NGOs' Resource Capacity Antecedents for Partnerships

Khaldoun AbouAssi,[1] Nadeen Makhlouf,[1] Page Whalen[2]

[1]American University, [2]Bush School of Government & Public Service

Nonprofit organizations strive for continuous improvement in their programs' effectiveness and sustainability, service efficiency, and accountability. Typically, managers face the need to attain these objectives despite limited or declining resources. For that reason, collaboration with other organizations has become an increasingly favored tactical strategy. However, even with the extensive literature on collaboration, there is a lack of empirical testing of elements or characteristics essential to collaboration. Using survey data from environmental organizations, we find that organizations that have sufficient human resource capacity, more technological resources, and employ females at the leadership level would more likely seek collaboration than would other organizations. Organizations that generate higher internal revenues are less likely to seek collaboration.

Keywords: *collaboration, partnerships, capacity, nongovernmental organizations*

WITH THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs), the challenges these organizations face have also grown exponentially. Salamon (1994) contends, "Despite the immense expectations that have been placed on the third sector, it is still far from clear how effectively it can respond to current opportunities. For all its dynamisms, this sector remains vulnerable to a variety of internal stresses and external constraints" (118). With this in mind, many NGOs look for ways to address challenges, experiencing a growing phenomenon by which organizations are engaged in interorganizational collaborations. In fact, collaborative arrangements can today be viewed as a characteristic of organizational effectiveness (Mitchell 2015).

The public and nonprofit management literature does not agree on a definition of collaboration (O'Leary and Vij 2012). Most frequently, collaboration is defined as "the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by single organizations" (Agranoff and McGuire 2001). Although the literature also acknowledges both positive and negative implications for collaboration (Arsenault 1998; Austin 2000; Brinkerhoff 2002, 2003; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000), confusion remains around the antecedents of collaboration.

The identification of antecedents or characteristics that are essential to collaboration is limited in the existing literature. This article examines NGOs' capacities to engage in collabora-

Correspondence to: Khaldoun AbouAssi, American University, School of Public Affairs—Department of Public Administration and Policy, 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Ward Circle Building, Room 343, Washington, DC 20016–8070. E-mail: abouassi@american.edu.

Journal sponsored by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University.

Published online in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/nml.21200

tions, with the primary goal of conceptualizing these antecedents. We focus on partnership as a form of collaboration and examine the human, financial, and technological resources of organizations that initiate or take part in partnerships.

We first discuss the relation between partnerships and collaboration and then proceed to draw hypotheses informed by the literature on how NGOs' human, financial, and technological resources relate to engagement in partnerships. Next, we discuss the research setting and methodology, then analyze the results and reach some conclusions.

Collaboration and Partnership Defined

The literature lacks a common definition of *collaboration*. Some scholars consider collaboration as an umbrella concept that encompasses various forms of interorganizational relations; others approach collaboration as one of those forms (O'Leary and Vij 2012). Snavely and Tracy (2000) define collaboration as "the overarching commitment to work closely with other organizations where their missions overlap and intersect and where the combining of resources leads to improved service effectiveness and efficiency" (148). Meanwhile, Guo and Acar (2005) define it as an act in which organizations "work together to address problems through joint effort, resources, and decision making and share ownership of the final product or service" (342–43). These definitions underscore the relationship building and creative problem solving NGOs engage in to achieve certain goals.

Among practitioners, especially those working for organizations in the Global South, the term *partnership* is frequently used. A partnership reflects what Mattessich and Monsey (1992) describe as collaboration through which organizations create a common new goal, pursue it through a novel project based on a certain structure or arrangement, ongoing communication, and pooled resources used for that project. A partnership is seen as "a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labor based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner" (Brinkerhoff 2002, 21–22). Partners seek to maximize mutual benefits while maintaining their missions and values (Brinkerhoff 2002). We support this argument and view partnerships as working arrangements among diverse actors, verbalized in a formal agreement to work on agreed-upon objectives and on projects with specific time frames and resources. Partnerships are temporary endeavors. Throughout this article, the terms *collaboration* and *partnerships* are used interchangeably (Proulx, Hager, and Klein 2014).

Collaboration: Forms and Essential Elements

One essential question that emerges from the literature is: What are the fundamental components that bind organizations in collaborative relationships? Many authors (Brinkerhoff 2002; Perrault et al. 2011; Snavely and Tracy 2000, 2002) argue that trust is one of the most essential factors in partnerships. Bonds of trust between organizations aid in opening lines of communication; trust is built through understanding and having bureaucratic mechanisms for periodic interactions and meetings among organizations (Walker and Hills 2012), as well as the "development of less formal norms of behavior through an organization culture that expects and supports participatory approaches and mutual respect" (Brinkerhoff 2003, 118).

Moreover, nonprofit managers must work harmoniously, focusing on mutually beneficial outcomes and willingness to share information (Knickmeyer, Hopkins, and Meyer 2003; Snavely and Tracy 2000, 2002; Thomson, Perry, and Miller 2009). This mutuality sheds light on the importance of information sharing and cooperative interactions to strengthen partnering organizations (Axelrod 1997; Lister 2000; Provan, Isett, and Milward 2004; Thomson and Perry 2006). An agreement may also reflect each partner's rights and obligations.

