New American Relief and Development Organizations: Voluntarizing Global Aid

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ABSTRACT

International aid has seen a trend towards decentralization and voluntary action in the last two decades. Relief and development non-governmental organizations (NGOs) registered with the IRS ballooned from about 1,000 in 1990 to over 11,000 in 2010, and most of these are small organizations run on a voluntary basis. These NGOs are headquartered in one-third of all U.S. counties, representing every state in the United States. How can we explain the distribution and the growth of these organizations over time? I use a multilevel model with county means to show that higher per-county income, education, percent of residents born abroad, and higher numbers of religious congregations and Rotary Clubs explain between-county differences, although only education and number of congregations retain positive within-county, over-time effects. The article aims to inject a globalized perspective into theories of nonprofits and voluntarism and to demonstrate that the decentralization of aid to voluntary actors is a phenomenon that must be taken up by scholars of globalization and development.

KEYWORDS: NGOs; globalization; nonprofits; voluntarism; development.

The only ice cream shop in Butare, Rwanda is the offspring of a chance encounter at the Sundance Institute. The leader of a women’s drumming group from East Africa fell into conversation with two restaurateurs from Brooklyn who had recently opened an ice cream shop that was winning the hearts of the city’s foodies. In the space of a few months the plan emerged for Inzozi Nziza: an ice cream parlor in a Rwandan university neighborhood, funded by the Brooklyn restaurateurs, and staffed by the young women who played in the drumming group. The young women would receive training in English and business management while the appeal of ice cream on hot East African afternoons would eventually make the project self-sustaining. The three partners hired a former Peace Corps volunteer to oversee the training and launch of the shop in Butare, while in January 2011 the project was recognized as a tax-exempt public charity by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); the Brooklyn restaurateurs were officially in the business of international aid.

Inzozi Nziza is one of over 10,000 new international aid organizations founded by Americans since 1990. Thanks to the world-shrinking power of globalization, Americans find themselves connected to
distant communities in poor regions of the world. Beneath the global exchanges of trade and the movements of a cosmopolitan elite, American citizens are more quietly forging global ties through immigration, tourism, volunteering, study, work, and adoption. These ties have shaped an important trend in international aid: the multiplication of grassroots relief and development organizations that operate independently from established development institutions. In 1990, there were just over 1,000 registered American relief and development organizations; more than 1,300 new organizations were established in 2010 alone, for a total of 11,181 aid organizations by the end of 2010. Today, nearly one-third of U.S. counties are home to one of these international aid groups.

Despite substantial scholarly and policy attention to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) generally, little has been written about the diffusion of this organizational form to grassroots actors. This article analyzes the predictors of these groups’ founding using U.S. county-level data. I show that the founding patterns of grassroots NGOs have some commonalities with domestic nonprofits, but that these new organizations will have particular impacts on both American communities and aid recipients. “Voluntarized” aid is apt to vary widely in its methods and quality, and it vastly multiplies the number of actors with whom political leaders in the Global South must coordinate. In U.S. communities, grassroots NGOs provide a new lens through which Americans can come to view the Global South—one that focuses on social problems and imagined American solutions to them. My theoretical aims in this article are to inject a globalized perspective into theories of nonprofits and voluntarism and to demonstrate that the decentralization of aid to voluntary actors is a phenomenon that must be taken up by scholars of globalization and development.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

NGOs have played a significant role in relief and development aid for at least 70 years. The first “baby boom” of American NGOs came in the wake of World War II, and by the 1970s the U.S. Congress ramped up funding to NGOs as an alternative to dealing directly with foreign governments. In the early 1990s, NGOs became, briefly, the darlings of Western donors who envisioned them at the heart of a fast-track plan to establish democracy and free markets in the former Soviet bloc (Aksartova 2009; Hammack and Heydemann 2009). Since then, NGOs have played a significant role in the distribution of development aid in the Global South and have taken on increased responsibilities in humanitarian emergencies, natural and man-made (Forman and Stoddard 2002).

Social scientists have made claims that NGOs also play strong cultural roles. The world polity tradition (e.g., Meyer et al. 1997) views the post-World War II compact as a crucial historical moment when nations became bound by a common, rationalized “world culture.” John Boli and George M. Thomas (1997) identify the core tenets of this culture as universalism, individualism, rationality, orientation towards progress, and “world citizenship,” and NGOs play a crucial role: they are the “transmission belt” that extends these values from core to periphery. Boli and Thomas (1997) argue that NGOs, typically operated by rationalized professionals, form global networks that “shape the agendas and behavior of states” (p. 184) on issues from women’s status to the rules of war. They expect that the greater penetration of NGOs into the global periphery will bring a change in values and behaviors leading to greater cultural homogeneity across the world. Recent work demonstrates that in remote parts of Africa, “interstitial elites” have indeed adopted the discourse of rational progress peddled by NGOs (Swidler and Watkins 2008).

While the breadth of the NGO movement and its penetration into the periphery of the periphery have been documented (Hannan 2012), what has largely eluded scholarly attention is the embrace of the NGO form by Americans wishing to engage in direct aid to foreign communities. The solid line in Figure 1 depicts the number of international relief and development organizations registered each year with the IRS, and the dashed line represents the ratio of new relief and development organizations to all new 501(c)3 organizations registered each year. As the dashed line demonstrates, aid organizations’ tremendous growth in the last two decades is not an artifact of the overall growth of the
nonprofit sector. The number of new American aid organizations registering annually with the IRS quadrupled from 2000 to 2010, compared with only 19 percent growth for other 501(c)3s. Charitable giving echoes the story: Americans gave $15.7 billion to international organizations in 2010. That number represents a bigger increase over 2009 giving than any other sector: 15.3 percent, compared with .8 percent for religion, 5.2 percent for education, 6.2 percent for public benefit organizations, and 5.7 percent for arts, culture, and humanities (Center on Philanthropy 2011).

The geographic range of their founding is as striking as the growth in the number of organizations. Today, NGOs are headquartered in over 1,000 U.S. counties, representing every state in the union. Over time, the share of organizations headquartered in New York and Washington, DC has shrunk; 20 percent of the organizations founded before 1990 were in those locations, while only 11 percent of the organizations founded since 1990 are there. Figures 2 and 3 depict the number of NGOs based in U.S. counties in 1990 and 2010. In 1990, American-based aid organizations were largely found in major cities, notably New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC. By 2010, the aid organizations in those cities and in other urban centers—Chicago, Miami, and San Francisco—had multiplied, while there had been wide expansion in the rest of the country, notably in the upper Midwest and South.

