

Beyond Cans and Capacity: Nonprofit Roles and Service Network Objectives in an Emergency Food Network

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Abstract:

Many essential public services are provided through networks of community-based nonprofit organizations. Previous research demonstrates that simply providing additional resources to these organizations is insufficient to better address demands for public services. We also know little about how and why these organizations adopt network-level objectives related to service provision. In this analysis, we expand the focus of service provision beyond capacity to incorporate the unique roles that define the very existence of nonprofit organizations, and how these roles affect organizational behavior with respect to service network objectives. We use focus group, survey, and administrative data from 100 community-based nonprofit organizations in emergency food service network to explore the relationships between capacity, roles, and specific program objectives.

Key words: nonprofit, capacity, service provision, roles, networks

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Introduction

The economic crisis that began in 2008 led to growing demand for essential social services, such as emergency food and housing assistance, job training, and community development. Many of these services are administered through networks of community-based nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Prior research indicates that within any given service provision network, nonprofit organizations have varying capacities that may influence their ability to adapt or enhance their services in response to changes in demand.

Additionally, nonprofit organizations have their own values and serve diverse purposes that may not align with their stated purposes of service provision. These purposes may influence their responsiveness to increased demand. Here, we conceptualize nonprofit purposes through the framework of nonprofit roles. Aside from service provision, common nonprofit roles include social capital creation, citizen engagement, political advocacy, innovation and value expression. This framework allows us to explore the extent to which a nonprofit organization's identification with particular roles helps explain its willingness to adopt particular service network objectives

For this study, we collect data from organizations that are part of a large emergency food network in central Ohio. Motivated by changing economic circumstances, the coordinating agency (Foodbank) established service objectives to double annual food distribution, increase the use of evidence-based practices, and enhance pantry networking. To achieve these objectives, the Foodbank turned to its network of more than 200 nonprofit and voluntary partner organizations. Employing a mixed methods research design, we identify those factors that are associated with the perceived ability (and willingness) of partner organizations to respond to these service

objectives. We leverage focus group and survey data to explore the extent to which nonprofit roles provide additional explanatory power-- beyond traditional measures of capacity.

The findings from our analysis have implications for both practice and research. Practically, coordinators of service networks often rely on the voluntary participation of diverse organizations. Our study highlights the importance of understanding the resource-based and perceptual factors that influence the likelihood of organizational compliance with service objectives. Empirically, we extend research analyzing nonprofit capacity with an approach to assess nonprofit roles, providing a more complete picture of factors that influence nonprofit organization responsiveness to changes in the external environment.

Background and Theoretical Expectations

Community service provision networks consist of three or more organizations that consciously agree to coordinate and collaborate with one another in order to deliver services, address problems and opportunities, transmit information, innovate, and/or acquire needed resources (Provan and Kenis 2008). Unlike information sharing networks or informal collaborations, service provision networks are goal-directed and intentional (Kilduff and Tsai 2003), with the ultimate task of ensuring the delivery of some essential social service. Service provision networks vary substantially in terms of structure, centrality, density and coordinating mechanisms (Isett and Provan 2005; Provan and Milward 2001; Tolbert and Zucker 1983). Here, we focus on those service provision networks whose members participate voluntarily, rather than networks whose members are legally or otherwise mandated to participate (Kenis and Provan 2009).

What factors influence the extent to which nonprofit organizations embrace network objectives?

Building from prior studies, we expect organizational capacity to be an important factor.

Capacity can be broadly defined as the attributes and processes that enable an organization to achieve its mission, including the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and meet demand for services (Christensen and Gazley 2008; Doherty et al. 2014; Eisinger 2002). Dimensions of capacity can be physical, e.g.:m infrastructure, material, and financial resources (Christensen and Gazley 2008; Doherty et al. 2014). Other capacity factors include managerial processes and planning (Nye and Glickman 2000; Sowa et al. 2004), and collaborative capacity (Doherty et al. 2014; Glickman and Servon 1998; Graddy and Chen 2006).

In an early study of Community Development Corporations, Glickman and Servon (1998) concluded that intermediaries wishing to improve the performance of organizations within their networks should move beyond providing grants and supplies (“bricks and sticks”), to facilitating more holistic capacity building of community development corporations. Funders and network coordinators launched a capacity building movement in the late 1990s and early 2000s in an attempt to increase the effectiveness of their partner organizations (e.g. De Vita and Fleming 2001; Light 2004). Despite some evidence of these efforts, researchers have noted limitations of conceptualizing and measuring capacity, particularly pertaining to mission achievement and accounting for the diverse purposes of nonprofit organizations (Doherty et al. 2014; Glickman and Servon 2003; Sobeck and Agius 2007; Wing 2004). Additionally, in their study of food pantries specifically, Paynter and Berner (2014) call into question the generalizability of certain

aspects of organizational capacity, noting differences in grassroots organizations that call for additional study.

