more country member with a vote (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013). ActionAid registered as a foundation in the Netherlands, and the international headquarters partly moved from London to Johannesburg and other regional hub cities. With this move, ActionAid became the first major UK NGO to have moved from north to south.

Gradually, country programs were nationalized as autonomous associations with national assemblies and national boards accountable to the assemblies[3]. In 2008, ActionAid mirrored the two-tiered (i.e., assembly-board) system already running nationally at the international level. In 2009, a constitution was enshrined, and the first annual international general assembly took place. From this point onward, African, Asian, American, and European national members could bring motions and directly shape the association's future (Ebrahim & Gordon, 2010). For example, as early as 2010, the affiliate units in Ghana, Greece and Sierra Leone submitted three motions for a vote at the assembly, which could have direct effects in the ways of working of the whole organization, such as which new country members to accept or how to distribute the international budget (Ebrahim & Gordon, 2010).

With the adoption of human rights approaches in the 2000s, ActionAid also started a radical democratization of its international decision-making structures. Country directors and international board members—originally British nationals—gradually diversified (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013). Likewise, ActionAid federation's voting geography changed to give more decision-making power to African, Asian, and Latin-American countries.

In 2010, eight out of 15 of the affiliates (members who double-voted) were high-income countries, while seven were African, Asian, and Latin-American. The affiliate status was formerly reserved to high-income country members. Likewise, half of the 10 associates (members who single-voted) were African, three Asian, and two European (Ebrahim & Gordon, 2010).

In 2015, the number of affiliates had risen to 21, 11 of which were nonhigh-income countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin-America. The six associates, that is, potential future affiliates, were all nonhigh-income countries from Africa and Asia (ActionAid, 2016). This distinguished ActionAid from other NGOs like CARE, Oxfam, and Save the Children at the time (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013). Still, in 2022, all of the 21 Oxfam members were high-income countries except for Brazil, Colombia, India, Mexico, and South Africa (Oxfam, nd).

Additionally, ActionAid sought to decentralize income by setting up national fundraising schemes. By 2015, some nonhigh-income countries had successfully started to mobilize committed income in the federation, i.e., Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Thailand (ActionAid, 2017a). This was important, given that most country members still depended financially on high-income (many of which former colonizing) country members, despite all members being autonomous legally and in decision-making processes. Added to this, a financial rule existed stating that no more than 50% of the total budget of an ActionAid member could come from any one governmental or private actor other than ActionAid, to

[3] AAUK, ActionAid Ireland and ActionAid US did not have national assemblies at the time (Jayawickrama & Ebrahim, 2013, p. 6)

preserve political autonomy (Ebrahim & Gordon, 2010).

These early efforts in democratizing decision-making and finances have mirrored in the activity of the organization. For instance, countries involved in the Tax Justice Campaign I studied had relative autonomy (and even funding) in planning and implementing the campaign. In Nigeria, the campaign not only had international claims and actions such as tax avoidance from multinational companies sitting in the UK but also national and local ones such as corruption and tax incentives from the Nigerian government to the companies. This enabled ActionAid UK to promote a "blame us" frame while ActionAid Nigeria rooted the campaign in the country. I have studied this in more detail somewhere else (Cascant-Sempere, 2022).

At the middle-management level, it is still difficult to find disaggregated data in annual reports about the ethnicity of staff (percentage of staff, percentage of senior positions) in the same way that one can find about the percentage of male/female in staff, volunteers and senior leadership positions (e.g., ActionAid, 2022a) or about the salaries of CEOs and senior leadership (e.g., ActionAid UK, 2022a).

In 2021, ActionAid UK carried out an antiracism audit, which created controversy amongst staff and the media. Some staff felt that evidence of institutional racism had been ignored (ActionAid UK, 2022a). On the other hand, the audit identified "a number of good practice areas" in the charity. For instance, they found that the proportion of Black and ethnic minority staff working at AAUK was higher than the sector average (Hargrave, 2022).

My own experience as a consultant for ActionAid and while doing fieldwork let me observe that the national teams in ActionAid had most staff from the country or region, including CEOs and leadership teams. I could observe this in India, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and South Africa as well as in regional workshops where the presence of white people was scant or inexistent. In Nigeria during fieldwork, I was the only white in the organization when I arrived, and I remember that some staff prided the place for being fully black staffed (ActionAid Nigeria staff, informal chats, 2013–14). Only in 2014, three Asian and European expats started working at ActionAid Nigeria. One could also observe diversity of religions and ethnicities within the staff (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba …).

Also, it was common practice to have to justify working abroad as an international consultant if a national could do the job. This meant, for instance, that I (and the ActionAid staff contracting me for consultancies) had to justify why a white European like me was taken as an expert. This happened to me twice, when working in India and South Africa.

However, racial equity and decoloniality are far from being an organizational priority or line of work. Long ago, ActionAid decided to focus on women's rights and to tackle this from different thematic areas such as violence against women, public services, climate justice, and humanitarian work, as seen in its last two global strategies (ActionAid, 2011; ActionAid, 2017b). Similarly, ActionAid's Nigeria priorities involve emergencies, land and climate, and women's rights (ActionAid Nigeria, 2018). This orientation has historically relegated racial equity to smaller and more ad hoc initiatives within the organization.

More recently, however, the organization has given the matter more prominence. In its last annual report, ActionAid acknowledged the work of the racial justice movement Black Lives Matter and how it has:

> Created a new lens for some of our work, giving energy to a push for decolonisation of the NGO sector and exposing the unacceptable neo-colonial dynamics in international economic relations and the aid sector (ActionAid, 2022a: 7)

Additionally, in 2022, ActionAid prepared and gained a funding call from a large global foundation on racial equity for a total of $10 million (ActionAid, 2022b). ActionAid presented it as a hopefully growing future line of work:

> We had a few significant breakthroughs in raising strategic funds for this programme work, including … the largest ever grant for anti-racist public education work in Brazil. The collaboration with black, indigenous and Quilombola movements in Brazil and the global mapping of anti-racist education initiatives has opened very exciting new threads of work which can inspire and strengthen similar actions and efforts in other ActionAid's countries and regions (ActionAid, 2022a: 26).

This section has analyzed structures and programs at the global and meso (organizational) level and how they related to race and coloniality. Findings 2 and 3 now move to analyze the microlevel of race and coloniality in the organization's campaigns and programs.

Finding 2: Adapting to New Geographies of Poverty and Activism Worldwide: Work on UK Poverty

Including or not UK poverty in the campaigns and programs of a development NGO has a racial and colonial reading. Seeing poverty elsewhere in other countries is not only a process of othering and distancing oneself from those considered poor, it is also a racial issue as the globally othered, as the poor are mostly racialized, postcolonial populations.

Other reasons relate to better adapting to new geographies of poverty and activism worldwide. On the adaption to the current poverty context, an interviewee commented that:

> As poverty moves … there is so much poverty in middle-income countries, lots of the previous wealthier countries are doing really bad in the recession, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing massively … I would like to work on structural issues to tackle global inequality and poverty wherever it is (ActionAid UK activism officer, interview 2014).

On activism and campaign coherence, the same interviewee added that certain forms of mobilizing in the UK were undermined, for example, UK campaigners mobilizing against UK poverty besides other campaigners mobilizing against poverty in other countries or UK poor people mobilizing with their own claims:

> I really want to be working on development and I love the tax campaign, as it is structural … [but] I would like us to link more UK and development issues with the tax campaign … when we are talking about tax, tax pays for important stuff in developing countries, well it pays for important stuff here as well. It has an impact too in the UK, all over the world … the framing of things in a development way, I understand why ActionAid needs to do it but I would like to frame them as… these are the structures of the world that are causing problems for everyone … our campaigning … [is] an act of global justice and an acknowledgement that we are all affected (ActionAid UK activism officer, interview 2014).

This connects with current "we are the 99%" approaches from past global justice and occupy movements, which question the vision of a north–south world with neat divisions between higher- and lower-income countries upon which the global poverty vision has rested. Instead, the 99% frame argues that there is a 1% rich elite versus a 99% of poor people in the world and asks for the poor of all countries to become united against that global elite (Gould-Wartofsky, 2015).

Tensions of not including UK poverty get aggravated in moments of economic crisis and recession. It is when UK poverty levels become more blatant, and when the UK political panorama gets tense, that development NGOs and funding governments face an identity as well as financial crossroad. They may feel obliged to justify why a state's budget is allocated for overseas poverty while cuts are being felt domestically (Green, 2015).

However, there are also disadvantages from working on UK poverty in a development NGO that go beyond the financial costs. According to two interviewees, these have been long-lasting discussions in the sector:

> There have been lots of discussion about it [ActionAid UK working in partnerships domestically] and that's never really happened (ActionAid UK youth engagement manager, interview, 2013).

> Any international development NGOs that I've worked in, there is this great discussion about how to tie up these things together, but it's still quite tricky (ActionAid UK activism officer, interview 2014).

One such disadvantage is the larger resistance from conservative politicians and media in the UK to claims about austerity "at home" than to the effects of UK politics overseas. This was the case of Oxfam's Perfect Storm initiative in 2014, which questioned the austerity policies of the UK government. A conservative member of Parliament rapidly criticized the NGO for being "too political," and this was followed by an inspection from the Charity Commission (Williams, 2014). Similarly, Save the Children's campaign on children's poverty, It Shouldn't Happen Here, had also received criticism from another conservative member of Parliament who disagreed with the campaign asking for more governmental protection for the poorest families (Elhusseini, 2012).

Other disadvantages of integrating UK poverty raised for the case of Islamic Relief UK regarded the minor appetite from UK individual donors to fund work in the UK as well as the opposition from some members of staff, trustees, and volunteers (Pickering-Saqqa, 2019b). In fact, it took more than two decades—from 1972 to 1995—and five rounds of consultations for Oxfam to establish its UK poverty program (Pickering-Saqqa, 2019a). These fundraising issues resonated in ActionAid:

> When we work in partnership it's very hard to sacrifice our visibility in a way that we can do in the South, where it doesn't matter if our rally has an ActionAid logo and another logo, and it sounds picky, but … it is a big issue for organisations in the UK (ActionAid UK youth engagement manager, interview, 2013).

Looking back, ActionAid's initial mission right after its creation in 1972 included social work in lower income countries and in the UK (Newman, 2011). In its first years of operation, ActionAid's goals included UK support for drug addicts and other young people besides the overseas supply of medical staff and equipment and overseas support to children. However, ActionAid abandoned charity work in the UK in the late 1970s, with the notion of "poverty" turning into "poor-country poverty." The next section explores the current situation.

Finding 3: Structural Versus Narrative Approaches to Integrating UK Poverty

In the UK, some development NGOs implement UK poverty programs nowadays [2022]. These include Oxfam (created in 1995), Islamic Relief (created in 2004), and Save the Children (created in 2012) (Butler, 2013; Elhusseini, 2012; Pickering-Saqqa, 2019b).

ActionAid implements a hybrid approach. Some of its European federation members, such as ActionAid Italy and Solidarity Alliance [ActionAid's partner in Spain], have set up domestic poverty programs. They include campaigning and political action aimed at domestic targets, namely, their governments, such as campaigning for the introduction of a minimum income allowance in Italy, or for the regularization of migrants in Spain (ActionAid Italy, nd: ActionAid-Alianza, nd).

Conversely, ActionAid UK does not implement any UK program or fundraising initiatives to deal with poverty domestically. Its campaigning in the UK is orientated toward having an impact on low-income poverty elimination, not on UK poverty itself. However, ActionAid UK uses a lighter way to include this identity extension without setting up an autonomous program or campaign on UK poverty. This is illustrated more clearly if we move the analysis from the organizational to the campaigning level.

In the Tax Justice Campaign of 2013–2014, ActionAid UK created joint frames and slogans linking all types of poverty. This is a more moderate solution than Islamic Relief, Oxfam, and Save the Children, where poverty frames functioned independently from each other, with autonomous (although similar) campaign targets and demands for the UK and overseas.

For instance, returning to Oxfam's Perfect Storm initiative, Oxfam claimed in it that "lifting the lid on austerity Britain reveals a perfect storm—and it's forcing more and more people into poverty" and that "1% of Britons own the same amount of wealth as 54% of the population. RT [retweet] if you think this is unacceptable" (Williams, 2014). These slogans resonated with the 99% global justice perspective described above. Moreover, they talked about UK poverty autonomously without referring to poverty in lower-income countries.

Similarly, Oxfam Scotland supported a No Evictions for Bedroom Tax petition organized by a partner organization, targeted at the Scottish Parliament for a housing law amendment (Build Scotland, 2013). Likewise, Oxfam asked UK councilors and local councils to "fight cuts to frontline services and make the financial sector pay for the damage it has caused" in its Robin Hood Tax international campaign (Robin Hood Tax, nd). The targets were exclusively UK authorities.

ActionAid UK's take in the Tax Justice Campaign differed to that of Oxfam—the NGO alluded to UK poverty in its campaigning by integrating them into existent developmental frames but did not create autonomous claims with asks to UK authorities[4]. For instance, ActionAid UK's local campaign Towns against Tax Dodging went with the message: "Your [UK] local council has to juggle resources to pay for the essential services in your community, while big companies get away with dodging billions. It's the same in countries like Zambia" (Towns Against Tax Dodging, 2014).

This campaign slogan framed tax justice from a global poverty and global justice perspective. The framing connected both. The first stuck to the mission of a developmental organization that received funding for work in, and on, lower income countries. The second opened up options for collaborations and coalitions beyond development NGOs and the aid sector in the UK. It would also serve to alleviate tensions, especially in moments of UK recession, about which type of poverty is more important to support.

For instance, the latest Tax Justice Campaign chapter in the runup to the UK elections in 2015, the Tax Dodging Bill campaign, was taken up in coalition by development aid organizations

[4] During fieldwork, no ActionAid claims like those of Oxfam were observed that were independent and not bridged to poor-country poverty ones.

Figure 1. Example of a global justice angle including a UK perspective.

Source: taxdodgingbill.org.uk

like ActionAid UK and Oxfam, and UK national organizations like the National Union of Students and the High Pay Centre. As a slogan read in the campaign: "The Tax Dodging Bill could generate at least £3.6 billion more a year in tax to fight poverty in the UK, and billions more for developing countries" (Tax Dodging Bill, nd). Another example can be seen in Figure 1. This coalition was arguably feasible thanks to a common all-countries poverty or global justice approach that acknowledged and included UK poverty. An exclusive global poverty view would have not fitted well with the noninternational members of the coalition.

More recent campaigns by ActionAid also use global justice narratives. For instance, the women's rights campaign overall frame is global and includes the UK. Based on events taking place in the USA, the campaign frame drew on the #MeToo Movement for a global call uniting all countries: "from the USA to Malawi: the reach of #MeToo" (ActionAid UK, 2022b). Similarly, a petition to end violence at work against women and LGBT+ people, gave examples in Ghana, Jordan, and the UK, thus making this challenge visible also in the UK. For instance, it acknowledges that "in Jordan, one in five women experienced one or more forms of violence in the workplace" and that "in the UK, more than half of all women and 68% of LGBTQIA+ people and 68 % of disabled women reported being sexually harassed at work" (ActionAid UK, 2021a).

Another recent campaign on climate justice also included three country campaign cases, one of which was European: "The world is in the midst of a climate crisis. We're seeing extreme heatwaves, floods and storms from China to Germany to Cambodia—but not everyone is equally equipped to deal with them" (Action Aid UK, 2023). In its campaigning style, the organization ensured that "We're committed to intersectional feminist, anti-racist and trans-inclusive campaigns for justice" (Action Aid UK, 2023).

A third campaign petition against the Illegal Migration Bill also connected the UK with countries like Rwanda, this time, in a blame us frame style rather than in a horizontal, global justice one like the two mentioned above: "The bill effectively ends the right to claim asylum in the UK, and allows for people fleeing war, persecution and humanitarian … to be detained indefinitely without their case ever being heard. They could even be deported back to the country they have escaped or be sent to Rwanda" (Action Aid UK, 2021b).

These examples break with the cliché that high-income countries do not need to *develop*. Making them visible and part of the problem moves away from "othering" those countries who need to change—a vestige of coloniality (Luetchford & Burns, 2003; Pickering-Saqqa, 2019a).

In some cases, high-income countries will be located as one more case to be compared, as one more country that needs to improve its development, as one more country in face of common world challenges such as pandemics, classism and racism—the global justice frame. In other cases, high-income countries will be studied for the effects their policies have on lower-income countries—the blame us frame.

However, there are limitations to the extent to which this narrative approach can stretch. When it comes to more demanding coalitions, actions, and resource mobilizing, choices need to be made between assigning resources and funding to one or another perspective. An ActionAid UK activism officer reflected:

> There've been quite strong links between them [UK Uncut, a UK grassroots movement] and ActionAid … but they're much more focused on the UK and services being cut, and we can't really talk about that … we do quite a little bit but … our mandate is to work on development issues, that means overseas (ActionAid UK activism officer, interview 2014).

In fact, organizational structures in ActionAid UK strictly stuck to a global poverty vision, i.e., the human resources invested in UK activism, such as an activism officer, were oriented toward supporting actions focused on poverty elsewhere, not UK poverty. Similarly, there were 60,000 ActionAid UK campaigners at the time of research (AAUK campaign engagement manager, interview, 2014). Of these, 15,000 would take frequent online action, and less than 50 would take more time-consuming street action in a go. UK campaigners could choose which campaign action to do but not the theme or target, for instance, UK themes or targets.