If American aid organizations are no longer confined to the traditional hubs of Washington and New York, how do we explain the dispersion of aid organizations, and what are the implications of this new pattern? Existing scholarship has tried to explain local differences in numbers of nonprofit organizations generally, but until now the numbers and dispersion of international aid organizations based in the United States has been too small to investigate. Like other nonprofits, new NGOs rely mainly on private donations and the (typically unpaid) labor of a board of directors and volunteers, and they aim to serve some public good unmet by government or the private sector. But they are
crucially different in that the area from which they draw resources and the area they serve are not only discrete, but on different sides of the globe. They exist to transfer resources—material, and as world polity theorists would have it, cultural—from the United States to needy communities in distant countries. David Held and colleagues (1999) have characterized globalization as flows—of goods, capital, people, and ideas—and these 10,000 new international development organizations represent new channels. The dispersion of NGOs is part of globalization’s “transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions...generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power” (Held et al. 1999:16). At the heart of the world polity argument is the idea that NGOs bring with them not just material resources but particular ways of defining people and problems. Yet if the sending ports of NGOs are becoming dispersed—if they are no longer centered in the hubs governed by norm-bound professionals—the sorts of influence these NGOs will export is up for grabs.

The decentralization and “voluntarization” of aid to thousands of grassroots NGOs has implications for both aid recipients and American communities. Aid from decentralized, voluntary organizations is less likely to be shaped by security interests or by professional orthodoxy; yet it may repeat the failed experiments of the past, and it may be unsystematic in who it serves. Grassroots NGOs are free to reflect the particular skills and interests of their American founders—be those ice cream, entrepreneurship, or evangelical Christianity—and not all will be effective aid interventions. The burden on political leaders in the Global South is apt to increase as they are obligated to coordinate with an growing number of aid actors.

The dispersion of grassroots aid organizations also will have consequences for American communities. NGOs like Inzozi Nziza offer Americans direct, personal links to specific communities in the Global South, and yet those links are constituted by the understandings of social problems in the South and the role of Americans in solving them. When grassroots aid workers travel abroad, their

Figure 2. Registered International Development Organizations by Country, 1990

Source: IRS Business Master File via the National Center for Charitable Statistics
understandings of aid-receiving countries will be shaped by their training, language skills, and time in country (or lack thereof). As these volunteers return home and engage in typical nonprofit tasks—setting up fundraising campaigns, building their groups’ websites, and engaging in conversations about their work—they will create narratives about the causes of underdevelopment and the role of Americans in remedying it. The dispersion of aid groups is therefore a force likely to shape grassroots American understandings of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the place of the United States in the globalizing world.

If these grassroots NGOs represent an important new development in American voluntarism, international aid, and globalization, as I argue they do, then understanding the circumstances of their formation is a key analytic task. At present there is no national survey to identify individuals involved in international aid groups in the way that the General Social Survey is used to identify members of sport, political, or literary associations. What is possible now is to look at the presence of these organizations in the geographic aggregate. I use U.S. counties as the geographic unit of analysis, since this is the smallest geography for which demographic and organizational data are reliably available.

To generate hypotheses about the geographic predictors of new international aid groups I turn to studies of domestic nonprofit formation and voluntarism. These literatures offer a jumping-off point for the local predictors of NGO foundings, and will bring into relief the ways in which the founding of these international organizations is a distinct phenomenon. In the next section I review these literatures and develop six hypotheses, which I go on to test using cross-sectional and longitudinal regression models.

**THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

Theories of nonprofit origins attempt to account for the varying sizes of the nonprofit sector in different geographies, or why nonprofit organizations rather than for-profit firms or government agencies
would emerge to provide services in the first place. Empirical research on volunteering differs in that it typically takes the individual as the unit of analysis and is driven by concerns about civic engagement. Although these literatures take different units of analysis and are motivated by different policy concerns, they are both potentially useful to explain the founding of international aid organizations. According to IRS records, 57 percent of international aid groups generate less than $25,000 in revenue per year; for organizations three years old or less, that figure is 75 percent. These figures suggest that the founders of most of these nonprofits bear heavy burdens of voluntary labor. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that many of the antecedents of volunteering would also apply to the founding of new NGOs.

Theories of Nonprofit Origins
Demand-side theories of the nonprofit sector (Hansmann 1987; Weisbrod 1977, 1978) explain the presence of nonprofits by the inability of the state or for-profit firms to meet the demand of consumers for particular goods. From these perspectives, governments cater to the median voter, so nonprofits emerge in heterogeneous populations. For-profit firms cannot gain consumer trust for sensitive transactions like blood transfusions, so nonprofits emerge to fill these gaps. Some empirical work has supported demand-side theories. John Corbin (1999) found that racial diversity is associated with higher numbers of social service organizations, but a study examining New York counties found racial diversity to be associated with more educational organizations but not other types of nonprofits (Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen 1992). Cross-national research in Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, India, and Thailand found ethno-linguistic diversity to be positively associated with the size of the nonprofit sector (Anheier and Salamon 1998). Local need is also not a consistent predictor of the size of the nonprofit sector; in Indiana counties the level of poverty was found to be significantly associated with fewer nonprofits per capita (Grønbjerg and Paarlberg 2001).

Supply-side or entrepreneurship theories (James 1987; Rose-Ackerman 1996; Young 1983) account for founding of nonprofits in terms of the qualities and motivations of founders. Rather than assuming the shape of the nonprofit field is an efficient response to consumer demand, this perspective assumes that the preferences of “nonprofit entrepreneurs” shape organizations’ mission and form (Anheier 2005). Estelle James (1987, 1989) emphasized the role of religion, suggesting that religiously motivated individuals start nonprofits to maximize adherents or particular religious world-views. Mark Chaves (1998) modified James’ theories, acknowledging that many religious nonprofits become “secularized” over time or perform non-religious tasks; in his view, though, religious commitment can motivate people to a “diffuse this-worldly activism” that finds form in nonprofit work. But nonprofit entrepreneurs need resources as well as ideology to found organizations. Other studies have established the socioeconomic resources that are associated with nonprofit activity. Thomas M. Guterbock and John C. Fries (1997) and Kirsten A. Grønbjerg and Laurie Paarlberg (2001) found local levels of education to be positively associated with the size of the nonprofit sector. Wealth (Jencks 1987; Wolpert 1989) and income (Bielefeld 2000; Corbin 1999; Saxton and Benson 2005) have also been positively associated with the number of nonprofits in a community.

