Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership 2018, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 254–276
https://doi.org/10.18666/JNEL-2018-V8-I3-8291

Perceptions of Nonprofits and For-Profit Social Enterprises: Current Trends and Future Implications

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Abstract

Nonprofits and for-profits use the term *entrepreneurial* to describe the mind-sets, behaviors, and strategies they employ to achieve organizational goals. Relatively little analysis has been conducted about public perception of the differences between nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and for-profit social enterprises (FPSEs) and how these perceptions influence the behavior of potential investors, donors, employees, and volunteers. This study explores how Gen Z respondents (those born in the early 1990s) perceive NPOs and FPSEs along multiple dimensions, including values, motivations, and organizational culture. Overall, Gen Z young people perceive NPOs and FPSEs as having distinct orientations to expressive roles (values and social welfare goals) and affiliative roles (inclusive community engagement), but perceive NPOs and FPSEs as more likely to have overlapping approaches to instrumental roles (getting the work done). Our results identify some perceptions that align with a priori assumptions, as well as views that indicate new ideas about the NPO and FPSE sectors. These results have implications for leaders of all types of organizations, but especially for leaders of FPSEs who may seek to assert their expressive and affiliative similarities with their nonprofit peers.

Keywords: *nonprofit organization; for-profit social enterprise; public perception; future leaders*

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Public perceptions of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and for-profit social enterprises (FPSEs), and the distinctions between them, have implications for theory, policy, and practice. As Jones and Donmoyer (2015) noted, "Just as there are many roads to Rome, there are many ways to accomplish the goals of the third sector" (p. 13). These "roads" to address social problems may spur innovation, but may also create competition for philanthropic resources. A donor, volunteer, or government agency seeking to support specific objectives may rely on popular perceptions of NPOs and FPSEs when making resource-sharing decisions, rating one sector over another in terms of effectiveness, probity, and stewardship of funds. Past research has explored theories that highlight the differences among sectors, but less is known about whether those distinctions are also perceived as important to the public that interacts with these organizations.

Andersson and Self (2015) demonstrated that nonprofit activities described as "entrepreneurial" are perceived favorably; our research expands such inquiries, examining how perceptions of NPOs and FPSEs compare across key organizational dimensions. We explore how Generation Z (Gen Z), individuals born in the mid-1990s to mid-2000s, perceive NPOs and FPSEs in terms of values, motivations, effectiveness, and organizational culture. We organize these dimensions under the principle roles of NPOs in society including affiliative, expressive, and instrumental (Clerkin et al., 2014). Our study focuses on how Gen Z perceives the NPO and FPSE sectors, with an exploratory emphasis on understanding opinions and viewpoints about how the sectors may be perceived similarly. Three questions guided our analysis:

- In what ways does Gen Z see NPOs and FPSEs having similar characteristics?
- In what ways does Gen Z see NPOs and FPSEs being distinct from each other?
- Does Gen Z perceive that NPOs maintain a unique niche in serving in their traditional affiliative and expressive roles?

Gen Z individuals constitute a generational cohort with several unique characteristics, including having used the Internet since a young age, and they are usually thought to be comfortable with technology and with interacting on social media. Some marketing sources have also suggested that growing up through the Great Recession has given this generation a feeling of unsettlement and insecurity (Patel, 2017). Additionally, Gen Z is 55% more likely than millennials to want to start a business, which can be tied back to general traits of independence and desire for financial success (Patel, 2017).

To date, little research has been conducted on Gen Z's interests and motivations toward future careers and engagement with NPOs or FPSEs. As such, we investigated whether past perception about nonprofits and for-profits remain relevant for Gen Z, or if other assumptions have been eclipsed by new perspectives of the sectors. Our results indicate that, overall, Gen Z individuals perceive NPOs and FPSEs as having distinct orientations to expressive and affiliative roles, but perceive NPOs and FPSEs as more likely to have overlapping approaches in their instrumental roles.

We first outline research on the societal roles of NPOs and describe the consensus emerging from multiple definitions of FPSEs. We then identify and explore three key drivers of the blurring of sector distinctions: NPOs adopting business strategies, the ascendance of entrepreneurship, and the emergence of for-profits adopting philanthropic strategies, such as socially oriented corporate missions and values statements. We also discuss the relevance and implications of Gen Z's perceptions of sector distinctions.

Theoretical Background

Dimensions of "Nonprofitness"

Attempting to describe the organizational culture of nonprofits can undervalue much of the richness and variance within the NPO sector that is loosely defined by tax status. For example, a large multinational advocacy organization such as Amnesty International, a local service organization such as Meals on Wheels of Tampa, and a trade group such as the National Beer Wholesalers Association are all a part of the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits differ from each other, yet to some degree, all NPOs occupy three distinct roles in society—instrumental, expressive, and affiliative (Clerkin, Penbrooke, Riester, Sudweeks, & Walton, 2014)—that are often in tension with each other; the more nonprofits work to fill one role, the more difficult it often becomes to fill the other roles. The instrumental role encompasses an NPO's measurable implementation tasks, very much the "doing" part of nonprofits that includes services rendered, policies advocated, research completed, or members' interests represented. The expressive role of an NPO enables its supporters to develop and express the values and purpose of the organization. This is the core mission of why the nonprofit exists and how it chooses to operate. The affiliative role focuses on the community-building aspects of NPOs and, in an American context, is a fundamental outgrowth of First Amendment freedom of association rights. Our discussion of the affiliative role focuses on the contribution that the nonprofit organization makes to society and does not refer to Goleman's (2000, 2001) discussion of the affiliative leadership style. In this role, nonprofits are the cauldron of citizenship and social capital development where people develop skills and behaviors to engage successfully in the public sphere.

NPOs may experience uncertainty regarding their niche, role, or distinction from government and FPSEs. This struggle can be attributed to the fact that "nonprofit organizations not only operate in ways similar to the market because they are private and independent, but also operate in ways similar to the state because they must contribute to the common good" (Sanders, 2012, p. 181). NPOs often must reconcile the needs of large donors while considering how to remain competitive for government funding (Heutel, 2014).

Dimensions of For-Profit Social Enterprises

Social enterprises have attracted the attention of practitioners, scholars, and policy makers because these organizations play a key role in delivering public services and create effective strategies for citizen support (Lyon & Sepulveda, 2009; Mair & Marti, 2006). Scholars have posited several definitions for social enterprises over the years, but they have struggled to settle on one all-encompassing characterization. Jones and Donmoyer (2015) offer a legal definition that classifies social enterprises as 501(c)(3) nonprofits, for-profit organizations, or cross-sectorial partnerships that may include government participation. Dacin, Dacin, and Matear (2010) provide an extensive collection of definitions for social enterprise including the Schwab Foundation's definition for a social enterprise as "an organization that achieves large scale systemic and sustainable social change through a new invention, a different approach, a more rigorous application of known technologies or strategies, or a combination of these" (p. 40). Haugh (2006) defines social enterprise as a collective term that encompasses a range of organizations that trade for a social purpose, and Katz and Page (2010) define social

enterprise more specifically as privately owned organizations using business methods and forms to improve society.

A common thread among these perspectives on social enterprise involves achieving "economic, social, and environmental value by trading for a social purpose" (Haugh, 2012, p. ?). Social enterprises tackle issues that will benefit society, can be either nonprofit or for-profit, and typically operate a revenue-generating business. FPSE's earned income allows them to flexibly allocate resources to mission priorities while remaining unencumbered by donor restrictions (Katz & Page, 2010). FPSEs are described, many times, as nonprofit in duty, but for-profit in their approach (Katz & Page, 2010). Social enterprises may also differ from a traditional nonprofit organization in terms of strategy, structure, norms, and values (Dacin et al., 2010).

Some research also identifies differences in outside perceptions of nonprofits versus for-profits. These perceptions may arise from work practices within each type of organization that fosters behavioral patterns reflecting warmth (NPOs) versus competence (FPSEs; Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010). Other research on promotion practices suggests that for-profit executives are often promoted because they have shown competence and managerial skill, whereas executives in nonprofits are promoted because they have shown commitment to the social good of the organization (Moret, 2004). Additionally, FPSEs may have a greater focus on bottom line metrics (e.g., operating efficiency and cost) than NPOs do (Blizzard, 2002). Securing sufficient funding is also crucial to the creation, development, and growth of new organizations, with FPSEs often turning to venture or angel investors for start-up capital (Mason & Harrison, 1995, 1997).

Sector Boundaries

Profit maximization, the bottom line goal of for-profit enterprises, is often in conflict with social goals and public values. These goals are the mission of NPOs, which are permitted to earn excess revenue over expenses, but forbidden from distributing the surplus to investors, which limits their financial flexibility. Many scholars consider social enterprises to be "hybrids" that aim to balance prosocial behavior and efficiency. As such, sometimes these social enterprises push against the failure of profit maximization to align with the public interest, by employing decision makers who may directly ignore price signals (Besley & Ghatak, 2017). These hybrid organizations may look remarkably like for-profit enterprises and nonprofits. As FPSEs have gained attention, some nonprofits have employed "tactical mimicry," dressing themselves in the language of and adopting some tools of FPSEs to gain resources (Calvo & Morales, 2016; Dey &Teasdale, 2016). The ability to quickly identify an FPSE versus an NPO may only be afforded to those who have access to organizational records or legal documents. Three key trends have contributed to a blurring of distinctions between the sectors: resource competition forcing NPOs to focus on their instrumental role, praise of entrepreneurship as a necessary reform to management of mission-driven organizations, and the incorporation (or co-optation) of philanthropic strategies into the commercial activities of for-profit organizations.

For many years, discussions of the definitions and the sustainability of the nonprofit sector rarely referenced the term *entrepreneurship*. Now, nonprofits and for-profits use the term to describe their missions, programs, and social impacts. Responding to external pressures and resource competition, nonprofits have increasingly focused on

their instrumental role, including the commercialization of core programs, increasing service contract agreements and/or fee-based services, and forming new commercial partnerships (Dees, 1998). Past research defines the concept of a "socially entrepreneurial nonprofit" in various ways. Some describe these nonprofits as being proactive and willing to take risks, challenge norms, and introduce novel ideas and solutions to enhance mission and sustainability (Giraud Voss, Voss, & Moorman, 2005; Morris, Webb, & Franklin, 2011; Pearce, John, Fritz, & Davis, 2010; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). Other research emphasizes commercial activities that generate earned income and the use of business tools and mind-sets in managing nonprofit agencies (Boschee, 2006; Brinckerhoff, 2000). Many scholars, practitioners, and policy makers promote social entrepreneurship as a way for nonprofit organizations to be more effective (Andersson & Self, 2015). As a result, social entrepreneurship and the need to be more entrepreneurial has become a best practice for nonprofits to solve social issues, survive in a competitive marketplace, and generate social impact (Andersson, 2012; Dart, 2004; Edwards & Pinckney-Edwards, 2008).

Although some research takes the view that nonprofits need to become more entrepreneurial to become more effective (Boschee, 2006; Brinckerhoff, 2000; Eikenberry, 2009; Weerawardena, McDonald, & Mort, 2010), other research focuses on the fashionable but unproven nature of social entrepreneurship in any sector. Mair (2011) calls social entrepreneurship "trendy" and further adds that "the catalyzing force behind the momentum on social entrepreneurship" is not academic inquiry but "elite endorsement" from the practitioner world (p. 15), including policy makers, foundations, business philanthropists, and celebrities. Andersson (2012) also argues that social entrepreneurship has become "an object of desire—more important for what it symbolizes than for its substance and applicability to nonprofits" (para. 6). Lindgren and Packendorff (2009) note that researchers seldom explicitly discuss or examin the basic assumptions and other taken-for-granted views of entrepreneurship. Parker (2005) argues that people have become "accustomed to regard entrepreneurship as always unambiguously a 'good thing'" (p. 6). Andersson and Self (2015) also suggest that a general psychological bias may be favoring the rhetoric of social entrepreneurship and that this bias is independent of the content of behaviors, practices, or approaches. Their recent experiment illustrates how a nonprofit strategic option that mentioned concepts related to social entrepreneurship was perceived as more effective than an identical strategic option that did not mention such concepts (Andersson & Self, 2015). Dey (2006) also notes that social entrepreneurship is frequently portrayed as an "unequivocally positive" phenomenon (p. 121). These scholars highlight the need for continued research on how this social construction of social entrepreneurship affects perceptions held by the general public and by those who work and lead nonprofit organizations.

Although the discussion of social entrepreneurship focuses on NPOs that adopt strategies from the for-profit toolkit, many for-profits also adopt strategies and territory typically associated with nonprofits. In some cases, NPOs have created markets for goods and services that have attracted for-profit capital. The creation of these markets contributes to growing ambiguity in the distinctions between sectors as the values and tools from each sector are shared across boundaries. These "fuzzy boundaries" may lead to innovation among both sectors; indeed, a 2014 article in a business trade press explains "Why You Should Run Your Business Like a Non-Profit" (Ehrenkrantz,

2014). Such practices involve FPSEs increasing employee engagement through organizational cultures that build community, autonomy, and purpose into the employee experience—aspects of the affiliative role of nonprofits.

Scholars discuss differences between government, for-profits, and NPOs along multiple domains, such as leadership, organizational culture, financing, entrepreneurship, and innovation (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). This study examines the differences between FPSEs and NPOs in terms of roles that have traditionally been assigned to NPOs: affiliative, expressive, and instrumental. We believe that FPSEs do not necessarily have a different set of roles that they inhabit, but a different level of complexity in balancing the expressive and instrumental roles to maintain commitments to social values and profitability.

For-profits enact the expressive role of nonprofits through corporate values statements and, in some ways, the adoption of triple bottom line accounting practices. Elkington (1997) argues that social welfare (people), environmental preservation (planet), and profit can coexist as ultimate organizational goals, and outlines the practices to achieve them. Ehrenkrantz (2014) suggests that successful and profitable for-profit organizations identify a philanthropic mission as the ultimate goal of their commercial endeavors, creating a value proposition that "downplays money or doesn't even mention it" (para. 4). He cites the petroleum company Anadarko as a positive example, quoting its mission to "deliver a competitive and sustainable rate of return to shareholders by developing, acquiring and exploring for oil and natural gas resources vital to the world's health and welfare" (para. 5). Ehrenkrantz fails to mention, though, that Anadarko was a minority owner of the Deepwater Horizon oil platform whose explosion in 2010 caused the biggest offshore oil spill in U.S. history. Anadarko paid $4 billion to BP to settle damage claims and owed $159.5 million in fines to the U.S. government for Clean Water Act violations, yet claimed that Anadarko was not culpable in causing the spill (Fisk & Calkins, 2015).