> I can do participatory sort of training and activity planning, but I can't allow the young people … to decide what campaigns we are going to run … the policy and campaigns team decides what are going to be the key issues (ActionAid UK youth engagement manager, interview, 2013).

Additionally, she reflected on the difficulty of mobilizing UK youth from marginalized backgrounds, working youth and school and college students: "If you want to reach young people outside the university then you have to invest in more … and that is not something that in the UK we are set up to do" (ActionAid UK youth engagement manager, interview, 2013).

Conversely, Oxfam and Save the Children had staff posts and structures around UK poverty, which involved some level of autonomous mobilizing and campaigning. For instance, Save the Children once asked the public to donate specifically to a UK poverty program aiming to raise £500,000—although it was not specified if part of this would go to campaigning or rather be directed to service-delivery program (Elhusseini, 2012).

The fact that ActionAid UK is a significant fundraiser in ActionAid's federation may have affected its freedom to be more openly political in the UK space. ActionAid's tax justice campaigner (pers. comms., 2016) noted that more high-income country members in Europe and beyond may opt for these changes in the future, as is already the case in other ActionAid country members such as Italy, and that this will necessarily go hand in hand with a shift to fundraising in low and middle-income country members.

Discussion: Decolonizing Organisations, Implications for the Wider Development Sector

To what extent has ActionAid turned decolonized and racially egalitarian? And what can be learned from the case? The NGO took steps in material and cultural aspects. It had a substantial and early progress on the structural and decision-making front that was global

(materials aspects). As seen, it changed its decision-making structure drastically at the highest level and partly at the middle management level. This permeated in the relative decentralized and autonomous decision-making of each country member, for example, in initiatives such as the Tax Justice Campaign. Thus, global decentralization is key for the decolonization of an organisation besides human resource issues addressing racial equity in UK headquarters.

However, there has been little talk about racial equity in the organization until quite recently. Also, the existence of programs and campaigns specifically addressing racial equity is still emergent (cultural aspects). Strategic priorities have not been racialized, as seen in organizational strategies and annual reports. Then, claims about UK's responsibility in someone else's poverty (blame us approach) and about UK poverty are present in ActionAid's work. Yet, for UK poverty and other UK development aspects such as climate change and gender violence, this takes place at the narrative level of campaigns (global justice approach) more than at the organizational or structural level. This limits potential alliances when it comes to street mobilization, as few or no partnerships (in the UK) exist beyond the narrative.

For all these reasons, we can conclude that the development NGO is less of an *extreme* case than what was expected initially, compared with other NGOs. The organization went beyond changes in headquarters and challenged unequal international structures that related to race and colonialism. In this respect, it is advanced compared with other NGOs in the sector. Yet, these historic advances are only part of the struggle to decolonize an organization, and there is still work to be done.

All in all, the case leaves several learnings. First, that taking a moderate approach is better than nothing. For instance, for the issue of having UK programs, or UK campaigns with UK targets, this is probably not a viable option for many NGDOs in the sector. If this is the case, then the narrative approach is a fair enough alternative that acknowledges the need to address failures in the development models for all countries. Be it with a lighter narrative approach (ActionAid UK) or with a stronger structural one (ActionAid Italy and ActionAid Spain), the case demonstrates that the original mission of an organization (that of supporting the world's poorest) can expand without necessarily diminishing the identity of the organization, and that these expansions that address tensions may precisely benefit the original mission.

Second, it is hard to draw a line from which to dictate whether an organization has decolonized and become racially egalitarian. There is no magic bullet, as each organization departs with diverse starting points. Overall, the case shows that a mixture of cultural and material aspects becomes necessary to lead in the right direction of change, including: 1) equality of votes amongst the richer and poorer country members (which are also racialized); 2) diverse staff proportional and representative of the population in each country; 3) programs on racial equity; and/or 4) campaigns that disclose the responsibilities of donor, high-income countries on other countries (blame us approach) as well as their own development challenges such as poverty, gender violence, or climate change (global justice approach). Overall, if development work is to become more decolonial and egalitarian, nonracialized staff and high-income countries will need to give away power and be within the picture, not behind it.

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APPENDIX 1

List of Documents Used

- ActionAid's Strategy 2012–2017 – People's Action to End Poverty
- ActionAid's Strategy 2018–2028 – Action for Global Justice
- ActionAid Nigeria's Strategy 2018–2023 – Social Justice to End Poverty
- ActionAid Annual Reports 2015 to 2021
- ActionAid UK Annual Report 2021
- Towns Against Tax Dodging Campaign, 2014 (website no longer available)
- ActionAid UK Campaigns, 2021–2023 (on website)

List of Interviews (between 40-90 minutes)

- ActionAid UK youth engagement manager, interview, 2013
- ActionAid UK campaign engagement manager, interview, 2014
- ActionAid UK activism officer, interview, 2014
- ActionAid's tax justice campaigner, pers. comms., 2016
- ActionAid and ActionAid UK staff, interviews, 2013–14
- ActionAid Nigeria staff, informal chats, 2013–14

Research Article

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Financing Education Spending in the Context of Interbudgetary Relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan

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Educational capital obtained in the learning process is a combination of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, work experience, and personal characteristics that bring a person income during his career and stimulate further investment in education. The aim of the study is to reveal the critical aspects of republican and local financing of education in Kazakhstan and the prospects for its development. The methodological basis of the research is formed by a system of general scientific and unique research methods, i.e., synthesis, system-analytical analysis, and abstract-logical methods. The critical result of this work is the systematization of acquisitions within the framework of the researched topic and the study of the features of optimizing the decentralization of education financing in Kazakhstan. As a result, various options for maintaining the financing of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan were considered. The share of influence of the Kazakhstani government on the financing of this sphere was revealed. The ways of modernization and expansion of ways of financing the education system are proposed, namely, to increase the efficient distribution of financial resources at all levels of the budget system; increase the opportunities for educational institutions to raise additional funds through educational innovations, expand the list of paid services provided by such institutions; carry out decentralization of education, taking into account the characteristics of the regions, their production potential, and the demographic situation and the interests of territorial communities. The results of this research, as well as the conclusions formulated on their basis, are of significant importance for the scientific community and for financial experts and practitioners from the sphere of education and can influence the subsequent processes of reforming the financial provision of education in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: public administration; financial support; public spending; local spending; reforms

Introduction

Education and science are sectors that, developed in connection with the processes of globalization, form development on an innovative basis, taking into account the needs of the country as a whole and each individual. The rapid growth of information technologies, telecommunications, and the integration of education, science, and production, along with the country's dependence on global processes, highlight the need to study and adapt to

Zamirbekkyzy, M., Saparova, B., & Bulakbay, Z. (2024). Financing education spending in the context of interbudgetary relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *10*(1), 90–105. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.g1spd012

international trends. Simultaneously, fierce competition among educational institutions at all levels calls for a shift in development priorities in the scientific and educational spheres to ensure relevance, competitiveness, and innovation (AllahMorad, 2021; Jatkiewicz, 2021).

Reforming the education system is a crucial task for the Republic of Kazakhstan, as it aims to achieve its strategic goals and enhance its status as a modern state. Adapting the education system to current conditions is imperative in ensuring a high level of competitiveness in the economy, promoting economic growth, and fostering sustainable development. This urgency stems from the recognition of education's pivotal role in shaping the nation's future and empowering its citizens to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing global landscape. Today, financial investments in education are recognized as one of the most critical investments in human capital (Pakhomova et al., 2021b), which forces us to look for new approaches for solving the issues of state financing education as an essential component of human capital.

Financing education is the main lever of state influence on the transformation processes in educational institutions and the primary tool for achieving positive results in the education sector itself (Abylkassymova, 2020). Therefore, the government of Kazakhstan, as well as those of other countries, adopts systematic documents that regulate the development process of a particular field of activity at the state level. The Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 988: "On the approval of the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025" (2019) aims to increase global competitiveness in education and science, promote universal human values, and integrate scientific achievements into the country's socioeconomic development from 2020 to 2025. Nevertheless, to further improve the quality of the use of budgetary funds in this industry in the future, it is worth considering in more detail how education expenditures are financed in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A large number of scientists have engaged in the analysis of the state of the education sector in Kazakhstan. Among them, S.D. Shaimukhanova et al. (2012) is worth noting. Their work assesses the condition and path of development of the education system in the country since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the authors pay less attention to the problems of financing the industry. In turn, L. Duisembekova (2013) describes the features and prospects for developing the educational sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan and suggests methods for improving its condition. However, the author considers this issue too narrowly, offering solutions only to improve teachers' working conditions. The works of scientists who analyze the features of financing the education sector in other states also became important. Among these, it is worth highlighting Humbatova and Hadjiev (2019), who describe the current situation in Azerbaijan; Le and Tran (2021), with an analysis of the situation in Vietnam; and Vera-Toscano (2013), with a review of data on education financing in the European Union (EU) countries. Consideration and use of the experience of other nations allow better advice on the development of this industry in Kazakhstan.

The main objective of this work is to evaluate the major educational projects in Kazakhstan, study the trends in the development of the education sector, and propose policy measures. This study focuses on the overall state of education in the country, including the reforms related to the allocation of public funds. The article fills a literature gap by examining interbudgetary relations and financial support for education in Kazakhstan. It highlights the significance of education for economic growth and sustainable development, proposing measures to ensure accessibility, quality, and efficiency in education financing.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology combines general scientific and unique research methods, i.e., the synthesis, system-analytical analysis, and abstract-logical methods. Synthesis allowed us to integrate various sources to obtain a holistic picture, and, with the help of system-analytical analysis, the authors managed to consider the object of research as a complex system,

revealing its dynamics and interdependence. The abstract-logical method allowed us to interpret the data with the help of reasoned inferences, which provided an in-depth study of the prospects of financial support for education in Kazakhstan, a comprehensive analysis of interbudgetary relations and implications for education policy.

A systematic review of the literature was used to argue the data in the article. The data meet two criteria for inclusion in the study: report on initial research findings and focus on using fundamental research in educational institutions, especially on practical results and regulations adopted in Kazakhstan. There are several reasons for using the literary approach. First, it should be noted that the system based on the study of the literature above is the most appropriate method for this study since it "improves knowledge and broadens the scientific and practical horizons." In addition, the logical systematization and unification of the theoretical base are a fundamental basis for further research in this direction.

Thus, the primary sources of information were state regulations and long-term state planning documents [in particular, these are Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 77-VII "On the republican budget for 2022–2024" (2021) and Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" (2007), Budget Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008), Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 988 "On the approval of the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025" (2019)], as well as official methodological documents, books, monographs, scientific articles, and practical research of scientists. There were several reasons for using these resources since papers are an easily accessible database. In contrast, high-quality books can offer an overview of the field of study and an in-depth analysis of one subject.

The presented research work was carried out in three main stages. In the first stage, a system-analytical method was used, based on which a theoretical generalization was made of the current views of scientists in determining approaches to financing education in Kazakhstan and also outlining the main trends in this direction, which the state, through its functions, planned to put into practice to improve the system of management and financing of education in the synergy of the state and local levels, which will have a positive effect from such an implementation in the short- and long-term.

In the second stage, the synthesis method was used, which made it possible for the authors to form their own vision of financing education expenditures in the context of interbudgetary relations. This analysis also made it possible to assess the existing problems in this direction more deeply as well as to study the current situation that has developed in the educational sphere of Kazakhstan, in particular, in the context of its financial support from the state and local authorities. In addition, it was summarized that the models of public administration of education systems are thoroughly tested by time and the current directions of development of countries in the international social society, which forces states to borrow and update management models that will correspond to the rapid growth of education.

As for the final stage, based on the results obtained in the course of its effects, final conclusions were formulated, which will more effectively contribute to resolving the existing problems of financial provision of education in Kazakhstan at the state and local levels with a view to their proper coordination to achieve the desired result in this area.

Results

One of the tasks that the government sets for itself for the next six years is the introduction of a vertical system of management and financing of education, which is characterized by the achievement of three indicators, as presented in Table 1.

It is worth noting that, in the state budget of Kazakhstan for 2022, 1823.1 billion tenges are allocated to finance the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Table 1. The task of the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 is to "Introduce a vertical system of management and financing of education"

Outcome indicators	Unit rev.	Source information	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Responsible executors
Share of public daytime general education schools that switched to per capita funding out of the total number of full-time schools	%	Reporting information	22.6	22.6	22.7	61.1	100	–	Local executive bodies, Ministry of Education and Science
Share of heads of higher education institutions who have completed advanced training in the field of management	%	Administrative data of the Ministry of Education and Science	20	40	60	80	100	–	Ministry of Education and Science
Share of spending on education and science from gross domestic product (GDP) (2019 – 3.8%)	%	Data from the Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Education and Science	5.1	5.6	6.2	6.6	68	7	Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Science

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 988: "On the approval of the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025" (2019).

which is 10.1% of all public spending (18062.7 billion tenges) approved by Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 77-VII "On the republican budget for 2022-2024" (2021). Thus, it can be said that, in Kazakhstan, the level of spending on education is relatively acceptable. Still, at the
same time, its status is relatively low, given the current demographic situation and the peculiarities of improving the country's socioeconomic policy. Consequently, the problem that exists today in the field of education increased the attention of the state and local authorities since, in the education system of Kazakhstan, expenditures are inherently mainly carried out by local budgets, which indicates the decentralization of the state education system. It should be noted that local budgets spend on average about 70% of all annual education costs on education. The regional (local) level of funding provides for the financing of educational institutions of the state, municipal forms of power on the ground, and the implementation of regional educational programs (Aryn & Issakhova, 2018). The scientific study of the financial support of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan gave the following results. Today, the financial support of the educational industry is one of the critical components of the public administration strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. When studying the relevant issues, there is a need to solve several problems, in particular:

- selection of primary development trends;
- determination and use of optimal sources of financial support;

Table 2. Critical areas of budget funds depending on the type of budget

Budget level	Direction of expenses
Republican budget	– general education of gifted children in state educational organizations; – holding extracurricular activities of national importance; – training of specialists with technical, professional, postsecondary postgraduate, and higher education in state educational organizations; – retraining of personnel, advanced training at the state level; – provision of textbooks and teaching materials for state secondary educational institutions.
Local budgets: – the regional budget, the budgets of the city of republican significance, the capital; – budgets of the city of district significance, village, town, and rural district; – district (cities of regional significance) budget.	– early childhood education and training, including health care; – primary, secondary, and general secondary education, evening education, as well as boarding schools; – purchase and delivery of textbooks and teaching materials; – additional education for children at the regional, district (city) levels; – training of specialists with technical, professional, post-secondary, higher, and postgraduate education, except for those financed from the state budget; – teaching children according to unique general education curricula; – education of gifted children in specialized institutions; – technical, vocational, and postsecondary education; – holding school Olympiads of the regional, district (city) scale; – retraining of workers and improvement of their qualifications, financed from budgetary funds at the local level; – training of participants in the electoral process; – examination of the mental health of children and adolescents; the provision of psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations; – rehabilitation and social adaptation of children and adolescents with developmental problems; – logistical support; – state provision of children left without parental care, orphans, their compulsory employment and housing; – free, reduced-price meals for specific categories of students; – methodical work; – functioning of centers for adaptation of minors; – medical care for students and pupils of educational organizations; – organization in rural areas of free transportation of students to the nearest school and back.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" (2007); Budget Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008).

- development and implementation of economic mechanisms for the rational use of available financial resources;
- ensuring the required level of interaction between state and local authorities in the context of the rational use of budgetary funds; and
- achieving effective interbudgetary relations in the context of reforming approaches to education financing (Sedykh & Yufanova, 2014).

Consequently, the implementation of reforms in the field of education is an urgent problem today for several reasons, namely:

- insufficient level of funding for the educational sector;
- inefficient use of available financial resources;
- imperfect legal support;

- obsolete material and technical base;
- high cost of credit;
- unfavorable investment climate; and
- the outflow of qualified specialists abroad and others.

In addition, it is advisable to constantly update the content of education and the organization of the educational process with democratic values, the fundamentals of a market economy, and advanced scientific and technological achievements, which also require certain financial costs (Fonariuk et al., 2023). To date, the development and implementation of state policy in the educational sphere are carried out by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" (2007). In contrast, the financial resource for the functioning and development of education is laid down in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the state budget" for the corresponding year [today it is Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 77-VII "On the republican budget for 2022–2024" (2021)] regional and local budgets, and the directions of using budgetary funds in the educational industry are determined by the Budget Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008). Thus, state funding of educational organizations is carried out at the expense of the republican (state) and regional (local) budgets, following all generally accepted requirements, standards, and norms, which are established at the legislative level of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Omirbaev et al., 2011) (Table 2).

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that the education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is relatively centralized (decrees of the president, acts of parliament, and religious laws strictly regulate all levels of the country's education system), where the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the central responsible body of state power and works with four administrative levels:

- regional (regional) departments of education;
- municipal departments of education;
- district departments of education; and
- school level.

In addition, Table 2 shows that the 11-year compulsory education is financed from the republican budget. The oblasts are responsible for education in vocational schools, as well as in unique and specialized schools, and for the distribution of textbooks, the maintenance of school infrastructure, the provision of accessible and subsidized school meals for specific categories of students, and support for orphans. Local governments, accordingly, are entrusted with the primary responsibility for financing schools, evening education, and boarding schools (Kazakhstan: Financing for Equity, 2021).