Volunteering
Studies looking to explain differential rates of volunteering have also analyzed the effects of religion, race, income, and education. For frequency of volunteering, like the number of nonprofit organizations in a community, education is a positive and reliable predictor (Forbes and Zampelli 2011; Musick and Wilson 2008; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003). Education provides volunteers with stronger cognitive skills, awareness of social problems, and greater self-confidence, and crucially, according to Marc Musick and John Wilson (2008), it increases the size of one’s social network. In their analysis of independent sector data, higher levels of membership and informal social interaction among the educated accounted for about half of the effect of education on the frequency of volunteering.
Studies of volunteers have also observed a positive relationship between income and volunteering (Day and Devlin 1998; Menchik and Weisbrod 1987; Pho 2008, Smith 1998), though rates of volunteering may decline for high-income people (Lee and Brudney 2010). At the very least volunteers must be able to forego the potential earnings of the time spent volunteering. The pattern between occupational status and volunteering follows a similar pattern, with professionals and managers volunteering most, followed by white-collar workers, and then blue-collar workers (Reed and Selbee 2000; Musick and Wilson 2008).

Race and immigrant status are also significant predictors of volunteering. Whites are more likely to volunteer than blacks, Hispanics, or Asians (Foster-Bey 2008; Rotolo, Wilson, and Hughes 2010; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003), though Musick and Wilson (2008) found that among people who do volunteer, whites and blacks contribute roughly the same number of hours. Immigrants are less likely to volunteer than native-born Americans (Foster-Bey 2008; Lopez and Marcelo 2008; Sundeen, Garcia, and Wang 2007), though speaking English and duration in the country increase an immigrant’s likelihood of volunteering (Musick and Wilson 2008, Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2004). Voluntarism is one of the outcomes involved in the contentious scholarly debate linking higher racial and ethnic diversity to lower social capital and civic engagement. Though Robert Putnam (2007) argued that contextual racial and ethnic diversity have negative effects on several indicators of civic engagement (including volunteering), further research using Putnam’s data set that has examined types of associational membership and has accounted for effects of poverty and inequality has complicated Putnam’s story (Portes and Vickstrom 2011). Other results linking contextual diversity and voluntarism are mixed. Thomas Rotolo and John Wilson (2012) found a negative relationship between racial diversity at the level of the state and volunteering. In a secondary analysis of several U.S. data sets, Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn (2003) found negative and null relationships between racial diversity and voluntarism or associational membership, while a study of 28 European nations showed no significant relationship between ethnic diversity and giving informal help or membership in voluntary associations (Gesthuizen, van der Meer, and Scheepers 2009).

There is substantial evidence that individuals who attend religious services more frequently are more likely to volunteer (Campbell and Yonish 2003; Herzog and Morgan 1993; Smith and Faris 2002). Several studies have shown that attendance increases volunteering by increasing attendees’ social ties (Becker and Dhingra 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Musick and Wilson (2008) argued that not only are frequent religious attenders more like to be asked to volunteer (itself a strong predictor of volunteering rates), these individuals have more associational memberships and informal social ties. This is not surprising because churches are typically well connected to other organizations in the community, with ties to educational, service, recreation, and political groups (Cornwell and Harrison 2004).

To apply these theories to a model of distribution of organizations based in U.S. counties but working in foreign communities, we must conceptualize counties as meaningful entities from which organizations draw resources, ones from which connections can be made outward to points on the other side of the globe.¹ Unlike the domestic organizations that have comprised most studies of the nonprofit sector, the demand for NGOs comes from a different locale than the supply. Differences in demand for NGO services, however we would operationalize it, would not lead to differences in the distribution of NGOs in U.S. counties. These particular qualities of international organizations call for two theoretical adaptations when extending existing theory on nonprofit distribution. First, I focus on supply-side explanations; second, I introduce globalized links—operationalized here as immigrants and Rotary Clubs—as a necessary condition for the founding of NGOs in U.S. counties.

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¹ It is possible that NGOs may draw some of their resources from within the United States but outside of the county in which they are based. However, an examination of NGOs’ IRS 990 forms (digitized on Guidestar.com) listing addresses for the Board of Directors typically put the majority of directors in the same county.
Hypotheses

High levels of education are typically associated with higher levels of volunteering and nonprofit activity, and the effect may be even stronger here, as universities provide people with globalized connections through research networks, study abroad, and volunteer programs. Income is likely to be positively associated with the number of international organizations as with other organizations, particularly because these groups rely so heavily on private funding—Elizabeth T. Boris and C. Eugene Steuerle (2006) reported that American organizations doing international work rely on private donations for 68 percent of their funding, a higher share than any other nonprofit subsector. Therefore:

H1. A county’s per capita income will be positively associated with the number of international relief and development organizations registered in that county.

H2. Educational attainment in a county will be positively associated with the number of international relief and development organizations registered in that county.

The literature discussed above suggests that racial diversity might be negatively associated with the founding of new organizations by two paths. Counties with high shares of non-whites, who are less likely to be volunteers, would also seem to have fewer voluntary entrepreneurs to start NGOs. Contextual effects could also be in play. If racial heterogeneity contributes to a lack of local social capital, there will be a negative effect on the founding rate of international aid organizations. I test this relationship with Hypothesis 3:

H3. Everything else being equal, counties with higher racial diversity will have fewer international aid organizations.

Religion might affect the rate of organization foundings in several ways. Religiosity might generate the “diffuse this-worldly activism” that Chaves (1998) wrote about—that is, increase the motivation of potential voluntary entrepreneurs—leading to more aid organizations. Moreover, since American religion is strongly congregational, relying heavily on local governance and the voluntary action of the members of the congregation (Wuthnow 1990), membership in a religious congregation is likely to develop the skills and social networks that would support nonprofit action. These social networks provide opportunities for recruiting nonprofit collaborators and donors, and the recurring nature of religious involvement means that social pressure from fellow members to volunteer or make a donation is more likely to be effective. Religion may also provide a sense of shared identity with individuals in the Global South (i.e., co-religionists providing aid to one another), and religious structures may provide the global connections that sow the seeds of new aid organizations. The potential contributions of religious congregations to voluntary entrepreneurs’ motivation, skills, and social networks suggest Hypothesis 4:

H4. The number of religious congregations in a county will be positively associated with the number of international aid organizations.