Although this discussion covers some of the normative requirements for collaboration, it brings attention to resource capacity as an antecedent for collaboration. According to Sowa (2009), nonprofit organizations "operate in a marketplace, where other organizations may be in competition for resources, including financial resources and clients" (1015). Our analysis includes three varying elements of partnerships: (1) the arrangements themselves, (2) the number of partners or actors an organization is involved with, and (3) the financial resources an organization secures through these relations. The first is important for explaining the scope and kinds of collaborations. The number of partners reflects the complexity of activities involved. Every partner may have different strengths and weaknesses. They may have different capabilities that are reflected in what they can or cannot do. Hence their number affects the final outcome, the greater the number the greater the depth of what can be done. The number of partners can also affect the level of dedicated financial resources.

To acquire the resources necessary for survival, organizations must adopt strategies that are appropriate within their institutional environment (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2006; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Sowa 2009; Tsasis 2009). Without claiming causality, we are interested in understanding which organizations tend to engage in partnerships to conceptualize NGOs' (1) human, (2) financial, and (3) technological resources as antecedents for partnerships.

Human Resources

Among the most valuable resources for an NGO is its workforce. Partnership boosts organizational capacity—even from a human resources perspective—at the individual organization level. The questions to ask here are: Does staff size and expertise influence the decisions to engage in collaborative relationships? Similarly, does the extent of gender diversity at the leadership level influence such decisions?

Some would argue, yes. Public issues have grown in volume and complexity over the years; therefore, the size and quality of the human element of an organization should match the scale of those challenges. A considerable body of literature (O'Leary and Vij 2012; Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort 2006; Tsasis 2009) argues that collaboration can lead to an increase in an organization's staff quality and numbers, and is not an initial internal factor. Nevertheless, most NGOs need human capital to implement programs, complete projects, or provide services. Managers face increased pressure to accomplish more for less in competitive environments. In this competitive setting, NGOs that have access to a large pool of talents may benefit from the opportunity to implement programs and services without depleting essential internal resources. Moreover, the implementation of programs or the delivery of services may, over time, however, uncover gaps or shortcomings (Sowa 2009). These gaps can spur collaborative activities (Sowa 2009). In short, collaboration, as a multiorganization process, requires extensive coordination and communication that are best handled by a good core of qualified staff (O'Leary and Vij 2012). Organizations with an adequate number of staff members may be more likely to have the ability to collaborate with other NGOs and mitigate gaps if they exist.

NGOs with linkages to critical human resources have the ability to control or depend on those resources through established networks, and thus increase their capacity for achieving organizational goals (Chen 2010; Hardy, Phillips, and Lawrence 2003; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Provan 1984; Sowa 2009; Weber and Khademian 2008).

Consequently, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. NGOs with more staff members are likely to have

a. More partnerships
b. More partners
c. More financial resources through partnerships

Gender

Of particular interest in this study is the impact of gender on interorganizational relations. Gazley (2010) confirms a commonly accepted view that female managers tend to leverage their interpersonal skills more so than do their male counterparts. In fact, she finds that female executives are less inclined to view collaborations in a negative light. This can be beneficial in engaging in collaborations. Building collaborations requires managers who have vision, possess the capacity to perceive what an organization needs for success, and clearly demonstrate a willingness to collaborate as needed (Mulroy and Shay 1998; Snavely and Tracy 2002).

Institutional roles, however, can constrain and prescribe the behaviors of those who lead them (Benharda, Brett, and Lempereur 2013). Consequently, the relationship between the participation of women in NGOs as leaders, their styles of leadership, and interpersonal orientation have become an important topic of research (Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin 1996; Eagly 2007; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky 1992). Recent research suggests that women may have unique and significant impacts within and across organizations (Guy and Newman 2004; Meier, O'Toole, and Goerdel 2006; Stivers 2000, 2002). In the nonprofit sector, specifically, it is argued that women bring diversity of styles to decision making and "tend to lead a more democratic and participative style compared to men" (Bradshaw et al. 1996; Eagly 2007; Eagly et al. 1992, 4). Research also suggests that female managers are "less hierarchical and more participatory, interactional, and flexible" (Lunneborg 1990; Meier et al. 2006, 26; Rosener 1990).

Based upon this research, we propose that organizations led by female managers tend to reach out and engage in collaborations more often than male-led organizations. According to Foster and Meinhard's (2002) study of organizational predisposition to collaborate, "Women have different *modi operandi* [methods of working]" (553). They attribute this to the socialization process in which women are taught to be relationship oriented. In contrast, men are conditioned to be independent (Foster and Meinhard 2002).

The perpetuation of gender roles in this context is not necessarily undesirable. The literature supports the rationale behind gender differences in management methods and eschews the "perception of sameness, which would fail to acknowledge the relational qualities that are a traditional source of female pride and that may contribute to superior performance by women leaders" (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, 782). These perspectives can help facilitate the implementation of unique management behaviors by women in positions of power (Benharda et al. 2013; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly et al. 1992): "In general, people expect and prefer women to be communal, warm, and gentle and that men be agentic, manifesting traits such as confidence, aggressiveness, and self-direction" (Eagly 2007, 4). Meier et al. (2006) note that "gender matters, but it matters differently for different managerial functions" (33).

Consequently, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2. NGOs managed by women are likely to have:

a. More partnerships
b. More partners
c. More financial resources through partnerships

Financial Resources

Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory maintains that organizations establish linkages with other organizations to mitigate environmental uncertainty, increase effectiveness in negotiations for resources, and secure an organization's survival without being dominated or completely dependent upon the external environment (Sowa 2009; Tsasis 2009). A desire for an organization to enter into a collaborative relationship is dependent on its internal characteristics and external environment—particularly its resources and its ability to optimize and protect those resources while maintaining its independence and degree of autonomy (Cuijpers, Guenter, and Hussinger 2011; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Provan 1984; Snavely and Tracy 2002; Tsasis 2009).