FPSEs that strategically adopt nonprofit status to achieve philanthropic goals would likely take pains to distinguish themselves from for-profit corporations that adopt community-minded values and mission statements as window-dressing for business as usual. In part, this study wants to determine how successful FPSEs are in communicating the importance of their social missions and how the public perceives this in relation to their pursuit of financial goals. If FPSEs are, as a sector, perceived as primarily profit-driven, then the social mission may suffer. Consumers and investors may note added value in supporting NPOs over other for-profit competitors. If, however, FPSEs are understood primarily as expressive of social and democratic values, with profit as a means rather than an end, NPOs may be facing stiffer competition for resources. Nee (2015) argues that a loss of distinction between sectors leads to domination by a singular set of values, which may jeopardize long-term societal health and stability. This blurring exists because FPSEs seek to adopt the expressive role by reflecting public values and social goals. They do not have a different set of roles from NPOs, but by attempting to create social value in a for-profit framework, they face the difficult task of balancing commitments to their expressive and instrumental roles. If they are successful in doing so, they provide greater competition for NPOs.

In the context of this study, the perceptions of Gen Z individuals are particularly important as they assume greater levels of responsibility and influence in civic and pro-

fessional spheres. The baby boomers, typically defined as those born between 1940 and about 1965, were the largest generation of workers, and organizations were expected to adjust to the mainstream group and its needs in the workplace (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Wesner & Miller, 2008). Gen Z individuals who are just now exiting high school and undergraduate institutions will soon fill the occupations that baby boomers leave open (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Gen Z's perceptions of NPOs and FPSEs could affect their willingness to engage with these organizations as volunteers, donors, and employees.

Gen Z is just now being more clearly defined, with most discussions taking place within marketing and business research. Indeed, there are many interpretations of what Gen Z wants and how they engage with their communities (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017). In general, as outlined in a recent *Forbes* article (Patel, 2017), Gen Z is more pragmatic and motivated by job security. Gen Z has also been defined by its competitiveness, need for independence, and entrepreneurial spirit. Generally, Gen Z individuals are also technologically savvy, able to multitask, and comfortable as digital natives, able to flip between programs, platforms, and data interfaces. Gen Z individuals, despite being immersed in devices and technology, also crave face-to-face interaction (Patel, 2017). With these perceptions of the for-profit sector, and if businesses are successfully satisfying the expressive and affiliative needs of Gen Z, do NPOs face an existential crisis? Or do NPOs remain relevant to Gen Z, occupying a distinct and valuable niche?

Method

Sample Development

While exploring the differing perceptions of NPOs and FPSEs, we wanted to understand distinctions specific to Gen Z. We distributed our survey to a group of Gen Z individuals enrolled in multiple sections of the same undergraduate political science course. The sample included 112 individuals, 105 of whom responded, resulting in a 94% response rate. Our sample was predominantly respondents in the 17- to 20-year-old age group, 52% male and 46% female. Additionally, 48% of the respondents were majors in humanities and social sciences. Because we were specifically interested in how the perceptions of Gen Z may differ from those of previous generational groups, this sample was appropriate to capture the unique opinions of Gen Z. Generational groups comprise individuals who share historical or social life experiences that can develop a group's personality (Smola & Sutton, 2002), and this personality will be important for NPOs to understand while they work to attract new employees and supporters. Also, the personality a generation adopts can affect their feelings toward authority and organizations, what they desire to gain from work, and how they plan to satisfy those desires (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Table 1 illustrates how members of our sample may have engaged or interacted with nonprofits in the past. Given the limited research on the perceptions of Gen Z, we offer these descriptive statistics as a baseline understanding for our sample's knowledge of and commitment via volunteering with and donating to nonprofit organizations. As demonstrated in Table 1, only 6% of our sample has never personally volunteered with or donated to a nonprofit organization. Nearly 35% of our respondents have personally volunteered or donated monthly.

Table 1

Sample Volunteering or Donating Frequency

Frequency	Individual volunteers or donates %	Family volunteers or donates %	Friends volunteer or donate %
Weekly	10	13	11
Monthly	35	31	32
Yearly	49	38	42
Never	6	18	15

Survey Development

To critically examine Gen Z's perceptions of organizational attributes, in this survey we used side-by-side comparisons of NPOs and FPSEs. Question matrices were formatted so that respondents could differentiate how both types of organizations internalize specific dimensions, including use of data and technology, innovation, effectiveness, and organizational culture. Our analysis specifically focuses on understanding perceptions regarding the affiliative, expressive, and instrumental roles of NPOs and FPSEs. For analysis purposes, we associated survey item grouping titles with the affiliative, expressive, and instrumental roles. For example, some of the categories included goals and purpose; data and new technologies; innovation, strategy, and impact; corporate and community responsibility; financial resources; democratic processes; independence and courage; and employee attributes. Table 1 shows which survey categories were associated with each nonprofit role aspect. Within each dimension, respondents could answer survey statements using four answer choices including *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *do not know*. Table 2 lists summary statistics of the survey questions. The table lists the number of respondents for each question and the average response for that question regarding the statement describing an NPO or FPSE. A *never* response was coded as 1, a *sometimes* response as 2, and an *often* response as 3. If a respondent answered *do not know*, that response was dropped from the analysis.

Table 2

Summary Statistics

Role aspect	Survey question	NPO				FPSE			
		N	*M*	Min	Max	*N*	*M*	Min	Max
	Instrumental Role Aspects								
Professional Culture	Programs are delivered primarily by volunteers	91	2.75	2	3	88	1.64	1	3
	Employees earn incomes at or above fair market wages	86	1.98	1	3	85	2.57	1	3
	Is a great place for people of color to work	81	2.64	1	3	74	2.29	1	3
	Is a great place for young professionals to work	89	2.57	1	3	87	2.50	1	3
Economic Motives	Maximizing profits is their primary goal	101	1.66	1	3	96	2.85	1	3
	Prioritizes economic over social return on investment	95	1.78	1	3	93	2.78	1	3
	Spends money wisely	96	2.50	1	3	92	2.45	1	3
Financial Resources	Donations are the primary source of revenue	98	2.82	1	3	93	1.76	1	3
	Sales of goods and services is the primary source of revenue	94	1.79	1	3	95	2.84	1	3
	Government grants are the primary source of revenue	87	2.48	1	3	84	1.80	1	3
	Uses crowdfunding	86	2.59	1	3	81	2.11	1	3
Innovative Strategies	Willing to make large bets on new ideas	93	2.09	1	3	95	2.42	1	3
	Tries to tackle new problems	96	2.59	1	3	93	2.48	1	3
	Tries new solutions to old problems	93	2.54	1	3	87	2.46	1	3
	Creates effective solutions to tough problems	96	2.56	2	3	90	2.49	1	3
Use of Data and Technology	Uses technology in the workplace	95	2.53	2	3	95	2.92	1	3
	Uses data in decision making	95	2.51	2	3	94	2.78	1	3
	Uses technology to receive feedback from clients/customers	97	2.46	1	3	95	2.76	1	3
	Uses social media to communicate their work	96	2.77	1	3	91	2.77	2	3
	Uses technology to address social problems	94	2.53	1	3	93	2.53	1	3

Table 2 (cont.)

Role aspect	Survey question	NPO				FPSE			
		N	*M*	Min	Max	*N*	*M*	Min	Max
	Expressive Role Aspects								
Mission	Social justice is important in their work	97	2.81	1	3	92	2.05	1	3
	Accomplishing their mission is their primary goal	102	2.83	2	3	96	2.48	1	3
	Works for the best interest of their clients/customers	97	2.70	1	3	94	2.43	1	3
	Advocates on behalf of their clients	98	2.61	1	3	94	2.43	1	3
Trustworthiness	Regarded as trustworthy by the public	101	2.63	1	3	96	1.99	1	3
	Regarded as trustworthy by competitors	93	2.57	1	3	91	1.91	1	3
	Regarded as trustworthy by other organizations	95	2.63	1	3	95	2.12	1	3
	Regarded as trustworthy by their clients/customers	99	2.69	1	3	97	2.33	1	3
Independence and Courage	Is courageous in promoting their values to positively impact society	100	2.78	1	3	96	2.23	1	3
	Is highly influenced by big donors/investors	98	2.22	1	3	98	2.62	1	3
	Makes decisions without outside influence	96	2.12	1	3	91	2.01	1	3
Environmental Stewardship	Cares about how their use of resources impacts the environment		97	2.73	1	3	93	2.01	1
	Advocates for environmental sustainability	99	2.67	2	3	91	2.02	1	3

Table 2 (cont.)

Role aspect	Survey question	NPO				FPSE			
		N	*M*	Min	Max	*N*	*M*	Min	Max
	Affiliative Role Aspects								
Community Inclusion	Engages their community in organizational decision making	94	2.65	1	3	92	1.93	1	3
	Gives people the opportunity to learn democratic skills	86	2.64	2	3	87	2.14	1	3
	Engages their clients/customers in organizational decision making	89	2.51	1	3	88	2.02	1	3
	Empowers people to solve their own problems	90	2.43	1	3	85	2.03	1	3
	Employees use democratic processes to make decisions	87	2.60	1	3	85	2.15	1	3
Geographic Focus	Primarily focuses on global issues	99	2.45	1	3	88	2.17	1	3
	Primarily focuses on local issues	94	2.38	1	3	87	2.11	1	3

Analysis

In our analysis of all survey questions in this study, we compared each answer related to NPOs to the corresponding answer for FPSEs. Specifically, we focused on the frequency that respondents indicated that the survey item often described an NPO or FPSE. We conducted a *t* test of the difference in means between responses for the two types of organizations to establish significant differences in perceptions about NPOs versus FPSEs. The *t* test indicated that respondents regarded organizational attributes differently for NPOs and FPSEs, and the percentage that answered *often* to the survey item helps characterize perceptions of critical organizational practices.

Results

We report survey results for each principle role of nonprofit organizations: instrumental, expressive, and affiliative. A positive mean difference indicates NPOs scored higher than FPSEs on that question and were more likely to be perceived as often embodying the description in the survey item.

Instrumental Role

Table 3 displays the results for five aspects of the instrumental role, including professional culture, economic motives, financial resources, the use of innovative strategies, and the use of data and technology. The largest mean differences were found in survey questions regarding economic motives, financial resources, and professional culture, although significant differences were found in at least one survey question for each aspect.

Table 3

Comparison of Gen Z's Perceptions of Instrumental Role Aspects for Nonprofit Organizations and For-Profit Social Enterprises

Instrumental role aspect	Survey question	*N*	M_{diff}	*t* test sig.	% answered *often* for nonprofit	% answered *often* for FPSE
Professional Culture	Programs are delivered primarily by volunteers	84	1.12	0.00**	75.82	11.36
	Employees earn incomes at or above fair market wages	81	-0.64	0.00**	20.93	58.82
	Is a great place for people of color to work	73	0.38	0.00**	53.75	28.38
	Is a great place for young professionals to work	83	0.08	0.33	58.43	54.02

Table 3 (cont.)

Instrumental role aspect	Survey question	*N*	M_{diff}	*t* test sig.	% answered *often* for nonprofit	% answered *often* for FPSE
Economic Motives	Maximizing profits is their primary goal	94	-1.22	0.00**	12.87	87.5
	Prioritizes economic over social return on investment	89	-1.02	0.00**	14.74	81.72
	Spends money wisely	90	0.08	0.38	52.08	48.91
Financial Resources	Donations are the primary source of revenue	91	1.11	0.00**	83.67	10.75
	Sales of goods and services is the primary source of revenue	89	-1.09	0.00**	11.7	85.26
	Government grants are the primary source of revenue	79	0.76	0.00**	62.79	15.48
	Uses crowdfunding	79	0.52	0.00**	51.72	30.86
Innovative Strategies	Willing to make large bets on new ideas	89	-0.33	0.00**	24.73	48.42
	Tries to tackle new problems	92	0.12	0.14	60.42	53.76
	Tries new solutions to old problems	86	0.08	0.29	54.84	49.43
	Creates effective solutions to tough problems	89	0.08	0.19	56.25	51.11
Use of Data and Technology	Uses technology in the workplace	90	-0.34	0.00**	52.63	92.63
	Uses data in decision making	90	-0.28	0.00**	50.53	80.85
	Uses technology to receive feedback from clients/customers	93	-0.27	0.00**	52.58	77.89
	Uses social media to communicate their work	89	0.01	0.84	78.13	76.92
	Uses technology to address social problems	89	0	1.00	56.38	59.14

**$p < .05$.

The largest mean difference in absolute value (1.223) was found in the survey question asking whether *often*, *sometimes*, or *never* best characterizes an NPO's and FPSE's primary goal as maximizing profits. *Often* responses occurred in a lopsided ratio: 87.5% for FPSEs and 12.87% for NPOs. The statement "Prioritizes economic over social return on investment" had similar ratios in its *often* responses. While Gen Z individuals in this survey appeared to perceive a distinct difference in the economic motives of NPOs and FPSEs, they did not indicate a difference in effective use of monetary resources; responses to "Spends money wisely" were remarkably similar. So, too, with many of the questions relating to the use of innovative strategies, Gen Z individuals in our survey rated NPOs and FPSEs roughly the same in how they attempt to tackle new problems, create effective solutions to tough problems, and try new solutions to old problems. Respondents did answer that FPSEs are twice as likely to answer "often" to the statement "Willing to make large bets on new ideas." [However, respondents perceived that FPSEs were twice as likely as NPOs to be willing to make large bets on new ideas.]

Gen Z individuals in our survey believe FPSEs use technology more often in the workplace and use data to drive decision making and evaluate feedback. However, there were no significant differences in their perceptions of whether FPSEs and NPOs use technology to address social problems and social media to communicate.

Results indicate sizable differences in Gen Z's perceptions of the prominence of different income streams for FPSEs and NPOs. Although goods and services are the primary source of revenue for NPOs (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016), fewer than 12% of respondents in our survey share that perception; 85% believe it to be true for FPSEs. Gen Z individuals perceive that NPOs are more often dependent on donations and government grants as primary sources of revenue. Respondents also believe that NPOs are more likely than FPSEs to use crowdfunding.