Nonprofit entrepreneurs interested in the issues of global poverty do not approach the globalized world as a tabula rasa; individuals with a general concern with these issues but no specific ties seem more likely to give to or volunteer for an existing aid organization. Ties between Americans and communities in poor countries could be forged by travel, business, adoption, or immigration. Research by Alejandro Portes (1999, 2000) and Peggy Levitt (2001) suggested that migrants actively forge links

2 Sociologists of religion have noted the tendency of non-Protestant religions to assume an increasingly congregational form as they are established in the United States (Ebaugh and Chaftz 1999).
between their community of origin and their country of reception. These links then form the basis for flows of goods, money, information, and more migrants. Levitt noted that these links can be embedded in religious communities, with money flowing from the United States to poor countries to support churches in the sending town and traditional religious festivals. A larger share of immigrants in a community might directly increase the number of nonprofits if immigrants themselves found organizations to aid communities back home; a higher number of immigrants in the community might also signal globalized ties that are unobservable in this analysis but that are associated with the founding of aid groups. Therefore:

**H5. The percentage of foreign-born residents in a county will be positively associated with the number of international relief and development organizations.**

Existing international organizations have a potentially strong role to play in generating new global structures like international aid organizations. Universities, international corporations, and civic organizations all might allow Americans to connect with needy communities across the globe. Here I test the effect of one common civic organization: Rotary Clubs, which were chosen for this analysis because of their ubiquity in the United States, their emphasis on partnerships between U.S. chapters and others abroad, and the small grants they offer to aid projects in developing countries. In 2010, there were 7,632 Rotary Clubs located in 2,340 U.S. counties. The final hypothesis, then, tests the effect of existing globalized organizations in a county on the founding of new NGOs:

**H6. Net of other factors, greater numbers of Rotary Clubs will be associated with greater numbers of international aid organizations.**

### DATA AND METHODS

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable in this analysis is the count of international relief and development organizations registered with the IRS per U.S. county. (Registration with the IRS is the legal step needed to make an organization tax exempt.) The data are drawn from the IRS’s Business Master File (BMF) (IRS 2011), available through the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) at the Urban Institute. The BMF contains descriptive information for all active organizations that have registered for tax-exempt status with the IRS and is updated several times a year. I include data for organizations in the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

When an organization applies for tax-exempt status with the IRS, it is given a code from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) (NCCS 2007) according to its stated purpose. Based on each code’s detailed description in the NTEE-CC handbook and analysis of a sample of organizations with the relevant codes, I include organizations with the following codes in this study: Q30-39: International Development and Relief, and Q70-71: International Human Rights.

Web searches of a random sample of organizations with these codes revealed that organizations labeled as “human rights” organizations and those labeled as “development” were carrying out very similar work. For example, a group doing women’s microenterprise might be coded as Q30 or Q70, depending on whether the mission statement highlighted women’s empowerment. These codes exclude international organizations without an aid mandate: international cultural exchange or study programs, groups interested in security or non-proliferation, and international trade groups.

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3 In separate analysis of a randomized sample of 150 grassroots NGOs’ websites, I found that 15 percent of organizations mentioned Rotary Clubs as partners in their work.

4 Analysis of the random sample of 150 websites also confirmed that the aid organizations analyzed here operate primarily in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, as the “international development” and “international human rights” designations would suggest.
The shortcoming of this system is that organizations doing relief and development work are occasionally categorized according to the sector of their project. For instance, an organization called Development in Gardening, which does urban agriculture projects in Africa and Latin America, has code C42 (Garden Clubs). This false-negative error will conservatively bias my total count of grassroots NGOs but can be assumed to be geographically random. My preliminary analysis shows that false-positive errors—non-development organizations mistakenly categorized as development organizations—were rare, about 2 percent. While fluctuations in marginal tax rates since 1990 might make tax-exempt charitable giving slightly more or less advantageous in particular years, there have been no major legal changes in this era that would provide financial incentives (or disincentives) for a new group to register for tax-exempt status.

### Independent Variables

I use data from the Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010a, 2010c) to control for county-level demographic variables. In the models below I include variables for county population (in thousands), population density, and the county’s per capita income, reported in thousands of dollars and inflation adjusted to 2010 values. The educational attainment of the county population is measured by the percentage of residents who have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher.

I use a modified Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) to measure a county’s level of racial diversity, drawing data from the Census and ACS. (Following the literature on community diversity and social capital [e.g., Alesina and La Ferrara 2000], I use $1 - HHI$ so that the index can be read as a measure of diversity rather than homogeneity.) In order to avoid artificially inflating counties’ diversity when the number of possible categories increased in 2000, I calculate the index using the five racial categories available in the 1990 Census: white, black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, and other. For 2000 and 2010, I reaggregate the separate categories of “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander” and include “two or more races” with “other.” The index is generated according to the formula $1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N} s_i^2$, where $N$ is the number of racial categories (five) and $s_i$ is racial group $i$’s share of total population. The index ranges from zero to $1 - (1/N)$; in this case $.8$, since $N = 5$. Zero indicates that that the entire population belongs to a single racial group, and $1 - (1/N)$ indicates that the population is equally distributed over the racial categories.

The counts of religious congregations in a county in 1990, 2000, and 2010 are drawn from decennial studies of church membership conducted by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB) (ARDA n.d.). For 2000 I use the “adjusted” congregation count, which includes correctives to include historically African American denominations that were excluded in the original sample of 149 religious denominations. (For details on the adjustment procedure, see the file documentation in the Association of Religion Data Archives or Finke and Scheitle 2005). Counts of Rotary Clubs were furnished upon my request by the Rotary International membership office. I also include as a control variable the number of 501(c)3 public charities other than international relief and development organizations, drawn from the BMF.