NGOs "serve various groups in society and rely on multiple sources of funds, including private donations, membership and client fees, private foundations, corporations, and government grants and contracts" (Jang and Feiock 2007, 176). Sources of funding can also influence an NGO's management practices (AbouAssi 2014; Brinkerhoff 2003; Jang and Feiock 2007). Organizations that are mainly supported by private sources of funding are less likely to collaborate with other organizations than those that are funded publicly (Irvin 2007; Jang and Feiock 2007). Existing research also indicates that internal revenues—mainly membership fees—are a relatively stable stream of financial resources compared to others such as international funding or government subsidies (Hodge and Piccolo 2005; Wicker, Longley, and Breuer 2015); they are usually obtained from a relatively large number of members contributing a relatively small amount each, thus acting as a smoothing device (Wicker et al. 2015).

There are many reasons why nonprofits compete with one another (Irvin 2007), including competition for donated revenues, for inputs such as labor, grants, and even for media coverage (Irvin 2007, 2010). Nonprofits often rely on multiple sources of revenue because they cannot charge for services rendered (AbouAssi 2014). In addition, organizations that provide similar services compete for some resources. Resisting competitive urges in exchange for the mutual sharing of organizational assets, abilities, information, and resources makes it possible for collaborations to become successful (Byrne and Hansberry 2007; Guo and Acar 2005; Jang and Feiock 2007; Knickmeyer et al. 2003).

Consequently, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. NGOs with low internal revenues are likely to have:

a. More partnerships
b. More partners
c. More resources through partnerships

Technological Resources

Services delivered by NGOs may erroneously be perceived as inadequate because of poor communication or lack of updated technology (Brinkerhoff 2003; Hackler and Saxton 2007; McHargue 2003; O'Leary and Bingham 2007). Modern communication technology takes various forms. As far as NGOs are concerned, the most obvious, and the focus herein, are organizational websites and social media presence.

Although advanced technological resources may not be available in all organizations, the use of these resources means greater visibility and the ability to mold a desirable image to present to the public as well as to partners. Research suggests that nonprofit organizations acknowledge the increasing importance of social media. However, they do not always take advantage of all the options that social media sites have to offer (Curtis et al. 2010; Waters et al. 2009). It can be said that many nonprofits lack the resources to provide continuous attention to social media upkeep. However, Waters et al. (2009) argue that creating a profile may ward off potential relationships. In a competitive arena, social media has become a way for nonprofits to set themselves apart from other organizations in the same sector (Corder 2001). Using emergent forms of communication can help NGOs get a leg up on their competition and to persuade potential partners and stakeholders in supporting or preferring to partner with one NGO over another (Auger 2014; Maxwell and Carboni 2014). The use of technology may help in achieving clarity of expectations. Maxwell and Carboni (2014) contend that social media usage supports communication among organizations, albeit not in a substantive way.

Overall, the literature indicates that partnerships can be enhanced with the use of communication technology. Communication, especially through numerous outlets, offers NGOs an opportunity to improve upon overall organizational performance and interact with stakeholder and funder groups as well as other entities. The interaction that occurs through the use of Web-based technologies plays an important role in maintaining relationships with key stakeholders (Jo and Kim 2003; Seltzer and Mitrook 2007). In addition, studies have shown that NGOs use social media and other Web-based technologies, such as organizational websites, to "streamline management functions" and interact with other organizations (Waters 2009; Waters et al. 2009, 103). Through these interactions organizations may seek to develop strong collaborative relationships. Under the assumption that both websites and social media activity require some degree of professionalization and deliberate upkeep, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4. NGOs with more technological resources are likely to have:

a. More partnerships
b. More partners
c. More financial resources through partnerships

Sample Background

This article provides a study of the environmental NGOs in Lebanon, which hosts a large NGO sector. Lebanon depends to a great extent on various external sources of revenues such as treasury bonds, remittances, and grants. A considerable percentage of grants is channeled through NGOs (AbouAssi 2013, 2015).

NGOs in Lebanon function as dues-paying membership organizations or associations that work to serve the general public. They operate without constraints on sources of funding or control from the central government. Because of their relative fiscal freedom, NGOs secure funding from various sources, including international donors (AbouAssi 2015).

We point out several additional characteristics of Lebanese environmental NGOs. First, around 35 percent of these organizations are relatively new, founded after the year 2000, mainly because of the increase of international funding to the environmental sector. Second, NGOs in Lebanon are small organizations in terms of staff; in our sample, many environmental NGOs sporadically rely on volunteers (AbouAssi 2015). Third, collaboration among NGOs in Lebanon is weak. Networking takes place, but the NGO membership base is relatively small and largely ineffective. Developing effective partnerships is difficult for many NGOs, but some still find it necessary to collaborate—either because of funding requirements or the nature of a project (AbouAssi 2015).

Data Collection and Analysis

An online and mail survey targeted 153 registered Lebanese environmental NGOs in 2010 and 2011; 98 responded. The survey included questions related to the annual budget, internal sources of revenue (membership fees and income-generating projects), external sources of revenue, funded projects, partnerships, number of partners, staffing, and percentile distribution of external funding between 2005 and 2009. The data set covers operational and financial resources for each of the five years. Secondary data were collected from public documents (reports, media, and websites) to ensure accuracy.