Regarding professional culture, the majority (53.75%) of Gen Z respondents indicated that NPOs would be a good place for people of color to work, whereas only 28.38% answered *often* for FPSEs. Results were roughly similar, though, for the statement, "Is a great place for young professionals to work." Our survey respondents perceived that employees at FPSEs more often earned incomes at or above fair market value. They also indicated that many NPOs deliver their programs primarily with volunteers.

Expressive Role

Survey results within the value expressive role highlight strong differences between NPOs and FPSEs. As Table 4 indicates, responses for statements related to the mission of an organization, such as mission focus, social causes, and client advocacy, show NPOs are more strongly perceived as more dedicated than FPSEs. The clear majority, 82.5%, of Gen Z respondents believe NPOs are often driven by social justice, versus 17.3% for FPSEs. Similarly, findings from questions related to trustworthiness show that perceptions of NPOs are significantly (at the 99% confidence level) different than perceptions of FPSEs. The majority of respondents believe that NPOs are often perceived as trustworthy by their clients, competitors, other organizations, and the public. Only 35% of respondents believe that FPSEs are often trusted by their clients; even lower percentages report that they are often trusted by the public, other organizations, and competitors.

Table 4

Comparison of Gen Z's Perceptions of Expressive Role Aspects for Nonprofit Organizations and For-Profit Social Enterprises

Expressive role aspect	Survey question	*N*	M_{diff}	*t* test sig.	% answered *often* for nonprofit	% answered *often* for FPSE
Mission	Social justice is important in their work	90	0.77	0.00**	82.5	17.3
	Accomplishing their mission is their primary goal	96	0.38	0.00**	83.3	52.1
	Works for the best interest of their clients/customers	90	0.30	0.00**	71.1	43.6
	Advocates on behalf of their clients	93	0.22	0.01*	64.3	47.9
Trustworthiness	Regarded as trustworthy by the public	95	0.684	0.00**	65.4	11.5
	Regarded as trustworthy by competitors	88	0.64	0.00**	59.1	11.0
	Regarded as trustworthy by other organizations	92	0.53	0.00**	64.2	20.0
	Regarded as trustworthy by their clients/ customers	96	0.38	0.00**	70.7	35.1
Independence and Courage	Is courageous in promoting their values to positively impact society	94	0.58	0.00**	79.0	33.3
	Is highly influenced by big donors/ investors	94	-0.37	0.00**	40.8	68.4
	Makes decisions without outside influence	90	0.21	0.023*	34.4	18.7

Table 4 (cont.)

Expressive role aspect	Survey question	*N*	M_{diff}	*t* test sig.	% answered *often* for nonprofit	% answered *often* for FPSE
Environmental Stewardship	Cares about how their use of resources impacts the environment	89	0.71	0.00**	74.2	17.2
	Advocates for environmental sustainability	91	0.22	0.00**	55.7	36.3

**$p < .05$.

Statements regarding independence and courage, another construct within our expressive framework, focus on organizations' ability to handle decisions without undue outside influence, to promote values, and to withstand pressure from benefactors. Our results show that respondents believe NPOs are significantly different from FPSEs on all three fronts. Although just 34.4% of Gen Z individuals in our survey perceive that NPOs often make decisions without outside influence, that result is far lower than the percentage, 18.7%, for FPSEs. Gen Z members indicate that NPOs are courageous in promoting values that will positively affect society; 79% of respondents believe this is often the case for NPOs, and only 33.3% believe so for FPSEs. Results from the environmental stewardship construct indicate that respondents believe NPOs are significantly different in their regard for environmental sustainability and use of resources. Respondents indicate a perception that NPOs often advocate for environmental sustainability and care about responsible resource usage.

Affiliative Role

Survey results indicate significant differences overall in the affiliative role. In this role, organizations create opportunities for people with similar interests, concerns, and goals to share resources and engage as a group in the public sphere, as Table 5 shows. Gen Z individuals appear to believe that NPOs participate more often in inclusive activities that utilize democratic processes and engaged decision making and problem solving. NPOs scored significantly higher than FPSEs on four questions regarding inclusive decision making and community engagement. Respondents perceive that NPOs are more likely than FPSEs to often engage their community in organizational decision making, often engage their clients/customers in organizational decision making, often give people the opportunity to learn democratic skills, and often empower people to solve their own problems. These results point to a strong perception among Gen Z that nonprofits are inclusive of multiple perspectives and are responsive to community influence.

Table 5

Comparison of Gen Z's Perceptions of Affiliative Role for Nonprofit Organizations and For-Profit Social Enterprises

Affiliative role aspect	Survey question	*N*	M_{diff}	*t* test sig.	% answered *often* for nonprofit	% answered *often* for FPSE
Community Inclusion	Engages their community in organizational decision making	91	0.75	0.00**	65.96	13.04
	Gives people the opportunity to learn democratic skills	82	0.52	0.00**	63.95	21.84
	Engages their clients/customers in organizational decision making	85	0.51	0.00**	55.06	23.86
	Empowers people to solve their own problems	85	0.4	0.00**	47.78	16.47
	Employees use democratic processes to make decisions	91	0.13	0.10	43.75	36.17
Geographic Focus	Primarily focuses on global issues	88	0.35	0.00**	50.51	26.14
	Primarily focuses on local issues	86	0.28	0.00**	39.36	24.14

**$p < .05$.

Results on local versus global emphasis were interesting. Nonprofits were perceived to be stronger than FPSEs in local and global focus. Although these results seem contradictory, they may not be. Respondents may believe that local nonprofits primarily focus on local issues and global nonprofits primarily focus on global issues, not necessarily that any single nonprofit does both.

No significant difference was found for the question "employees use democratic processes to make decisions," which indicates, perhaps, that survey respondents perceive NPOs to be more likely than FPSEs to empower outside groups in decision making. Relatively little difference was found in how these types of organizations operate internally on inclusive decision making.

Discussion

Our study focuses on Gen Z's perceptions of the characteristics, whether similar or divergent, of NPOs and FPSEs. In addition, we sought to determine if Gen Z individuals perceive that NPOs maintain a unique niche in serving in their traditional affiliative and expressive roles. Some results, as highlighted, confirm a priori assumptions about the differences between NPOs and FPSEs, whereas other findings indicate that Gen Z members may have new and different perceptions about overlapping and distinct qualities of the sectors.

The expressive and affiliative roles drew the most distinct differences in survey responses. Within the expressive framework, findings from the mission and trustworthiness constructs follow an undeviating trend; Gen Z individuals find that NPOs, compared to FPSEs, tend to concentrate on social justice issues and that NPOs focus more on mission, clients, and conducting themselves in a more trustworthy manner. NPOs were also perceived as more independent and courageous than FPSEs. This study also supports the continued strength of the affiliative role as a distinctive characteristic of NPOs compared to FPSEs. NPOs are perceived to engage their communities and clients frequently in organizational decision making. This could reflect many ideas of community engagement, for example, the board structure of nonprofit governance, the visibility of community leaders and residents participating in NPO activities at a high level of voluntarism (i.e., United Way campaigns or planning 5K runs), or the ethic of client self-determination as a value in service provision. Our findings also suggest that Gen Z may perceive that NPOs are more trusted carriers of the values of social justice, inclusion, and community engagement than are FPSEs.

Within our exploration of the instrumental role, the more business-like orientation of organizations, FPSEs are strongly associated with entrepreneurial themes: maximization of profits, sales of goods and services, risk taking, technological workplaces, and data-driven decision making. In other instrumental activities, though, survey respondents did not draw a clear distinction between the NPO and FPSE sectors, including aspects such as tackling new problems and trying new solutions, spending money wisely, using technology to address social problems, and using social media. Regarding financial strategies, specifically the use of crowdfunding, Gen Z members perceive NPOs as more likely than FPSEs to use this technological innovation. These results indicate that Gen Z may not operate under the assumption that businesses that are described as social enterprises have more resources and expertise to try innovative approaches, but rather they perceive NPOs and FPSEs as roughly equivalent in their use of novel strategies.

Survey results also indicate that Gen Z individuals do not perceive the advancement of the social mission as a strength of FPSEs. Although a majority of the respondents (52.1%) rated FPSEs as often mission focused, only 17.3% believe that FPSEs are often social-justice-driven. Moreover, survey respondents did not perceive trustworthiness, independence and courage, and environmental stewardship as strengths, which further reflects that FPSEs differ from NPOs. These perceptions contradict definitions of social enterprise as seeking to use for-profit, entrepreneurial, and innovative strategies in the service of a social mission. Perceptions of Gen Z members in our survey support neither the means nor ends in those definitions. Respondents do not

strongly associate FPSEs with social missions, and they do not comprehensively distinguish FPSEs' innovation or entrepreneurial methods from those of their NPO peers.

Conclusion

Acknowledging that this initial survey is exploratory in nature, we find it useful to return to our research questions as we look for the lessons to be gleaned from this study. In what ways do Gen Z individuals perceive NPOs and FPSEs as having similar characteristics, and in which ways do they appear distinct? How do these perceptions inform a greater understanding of the dimensions of an organization's affiliative, expressive, and instrumental roles? As the results of this study suggest, Gen Z perceives NPOs as important bastions of public values, social justice, and trustworthiness while also recognizing FPSEs as perhaps being nimbler and adaptive in their business strategies.

Our findings have implications for the training of leaders in both types of organizations. Leaders of NPOs may take comfort in the knowledge that their expressive and affiliative roles occupy a distinct niche in the perceptions of Gen Z. They should be aware, though, that Gen Z individuals perceive NPO staff to be lower paid, more likely to be volunteer rather than professional, and less likely to use technology in the workplace and data for decision making. It may also be discomforting to find that even though Gen Z members recognize NPOs as having superior strengths in terms of inclusion, community engagement, social mission, and trustworthiness, they perceive NPOs and FPSEs as roughly equivalent in terms of being good places for young professionals to work.

The implications for FPSEs are more important. The general concept that social enterprise achieves "economic, social, and environmental value by trading for a social purpose" (Haugh, 2012) was to some extent questioned by the Gen Z members participating in this survey. Survey participants clearly believe that the FPSEs are profit-driven, maybe at the expense of social goals, and that the organizations are heavily influenced by big investors. FPSEs appear to have failed to convince Gen Z individuals in this survey that they are undertaking their economic activity in support of a social mission. Traditional strengths of FPSEs, such as associations with sustainability, environmental stewardship, and innovative approaches, are not supported in these findings. Leaders of FPSEs [need to] recognize further indications that Gen Z is unaware of or disbelieving of the social missions of FPSEs. If FPSEs, like NPOs, derive value from association with affiliative and expressive roles, then the leaders of FPSEs may have more work to do in convincing young people of the sincerity of their intent and extent of their accomplishments in those roles.

Because of the exploratory nature of our study, there are some limitations to consider. First, our sample was derived from a group of Gen Z students who are mostly engaged in social science curriculum at a higher education institution. In this way, our sample has likely had more exposure to discussions about the roles of nonprofit organizations and may be more likely to already perceive them as affiliative or expressive. Future research could broaden the scope of this inquiry by including respondents with a wider variety of educational experiences. A second limitation is that this survey only asked respondents for their perceptions about NPOs and FPSEs, encouraging responses to remain bounded within comparisons of those two sectors. Future research

could include comparisons of traits between four options: government agencies, NPOs, FPSEs, and traditional businesses.

Further research in this area also has practical applications—it may inform training of future leaders in both sectors and help to develop a more nuanced understanding of potential workforce changes as Gen Z members begin their careers. Additionally, overall public perceptions about potential similarities and differences between NPOs and FPSEs have implications for theory and public policy. Philanthropies and government agencies may no longer be relying on past assumptions about the effectiveness of NPOs versus FPSEs when making decisions regarding financial gifts and grant funding, which may result in NPOs being more highly favored because of their perceived ability to maintain public trust while delivering high-quality services. Our results also suggest that donors and volunteers may seek out opportunities to give to NPOs rather than FPSEs, especially if their perception is that the organization is worthier of their time and support because it champions important values such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and community inclusion.

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Perspectives on Public Management and Governance, 2018, 1–10
doi:10.1093/ppmgov/gvx015
Article

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Studying Networks in Complex Problem Domains: Advancing Methods in Boundary Specification

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ABSTRACT

The application of network perspectives and methods to study complex problem and policy domains has proliferated in the public management literature. Network metrics are highly sensitive to boundary decisions as findings are a direct reflection of who and what was considered to be part of the network. The more complex the problem domain, the messier the network and the more challenging it is for researchers to determine network boundaries. Laumann, Marsden, and Prensky's seminal (1989) article on network bounding highlighted the theoretical and methodological significance associated with determinations of network boundaries in social network research. However, despite an expansion of network scholarship, the advancement of frameworks aimed at assisting scholars in thinking through the relative advantages and disadvantages of different boundary determinations has received limited attention. This article addresses this gap. Drawing insights from three network studies, we argue that problem domain characteristics and concerns such as formal structures, isolates, disconnected subgroups and/or the duration of the ties will be differentially emphasized with different boundary approaches. We leverage these insights to advance a framework for aiding network scholars working in complex problem domains to consider the strengths and limitations of varied bounding approaches in relation to the question at hand.

Introduction

Imagine a situation in which two public management researchers share a common interest in network structures that promote effectiveness in managing complex problem domains. Unbeknownst to each other, they both carry out a network study on a mid-sized community in the Midwest which has received national acclaim for its achievements in reducing homelessness. Both researchers are interested in mapping the structure of the coordination patterns underlying the community homelessness response network. However, neither researcher is from the area and has limited a priori knowledge of the community. The first researcher learns about a collaborative network convened by the Governor's Task Force to End Homelessness comprised of representatives from 23 different organizations and agencies. Asking each of the representatives in this group to indicate whom of the 22 other members they coordinate with directly, this network scholar suggests, based on their findings that effective network governance is facilitated by network centralization around a network administrative organization. The second researcher, unaware of the Governor's Task Force group, spends time identifying representatives of prominent organizations and agencies engaged in homelessness prevention work. Using

an initial list of 10, the second researcher conducts interviews asking informants to identify others with whom they coordinate directly resulting in the identification of 47 organizations. Based on their findings, researcher two suggests that effective networks are relatively decentralized and densely connected. Thus, two researchers interested in the same question in the same community, each using network methodologies that have precedence in the existing literature, create data on coordination patterns that support contradictory conclusions. Is this possible, you ask? Absolutely. In this article, we describe the challenges and consequences of boundary determinations when applying network perspectives to gain insight into complex problem domains. We do this with an eye toward offering a framework to aid scholars in critically considering the features of the domain to both inform and justify their boundary decisions.