Our study proposes a more holistic conceptualization of capacity that integrates what stakeholders help define as central, unique, and enduring to a particular organization's identity and purpose (Albert and Whetten 1985). Nonprofit organizations often espouse participative, relational and self-organizing values (Herranz 2008; Hill and Lynn 2003), representing the identities of diverse stakeholders on whom the organizations are dependent for survival (Eckerd and Moulton 2011; Frumkin 2002; Moulton and Eckerd 2012). An organization can exhibit multiple identities, or roles, simultaneously (Albert and Whetten 1985; Balser and Carmin 2009). For example, an organization can present itself to clients with a focus on service delivery, but present itself to donors and volunteers as an outlet for value expression. This strategic dissonance can lead to goal conflict (Bailey and Falconer 1998; Elsbach and Kramer 1996) – i.e.: pursuit of objectives seemingly incongruent with organizational goals of service delivery. An understanding of these roles may thus help explain service network behaviors, such as willingness to take on additional clients when there is a perceived gap in a service network or to participate in a community meeting to discuss new strategies.

Prior literature suggests several roles that are core to the nonprofit sector (Frumkin 2002; Kim 2016; Moulton and Eckerd 2012; Salamon 2002). Following Frumkin (2002), we organize nonprofit roles along two dimensions. The first dimension assesses whether the organization's activities are supply-driven (initiated by entrepreneurs internal to the organization) or demand-driven (initiated in response to a societal need). The second dimension reflects the extent to

which activities are instrumental (accomplishing tasks) or expressive (outlets for individuals to express values). Using these dimensions, Frumkin's typology identifies four roles: service delivery (demand, instrumental), innovation (supply, instrumental), civic/political engagement (demand, expressive), and values/faith (supply, expressive).¹

For each role construct, we identify relevant theories that may help explain the expected relationships between a given role and the pursuit of particular objectives -- including economic, organizational, institutional, and network theories.² We then propose types of service objectives that are most aligned with a particular role emphasis. We draw from prior literature that includes both programmatic processes (how services are delivered and coordinated) and programmatic outcomes (intended change in the target population) (Sowa et al. 2004) to define service objectives. Finally, we suggest capacity factors that are most likely to be perceived as barriers for organizations espousing particular roles. In particular, we draw from the literature on organizational capacity to identify if physical barriers (e.g., resources and space) or non-physical barriers (e.g., planning capacity, motivation, and trust) are more likely to be relevant for a particular role. Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the theories, service objectives and capacity barriers.

[Insert Exhibit 1 Here]

¹Other researchers have separated the roles of civic engagement, social capital creation, and political advocacy; we combine them here due to our limited sample size and inability to differentiate their effects. Frumkin (2002) more broadly refers to innovation as social entrepreneurship; however, we follow the lead of other scholars and use the term innovation (Herranz 2008; Moulton and Eckerd 2012; Salamon 2002).

² We acknowledge that multiple theoretical perspectives can be used to help inform the relationships in each quadrant. We highlight particular theories as examples of those that may be most applicable.

The grid's upper left quadrant represents service provision, where an organization views its role as filling a critical service gap (instrumental). Economic theories can be used to help explain the types of service objectives pursued in line with this role. Nonprofits may evolve to provide services that are demanded by the public, but are not adequately provided for in the private market due to the public nature of the good, information asymmetries, externalities or other barriers to a functioning market (Hansmann 1980). Given the need to demonstrate that they are responding to unmet demand, nonprofits emphasizing this role may be more likely to pursue concrete, measurable service objectives, including increases in participation (outputs) or increases in efficiency (e.g., time or cost to produce outputs). Insufficient physical resources (financial, physical, human) are expected to be the primary perceived barrier to meeting these objectives.

H1: The greater a nonprofit organization's focus on the service delivery role, the more likely it will be that the organization will pursue objectives for which results can be easily measured, such as increasing the number of participants served or strategies to enhance efficiency.

The innovation role is in the upper right quadrant, where organizations initiate new practices or services (instrumental) in response to ideas generated by organizational stakeholders (supply-side). Organizational theories that emphasize the strategic behaviors of organizational actors are relevant here. Strategies for innovation may be in response to perceived pressures from the external environment, where organizations seek to differentiate themselves from their competition (Porter 1979; Vining 2011), or to manage dependencies on external groups by

diversifying their practices (Hillman et al. 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). In the nonprofit sector, organizational innovation may also occur through organizational learning, where nonprofit organizations share best practices and engage in experimentation to identify new ways to better achieve their missions (McDonald 2007). Organizations are more likely to seek out and emulate best practices when there is ambiguity about processes that are most effective (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Herman and Renz 1997; Verbruggen et al. 2011). Barriers are likely to be a mix of physical and non-physical, such as a perceived lack of managerial capacity or planning capacity to implement changes in processes.