Variables

To detect the relations between the resource capacity of organizations and their engagements in partnerships, we focus on three elements: the number of engagements or partnerships, the actors or partners an organization is involved with, and the resources secured through these engagements. The statistical model includes the following dependent variables:

1. *Number of partnerships*: a continuous variable measured by the definite numbers of new partnerships an NGO forges in a specific year.
2. *Number of partners*: a continuous variable measured by the definite numbers of new partners an NGO has across these partnerships in a specific year; a partner involved with the organization in more than one partnership was counted once.
3. *Financial resources or project budget*: measured by the total amount of financial resources the organization acquires through partnerships. These resources are usually separately reported as project budgets; the amounts allocated from each project in a specific year (versus the total project budget) were aggregated.

As illustrated in the research hypotheses, an NGO's resource capacity can be assessed through the inclusion of the following independent variables:

1. *Number of staff*: a continuous variable measured as a composite scale for staffing levels (part-time staff and full-time staff) an organization has in a specific year.
2. *Number of volunteers*: a continuous variable measured by the definite numbers of volunteers in a specific year.
3. *The gender of the executive director of the organization*: a binary variable (male as 0 and female as 1).
4. *Financial capacity or stability of an organization*: in terms of how much the organization can self-sustain financially: this is measured as the ratio of the internal revenue an organization annually generates mainly through membership fees and income-generating activities to the total budget for each year.
5. *Technological resources*: a binary variable measured by the presence of technological tools such as websites and social media in a specific year.

We also include two control variables: the organization's age and size (Guo and Acar 2005; Handy, Mook, and Quarter 2008; Hartenian 2007). Organizational age is measured by the time between each organization's year of establishment and the year of observation; the size of the organization is measured by the total annual budget (Benzing, Leach, and McGee 2010). This variable—along with project budget variable—was then logged to avoid skewness of results.

The data were collected on each of the 98 organizations for five consecutive years, generating 490 possible observations. After cleaning the data of missing information or inactivity of an organization at a given time, the panel data used in the model are composed of 422 observations. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of the variables.

Statistical Model

We ran separate ordinary least square (OLS) equations for the dependent variables. The analysis uses panel data from 98 Lebanese NGOs between 2005 and 2009. With panel data,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Min*	*Max*
Number of staff	422	2.249	3.722	0	23
Number of volunteers	422	22.005	54.387	0	520
Executive director gender	422	.560	.283	0	1
Internal revenues	422	2,974.784	9,649.379	0	108,807
Technological resources	422	.660	.358	0	1
Organizational age	422	16.104	10.600	0	41
Number of partnerships	422	.763	1.186	0	8
Number of partners	422	1.400	2.268	0	12
Resources through partnerships	422	124,165.777	34,869.014	0	2,572,670
Organizational size/budget	422	137,199.190	42,325.180	0	2,781,538

there might be an effect of variances over time; we are not able to obtain the complete information about these changes over the years. Hence, we use year fixed-effects to control them (Boyne and Chen 2007, 461).

OLS Results

A correlation analysis has been conducted to examine the possible correlations between variables. The number of staff variables and the control variable of organizational size is highly correlated but around the .7 threshold. We performed multiple runs with both variables in or out, and each variable in with the other removed. After multiple runs, there was no clear effect on the results to exclude one. We also tested the control variables within the models; the results indicate that organizational size is not significantly related to the independent variables. The age of the organization relates, with marginal significance, only to the number of partnerships an organization forms, with older organizations joining more partnerships than younger organizations.

Table 2 shows the results of the models of the three OLS analyses. Model 1 includes the number of partnerships as one of the dependent variables. The results indicate that an

Table 2. Results of OLS Regression (with year-fixed effects)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
	Number of Partnerships	*Number of Partners*	*Resources through Partnerships (log)*
Number of staff	.017***	.160***	.005**
	(.060)	(.051)	(.001)
Number of volunteers	.009	−.020*	.008***
	(.089)	(.000)	(.002)
Executive director gender	.400***	.520***	.001
	(.000)	(.010)	(.080)
Internal revenues/budget	−.040***	−.030	−.050***
	(.002)	(.010)	(.003)
Technological resources	.698**	.701**	.270
	(.866)	(.010)	(.339)
Organizational age	.050**	.120	−.003
	(.010)	(.210)	(.100)
Organizational size (log)	.881	.652*	.542*
	(.910)	(.319)	(.160)
Constant	.521***	.810***	1.174***
	(.130)	(.580)	(.910)
R-Squared	.879	.799	.837
p	.000	.000	.000
N	422	422	422

$^*p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

organization with one more staff member tends to engage in an additional partnership 0.017 times more than other organizations; however, the number of partnerships does not relate to the number of volunteers. The results also show that organizations headed by female executive directors engage in partnerships 0.4 times more than those headed by a male executive director. In addition, an organization's financial capacity is related negatively to the number of partnerships the organization has, while the technological resources of the organizations are not significantly related to forging partnerships. Finally, organizations with additional technological resources tend to have 0.698 more partnerships than other organizations.