Social network theory, constructs, and methods provide a valuable toolkit for understanding the social structure and processes that underlie human responses to complex problem domains (Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson 2013; Hennig et al. 2012; Wasserman and Faust 1994). Post-modern theorists remind us that all scholarship is interpretive and what one "finds" in scholarly enterprise is a function of how one asks the question, the methods one uses to answer it, and the lens one uses to interpret the resulting findings. Network science, in particular, requires significant interpretive decisions in design, analysis, and interpretation. However, the field has given limited attention to considering how different network methods may emphasize certain features of social structure while systematically obscuring others. This is especially relevant in terms of our knowledge about how we bound networks for the purposes of quantitative network analysis. Given the proliferation of network research in the field of public management, it is timely that we critically reflect upon the ways in which we bound networks in studying institutional responses within complex problem domains and how design choices may influence our understanding of those domains.

Many public management scholars have embraced a narrow use of the term "network," referring specifically to a formal, multi-organizational entity with presumably clear boundaries (e.g., Provan and Kenis 2008). However, a network perspective is far more versatile and can be usefully applied to aid in understanding a broad range of social phenomenon among a group of interdependent actors, even when network boundaries are fuzzy and dynamic (Brass et al. 2004). Across many fields in the social, health, and environmental sciences, there is increasing recognition that many significant public issues facing local communities are in fact interconnected sets of problems (Trist 1983), which collectively form problem domains (Ackoff 1999; Arias et al. 2000; Lasker and Weiss 2003). Problem domains are influenced by the actions and decisions of numerous interdependent actors seeking to manage the domain (Rethemeyer and Hatmaker 2008).

A key challenge in the study of formal and informal responses within complex problem domains is that they are, by definition, ill-defined, leaving it up to the scholar to make determinations concerning who is and is not to be considered part of the network when using network methods. To further complicate boundary specifications, networks are social constructions that may look and be evaluated differently depending on whose perspective is being privileged (Nowell et al. 2016; Mandell and Keast 2008). For example, network actors may differ from each other in their understanding of who belongs to or within the network. Further, scholars may differ in their perspectives about a network relative to those actors involved in the network (Mandell and Keast 2008; Turrini et al. 2010). Finally, two scholars may study the same social phenomenon yet draw the boundaries of the network differently. Consequently, challenges relating to network boundary determinations are endemic to all network research. They are particularly germane when applying a network perspective to gain insight about social structure that undergirds complex problem domains (Weber and Khademian 2008).

The solution for researchers (and reviewers) is to be clear about the relative advantages and disadvantages of a given boundary decision. Transparency, deliberate consideration of boundary consequences, and evidence of informed choices are all reasonable responses to the challenges of dealing with boundary specification with messy networks in complex problem domains. In 1989, Laumann et al. warned scholars of the methodological and theoretical significance associated with boundary determinations in network research. Despite this, decisions concerning how network boundaries are determined are rarely discussed or critically examined and the extant literature provides little advice to guide a scholars' decision or to consider the consequences of their design choices.

The goal of this article is two-fold. First, we consider the methodological strengths and limitations of Laumann et al.'s (1989) three bounding approaches when applying a network perspective to the study of messy problem domains. Second, we offer a decision framework to aid researchers and reviewers in critically assessing the appropriateness of any given boundary approach based on key characteristics of the research context and focal research question. To ground this discussion in real world application, we review Laumann et al's. (1989) framework as it

corresponds to three whole network studies drawn from our own research, allowing us the opportunity to reflect upon the research team's thought processes that guided each study's design, how network boundary and problem domain characteristics are linked, and the consequences of these linkages on the interpretation of findings. We do this with an eye toward offering a framework for aiding researchers in considering strengths and limitations of different approaches under different contexts.

NETWORK BOUNDING

The topic of network boundaries is situated in the literature within the larger conversation around social network analysis. To date, the attention to network boundary considerations has been largely descriptive (Crona and Bodin 2011; Ernstson 2011; Isaac and Dawoe 2011; Prell, Reed, and Hubacek 2011; Ramirez-Sanchez 2011; Sandström 2011; Tindall, Harshaw, and Taylor 2011), with some attention to the challenges and complexities associated with establishing network boundaries (Bodin and Prell 2011; Borgatti et al. 2013; Frank 2011; Marsden 2005; Zuckerman 2003). Frank (2011) characterizes network boundary definitions as a key potential pitfall of social network analysis. He emphasizes this is a function of the analytic practices rather than from a data characteristic perspective (Frank 2011, 18). Sandström (2011) acknowledges the necessity of empirically based network boundary definitions. She points out that although empirical approaches are needed, governance networks pose complexities stemming from possible incongruences among formal hierarchical networks and informal "real-world networks of governance" (Sandström 2011, 239). Bodin and Prell developed a classification system to help "organize one's thinking about defining appropriate system boundaries" (Bodin and Prell 2011, 354). This classification scheme is designed with natural resource governance networks in mind and uses a network characteristic, the extent to which the system is open or closed, to aid the researcher in thinking about relevant actors and ties within that system.

Barnes discussed boundary definition as the problem of "where to set the limits in the analysis of social networks that in reality to do not have any obvious limits at all" (Barnes 1979, 414). Wasserman and Faust underscore this, explaining, "to study a network, we must be able to enumerate a finite set of actors to study," (Wasserman and Faust 1994, 32). This is critically important as the way researchers bound networks has implications for their findings. For example, popular network metrics such as density and centrality are only interpretable in reference to a clearly delineated network boundary. Further, most network metrics are highly sensitive to changes in network boundaries (Provan, Fish, and Sydow 2007). For example, a central actor in a network as conceptualized using one set of bounding criteria may be a peripheral actor under different boundary criteria (Wasserman and Faust 1994). This requires a network researcher interested in whole networks to make a significant interpretive move in designing their research, drawing a line around who is and is not considered.

Consequently, network researchers literally give shape to the phenomena they seek to study through the boundary choices they make. Methods and theory for approaching networks in complex problem domains cannot be separated; they are inherently linked in how researchers think about a network, how they bound it, and study it. This linkage also affects the data researchers analyze and the conclusions they can draw.

Bounding Approaches

In 1989, Laumann and colleagues published a conference paper that has become one of the foremost-cited pieces of literature for scholars seeking to characterize their research methods related to network boundary decisions in whole network studies. In this article, the authors offer three methodological alternatives for identifying who is considered "in" and who is "out" of a focal network of interest. These three approaches are: (1) actor characteristics, (2) relations, or (3) events/activities. Used independently, or in combination, the application of these approaches provides the methodological decision rules for defining a network as an entity worthy of investigation.

Real world case examples can offer valuable insights into the capabilities and limitations of these different approaches to bounding to advance a discussion of the methods for and consequences of different approaches to bounding. Here, we consider case examples of three whole network studies from our own research portfolios and describe how each was bound by the researcher or research team. Each example study employs a different boundary approach to identify a network of interest within a complex problem domain. The first example primarily leverages an actor-characteristic bounding approach among individuals involved in community health initiatives. The second example uses a variant of an actor relations approach to conceptualize a policy network associated with the regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Our final example applies an event/activity approach to study interactions within a disaster response network. In the section below, we briefly summarize each network bounding approach as outlined by Laumann and colleagues (1989) followed by a methodological description and critical reflection of this approach as it was used to define the network of

interest in the corresponding example case. Our goal is to illustrate different methodological approaches to bounding based on previous research rather than creating de novo research.

An Investigation of Networks in Community Health Promotion: Actor Characteristics Approach

Network boundaries based on actor characteristics identify network members based on some a priori attribute or affiliation. For example, actors may be identified because they all went to a given university, are members of a fraternity, or are known leaders within a given community. In this approach, there is no a priori assumption of any particular interpersonal or inter-organizational linkage among network members. Rather, the network is defined purely as actors who share a common characteristic and allows the researcher to investigate where linkages exist among this set of actors. Laumann and colleagues further delineated two common methods to defining actor characteristics: (1) positional and (2) reputational. The positional approach is based on formal membership criteria, often associated with employment by an organization (Krackhardt 1990). The reputational approach relies on judgments of knowledgeable informants to determine if a participant actor fits a specific attribute (Laumann et al. 1989).

In our first example case, the research team studied membership interlocks among collaborative multi-organizational groups organized around health promotion working in the same community. These collaborative groups were defined as three or more organizations or agencies who self-identified as having a mission to improve health and wellness within a single county (Nowell, Yang, and Hano 2013). The network of interest was composed of organizations that participated in these groups within a specific county. Therefore, a *positional actor characteristic* sampling approach was used.

To establish the list of network members, the researchers started with the membership list from a large, cross-cutting collaborative group that served as a hub for identifying and coordinating efforts around health priorities within the county. Next, the team employed a snowball approach to identify other health-oriented collaborative groups within the community (Borgatti et al. 2013, 34–5). The team then contacted each group and obtained their membership list. The snowball sampling continued with each newly identified health collaborative until no new collaborative groups were identified. To supplement the snowball sampling, the research team conducted web searches to identify potential isolates, actors or subgroups that were disconnected from other network actors but fit the definition of a health collaborative established above. In all, a total of 34 health-oriented collaborative groups were identified within the county.

Confirmed membership lists from each collaborative were then entered into a relational database and cross-referenced to identify organizations that shared common memberships across two or more collaborative groups. A two-mode network was then constructed which represented connections between organizations and collaborative groups via shared memberships, revealing a macro structure of health-oriented collaboration within the county (Nowell, Hano, and Albrecht 2017).

The resulting two mode network revealed a wide array of organizations engaged in health oriented collaborative groups within the county. They were connected through their membership to one or more of 34 different groups. If our research team had bounded the health service delivery network using a relational approach (see below), it would have created a more traditional study of "who collaborates with whom" at the dyadic level. This might have allowed the researchers to consider collaboration occurring strictly between two organizations, a structural feature not considered in our study. However, it would have also meant that the researchers would have missed understanding the broader institutional structures within which much of health-oriented collaboration took place. The advantage of sampling based on the positional actor characteristics in a health-oriented collaborative group was that those actors central to collaborative health-related activity in the county were captured as were those isolates and subgroups who had limited connection. Isolates are network nodes disconnected from the other nodes on the modeled relationship of interest. Further, it allowed the researchers to identify groups that had a high degree of overlapping memberships with other collaboratives and those that appeared to operate in complete isolation from the broader network.

This approach also provided representation of macro community structure as long as all health collaborative actors were involved in some type of health-related collaborative group. However, if important actors who shape health efforts within the county did not share this inclusionary attribute, the researchers' understanding of this community system would be incomplete and potentially skewed. For example, the researchers noted that elected officials and funders were generally not members of these collaboratives. Therefore, this approach may obscure certain key elements in a community. In summary, the positional actor approach has the advantage of revealing the formal institutions and structures and inclusion of isolates and subgroups based on the actor characteristics, but will limit the ability to see a broader system or network that extends beyond these actor characteristics.

GMO Policy Coalition—A Relational Approach

Network bounding based on *actor relations* uses an a priori specified type of dyadic relationship to identify who is considered in the network. For example, a network researcher may choose to bound a service delivery network based on referral patterns such that an agency is included in the network if it refers to, or receives referrals from, another agency in the county. Sampling in this approach is generally based on a snowball design initiated by identifying the referral ties associated with an initial actor or set of actors and would continue until no new actors were identified in any referral ties associated with any actor.

The aim of our second case example was to describe the origins and evolution, structure and governance, and the management and leadership of a policy coalition opposed to various aspects of the United States' regulatory policy for GMO. Over the last 14 years, organizations and individuals within this network have engaged in various judicial and legal actions against the US federal government in an attempt to alter GMO regulatory policy. The organizations and individuals forming this policy coalition advocate a more precautionary regulatory approach to GMOs than the current US regulatory policy. A network perspective was deemed advantageous for understanding the structure of this group of individuals and organizations, and sought to identify whether the network was characterized by significant closure in terms of who cooperated with whom.

The actors in this setting did not self-identify as a network or formal group of any kind. Consequently, the network was bound based on an actor *relational approach* of cooperation as co-litigants on lawsuits related to GMOs or co-signatories on citizen petitions to regulatory agencies. The policy issue focus was limited to specific GMOs or release events where a GMO would be introduced to a new environment. To identify potential network participants, the researcher reviewed two types of legal documents, court filings and citizen petitions, from 2001 to 2014. The documents were downloaded from the Center for Food Safety (CFS) Web site. The court filings included complaints, motions, orders, injunctions, amicus briefs, and Supreme Court Opinions from lawsuits filed against the federal government. The court filings were reviewed to identify the list of organizational and individual plaintiffs involved in the lawsuit, all of which were considered actors in this network. The citizen petitions were submitted to various US agencies including the Federal Drug Administration, US Department of Agriculture, and US Fish and Wildlife Services requesting specific types of regulatory guidelines and actions. Citizen petitions were reviewed for organizations or individuals that signed the petition, and all signatories were considered actors in the network. This bounding methodology identified a policy coalition of 152 organizations and 24 non-affiliated individuals that utilized legal actions to advocate for a more precautionary stance to the regulation of GMOs. As the CFS was the initial actor from which most others were identified, this actor was common to all legal proceedings investigated. Internet searches were performed to identify other US-specific GMO legal actions where the CFS was not involved, but this search did not reveal additional lawsuits.

The GMO policy network study revealed a picture of a policy coalition highly centralized around the CFS. The snowball sample of cooperative ties in the litigation was focused around CFS. Therefore, this sampling approach carried with it the risk that the resulting network was not a representation of the national GMO policy network but rather captured only a sub-set represented by the extended ego network of the CFS. A confirmatory alternative sampling strategy was used to mitigate for this risk. Internet searches were used to identify US-specific GMO legal actions where CFS was not involved, which is a modification of an event-based sampling strategy. None were identified which provided additional confidence that CFS is, in reality, a highly central actor in this network. However, the risk remained that independent GMO-related litigation efforts were occurring in isolation of the core policy network. In network terminology, these actors would be referred to as isolates or potentially disconnected sub-groups. In addition, the GMO policy network based on cooperative relationships related to legal actions meant that organizations or individuals active in the policy network, but not involved in litigation, were excluded from consideration. For example, organizations who engaged in the national GMO debate solely via public awareness and advocacy efforts were excluded from consideration.