At the same time, the expenditures of the state budget of the Republic of Kazakhstan, aimed at ensuring the required educational level in the country, according to the results of recent years, are usually within 3.3%–4.6% of the country's GDP (2021: 4.59%; 2020: 4.45%; 2019: 3.35%). This level as a percentage of GDP is considered low and not in line with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) recommended 5%–7% of GDP. At the same time, every year, the state increases its spending on education. Still, the most significant part of these costs is aimed at ensuring the development of preschool, primary, and secondary education. As for higher and postgraduate education, their funding is at a level of less than 10% of the total education costs; in addition, 15% of the total education costs are directed to the training and retraining of personnel (Bureau of National Statistics…, 2023). The government announced that, by 2025, education funding will increase to US$27 billion (7% of GDP) with a focus on building 800 new schools, training in educational technology and innovation, 100% kindergarten enrollment, and raising teacher salaries, among others. The state education program includes construction of schools and kindergartens, the modernization of vocational education, e-learning projects, and teacher training systems (Ministry of Finance…, 2023).

The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" (2007) considers effectiveness and efficiency as being among the essential principles of the system of financial support for education, highlighting them as today's priority tasks. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank noted that Kazakhstan has made profound changes to improve the education sector and is gradually approaching international norms and best practices (Pons et al., 2015). However, with the current level of financial support and approaches to the distribution of public funds, the Republic of Kazakhstan will not be able to provide an adequate number of its citizens with quality education and conduct the necessary amount of scientific and practical research to achieve the required level of innovation. Accordingly, it can be concluded that insufficient funding is the main reason for the weak competitiveness of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the above work, the authors mentioned the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025, which, among other things, is planned to be introduced into public education schools per capita funding (Decree of the Government…, 2019).

The first attempt to introduce school per capita funding dates back to 1999. In 2011–2013, a project was implemented to pilot the introduction of per capita funding in secondary education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the methodology for normative per capita financial provision of secondary education organizations. Since 2012, an innovative financing system has been introduced in the Republic of Kazakhstan's five pilot regions: East Kazakhstan; South Kazakhstan; Akmola; Pavlodar; and Mangystau regions. At the same time, since September 1, 2020, per capita funding has been introduced in about 1500 city schools in Kazakhstan, along with the plans of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which are not limited to urban schools (United Nations in Kazakhstan…, 2021).

Since 2021, on behalf of the President of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, changes have been made in the vertical of financing the education system: the budgets of all schools, previously funded from district funds, are now accumulated at the regional level. The ministry plans to review the budget structure of all schools subsequently. Moreover, since now there is a transition to per capita funding in urban schools, the plans are to distribute funds evenly for students at the rural school level and introduce initiatives that will ensure a qualitative gap between the village and the city. However, the research results prove that the methodology proposed above still does not fully reflect the principles of per capita financing for several reasons:

1. The methodology is aimed at meeting the needs of teachers in remuneration and is not focused on the needs of schoolchildren.
2. The exclusion of small-class and other types of schools from per capita funding increases the inefficiency and inequity of the secondary education funding system, which is reflected in the presence of several funding mechanisms and increases management costs.
3. A large number of coefficients complicates the per capita funding formula. It makes it specific to each school, and applying the formula becomes a complex, costly and nontransparent process.

Therefore, the revision of the per capita financing formula will allow identifying problematic issues and minimizing their impact during the implementation period. This will help to improve equity in access to quality education through fair funding for schools. In addition to secondary education, higher education is also being reformed in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The reforms of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in recent years focus on minimizing the number of higher educational institutions. The implementation of such reforms resulted in the accumulation of budgetary funds depending on the size of HEIs in the ratio, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of budgetary funds among higher-education institutions based on size

Size of higher education institutions	Percentage of budgetary funds, %
Large higher-education institutions (>250 staff)	88
Medium-sized higher-education institutions (101 to 250 staff)	5
Small higher-education institutions (<100 staff)	7

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Kazakhstan – Higher Education Strategy Associate (2022).

Studies show that the main problem is that part of the public financial support for higher education is distributed through the system of educational grants, which currently has certain shortcomings, namely,

- variation in the cost of grants for universities and study programs hinders grant recipients' academic mobility, which, in turn, does not contribute to fair competition between universities. In addition, this factor determines the difference in the level of remuneration at universities;
- the current system does not provide sufficient support to the low-income population; and
- in postgraduate education (especially for candidates of sciences, grant programs do not allow one to choose an educational institution at their own discretion) since grants are given to specific universities, and the efficiency ratio of such funding is not considered in their distribution.

The authors note that, given the above situation, Nazarbayev University received the most significant number of state grants. Thus, Nazarbayev University received an average of 7.16 million tenges for training one bachelor's degree (for comparison: in the Kazakhstan branch of Moscow State University, funding amounted to 1.71 million tenges per person; in the Voskhod branch of the Moscow Aviation Institute, funding was 0.9 million tenges). At the same time, calculations showed that, taking into account only large national universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the preparation of one bachelor in such a university, on average, costs the state 0.92 million tenges per year.

In other universities (that is, medium and small), the average cost of such education is in the range of 0.83 million tenges per person per year. It should be noted that the top 15 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 2021/22 academic year received more than 39 billion tenges, which is 18% more than in the 2020/21 academic year and equals 67% of the financial support of all 66 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, the dynamics showed that every year the number of universities that receive more than a billion tenge from the state is increasing (for comparison: two years ago, there were six such universities, last year 10 (see Table 4) (Bikineeva, 2022).

Based on the assessment and analysis of current practice results, the authors concluded that the channels for financing higher education require a constructive expansion not only through the system of educational grants but also through investment projects. For example, in developed countries, when determining the level of financial support for universities, several indicators are considered, e.g., scientific practice, employment, communication with employers, etc. A significant part of research funding is provided through direct grants without determining compliance with several criteria developed based on their effectiveness (OECD, 2018). The conclusions presented above confirm the need for a long-term increase in the volume of investments in the educational sector and maintaining them at a level not lower than the OECD standards (5%–6% of GDP) and/or at a level of at least 15%–20% of total government spending. At the same time, ensuring a high level of efficiency of investments in

Table 4. TOP-15 universities that received grants for the implementation of undergraduate programs in the 2021/22 academic year

Place	Higher-education institution	Number of grants for undergraduate studies	Average cost per grant per year (thousand KZT)	Total amount of contributions (million KZT)
1	Nazarbayev University	1792	7159	13177
2	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	4445	920	4091
3	L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University	3669	920	3377
4	Satbayev University	2615	920	2407
5	Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University	2472	920	2275
6	S. Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University	2303	825	1900
7	M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University	2165	825	1786
8	Almaty University of Power Engineering and Telecommunications named after Gumarbek Daukeev	1964	825	1620
9	Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University	1480	920	1362
10	Academician E.A. Buketov Karaganda University	1642	825	1355
11	Suleyman Demirel University	1634	825	1348
12	International Information Technology University	1471	825	1214
13	Astana IT University	1457	825	1202
14	Karaganda Technical University	1333	825	1100
15	International Education Corporation	1328	825	1096

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on K. Bikineeva (2022).

the education system is one of the critical indicators of improving the quality of education.

In the context of the study, it is worth noting that the often-mentioned OECD can be attributed to supranational politicians (Gunter, 2017) who challenge the structure and range of policies and programs in the field of education around the world. It should be noted that the policy recommendations of the OECD are primarily based on the results of their various international assessments, such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), and the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (Volante et al., 2017). Kazakhstan, as part of the world community, took part in all these studies, even though it is not a member of the OECD. It should be emphasized that the OECD is widely regarded as a body with significant global influence, including in nonOECD countries (Sorensen et al., 2021).

The OECD has become a key policymaker mainly due to its international tests and being the leading organization in the field of transnational governance in education. The starting point was the OECD study on the development of evaluation criteria. Therefore, the organization's influence was primarily associated with its role in global comparative studies. Many countries recognize that education should be the main focus of national policy and are making great efforts to improve this sector (Cibák et al., 2021). Kazakhstan is no exception. The government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has demonstrated its commitment to developing its education system by updating existing regulations, passing new legislation, and recognizing and implementing best practices.

From the preceding, it can be summarized that OECD research has mainly had a progressive impact on the national education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The results of PISA have significantly accelerated the process of updating the school curriculum content and moving toward the internationalization of reforms in the Republic of Kazakhstan. It should be noted that many large-scale reforms in the field of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan were adopted even before the results of PISA. Therefore, claiming that the new education system is based only on PISA is a mistake. However, it should be emphasized that the OECD recommendations were considered when modernizing the Kazakh education system. Although current political programs may threaten the national school system of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan needs to participate in these studies so that the education system can benefit the country, offering quality education to everyone. National values should be prioritized in the pursuit of ratings and attention from educational authorities.

Discussions

According to the authors, comparing education financing in the Republic of Kazakhstan and other countries would be helpful. Thus, in their work, Humbatova and Hadjiev (2019) writes about the increasing role of education and its state funding in Azerbaijan in connection with the country's subsequent development. Scientists report that, in the country, the development of science is defined as the main direction of development of the state as a whole, and yet there are significant problems with the development of the industry. For example, there is no direct correlation between the amount of money spent on education and indicators of the development of science (Pakhomova et al., 2021a). In this case, the authorities should pay more attention to how their funds are used and the corruption component, which will likely become relevant for Kazakhstan. In their work, Le and Tran (2021) study public spending on education and its relationship with economic growth in Vietnam. In their work, they prove that, in the long run, GDP growth and an increase in education costs affect each other; that is, an increase in education spending also increases the growth of the gross product. Based on this, scientists recommend increasing the cost of education in the country as well as solving problems in this area (in particular, with the level of qualification of teachers), which is relevant for Kazakhstan.

Features of the use of budgetary resources for education in Brazil were studied by T. Cruz and T. Sliva (2020). Scientists write that their system is entirely decentralized, although it has its own characteristics, e.g., local authorities minimally use local taxes for education. However, they request interbudgetary transfers intended for the development of this area. Thus, the role of the federal authorities consists of the clever use of the funds allocated from the state budget. This management system is quite unusual and differs significantly from Kazakhstan. In turn, Y. Liu et al. (2019) studied the impact of spending on education, confirming a direct relationship between economic growth and education spending (primarily secondary) based on data from China.

In addition, scholars have described the peculiarities of financing education in the country. In general, they are carried out by the central government, and only noncompulsory education can be carried out at the expense of beneficiaries. Thus, the system of budgetary financing of the industry is weakly decentralized. In her work, fascinating conclusions come from E. Vera-

Toscano (2013), who analyze education costs in EU countries. In the article, she writes that the effectiveness of spending on education depends on the number of preschools, schools, and student populations. Thus, in countries with a large proportion of older people, increasing the cost of education (or implementing all kinds of reforms in this area) leads to worse results than in countries with a large part of the young population (Juškevičienė et al., 2022). Therefore, before deciding to increase spending on education, it is worth carefully studying the structure of the country's population. In Kazakhstan, a relatively large part of the population is young (Demographic Statistics of Kazakhstan, 2023), which probably justifies investing in this industry.

It is essential to consider what opinions about the education development in Kazakhstan reached other scientists during their research. Shaimukhanova et al. (2012), for example, writes that the development of education in Kazakhstan is primarily associated with the socialist past of the country, stating that the past education methods were not as effective as the new ones, particularly the Bologna system, which was actively introduced in the country in the 10s of the 21st century. In their opinion, in the future, even better results in terms of the development of the state in the country should be expected. In turn, Duisembekova (2013) writes about the methods by which the Republic of Kazakhstan probably plans to develop the educational industry in the country. In particular, it is designed to improve the standard of living of teachers and the prestige of this profession while providing additional benefits for them, especially if they live in rural areas (Kolomiiets et al., 2021). This policy will indeed be able to improve the quality of teachers in the country in the future, which may turn out to be a competent investment for the state in the perspective of a decade (Menshikov et al., 2022).

Separately, it is worth discussing issues with the decentralization of the education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which began in the 2000s. Thus, in recent years, costs have been borne to a greater extent by local budgets since, on average, more than half of all education costs are allocated from local budgets (Jatkiewicz, 2013). The specified ratio of expenditures of the state and local budgets indicates that the Republic of Kazakhstan is characterized by a transition from a centralized to a decentralized management model, carrying out constructive reforms aimed at democratizing management functions. Respective reformatting is associated with introducing democratic principles into the management process and an increase in the role of local authorities in managing the financial resources of the educational industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to the authors, decentralization, in general, should contribute to the development of any economic sector, which is also believed by Abimbola et al. (2019). This is because decentralization increases the efficiency of using budgetary resources, which, in the long run, should lead to better results in the industry. However, there are other opinions among scientists, which are voiced by Mynbaeva and Satyvaldieva (2011). They discuss the existing adverse effects of decentralization. In their opinion, these effects impede the creation of generally accepted state standards of education and may increase the financial inequality of certain levels of education, depending on the possibilities of local budgets. The authors also note that the process of decentralization, in its essence, does not mean the complete leveling of the influence of the central government. Still, certain degrees of manifestation of decentralization can introduce a relatively deep divergence within the management system, which can also be observed in Kazakhstan (Kovalova et al., 2021).

In the above work, the authors mention the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" (2007), which is considered one of the most promising in the country for the development of education. Indeed, reform proposals include expanding preschools, introducing new funding structures (including a per capita funding scheme), establishing community centers to help small schools, increasing investment in educational institutions, and greater use of information technology in schools. Y. Sarmurzin et al. (2021) also write that the qualitative introduction of such a law into action could positively impact the development

of the country's educational sphere. This work notes that a unique role was played by studies conducted by the OECD regarding the development of education in Kazakhstan (Gunter, 2017).

Summarizing them, it should be noted that the problems of financing education in the context of implementing new approaches to forming interbudgetary relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan still exist and need to be addressed immediately. In general, financing of the education and science sector is a determining factor in the state's competitiveness in the modern world economic system, regardless of the level of provision with natural resources and the volume of its own markets and is the most important investment (Podoliak, 2022). Therefore, the main steps in reforming education on the way to the overall economic growth of the country, which can be identified based on OECD research, are as follows:

- ensuring the effective distribution of financial resources at the state and local levels to maintain the proper state of the material and technical base of educational institutions;
- organization of continuous monitoring and control of the targeted use of budgetary funds allocated for the educational industry;
- attraction of grants from international technical programs creation of public associations that can mobilize resources from international programs may become additional financial support for local governments;
- expanding the ability of educational institutions to attract additional funds through educational innovations; expansion of the list of paid services provided by educational institutions;
- introduction of an integrated approach to reform, including preschool, school, out-of-school, and vocational education;
- stimulation of constant motivation of pupils and students for quality education; and
- conducting decentralization of education, taking into account the characteristics of the regions, their production potential, the demographic situation, and the interests of territorial communities.

According to the authors, if all these recommendations are applied by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it should probably expect great success in developing education in the country.

Conclusions

The conducted scientific study of the prospects for financial support of education in Kazakhstan in the context of interbudgetary relations led to the following conclusions. In current conditions, when Kazakhstan, like most countries of the world, has recognized the priority to form a new postindustrial type of society, which is characterized by the creation of a new model of the economy, i.e., the knowledge economy, wherein education is becoming one of the critical factors in economic growth and sustainable development of the state. To solve the problems facing the educational sphere, a significant increase in the volume of its financing is required.

The study gives grounds to assert that effective and synergistic interbudgetary relations in the financial provision of all levels of education are designed to ensure that education meets modern demands from society and needs of the economy, the availability and quality of educational services, regardless of the place of residence of consumers of such services, and the improvement of economic levers for managing the system. Education at all levels, overcoming the isolation of schooling from the economy, and integrating higher education into the economic development of the state and the European educational space. At the same time, constructive reforms in education financing will ensure the dynamic development of this sector, stimulate the processes of knowledge commercialization, strengthen the market positions of public educational institutions, and increase their competitiveness since education will fulfill its mission of developing the country's human potential with reliable and stable sources of funding.

Despite specific positive steps due to the emerging processes of reforming the financing of the education system, there are risks to their successful completion. According to the results of the study, in addition to political ones, a significant risk today is the low financial solvency and independence of local budgets, the lack of established standards for financing education, conflicts over school closures, and the lack of professionals with work experience who could exercise new powers and manage the educational process, in the field, as well as sharing responsibility for the quality of education. In general, the results obtained in the course of this scientific study, as well as the conclusions formulated on their basis, can be used as an adequate scientific basis for further research, which will consist of the development of funding models and other organizational and economic mechanisms aimed at ensuring accessibility and the quality of education as well as to improve the efficiency of budgetary spending on education at the state and local levels in Kazakhstan.

Future studies in education financing in Kazakhstan can explore the impact of increased funding on educational outcomes and academic achievements as well as its effectiveness in improving the overall quality of education. Additionally, research can focus on ensuring equity and inclusivity in financing policies to guarantee equal access to quality education for all segments of the population. Moreover, evaluating the efficiency of budgetary spending and identifying areas for resource optimization would be crucial in enhancing the cost-effectiveness of education funding. Last, exploring the potential benefits and challenges of public–private partnerships can offer insights into how involving the private sector can contribute to the accessibility and sustainability of education financing in the country.

