

# **Representational Roles of Nonprofit Organizations in Policy Advocacy**

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# Research questions

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## ● **Political representation**

- It is the relationship between representatives and those whom they serve.
- Electoral representation has limitations due to geographically defined districts and majoritarian systems.

## ● **Nonprofits in political representation**

- Nonprofits can complement democratic representation by advocating for people and interests left out of elections.
- Nonprofits usually do not have legally binding authorization by and accountability to those whom they claim to represent.

# Research questions

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## ● Key research questions

- For whom do nonprofits aim to mainly advocate?
- How do nonprofits speak for those whom they aim to primarily serve?
- Does the manner in which nonprofits serve differ depending on those whom they aim to chiefly serve?
- Why do nonprofits serve differently depending on those for whom they aim to mainly work?

# Research framework

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## ● **The concept of the representational role**

- It consists of representational foci and styles (Eulau et al., 1959).

## ● **Representational foci**

- For whom do nonprofits aim to mainly speak?
  - ✦ Nonprofits act on behalf of members, constituents, or the general public.

## ● **Representational styles**

- How do nonprofits advocate for their representational foci?
  - ✦ In the delegation style, a nonprofit follows mandates of its representational focus.
  - ✦ In the trusteeship style, a nonprofit pursues what it independently identifies as the best interests of its representational focus.
  - ✦ In the educational style, a nonprofit attempts to persuade its representational focus of what issues or policies are important for it.

# Hypotheses

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- **Hypotheses about relationships between representational foci and styles**
- H1a: Nonprofits that aim to advocate mainly for their members would be more likely to adopt the delegation style than the trusteeship style.
- H1b. These nonprofits would be most likely to adopt the delegation style among all types of nonprofits.
- H2a. Nonprofits that aim to primarily serve the general public would be more likely to practice the trusteeship style than the delegation style.
- H2b. These nonprofits would be most likely to utilize the trusteeship style among all types of nonprofits.

# Hypotheses

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- **Hypotheses about relationships between representational foci and styles (cont.)**
- H3a. Overall, for organizations that aim to speak chiefly for their constituents, there would be no difference between the degree to which these nonprofits adopt the delegation and trusteeship styles.
- H3b. Depending on the type of constituency that these nonprofits aim to mainly serve, the degree to which they utilize the delegation and trusteeship styles would differ.

# Hypotheses

## ● Key characteristics of representational foci

|                | Interest in issues | Knowledge about issues | Policy preferences | Influence |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Membership     | High               | High                   | Homogeneous        | Large     |
| Constituency   | Mid                | Mid                    | Mid                | Mid       |
| General public | Low                | Low                    | Heterogeneous      | Small     |

# Hypotheses

- **Relationships between representational styles and characteristics of representational foci**

|                   | Higher interest in issues | Higher knowledge about issues | More diverse policy preferences | Larger influence |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Delegation style  | More likely               | More likely                   | Less likely                     | More likely      |
| Trusteeship style | Less likely               | Less likely                   | More likely                     | Less likely      |
| Educational style | More likely               | Less likely                   | Less likely                     | Less likely      |

# Hypotheses

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- **Hypotheses about relationships between representational styles and characteristics of representational foci**
- H4a. Controlling for the four characteristics of members, constituents, and the general public, representational foci would have no discernible effect on the degree to which nonprofits practice the delegation and trusteeship styles.
- H4b. For nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their constituents, types of constituencies would have no measurable effect on the degree to which these nonprofits practice the delegation and trusteeship styles, controlling for the four characteristics of constituencies.

# Hypotheses

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- **Hypotheses about relationships between representational styles and charitable giving and volunteering**
  - H5a. Nonprofits that rely more on donations would be less likely to practice the delegation and trusteeship styles.
  - H5b. Nonprofits that rely more on volunteers would be less likely to employ the delegation and trusteeship styles.

# Hypotheses

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- **Hypotheses about relationships between representational styles and membership status**
- H6a. For nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their constituents or the general public, membership organizations would be less likely than non-membership organizations to practice the delegation style.
- H6b. For nonprofits that aim to chiefly represent their constituents or the general public, nonprofits with a larger membership would be less likely than nonprofits with a smaller membership to adopt the delegation style.

# Hypotheses

## ● Conceptual models

- Delegation / trusteeship / educational style =  $\alpha_0$  + (types of representational foci) +  $\alpha_2$ (policy issue variable) +  $\alpha_3$ (charity-related variables) +  $\alpha_4$ (membership-related variables) +  $\alpha_5$ (other organizational attributes) +  $\mu$
- Delegation / trusteeship / educational style =  $\beta_0$  +  $\beta_1$ (types of constituencies) +  $\beta_2$ (policy issue variable) +  $\beta_3$ (charity-related variables) +  $\beta_4$ (membership-related variables) +  $\beta_5$ (other organizational attributes) +  $v$

# Hypotheses

## ● Conceptual models (cont.)

- Delegation / trusteeship / educational style =  $\gamma_0 + \gamma_1(\text{characteristics of representational foci}) + \gamma_2(\text{types of representational foci}) + \gamma_3(\text{policy issue variable}) + \gamma_4(\text{charity-related variables}) + \gamma_5(\text{membership-related variables}) + \gamma_6(\text{other organizational attributes}) + \eta$
- Delegation / trusteeship / educational style =  $\lambda_0 + \lambda_1(\text{characteristics of constituencies}) + \lambda_2(\text{types of constituencies}) + \lambda_3(\text{policy issue variable}) + \lambda_4(\text{charity-related variables}) + \lambda_5(\text{membership-related variables}) + \lambda_6(\text{other organizational attributes}) + \varphi$