Model 2 includes the number of partners as the dependent variable. The number of partners significantly relates to the all of three aspects of NGOs' human resource capacity (numbers of paid staff and of volunteers and gender of executive director). A one-unit increase in the number of staff relates to a 0.16 additional partner, while a one-unit increase in the number of volunteers relates to 0.02 fewer partners an NGO is involved with compared to other organizations. In other words, an organization with 10 more staff has an additional partner, while an organization with 100 more volunteers is involved with two fewer partners, in comparison to other organizations. In addition, an organization headed by female executive directors tends to have 0.5 more partner than those organizations headed by a male counterpart. We also notice that organizations with additional technological resources tend to have more partners than other organizations, though the result for financial capacity is not significant.

Model 3 focuses on the total budget the organization secures through partnerships. Partnership-based project budget significantly relates to two aspects of human resource capacity (numbers of paid staff and volunteers). An organization that employs one more paid employee and one more volunteer than other organizations tends to have an additional 1 percent higher partnership-based project budget by a factor of .005 and .008, respectively. The financial capacity of the organization is negatively related to the partnership-based project budget; an organization that increases its internal revenues by 1 percent tends to have a lower partnership budget by 0.02 percent than other organizations. Generating more internal revenues is associated with an expected 5 percent decrease in resources secured from engaging in partnerships. Neither the technological resources nor the age of the organization is statistically significant in relation to the funding an organization gets through forging partnerships.

Discussion

The results confirm some of our proposed hypotheses. First, we find that organizations with more staff tend to form more partnerships, engage with more partners, and acquire additional resources through these partnerships. This aligns with existing research (O'Leary and Vij 2012; Selden et al. 2006; Tsasis 2009) that suggests that collaborations among organizations require human resources to manage. NGOs that have staff in sufficient number are better able to form or join partnerships; existing staff is available and have skills and knowledge to implement joint projects and concurrently interact and manage communications with multiple partners. With the availability of this critical resource, the organization can pursue a greater role and, therefore, secure more funding in a partnership than an organization with skeleton staff that does not necessarily have enough time or skills.

In addition, organizations headed by female executive directors tend to form more partnerships and engage with more partners. The results align with the arguments made by Foster and Meinhard's 2002 study of organizational predisposition to collaborate. As previously mentioned, the authors contend that NGOs managed by women may be more likely to enter into collaborative relationships than organizations run by men. The psychosocial development of women is more compatible with being a successful collaborator; women are more communal and consensus builders and prefer participatory and collective approaches to solving problems more than men (Bradshaw et al. 1996; Eagly 2007; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly et al. 1992). In particular, those leaders realize that working in isolation from other organizations does not extend services to their stakeholders in the most effective or efficient way possible. However, as previously discussed, the relationship between participation of women in organizations and the significance of their efforts when they hold positions of power is a relatively new area of research, and the discussion on inherent gender differences—such as styles of leadership, task or interpersonal orientation, or autocratic or democratic methods of management—will continue for some time. We also note that financial resources acquired through partnerships are contingent on the capacity of the organization and the projects being implemented—and not on the gender of senior management.

Our study finds that organizations with higher internal revenues tend to form fewer partnerships and secure fewer resources through these partnerships. This is consistent with existing literature (Cuijpers et al. 2011; Hardy et al. 2003; Hodge and Piccolo 2005; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Provan 1984; Snavely and Tracy 2002; Tsasis 2009; Wicker et al. 2015). Scholars note that collaboration may serve to promote stability and efficiency and serve as a means to garner funds not previously available and possibly provide added exposure to benefit an NGO in the future (Alexander, 2000; Mosley, Maronick, and Katz, 2012; Oliver, 1990). Therefore, with that in mind, organizations with limited internal resources would seek more collaboration to overcome shortages. At the same time, resource-sufficient organizations depend less on external arrangements and resources to operate and manage projects. The argument here is that availability of resources and organizational ability to optimize and protect those resources might motivate an organization to operate independently. An organization that generates internal revenues through membership fees and income-generating activities can build a financial capacity that allows it to implement its projects without seeking to collaborate with other organizations or soliciting additional resources. However, when an organization with sufficient internal revenues engages in partnerships, it tends to get a small share of the partnership budget, reflecting either a limited role in the project or a contribution of the organization's own financial resources to the partnership.

Finally, technological resources are significantly related to the number and kind of partnerships and partners. Poor communication among organizations, lack of updated technology, and dispersed coordination efforts hinder partnerships (Brinkerhoff 2003). Thus, the ability to communicate is a strategic tool used to manage relationships (Hackler and Saxton 2007). NGOs can utilize available technological assets for the maintenance of adequate communication (Khan, Swar, and Lee 2014). Partnerships require communication and ongoing coordination; by streamlining the process, use of technology helps ensure effective and efficient communication and build trust among organizations (Brinkerhoff 2002; Perrault et al. 2011; Snavely and Tracy 2000, 2002; Walker and Hills 2012).

NGOs differ in their missions and activities; consequently, their methods of collaboration also differ. Therefore, the use of social media can help in operating within networks (Agranoff 2006; O'Leary and Bingham 2007). In addition, advanced communication technology helps an NGO to distinguish itself from its peers by building its public image through its websites and social media presence. This in turn may make the organization more attractive as a potential partner (Auger 2014; Corder 2001; Maxwell and Carboni 2014).