Disclosure Statement

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Research Article

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A Grounded Theory of Christian Public Administrators' Integration of Faith and Work

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About 28% of U.S. public administrators profess to be Christians who regularly attend church. Given potential impacts on public policy and services, it is important to understand how these administrators integrate faith and work. Following a constructivist grounded theory approach, this study presents a taxonomy of Christian public administrators' faith–work integration based on analysis of 30 in-depth interviews. The taxonomy's axes are: (1) purpose—pious versus instrumental, and (2) locus—personal, workplace relationships, or societal. All participants share faith-driven work motivation aligned with public administration values. Their mode of faith–work integration varies based on perceived religious liberty and orientations toward a sacred–secular divide versus a holistic Christian worldview. The model suggests individuals motivated by theonomic and proselytizing goals may self-select out of government service. This research offers implications for public sector leaders, educators, and Christian public administrators seeking insight into how to relate their faith and work.

Keywords: Christianity; religion; faith–work integration; public administrators; grounded theory

How do work and religious faith intersect for Christian public administrators? A range of possibilities can be imagined that suggest the importance of this question. Do Christian public administrators subvert public policy goals? Excel in self-sacrificial service? Smolder with Christian nationalist fervor? Exercise uncommon equanimity? Harbor prejudice? Champion justice? Such speculation is moot if Christians are uncommon among the ranks of public administrators. The 2021 General Social Survey included questions on respondents' sector of employment, supervisory role, religious affiliation, and religious service attendance. Of the 153 respondents who worked for government in a supervisory role, 93 (61%) described themselves as Christian, and 43 (28%) described themselves as Christians and reported attending church services more than once per month.[1] Granting a ±10% margin of error at the 95% confidence level for this small sample, a safe conclusion is that at least about one-half of government supervisors describe themselves as Christian, and at least one-fifth of government supervisors may be described as regularly attending Christian church services. Whatever the relationship between

[1] Author's analysis of 2021 General Social Survey data available at https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org. The survey item asking whether respondent work for a government was not asked more recently than 2021. Seventeen respondents said they worked for both government and the private sector; these respondents were excluded from analysis.

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their faith and work, the proportion of public administrators who are committed Christians is not trivial. We know that public administrators' personal values can affect their professional decisions (Frederickson, 1997; Gawthrop, 1998; Goodsell, 1989). We do not know, however, how Christian public administrators' religious values affect their work.

A large body of research has focused on the relationships between faith and work in the private sector and in nationally representative samples of workers (and, so, dominated by private sector employees' data). Christian belief does affect management, usually with positive effects for the worker and the organization (Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 85–94). When religious employees perceive a good fit between religious and workplace values, their faith is often a resource for work effectiveness, work unit cohesion, organizational citizenship, job satisfaction, job commitment, and handling workplace stress (Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 91–94; Héliot et al., 2020; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015). Religiosity, especially church attendance, predicts greater adherence to ethical standards in workplace decision-making (Emerson & McKinney, 2010; Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2008; Vitell, 2009).

Some of these findings may apply to public administration, but faith–work integration may well look different in the government context. Christian doctrine is replete with government- and politics-infused themes that could affect government employees' thinking about their work differently than their private sector counterparts. The advent of the "kingdom of God" is a prominent theme of the New Testament (Strauss, 2020). Christian identity is likened to citizenship in heaven (Matthew 5:13–16, Ephesians 2:19, Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 13:14, I Peter 2:11–12). The New Testament epistles exhort Christians to submit to government authorities (Romans 13:1–5, Titus 3:3, 1 Peter 2:13–14) and describe even the non-Christian government official as "God's servant working for your good," doing "the work he has given them" (Romans 13:4–6; all Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version, 2001). At the same time, when religious conviction and government edicts conflict, the Bible's teaching is clear: The Christian "must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The Bible offers the examples of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, even as Babylonian officials, refusing to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar's idol (Daniel 3) and Daniel, also a high government official, continuing to pray, despite King Darius's prohibition (Daniel 6). It seems likely that these and other Bible passages about government would have an effect on Christian public administrators' beliefs about work distinct from Christians in other professions.

In the United States, public administrators also have a different relationship to the First Amendment than private sector administrators (Bruce, 2000; Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 228–229; King, 2007). Like their private sector counterparts, public administrators enjoy religious exercise protections, but they are uniquely prohibited from working to establish a state religion. Moreover, as government employees, public administrators' employers and supervisors are constitutionally bound to protect their right to free expression and to uphold the prohibition on establishment of religion. However, courts and legislatures might find a balance between public administrators' right to free religious expression and the public's right to be free of government-established religion (Cate, 2018; King, 2007), Christian public administrators' *perceptions* of their constitutional rights and restrictions may affect how they bring their faith into the workplace (Bruce, 2000; Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 228–229).

A small body of research based on secondary survey data has found that government employees and private sector employees do differ in measures of religiosity. Government employees in the United States express a stronger commitment to and involvement in religion than do private sector employees (Freeman & Houston, 2010; Houston & Cartwright, 2007; Houston, Freeman, & Feldman, 2008), a pattern that holds in most other countries studied as well (Houston &

Freeman, 2022). The substantive impact of more religiosity among public sector employees has gone largely unexamined (Bednarczuk, 2019; King, 2007). Bednarczuk (2019) finds religiosity to predict higher job satisfaction among government workers. Bozeman and Murdock (2007) find religious public managers to have a more positive view of their agencies and coworkers than nonreligious managers. Buszka and Ewest (2020, p. 225–226) apply Miller and Ewest's (2013, p. 405–411) theory of faith–work integration to briefly hypothesize that public sector employees tend to integrate their faith and work in three ways: (1) by viewing their work as a religious calling, requiring excellence and positive interpersonal relationships at work (the "process/activity orientation"); (2) by viewing their work as honoring God through service to society (the "outcome orientation"); and (3) by viewing their work as pursuing religiously formed ethical priorities that affect their organizations and the public (the "community orientation"). Beyond the work of these scholars, previous research has not explored how public administrators' religious beliefs affect their work attitudes and behaviors. The present study is the first empirical research to depart from analysis of secondary survey data, instead using qualitative methods to develop rich descriptions and explanations of public administrators' faith–work relationships grounded in their own reflections.

Research Design

Participants

This research followed a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) to develop a plausible model of Christian public administrators' understandings of the relationship between their faith and work, based on close analysis of 30 in-depth interviews. Study participants were recruited using network sampling. I first recruited participants from my own personal and professional networks by email, who then provided referrals to other potential participants. I also expanded recruitment by requesting referrals from professional acquaintances across the United States, mostly in academia. I sent 42 interview requests.

Potential participants were directed to a webpage with general information about the study, screening questions, and a consent statement. The webpage included the following statement about participant eligibility:

> Christian public administrators in the United States are invited to participate in this study. *Public administrators* are unelected administrators, analysts, and managers in government agencies. For purposes of this study, I am seeking public administrators who would describe themselves as *committed Christians* as evidenced by regular (more than monthly) participation in Christian church services and affirmation of one of the historic confessions of the Christian faith, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Athanasian Creed, or a contemporary statement of faith consistent with these creeds, such as the Baptist Faith and Message, the Lausanne Covenant, or the National Association of Evangelicals' Statement of Faith. I am interested in talking to Christian public administrators who have never given much thought to faith–work integration, those with deeply held beliefs about faith–work integration, those who believe faith and work should remain separate, and everyone in between. [The creeds and statements of faith had hyperlinks to those documents.]

These eligibility criteria limit the study to a somewhat narrow, management- and government-oriented definition of "public administrator" (following Denhardt, 1999) rather than broader definitions that might include people working in public service-related roles in the private nonprofit and for-profit sectors or government employees in frontline roles, such as case managers, teachers, or police officers. The religious criteria combine orthodox Christian belief, as represented by Christian creeds and statements of faith affirmed by Protestant, Catholic, and

Orthodox Christians, and religiosity, as defined by regular church attendance (following Bozeman & Murdock, 2007; Brotheridge & Lee, 2007). While broader definitions of "public administration" and "committed Christian" could have been used, these narrower definitions are intended to permit a focus on participants' perceptions of the relationship between maximally distinctive public administration work and maximally distinctive Christian faith. For anyone who may prefer different definitions, this study may be considered more simply for what it is: an exploration of the faith–work relationship among government managers who subscribe to core Christian beliefs and attend church regularly.

The last sentence of the eligibility statement was also intended to connote neutrality toward different views on faith–work integration, a stance I sought to maintain throughout participant recruitment and interviews in order to maximize variation in participants' perspectives on the topic. Participants had to check survey boxes affirming they met the definitions of "public administrator" and "committed Christian" as defined in the statement in order to be considered eligible for the study. Eligible participants were then directed to an online form to schedule an interview. Interviews averaged 40 minutes and were conducted and recorded via Zoom and transcribed (with subsequent manual cleanup) using Otter.ai. All interviews were conducted during 2022.

Data collection and data analysis, described below, proceeded iteratively, with tentative themes from earlier interviews, which I developed in analytic memos, suggesting paths for further exploration in subsequent interviews. Consistent with the conclusions of an analysis of 100 interview-based grounded theory studies (Thomson, 2010), I found that about 25 interviews were sufficient for fully developing themes and concluded data collection after 30 interviews. Table 1 summarizes salient characteristics of the study participants.

Data Collection

The semistructured interviews were designed to elicit participant-directed perspectives on the relationship between faith and work. At the beginning of each interview, I summarized the purpose of the study, my own motivation as a Christian with an administrative role in a public institution trying to sort out the relationship between my faith and work, and my desire to learn from other Christian public administrators. The intent of this introduction was to connote my genuine stance of "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 2002, p. 49–51), not seeking any predetermined answers but interested in learning from participants and "safe" to talk to openly about what some may consider a sensitive topic.

All participants were asked the same core set of questions, though question wording and order would vary somewhat to keep interviews natural and conversational. After asking warm-up questions about their work and church involvement, I asked: "Let's start with a very broad question, and you can take it in whatever direction you'd like. How would you describe the relationship between your faith and your work?" The remaining standard questions were: "Is there anything about public administration that makes it hard to be a Christian in this field?" "On the other hand, is there anything that makes public administration especially well-suited for Christians?" "Are there ways you would like to integrate your faith and work differently than you do now?" "As we've been talking, has anything else come to mind that you'd like to share?" I prompted participants to elaborate on their answers and to provide examples in conversational follow-up comments and questions while consciously maintaining a neutral, nondirective, interested, empathetic stance.

Table 1. Select characteristics of study participants
(n = 30)

Level of government	***n***
Federal	7
State	12
Local	11
Years of government employment	
Less than 5	4
5–10	3
More than 10	23
Domain	
Defense	1
Economic development	2
Economic regulation	2
Education	2
Energy	4
Environment	2
General administration	6
Health	3
Information services	1
Justice	1
Parks and recreation	1
Public works	3
Social services	2
Church affiliation	
Anglican	4
Baptist	8
Catholic	1
Episcopal	1
Methodist	3
Nondenominational, evangelical	7
Presbyterian	6

Data Analysis

I open-coded all interview transcripts, assigning brief labels as potential categories for all phrases and sentences relevant for capturing the participants' understandings of the relationship between their faith and work. I then grouped and renamed similar codes, employing the "constant comparison" method (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54), comparing codes to data and codes with other codes to develop a set of codes that comprehensively categorize the meaning conveyed in participants' words. Borrowing from thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 76–115), related codes served as the basis of themes constructed to identify broader categories or continua of meaning along which participants varied. Iterating between analysis and interviewing, I used "theoretical sampling" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96–104) to seek additional data to build out these developing themes. For example, I enrolled participants in other regions of the country to explore a potential theme related to geographic context, and I asked follow-up questions about using faith as a

resource for instrumental decision-making to explore variation in participants in relation to that developing theme.

I took a semantic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 57–58) to build the descriptive taxonomy presented below, building themes around participants' own words and overt meanings that they, themselves, would easily recognize as their own. To develop the subsequent explanations for why Christian public administrators employ one type of faith–work integration rather than another, I also used a latent analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 57–58), with the explanations based not only on the participants' own words but also on underlying meanings and assumptions inferred from the data.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

Focusing on Christians in U.S. public administration roles allows for the development of a theory of their faith–work integration that is specific, richly described, and heavily contextualized—strengths of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This narrow focus, though, also suggests limitations. This study may not wholly apply to faith–work integration in other countries or among non-Christian religious public administrators, areas that could be explored in future research. This study's qualitative approach may also help move future quantitative research beyond reliance on the few relevant items available in secondary survey data. Future surveys could use this study's findings to generate more robust, theory- and data-informed sets of questions to learn more about the frequencies of different types of faith–work integration identified in this study and to quantitatively test and describe this study's explanations of variation in faith–work integration.

Findings

A Grounded Taxonomy of Christian Public Administrators' Faith–Work Integration

Given their shared Christian faith and public sector employment, it is not surprising that the participants hold at least three core beliefs about faith–work integration in common. First, Christian public administrators hold a high view of vocation, i.e., the sense of being called to public service and belief that work has inherent dignity. "I truly believe that this is my calling" (Participant 19) is a common sentiment. Second, they see government work as legitimate for Christians, often alluding to the Romans 13 passage in which the Apostle Paul instructs the Roman Christians to submit to government authority, whom he describes as God's servants working for the good of the people, and the Old Testament stories of Joseph serving as an Egyptian government official and Daniel serving as a Babylonian and Syrian government official. Third, Christian public administrators value the dignity of all human beings, who they believe are made in the image of God—the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*, based on Genesis 1:27. Behaviorally, this belief translates into an intentional effort to treat people with respect, regardless of their choices or personal characteristics.

Figure 1. A Grounded Taxonomy of Christian Public Administrators' Faith–Work Integration

Purpose of faith–work integration	**Locus of faith–work integration**		
	Individual	**Workplace relations**	**Society**
Pious integration Work as context for fulfilling Christian duties	Privately pious ▪ Exercising and growing in personal piety in the work context ▪ Cultivating virtues of peace, joy, and patience at work ▪ Work as a vehicle for personal spiritual fulfillment	Caring friend ▪ Pursuing positive, caring, informal relationships with coworkers ▪ Engaging in lifestyle evangelism with non-Christian coworkers ▪ Enjoying fellowship and mutual encouragement with Christian coworkers	Loving neighbor ▪ Fulfilling Christian command to love your neighbor, with service to neighbor as end in itself ▪ Engaging in public-facing lifestyle evangelism
Instrumental integration Faith as a resource for fulfilling professional duties	Virtuous worker ▪ Drawing on Christian belief as a resource for effective professional behavior and decisions ▪ Pursuing exemplary professional ethics ▪ Using God-given personal strengths to do good work	Effective coworker ▪ Crafting positive, productive relationships with coworkers to achieve agency goals ▪ Adopting a distinctively Christian leadership style to elicit followers' best work	Agent of social flourishing ▪ Using Christian values to work toward a more just, equitable, healthy, prosperous society ▪ Stewarding God's creation

Christian public administrators do, though, vary in how they think about faith–work integration as well. Respondents describe their faith–work integration across three loci: within individuals; within workplace relationships; and with respect to the broader society. Christian public administrators may gravitate toward one of these loci, or they may operate within more than one, but they think distinctly about them, one at a time. Respondents also describe faith–work integration in terms of two purposes, which may be labeled "pious integration" and "instrumental integration." Those who emphasize pious integration see their work as a context for fulfilling Christian duty, i.e., their duties to God and pursuing and enacting their own personal holiness. Those who emphasize instrumental integration see their faith as a resource for fulfilling their professional duties well. As with the loci, Christian public administrators may emphasize one purpose or the other or pursue both, but they think about these two purposes as distinct categories.

These two dimensions of faith, i.e., work integration and locus and purpose, are orthogonal to each other. Christian public administrators who emphasize either purpose may pursue that purpose within any of the loci, and those who tend to operate within any one of the loci may pursue either purpose or both. The different combinations of purposes and loci are depicted in the taxonomy of Christian public administrators' faith–work integration in Figure 1. At the risk of oversimplification, Christian public administrators integrating their faith in different combinations of purposes and loci are labeled "privately pious," "caring friend," and "loving neighbor," for those pursuing pious integration in the individual, workplace, and society loci, respectively; and "virtuous worker," "effective coworker," and "agent of social flourishing," for those pursuing instrumental integration within the three loci. Keeping in mind that a Christian

public administrator may integrate faith and work in more than one of these purpose–locus combinations, each combination is described below with representative quotes from the participants.

The *privately pious* see the workplace as an important context for their personal spiritual experience and growth. Christian public administrators see their work as honoring God: "We're glorifying God by our work" (P6). Faith is a "bulwark" (P15) against work-related stress and an assurance that "this is going to work out however it's supposed to" (P27), and you can "give your work stress over to God" (P4). Faith gives "peace in your heart" (P25). Prayer is a source of strength at work: "When the times get tough, I start praying" (P16). Religious priorities protect work–life balance: "God kind of directed me [...] What I've come to realize is, you know, I don't want to work 60 hours a week" (P27). The privately pious also value the effects of work on their faith in addition to bringing their faith to work. "This is where God has placed me, for my own sanctification" (P22). This growth in holiness includes a deepening appreciation of human dignity, such as by developing greater empathy for the poor.