# Survey methodology

## ● Sampling methods

- The target population is 501(c)(3) public charities and 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations involved in policy advocacy.
- The target recipients are executive directors or directors of public policy.
- The sampling source is the IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute.
- Nonprofits engaged in policy advocacy are defined as organizations that: either (1) chose the 501(h) election, (2) reported lobbying expenditures in the past three years, (3) were coded “civil rights, social action and advocacy” under the NTEE Core Codes, (4) were coded “alliances and advocacy” under the NTEE Common Codes, or (5) were coded “legislative and political activities” under the IRS Activity Codes.
- For the survey, 1,280 nonprofits are randomly chosen from the master list.

# Survey methodology

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## ● **Survey execution**

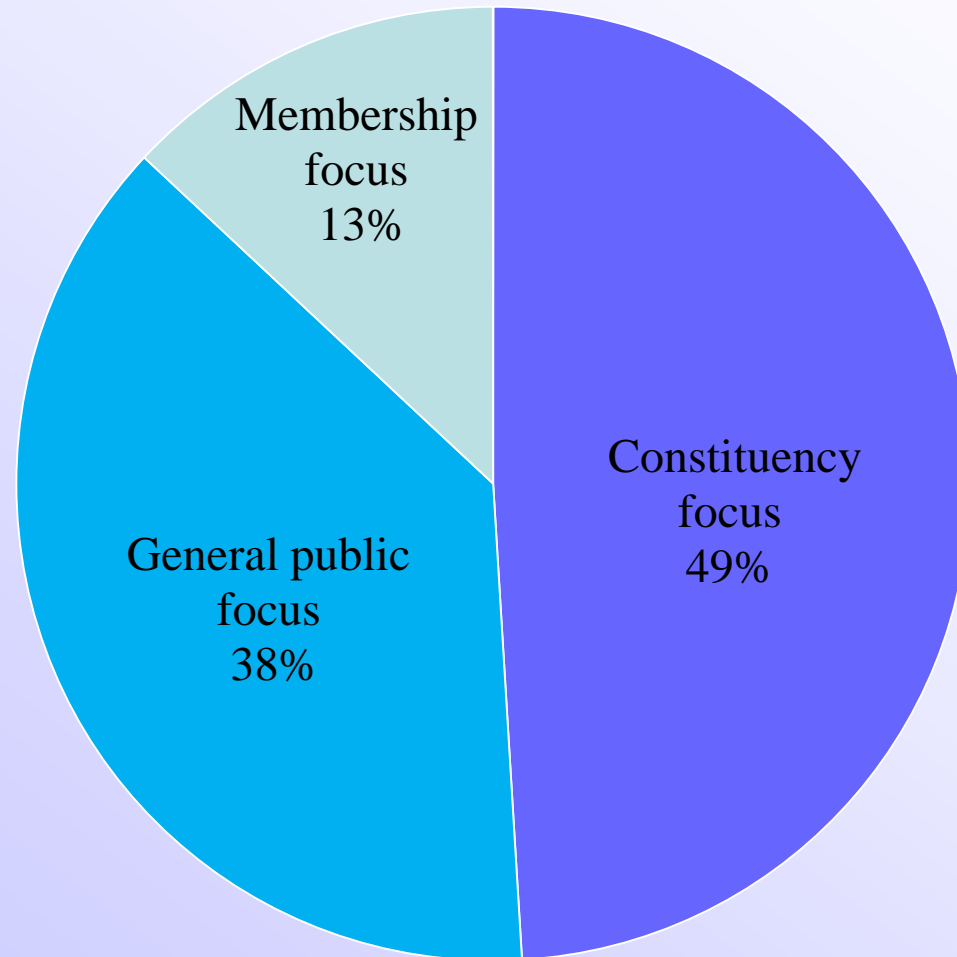
- A mixed-mode survey consists of web and postal mail questionnaires.
- A web survey was conducted from October 2010 to November 2010, and a postal mail survey was carried out from January 2011 to April 2011.
- The response rate was about 57.5% (729 respondents).

## ● **Limitations of the survey methodology**

- The methodology confines findings to the perceptions of nonprofit officers.
- Nonprofit officers may answer the questions in a biased manner.
- The mixed-mode survey may introduce measurement errors.