In summary, network bounding based on our example revealed that there were challenges to identifying formal institutions and structures due to the relational approach that centered on the CFS, but it did provide insight into the informal institutions and structures of the policy coalition. A relational approach also provided opportunities to explore network relationships over time and how they might evolve and change. Nonetheless, there were risks associated with missing isolates and disconnected subgroups, but these were mitigated by utilizing a second sampling strategy that emphasized an event based approach. Compensating for these relative weaknesses, the relational approach does provide a greater degree of confidence that those with clear relational ties to CFS were identified comprehensively.

Disaster Response Networks During a Large-Scale Wildfire—An Event Based Approach

In our third case example, organizations involved in transboundary disaster responses were studied using an event based approach. Transboundary disasters necessitate quick response in uncertain and dynamic conditions by a myriad of agencies representing multiple jurisdictions and operational areas (Ansell, Boin, and Keller 2010). Disaster response networks have been defined as "the collection of individuals, organizations, and agencies that have sustained involvement during the event who aim to serve the community in minimizing and coping with damages brought on by the disaster" (Nowell and Steelman 2012, 235). These networks are not static; as a whole, they must be able to maintain their ability to respond to an event while undergoing transformations as organizations and agencies become more central, decrease in centrality, or enter or exit the network. In this study, the goal was to understand communication patterns among actors within a disaster response network during a large-scale wildfire disaster.

To bound the network in this study, the research team utilized an *event based* sampling strategy. Building on a previously developed methodology used in other incidents (Steelman et al. 2014), any organization or informal group who became operationally engaged during an incident response was considered part of the network. This research developed an initial roster of incident responders based on operational areas of responsibility (i.e., evacuation, road closures, fire operations), then refined this roster based on who actually responded during a specific incident. Incident specific information about responders was collected and verified via interviews with Incident Management Team (IMT) members and emergency managers.

To define specific incident response networks, the researchers first contacted the Incident Commander from IMT responding to the wildfire event to confirm affected jurisdictions and host agencies involved. Researchers then contacted the Liaison Officer or equivalent position for the IMT and asked them to identify agencies and personnel engaged in responding to the fire. Members of the IMT Command and General Staff were also identified during this process. Personnel from host units and select county agencies were then contacted to confirm participation in the incident response network. Through this process, responders were identified and then surveyed about communication, coordination, and performance on the incident.

The wildfire response network was bounded based on participation in response to a specific wildfire event. This strategy provided researchers with a robust methodology for capturing the whole network, or full range of actors involved, regardless of institutional affiliation or whether they engaged with the rest of the network. The ability to capture isolates and disconnected subgroups is a key strength of event based network sampling. This was deemed an appropriate approach in this case because in a disaster event, identifying isolates is important as they can be indicative of a coordination failure. However, because participation in the event is the criterion for inclusion, the resulting network failed to represent those who did not engage, but perhaps should have. Therefore, event participation sampling can be problematic if researchers want to situate findings to the broadest set of actors that *may* or *should* be engaged at different points in time within the complex problem domain. In these cases, positional actor characteristics or relational sampling would need to be used to augment research findings. Further, an event-based approach requires the authors to temporally bound what constitutes the beginning and the end of the event. The case of the disaster response networks, this was not so simple as the response phase of the incident often transitions organically into recovery and mitigation types of activities. This requires the researcher to make an additional interpretive move of deciding when the "response" event ends even though activities related to the incident may be on-going for months if not years to come. In our case, we used 65%–75% containment of the wildfire as our indication that the response phase of the incident was drawing to a close.

In summary, event based sampling is not a strong approach for identifying formal or informal institutions and structures or for covering phenomena that are considered more permanent. Because of the episodic nature of these events, exploring longer term network relationships or the duration of relationships over time is not ideal. It is a strong approach for capturing isolates and subgroups and useful in cases where the events themselves are of theoretical relevance. Caution should be used, however, in extrapolating findings from event based networks which are episodic to permanent networks. Further, scholars should carefully consider and be able to justify the temporal boundaries that will be used to constitute "the event".

Costs and Considerations of Different Bounding Approaches

Each of the three approaches to bounding described here have distinct implications for determining which actors are included in the analysis, and which are excluded from consideration. Clearly, one approach is inherently no better than another. Laumann et al. noted these methods can be, and often are, used in combination. Although it may be tempting to consider automatically using all three approaches concurrently to avoid missing actors, this is likely to be

unrealistic. First, many complex problem domains do not have networks that conform to all three bounding approaches (e.g., lack of theoretically interesting events), so researchers would be in the position of shaping questions to fit bounding decisions, which is backward. Further, each of these methods carry a high-response burden on the part of participants. Collecting network data using all three methods separately would both create undue burden on study participants, meaning it would be unlikely to receive approval from a research institution and would suffer from very low response rates.

We identified distinct differences when we considered specific types of actors that were excluded from each of the networks described. Boundary determinations based on positional actor characteristics have strengths in overcoming the issue of capturing isolates and disconnected sub-groups. This is because sampling in this approach is done based on a characteristic of the node—not a characteristic of the relationship between two nodes, which is more typical of the relational approach. Therefore, there is no assumption in this method that there is any relationship between any actor and any other actor in the network. This approach also has the advantage of homogenizing the network based on whatever positional actor characteristic is the basis of sampling which can aid in comparison for the purposes of theory building.

However, a key limitation of a positional actor characteristic approach is that it may conflate institutional effects and social dynamics. This is because the very basis upon which network membership is determined is often based on some institutional membership. For instance, people who work for a certain agency, or belong to certain groups or positions may result in an institutional bias. Consequently, any network data collected among this group of actors is likely to reflect as much about the institution that defined network membership as it does about the interpersonal dynamics of the people within the institution. Disentangling institutional from interpersonal effects can be challenging.

Bounding based on the relational approach has particular strengths compared to the positional actor characteristic and event based in it allows the researcher to identify organic networks that result from formation of dyadic relationship ties. This is easily understood in the context of the GMO policy network, because this type of network is not associated with institutional boundaries. Therefore, relational bounding does not suffer the same limitations of other approaches that may miss critical network effects and structures because the researcher limited their consideration to affiliation within specific organizations or group designations or events. This is particularly relevant in the field of public management where the intersection of formal organizational boundaries and informal social connections is often of interest. However, relational approaches to studying networks impose other kinds of blind spots. In particular, isolates—actors who are disconnected from other network actors—are generally excluded from consideration when using an actor relations approach. This is because the sampling strategy generally entails identifying a focal actor or set of actors and then tracing patterns of relationships from those actors using a snowball type of approach. Isolates or disconnected sub-groups would be excluded in such an approach, which may obscure the researcher's understanding of key network dynamics—particularly in loosely coupled (sparse) networks.

Defining network boundaries based on participation in an event, as in the wildfire study, also has tradeoffs. Unlike the relational approach, this approach will easily capture isolates and disconnected sub-groups. Further, unlike positional actor characteristics, the participation approach is not limited in any way by institutional boundaries. Therefore, it can be a powerful method for capturing interactions of loosely coupled individuals representing numerous institutions as is often seen in emergent networks such as those involved in responding to disasters. However, this approach is arguably also the narrowest of all the approaches. It limits the network to actors who were at a specific event, which may be limited in temporal and spatial scale. Therefore, the event becomes the sole domain of consideration and may limit generalizability of findings beyond that event. It may be difficult to understand how actors associated with a given event relate to other events over time, and measures like duration and embeddedness would be difficult to capture. It is important to remember that the network associated with one event may not be the same as the networks associated with similar events at different points in time, even if the location or circumstances of the events are very similar.

ADVANCING A NETWORK BOUNDING DECISION FRAMEWORK

When deciding how to bound a network, a researcher must first determine the network features that are of primary interest to their research question. Consideration of the network features that are relevant to the research question informs the decision criteria for sampling, which in turn directly reflects the network bounding approach and the conclusions one can draw from the research.

As networks are socially constructed and there is not a single "true" network that can be identified, networks are defined through the proper boundary specification based on researchers' objectives and the context

of interest. There is no one correct way to bound a given network, but there are wrong ways of bounding if researchers inadvertently choose a boundary definition that excludes actors who are arguably central to understanding how the network behaves or includes actors who are not.

Abstracted beyond the networks examined here, our comparison findings suggest that depending upon the network attributes and features of interest, one method of network bounding may be more fruitful than another (Table 1). Our goal for writing this article is to focus the attention of network scholars on the process of considering which bounding approach to employ. To that end, we offer the network bounding decision-making framework shown in Table 1, which can be used as a tool to assist researchers make strategic decisions related to how the networks in their research studies are bound.

Institutional norms and formal structures are often important considerations of network studies in the public and nonprofit literature. These features represent the organizational and interpersonal rules, processes, and norms that guide the social and relational interactions of network members. As within organizations, networks can form formal and informal norms and structures over time. One example of emergent, informal structures are the latent power structures that exist between and among actors. If informal power is a focal interest to the research question, then sampling based on a relational approach may be fruitful because informal power is inherently interpersonal and may transcend position or any one event. However, if one is interested in more formalized, existing institutional norms and decision spaces, and the corresponding flow of power within them, sampling on events or actor characteristics may be appropriate.

Isolates and disconnected subgroups (also called cliques or factions) are additional features of interest in some network studies. These actors or sub-groups have no direct relational or formal connections with

Table 1. Key Consideration When Determining a Network Bounding Approach

Network Feature Important to Research Context	Description	Cues to Aid in the Determination of a Bounding Approach	Recommended Bounding Approach		
			Relational	Positional or Reputational Actor Characteristics	Event Participation
Institutional norms and structures	Informal or formal rules and processes that emerge as patterns because they are ingrained in the fabric of the network and ties among actors	Does the research question (RQ) have a primary focus on *informal* ties between actors or informal *power* structures?	✓		
		Does the RQ focus on understanding formal ties and processes among actors?		✓	
Isolates	Actors who have no direct relational ties	Does the RQ address questions related to the presence of *all* actors important to the domain, regardless of their connections to others?		✓	✓
Disconnected subgroups	Cliques or factions within the network that do not share relational ties with other parts of the network	Does the RQ seek to identify the existence or roles of cliques or factions within the network that do not share relational ties with other parts of the network?		✓	✓
Duration	Permanence of ties between actors over time	Does the RQ explore a network characterized by enduring relationships over time?	✓	✓	

other actors in the network. Entirely relational based approaches to identifying networks are not justified if isolates are likely present in the problem domain. Such an approach can dramatically skew the overall degree of connectivity that actually exists within the domain when isolates are ignored. In contrast, an actor characteristic or event based approach to bounding will allow the researcher to identify and include individuals or groups who are relevant to the research question but who have no network ties to anyone else.

Some network studies are particularly interested in certain types of networks based on the duration of the relationships among actors. Research interested in network duration, meaning the permanence of ties between actors over time, may be aimed at understanding long-term enduring relationships among actors, or have a primary interest on short-term relationships. If network duration is a key network feature important to the research context, and the network of interest is characterized by enduring relationships over time, then positional actor characteristics and/or a relational approach might be more appropriate. Event participation is unsuitable for bounding such a network as that approach may reflect only temporary networks that emerge due to the specific event.

There are additional network features that are not addressed in Table 1 based on their ubiquity. For instance, all three bounding methods are appropriate for researching measures of embeddedness (multiplexity), centrality, span, density, and connectivity. These measures can be applied to any network data regardless of bounding; however, the measures themselves are affected by the type of bounding used. For instance, the span of a network bounded by the event based approach will likely not mirror the span of a similar network bounded by the relational approach, and so forth. There are also implications for data structure and analytical decisions, which should flow from each method of bounding.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have identified that network boundary decisions are endemic to all network research but become even more critical when applying a whole network perspective to the consideration of complex problem domains with fuzzy boundaries, as are typical in public administration research. However, despite its theoretical and methodological importance, discussion around how networks are bounded and the explicit trade-offs inherent in the method chosen continues to be under developed. As network scholarship continues to grow, the consequences of how networks are bounded should be treated more seriously given the consequence they can have on findings. In this article, we offer some guidance to network researchers in how to think about selecting an appropriate strategy for defining network boundaries. Although there is no perfect solution for how a network can be bounded, there are informed tradeoffs that researchers should choose knowingly while justifying the relative advantages and disadvantages a given approach offers. Based on our review of three whole network studies, each embracing a different approach, we conclude that each of three approaches proposed by Laumann et al. (1989) has strengths and limitations including: (1) their ability to reveal formal and informal institutional norms and structures; (2) their ability to capture isolates and disconnected sub-groups, and (3) their ability to represent social relations over time. Through recognizing these strengths and associated limitations, researchers are better informed to choose the most appropriate strategy. Insights like the ones provided through our research will help strengthen the overall use of network approaches in research to provide greater clarity into network dynamics.

Funding

This research was supported in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation and a funding from the Joint Fire Science Research Program (Branda Nowell and Toddi Steelman, 2013). The views expressed in this article are solely those of the authors.

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Institutional logics and accountability: Advancing an integrated framework in nonprofit-public partnerships

Abstract

Public and nonprofit management literature has focused more on formal accountability and less on emerging, informal structures that are present in the pilot stages of partnerships. This study uses a phenomenological approach to examine the institutional logics of partner organizations and offers an integrated framework for how these logics may translate into accountability structures in a nonprofit-public partnership (NPPP). This framework advances a basis for the mechanisms present when individual organization's or agency's institutional logics must be reconciled in the context of accountability. The analysis points to emerging challenges and cross pressures within the NPPP that are driving a need for comprehensive evaluation measures, established processes for business planning, and written agreements like memorandums of understanding to provide clear definitions of partnership roles. Public managers designing or joining pilot partnerships need to be aware that mismatched institutional logics and perceptions of accountability can occur, and these dynamics may lead to a variety of hybrid measures to ensure future sustainability of inter-organizational relationships.