For the *caring friends*, faith–work integration is the intentional, faith-driven pursuit of positive, caring, informal relationships with coworkers, often emphasizing interpersonal communication centered around nonwork issues. "For the people I work with more often, it's really important for them to know that I care about them as a person more than I care about them as an employee. And I really do mean that. [...] We're dealing with personal crises in their life that had nothing to do with work. And they came to me and talked about it" (P1). "I still think the most important thing is to love people, because that's what [Jesus] told us to do" (P10). Faith–work integration can simply mean being a pleasant coworker: "I need to be kind and respectful. I need to do what the word of God says there" (P21). Faith can shape conflict management: "Even if they're continuously being antagonistic, I'm supposed to respond in a way that is courteous and kind to them, showing the love of Jesus [...] That's part of being a Christian" (P18). Faith–work integration is a workplace ministry: "I feel like it's, in a way, a ministry. I get to encourage people [...] I didn't know I was going to counsel so much [...] I think that's tied to my faith in a lot of ways, the ways I'm able to encourage them" (P2). Christian public administrators pray for their coworkers: "I pray over my coworkers" (P4). "I have prayer cards [...] I pray for the Board members all the way down to my team. So I do a lot of prayer" (P9).

This workplace ministry can extend into evangelism, i.e., efforts to persuade others to become Christians. Christian public administrators are reluctant to engage in aggressive, overt evangelism in the workplace: "I'm not inviting people to my office to like, open up the Bible and, you know, share the gospel with them" (P1). Instead, they engage in "lifestyle evangelism"—signaling their Christian identify and living winsomely before non-Christians to attract them to the faith: "I let my actions show my faith" (P8). Respondents gave many examples of such strategic self-presentation, which they perceive as contrasting with aggressive, overt evangelism: "I give my Christmas card that has, you know, some Scripture on it" (P10). "I would share the story of making the decision to come to [current agency], that I had to pray about it a lot" (P16). "I attend Bible study on Monday nights, and [...] they know that I'm off, like, Monday nights are sacrosanct [...] I can't work late [...] I talk pretty freely about being involved in my church, when people are like, 'how was your weekend, what did you do?'" (P22). "There are opportunities that I have to say certain things that may let people know that I'm a believer, like I [...] mindfully use the word 'creation' over 'environment,' you know, something like that, just to kind of let people know where I'm coming from [...] I think that it just opens the door for further conversations" (P3). This is commonly balanced by a recognition of the need for respect of diverse coworkers and a desire to avoid introducing any division in the workplace: "I didn't want anyone to ever think I was trying to coerce them or preach to them or anything like that" (P16).

The *loving neighbors* see their service to society as fulfilling Jesus's command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), taking to heart the lesson of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), that anyone who needs help can be a "neighbor." "I'm called to be a good neighbor [...] and really, everybody's my neighbor" (P18). This love of neighbor is an end in itself, i.e., an act of Christian obedience: "You have a Christian duty of service" (P15). "I get my satisfaction in life from helping others, and one of the greatest opportunities to do that is through public service" (P11). "Servanthood is at the core [...] of Christianity [...] Jesus was a servant [...] For me, a large part of being a Christian [...] is just serving others" (P13). Loving one's neighbor can also extend to a public-facing lifestyle evangelism, signaling Christian identity publicly and seeking to have "people see Christ through how I live" (P1).

Turning to instrumental integration, the *virtuous workers* draw on religious belief to guide their individual professional behaviors and decisions. Christian public administrators frequently use the terms "integrity," "trustworthy," and "honest" to describe how faith shapes their professional character. "It is very important for me to conduct myself in a way, in all of my work, [...] that people realize that I'm different, that people recognize that I'm a person of integrity and don't have any questions about that. [...] I work really hard to maintain and preserve that" (P1). A strong work ethic is also seen as a Christian virtue. "I give my employer a full day's work every day. I think the Lord expects that of us. I do not cheat my employer" (P17). "If I say I'm going to work 40 hours a week, you know, I actually work 40 hours a week" (P3). Some see their work as a good fit with their God-given skills. "The opportunity to kind of use the gifts that I have [...] in a way that helps [...] make sure people are getting what they need [...] it's a very good fit for me. If God has given these skills, then it's good to use those skills" (P5). More generally, Christian public administrators believe it is important to do their work with excellence. "I need to be really good at what I do" (P21). "I think we are called to do things with excellence. We're set apart as Christians, and so our work product should match that. [...] I feel God's pleasure [...] when I do my best work here" (P7).

The *effective coworkers* apply religious convictions to cultivate workplace relationships that are productive and effective toward agency goals. Helpfulness, self-sacrifice, and servant–leadership are common themes: "[I] always try to put others' work before [...] my own work" (P29). "I am a servant leader [...] based off of Jesus in the Bible [...] a servant leader is someone who places the needs of others before their own" (P19). Some Christian public administrators bring skills developed in the church context to work: "I do a lot of shepherding in my church and Bible study contexts [...] and I have been able to take a lot of what I have learned in that context and apply it at work [...] The people under me don't know they're being shepherded. [...] It's one of the greatest secrets [...] when you're managing people, it really is shepherding honestly, if you're doing it well. And so, like, a lot of the things that I've learned over the years in the Christian context have been hugely helpful as a manager and when I'm working with colleagues" (P22).

The *agents of social flourishing* apply Christian values to work toward a more just, equitable, healthy, and prosperous society. These administrators believe that Christianity's distinctive values are good for all of society, Christians and non-Christians alike. They do not have in mind values pertaining to personal faith or private religious practice, such as faith in Christ and submission to church leaders, but rather "common good" values. Respondents gave examples of policy and service provision decisions that reflect three interrelated common good values they see as based in their religious beliefs: honoring human dignity; helping vulnerable persons; and prioritizing opportunities to maximize human potential. "Every client I meet, I tell them that they have endless talent and endless potential. And I say that you were born on purpose for a specific purpose, that you're here for a reason" (P19). "From a faith perspective, I do and always have had

a heart for those who are marginalized [...] I'm here to help the people who need the most help" (P30). Another (P28) recounted advocating for funds to be allocated for homeless services, and others (P1, P4, P5, P12, P13, P17, P22) described prioritizing help for widows, orphans, low-income persons, and persons with developmental disabilities, all citing the Christian virtue of caring for the vulnerable.

Others describe their work as pursuing societal peace and flourishing. An environmental protection inspector (P3) and an environmental research manager (P25) described their work as "stewarding" God's creation, ensuring that natural resources are protected as well as used for human welfare. A monetary policy administrator explained his agency's work to promote full employment and contain inflation as "glorifying God" (P24) by contributing to a right ordering of society, characterized by peace and prosperity, with people and natural resources directed toward their best potential. A workplace safety manager (P15) and a federal program analyst (P29) similarly described their work as pursuing "human flourishing." "I try to keep in mind [...] the goal of what I'm doing, you know, protecting the dignity of all people, [...] trying to build a better world [...] for human flourishing" (P15).

Explaining Variation in Christian Public Administrators' Faith–Work Integration

The preceding taxonomy organizes the participants' responses to describe and categorize the range of Christian public administrators' approaches to faith–work integration. Why, though, do public administrators gravitate toward one type of faith–work integration or another? Taking a more latent analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 57–58) to identify underlying meanings and assumptions present in the data, I identified two answers to this question. These two explanations are integrated with the descriptive taxonomy in Figure 2.

Explaining the Locus of Faith–Work Integration

The primary locus of integration is dependent on perceived religious liberty. The more Christian public administrators perceive constraints on religious liberty, the more they emphasize the individual locus of integration. The more they perceive broad religious liberty, the more they emphasize the societal locus of integration.

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, U.S. law requires generous religious accommodations for employees of the federal government, state governments, and local governments that have at least 15 employees. These accommodations go so far as to permit proselytizing in the workplace (The White House, 1997; U.S. Department of Justice, 2017; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2021), as long as it ceases "with respect to any individual who indicates that the communications are unwelcome" (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.) and does not otherwise "constitute harassment of coworkers" or impose "undue hardship" on agency operations (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2021). Regardless of *de jure* religious liberty, Christian public administrators' faith–work integration is affected by their *perceived* religious liberty, which may be shaped by informal workplace norms and cultural cues more than law.

Figure 2. A Grounded Theory of Christian Public Administrators' Faith–Work Integration

Perceived low religious liberty ⟷ Perceived high religious liberty

Sacred/secular divide mindset ↕ Holistic Christian worldview	Purpose of faith–work integration	Locus of faith–work integration: Individual	Workplace relations	Society
	Pious integration Work as context for fulfilling Christian duties	Privately pious ▪ Exercising and growing in personal piety in the work context ▪ Cultivating virtues of peace, joy, and patience at work ▪ Work as a vehicle for personal spiritual fulfillment	Caring friend ▪ Pursuing positive, caring, informal relationships with coworkers ▪ Engaging in lifestyle evangelism with non-Christian coworkers ▪ Enjoying fellowship and mutual encouragement with Christian coworkers	Loving neighbor ▪ Fulfilling Christian command to love your neighbor, with service to neighbor as end in itself ▪ Engaging in public-facing lifestyle evangelism
	Instrumental integration Faith as a resource for fulfilling professional duties	Virtuous worker ▪ Drawing on Christian belief as a resource for effective professional behavior and decisions ▪ Pursuing exemplary professional ethics ▪ Using God-given personal strengths to do good work	Effective coworker ▪ Crafting positive, productive relationships with coworkers to achieve agency goals ▪ Adopting a distinctively Christian leadership style to elicit followers' best work	Agent of social flourishing ▪ Using Christian values to work toward a more just, equitable, healthy, prosperous society ▪ Stewarding God's creation

Those who perceive religious liberty to be largely constrained in the government workplace lean toward the individual locus of integration, keeping their faith largely a private matter. A state executive perceived extreme constraints; speaking of her faith, she said, "The challenge, I think, especially in a leadership role, and being in the public sector, is you can't talk about it … you couldn't bring God into […] a public sector environment." When asked how her faith affects her work, she emphasized an internal focus, "exhibiting grace under pressure" and doing her work "with good morals" (P16). This pattern is repeated throughout the data and in the inverse as well. A state regional planner (P18) said, with regard to faith in the workplace, "There's no restrictions, as far as I can tell […] I don't feel like I have to hide who I am […] I've actually had conversations with some of my coworkers, just talking about our beliefs." When asked about his faith–work integration, he had an external focus, building caring relationships with his coworkers and serving the public as a "good neighbor." This finding affirms Buszka and Ewest's (2020) emphasis on the

importance of organizational type in shaping faith–work integration (p. 215–239) and, specifically, supports their hypothesis that perceptions of religious freedom would be especially salient in affecting workers' faith–work integration in government agencies (p. 228–229).

Participants also respond to the perceived religious expression norms of their cultural contexts. "I have the luxury of working in the South, where discussions about faith are much more routine. You know, you go up to certain areas of the country, you don't talk to people about faith [...] I think in certain places like D.C. [...] it would be more challenging to be more outright about your faith" (P8). Three participants from D.C., though, perceive a great deal of religious freedom, freely self-identifying as Christians in their public roles, offering invocations at public meetings where "everybody knows I'm a Christian" (P21), and "caring for widows and orphans ... looking out for the least among us" (P22). On the other hand, two employees of the same agency, working in the same building, perceive their organizational culture very differently. They both, unprompted, estimated the percentage of the agency's employees who are Christians to be 90% and 30%–60%, with the former speaking of praying with coworkers and asking them "Where are you in your faith?" (P6) and the latter emphasizing that "You have to be careful; you have to make sure that you don't do something that could upset people who are not Christians" (P9). Just as with the legal context, the Christian public administrator's perception of the cultural context and its implications for religious liberty matter more than the accuracy of those perceptions. Whether accurate or not, perceived religious liberty leads to more externally situated integration, and perceived constraints lead to more internal, private integration.

Explaining the Purpose of Faith–Work Integration

The primary purpose of integration is dependent on beliefs about the relationship between the sacred and secular. The more Christian public administrators believe in a sacred–secular divide, the more they emphasize pious integration. The more they believe in a holistic Christian worldview, the more they emphasize instrumental integration.

The relationship between Christianity and culture is a topic of perennial debate among Christian theologians (see, for example, Carson, 2008; Hunter, 2010; Niebuhr, 1951), and the tensions underlying that debate are present in the participants' decision-making about how to relate their faith to their work. Some Christian public administrators tend to enact a sacred–secular divide. The sacred–secular divide is a habit of mind that emphasizes distinctions between religious and nonreligious parts of our lives. In a strict sacred–secular divide, the sacred would include prayer, worship, Bible study, our spiritual formation, and unseen spiritual realities, like heaven and God; the secular would include everything else: human-made institutions; the physical world; and temporal concerns.

Some Christian public administrators adopt a "soft" sacred–secular divide. While still seeing their work as a calling, work as a public administrator is an opportunity for practicing and growing in Christian character and practice, whether in one's private thoughts and behaviors, in relationships with coworkers, or in relationships with the public. Faith–work integration is largely indifferent to the actual substance of the work, whether ensuring traffic safety, increasing employment, or licensing medical professionals. To do the work well looks the same for the Christian as the non-Christian. As one theologian, who distinguishes between Christians' dual citizenship in the "common kingdom" (the secular) and the "redemptive kingdom" (the sacred), puts it, "The moral requirements that we expect of Christians in cultural work are ordinarily the same moral requirements that we expect of non-Christians, and the standards of excellence for such work are the same for believers and unbelievers" (VanDrunen, 2010, p. 168). The Christian public administrator may have distinctively Christian work motivations and distinctively Christian interpersonal relationships at work, but there is no distinctively Christian way to do the actual

work of public administration. For the Christian public administrator who subscribes to a sacred–secular divide, faith–work integration is an exercise of Christian piety but not instrumental for accomplishing public administration goals.

In contrast, other Christian public administrators enact a holistic Christian worldview, seeking to apply Christian belief to all aspects of their lives, including decision-making and behaviors directed toward public administration goals. In Christian theology, the concept of "worldview" was popularized by the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century Dutch theologian and prime minister, Abraham Kuyper. A worldview is a set of foundational beliefs that serve as a stable starting point for answering life's important questions: Who am I? What is my purpose? How should I relate to others? What is good? Kuyper's Christian worldview is, indeed, comprehensive: "… no sphere of human life is conceivable in which religion does not maintain its demands that God shall be praised, that God's ordinances shall be observed, […]. Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, […] he is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God" (Kuyper, 1996/1898, p. 30). A Kuyperian worldview sees the world as God's good creation but corrupted by evil; it is the Christian's duty to steward all of creation—natural resources, human institutions, and individual lives—into ever better alignment with God's intended purposes: "We must, in every domain, discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and in human life" (p. 18).

This comprehensive worldview language resonates in some Christian public administrators' reflections on faith–work integration: "My faith is just at the foundation of my life. So it's going to be in work, it's going to be in everything I do" (P31). "I'm a public service worker, I'm a Christian, and both of those things […] are intermingled inside me. […] I'm going to use that mindset and those skills to perform in my job" (P20). For these administrators, faith is instrumental for guiding decision-making and behaviors toward public administration goals. Participants avowing a Christian worldview commonly made a pointed effort to avoid the impression of wishing to impose Christianity on others. Instead, they see *Christian*-driven decision-making and behaviors as synonymous with *effective* decision-making and behaviors and thus instrumental for pursuing legitimate public goals.

Discussion

Nonintegration of Faith and Work

While the goals of the preceding theory are to describe and explain Christian public administrators' faith–work integration, it also suggests what may lie outside the boundaries of the model, that is, what may constitute nonintegration of Christian faith and public administration. If we imagine what would lie outside Figure 2 to the top and left, we would be in the intersection of a strict sacred–secular divide (rather than the "soft" sacred–secular divide described above) and the perception of no religious liberty in public administration, and we would expect no integration. It is plausible that some Christian public administrators do occupy this space, but the participants in this study are not among them. Future research could explore whether some Christian public administrators do eschew all faith–work integration and, if so, whether this is due to an insuperable sacred–secular divide, misperceptions of religious liberty, or other factors unanticipated by this research.

Extending beyond the top row to the right, we might imagine a pious Christian public administrator with a perception of unlawfully expansive religious liberty, using work as a platform for aggressive proselytizing. Extending the bottom row to the right, we might imagine a theonomic public administrator, seeking to enact laws from the Bible or establish Christianity as the state religion (Smith, 1989). None of the participants in this research intend to be aggressive evangelists or theonomic operatives. Some participants do, however, say there are types of public

administration work they would self-select out of, with abortion-related work being the example most cited (P1, P3, P11, P12). Future research could explore whether individuals with proselytizing and theonomic goals similarly self-select out of public service careers or these tendencies are abated in some Christian public administrators when socialized by the profession's values of pluralism, rule of law, and respect for individuals' self-determination.

Implications for Practitioners and Educators

This study finds that Christian public administrators' religious beliefs contribute to their motivation to work with integrity and excellence, to be pleasant, caring, and effective coworkers, to view others as worthy of respect and dignity, and to devote themselves to serving others, consistent with previous research conducted outside the public sector (Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 91–94; Emerson & McKinney, 2010; Héliot et al., 2020; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015; Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2008; Vitell, 2009) and the hypotheses of Buszka and Ewest (2020, p. 225–226) deduced from Miller and Ewest (2013, p. 405–411). As these values are consonant with public administration values (Johnson & Feldheim, 2002; King, 2007, 2017; King & Sellers, 2018), all public administrators should strive for workplace policies, practices, and cultures that foster these positive behaviors.

