**Mission accomplished? A cross-national examination of charity dissolution**

Diarmuid McDonnell1, Alasdair Rutherford2 and Carolyn Cordery3

1. Research Associate. UK Data Service, Cathie Marsh Institute, University of Manchester, UK (diarmuid.mcdonnell@manchester.ac.uk).

2. Professor of Social Statistics. Faculty of Social Sciences, Colin Bell Building, University of Stirling, UK.

3. Professor of Accounting. Department of Accounting, Aston Business School, UK.

**Abstract**

*Issue*

Encouraged by ‘open data’ movements, regulators are increasingly sharing large-scale data about charities and their regulation (Cordery & Deguchi, 2018). However, the openness of the data is not matched by its accessibility: researchers often need intermediate computational or data science skills to download the data they need – this is particularly true when data is only available through computational means (e.g., New Zealand Charities Services API), or information is segmented across different data platforms (e.g., England & Wales’ charity trustee data is split across the regulator’s website and open data portal). The issue of data access impinges heavily on a multitude of nonprofit research projects, whether within or cross-national, quantitative vs qualitative etc.

*Topic*

In this paper we provide an assessment of the accessibility, value and comparability of administrative data available from multiple charity jurisdictions. We apply these data resources to analyse a topic of considerable scholarly, public and regulatory importance: **charity dissolution,** with a particular focus on measuring **mission completion**. Defining charity success and failure has proved problematic for researchers (Hager, 1999; Lecy et al., 2011). In contrast to failure, charity success is easier to conceptualise but poorly understood for a number of reasons: extant studies have focused on a limited number of subsectors such as Social Service organisations (Helmig et al., 2014); used observations from small regional study sites (e.g. Wollebaek, 2010); covered short time periods (e.g. Hager et al., 1996); or been unable to differentiate success from other forms of dissolution such as amalgamations, revocation of charity status, winding up of operations, periods of inactivity etc (e.g., Lu et al., 2019).

*Implications*

Research on dissolution is dominated by US or UK-based studies, which is mainly explained by the availability of open data resulting from the sustained efforts of large-scale infrastructure and research bodies (e.g., NCCS in the US; Third Sector Research Centre in the UK). By focusing on under-researched jurisdictions – including Republic of Ireland, New Zealand and Australia –, our study contributes to methodological approaches for researching the charity sector by: defining dissolution in a more granular manner, shifting focus to other important organisational events experienced by charities; clarifying the relevance and extent to which core theories - resource dependence, population ecology, and new institutionalism - possess explanatory power for understanding dissolution in jurisdictions other than the US and UK; and demonstrating the use of open-source computational tools for collecting varied and voluminous data about charitable organisations.

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