# Survey results

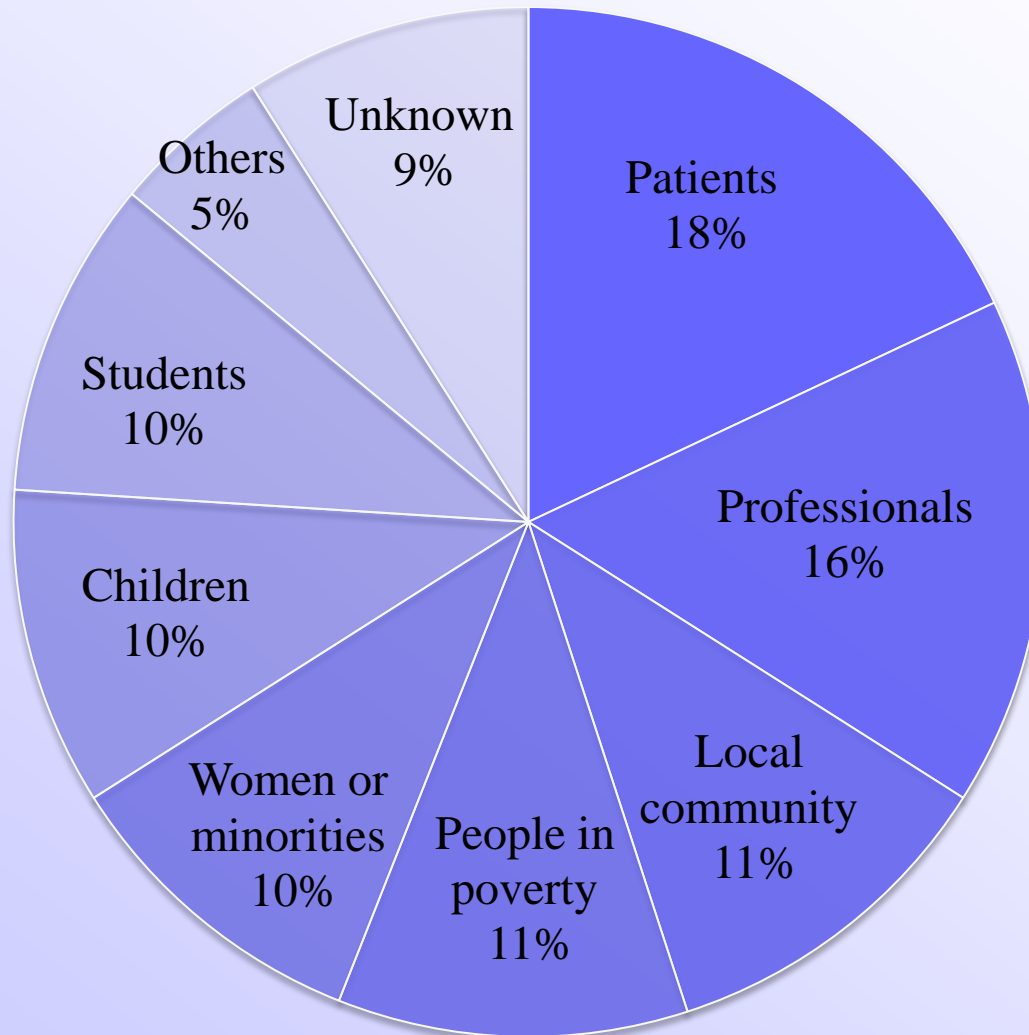
## Representational foci



Nonprofit officers were asked: “Whom does your organization aim to mainly serve?”