Public administrators should receive training in policies about religious expression in the workplace. Training should guard against two errors. On the one hand, Christian public administrators should know the limits of religious expression to avoid unwelcome proselytizing or any behaviors that could violate the Establishment Clause. On the other hand, Christian public administrators should not feel illegitimately restricted in workplace religious expression. To do so could decrease their own work motivation and satisfaction (Bednarczuk, 2019) and even limit their work effectiveness (Buszka & Ewest, 2020, p. 93; Héliot et al., 2020). Public agency leaders should ensure religious employees do not feel pressured to unnecessarily suppress their religious identities and motivations due to misinformed self-censoring, informal organizational norms, or misguided agency policies. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices should acknowledge religious belief as a common and positive source of diversity among government employees to be respected by coworkers. Religious belief is a central aspect of self-identity among a large proportion of government employees and, for many, a meaningful motivation to treat others with respect and compassion, i.e., a motivation well aligned with DEI goals. The "Clinton Guidelines" (The White House, 1997) remain the most thorough available federal guidance for managing the tensions between government employees' religious freedoms and the Establishment Clause (and is cited by more recent federal guidance, such as "Federal Law Protections for Religious Liberty" [U.S. Department of Justice, 2017]). Future research could explore how government agencies are actually navigating these tensions in practice.

The study's findings also have implications for Christian public administrators themselves. The proposed theory may be useful for Christian public administrators wanting to reflect on how they might be more intentional about faith–work integration, a common refrain among this study's participants. Christian public administrators may apply the theory to describe their own faith–work integration and to consider why they may favor one type of integration or another. Those wishing to integrate their work and faith differently than they do now may see more opportunities in the model. They may see reasons they may have felt inhibited in their faith–work integration and possible remedies, such as gaining a better understanding of their legal contexts and examining their beliefs about the sacred–secular divide and Christian worldview. And while most of this study focuses on the effects of faith on work, they may also reflect on how work affects their faith. The Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*—the belief that people are made in the image of God—may be particularly strengthened by reflecting on the dignity, potentialities, and diversity of the public they serve.

Conclusion

Given that at least one-fifth of U.S. public administrators profess to be Christians who attend church services more often than monthly, researchers, the public, and other public administrators would reasonably wonder how religious beliefs may affect the actions of this sizeable proportion of our public servants. This study concludes that Christian public administrators integrate their faith and work in different ways, depending on their perceptions of workplace religious liberty and their beliefs about whether the sacred and secular are distinct categories of the Christian life. Whatever their perceptions about religious liberty and beliefs about the sacred–secular divide, Christian public administrators integrate their faith and work in ways that are well aligned with public administration goals and values. Even if limiting their faith–work integration to pursuing personal piety at work, Christian public administrators are motivated to work with joy and patience, to care for their coworkers, and to serve the public as an act of Christian love. Those who see their faith as having more instrumental purposes strive to use what they believe to be God-given gifts toward public service goals, to use Christian values to work productively with coworkers, and to seek societal flourishing aligned with authoritative public policy and Christian conceptions of peace and justice. Christians with motivations outside these boundaries, such as those who seek a platform for overt evangelizing or who wish to make Christianity a state religion, seem to self-select out of public service. Public administration leaders should reinforce the legal boundaries of faith–work integration through policy and training, but they should also normalize free religious expression and motivation within those boundaries. Christian public administrators' faith is an asset for work motivation, workplace relationships, and public service that benefit all of society.

Disclosure Statement

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

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Open Government Policymaking by Popular Voting: Comparing Canada and New Zealand

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The connection between open government policy and popular voting is understudied, yet it can reveal interesting patterns of policymaking that blend agenda setting, policy formulation, and decision-making in semiformalized fluid forms. This inquiry investigates the link between policy voting and open government by comparing the case studies of cocreating open government partnership national action plans in Canada and New Zealand. It examines the role of voting within the policy cycle of open government as a system of governance comprised of transparency, participation, accountability, and civic education. It further employs an exploratory mixed-methods approach of analyzing applied reports, official documents, social media campaigns, and expert interviews. It was found that not the voting format but the government's approach to interaction with stakeholders is associated with the diverging patterns of open government in the two countries.

Keywords: open government; policy making; voting; Canada; New Zealand

Introduction

This inquiry seeks to explore the role of nonbinding popular policy voting in open government as a system of governance. The challenge is that voting is often associated with elections for public office (Ehin et al., 2022; Heinl et al., 2023; Spycher-Krivonosova, 2022). However, voting has more applications—in particular, for selecting policy proposals. Furthermore, there is abundant research on binding policy voting, usually at referenda (Germann, 2021; Germann & Serdült, 2017; Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2022). However, in terms of the influence of policymaking, there is a spectrum that encompasses binding decisive referendum and nonbinding consultative polling (Krimmer & Kripp, 2009; Hennen et al., 2020). Within this range, there is also advisory voting accompanied by deliberation with the less formalized procedure, which makes it less formal but also more open to policy innovations. This is the case of voting for draft policies within the Open Government Partnership (OGP) cocreation process.

OGP is an international initiative that sets up a common framework (Open Government Partnership, 2022) for developing, implementing, and assessing reform plans in participating countries and municipalities. OGP methodology requires that a government designs a national action plan (NAP) jointly with the public. In some OGP participant countries, the public was enfranchised with the right to vote to propose or prioritize policy ideas for that country's NAP. Presumably, there is a substantial difference in the role of such voting, depending on voting design, political culture, the interaction between the government and the public, and on other

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country-specific circumstances. Hypothetically, by being entitled to vote for policy proposals, civil society can be empowered by gaining some sort of decision-making power and leverage in advocacy for their causes. In turn, by returning part of its decision-making power back to its constituents, the government can become more open to input from the public. In general, in the process of cocreating a joint action plan, civil society and authorities may develop a more cooperative approach and thereby rebalance representative democracy more toward direct and participatory democracy.

To explore the role of voting during the OGP policy cocreation empirically, this paper examines the voting for OGP draft policy commitments in the two countries of the Commonwealth of Nations that have reportedly performed voting for OGP draft policy commitments: Canada and New Zealand. The 56 commonwealth countries (The Commonwealth, ND) share the fundamental values of fundamental human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and just and honest government (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019). Canada and New Zealand share the similarity of being parliamentary democracies under a constitutional monarchy. However, they are different in administrative structure, whereas Canada is a federation and New Zealand is a unitary state. Furthermore, Canada is considerably bigger than New Zealand in terms of its territory and population. Presumably, this may shape the patterns of nationwide policymaking differently. The two states are also participants of the international OGP initiative: Canada from 2011 (Open Government Partnership, ND-a) and New Zealand from 2013 (Open Government Partnership, ND-b). Both countries have utilized voting while cocreating NAPs: Canada in 2016 online (Karanicolas, 2018) and New Zealand in 2018 offline (Booth, 2020). These basic similarities and specific differences make the two national cases suitable for an international comparison of the role of voting for open government draft policies.

This paper's central research question asks: What is the role of voting for policy proposals in open government in Canada and New Zealand? This potential connection is discerned in three aspects. First, we aim to identify the role of voting for policy proposals within the stages of the policymaking cycle of the OGP cocreation process. This is identified by the instances of applying voting and using its results at particular policymaking stages. Second, we inspect if and how voting for policy proposals are linked with open government policies as inscribed in national action plans. This is assessed by the number of top-voted policy proposals that are written in the national action plans. Third, we search for the association of voting for policy proposals with open government principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and civic education. This is evaluated by the scale of government activities of documenting the cocreation process and its outcomes, responding to public input, engaging stakeholders, and communicating the OGP model to the public.

The paper starts with a review of prior studies of popular voting for open government policies, then outlines the conceptual framework of this inquiry, details the research methodology, analyzes the context, process, and outcomes of open government policy voting in Canada and New Zealand and ends with a conclusion, discussion, and policy recommendations.

Available Research of Open Government Policy Voting

The role of voting for policy proposals in open government is a rather niche topic, yet there are some studies available. By definition, open government implies the use of digital technologies. Therefore, although voting for open government priorities can and does occur in person, virtually all identified inquiries on the link between voting and open government examined i-voting, mostly on dedicated e-platforms (websites that have an integrated function of casting and counting votes over the Internet).

The most relevant case was the U.S.'s Open Government Dialogue. Back in 2009, it combined online brainstorming, deliberating, voting, and codrafting ideas for making the government more transparent, participatory, and collaborative (Bingham, 2010). The analysis of website

content and statistics found that during the Open Government Dialogue voters did use the voting mechanism to provide feedback on ideas, engaged in deep conversations on policy issues, and small groups of acquaintances with a common goal collaboratively drafted policy proposals (Bingham, 2010). In a similar three-stage process in 2010, participants submitted and voted on ideas about goals and objectives for the United States National Dialogue on the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, decided how best to prioritize and achieve proposed goals and objectives, gave feedback on the final products, and identified the next steps (Lukensmeyer et al., 2011). Evidently, the multistage model of crowdsourcing ideas, deliberating on the raised issues, prioritizing policy proposals in i-voting, and codrafting them online was outlined and piloted already in the early years of open government reforms.

One of the most immediate features of i-voting for open government policies is its usability. Thus, an international survey of open governance usage factors performed in 2013 in six countries identified that the perceived ease of use was directly linked with the intention to use open government (Jurisch et al., 2015). Furthermore, a research review of online voting and deliberation platforms found that some e-platforms aiming to capture more systematic and deliberative decision-making have proven to rapport with higher quality results, but since very few users can and are willing to use these e-platforms, their use tends to be connected with even more reduced participation (Hansson et al., 2015).

Moreover, an empirically based reflection on the role of information and communication technologies in the development of open government assumed that digital technologies have sometimes facilitated voting overall, but this has not necessarily resulted in more informed or more representative voting (Alderete, 2018). However, another analysis of i-voting and deliberation platforms demonstrated that waiving the requirement to register engages a large number of silent visitors who are able to observe the ongoing discussion, thereby supporting educational objectives and awareness of the open government platform (Koch et al., 2011). This shows that the accessibility and ease of use of e-platforms have the potential of a strong association with high awareness, knowledge, and voter turnout for open government policies; however, these links are inconclusive. Consequently, the design of voting for open government policies requires thorough study.

A more complicated substantial characteristic of an open government e-platform is its functionality in relation to policy making. An international comparative study of 465 ICT open government platforms between the years 1999–2019 demonstrated that an online platform is more sustainable if it focuses on a specific policymaking stage, although if it allows citizens to propose policies or demand holding governments accountable, it will likely be discontinued (Cingolani, 2021). For instance, the 2014 analysis of open data portals revealed that an Australian portal allowed users to vote on the best suggestions, while a New Zealand portal provided mechanisms to monitor the processing of each request (Lourenço, 2015).

If these possibilities were combined, they would empower voters to shape decision-making and to monitor policymaking outcomes. In one instance, a qualitative comparative analysis of digital platforms in France, Italy, and the United Kingdom showed that e-voting at collaborative platforms in the United Kingdom encompassed the ability to vote online to choose among different proposals and reach a common decision and also an online consultation based on questionnaires and closed answer forms and e-petitions (De Blasio & Selva, 2019). A qualitative comparative analysis of a survey of innovation activities of Norwegian public administration agencies identified a positive relationship between user input and service outcomes (Gesierich, 2023). These studies reveal that voters and authorities consider the potential association of their online deliberation and voting with open government policies. Thus, an open government cocreation process should be located within the policymaking cycle.

Deliberation on social media is also part of a voting campaign. A study of the 2009 United

States Open Government Dialogue found that a proper understanding of open government debate requires the analysis of discussions not only on dedicated platforms but also at external social networking websites (Konieczka, 2010). A more recent inquiry into open government initiatives illuminated the importance of analyzing social media discussions (Kalampokis et al., ND). Clearly, the public is inclined to use multiple online media for debating open government policy proposals. Thereby, it is reasonable to analyze the scope and content of such discussions, primarily on social media. Thereby, we can bridge the two aspects of digital democracy: the electoral aspect (digital democracy as a digital transformation of government work, marked by open government data, digital services, and digital information) and the nonelectoral aspect (digital democracy as an opportunity for civil society to be involved in political participation in a country, such as electronic elections, online political participation, and digital activism) (Ali et al., 2023).

Overall, there are a number of academic, applied, and policy studies on the discussion, drafting, and voting for open government policy proposals. Still, specifically, the role of voting for draft open government policies within the broader open government ecosystem is understudied. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to this limited field by exploring the two countries as case studies.

Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of this inquiry, we use a broad notion of popular voting as a process that allows citizens to vote on policy issues (el-Wakil & McKay, 2020). Thereby, such voting can be applied to mapping ideas, crowdsourcing proposals, or making decisions. Further, this definition of voting can be employed for nonbinding consultations, binding decision-making, or a mixed formally nonbinding, yet informally binding, exercise. Also, eligible voters can belong to the general public, civil society, and public authorities, thus encompassing public and expert voting formats. Finally, voting can be performed in-person (offline) or remotely (online), embracing different channels of vote casting and counting. For parsimony, all varieties of voting performed via the Internet, online, or via any computer or mobile device are further named i-voting. Internet voting (i-voting) is defined as voting using internet and computer technologies at least for casting and counting votes (Khutkyy, 2020). Such a broad view on voting allows us to explore a wider variety of policy cocreation forms and identify their role in the open government policymaking cycle.

To better understand the role of voting for policy proposals, we seek to locate this practice within the policymaking cycle. The policy cycle is defined by Cheung (2011) as the process whereby political actors attempt to shape the definition of problems, the setting of a policy agenda, the formulation of policy alternatives, the adoption and implementation of policy decisions, and the evaluation of policy outcomes. Within this cycle, there are five stages: agenda setting; policy formulation; decision-making; policy implementation; and policy evaluation. In relation to voting, in this study, we refer to the first three stages only. These concepts are defined by Howlett and Giest (2015).

Agenda setting refers to the first stage in the process when a problem is initially sensed by policy actors and a variety of solutions are put forward. Policy formulation refers to the development of specific policy options within the government when the range of possible choices is narrowed by excluding infeasible ones and efforts are made by various actors to have their favored solution ranked highly among the remaining few. Decision-making refers to the third stage in which formal actors in government adopt a particular course of action. This resonates with a newer integrated policymaking process framework (Banha et al., 2022), which builds on fundamental stages of the public policy cycle but has a more detailed understanding of the agenda-setting, decision-making, and implementation stages.

For a more standardized assessment of voting role in open government policymaking as indicated in NAPs, we consider the Association for Public Participation (IAP2) “Spectrum of

Participation" adapted by the independent reporting mechanism (IRM). This model classifies the levels of participation according to the public's role in any public participation process and consists of five levels of public impact: inform; consult; involve; collaborate; and empower (IAP2 International Federation, 2018). IRM added the lowest "no consultation" level and reformulated the definitions as follows: "inform," the government provided the public with information on the action plan; "consult," the public could give inputs; "involve," the public could give feedback on how commitments were considered; "collaborate," there was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda; and "empower," the government handed decision-making power to members of the public. Since the IRM did not present this model in its handbooks, we use the model presented in Canada and New Zealand IRM reports (Karanicolas, 2018; Booth, 2020).

Furthermore, as we examine only the development of NAPs, not their implementation, in this paper, we count only the levels of public participation during the development of a NAP. This participation spectrum is useful, as it allows a systematic comparison between different participation processes. In this respect, we disagree with May (2006) that the "star of participation" or the "triangle of engagement" is better than the "ladder of participation." May's argument that "most thinking about participation focuses on the needs of the agency, and not on the needs and desires of the participants themselves" (2006, 5) is not so relevant in the context of OGP NAP development processes in Canada and New Zealand. The reason is that, in these countries, the active public does want a higher level of influence on open government policies; rather, it is the government's position and the cocreation design that limit the scale and depth of public input. In addition, we consider the democratic quality of cocreation (Ansell et al., 2023).

In this inquiry, open government is interpreted not as an organization but as a particular system of governance, i.e., an open as opposed to a closed one (Felin & Zenger, 2014). Since this study examines practical cases within the framework of OGP, here, the core concept of open government is also defined in practitioner terms. According to OECD (2016, p. 3, 4) open government is "a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth."

The three core principles are specified by OGP (2022, p. 20) in the following definitions. Transparency includes "publication of all government-held information (as opposed to only information on government activities); proactive or reactive releases of information; mechanisms to strengthen the right to information; and open access to government information." Accountability assumes "rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments." Participation supposes that "governments should seek to mobilize citizens to engage in a dialogue on government policies or programs; provide input or feedback; and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance."

Additionally, it is useful to consider the concept of civic education, which is often performed in relation to open government frameworks and policies. According to Banda (2009), civic education is a process of learning to think about one's life as a citizen in a community and cultivating the knowledge and skills needed to act as such. Some approaches aim to locate these principles into consecutive stages (Pirannejad & Ingrams, 2023). In contrast to them, for a more multidimensional analysis, in this study, we treat all these four aspects of open government as relatively independent.

Research Methodology

In order to identify the role of offline and online voting in open government in different settings, this was an exploratory study applying a mixed-methods approach.