H2: The greater a nonprofit's focus on the innovation role, the more likely the organization will pursue service process enhancements such as sharing and adopting best practices.

The bottom left quadrant includes those organizations responding to needs (demand) for social cohesion or value aggregation (expressive). Roles aligning on these dimensions include civic engagement, political advocacy and social capital creation. This quadrant is informed by network theories such as social capital (Berger and Neuhaus 1977) and social embeddedness (Granovetter 1973) as well as theories of governance that incorporate coproduction, wherein the client or service recipient is involved in the production process (Brandsen and Pestoff 2006). For this role, nonprofits are expected to pursue objectives that demonstrate value to the community, such as community member or beneficiary engagement in decision-making as Heinze et al. (2016) demonstrate. These interactions empower clients and give legitimate voice to the varied stakeholders in a nonprofit organization (Bovaird 2007). Barriers here are primarily non-

physical, including information costs, reputation, perceived lack of trust and diverse motivations (Fledderus et al. 2014).

H3: The greater an organization's focus on civic engagement, political advocacy, and/or social capital creation, the more likely the organization will pursue service processes that demonstrate a commitment to social cohesion or community member engagement.

Finally, the bottom right quadrant includes those organizations espousing a value expression role, where action is taken to advance particular values (expressive) in response to stakeholder ideas and preferences (supply). A basic tenet of resource dependence theory argues that every organization needs resources to be sustainable, the procurement of which affects organizational behavior (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Freeman (1994) and Fassin (2009) argue the importance of strategically addressing stakeholder interests in the name of organizational sustainability. This may mean implementing processes and prioritizing outcomes that reflect the values of stakeholders that control key resources (i.e.: donors who give funding or volunteers who give time to implement programs). Barriers here are primarily non-physical and relate to stakeholder preferences, where the organization prioritizes the values of certain key stakeholders (e.g.: volunteers) over others (e.g.: clients or service network coordinators)

H4: An organization's likelihood of adopting service network objectives may be mediated by the extent to which the organization focuses on value expression.

III. Research Design

The Case of the Foodbank

We explore the above expectations through a case study of a large service provision network of food pantries. In the U.S., food pantries are typically associated with a regional Foodbank where they have access to food at reduced (or no) cost, including government provisions and private industry surplus. Our sample consists of 270 nonprofit organizations located across 20 counties in central and eastern Ohio, who are affiliated with a central Foodbank. The Foodbank can be considered a network coordinator, distributing resources (food) and best practices to food pantries within the network. The Foodbank network is voluntary; however, both the food pantries and Foodbank are dependent on one another to achieve their missions. Food pantries could choose to operate without the resources provided by the Foodbank but they would be less likely to be able to meet the hunger needs in their communities. The Foodbank views as its primary clients the end-users who receive food. The pantries provide a means for the Foodbank to reach its primary clients. The Foodbank cannot mandate specific practices that may not align with pantry views without potentially alienating these partner agencies.

The Foodbank indicated an interest in three service-related objectives including expanding service provision, disseminating best practices, and increasing networking among its partners. Serving more clients reflects increased utilization, which is a clear way to demonstrate response to increased demand. Therefore, we expect that organizations emphasizing the service provision role will be more likely to adopt the objective to serve more clients.

The objective to adopt the choice pantry model is aligned with two different roles. The choice pantry model is an industry best practice to reduce food waste and more efficiently serve the

needs of clients (Martin et al. 2013; Verpy et al. 2003). Thus, those emphasizing the innovation role may be more likely to adopt this model. Additionally, the choice model incorporates elements of coproduction by empowering clients to participate in the delivery of services, which may increase client engagement. We thus expect organizations reflecting innovation or social capital creation roles to align with this objective.

The Foodbank has expressed a desire to increase pantry networking. This provides opportunities for sharing best practices, which is central to the innovation role. Additionally, it can facilitate relationship-building and community member engagement, which speak to the (demand-driven, expressive) social capital and civic engagement roles.

Methods

Qualitative and quantitative data for this analysis were collected through (1) a series of regional focus groups, followed by (2) an online and telephone survey, and (3) administrative data provided by the Foodbank. First, we began our analysis with a series of 8 regional focus groups held between March 1 and May 31, 2010. Representatives from each of the 270 food pantries were invited (by mail, email and telephone) to attend one of the regional meetings. In total, 131 representatives from 90 (33 percent) of the food pantries attended a focus group, lasting an average of two hours each.

The purpose of the focus groups was to identify successful strategies as well as barriers to the three Foodbank objectives. Focus group discussions were recorded and analyzed using an inductive-deductive approach (Bigelow and Stone 1995; Miles and Huberman 1994). Focus

group probes were pre-structured to elicit insights on specific barriers to adopting network objectives, including an exploration of specific roles. Coded responses informed the creation of a survey instrument, the independent variables to be used in the multivariate analysis, and the interpretation of study findings.