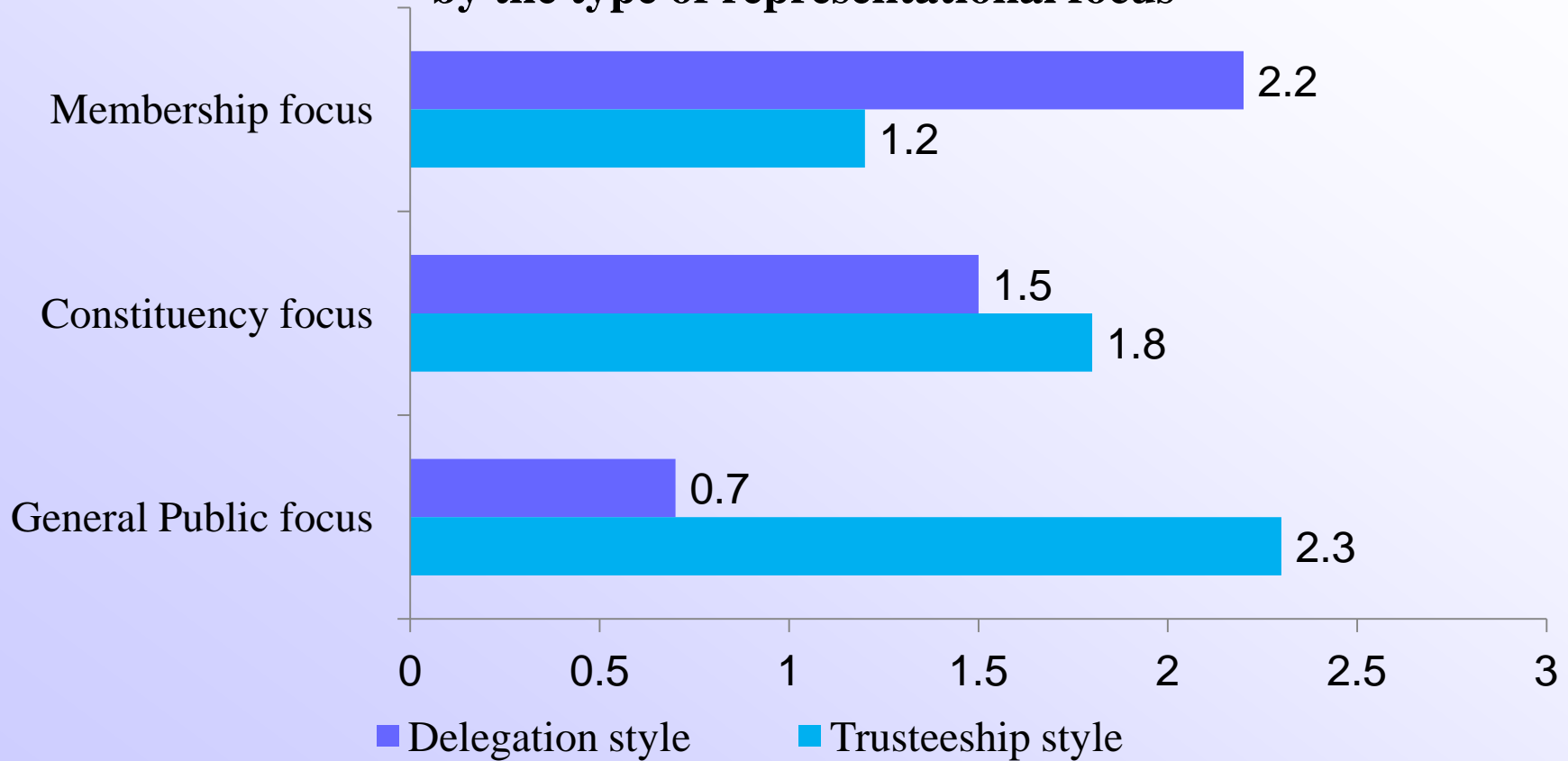
# Survey results

## Types of primary constituencies



# Survey results

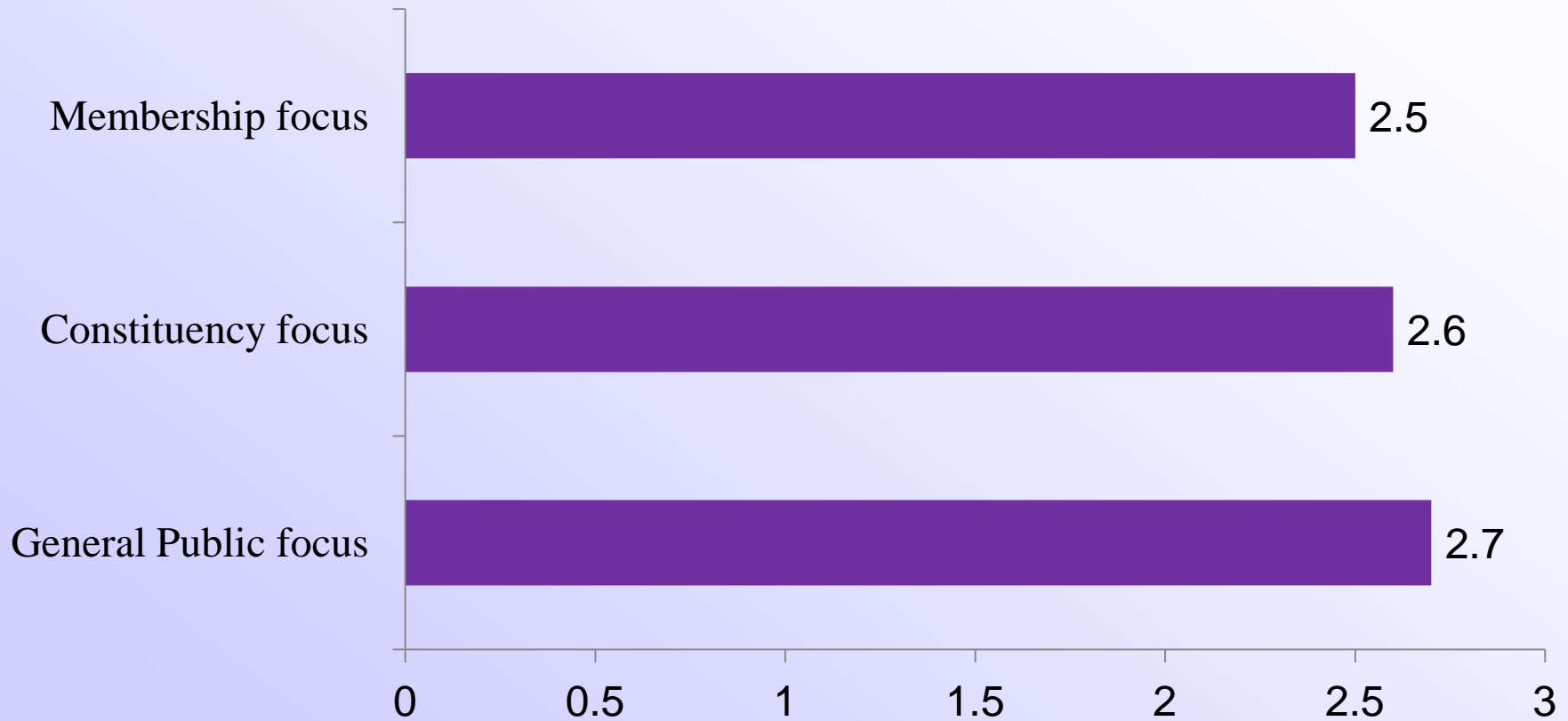
## Delegation and trusteeship styles, by the type of representational focus



Nonprofit officers responded by using a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 is 'very unlikely' 1 is 'somewhat unlikely,' 2 is 'somewhat likely,' and 3 is 'very likely.'