Keywords: nonprofit-public partnership, institutional logics, accountability, governance

Author biography

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Introduction

As more public agencies and nonprofits collaborate and partner with other organizations with different organizational and accountability structures, it is important to consider that effective partnership accountability involves the reconciliation of diverse expectations (Romzek, LeRoux, & Blackmar, 2012). Additionally, organizational actors within partnerships need to balance their separate organizational missions and goals, as well as their collective missions and goals (Kenis & Provan, 2007; Provan & Milward, 2001; and Radin & Romzeck, 1996). Nonprofits and governmental agencies often enter in to partnerships for the delivery of social services (Smith, 2003), but these nonprofit-public partnerships (NPPPs) may be challenging to sustain because nonprofits and government agencies can have different views and structures for accountability. In some cases, nonprofits attach more value to independence, while government sees accountability to the public as a priority (Ferris & Williams, 2014).

Some past research has recognized that there can be mismatched expectations within an NPPP, focusing on issues of mutual, yet adversarial accountability (Young, 2000) or top-down versus bottom-up approaches to collaboration (Kearns, 2012; Salamon & Toepler, 2015). There is also a significant literature concerning issues of agency and stewardship (for example Van Slyke, 2006) in NPPPs which function within memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or contracts. Reconciling the values and norms within a partnership can be complex, and the institutional logics of each organization or agency can affect the process of designing and implementing accountability structures that all partners can accept. To date, frameworks for understanding institutional logics and informal versus formal accountability have not been examined together. This article seeks to integrate the institutional logics approach (ILA) as advanced by Skelcher and Smith (2015) with Romzek et al.'s (2012, 2014) framework for understanding informal accountability and potential pressures to move towards more formal accountability.

This research leverages a phenomenological case-study approach to examine an NPPP in its emerging partnership and pilot program year. The NPPP, called the Neighborhood Ecology Corps (NEC), is an environmental education service delivery collaboration that includes a nonprofit organization; federal, state, and local parks; and a public higher education institution in the United States. The pilot year of the program took place during the 2015-2016 school-year. During the pilot year of the program, no contract or MOU was in place to establish partner responsibilities or roles. The nonprofit provides the program delivery experience; the various park systems have access to facilities, transportation, and equipment; and the university has laboratories for ecological research and mentors to encourage career opportunity development. Important to the context of this research is that this NPPP is emergent, thus it is in the nascent stages of developing the program it delivers and how it will evaluate the program and the contribution of partners who do not have an established contract nor mandate. This partnership has many similarities with the much-studied phenomenon of community-based collaborative groups in which no one partner has more power or authority, and the organizations and agencies recognize that their combined effort is more well-positioned to address complex social problems than insular initiatives (Agranoff, 2006; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012; Nowell & Foster-Fishman, 2011; O'Leary & Vij, 2012; Weber & Khademian, 2008).

To date, little work has been done to understand how recognizing and reconciling institutional logics may be an important factor in creating sustainable accountability in a partnership that is in a pilot or pre-contract stage (one notable exception is Gazley, 2008). In the case study presented here, institutional logics are defined as a "set of material practices and symbolic constructions used by organizations as guidelines for behavior" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248). Using Skelcher and Smith's (2015) framework, this research first examines how to understand an organization's sources of legitimacy, authority, and identity, and then how those perceptions may be translated into expectations for accountability structures of the NPPP.

Building on the findings about what dynamics may support informal accountability from Romzek et al.'s (2014) study, this research defines mismatch institutional logics of accountability as different views of shared norms and facilitative behaviors that can lead to challenges or cross-pressures within the partnership. The pilot-year context of this case study allows for the documentation of the institutional logics and facets of accountability within each partner organization, the nature of their ideal type This study also explores how a variety of institutional logics regarding accountability may be affecting challenges and cross-pressures in the partnership. Additionally, as the NPPP is moving out of a pilot program phase which provides a unique opportunity for the partners to reflect on what has been accomplished and future directions for accountability structures and if their institutional logics will be assimilated, blended, or blocked in the future. The institutional logics of each individual organization within the NPPP in this case also point to diverse viewpoints about how the partnership should communicate, function, and make decisions as it matures to achieve its ideal type of accountability. Overall findings also suggest that each individual organization's institutional logic that addresses accountability can motivate suggestions for governance mechanisms to better support the functioning of the NPPP.

This article proceeds with a review of relevant theory and research in both the institutional logics and accountability within partnerships traditions. Next, the case is described in more detailed and is followed by a description of methods, data collection, and analysis procedures. Results are presented and future directions for research are offered.

Integrating institutional logics and accountability

In current public and nonprofit management literature, both ILA and considerations of accountability have had a rich tradition, but have largely been developed as separate theory spaces. Past research discussed below is reviewed separately, but with the aim of highlighting

areas for intersection that are addressed at the end of this section. Figure 1 below offers an integrated framework of these foundational theories that will later be utilized for analysis in this research.

Institutional logics and NPPP partnerships

Each organization within an NPPP may have its own institutional logics that can affect how accountability is structured intra-organizationally, as well as how it is communicated and understood in the context of the partnership. In their seminal research, Friedland and Alfred suggest that beliefs and rules within organizations are connected through institutional logics that are "both a set of material practices and symbolic constructions" (1991, p. 248). Institutional logics are also considered to be important in understanding an organization's guidelines for behaviors that are translated into action through decision-making practices (Friedland & Alford, 1991). In addition to generating practices and symbolic constructions, institutional logics also provide individuals within organizations with a shared "vocabulary of motives" and a sense of self that is tied to the character of an organization (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 251). Within an organization, a shared language and logic can generate both what is seen as valuable and the rules through which these valuable actions are adjusted and shared externally (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

As a metatheoretical framework, the institutional logics perspective can also aid researchers in understanding how individuals are influenced by their organizational situation and how they may use "unique organizing principles, practices, and symbols" in their communication and thinking (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012, p. 2). In this way, institutional logics are seen as producing three key products that include decision-making, sensemaking, and collective mobilization (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Building off of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) work that focuses on the isomorphism that can be present in unique disciplines and fields, the institutional logics framework connects the view points and actions of actors to their organizational and professional cultures. Because people tend to operate within

their “field,” individuals also form communities of organizations that share common meaning systems through frequent interactions with each other (Reay & Hinings, 2009; Scott, 2001). These frequent interactions can reinforce institutional logics within organizations and distinct fields, leading to organizations in different niches to form different social constructions and negotiation processes to maintain their institutional logics (Scott, 2001). When multiple logics are present, as can be the case in NPPPs with a variety of organizational types and missions, ambiguity about accountability expectations can trigger a need for sensemaking and new processes to reconcile mismatching institutional logics (Thornton et al. 2008).

More recent studies have focused on institutional logics in hybrid organizations, with an emphasis on how organizational logics in a partnership setting are the symbolic and material representations of legitimacy and actor identity (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). Key to understanding the ILA, especially in hybrid contexts, is each organization’s or agency’s source of legitimacy, authority, and identity (Skelcher & Smith, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012). In this study, analysis will focus on institutional orders that include the community, state, and profession. Within the community institutional order, legitimacy is a function of trust and reciprocity, authority is derived from commitment to community values and ideology, and identity is driven by emotional connection and reputation (Skelcher & Smith, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012). State institutional order has a different logic, with legitimacy coming from democratic participation, authority being a function of bureaucratic domination, and identity stemming from social or economic class (Skelcher & Smith, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012). In the professional institutional order, personal expertise provides legitimacy, professional association encourages authority, and identity is associated with the quality of an organization’s craft (Skelcher & Smith, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012).

Skelcher and Smith’s (2015) theorizing about the nature of ILA also suggests that when organizations or agencies enter into the processes of partnership, five possible outcomes exist: segmented, segregated, assimilated, blended, and blocked logics. While Skelcher and Smith

(2015) do focus their discussion of hybridity in an organizational context, three types of outcomes are applicable to a partnership or multi-organizational space. Assimilated hybrids are defined by the group's core logic adopting some of the practices or symbols of new logics that are being introduced. Blended hybrids are similar, but are more of a holistic incorporation of elements of existing logics into a novel and partnership-specific logic. Finally, blocked hybrids are the picture of dysfunction where partners cannot resolve important tensions between competing logics. While the presence of these types of outcomes, especially when examining countervailing institutional logics, has been theorized, little attention has been paid to the dynamics that take place during the very early stages of a partnership *before* a formal agreement or contract has been created. In this emergent context, accountability, as discussed below, may have unique dynamics especially in the informal space.

Accountability dynamics in NPPPs

Accountability has been defined and researched from many perspectives within both public and nonprofit management literature. Classic literature focuses on describing the components of accountability in regards to "to whom" an organization is accountable, "for what" the organization is accountable, and "how" the accountability is tracked or measured (Jos & Tompkins, 1994; Yang, 2012). The current proliferation of NPPPs has been seen as influenced by resource dependence within a nonprofit on government funding, reduced transaction costs, and perceived competitive advantage with other nonprofits (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; MacIndoe, 2013). From the nonprofit's perspective, partnering with a government agency can make their organization more attractive to other funders, while also sustaining their operating budget. Additionally, the strength of these partnerships is positively associated with a nonprofit's capacity and resource diversification, further driving the urge for nonprofits to seek governmental support (MacIndoe, 2013).

The increase in NPPPs brings its own issues of accountability because, although nonprofits do want to be in these partnerships, these same organizations do not want to be considered only as "vendors" who are simply delivering a program that is fully dictated by governmental wishes (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). Nonprofits want to be selective about what programs or services they chose to provide, and these organizations want to remain free from political pressures or being viewed by supporters as having become politicized in their advocacy work. Challenges also arise in NPPPs because a nonprofit or philanthropic foundation may see an initiative as a top priority when the governmental partner views it as just one of many other programs to be accomplished (Ferris & Williams, 2014).

When partnering together, nonprofits and government agencies can have different assumptions about the necessary structures for accountability. As of late, some scholars have started paying more attention to individual organizations' influences on accountability structures in those partnerships where the nonprofit delivers services that address complex social issues (Yang, 2012). As more nonprofits collaborate and partner with government agencies, especially in non-contract and non-mandated partnerships, different organizational logics and accountability structures can interact. In this informal and often emergent partnership context, is important to consider that effective accountability involves the reconciliation of diverse expectations of shared norms and facilitative behaviors (Romzek et al., 2012). From Romzek et al's (2012) work, understanding issues of informal or pre-contract accountability also includes the feedback loop process through which shared norms and facilitative behaviors interact with challenges and cross-pressures to result in rewards and sanctions that are constantly adapting and being reexamined by the partnership actors.

While the majority of research has focused on NPPPs that have a more formal contract or MOU, there are some suggestions that shed light on contingencies and constraints in pilot programs or informal, emergent partnerships (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006), including

competing institutional logics, that can slow or deter the formation of NPPPs. Additionally, scholars have advanced some suggestions about the nature and necessity for informal relationships between public and nonprofits, focusing on how government remains the leader of the relationship, with collaboration being only weakly established (Gazley, 2008).

Romzek et al.'s (2012, 2014) framework provides the most substantial basis for understanding three basic facets of accountability that can are present in both informal and formal partnerships. In their view, all actors are answerable to a source of authority, those authorities have specific expectations of performance, and specific mechanisms will be in place to hold those answerable actors to account to authority based on expectations (Romzek et al., 2012). These dynamics overlay with Jos and Tompkins' (1994) concepts of "to whom", "for what", and "how". Romzek et al. (2012) offered a preliminary model of informal accountability that was then expanded in their 2014 empirical work. As shown in Figure 1 below, the most salient aspect of this model is the feedback loop associated with the challenges or cross-pressures which can include competition, staff turnover, financial pressures, hierarchy, gaps between the rhetoric of partnership and the reality of the work, and tensions between formal and informal accountability.

Research focus

This research aims to understand the dimensions and dynamics of both informal and formal accountability structures that are present in an NPPP as they relate to the institutional logics and ideal logics of each individual partner organization. In the past, less attention has been paid to understanding what ILA factors may signal a shift in accountability structures in a NPPP from informal to formal as well as whether that shift suggests assimilation, blending, or blocking. Given that the NPPP has completed its pilot year and is positioned to continue for more years to come, there is an opportunity to research the current conditions of institutional

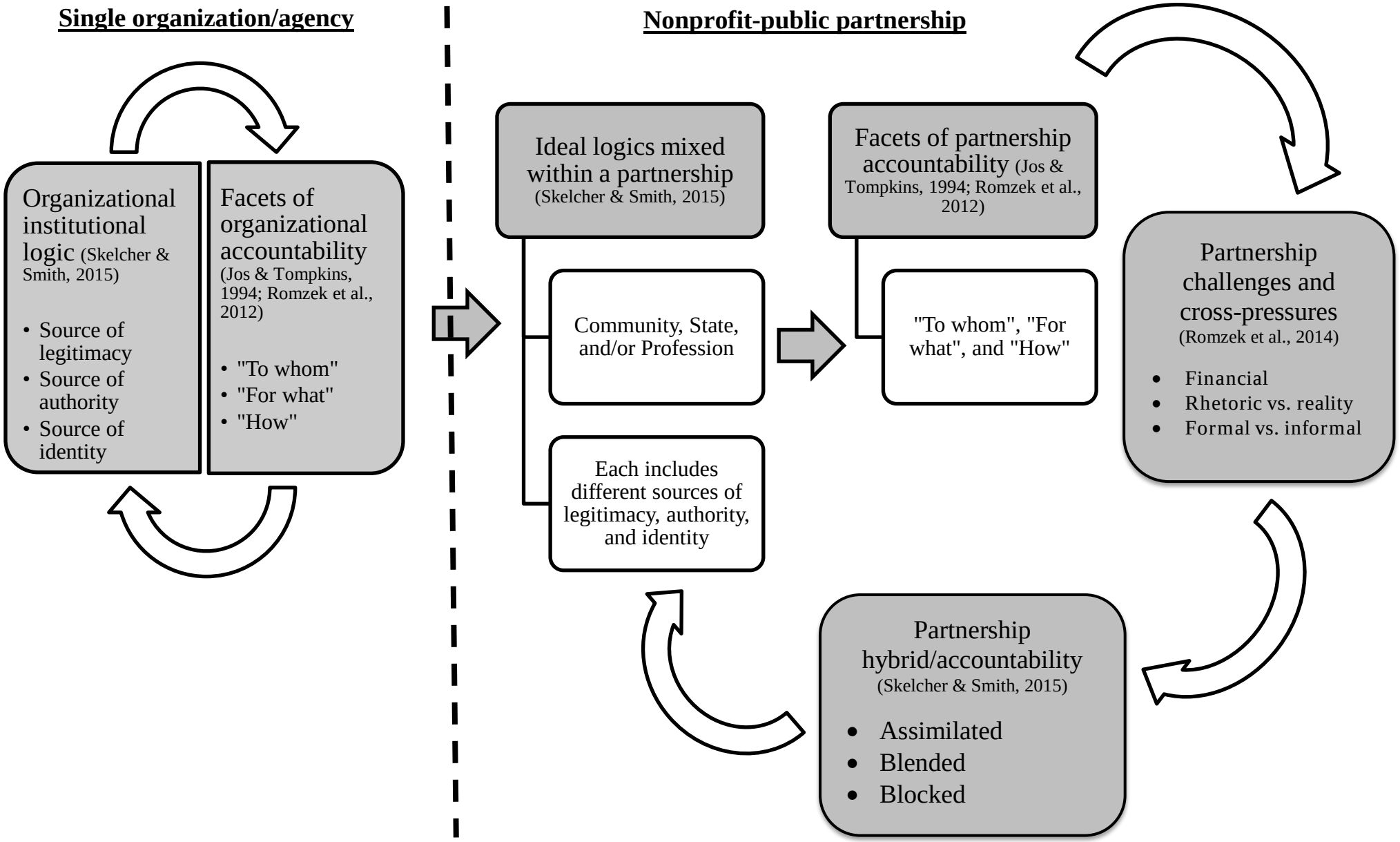
logics and the drivers of accountability structures for the future. This research also focuses on identifying and analyzing the drivers of accountability structures within a partnership that includes distinct organizations with a variety of internal accountability processes that may or may not mirror those used inter-organizationally.