The presence of immigrants is measured using percent of county residents who are foreign born (and may remain citizens of their native countries or may have become naturalized U.S. citizens) according to the Census. Note that because of the shift to the short form for the 2010 Census, I have to rely on ACS 2006-2010 period estimates for population density, population, per capita income, and percent foreign born. This will tend to underestimate the over-time effects of these variables, but will not have an effect on between-county comparisons. Following the literature on civic

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5 ACS one-year point estimates are available for counties with 65,000 residents or more, but this comprises less than a quarter of U.S. counties. I substituted 2010 point estimates for the counties for which they were available as a robustness check in the models described below, and no substantively different results emerged. For more on ACS period estimates and their interpretation, see Mather, Rivers, and Jacobson 2005.
engagement and race, I include a dummy variable for counties located in the South (former member states of the Confederacy). I also include a dummy variable for whether the county contains the state’s capital city (or the national capital, in the case of the District of Columbia).

To control for the possibility of local diffusion effects, I include a variable for the number of international aid organizations in all counties adjacent to the focal county two years prior to each wave (i.e., in 1988, 1998, and 2008). Adjacent counties are determined using the Census Bureau’s county adjacency file (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b). With the exception of these lagged adjacency counts and ACS period estimates, all variables were measured at 1990, 2000, and 2010, yielding three waves of data for 3,143 U.S. counties. Descriptive statistics for all variables are given in Table 1.

### Models

The simplest approach to predicting numbers of organizations in a county is to use a count model that employs county-level characteristics at the beginning of the study period to predict the number of organizations founded by 2010. Since the dependent variable is overdispersed, a negative binomial model is appropriate here, and I present these results for reference in Table 2.

However, this modeling strategy has a number of weaknesses: it cannot parcel out the effect of exogenous change over time, and is apt to overlook unobserved heterogeneity between counties, particularly when we are only testing for the effects of a small number of theoretically motivated variables. Longitudinal data allow the possibility of observing change within the same units over time. To avoid the constraints of a fixed-effects model—i.e., the exclusion of time-invariant covariates and cases for which there is no change in the dependent variable (here, nearly 2/3 of cases)—I instead use a mixed-effects random-intercept model that includes cluster means. I treat the outcomes and predictors from the counties measured at 1990, 2000, and 2010 as multilevel data clustered at the level of the county. The count of international organizations and predictor variables in a given year are treated as level one, and the county is level two. As in all multilevel models, the outcome variable (here, the number of aid organizations) varies at the lowest level. Most of the covariates—including population, percentage of the population with a BA or higher, the number of Rotary Clubs—will vary at this level, meaning that even within the county they will vary over time. The South and capital city dummies are level-two variables, meaning they are invariant over time and vary only at the level of the county.

### Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>International development organizations</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
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<td>Per capita income (in thousands, 2010 dollars)</td>
<td>21.68</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>64.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of population with BA or higher</td>
<td>16.36</td>
<td>8.04</td>
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<td>70.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial diversity</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<td>Number of religious congregations</td>
<td>92.19</td>
<td>164.90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Rotary Clubs</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent foreign born</td>
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<td>Adjacent-county aid organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of other nonprofits</td>
<td>251.14</td>
<td>876.31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital city</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (in thousands)</td>
<td>88.56</td>
<td>289.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>9,758.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>239.51</td>
<td>1,607.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>69,357.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 9,429 county-years
A general random-intercept model (or mixed-effects model) uses both between effects (i.e., between counties) and within effects (within the same counties over time) to model the effect of each covariate, using the following equation:

\[
\ln(\mu_{ij}) = \beta_1 + \beta_p x_{pi} + \xi_{1j} \quad (1)
\]

The equation models the expected count of organizations in county \(j\) in year \(i\) \((\mu_{ij})\), and \(\xi_{1j}\) represents a cluster-specific intercept that accounts for unexplained heterogeneity at the level of the cluster (in this case, the county). This model implicitly assumes that between and within effects are the same for a given covariate—for example, that the effect of an increase in one religious congregation between counties is the same as the increase in one religious congregation between time periods. Of course, there are many reasons to think this might not be true; a new religious congregation may not have established the deep networks that an existing congregation has, or may belong to one of the rapidly growing denominations that are less likely to engage in outreach work than older denominations. Fortunately it is possible to relax the assumption that between and within effects are the same for a covariate by using the model

\[
\ln(\mu_{ij}) = \beta_1 + \beta_{pW} (x_{pij} - \bar{x}_{pj}) + \beta_{pB} x_{pj} + \xi_{1j} \quad (2)
\]

In this equation \(\bar{x}_{pj}\) is a variable’s cluster mean while \((x_{pij} - \bar{x}_{pj})\) is a mean-centered variable. Therefore \(\beta_{pW}\) can be interpreted as a within-county effect, while \(\beta_{pB}\) is understood as the between-county effect (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012). Note that when we set \(\beta_{pW} = \beta_{pB} = \beta_{pp}\) Equation 2 collapses back into Equation 1. This model has the virtue of generating within-county effects as a fixed-effects model would, while not excluding cases with no change in the dependent variable over time. Moreover, the between effects estimated here are not subject to the influence of county-level unexplained heterogeneity as they would be in an only between-effects model. Note also that introducing the county-level random intercept \(\xi_{1j}\) addresses the problem of overdispersion present in a cross-sectional model (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012), making a Poisson model sufficient where the cross-sectional model required a negative binomial model to deal with excess zeroes in the dependent variable. I run the model using the STATA command `xtpoisson`, specifying a normal distribution for the random intercept.

In Table 3, the level-one (time-varying) variables are labeled as either (between), which should be interpreted as the variable’s effect between counties, or (within), which is interpreted as the effect of the variable within a given county over time. The dummy variables for capital city and the South are time invariant and are understood as between-county effects. I also include in the model dummies for the years 2000 and 2010 to allow for independent historical effects for those time periods relative to 1990, since we expect that the developments in transportation and technology in those periods were drivers of the growth of aid organizations. Missing data are dealt with by listwise deletion, resulting in the loss of three cases in the cross-sectional model for missing data on religious congregations in 1990. In addition to those three cases, the longitudinal model excludes 15 other hypothetical county-year cases because the county area was created or eliminated between Census waves. (This occurred in several rural areas of Alaska and in one county in Colorado. Counties were included in the longitudinal analysis if they existed in at least two Census waves.) Coefficients are given as incidence-rate ratios (IRRs). In Tables 2 through 5 the values for population density, religious congregations, and other nonprofits are given in hundreds to make IRRs interpretable at three decimal places.