# Survey results

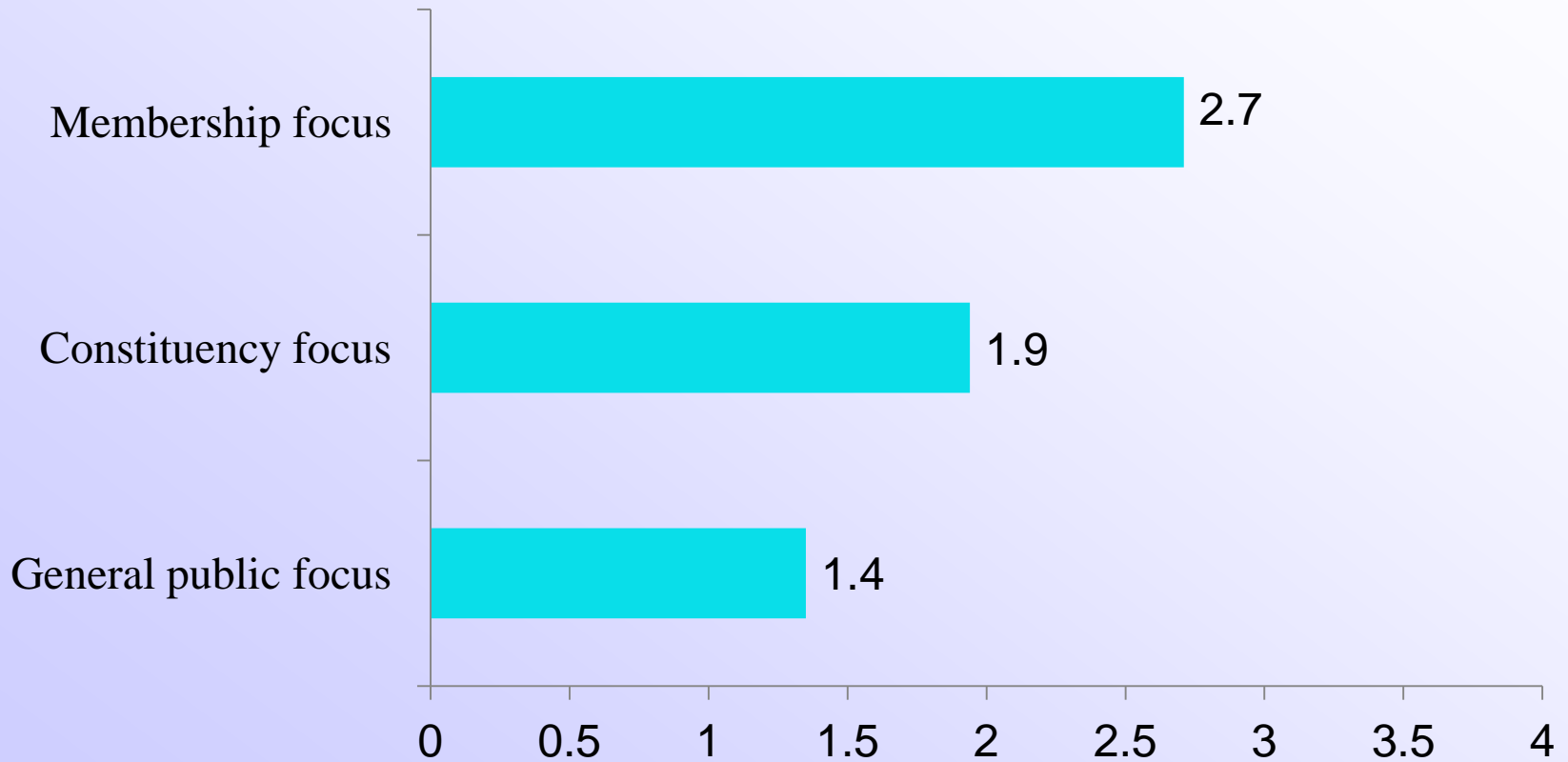
## Educational style, by the type of representational focus



Nonprofit officers responded by using a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 is 'very unlikely,' 1 is 'somewhat unlikely,' 2 is 'somewhat likely,' and 3 is 'very likely.'