A number of applied reports, as a relevant source of information about the OGP process in the studied countries, were scrutinized. Primarily, these were IRM reports. These assessments evaluate the cocreation process of NAPs according to IRM standards. They are performed by independent researchers, thereby being nonpartisan and objective. The only drawback is that they are not focused on the role of voting in cocreation, mentioning it only marginally. In total, seven IRM reports were analyzed (four from Canada and three from New Zealand). In addition, six government self-assessment reports, providing the government's perspective on the cocreation and implementation of NAPs, were inspected (three from Canada and three from New Zealand).

Furthermore, a policy analysis of OGP-related official documents published by a national multistakeholder forum (MSF) and the government was performed. First, these covered 10 government-adopted NAPs (five in Canada and five in New Zealand, including two updates). Second, these included more specialized documentation. In Canada, these were five government-published online documents: an overview of the NAP development and implementation; background on the consultation; events schedule; discussion on the draft NAP; and the summary report. In New Zealand, there were 26 documents (14 by the government official group and 12 by the expert advisory panel [EAP]). There were agendas and minutes of meetings, especially those illuminating discussions and decision-making about the cocreation process, specifically designing, communicating, and counting voting for open government policy priorities.

Awareness-raising and civic education campaigns were reviewed using the manual qualitative content analysis of social media accounts of MSF and government agencies responsible for communicating the national OGP process. In total, 68 social media posts (48 in Canada and 20 in New Zealand) from four social media accounts (two Twitter accounts in Canada; a Facebook and Twitter account in New Zealand) were analyzed. The examined parameters included the number of social media posts, online discussion duration, the number of reactions from the online audience, and the scope of audience interaction, in terms of the number of comments and reposts.

Aiming to understand the opinions of stakeholders knowledgeable about the cocreation process and especially voting for open government draft policies, we conducted online semistructured interviews with experts from the government and the public. To reconstruct a diverse multistakeholder vision of the cocreation, we approached independent experts, civic activists, development specialists, and government officials potentially well-informed about the voting performed during the OGP cocreation process in Canada and New Zealand. Prospective respondents were identified via the lists of MSF members on OGP-related government websites and via recommendations by interviewees using the snowball technique. We reached out to 19 prospective informants (eight in Canada and 11 in New Zealand). The response rate was 47% resulting in nine responses: eight interviews (four with Canadian and four with New Zealand experts) and one written answer from September 19 to October 25, 2022. Although the final sample is not extensive, given the requirement of awareness of the highly focused issue of the role of voting for draft open government policies, it is a good result.

All interviewees provided informed consent that their answers could be audio-recorded, transcribed, and cited in publications. Only two persons (both from Canada) chose to remain confidential (they are referred to as "Confidential Informant One" and "Confidential Informant Two"). On average, interviews lasted for 52 minutes. In cases when the interviewees requested to authorize their quotes, respective draft citations for the paper were shared with their authors who verified the correctness of understanding and explanation. Two informants also wrote IRM reports (one about Canada and one about New Zealand); therefore, these experts are cited in two capacities: as authors of applied reports and as interview respondents. Wherever possible, we verified expert statements either corroborating them against other

publications or by comparing them with other experts' opinions. Interview questions and transcripts were respectively structured and coded around three topics: the role of respondents in the OGP cocreation process; voting design; and the impact of voting on open government.

Policy Voting and Open Government in Canada

OGP cocreation advancement in Canada

Over more than a decade of participation in OGP, Canada has undergone an evolution in open government policy cocreation. The country's government joined OGP in 2011 and since then it has developed five NAPs and accomplished three of them (Open Government Partnership, ND-a). Over this time, Canada's style of interaction between the government and the public has changed considerably. It has progressed from limited consultations in 2011–2012 (Francoli, 2015) through wider and deeper consultations in 2014 (Francoli, 2016), up to even more engaging and innovative consultations in 2016 (Karanicolas, 2018). However, these reports indicate that these cocreation processes were either government-controlled (steering the process rather strictly) or government-dominated (having the highest share of civil servants among all stakeholders participating). It is worth noting that the Canadian government was already practicing the digital format of e-consultations for drafting open government commitments in 2011 (Francoli, 2015) and 2015 (Francoli, 2016). In 2016, i-voting for open government cocreation (in the sense of i-voting for draft policy commitments) was introduced (Karanicolas, 2018). This shows that experimentation with i-voting for policy cocreation was a stage in the broader transformation of interactions between citizens and authorities, though not perfect, in the context of the open government process.

The 2016 open government policy voting format in Canada

Canada's 2016 i-voting for open government draft commitments utilized upvoting for proposed ideas on the government's website. The government website reads that this voting was conducted from March 31 to May 15, 2016 (Government of Canada ND-b). This was a reasonable period for submitting succinct proposals and voting for those offered by others. As assessed by an online platform user, from a technical point of view, the platform worked perfectly well, and it was easy to use (Toby Mendel, civic activist). The government preset six themes (open information, social and economic development, innovation and prosperity, fiscal transparency, and enabling citizens), so that each proposal from the public had to fit one theme (Government of Canada, ND-c). This narrowed the spectrum of possible inputs from the public and would indicate that the government had set up the policymaking agenda from the very beginning.

Overall, according to the IRM research, during the 2016 cocreation process, the i-voting system for potential open government commitments allowed online visitors "to express approval for particular ideas by marking them with a thumbs up, and thereby gauge which inputs were garnering traction with the public" (Karanicolas, 2018, 23). As reported by the government, people were able to suggest new ideas for the upcoming NAP as well as comment and vote on existing suggestions (Government of Canada, ND-b). Also, one informant clarified that ideas collected at the initial phase were filtered down to a shortlist, which then was posted on the government's website for public voting (Confidential Informant One). The availability of three online options for submitting policy ideas, discussing, and voting for them enfranchised the public with basic e-participation instruments for policy drafting.

Yet, this did not empower the public with decision-making itself. The online system of voting only allowed citizens to either like or dislike a proposal during the consultation/discussion phase (Mary Francoli, independent expert). In terms of the cocreation process, it was a type of internet-based public consultation (Confidential Informant Two). In addition, as identified by the IRM researcher, a series of in-person roundtable consultations were held in cities across Canada on April 20, May 3, May 5, May 10, and May 12, 2016 (Karanicolas, 2018, 23). Such offline discussions served as a parallel channel for policy input and deliberation, thereby

creating an opportunity for greater inclusivity of the NAP cocreation process.

2016 cocreation-related communication campaign in Canada
The government held an awareness-raising and civic education campaign to inform and engage the public in the cocreation of Canada's third NAP. The government reported that its Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) tweeted about consultation opportunities and events to encourage Canadians to make their voices heard on open government and invited Canadians to tweet using the #opengovcan hashtag to share their thoughts and create their own open dialogue (Government of Canada, ND-d). An independent researcher acknowledged the government's genuine efforts to use social media and to try to get as many people across as possible (Michael Karanicolas, independent expert). Indeed, the search on Twitter found 48 tweets with the #opengovcan hashtag tweeted before and by the end of the i-voting period. All of them were tweeted from the @TBS_Canada account of TBS (TBS Canada, ND).

Specifically, tweets on April 20, 21, 22, and 24 as well as on May 10, 11, and 13, 2016, called for inputs to the third NAP and provided a link to the idea mapping, online deliberation, and i-voting webpage (Government of Canada ND-c). This webpage provided a link to background information about the online consultation process (Government of Canada, ND-a). This reflected an element of civic education about open government conducted by the Canadian government. In addition, Canada's OGP website is powered by the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, allowing visitors to subscribe to website updates in a reader-friendly format. As reported by the government, overall, the OGP cocreation webpages gained 12,782 views (Government of Canada ND-d). Considering the Canadian population of approximately 40 million (Statistics Canada, ND), this might reflect a relatively low to moderate awareness and interest in the topic from the public. One reason for that might be the lack of internet access in some remote parts of Canada. Another more significant reason might be a suboptimal communication campaign. As assessed by an informant with relevant expertise, Canada's OGP process was "poorly marketed" (Confidential Informant Two).

This individual suggested that this is linked, in part, to a mistaken assumption about the extent to which people monitor and engage with government initiatives through online channels, how and what people might search for online, and their capacity to make effective use of the government information/data they might find online. One informant said that the call for submissions was not disseminated enough, and their civil society organization knew about the call because they were "wired" into the IRM system (Toby Mendel, civic activist). This shows that the information campaign about Canada's cocreation process probably has reached people already closely following the government's updates.

Document-evidenced pattern of the 2016 cocreation in Canada
The 2016 online idea mapping, e-deliberation, and i-voting altogether revealed moderate participation of the Canadian public. As reported by the government, all online channels of public input into the draft NAP (online idea generation, Twitter participation, online plan drafting, and email submissions) comprised 56% of the total number of 535 participants (Government of Canada, ND-d). As i-voting was a part of online idea generation, 27% of engagement indicates that 144 persons took part in it. The i-voting webpage shows that 66 ideas were submitted, 37 of them were commented on (attracting from zero to 40 comments), and all of the ideas received some number of votes (ranging from one to 151) (Government of Canada, ND-c).

Interestingly enough, the government report provided slightly different statistics: a total of 1,152 ideas and comments, but only 127 votes on ideas and comments were cast online (Government of Canada, ND-d). In any case, the observed numbers reflect a significant level of discussion and expression among participants. It is worth noting that the participants could either post anonymously or disclose their names. On one side, this made the discussion more open but on the other side reduced the level of responsibility for the online debate. The

availability of detailed i-voting results online demonstrated solid government transparency.

Expert-evaluated pattern of the 2016 cocreation in Canada
The 2016 i-voting for open government ideas created an opportunity for the public to shape Canada's open government policies, and, though most probably such an opportunity was in place, the government kept its ultimate decision-making power. One expert expressed the opinion that the online platform helped reach more people than offline meetings, but the level of engagement was a lot more cursory (Confidential Informant One). Another interviewee agreed that it was good that the voting drew people into the process, that stakeholders had a chance to vote, that they found meaning in their engagement, and that they felt like they were doing something meaningful because they press the button and then something actually changes, but the real change was questionable (Michael Karanicolas, independent expert).

The challenge was that the voting results did not directly define the final NAP. Three experts on Canada's OGP cocreation process concurred that it was not the public but the government who made the final decision about open government policies included in the third NAP. It was a process controlled and driven by the government; civil society and external stakeholders did not really have any control over how the process unfolded and where the process ended up (Michael Karanicolas, independent expert). "Final decision for what commitments get included in the plans has always been with the government," noted one respondent (Mary Francoli, independent expert). Another expert echoed that "final decision-making authority continues to rest with the government" (Confidential Informant Two). It is reasonable to conclude that, during the 2016 cocreation of third Canada's NAP, the agenda was set up by the government, proposal submission and prioritization of i-voting were grassroots, but the decision-making was made by the government. Because of this, the analyzed i-voting was of nonbinding and consultative character.

The crowdsourcing of ideas and i-voting for them created space to express the government's generic accountability about the consultation outcomes, but it lacked individual responses and clear criteria for adopting final specific commitments. As an independent researcher put it: stakeholder input from the consultations went into the "black box" of government and a bunch of commitments came out of it; moreover, there was an imbalance in developing new commitments (Michael Karanicolas, independent expert). He added that there was a lot of confusion about where the commitment came from.

Nevertheless, the government made a substantial effort in responding to public input in a meaningful and approachable manner. It published a report containing succinct and extended summaries of suggestions for each theme and the government's response to them (Government of Canada, ND-d). It was written with plain language and accompanied by a glossary of key terms, selected citations from comments, and infographics, thus making it easier for a lay reader to understand the report. The government stated that it has incorporated public input into commitments number one, three, four, five, six, 16, 19, 20, and 21 (Government of Canada, ND-d). This comprises 41% of the 22 commitments of the resulting third NAP (Government of Canada, 2016). An IRM researcher confirmed that a lot of the feedback the government received was reflected in final commitments (Michael Karanicolas, independent expert).

Since this feedback about the government considering the public's suggestions for the NAP was aggregated in response to offline and online inputs, we cannot attribute this to i-voting only. Nevertheless, given that the majority of public input was provided via online channels, of which online idea generations and i-voting prevailed, it is reasonable to assume that i-voting plays a role in the resulting NAP. What we can state with confidence is that, by publishing its response to the public input, the government demonstrated accountability on the issue. Yet, this feedback was generic and not input-specific. As put by one informant: "When you have a broad consultation with a lot of people weighing in, then you hear a lot of things and you're

not going to detail every single thing that you heard from every single person" (Toby Mendel, civic activist).

Similarly, the IRM researcher found that "some stakeholders expressed skepticism toward the degree to which their input actually impacted the final action plan" (Karanicolas, 2018, p. 24). Indeed, it would have been even better practice to publish government responses to each individual submission. Still, the government's use of summaries by theme as justifications for their decisions constituted a basic form of accountability. Moreover, the public was able and did comment on the draft NAP by providing 233 comments (Government of Canada, ND-d). Therefore, Canada has reached the "involve" level of public influence on the contents of the action plan meaning that "the public could give feedback on how commitments were considered" (Karanicolas, 2018, 25). It is better than the lower "no consultation," "inform" and "consult" levels yet not as advanced as the higher "collaborate" and "empower" levels.

Policy Voting and Open Government in New Zealand

OGP cocreation advancement in New Zealand

During its nine-year OGP involvement, New Zealand has demonstrated a transformation in open government practice. New Zealand became a national member of OGP two years later than Canada—in 2013. By the end of 2022, it has designed and realized three NAPs (Open Government Partnership, ND-b). In relation specifically to cocreation, the New Zealand government's practice of interacting with the public for drafting OGP commitments has changed. It shifted from limited consultations in 2014 (Price, 2016) to wider consultations albeit with low engagement in 2016 (Booth, 2018) to more comprehensive consultations with higher public participation in 2018 (Booth, 2020).

However, these reports highlight the problem of excessive government power in drafting NAPs: shaping the plan overall in 2014, preferring individual over organizational inputs from the public in 2016, and the lack of interactive development of priority themes in 2018. Concerning the use of digital tools, New Zealand's government practiced online consultations throughout all three cocreation processes (Price, 2016; Booth, 2018; Booth, 2020). Still, this communication channel was used for collecting inputs only. A kind of voting was improvised in an offline format during the third NAP cocreation in 2018 (Booth, 2020). However, it was not effectively integrated into OGP policy drafting.

2018 open government pr-voting in New Zealand

In the New Zealand 2018 cocreation process, there was an offline narrow meeting of EAP and authorities with prevoting for draft OGP commitments. Prior to the multistakeholder synthesis workshop, there was a meeting between the civil society and government representatives that developed a list of draft policies to discuss at the workshop. As the minutes of the joint EAP-officials meeting of June 5, 2018, read, the participants of the meeting all received policy proposals prior. These were organized into themes, both irrelevant and relevant to open government, and ranked the latter seven themes with respective subthemes through a vote of top-three preferences. Furthermore, this decision was published on the OGP New Zealand website (Open Government Partnership New Zealand, 2018a).

2018 cocreation-related communication campaign in New Zealand

Communicating the outcomes of the above-mentioned prevoting for New Zealand's open government policies was problematic. The meeting occurred almost a month before the planned synthesis workshop. However, the formulated, voted, and ranked policy proposals were not sent to the workshop attendees. A workshop participant clearly stated that he did not receive draft commitments in advance (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist). Another workshop participant noted that there was no formal process set out in advance, there was no input into the synthesis workshop designed by participants, and draft commitments came as a surprise (Simon Wright, civic activist). Perhaps, this occurred because a week before the workshop the officials group (OG) meeting minutes indicated that the agenda and process for the workshop

were still being finalized by the State Services Commission (Open Government Partnership New Zealand, 2018b).

This might also be due to prolonged government publication practices. EAP minutes are formally approved before they are published; therefore, the minutes of the meeting do not appear until after the following meeting, which could be three months after the meeting to which the minutes relate (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist). He also noted that the OGP New Zealand website lacks an RSS feed, preventing website users from receiving instant RSS notifications about updates to the government's web pages on its Open Government Partnership work. As identified by an independent IRM researcher, since the proposals were not sent out in advance of the workshop, this prevented the delegates from properly preparing or consulting on the policy issues (Booth, 2020). This reflected the transparency and communication challenges of the New Zealand government. These were especially notable since the government did publish plenty of open government-related information, including MSF and OG meetings on its website (Open Government Partnership New Zealand, ND-a). Evidently, the New Zealand government's communication policy and the transparency in relation to the open government were inconsistent.

Such an approach to informing the public about the draft policies went contrary to an earlier campaign on social media aimed to engage the public for prior offline workshops and to provide input to the draft NAP. The IRM researcher identified the government's active promotion of public engagement on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn (Booth, 2020). Indeed, during April–May 2018, the New Zealand OGP Facebook page (OpenGovNZ) published eight posts, while the New Zealand OGP Twitter account (@ogpnz) tweeted five tweets, containing an invitation to participate in offline workshops and submit proposals on a website (Open Government Partnership New Zealand, ND-b). Engagement with the audience was not high (a maximum of six "likes," one comment, and six "shares" of a Facebook post and a maximum of 16 "'likes," one comment, and 13 "retweets" of a tweet). As an EAP member contemplated: "Public sector organizations were not that effective at using databases and any kind of social media to genuinely engage with an audience" (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). Nevertheless, prepublishing prospective draft commitments on social media for voting would have increased the transparency of the cocreation process and the quality of deliberation at the workshop.