**RESULTS**

Table 2 presents the results for the simple cross-sectional model. Note that the regression coefficients here indicate the effect of a variable for the entire study period, which is 20 years. Per capita income,
the percent of a county population with a bachelor’s degree or higher, percent foreign born, and the county’s number of religious congregations are all significantly and positively associated with a greater number of aid organizations. The predictors of racial diversity and number of Rotary Clubs are non-significant. The model offers some evidence for the effect of globalized connections; counties are likely to have 6 percent more international aid organizations founded between 1990 and 2010 for each additional percent of county residents in 1990 who were born outside of the United States.

The between-county results in the longitudinal model are similar to those from the cross-sectional model. Table 3 shows IRRs and 95 percent confidence intervals for the longitudinal model, while Table 4 shows the expected change in founding rates for a one standard deviation increase in each of the variables in the hypotheses, holding other variables constant.

Taking the control variables into account, between-county increases in per capita income are associated with more international development organizations. Two otherwise identical counties that differed by one standard deviation of income would show a 57 percent difference in the number of NGOs founded over the course of a decade. However, the within-county (over time) coefficient is small but negative, revealing that growth in county-level income between 1990 and 2010 is actually associated with the founding of slightly fewer organizations.

The coefficients confirm Hypothesis 2, that education is positively associated with organization growth. The dramatic differences between the educational attainment of the population of U.S. counties predict similarly dramatic differences in founding rates. A between-county difference of merely 1 percent is associated with a 7.7 percent ten-year predicted increase in the number of organizations founded. Within-county increases over time are also positive and significant, with a 1 percent within-county increase yielding a milder 3.4 percent predicted increase in foundings.

The results here refute the predictions of the literature about a negative relationship between racial diversity and the founding of new nonprofits. The between-county measure in fact shows a marginally significant (p = .06) positive relationship between racial diversity and new international aid organizations. A county that differed from another only with one standard deviation more racial diversity is predicted to have 9 percent more NGOs. The within-county effect is also positive but does not achieve statistical significance in this model. But in both cases, there is no support for Hypothesis 3.

### Table 2. Rate of International Development Organization Founding for 1990-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Incidence-Rate Rations (IRR)</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income (thousands)</td>
<td>1.076***</td>
<td>(1.045–1.107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent BA or more</td>
<td>1.057***</td>
<td>(1.036–1.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial diversity</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td>(0.570–3.406)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent foreign born</td>
<td>1.061***</td>
<td>(1.033–1.090)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious congregations (hundreds)</td>
<td>1.897***</td>
<td>(1.590–2.262)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotary Clubs</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>(0.988–1.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (thousands)</td>
<td>.998***</td>
<td>(0.997–0.999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (hundreds)</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>(0.993–1.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent-county aid organizations (lagged)</td>
<td>1.005</td>
<td>(0.993–1.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nonprofits (hundreds)</td>
<td>1.054**</td>
<td>(1.018–1.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital city</td>
<td>1.460</td>
<td>(0.928–2.298)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>(1.050–1.388)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.00470***</td>
<td>(0.00273–0.00810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>−11,978.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Negative binomial regression. N = 3,138 county-equivalents

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests)
Perhaps the positive relationship between diversity and the number of aid organizations is simply an echo of the immigrant effect being played out by second-generation immigrants who are reflected in the racial diversity of a county but are not counted among the foreign born. To evaluate this possibility I ran nested models that added variables for percent Hispanic, percent non-Hispanic Asian, and percent non-Hispanic black, displayed in Table 5. (Coefficients for other variables are virtually unchanged and so are not presented in the table. Model A, the reference model, is the same as that presented in Table 3.) The positive effects for racial diversity and percent foreign born persist as variables for percent non-Hispanic Asian and percent Hispanic are added. Only when the variables for non-Hispanic blacks are added to the model does the positive effect for racial diversity on the rate of NGO foundings wash out. Still, the suggestion of the literature on voluntarism, that greater diversity in a county would be negatively associated with number of international organizations, is contradicted. The large and positive association between the within-county percentage of non-Hispanic blacks and the founding rate of NGOs suggests three possible interpretations: (1) Organizations are being founded by second-generation African or Caribbean immigrants. (2) Organizations are being founded by African-Americans. (3) Organizations are being founded by non-blacks in communities.

Table 3. Rate of International Development Organization Founding by Decade, 1990-2010

Incidence-Rate Rations (IRR)  95% Confidence Interval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed part</th>
<th>1.094***</th>
<th>(1.072–1.116)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(between) Per capita income (thousands)</td>
<td>.946***</td>
<td>(.927–.965)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Per capita income (thousands)</td>
<td>1.077***</td>
<td>(1.063–1.090)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent BA or more</td>
<td>1.034***</td>
<td>(1.014–1.054)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent BA or more</td>
<td>1.653+</td>
<td>(.979–2.792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Racial diversity</td>
<td>1.599</td>
<td>(.680–4.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Racial diversity</td>
<td>1.054***</td>
<td>(1.037–1.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent foreign born</td>
<td>1.009</td>
<td>(.991–1.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent foreign born</td>
<td>1.009</td>
<td>(.991–1.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Religious congregations (hundreds)</td>
<td>2.521***</td>
<td>(2.273–2.796)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Religious congregations</td>
<td>1.035**</td>
<td>(1.010–1.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Rotary Clubs</td>
<td>1.074***</td>
<td>(1.049–1.099)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Rotary Clubs</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>(.991–1.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Adjacent-county aid organizations (lagged)</td>
<td>1.003*</td>
<td>(1.000–1.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Adjacent-county aid organizations (lagged)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>(.999–1.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Population (thousands)</td>
<td>.997***</td>
<td>(996–997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Population (thousands)</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td>(1.000–1.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Population density (hundreds)</td>
<td>1.008***</td>
<td>(1.004–1.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Population density (hundreds)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>(.998–1.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Other nonprofits (hundreds)</td>
<td>.969**</td>
<td>(.948–.989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Other nonprofits (hundreds)</td>
<td>.996**</td>
<td>(.993–.998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital city</td>
<td>1.841**</td>
<td>(1.277–2.653)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>(.850–1.163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_2000</td>
<td>2.938***</td>
<td>(2.590–3.332)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_2010</td>
<td>8.460***</td>
<td>(7.125–10.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Random part

| sigma_u                                       | 1.363*** | (1.214–1.530) |
| Log likelihood                                | –6,443.991 |

Notes: Random-intercept multilevel Poisson regression with cluster means. N = 9,414 observations (3,140 county-equivalent groups)  
+ p < .1 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests)
with large numbers of blacks. The former interpretations would mean that the volunteer patterns for blacks are different for international aid organizations than for different kinds of associations. If the latter interpretation is correct, contextual diversity does not discourage whites from being involved in international organizations in the way some researchers have argued that contextual diversity discourages other forms of civic engagement.