# Survey results

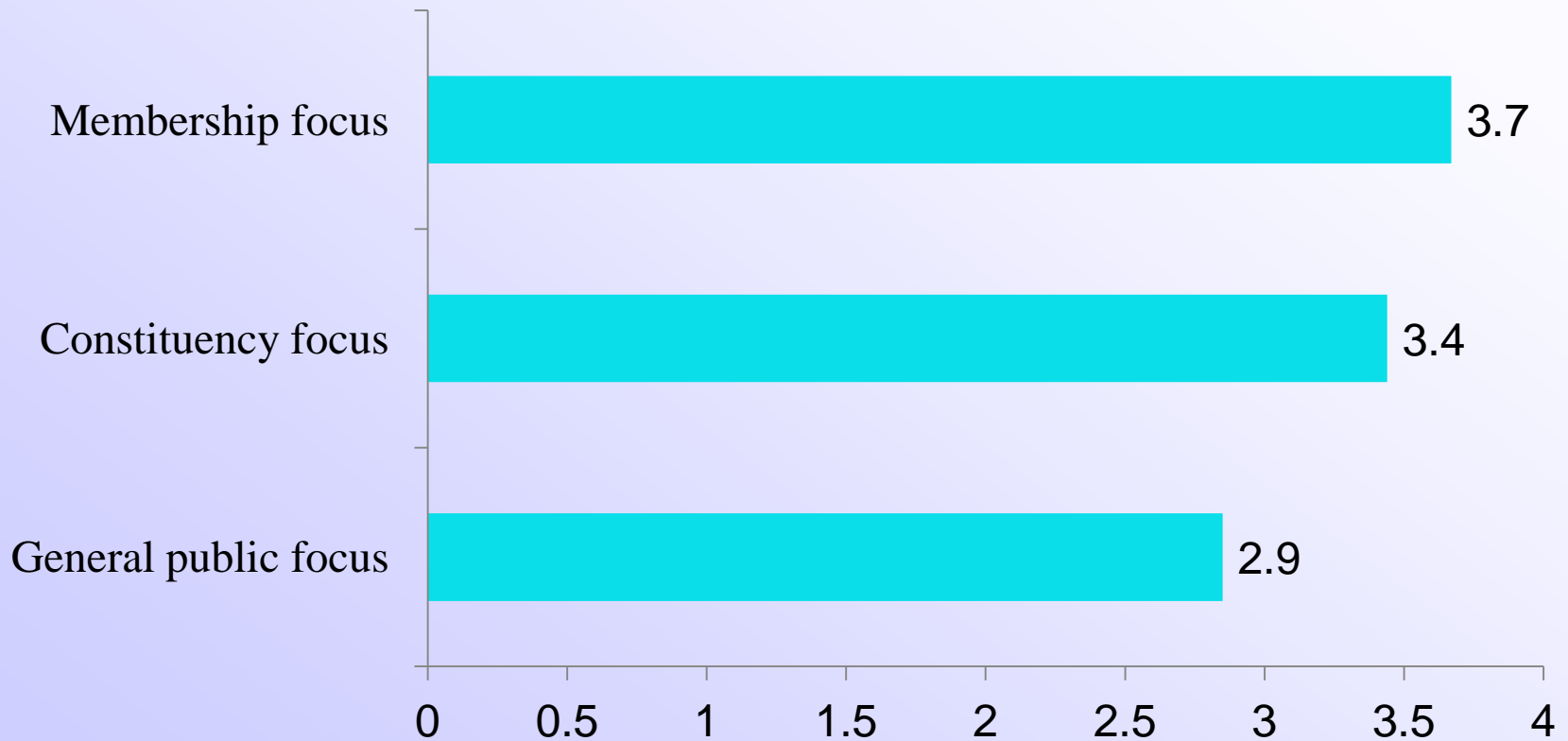
## Frequency of nonprofit's surveys on policy concerns of representational foci, by type of representational focus



Nonprofit officers responded by using a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 is 'never,' 1 is 'rarely,' 2 is 'sometimes,' 3 is 'often,' and 4 is 'very often.'

# Survey results

## Proportions of representational foci's agreement with nonprofit's policy positions, by type of representational foci



Nonprofit officers responded by using a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 is 'none,' 1 is 'very few,' 2 is 'some,' 3 is 'many,' and 4 is 'almost all.'

# Analysis

## Relationships between representational foci and styles (ordered probit analysis)

|   | Delegation style   | Trusteeship style  | Educational style |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| General public focus                              | -1.060 ***         | 0.729 ***          | 0.474 ***         |
| Membership focus                                  | 0.963 ***          | -0.578 ***         | -0.127            |
| 501(c)(3) public charity                          | -0.112             | -0.301 **          | -0.188            |
| Dependence on donations                           | -0.003 **          | 0.004 ***          | -0.001            |
| Log (# of volunteers)                             | -0.011             | -0.019             | 0.002             |
| Membership organization                           | -0.232             | 0.161              | -0.008            |
| Log (# of individual members)                     | -0.011             | 0.023              | 0.025             |
| Log (# of org members)                            | -0.020             | -0.037             | -0.001            |
| # of observations                                 | 686                | 686                | 686               |
| Log likelihood chi-square<br>(degrees of freedom) | 242.78 ***<br>(15) | 139.50 ***<br>(15) | 39.23 ***<br>(15) |

Note: \* shows statistical significance at  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* shows  $p < 0.05$ ; and \*\*\* shows  $p < 0.01$ .

Baseline category is nonprofits that aim to mainly represent their constituents.

# Analysis

## Relationships between types of constituencies and representational styles (ordered probit analysis)

|   | Delegation style  | Trusteeship style | Educational style |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Professionals                                     | 0.495 **          | -0.427 **         | 0.037             |
| Children  | -0.417 *          | 0.627 ***         | 0.081             |
| People in poverty                                 | -0.044            | -0.555 ***        | -0.109            |
| 501(c)(3) public charities                        | -0.010            | -0.540 *          | -0.471            |
| Dependence on donations                           | -0.004 *          | 0.005 **          | 0.000             |
| Log (# of volunteers)                             | 0.027             | -0.060 **         | -0.023            |
| Membership organization                           | -0.466 **         | 0.321             | -0.131            |
| # of observations                                 | 338               | 338               | 338               |
| Log likelihood chi-square<br>(degrees of freedom) | 39.33 ***<br>(19) | 48.94 ***<br>(19) | 24.63<br>(19)     |

Note: \* shows statistical significance at  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* shows  $p < 0.05$ ; and \*\*\* shows  $p < 0.01$ .