All three of the key products of institutional logics, including decision-making, sensemaking, and collective mobilization, may lead individuals in an organization to seek ideal types of accountability structures that will support how they view themselves, their organization, and their organization's place in the NPPP. Considering that the partner organizations have not interacted as part of a NPPP together prior to this study, the analysis will focus on documenting the institutional logics and facets of accountability within each partner organization, the nature of their ideal type, understanding if, and how a variety of institutional logics regarding accountability may be affecting challenges and cross-pressures in the partnership. Additionally, the NPPP is moving out of a pilot program phase which provides a unique opportunity for the partners to reflect on what has been accomplished and future directions for accountability structures and if their institutional logics will be assimilated, blended, or blocked in the future.

Three specific questions guide this analysis:

1. What institutional logics regarding important facets of accountability exist among the actors engaged in the pilot-year of the NPPP?
2. What ideal types of accountability are present amongst the partners in the NPPP?
3. What challenges or cross-pressures are emerging in regard to reconciling ideal types of accountability for the future?

Figure 1: Preliminary integrated framework of ILA and accountability dynamics



Methods

The case: The Neighborhood Ecology Corps

The Neighborhood Ecology Corps (NEC) is a unique environmental education service delivery collaboration that includes a nonprofit organization; federal, state, and local parks; and a public higher education institution in the United States. The pilot year of the program took place during the 2015-2016 school-year. The NEC offers a new way to engage the next generation of inner-city youth in reconnecting with nature by developing eco-literate young people who have the knowledge, skills, and motivation to contribute to their communities' health and sustainability.

The NEC model thrives on the collaboration of organizations with a common interest, important assets, human and fiscal resources, knowledge, and a history of engagement in youth development, instruction, and environmental and ecology activities. During the pilot year of the program, no contract or MOU was in place to establish partner responsibilities or roles. The NEC allowed the partners to make both monetary and in-kind contributions to support the program, while remaining consistent and aligned with their "core line of business." Each partner organization has a clear niche in environmental and outdoor education, and the outcomes of the partnership are generally aligned with individual organizational program goals. The nonprofit provides the program delivery experience; the various park systems have access to facilities, transportation, and equipment; and the university has laboratories for ecological research and mentors to encourage career opportunity development.

Data collection

A phenomenological qualitative approach is used in this study to understand the essence of all of the partners' experiences in the NPPP. The approach is also appropriate "given that at the core of understanding institutional logics is gaining insight about the meaning making" of

the individual organizations within the NEC partnership (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 144). The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to distill individual experiences with a phenomenon, like their organization's understanding of accountability, to discern a more universal definition (Van Manen, 2016). The assumptions of a phenomenological approach include the value of lived experiences, the recognition that experiences are conscious, and that experiences are understood through descriptions of them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In phenomenological traditions of inquiry, data is collected from individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon of interest through interviews by first broadly gathering a description of an informant's experiences and then asking open-ended follow-up questions to clarify and add description (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both managerial and front-line staff of all partner organizations within NEC. Stratified purposive sampling was used to ensure a broad range of perspectives within organizations and across levels of engagement with various aspects of the program and partnership. Overall, twelve total interviews were conducted in the late spring of 2016. Tenure at each organization and gender was considered to ensure that the interviews were diverse, while still capturing one front-line employee and one manager from each organization within the NEC partnership. The views of different levels of employees across all partners formed the basis for the purposive sample used in this case study.

An identical interview protocol was used for all interviews, and the protocol was centered on the three guiding questions for this analysis as discussed above. Additional probing questions were used to clarify ideas and concepts shared by informants. All participants were first asked about their organization's motivations for involvement in NEC. Next, respondents were asked to describe their daily work in their organization and how their organization conceives of successful and sustainable accountability measures. The informants were then prompted to describe how they perceive of accountability measures and structures within the NEC partnership. The final section of the interview focused on what tensions, if any, the informants

saw within the current accountability structures of the NPPP. At the end of the interview, time was reserved for any other feedback that the participants had to offer about the nature of the partnership and how it functioned during the pilot year of the program. All interview questions are listed in Appendix A. During the interviews, notes were taken in real time by the interviewer as the conversation unfolded. After the interviews were complete, the notes were cross-checked with a recording of the interview for accuracy and a more complete transcription of the interview was created.

Data analysis

Data coding was conducted using a thematic analysis process to understand the individual partners' experiences with accountability within their organizations and within the NPPP. As concepts emerged, process codes were created for initial, first-order themes because a process coding method uses verbs to connote observable and conceptual activities. These observable and conceptual activity codes are then considered a way to extract a description of participants' actions and interactions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) regarding their institutional logics and perceptions of accountability.

After initial coding was complete, a second order analysis was conducted to group the initial themes into overarching concepts that are described in the findings section. The original coding scheme was peer-checked with two other researchers who were not involved in the interview process or coding process. Several steps were taken to meet criteria for trustworthiness for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher developed familiarity with the organizations and the partnership. Throughout the study, internal peer debriefing was used to verify proper research practices and to discuss emergent findings. Finally, the overall findings from the interviews were shared back with the NEC partners in the form of a summary document that outlined lessons learned from the pilot year of the program and suggestions for improving accountability in the future.

Findings

Initial under-defined accountability processes and structures

Despite diverse approaches in institutional logics to be discussed in the section below, at the beginning of the pilot year there were several drivers of informal accountability. These drivers further reinforce the examination of how institutional logics interact with accountability in emerging or pilot-years of NPPPs. Most notably, the organizations in the partnership shared a strong dedication to the NEC mission and process of experimentation, despite having no formal contract in place before beginning program delivery. A parks staff member said, "All of us have a shared mission here" and a university official reiterated a dedication to the NEC program by stating that "NEC is everyone pulling in the same direction. We share a passion and mission to show off the great benefits of nature to more diverse young people."

The contributions from each partner in the NEC also fit their core line of business and were within their existing organizational capacity. Many partners reported significant recognition that a program like the NEC fulfills a need to connect with more diverse populations, but that a single organization could not have deeply implemented this program on its own. A manager within the parks system wondered, "Could we do this (a program like NEC) on our own? I don't think so. The time to reallocate resources would be a challenge if we did this alone. But doing it (the NEC program) through a partnership made sense. (The partnership) made us more nimble." Other supports for informal accountability in the NEC partnership included some initial testimonial feedback from participants that reinforced the program's mission. This feedback was useful to the partners for internal purposes as an early indication of the program's promise. Most importantly, some oversight for the program was provided by a champion of the NEC mission. This champion was housed at the university which also is the organization that initially gave the largest monetary support for the NEC.

Organizational institutional logics regarding facets of accountability

To examine the dynamics of how organizational logics regarding accountability flowed in to the partnership, this next section reviews the logics present within each of the partner organizations. The interview responses showed a wide variety of organizational institutional logics and viewpoints about accountability within the pilot year of the NEC partnership. Table 1 below summarizes sources of institutional logics and the accompanying facets of accountability for each organizational member of the partnership. The table also maps the sources of institutional logic and facets of accountability to the ideal type of logic regarding accountability that each organization brought to the partnership in its pilot year.

In all of the partner organizations, there was a system in place to track performance measurement that was tied to both internal and external accountability driven by the specific needs of the organization. The college engaged with the NEC within the university had broad range of stakeholders that includes students, faculty, alumni, businesses, and donors. For the university, legitimacy, authority, identity has many factors, and a top official said, "We check ourselves against rankings of other schools. Are we on the leading edge for our students? Can we get the best faculty? We focus on our alumni and those people or companies that want to hire our students."

The nonprofit identified that their organization must remain accountable to program participants, the community, and donors. A manager noted that they are accountable to "kids for sure (program participants)....We have several people in the community that own businesses and sponsor our programs, and (we are accountable to) the public schools. We have a few members of (the community) who donate on a monthly basis. Also, a couple of grants from businesses and we feel responsible to them." Overall, the governmental employees at all levels discussed institutional logics regarding accountability in their organizations. One employee described his organization's institutional logics and accountability systems by stating that "(I am

accountable to) my supervisor and on top of that, my supervisor's boss." The city parks employees saw themselves as accountable using a chain of command to upper management, while the state parks workers reported a logic of accountability to external stakeholders who support the parks systems through advocacy and fundraising.

Interestingly, the employees in the federal level of parks had the broadest and seemingly flexible institutional logic regarding their accountability responsibilities. One employee reflected that they always focus on the broader mission. "The NPS (National Parks System) of course is always reaching towards youth. With our call to action – our guiding mission under (the National Director)...We always ask ourselves if we're on-mission."

Table 1: Organizational institutional logics and facets of accountability

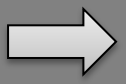
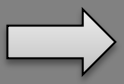
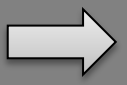
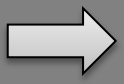
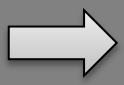
	Institutional logic sources	Facets of accountability	Ideal logic
City Parks	Legitimacy: Standards-driven (meeting public needs made into codes/processes) Authority: State-driven with bureaucratic concerns Identity: Status-driven from an internal perspective; maintaining high bureaucratic standards	To whom: Organizational hierarchy For what: Compliance and code-enforcement How: Internal performance measurement	State
State Parks	Legitimacy: Trust-driven based on overall public satisfaction Authority: Community values-driven by bureaucratic embodiment Identity: Reputation-driven from a quality of craft and community satisfaction perspective	To whom: Stakeholders (users, donors, and advocates) For what: Stewardship and development of natural resources How: Internal performance measurement	State and Community

	Institutional logic sources	Facets of accountability	Ideal logic
Federal Parks	Legitimacy: Expertise-driven Authority: Profession-driven position as respected institution Identity: Craft-driven mission focus	To whom: Organizational leadership For what: Executing broad mission How: Internal performance measurement	Profession
Nonprofit	Legitimacy: Trust-driven (meeting needs of participants, community, and donors) Authority: Community values-driven through commitment to development Identity: Craft-driven community connections	To whom: Stakeholders (participants, community, and donors) For what: Development of participants and their community How: Internal performance measurement	Community
Public University	Legitimacy: Expertise-driven (meeting needs of students, faculty, alumni, etc.) Authority: Profession-driven position as respected institution Identity: Reputation-driven rankings	To whom: Stakeholders (students, faculty, alumni, etc.) For what: Rankings and accomplishments How: Internal performance measurement	Profession

Ideal logics driving facets of accountability within the NPPP

Within the NEC partnership, each organization or agency brings its own ideal logic and expectations about accountability. The ideal logics based on Skelcher and Smith's (2015) ILA framework are mapped to desired facets of accountability for the NPPP in Table 2. The results of the analysis in this case study suggest that the mechanism that translates ideal logics to the needs within a partnership is based in each organization's or agency's drive to retain aspects of its own identity and logics even when engaging in an emergent, pilot-year program. Additionally, many of the partners noted the need for evaluation or performance metrics for this NPPP. While performance measurement was mentioned, this lack of metrics will be discussed in the following section that explores tensions and cross-pressures that are developing.

Table 2: Organizational institutional logics and facets of accountability

	Ideal logic		Facets of accountability desired in NPPP
City Parks	State		To whom: Partnership leaders For what: Participant retention How: [Metrics suggested]
State Parks	State and Community		To whom: Stakeholders - state park management and donors For what: In-kind support to NPPP How: Participant feedback and testimonials; [Metrics suggested]
Federal Parks	Profession		To whom: Partnership leaders For what: In-kind support to NPPP How: [Metrics suggested]
Nonprofit	Community		To whom: Stakeholders – Community, partnership leaders, and donors For what: Participant retention and development How: Participant feedback and testimonials; [Metrics suggested]
Public University	Profession		To whom: Partnership leaders For what: Participant development How: [Metrics suggested]

As is noted in Table 2, sources of authority that lead to perceptions of "to whom" the partnership should be accountable varies somewhat. The city parks, federal parks, and public university partnership members suggested that the partnership as a whole should be internally accountable to its leaders. One parks leader described this perception of accountability to fellow partners by saying, "All of us have different levels of overseeing things...We all know our roles and no one is overstepping boundaries. I am not able to be as autonomous because I am not the chief." A representative of the NEC partnership at the public university also stated, "We are in

this together, we are leading together and are responsible to each other." The nonprofit organization and the state parks saw authority and sources of accountability being driven by external forces manifest in the diverse needs of stakeholders. The nonprofit staff recognize their connection and responsibilities to the community that also translate to the work of the NEC. One nonprofit leader shared, "We have to make sure our language meets the people we are serving...We are talking about people changing their hearts and if you want (NEC to create) social change, we need (the community) to look at themselves in a different way."