Implications for Practice

This article has considered partnerships as they relate to nonprofit organizations' resource capacity without claiming any causality. It underscores the notion that having the right kind and amount of resources contributes to collaborative relationships. Specifically, this applies to retaining sufficient and talented staff, maintaining adequate financial resources, and sustaining technological capabilities. Investing in technological tools with strategic marketing in mind may put organizations in a better position to collaborate, because organizations with more visibility are associated with a greater number of partnerships. These partnerships may come with costs. However, investing more effort in raising internal revenues may mitigate these costs and challenges.

In addition, NGOs should upgrade their human resources as well as financial and technological capabilities if they aim to attract potential partners. Such investments could help build the capacity of staff and their retention. Having sufficient personnel contributes to the attainment of collaborative activities or arrangements. Possessing this level of resource base and capability attracts potential partners. Relatedly, each gender has a different style of management, which in turn may lead to more collaboration among organizations. Our analysis supports the existing literature, noted earlier in this article, that female managers are more inclined to favor and seek collaborations than males. This can have positive effects on the NGOs, because some donor agencies tend to support women empowerment and will specifically fund agencies that provide opportunities for women in management. This is also the case in developing countries, where women may face additional challenges in reaching management positions.

Conclusion

NGOs are increasingly engaging in interorganizational collaboration to optimize the achievement of their objectives. Such collaborative relations can affect, and be affected by, organizational resources and managerial styles and practices. For NGOs, human resources management is an important factor in organizational success. The same can be stated about the importance of financial resources and technological tools. All have substantial implications for the ability and readiness of an organization to engage in collaboration.

We recognize the limitations of the statistical model, the operationalization of some variables (for example, technological resources or tools), the small sample, and the single-country focus, which might affect the generalizability of the results. However, we need to recognize that (1) managers, regardless of their location and the type of organization they run, perform the same functions and roles because they face the same kinds of demands and challenges, and (2) universally, organizations are increasingly adopting best practices.

This article makes a theoretical and practical contribution to the nonprofit scholarship by empirically examining some arguments around collaboration that have not before been fully tested. In particular, Gazley (2010) argues that scholars have rarely included "gender, work experience, or other personal characteristics of the actors in their studies of institutional collaborative behavior" (71). Based on the results of this study, we suggest that NGOs led by female executive directors, with sufficient staff, lower internal revenues, and suitable technological resources are likely to collaborate in partnerships more than other organizations. Organizations may engage in collaborations to increase the probability of survival or further their influence within their external environment. Fundamentally, effective collaboration requires frequent interactions, outreach, and open communication.

Due to the increasing tendency among organizations to work together on various issues and service delivery, collaboration is often covered in nonprofit management literature. However, human resources' impact on collaborations has rarely been the focus of this literature. Organizations could benefit from additional research highlighting influential factors and impacts on organizational resources and capacity as a result of collaboration. Future research may address challenges associated with collaboration and trust, boundary spanning, coordination, team dynamics, and accountability. Understanding these challenges is essential to understanding the underpinnings of successful collaborations and the likelihood of continuing a partnership. However, managers may conclude from this research that NGOs can make deliberate and strategic decisions that ultimately could position them toward collaboration.

Collaboration has the potential to both increase and constrain organizational resource capacities; thus, managers should carefully consider the additional necessary oversight, management, burdens, and requirements that are placed on the organization and its human resources when collaboration is part of the organization's strategy. Many organizational factors such as resources, size, and commitment influence the impact that collaboration has on the organization as well as the willingness and readiness of an organization to collaborate. Although we hope our study provides additional insight on which organizations tend to collaborate and under which conditions and antecedents, we underscore the importance of investigating the impact of partnership on organizational capacity, keeping in mind the potential positive and negative implications, benefits, and costs associated with these interorganizational relations.

References

AbouAssi, K. 2013. "NGOs' Hands in Donors' Pockets: What Happens When Donors Move! How NGOs React to Shifts in Donor Funding?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43 (3): 584–602.

———. 2014. "Get Money Get Involved? NGO's Reactions to Donor Funding and Their Potential Involvement in the Public Policy Processes." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 25 (4): 968–90.

———. 2015. "The Third Wheel in Public Policy: An Overview of NGOs in Lebanon." In *Public Policy and Administration in the Middle East*, edited by Alexander Dawoody, 215–31. New York: Springer.

Agranoff, R. 2006. "Inside Collaborative Networks: Ten Lessons for Public Managers." *Public Administration Review* 66:56–65.

Agranoff, R., and M. McGuire. 2001. "Big Questions in Public Network Management Research." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 11 (3): 295–326.

Alexander, J. 2000. "Adaptive Strategies of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations in an Era of Devolution and New Public Management." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 10 (3): 287–303.

Arsenault, J. 1998. *Forging Nonprofit Alliances: A Comprehensive Guide to Enhancing Your Mission through Joint Ventures and Partnerships, Management Service Organizations, Parent Corporations, Mergers*. Jossey-Bass Nonprofit and Public Management Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Auger, G. A. 2014. "Rhetorical Framing: Examining the Message Structure of Nonprofit Organizations on Twitter." *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 19 (4): 239–49.

Austin, J. E. 2000. "Strategic Collaboration between Nonprofits and Business." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29 (suppl. 1): 69–97.

Axelrod, R. M. 1997. *The Complexity of Cooperation: Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*. Princeton Studies in Complexity. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Benharda, I., J. M. Brett, and A. Lempereur. 2013. "Gender and Role in Conflict Management: Female and Male Managers as Third Parties." *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research* 6 (2): 79–93.