An online survey was emailed to executive directors (or comparable contacts) of the 270 food pantries in June 2010. Follow-up with non-respondents was conducted via email, mail and telephone, and a telephone option to complete the survey was provided. In all, representatives from 148 food pantries (55 percent) responded to the survey, of which 110 (40 percent) had complete responses to all survey questions.³ Finally, administrative data on both respondents and non-respondents was provided by the Foodbank, as well as data on food needs in each county service area. Missing data on administrative indicators and survey questions results in a final sample of 98 to 102 observations with complete data, depending on the outcome variable.

Following a mixed-methods research design, we first describe findings from the focus groups and survey responses, beginning with general perceptions of the Foodbank objectives, followed by indicators for nonprofit roles and capacity. Finally, we estimate a series of multivariate models to explore the relative influence of nonprofit roles and capacity on network objectives.

IV. Findings

Service Network Objectives

Table 1 indicates partner agencies' willingness and ability to adopt each network objectives:

³ Using administrative data, we tested for significant differences between respondents and non-respondents. Respondent organizations are more often located in urban counties and tend to be larger, distributing more pounds of food and serving more individuals and households than non-respondents. The proportion with religious affiliation is consistent across both groups.

servicing more clients, operating a choice pantry model, and networking interest (survey questions available in online appendix). First, survey respondents were asked if they could serve more clients in response to increased demand. The majority of survey respondents (90 percent) were willing to serve more clients, but a large proportion (nearly 40 percent) indicated that they would not currently be able to serve more clients. This aligned with the insights from the focus groups. Most focus group participants expressed a desire to serve more clients, but some were hesitant about their ability to do so, primarily for capacity-related concerns including sufficient physical space to store food, and adequate management processes to organize distribution.

Second, survey respondents were asked about whether they currently implemented a choice pantry model, and if not, if they were interested in doing so. Just over half of the respondents (56 percent) indicated that they were currently implementing some type of choice model, while one-quarter indicated that they were not implementing—and were not interested in implementing—a choice based model.⁴ During the focus groups, participants referred to capacity barriers to offering choice, such as the need for space for clients to shop around. However, some of the concerns about offering choice also had to do with the organization’s prioritization of efficiency relative to other service values—for example, some expressed concern that long lines would form if they had to wait for clients to put together their own food packages.

⁴ In our primary specification, we code those providers who have already adopted the choice pantry model as “yes”, and those who have not adopted the choice pantry mode as “no.” We estimate a model as a robustness test where we code as “yes” those who currently have adopted the choice model and those who have not adopted the choice model but would be interested in doing do in the future (74.26 percent of pantries). The results are substantively unchanged from our primary specification.

Finally, survey respondents were asked about their interest in face-to face networking opportunities with other food pantries in their area. While the food pantries were part of the Foodbank service network and had ongoing interactions with the Foodbank, they did not necessarily collaborate with one another in the provision of their services. Nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated an interest in such opportunities. During the focus groups, some participants discussed an interest in sharing ideas, as well as physical space (e.g., for food storage) and pantry resources. Other participants were more hesitant, concerned about the additional time commitment that could burden an already volunteer-based operation.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

Nonprofit Roles

To elicit the various roles espoused by food pantries, focus group participants were asked to share what they saw as a significant purpose for their organization, as well as something their organization has done of which they were proud.. From this prompt, we found evidence of four of the six nonprofit roles previously identified. Many participants clearly expressed a focus on the service provision role, or meeting the hunger needs in their community, including providing high quality and efficient services. Value expression, particularly related to religious beliefs frequently came up, as well as social capital and innovation. Table 2 provides an example of focus group participant feedback corresponding to each of four nonprofit roles (no examples clearly corresponded to the civic engagement and political advocacy roles).

[Table 2 Here]

Based on the feedback from the focus groups, we incorporated indicators related to nonprofit roles into our survey instrument. Our resulting role index comprises a set of 21 survey indicators, with three to four indicators for each of six possible roles. Following Moulton and Eckerd (2012), and similar to Kim (2016), the role question asked respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how closely the indicator represents their organization, with 1 being “does not represent our values/purposes” and 5 being “strongly represents our values/purposes.” We report the descriptive statistics for each of the 21 component indicators in Table 3. We also construct the average role index score for the three to four indicators per role construct.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

The top four roles rated on the survey corresponded to the four roles described during the focus group discussion. Survey respondents rated service provision as the strongest role for their pantry, with an average score of 3.8. Value expression was rated the next highest, at 3.6. It is perhaps not surprising that value expression would be rated highly for food pantries, given that many of them are housed within religious institutions (Becker and Dhingra 2001). The third highest role espoused by survey respondents, at an average of 3.3, is the social capital role. This role includes promoting a sense of community, bringing people together and providing a place for clients and volunteers to network and feel a sense of belonging. Innovation is the fourth ranked goal per the survey responses. Similar to the focus groups, citizen engagement and political advocacy were less highly prioritized by food pantries on the survey. The nonprofit role index results demonstrate that even within a relatively homogenous group of nonprofit

organizations, there is substantial variation between organizations on particular roles (as indicated by the standard deviation of 1 or higher for most roles). This adds nuance to generalizations that might emerge regarding these types of organizations from focus groups or interviews alone.