The between-county effect of the number of religious organizations is strongly positive, and best seen in Table 4. A county that was identical to its neighbor except for having one standard deviation more religious congregations would have more than four times as many relief and development organizations at the end of the decade. The between and within effects differ in magnitude, as an increase in congregations over time is associated with a much smaller positive effect on founding rates. This notable difference in effect size is probably because new and established religious congregations are not interchangeable; it likely takes new congregations time to establish the social ties that research suggests make religious groups such effective incubators for volunteers. It may also be that by virtue of their denomination (Iannaccone 1994)—newer congregations tend to be doctrinally conservative—or that recently founded congregations are “greedy” organizations that monopolize members’ potential volunteer time.

The effect of foreign-born residents between counties is significant and positive. A difference between counties of one percentage point is associated with a 5.4 percent increase in organizations. (The corresponding one standard deviation increase is 29 percent.) Here, the within-county test is positive but non-significant. Hypothesis 5 is partially confirmed—net of other variables, counties with more foreign-born residents were likely to see more international aid organizations founded there between 1990 and 2010.

Hypothesis 6 about the facilitating role of globalized organizations receives some support with the positive between-county effect of Rotary Clubs. Controlling for other variables, a one-standard deviation increase between counties in the number of Rotary Clubs is associated with a 35 percent increase

### Table 4. Net Effect on Ten-year Founding Rate of One Standard Deviation Increase for Hypthesized Predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Effect Between Counties</th>
<th>Effect Within Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Income</td>
<td>57% increase</td>
<td>10% decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Education</td>
<td>74% increase</td>
<td>10% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Racial diversity</td>
<td>9% increase</td>
<td>(not significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: Religious congregations</td>
<td>434% increase</td>
<td>1% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Foreign-born residents</td>
<td>29% increase</td>
<td>(not significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: Rotary Clubs</td>
<td>35% increase</td>
<td>(not significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the number of international aid groups founded within a decade. The within-county effect does not achieve statistical significance.

Several of the control variables merit comment. Whether or not a county is home to a state capital is a significant predictor of how many organizations will be founded there. Net of other factors, capital counties are home to 84 percent more organizations over the course of a decade. This may be because state governments deal increasingly with the impacts of international trade (for example, by creating tax incentives for multinational corporations to keep jobs in their states) and providing social services to immigrants and refugees. Operating in a capital city might also provide an air of legitimacy to midsize and larger organizations that seek government contracts or major donations.

The control variables representing local diffusion have no statistically significant effect within counties over time but a very small, positive effect between counties. All other factors equal, for each additional aid organization present in adjacent counties two years earlier, a county is expected to be home to have .3 percent more aid organizations. These findings offer evidence that there is very little effect for diffusion of the founding of aid organizations between counties, net of other variables. Robustness checks using one- and three-year lags yielded nearly identical results (not shown here).

### Table 5. Nested Longitudinal Models with Race/Ethnicity Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
<th>Model D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent foreign born</td>
<td>1.057*** (1.039–1.074)</td>
<td>1.037*** (1.025–1.050)</td>
<td>1.050*** (1.023–1.077)</td>
<td>1.051*** (1.025–1.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent foreign born</td>
<td>1.012 (.993–1.030)</td>
<td>1.002 (.980–1.024)</td>
<td>1.007 (.981–1.034)</td>
<td>.995 (.970–1.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Racial diversity</td>
<td>1.711* (1.015–2.886)</td>
<td>1.905** (1.238–2.930)</td>
<td>1.730* (1.009–2.965)</td>
<td>1.085 (.470–2.507)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Racial diversity</td>
<td>1.677 (.680–4.140)</td>
<td>2.100 (.852–5.177)</td>
<td>1.873 (.750–4.676)</td>
<td>.906 (.342–2.399)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent Hispanic</td>
<td>1.044 (.998–1.010)</td>
<td>1.010 (.995–1.012)</td>
<td>1.003 (.996–1.015)</td>
<td>1.006 (not shown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent Hispanic</td>
<td>1.015 (.997–1.010)</td>
<td>1.010 (.991–1.030)</td>
<td>1.003 (.997–1.034)</td>
<td>1.023* (1.003–1.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent non-Hispanic Asian</td>
<td>.998 (.971–1.026)</td>
<td>1.006 (.977–1.035)</td>
<td>.998 (.971–1.026)</td>
<td>.994 (.975–1.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent non-Hispanic Asian</td>
<td>.978 (.970–1.018)</td>
<td>1.007 (.976–1.017)</td>
<td>.978 (.970–1.018)</td>
<td>1.007 (.976–1.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between) Percent non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within) Percent non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
<td>1.044*** (1.028–1.061)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** All models include: between and within variables for per capita income, percent BA or higher, religious congregations, Rotary Clubs, other nonprofits, population density, population, adjacent-county aid organizations (lagged), dummy variables for capital city, South, year. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. N = 9,414 observations (3,140 county-equivalent groups). Random-intercept multilevel Poisson regression with cluster means.

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests)
The dummy variables for 2000 and 2010 can be understood to represent time changes specific to the decades preceding them, net of the other time-variant variables included in the model. The historical effect for 1990 to 2000 is nearly 300 percent, while the 2000 to 2010 historical effect (relative to 1990) is 846 percent. These figures square with the pattern of over-time increase of international aid organizations depicted in Figure 1, and remind us that broad technological change is a crucial driver of the growth of these groups.

DISCUSSION

This article set out to connect a new movement in development aid to theory on nonprofits and voluntarism. As for other nonprofit organizations, the presence of international aid organizations is predicted by a county’s level of income and education. These findings broadly concur with a supply-side theory of nonprofit organizations that understands these to be the projects of well-resourced voluntary entrepreneurs. The positive association between education and new NGOs is also consistent with the world polity view of education as an important vehicle for the transmission of world culture. David Frank and John Meyer (2007) view education—particularly university education—as initiating students into a world society that subscribes not only to principles of rational universalism, but to belief in individual rights and progress (Boli and Thomas 1997). This article provides empirical evidence that education, one mechanism for the spread of world culture, supports the creation of another, NGOs.