Benzing, C., E. Leach, and C. McGee. 2010. "Sarbanes-Oxley and the New Form 990: Are Arts and Culture Nonprofits Ready?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40 (6): 1132–47.

Boyne, G. A., and A. A. Chen. 2007. "Performance Targets and Public Service Improvement." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 17 (3): 455–77.

Bradshaw, P., V. Murray, and J. Wolpin. 1996. "Women on Boards of Nonprofits: What Difference Do They Make?" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 6 (3): 241–54.

Brinkerhoff, J. M. 2002. "Government–NGO Partnership: A Defining Framework." *Public Administration and Development* 22 (1): 19–30.

———. 2003. "Donor-Funded Government–NGO Partnership for Public Service Improvement: Cases from India and Pakistan." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 14 (1): 105–22.

Bryson, J. M., B. C. Crosby, and M. M. Stone. 2006. "The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature." *Public Administration Review* 66:44–55.

Byrne, A., and J. Hansberry. 2007. "Collaboration: Leveraging Resources and Expertise." *New Directions for Youth Development* 114:75–84.

Chen, B. 2010. "Antecedents or Processes? Determinants of Perceived Effectiveness of Interorganizational Collaborations for Public Service Delivery." *International Public Management Journal* 13 (4): 381–407.

Corder, K. 2001. "Acquiring New Technology Comparing Nonprofit and Public Sector Agencies." *Administration and Society* 33 (2): 194–219.

Cuijpers, M., H. Guenter, and K. Hussinger. 2011. "Costs and Benefits of Inter-Departmental Innovation Collaboration." *Research Policy* 40 (4): 565–75.

Curtis, L., C. Edwards, K. Fraser, S. Gudelsky, J. Holmquist, K. Thornton, and K. Sweetser. 2010. "Adoption of Social Media for Public Relations by Nonprofit Organization." *Public Relations Review* 36:90–92.

Eagly, A. H. 2007. "Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 31 (1): 1–12.

Eagly, A. H., and M. C. Johannesen-Schmidt. 2001. "The Leadership Styles of Women and Men." *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (4): 781–97.

Eagly, A. H., M. C. Johannesen-Schmidt, and M. L. van Engen. 2003. "Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men." *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (4): 569–91.

Eagly, A. H., M. G. Makhijani, and B. G. Klonsky. 1992. "Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-Analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 111 (1): 3–22.

Foster, M. K., and A. G. Meinhard. 2002. "A Regression Model Explaining Predisposition to Collaborate." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31 (4): 549–64.

Gazley, B. 2010. "Why Not Partner with Local Government? Nonprofit Managerial Perceptions of Collaborative Disadvantage." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39 (1): 51–76.

Guo, C., and M. Acar. 2005. "Understanding Collaboration among Nonprofit Organizations: Combining Resource Dependency, Institutional, and Network Perspectives." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34 (3): 340–61.

Guy, M. E., and M. A. Newman. 2004. "Women's and Men's Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor." *Public Administration Review* 64 (3): 289–98.

Hackler, D., and G. D. Saxton. 2007. "The Strategic Use of Information Technology by Nonprofit Organizations: Increasing Capacity and Untapped Potential." *Public Administration Review* 67 (3): 474–87.

Handy, F., L. Mook, and J. Quarter. 2008. "The Interchangeability of Paid Staff and Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 37 (1): 76–92.

Hardy, C., N. Phillips, and T. B. Lawrence. 2003. "Resources, Knowledge and Influence: The Organizational Effects of Interorganizational Collaboration." *Journal of Management Studies* 40 (2): 321–47.

Hartenian, L. S. 2007. "Nonprofit Agency Dependence on Direct Service and Indirect Support Volunteers: An Empirical Investigation." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 17 (3): 319–34.

Hodge, M. M., and R. F. Piccolo. 2005. "Funding Source, Board Involvement Techniques, and Financial Vulnerability in Nonprofit Organizations: A Test of Resource Dependence." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 16 (2): 171–90.

Irvin, R. A. 2007. "Collaboration and Barter." In *Financing Nonprofits: Putting Theory into Practice*, edited by Dennis R. Young, 207–26. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

———. 2010. "Collaboration versus Competition in the Third Sector." In *Handbook of Research and Nonprofit Economics and Management*, edited by D. R. Young and B. A. Seaman, 83–95. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Jang, H. S., and R. C. Feiock. 2007. "Public versus Private Funding of Nonprofit Organizations: Implications for Collaboration." *Public Performance and Management Review* 31 (2): 174–90.

Jo, S., and Y. Kim. 2003. "The Effect of Web Characteristics on Relationship Building." *Journal of Public Relations Research* 15 (3): 199–223.

Khan, G. F., B. Swar, and S. K. Lee. 2014. "Social Media Risks and Benefits a Public Sector Perspective." *Social Science Computer Review* 32 (5): 606–27.

Knickmeyer, L., K. Hopkins, and M. Meyer. 2003. "Exploring Collaboration among Urban Neighborhood Associations." *Journal of Community Practice* 11 (2): 13–25.

Lister, S. 2000. "Power in Partnership? An Analysis of an NGO's Relationships with Its Partners." *Journal of International Development* 12 (2): 227–39.

Lunneborg, P. 1990. *Women Changing Work*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.

Mattessich, P., and B. Monsey. 1992. *Collaboration: What Makes It Work?* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Maxwell, S. P., and J. L. Carboni. 2014. "Stakeholder Communication in Service Implementation Networks: Expanding Relationship Management Theory to the Nonprofit Sector through Organizational Network Analysis." *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 19 (4): 301–13.