2018 open government policy voting format in New Zealand

The consecutive synthesis workshop was held with a multistakeholder audience. The exact number of participants is unclear. But it is most likely that the audience consisted of roughly half civil servants and half civil society (Keitha Booth, independent expert). As observed by the workshop participant from the EAP, although there were attempts to involve people outside of Wellington, travel and participation were too time-costly to them, so the event mostly accommodated Wellington-based participants (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). A synthesis workshop participant assumed that OGP New Zealand did not cover either travel or accommodation costs of the attendees of the synthesis workshop in Wellington, which raised questions about the representativeness of civil society participants from other parts of New Zealand (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist). Therefore, a further challenge concerned inclusivity and representatives, given the purported difficulty of involving participants based beyond the capital, which accounts for only about 422,000 of New Zealand's 5 million inhabitants.

The public voting for open government priorities for New Zealand was conducted as an offline multistakeholder exercise during an in-person synthesis workshop on July 2, 2018. As a workshop participant recalled, the structure of the workshop was comprised of small group discussions, talking about values and goals that OGP might help deliver or embody, and an ad hoc voting for 15 proposals from the government (Simon Wright, civic activist). An independent IRM researcher reported that the voting occurred as three multiple-choice

options per person among draft policy commitments put forward by the government as a collated essence of the earlier discussed 449 proposals (Booth, 2020); although, in practice, one person was able to put three votes to one proposal (Keitha Booth, independent expert). This shows that the voting procedure was inconsistent.

As a workshop participant from the civil society described the voting process, there were presentations of proposals from government agencies followed by putting some sticky labels on Flipchart paper with no further opportunity to hold the pen or draft the wording of the commitments themselves (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist). A member of the EAP had another perspective. She explained that the choice of commitments rested with government agencies willing to deliver them, so the agencies proposed the commitment list to civil society representatives, who had a voice in commenting and prioritizing policy choices (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist).

However, the IRM researcher stressed that the one-day session did not provide enough time to discuss the officials' proposals, and other priorities, or to codevelop commitments together with civil society (Booth, 2020). Such policy drafting and voting design indeed were problematic in terms of a procedural power imbalance, where government representatives controlled agenda setting, drafting, voting, counting, and decision-making process, while civil society delegates had little influence. A workshop participant described the process as follows: "From a position of power dynamics, all the power was with the officials, and no power was held by civil society" (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist).

Document-evidenced pattern of the 2018 cocreation in New Zealand

The 2018 public multistakeholder voting for New Zealand's open government policy priorities had only a marginal, poorly documented, and communicated role in the final NAP. According to a workshop participant, the proposals with the highest number of "sticky note" votes were deemed to be not the final commitments, but the foci of attention for developing fully formed commitments (Simon Wright, civic activist). So, by design, the government used this voting as a nonbinding prioritization exercise, loosely connected with further policy drafting and decision-making. Still, as recalled by an EAP member, one civil society concept got prioritized, discussed by a government agency, and resourced with a budget and civil servants, but that represented only one exemplar case (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). Another workshop participant also noted that all the proposals were merely business as usual, done from standards, and not transformative in terms of transparency, participation, and accountability (Simon Wright, civic activist).

Thus, voting alone was not able to raise the ambition of policy proposals. As highlighted by the IRM researcher, after the synthesis workshop, delegates and members of the public had no further involvement in developing and finalizing the commitments beyond receiving advice to comment on the draft action plan after its publication (Booth, 2020). One participant noted the potential rationale for this: To get a policy approved by the government, it is formulated carefully and cautiously to get the approval of the Cabinet of New Zealand (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). Still, drafting a policy proposal appealing to the government can be performed together with civil society. Furthermore, the results of the voting at the synthesis workshop were not properly documented, i.e., these statistics were not found in any report. This highlights the challenge of government transparency in this respect. After the voting at the synthesis workshop, New Zealand officials finalized the prioritized proposals, the EAP reviewed them, and the government reviewed and approved them (Booth, 2020). This indicates that some civil society representatives and members of the MSF had a degree of shaping the contents of the NAP, but the ultimate decision-making power was with the government.

The criteria for prioritizing open government policy commitments after the synthesis workshop that were included in the final NAP were not clearly communicated. An EAP

member confirmed that outreach and ongoing monitoring of impact were missing elements (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). The insufficient reporting about the voting process, outcomes, and their consideration undermined the New Zealand government's transparency and accountability as values of the OGP cocreation process. Therefore, IRM researcher evaluated New Zealand's level of public influence on the NAP as "involve," indicating that "the public could give feedback on how commitments were considered" (Booth, 2020, p. 12).

Expert-evaluated pattern of the 2018 cocreation in New Zealand

The voting for open government policy proposals at the synthesis workshop only resonated with the conciliation of civil society, which had been dissatisfied with the government's attitude toward interaction with civil society, reflected in the workshop design. Clearly, there was a mismatch of expectations regarding the cocreation process at the synthesis workshop between the authorities and civil society. According to an independent researcher, civil society participants of the synthesis workshop had expected to receive submissions ahead of the workshop and to contribute actively during the day (Keitha Booth, independent expert). As assessed by a workshop attendee, civil society got pretty upset, even angry, because the civil servants were not involved in the earlier cocreation process, were not listening to the concerns raised by the civil society, and were putting forward proposals disconnected from prior policy discussions (Simon Wright, civic activist).

Yet, he admitted that the voting exercise was aimed at placating the voters, since this idea looked like a way of handing power back to the civil society people. Another workshop participant confirmed that civil society delegates were angry at the representatives of the government department leading the OGP plan development for taking them by surprise at the workshop with the policy proposals put forward by authorities and for being involved in a process not meeting the cocreation requirements of the OGP (Andrew Ecclestone, civic activist). He labeled this approach to open government action plan development by New Zealand public officials as "performative cocreation, not real cocreation." He was referring to the concept of performative democracy (Matynia, 2016). An independent researcher also assessed that the workshop process did not meet cocreation and participation standards (Keitha Booth, independent expert).

Only one informant from the EAP evaluated the quality of workshop facilitation as "impressive" and assessed the workshop process as democratic, where every comment was taken seriously, enlisted, and fed into the plot (Dame Suzanne Snively, civic activist). She emphasized that one jointly developed commitment to publishing legislation was an example of a "good cocreation between civil society, the public sector, the EAP, and the agency organizing it." However, this individual perception goes contrary to the concerted voice of other interviewees and sources that the synthesis workshop with the voting for open government draft policies was badly prepared and conducted in terms of cooperation between the government and civil society.

Conclusion and Discussion

Although the generic level of public participation during the NAP development in both countries gained the same "involve" level, the particular voting for open government policy proposals in Canada and New Zealand demonstrated several profound differences and diverging patterns of open government in the aspects of transparency, accountability, participation, and civic education.

In Canada, i-voting for draft open government policy proposals was introduced at the early ideation phase lasting sufficient time. It was well integrated into the wider public online crowdsourcing and discussion that the Canadian government thoroughly reviewed and provided feedback upon. The government invested some effort into ensuring online civic education on open government-related themes. Then, the public was given the opportunity to voice their ideas, deliberate, and vote for policy proposals online. The online format of e-

consultations and i-voting combined with regional in-person workshops created an opportunity for greater inclusivity. Afterward, the government provided a detailed report on the cocreation process and its overall rationale in accepting or rejecting policy inputs for the final NAP. Due to its transparent, engaging, and accountable design, the Canadian cocreation i-voting facilitated the deliberation process and accorded with the final government policy commitments.

In New Zealand, the voting for open government policy priorities was in-person. During the prevoting, a narrow circle of civil society and government members grouped and prioritized policy proposals. This meeting was planned, structured, and documented but poorly communicated. At the public voting, a wider circle of representatives voted on the draft policies. However, the voting was an impromptu exercise, with little time to deliberate, and unclear review procedures and outcomes neither properly documented nor communicated by the government. The voting at the workshop was associated with some reconciling; nevertheless, participants were disappointed with the government's overall irresponsiveness to civil society. Besides, holding the underfunded offline workshop with voting for policy priorities in the capital cut off stakeholders from other regions, for instance, from Auckland, the country's largest city, which hosts around one-third of the population of New Zealand. Because of these questionable procedures and practices, New Zealand voting hardly facilitated any progressive government's policies and practices of collaboration with civil society.

Despite the above-mentioned differences, Canada and New Zealand's voting processes and their roles in open government share some similarities. Both governments conducted communication campaigns on their websites and social media, which received low engagement from their respective audiences. In the deliberation workshops of both countries, governments were overrepresented at deliberation workshops with civil society and were overly controlling the cocreation process, allowing only nonbinding consultative voting to prioritize draft policy proposals. Both governments lacked clearly formulated and communicated criteria and transparent procedures for finalizing open government policy commitments. Governments in both countries were also missing accountability in the form of published feedback to individual draft policy submissions. Probably, in part due to these shortcomings, NAP development processes in Canada and New Zealand were located at similar relatively low "involve" levels of public participation.

Evidently, it was neither the voting format (online versus offline) nor the generic representative democratic practices per se that predefined policy outcomes for the open government. It was the government's approach to procedural transparency, audience outreach, communication with stakeholders, delegating part of decision-making power, and accountability that mattered for the voting in particular and public consultation in general. More specifically, this relates to the political culture of the particular government agency responsible for the cocreation process. It is hardly reflected in any systematic international research and is difficult to measure. Yet, we can find the indications of such an approach revealed by country experts and manifest in the cocreation procedures and outcomes.

In order to have a genuinely engaging, empowering, and collaborative process of joint public-government policymaking, it should be designed and implemented together by all stakeholder groups from the very beginning, made consensus-based, and properly communicated. This requires regular communication among stakeholders, which establishes relationships, builds trust, and makes participatory government fruitful. To avoid erosion when individuals leave the process, once created, such practices should be institutionalized in respective process guidelines and formal procedural regulations. Potentially, such an approach could be reproduced in other countries under diverse political settings with at least basic democratic institutions. Furthermore, such cocreation can be scaled up beyond OGP to other policies, aimed at increasing its government transparency, accountability, and civic engagement.

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Understanding Nonprofit Work: A Communication Perspective, by Matthew Koschmann and Matthew Sanders

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Understanding Nonprofit Work: A Communication Perspective is an essential read for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers who are interested in the *doing* or *practice* of the nonprofit beyond the more abstract economic sector or discrete organization(s) that take on the nonprofit label. Matthew Koschmann and Matthew Sanders (2020) draw on their extensive research and the growing body of scholarship on communication and nonprofit organizations to advocate for a distinct communication perspective on nonprofit work as a new lens to examine everyday nonprofit practices and problems and to provide a way of "thinking communicatively," which can create positive, productive, and impactful outcomes in nonprofit work (p. ix).

Koschmann and Sanders (2020) begin by reviewing the dominant social understanding of communication as transmission, i.e., a process of functional or goal-oriented exchange of information between senders and receivers through channels, subject to noise and feedback loops (see Shannon & Weaver, 1998). A transmission perspective posits nonprofit organizations as a container and communication as flows of information within and from the container. However, the authors note significant critiques of the transmission model, including its inability to account for the complexities of and realities of dynamic meaning-making through human interaction. Communication is "not just about transmitting already-formed data between senders and receivers but rather is a complex process of continually producing and negotiating the meanings and interpretations that shape our lives" (Koschmann & Sanders, 2020, p. 8).

Drawing on what Craig (1999) and Deetz (1994) call a constitutive approach to communication, Koschmann and Sanders (2020) advocate instead for a social construction understanding of communication, i.e., we constitute, rather than simply express, our social realities in communicative interactions with others. Rather than asking what things "are," a communication perspective asks how things are created through communication, how they are sustained or transformed through interaction, whose interests and identities are represented, and what kinds of actions might be supported or constrained through that interaction. In other words, what makes something a nonprofit are the specific communication processes, practices, and procedures that set them apart from other collections of people. By viewing nonprofits not as

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things but as assemblages of interactions, Koschmann and Sanders (2020) argue that we can better understand how things come to be in organizations, enabling us to think more creatively about what we could do and who we could become in nonprofit practice.

In the subsequent five chapters, Koschmann and Sanders (2020) author alternating chapters, demonstrating what it can mean to "think communicatively" on several core nonprofit issues. In Chapter 2, Koschmann (2020) takes a communication perspective on the topics of nonprofit leadership, management, and governance (L-M-G) to expose a number of popular but unhelpful assumptions that portray leadership, management, and governance as mental, individual, positional, mechanistic, and situational. The communication perspective instead emphasizes social processes over personal cognition, hybrid agency over individualism, and a nexus of relationships, living systems, and socially constructed situations over abstract, mechanistic, or objective circumstances (see Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). A communication perspective asks what we do with other people, not what we do to them. Because nonprofits are primarily relational, the communication perspective provides a practical template for practitioners to use questions to build relationships and foster more meaningful L-M-G in nonprofit organizations.

In Chapter 3, Sanders (2020) examines how a communication perspective can help understand and manage the tensions that nonprofits face as mission-driven organizations in a market economy. Conventional wisdom positions nonprofits as needing to be more business-like in order to be successful (Bush, 1992). Yet, as they raise, make, and spend money in pursuit of their missions, nonprofit organizations must do so in ways that meet the expectations not only of those they serve but also of donors, employees, volunteers, governments, and the public, thus balancing often competing expectations of frugality and excess, overhead and charity, immediate needs, and long-term growth. But while an economic understanding of the nonprofit might posit that nonprofits can either act like businesses (and prioritize market ideology) or not (prioritizing ideals of justice, fairness, equality, or the common good), a communication perspective reveals that this dichotomy is a social construction, and that nonprofits can sustain a more nuanced understanding of nonprofit work as mission and market in practice through ongoing interactions.

In Chapter 4, Koschmann (2020) recognizes the centrality of collaboration as a key organizing strategy of the nonprofit and the not insignificant challenges that emerge from trying to build meaningful and effective collaborations across disparate partners. A communication perspective recognizes that collaboration and communication are inseparable. Collaborations emerge and exist in the ongoing interactions and decisions of various stakeholders, and collaborations only persist so long as the communication/interaction continue. As a result, Koschmann (2020) proposes the term "collaborcation" (drawing on Laurie Lewis, 2006) to center the role of communication in nonprofit collaboration. Collaboration typically presents many difficult challenges for nonprofits, especially in terms of exercising authority, developing a shared identity, taking meaningful action, and achieving meaningful effectiveness. Applying a communication perspective, however, explains that effective collaboration is the ability to exert influence in such a way that leads to the existence of a social entity that has the capacity to act and make a difference. Thinking "collabrocatively" foregrounds how people interact in and through collaborative work and how the outcomes of those interactions shape, enable, and constrain future interactions and outcomes.

In Chapter 5, Sanders (2020) focuses on the construction of meaningful work (see Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, & Lair, 2008). Many nonprofits face challenges in recruiting and retaining employees and volunteers. Without the typical market-rate compensation tools employed by the for-profit sector, nonprofits typically encourage participation through mission and purpose. Sanders (2020) argues that, in contrast with economic, managerial, and psychological perspectives that fail to

fully explain the meanings of nonprofit work, a communication perspective demonstrates that meaning isn't in the work itself but rather it exists in discourses, i.e., ways people talk about work that imbues work with meaning. In particular, a communication perspective foregrounds practices that foster memorable messages, associate organizational and personal identities, and connect work practices to organization mission to build a discourse of meaningful work while also recognizing the ethical implications of how the meaningfulness of work may be used to enable problematic practices or environments in some nonprofit contexts.

Finally, Koschmann (2020) applies the communication perspective to international nonprofit work in Chapter 6. While international nonprofit work experiences many of the same challenges and opportunities as nonprofit work in domestic contexts, international nonprofit work faces additional tensions surrounding language and terminology, knowledge and knowing, and religion and financial arrangements. Koschmann (2020) highlights how each tension has a substantial impact on how people communicate in international nonprofit contexts but also simultaneously are shaped and changed by those same communication processes. Close attention to these relational realities can lead to more successful communication outcomes. As Koschmann (2020) practically concludes, "How you understand communication in these situations could make all the difference, i.e., what it is you think you're doing when you communicate and what you think communication is accomplishing will have direct impacts on the successes of your projects and the quality of your relationships" (p. 157–8).

Koschmann and Sanders' (2020) book is essential reading for anyone interested in nonprofit organizing far beyond the communication discipline, including practitioners, students and scholars in management, business, development, political science, public policy, and nonprofit affairs. Koschmann and Sanders (2020) challenge readers to consider how communicative thinking enhances our understanding not only of what it means to do nonprofit work but ultimately of what it means to be a nonprofit. The transmission model of communication is inadequate in a complicated world in which relationships and meanings are constantly negotiated in interaction. Thinking communicatively may not lend itself to straightforward prescriptions for how to communicate in nonprofits, but Koschmann and Sanders (2020) demonstrate that those simplistic injunctions often fail to produce meaningful results in the face of the real world's complexities anyway. Instead, a communication perspective invites us to "consider what we are making together in our communication with other people" (Koschmann & Sanders, 2020, p. 161). This also provides a new way of understanding the nonprofit—not simply as not-business or not-government but as a unique organizational form dedicated to creating and shaping a better world through interactions with other people. Such an understanding provides nonprofit scholars, policymakers, and practitioners both agency and responsibility for how nonprofits envision and communicatively create the common good.

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