Nonprofit Capacity

In addition to nonprofit roles, focus group participants were asked about capacity constraints that made it difficult to meet service network objectives. Several capacity-related factors emerged, including lack of staff, lack of volunteers, lack of physical space, lack of financial resources, lack of food supply, and host priorities. Based on feedback from focus group respondents, we incorporated both perceptual and objective measures of organizational capacity into the survey (Sowa et al. 2004).

To assess perceived capacity, survey respondents were asked to rate nine barriers to serving more clients on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “not a barrier” and 5 is a “significant barrier.” Descriptive statistics for individual survey items are provided in Table 4. As indicated in Table 4, finances are the largest perceived barrier to serving more clients (with an average rating of 3.3), followed by physical space (average of 3.2), food supply (2.6) and human resources (2.3 for volunteers and 2.23 for staff). Other barriers were not perceived to be as substantial.

We employ principal components factor analysis to extract the uncorrelated components associated with the nine capacity barriers. As Table 4 illustrates, this data reduction technique

yields two capacity factors: one resource-based (finances, food, staff, volunteers), and one non-resource-based (community need and host priorities).

[Insert Table 4 Here]

On the survey, we also incorporate objective indicators of organizational capacity. We include an indicator for presence of paid staff (professionalization), years with the Foodbank (organizational age) and whether or not the pantry has a religious affiliation. We include this because, while the values role is not only a function of religion, many food pantries are housed in religious institutions, which may influence goals and service delivery. Finally, we include an indicator of “missing meals” from administrative data that may indicate community need. Missing meals (logged) is the estimated rate of food insecurity per person in a county, calculated by Feeding America based on a vector of explanatory factors that have been found to contribute to food insecurity.⁵

Comparison of Means

We expect that pantries adopting particular service network objectives may align themselves more strongly with particular nonprofit roles. To explore these relationships, we compare nonprofit role index means for pantries adopting particular service network objectives and pantries not adopting the particular objectives, with t-tests for statistical differences. Results are reported on Table 5.

⁵ We acknowledge the limitations of this variable, measured at the county level, not differentiating need between pantries in the same county. However, this proxy follows industry practice. More information on Feeding America’s methodology available here: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/how-we-got-the-map-data.html?referrer=http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2013/overall>

[Insert Table 5 Here]

For the objective to serve more clients, the only role rated significantly higher is the service provision role, a relationship we expected. For the objective to adopt the choice pantry model (best practices), social capital, political advocacy and innovation are rated significantly higher. We also expected pantries adopting best practices to rate higher on the innovation role, and the demand-driven expressive roles such as social action and political advocacy, which we see.

For the objectives related to networking, we observe higher emphasis on all roles except value expression. We expected emphasis on social innovation, social capital, and civic engagement roles. An emphasis on service provision can also be explained since service provision may be fundamentally enhanced through networking.

Finally, we explore the relationships between indicators of capacity and service network objectives. As indicated in Table 5, there are a few significant differences. First, pantries ready and able to serve more clients or adopt best practices have a significantly lower resource barrier factor score, as would be expected. By contrast, those pantries interested in networking report significantly higher resource barriers. Those pantries reporting that they are not interested in serving more clients are more likely to be affiliated with a religious organization. As might be expected, those pantries that have already adopted the choice pantry model or are interested in networking are more professional, i.e. significantly more likely to have paid staff.

Multivariate Regression Analysis

As a final step in our analysis, we estimate a series of multivariate models. Given the binary nature of the three outcome variables, we employ probit regression, modeling the latent propensity for a pantry to adopt a given outcome. For interpretation, we report marginal effects, or the estimated change in the latent probability of the outcome for a one unit change in the independent variable.

The degrees of freedom with which to estimate our models are severely limited due to our small sample size; thus, we must be selective in the vector of explanatory variables included in each model. For each outcome variable, we first estimate a reduced form model with nonprofit roles. We limit the roles included in the regressions to service provision, innovation, value expression and social capital creation since these emerged most clearly during the focus groups, and had the highest mean scores from our survey. We then add in capacity indicators (including the factor scores for capacity), indicators of community need, and some organizational characteristics.

Table 6 reports the results of the equations for each of our service network objectives. As expected in our first hypothesis, the service provision role is positively associated with the objective of expanding services. However, once organizational factors are included, the effect is no longer statistically significant. In addition, resource barriers are negatively associated with service expansion. An organization reporting more resource barriers is less likely to be able to service more clients.