International aid organizations differ from some other nonprofits (and from the predictions of the voluntarism literature) in that they are no less likely to be found in racially diverse counties. The data here showed that diversity itself had no significant effect net of the positive effect of percent county residents who were black. These findings are consistent with the argument made by Eric Uslaner (2009) that an area’s specific racial composition rather than generalized diversity is a determinant of civic engagement.

International aid organizations flourish in counties with more religious congregations. This study cannot distinguish the mechanism that links religious groups to the founding of international aid organizations, but existing literature tells us that the specifics of religious belief matter less for volunteering and other measures of civic engagement than the social ties that are nourished within religious congregations (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Congregations are nodes in networks of potential volunteers (who, conveniently, receive weekly reminders on the virtue of generosity). Moreover, immigrants to the United States are often quick to affiliate with religious groups (Ebaugh and Chafetz 1999) and these relationships may flower into broader ties between the immigrant’s sending and receiving communities. Therefore, religious congregations may facilitate the founding of NGOs both by encouraging voluntarism and by facilitating globalized ties.

The cross-national character of international aid organizations is what distinguishes them from the nonprofits that have been the object of most theory to date. The relationship between the organization and space must be reconceptualized, acknowledging that these groups draw resources from the counties in which they are situated, but rely on globalized ties to do their work. Here immigrants are understood as human links that encourage “transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power” (Held et al. 1999). In the period 1990-2010, nearly 70 percent of foreign-born residents hailed from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. These immigrants, who are increasingly settling in the Midwest, South, and more generally beyond the usual “receiving sites” (Massey 2008), provide durable human links between U.S. counties and communities in developing countries. The literature on transnationalism suggests that flows of people go on to become flows of goods, capital, and culture between the sites. Research that includes individual-level data is needed to determine whether the presence of immigrants is simply a contextual effect that is associated with the presence of international aid organizations, or whether the immigrants themselves are the voluntary entrepreneurs.

I also hypothesized that international relief and development organizations are more likely be founded outside of the traditional cosmopolitan hubs when there are existing cross-national
organizational links. Here I looked at a group common to American civic life that has global ties: Rotary Clubs. The Rotary provides an organizational structure through which Americans even in otherwise isolated places can connect to communities in developing countries. The small grants provided by Rotary may provide an important early boost to nascent NGOs. Even net of the number of other nonprofit organizations, counties with a greater number of Rotary Clubs were home to a greater number of international aid organizations, suggesting that Rotary Clubs are not just a signal of a county’s overall civic engagement, but are themselves a facilitating factor in the formation of new globalized groups. I anticipate that this mechanism extends beyond Rotary Clubs to other institutions based in U.S. counties that facilitate travel and ties to the Global South, such as international corporations or universities with study abroad and international research partnerships.

Between-county differences and the expansion over 20 years to areas beyond the “usual” homes for international organizations are part of the story. But also important is the within-county growth, less the product of over-time demographic changes within counties than the transformations in politics, communications, and transportation that took place from 1990 to 2010 (captured in rough form in this analysis in period dummies). In this period, the end of the Cold War and the decreasing cost of international travel made whole regions of the world more accessible to Americans than ever before. And communication was transformed, as long-distance phone service extended to more locations and became much cheaper. Most of all, the development of the Internet—particularly the widespread free availability of e-mail by the late 2000s—made it nearly as easy for someone in Brooklyn to communicate to a colleague in Butare as to one in the Bronx. The high costs of travel and communication that made ongoing collaboration possible only for resource-rich organizations had dramatically diminished by 2010. The regression analyses support the claim that these historical shifts figure strongly in the expansion of international relief and development groups in the last 20 years.

These 10,000 new international aid organizations and the geographic predictors of their dispersal in the United States should be of interest to sociologists for three reasons. First, the sheer number of these groups suggests that small NGOs are an ever more common way of delivering aid. The “supply-driven” nature of grassroots NGOs suggests that the quality and type of aid provided by these groups will vary with the skill and interests of their founders. Some of these new groups will go on to win government contracts or major foundation grants, but most are likely to remain cash poor, funded by private contributions. Yet even small, privately funded organizations may be big fish in the small ponds of the communities they serve abroad, as Susan Cotts Watkins, Ann Swidler, and Thomas Hannan (2012) have noted. These groups are part of the bigger decentralization of aid—a movement in the spirit of “small is beautiful” and “let a thousand flowers bloom”—or needless replication, a lack of coordination, and high transaction costs for the communities to be aided, depending on one’s perspective. The impact of these aid groups relative to official foreign aid and older, larger NGOs is an important empirical question that deserves attention.

Second, these organizations represent a significant new site for voluntarism and charitable giving. Gifts of time and money to international organizations are unlikely to overtake those to religious organizations and educational institutions—at present the most common recipients—any time soon. But these organizations will compete for Americans’ limited charitable hours and dollars, as the increase in giving to international organizations has already demonstrated. Volunteering for international aid organizations is likely to become a common activity for students on gap years or school breaks or retirees who wish to combine travel with meaningful work. Just as Theda Skocpol (2003) analyzed the civic implications of the shift from local membership groups to national organizations in the twentieth century, scholars will need to consider how civic engagement is transformed when Americans collaborate for the benefit of not their own collectivities, but for those abroad with whom they have only tenuous interdependence.

Finally, these aid organizations are a new kind of link between developing countries and American communities. Not restrained by the professional norms of larger, established NGOs, these
organizations’ cultural exports may be influenced by religious beliefs or American civic practices. The study of these organizations opens doors to the deeper subtlety of cultural exports beneath the “world culture” that organizations from the global center carry with them to the periphery. These organizations are also likely to loom large in the minds of their American donors and volunteers, shaping how they view the countries in question, the nature of global poverty, and the role of private actors and governments to respond. The projects undertaken and requests for materials, money, and volunteer labor made by NGOs provide distinctive lenses for viewing faraway places and people; for many Brooklynites, Butare will now be framed through *Inzozi Nziza*. In sum, these new international organizations have the familiar form and some of the predictors of other sorts of nonprofits, but their effects leave vast territory to be explored.

REFERENCES