Baseline category is nonprofits that aim to primarily represent women or minorities.

# Analysis

## Relationships between characteristics of representational foci and representational roles (ordered probit analysis)

|  | Delegation style   | Trusteeship style  | Educational style |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Interest in issues                             | -0.085             | -0.020             | 0.122 **          |
| Knowledge about issues                         | 0.114 *            | -0.016             |                   |
| Difficulty discerning policy preferences       | 0.011              | 0.011              | -0.108 *          |
| Influence on the nonprofit                     | 0.503 ***          | -0.308 ***         | -0.024            |
| General public focus                           | -0.759 ***         | 0.493 ***          | 0.547 ***         |
| Membership focus                               | 0.684 ***          | -0.377 **          | -0.197            |
| # of observations                              | 686                | 686                | 686               |
| Log likelihood chi-square (degrees of freedom) | 349.84 ***<br>(19) | 182.74 ***<br>(19) | 47.49 ***<br>(18) |

Note: \* shows statistical significance at  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* shows  $p < 0.05$ ; and \*\*\* shows  $p < 0.01$ .

Baseline category is nonprofits that aim to mainly represent their constituents.

# Analysis

## Relationships between characteristics of constituencies and representational roles (ordered probit analysis)

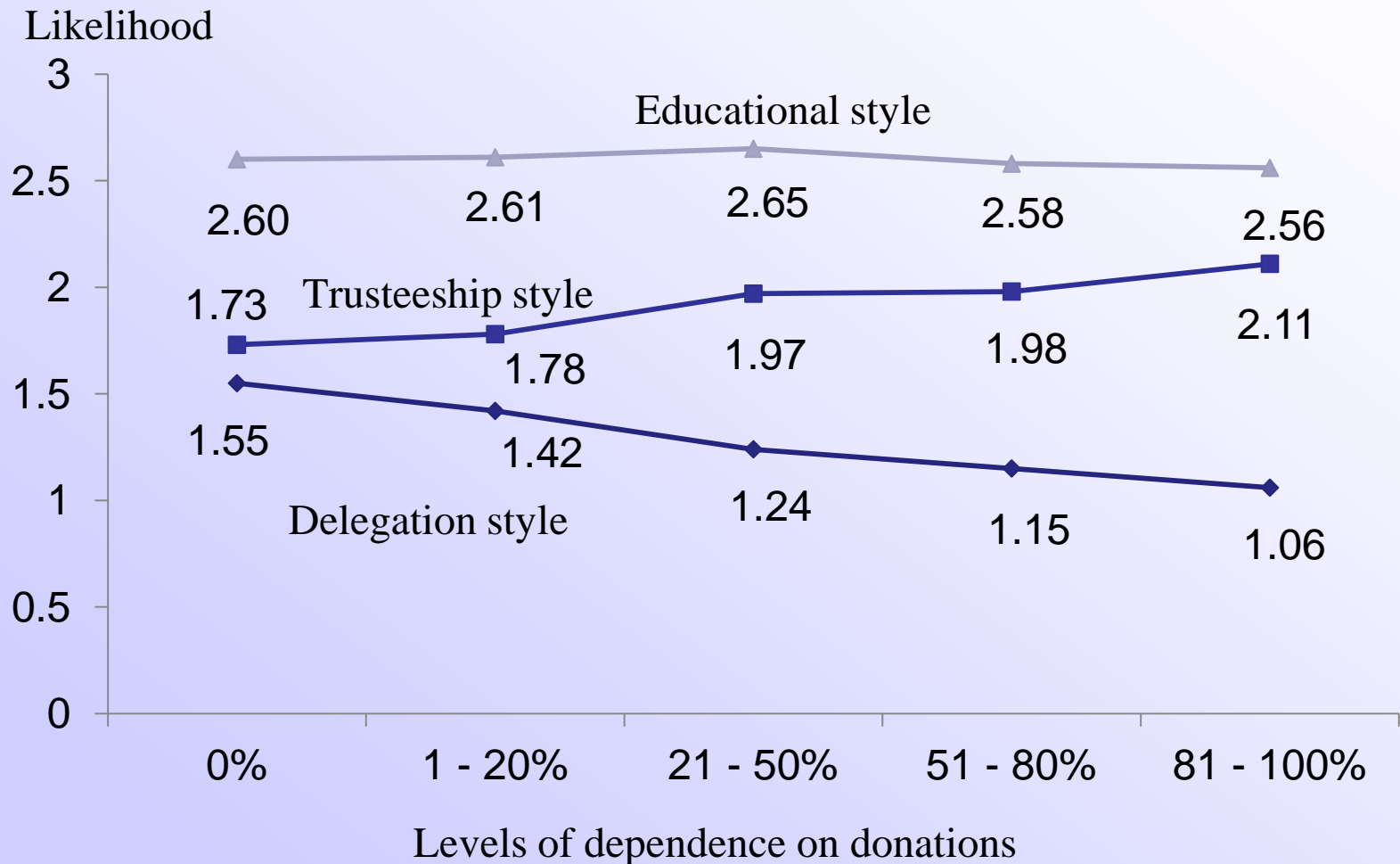
|  | Delegation style | Trusteeship style | Educational style |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Interest in issues                             | -0.020           | -0.069            | 0.170 **          |
| Knowledge about issues                         | 0.090            | -0.002            |                   |
| Difficulty discerning policy preferences       | -0.054           | 0.035             | -0.061            |
| Influence on the nonprofit                     | 0.449 ***        | -0.287 ***        | -0.082            |
| Professionals                                  | 0.406 *          | -0.337            | 0.032             |
| Children                                       | -0.350           | 0.573 ***         | 0.167             |
| People in poverty                              | -0.090           | -0.536 **         | -0.106            |
| # of observations                              | 338              | 338               | 338               |
| Log likelihood chi-square (degrees of freedom) | 84.14 *** (23)   | 68.73 *** (23)    | 30.18 (22)        |