Regarding "for what" and "how" the partnership may be accountable, the variety of ideal logics has translated into many, disparate concepts for the partners. Central to this issue, and to be discussed in more detail below, are challenges around mapping legitimacy "for what" to be accountable to tangible measurements or evaluation metrics. Among the partners that represent the local, state, and national parks systems, there are different views of whether anecdotal and testimonial feedback from participants will suffice as appropriate program evaluation. One parks staff member said, "I wanted to know what testimonials the kids and parents shared. But, the system of parks we are in doesn't always keep quotes from people (participants in programs) and we don't use them much because people want to see numbers (for evaluation purposes)." The university did recognize that its employees who work in coordinating roles with the NEC provide oversight, but there is still no consistent way to measure performance. A member of the university wondered, "What is our real expectation here? We have not been able to define quantitative measures (for NEC). If we can do that, we can understand what we are trying to do for the future."

The nonprofit organization, which leads the program and has the most direct contact with the participants, feels that some evaluation and performance measurement processes are in place, but there is a lack of common language among the partners to support accountability on the level of program outcomes that directly speak to the needs of the community that they serve.

The nonprofit staff also feel that lines of communication with other partners about evaluation measures are not as open as would be beneficial to the program. A leader of the nonprofit states, “It was challenging to communicate with partners (this year). The partners do not respond much. I will send a report or article. I will get something back like ‘nice job’ but that is all.”

Challenges and cross-pressures of accountability within the NPPP

In the pilot year of the NEC partnership, each organization felt comfortable with informal accountability, but as the program and partnership continues in to a second year, several challenges and potential cross-pressures are surfacing. Table 3 shows the nature of three challenges and cross-pressures, based on Romzek et al.’s (2012, 2014) model of the dynamics of informal accountability relationships. These findings focus on the three most prominent themes that surfaced, including a gap between the rhetoric and reality of partnering, financial pressures, and emerging tensions between formal and informal accountability.

All of the partners within NEC recognized an obvious gap between how they had initially spoken about their shared understanding of the partnership, and the reality during the pilot year. First, the partners increasingly recognized that there is a lack of clear program evaluation measures and a lack of any kind of performance measurement. The program seems to be functioning, but the partners do not have a way to assess it against any benchmarks or indicators. Leaders at the public university summed up the issue by saying, “We all agree with the passion here and that’s what got us to the table. But now it’s a reality check. We have not been able to define quantitative metrics.” A state parks manager also stated this need directly by saying, “More established reporting is needed. It (evaluation measures) are important for all of us so we can show we are doing something with our resources (that are being given to NEC).” A university representative also shared concern that, “we rely a lot on just the notes from (the nonprofit). That's good information, but it could be more directed.”

Table 3: Challenges and cross-pressures within the NPPP

	Rhetoric/reality	Financial	Formal vs. informal
City Parks	Lack of performance measurement	Business/sustainability planning needed	Communication channels and contracting process
State Parks	Lack of performance measurement	Business/sustainability planning needed	Communication channels and contracting process
Federal Parks	Lack of performance measurement	Funding for personnel	Communication channels and contracting process
Nonprofit	Lack of performance measurement	Funding for personnel	Communication channels
Public University	Lack of performance measurement	Business/sustainability planning needed	Program coordinator role and communication channels

Financial pressures are also driving challenges within the NPPP. Along with questions about funding are suggestions from partners to enter in to a process define a more structured business plan. The city parks, state parks, and public university have a strong focus on future business and sustainability planning. The university staff stated, “(We) need to get on solid financial footing. We need to get our arms around a sound business plan for this program.” Both the city and state parks recognize financial stability, as well as the consistent presence of in-kind donations as an important challenge. One city parks manager stated, “There would not be clear expectations set for what is needed and what is being given (if people in current roles where no longer in charge). Redundancy and sustainably are needed.”

Funding for personnel has become a concern for both the nonprofit organization and representatives from the federal parks system. Members of the nonprofit expressed their concerns by stating that “If we want to expand, we need funding or a new partner to put money in to the training (for more staff) but we need to make a plan. None of the partners can do the training now.” The federal parks staff noted that funding is also needed to help the partners

further personally engage, build shared norms, and have “face time” for planning. One staff member stated, “We need funding to implement a couple of visits (at the main program site) to really experience the (participants') neighborhood. Excellent to get the partners together and more time together would help us work well together.”

The largest area of challenge and cross-pressure involves expectations and needs surrounding formal versus informal accountability practices. The findings suggest that one of the most pressing challenges is communication between partners. Communication within the partnership concerns both logistics for the program itself and the sustainability of the partnership structure. Partners feel that more consistent communication would be helpful alongside discussions of the future of the program and possible expansion opportunities. Communication within the NPPP can serve as a way to solidify how the partners will be accountable to each other. A manager within the parks system stated that he sees a need for, “more formalized and more consistent meetings of the partnership to see how things are progressing. There are a lot of externalities that can affect all of us (the partners) and meeting more frequently can help us work together in a more sustainable way.” A representative from the university expressed concern that the lack of consistent and deliberate communication within the partnership could lead to partners disengaging from the work. She said, “All of us (the partners) can support this but we need to keep talking. Engagement is about long-term benefit and we have to keep them (the NEC partners) excited about long-term to stay involved.”

Stemming from the pressures of communication, is the need for role clarity among the organizations and agencies. For the parks' systems, roles could be established through a formal contracting process, and for the public university an official coordinator role may be an acceptable solution. A parks representative stated that, “We stepped out on faith (for the pilot year of NEC) and there are questions remaining. As it (NEC) is moving forward and growing, all of the players may need to sit down and do a MOU (memorandum of understanding).” The

university representative also shared that “accountability needs to get better soon. One central coordinator person could implement that.” While the other partners’ views seem to suggest a shift towards more formal processes like contracts and coordinator roles, the nonprofit views the challenge as more about governance in general. The nonprofit manager is also calling for a chance to get clarity from all the partners and “define whose role is what and who is doing what over the lifetime of this program.”

Another important dynamic that is driving the suggestions for more formal accountability structures and governance mechanisms is the need for clarity about the role of the nonprofit organization itself that is delivering the program. Some partners view the nonprofit as a vendor that can easily be replaced as needed, while other partners see the nonprofit and its staff as central to the success of the first year of NEC. A local parks manager asked, “As this matures, a question is whose is it? A scary question, but a necessary one.” Feedback from university representatives also reflects a need to formalize ownership of the program model and curriculum to delineate roles in the future so that more deliberate strategic planning can take place.

Finally, some partners also see the formalization of accountability as a way to clarify contingency planning and issues that could arise around liability if there is an incident as part of the outdoor education program. A parks manager clearly shared his organization’s unease by saying, “We need the risk management and liability side (in the MOU). I do think as we made it through the pilot phase we need to move in to an MOU phase so everyone clearly understands what the roles are in contingency planning.” A top official at the university encouraged a process for creating a formal contract as a way to define “how the different entities can work together. Agreements (like an MOU) helps us see how we can help each other as part of a strong partnership.”

Discussion

Overall, in the pilot year of the NEC partnership and program there were several strong drivers of informal accountability, but cross-pressures between NEC's accountability structures and the accountability structures within the individual partner organizations' ideal logics have begun to surface. Although the loose or under-defined accountability structures do have support and reinforcement on some levels, there are challenges to the partnership's performance that have emerged in the pilot year and are encouraging partners to consider more formal accountability that aligns with the individual organizations' institutional logics. These challenges include disconnect between the rhetoric versus reality of partnering evident in the lack of clear program evaluation measures and performance measurement, financial and sustainability challenges, and different expectations of formal versus informal communication and roles between partners.

To expand the field's understanding of the how institutional logics of partner organizations, Figure 1 above is offered as an integrated framework of ILA and accountability dynamics. Findings from this case study provide support for the process of individual organizations or agencies having unique sources of legitimacy, authority, and identity (Skelcher & Smith, 2015) that translate into their own internal facets of accountability (Romzek et al., 2012, 2014). When partners then engage in an NPPP, each arrives with its ideal logic and perceptions of accountability that may or may not be reconciled over time. This case study focuses specifically on a NPPP in its pilot year when no contract is in place. The findings do indeed show that challenges and cross-pressures can feed back into the process of establishing potential drivers of informal or formal accountability.

This study was not without some limitations, including that the partners as a whole have a vested interest in seeing the NEC continue because the program meets a need to better serve inner-city youth. While some tensions in mismatched accountability expectations may be arising

after the pilot year, the partners also express a desire to navigate these challenges to sustain the program they are creating together. In this way, feedback from the partners in this case should be examined as part of the "maturing" process of the partnership and not as signals of what governance concerns could eventually dissolve the NPPP. Additionally, each organization in this study has had experience in a partnership before, but not as part of a NPPP with a large scope that includes multiple domains of a public agency in the form of local, state, and national parks, a nonprofit, and a public university. This lack of past experience, whether positive or negative, may contribute to some of the positive bias that the partners exhibit around wanting to sustain the NPPP even when the accountability measures that each organization values as necessary are missing.

As outlined in the analysis presented above, the ideal logics of partner organizations and agencies mix within the NPPP. Potentially mismatched facets of accountability give rise to the challenges and cross-pressures over time. In this case, the rhetoric versus reality of partnering was present alongside issues of financial sustainability and expectations for formal versus informal accountability. These findings suggest that the NPPP is still undergoing a significant evolutionary period that could result in three possible outcomes of hybrid accountability based on Skelcher and Smith's (2015) theoretical merging of intuitional logics. A significant area for future research is to explore how and why this NPPP, and others that engage in non-contracted pilot-programs or phases, emerge with either assimilated, blended, or blocked logics regrading accountability.

Conclusion

This pilot phase, pre-contract NPPP poses a context rich for research inquiry as the accountability measures of the NPPP were initially mismatched with the internal accountability measures and institutional logics of the organizations and agencies involved. Despite this

incongruity, the partnership was willing to accept variation during the pilot year in accountability structures as long as the program retains participants and meets its agreed-upon mission. Overall, the partnership was established and did function on loosely informal accountability. As the program continues, all partners are interested in pursuing their institutional logics of accountability by engaging in business planning that can support consistent funding and creating written processes to address risk management and contingency planning. A variety of suggested governance mechanisms highlight the need for clearer definitions of partnership roles for each organization in ways that would establish more formal accountability.

Program expansion has also encouraged more discussion of formal contract processes, especially regarding the intellectual property rights of the program curriculum that the nonprofit designed. As the program enters its second year, seeks more grant-based funding, and plans to expand to other locations, more defined accountability measures and suggested governance mechanisms are emerging. These governance mechanisms include more formal institutionalization processes and a push for the creation of evaluation measures that meet the needs of all partners. Potential expansion of the program is also encouraging more discussion of formal contract processes or MOUs.

The findings from this research illustrate the norms, behaviors, challenges, and tensions of the formation and creation stage of NPPPs, as well as offer a more nuanced understanding of the dimensions of decision-making involved in achieving suitable accountability structures in the context of competing institutional logics. In this analysis, there is evidence that the formation stage and pilot year of the NPPP demonstrated diverse understandings and needs in regard to accountability. As more and more nonprofits partner with government for social programs and social services, many may undergo a similar pilot year of experimentation. In

these instances, non-existent, loose, or emergent accountability may be present in the initial partnership structures, but new dynamics can arise as the partnership and programs mature.

In the case in this study, some tensions and cross-pressures did surface between the individual partner organizations' accountability structures and the overall partnership structure, leading to suggestions of new governance mechanisms that are derived from each organization's institutional logics of accountability. Other NPPPs could experience these same pressures, but proper communication of the mission and its importance to each partner may serve as an enabling force to begin reconciling the challenges of diverse organizations in a partnership. The rhetoric versus reality gap and mismatches of accountability structures, manifest in a need for formal accountability and business planning to maintain financial sustainability of the partnership, needs to be recognized by public managers. Another driver for formal accountability structures can be a concern about the role of the nonprofit as either a vendor or an essential element of the success of the program. For other NPPPs, clarity in communication and deliberate planning for future funding could serve as way to validate each partners' institutional logics and maintain mutually-beneficial accountability.

Public managers are increasingly tasked with participating in, and even curating, partnerships throughout all sectors. Collaboration is not without its challenges and paradoxes (see Vangen, 2016), but recognition of the potential need for reconciliation of institutional logics in many partnerships processes can be beneficial to public managers. Not only can managers be more proactive in their appreciation of the values and logics of others organizations, but they can also enter into NPPPs better prepared to embrace creative solutions that emerge through the process of exploring opposing, but equally valuable, solutions to creating sustainable partnerships with blended logics and approaches to accountability.

Appendix A: Interview protocol

Research goal	Main questions	Possible probes
What institutional logics regarding important facets of accountability exist among the actors engaged in the pilot-year of the NPPP?	When NEC began in summer 2014, describe what your organization agreed to do for, or contribute, to the NEC partnership.	Who decided what your contribution would be? How was it decided? Was someone in charge of overseeing your contribution? If so, what did the oversight look like? Have you identified performance indicators for your organization in regards to your role? How do you monitor it? How would know if your involvement in this project was accomplishing what you hoped it would accomplish? What information would you rely on to tell you this?
	In your role, how do you see your organization using performance measures or metrics to *internally* track success?	Who sets the performance measures? How are the goals and outcomes tracked? How do you know when your work has been successful? Who do you feel that you are responsible to within your organization? Who are the outside stakeholders for your organization?
What ideal types of accountability are present amongst the partners in the NPPP?	How does your organization set goals and outcomes for the specific parts of the NEC program that you contribute?	Who sets the performance measures? When and where did this conversation take place? Describe what the conversations were like. Have

		there been follow up conversations? How are the responsibilities tracked?
	Now that you are working with the NEC partnership, what do the performance structures for that program look like?	
What challenges or cross-pressures are emerging in regard to reconciling ideal types of accountability for the future?	As NEC enters the second year, in this partnership, do partners have any new systems in place that help them remain accountable to each other?	If so, how have you communicated these goals and outcomes with the other NEC partners? If so, how will you now know if you are meeting your performance measures If so, who decided what changes needed to be made? How was it decided?
	Are there any areas your organization would like to see within NEC that need more oversight or improvement in accountability?	Are there tensions between how your organization tracks metrics and how NEC does? If so, describe why some areas may need more oversight.
	Are there any additional things that are needed for the partnership to be effective?	Is the existing structure of NEC working well? If not, who would be part of the process to create any new processes? Why? What outcomes would you expect from the new structures you envision?

Disclosure statement

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

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