Adopting a choice pantry, as a measure of industry best practices, is positively related to the social capital role (H3). Within the Foodbank context, this practice reflects client empowerment and participation in the method of service delivery, a hallmark of coproduction and a manifestation of social capital creation. The relationship holds even with the addition of organizational and capacity measures. The innovation role is not shown to be significant, thus failing to verify H2. While resource barriers are not statistically significant here, the presence of paid staff is positively related, indicating a possible relationship between professionalization and the adoption of best practices. Professionalization could be an indicator of managerial capacity and/or training in service practices, which may influence the extent to which the organization is willing or able to adopt the choice pantry model. Further research is needed to unpack this relationship.

The service provision (H1) and innovation roles (H2) are positively associated with an interest in networking. Additionally, organizations reporting higher resource barriers are more likely to express an interest in networking. Since collaborations may increase operational efficiencies and provide opportunities for sharing best practices, the significance and direction of these relationships are in line with expectations.

We found no evidence for the hypothesis suggesting that the value expression role may affect willingness to adopt service provision goals (H4). The value expression role is inversely related to the willingness to adopt a choice pantry, but loses significance once organizational capacity and barrier variables are introduced into the model. Additionally, perceptions of non-resource barriers are not statistically associated with any of the outcomes.

[Insert Table 6 Here]

V. Discussion and Conclusions

Our study explores factors contributing to the adoption of service network objectives, beyond traditional capacity dimensions such as resources, managerial processes, and collaborative capacity. We surmise that while capacity is certainly an important factor that influences the ability of community-based nonprofit organizations to adopt service network objectives, the nonprofit organization's identity also drives adoption of these objectives. Prior literature has theorized that alignment between the purposes of the organization and the purposes of the network are critical to goal achievement, particularly in service provision networks that lack formal types of authority to coordinate action (e.g., Provan and Kenis 2008). Here, we explore a measure to empirically assess this alignment using the construct of nonprofit roles.

The focus group and survey responses provide evidence that nonprofit food pantries play many of the diverse roles described by Frumkin (2002), Kim (2016), and Moulton and Eckerd (2012). Even within the same service area, organizations vary in terms of the roles that they play. In line with prior literature, the survey and focus group data also confirm two distinct types of nonprofit capacity: resource-based and non-resource-based.

Through an exploratory analysis, we find evidence that particular role constructs are correlated with the adoption of service network objectives, largely confirming expected relationships. We then estimate a multivariate analysis to identify the extent to which nonprofit roles provide

additional explanatory power, even after controlling for traditional measures of capacity. We find some evidence of an added role effect, especially for those organizations identifying with the service provision, innovation, and social capital roles. This suggests that the willingness to adopt service network objectives may in part depend on distinct organizational identities.

Additionally, the findings related to resource barriers are in and of themselves informative. Resource barriers were not significantly associated with adopting best practices, but were negatively related to service expansion, and positively related to the networking objective. This further supports our study's premise that while resources are important, simply providing additional resources is insufficient to securing the adoption of service network objectives. Taken together, this implies that network coordinators need to understand the organizational identities and perceived barriers held by partner organizations that can affect their willingness to agree to service coordinator objectives. For example, a partner organization prioritizing social capital may not be moved to agree to increase services because the coordinator promises more resource-based assistance (e.g.: a freezer). The coordinator needs to appeal to expressive orientation reflected by the organization and address the non-resource based values in order to procure cooperation. In doing so, the service coordinator can improve overall network participation and effectiveness.

When interpreting the results of the study, it is important to keep in mind its limitations. The study is limited to analysis of emergency food service providers, thereby affecting the generalizability of the findings outside of this context. Since most of our data come from the same survey, we recognize the risk for common source bias. We do address this to some extent

by including control variables from administrative data. Additionally, the objectives we use reflect the priorities of the network coordinator, but may not be appropriate for each partner agency. The sample size is small, limiting the number of explanatory variables we could include in each model. Respondents tend to be more urban and serve larger individual and household populations than non-respondents, which may bias the findings. For example, different roles may feature more prominently in our respondent group than in the non-respondents.

The primary purpose of this analysis is exploratory and descriptive; we are not able to isolate the extent to which particular roles cause nonprofits to engage in particular practices. However, it is likely that nonprofit organizations form their roles independently of (and prior to) the establishment Foodbank's objectives. While nonprofit roles may shift over time, we expect that such shifts would occur slowly in response to multiple stakeholders governing the organization, not strictly the objectives of the Foodbank. Future work could explore these issues by employing panel data on nonprofit roles, tracking changes in role emphases over time in response to changes in the stakeholder or economic environment of the organization, and subsequent implications for network outcomes.

Despite its limitations, this study has implications for both research and practice. The findings can be used to better understand when or why nonprofit organizations engage in particular practices. The inclusion of roles offers a way for researchers to better operationalize organizational mission and perceived priorities beyond the published mission statement. In practice, these findings can inform service network members who want to encourage their partner agencies to collaborate, expand service provision, and/or adopt best practices.