McHargue, S. K. 2003. "Learning for Performance in Nonprofit Organizations." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 5 (2): 196–204.

Meier, K. J., L. J. O'Toole, and H. T. Goerdel. 2006. "Management Activity and Program Performance: Gender as Management Capital." *Public Administration Review* 66 (1): 24–36.

Mitchell, G. 2015. "The Attributes of Effective NGOs and the Leadership Values Associated with a Reputation for Organizational Effectiveness." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 26 (1): 39–57.

Mosley, J., M. Maronick, and H. Katz. 2012. "How Organizational Characteristics Affect the Adaptive Tactics Used by Human Service Nonprofit Managers Confronting Financial Uncertainty." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 22 (3): 281–303.

Mulroy, E. A., and S. Shay. 1998. "Motivation and Reward in Nonprofit Interorganizational Collaboration in Low-Income Neighborhoods." *Administration in Social Work* 22 (4): 1–17.

O'Leary, R., and L. B. Bingham. 2007. "Conclusion: Conflict and Collaboration in Networks." *International Public Management Journal* 10 (1): 103–9.

O'Leary, R., and N. Vij. 2012. "Collaborative Public Management: Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going?" *American Review of Public Administration* 42 (5): 507–22.

Oliver, C. 1990. "Determinants of Inter-Organizational Relationships: Integration and Future Directions." *Academy of Management Review* 15 (2): 241–65.

Perrault, E., R. McClelland, C. Austin, and J. Sieppert. 2011. "Working Together in Collaborations: Successful Process Factors for Community Collaboration." *Administration in Social Work* 35 (3): 282–98.

Pfeffer, J., and G. R. Salancik. 1978. *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. New York: Harper & Row.

Proulx, K., M. A. Hager, and K. C. Klein. 2014. "Models of Collaboration between Nonprofit Organizations." *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* 63 (6): 765–46.

Provan, K. G. 1984. "Interorganizational Cooperation and Decision Making Autonomy in a Consortium Multihospital System." *Academy of Management Review* 9 (3): 494–504.

Provan, K. G., K. R. Isett, and H. B. Milward. 2004. "Cooperation and Compromise: A Network Response to Conflicting Institutional Pressures in Community Mental Health." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33 (3): 489–514.

Rosener, J. B. 1990. "Ways Women Lead." *Harvard Business Review* 68 (6): 119–25.

Salamon, L. 1994. "The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector." *Foreign Affairs*. www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1994-07-01/rise-nonprofit-sector.

Selden, S. C., J. E. Sowa, and J. Sandfort. 2006. "The Impact of Nonprofit Collaboration in Early Child Care and Education on Management and Program Outcomes." *Public Administration Review* 66 (3): 412–25.

Seltzer, T., and M. Mitrook. 2007. "The Dialogic Potential of Weblogs in Relationship Building." *Public Relations Review* 33:227–29.

Snavely, K., and M. B. Tracy. 2000. "Collaboration among Rural Nonprofit Organizations." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 11 (2): 145–65.

———. 2002. "Development of Trust in Rural Nonprofit Collaborations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31 (1): 62–83.

Sowa, J. E. 2009. "The Collaboration Decision in Nonprofit Organizations: Views from the Front Line." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 38 (6): 1003–25.

Stivers, C. 2000. *Bureau Men, Settlement Women, Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

———. 2002. *Gender Images in Public Administration: Legitimacy and the Administrative State*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomson, A. M., and J. L. Perry. 2006. "Collaboration Processes: Inside the Black Box." *Public Administration Review* 66 (December): 20–32.

Thomson, A. M., J. L. Perry, and T. K. Miller. 2009. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19 (1): 23–56.

Tsasis, P. 2009. "The Social Processes of Interorganizational Collaboration and Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 20 (1): 5–21.

Walker, R. M., and P. Hills. 2012. "Partnership Characteristics, Network Behavior, and Publicness: Evidence on the Performance of Sustainable Development Projects." *International Public Management Journal* 15 (4): 479–99.

Waters, R. 2009. "The Use of Social Media by Nonprofit Organizations: An Examination from the Diffusion of Innovations Perspective." In *Handbook of Research on Social Interaction Technologies and Collaboration Software: Concepts and Trends*, edited by T. Dumova and R. Fiordo, 473–85. Hershey, PA: IGI Publishing.

Waters, R. D., E. Burnett, A. Lamm, and J. Lucas. 2009. "Engaging Stakeholders through Social Networking: How Nonprofit Organizations Are Using Facebook." *Public Relations Review* 35:102–6.

Weber, E. P., and A. M. Khademian. 2008. "Wicked Problems, Knowledge Challenges, and Collaborative Capacity Builders in Network Settings." *Public Administration Review* 68 (2): 334–49.

Wicker, P., N. Longley, and C. Breuer. 2015. "Revenue Volatility in German Nonprofit Sports Clubs." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44 (1): 5–24.
Wondolleck, J. M., and S. L. Yaffee. 2000. *Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

KHALDOUN ABOUASSI *is an assistant professor in the Department of Public Administration and Policy in the School of Public Affairs at American University.*

NADEEN MAKHLOUF *is a PhD candidate in the Department of Public Administration and Policy in the School of Public Affairs at American University.*

PAGE WHALEN *is an alumna of the Department of Public Service and Administration at the Bush School of Government & Public Service*.