Understanding the roles nonprofits play can help service network coordinators develop targeted strategies that speak to both capacity needs and mission-based priorities.

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Exhibit 1: Expected Alignment Between Nonprofit Roles and Service Objectives		
	Demand-side Orientation	Supply-side Orientation
Instrumental Rationale	<p>Role(s): Service delivery</p> <p>Objective(s): Service expansion, efficiencies</p> <p>Theoretical Perspectives: Economic theories including market failure and transaction costs</p> <p>Capacity Barriers: Primarily physical (e.g.: financial, human)</p>	<p>Role(s): Innovation</p> <p>Objective(s): Service process enhancements (e.g.: best practices)</p> <p>Theoretical Perspectives: Organizational theories including resource dependence, institutional theory (isomorphism, innovation), strategic management</p> <p>Capacity Barriers: Mix of physical and non-physical</p>
Expressive Rationale	<p>Role(s): Civic engagement, political advocacy, social capital creation</p> <p>Objective(s): Networking, collaboration, social cohesion, civic engagement</p> <p>Theoretical Perspectives: Network theories including social capital and social embeddedness; coproduction</p> <p>Capacity Barriers: Non-physical</p>	<p>Role(s): Individual expression</p> <p>Objective(s): Mediator regarding adoption of specific objectives</p> <p>Theoretical Perspectives: Resource dependence, stakeholder theory</p> <p>Capacity Barriers: Non-physical</p>

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Representative Focus Group Quotes for Service Objectives				
	Yes	No		N
		Not Able	Not Willing	
Serve More	52.94	37.25	9.8	102
Choice Pantry Model	56.44	17.82	25.74	101
Networking Interest	68.32	31.68		101

Table 2: Nonprofit roles as expressed by focus group participants

Role	Key Words/Indicators	Representative Quote(s)
Service Provision	meeting community needs, providing high quality programs/services, cost efficient	"... one thing that I'm proud of there is that we're able to serve the community."
Social Capital	sense of community/belonging, bringing people together,	" I think the thing I've really seen an improvement in is the attitudes toward the people who come in, the clients who... to be here b/c we make them feel like they're welcome here. We don't, you know, we don't put them down for anything and we just, we love them, you know, they need a hug, if they need a prayer, whatever, we're able to do that."
Innovation	new ideas/approaches, new strategies, programs not previously provided, sharing	" you really honestly need to focus on food resources outside of the food bank – that's where the collaborating partners come in. You learn how to be a vendor and search for things and volunteers and donors and all that so it's a lot more than just giving people food. It's making sure that you can give them food."
Value Expression	volunteers/staff/donors express faith, doing God's work	"And you just say a quick prayer, because what happens is we're all doing God's work. We're like shepherds for the sheep – the lost and broken sheep. So if God's work is being done, of course he's going to see it through as long as it's managed well."

*No evidence for citizen engagement or political advocacy

Table 3: Role Summary Statistics

	Mean	SD
Promoting sense of community among our clients	3.485	1.558
Bringing together people of different backgrounds	3.107	1.644
Providing place for clients to network	3.087	1.704
Providing a place for volunteers to network	3.621	1.449
<i>Social Capital Role (Mean)</i>	<i>3.321</i>	<i>1.326</i>
Participating in voter education	1.932	1.301
Participating in public education campaigns	2.699	1.427
Community organizing around social issues	2.32	1.388
Promoting census participation	2.039	1.386
<i>Civic Engagement Role (Mean)</i>	<i>2.243</i>	<i>1.077</i>
Advocate for hunger relief programs	2.777	1.481
Participating in government committees	1.806	1.268
Meeting with political leaders	1.971	1.279
Participating in policy coalitions	2.068	1.367
<i>Political Advocacy Role (Mean)</i>	<i>2.162</i>	<i>1.067</i>
Trying out new approaches	3.359	1.577
Providing new services	2.874	1.649
Sharing new strategies	2.748	1.5
<i>Innovation Role (Mean)</i>	<i>2.993</i>	<i>1.273</i>
Meeting community hunger needs	4.67	0.692
Providing high quality services	3.553	1.613
Providing cost efficient services	3.282	1.635
<i>Service Provision Role (Mean)</i>	<i>3.833</i>	<i>1.079</i>
Providing place for volunteers/staff to express values	3.621	1.528
Providing place for donors to express values	2.961	1.737
Doing God's work in our community	4.175	1.361
<i>Value Expression Role (Mean)</i>	<i>3.601</i>	<i>1.173</i>

Table 4: Capacity Indicator Summary Statistics and Principal Components Factor Analysis

	Rotated factor loadings (orthogonal varimax)				
	Mean	SD	Factor 1 (Resource)	Factor 2 (Non-Resource)	Uniqueness
<i>Panel A: Perceptual Capacity Indicators</i>					
Capacity barrier, financial	3.324	1.678	0.6798	0.2132	0.4924
Capacity barrier, food supply	2.559	1.638	0.6292	0.258	0.5375
Capacity barrier, staff	2.235	1.599	0.7304	0.0014	0.4665
Capacity barrier, volunteers	2.294	1.558	0.7374	0.1803	0.4238
Capacity barrier, space	3.235	1.66	0.5829	-0.0098	0.6601
Capacity barrier, transportation	1.971	1.36	0.5715	0.1268	0.6573
Capacity barrier, distance	1.52	1.088	0.4288	0.5309	0.5343
Capacity barrier, community need	1.706	1.287	-0.0154	0.8333	0.3054
Capacity barrier, host priorities	1.725	1.236	0.1933	0.7745	0.3628
		Eigenvalue	3.308	1.252	
<i>Panel B: Objective Capacity Indicators</i>					
	Mean	SD			
Connection to Other Pantries	2.465	1.308			
Paid staff	0.29	0.456			
Years w/Foodbank	9.784	4.422			
Religious affiliation	0.853	0.356			
Missing meals	18.31	1.534			

Table 5: Means Comparison of Nonprofit Roles/Capacity and Service Networks

	Serve More Clients		Choice Pantry			Networking			
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes			
<i>Role Index Scores (Scale 1 to 5, 5 = strongly represents our values/purposes)</i>									
Role, social capital	3.125	3.495	2.978	3.605	**	2.641	3.616	***	
Role, civic engagement	2.13	2.343	2.136	2.338		1.82	2.438	***	
Role, political advocacy	2.115	2.204	1.902	2.36	**	1.688	2.388	***	
Role, innovation	2.861	3.111	2.725	3.211	**	2.229	3.333	***	
Role, service provision	3.583	4.056	**	3.681	3.959	3.083	4.188	***	
Role, value expression	3.507	3.685	3.659	3.526		3.323	3.734		
<i>Factor Scores for Perceptual Capacity Indicators</i>									
Factor score, resource barriers	0.296	-0.263	***	0.205	-	*	-	0.122	**
Factor score, non-resource barriers	-0.009	0.008		0.005	-		-	0.016	
<i>Objective Capacity Indicators</i>									
Paid staff	0.213	0.358		0.116	0.421	***	0.156	0.353	**
Years w/Foodbank	10.25	9.37		10.18	9.491		10.03	9.623	
Religious affiliation	0.917	0.796	*	0.891	0.789		0.844	0.855	
Missing meals	18.61	18.04	*	18.59	18.08	*	17.85	18.5	**
Observations	48	54		44	57		32	69	

Table 6 Probit Estimates for Service Network Objectives

	Serve More Clients		Choice Pantry		Networking Interest	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Role, social capital	0.0091 (0.170)	0.0092 (0.182)	0.2924* (0.175)	0.3831* (0.200)	-0.232 (0.180)	-0.256 (0.189)
Role, innovation	-0.0691 (0.157)	-0.1503 (0.186)	0.0702 (0.158)	0.0169 (0.161)	0.3795** (0.186)	0.4148** (0.202)
Role, service provision	0.3279* (0.183)	0.3301 (0.202)	-0.0334 (0.183)	-0.2235 (0.214)	0.6837*** (0.208)	0.7308*** (0.223)
Role, value expression	-0.0392 (0.123)	0.1686 (0.149)	-0.2252* (0.129)	-0.1056 (0.152)	-0.1998 (0.143)	-0.1842 (0.164)
Factor score, resource barriers		-0.3688** (0.146)		-0.1988 (0.148)		0.2559* (0.149)
Factor score, non-resource barriers		-0.1013 (0.149)		-0.0945 (0.154)		-0.0382 (0.162)
Paid staff		0.3053 (0.381)		0.9976** (0.399)		-0.1803 (0.413)
Years w/Foodbank		-0.0525 (0.033)		-0.0235 (0.031)		-0.0303 (0.036)
Religious affiliation		-0.9661** (0.377)		-0.5196 (0.452)		-0.4744 (0.429)
Missing meals		-0.0958 (0.098)		-0.1127 (0.100)		0.1811* (0.102)
Constant	-0.8648* (0.511)	1.6346 (1.763)	-0.1033 (0.522)	2.5742 (2.049)	- 1.6614*** (0.558)	-4.4379** (1.912)
N	102	100	103	100	101	100
Pseudo R ²	0.038	0.163	0.067	0.2	0.228	0.281
chi ²	5.287	24.071	8.651	18.849	21.482	35.606
p	0.259	0.007	0.07	0.042	0	0

Marginal effects, discrete change in dummy variable from 0 to 1; standard errors in parentheses; *p<1; **p<.05; ***p<.01