Note: \* shows statistical significance at  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* shows  $p < 0.05$ ; and \*\*\* shows  $p < 0.01$ .

Baseline category is nonprofits that aim to primarily represent women or minorities.

# Analysis

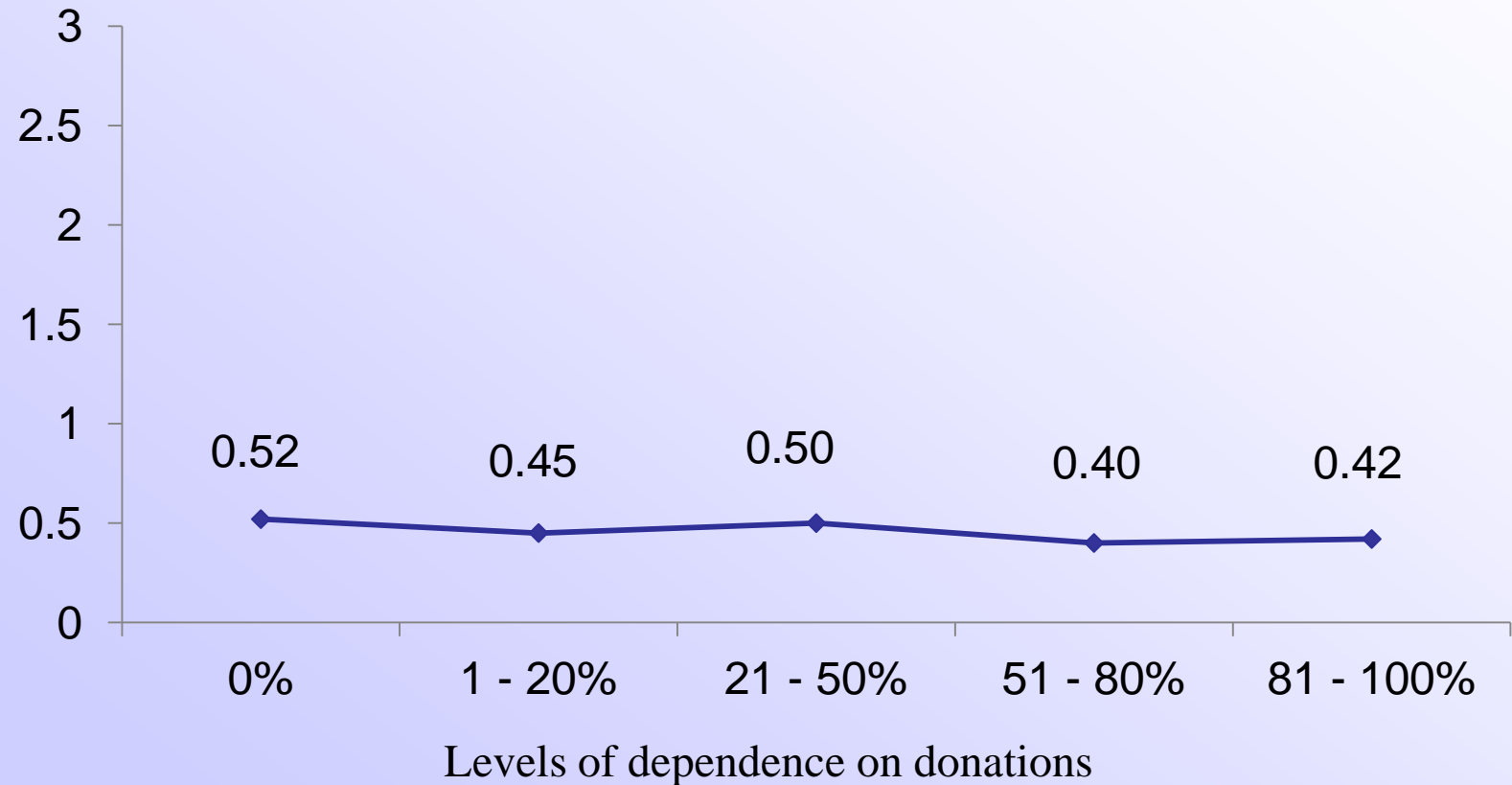
## Comparison of the likelihood of nonprofits adopting representational styles, by levels of dependence on donations



# Analysis

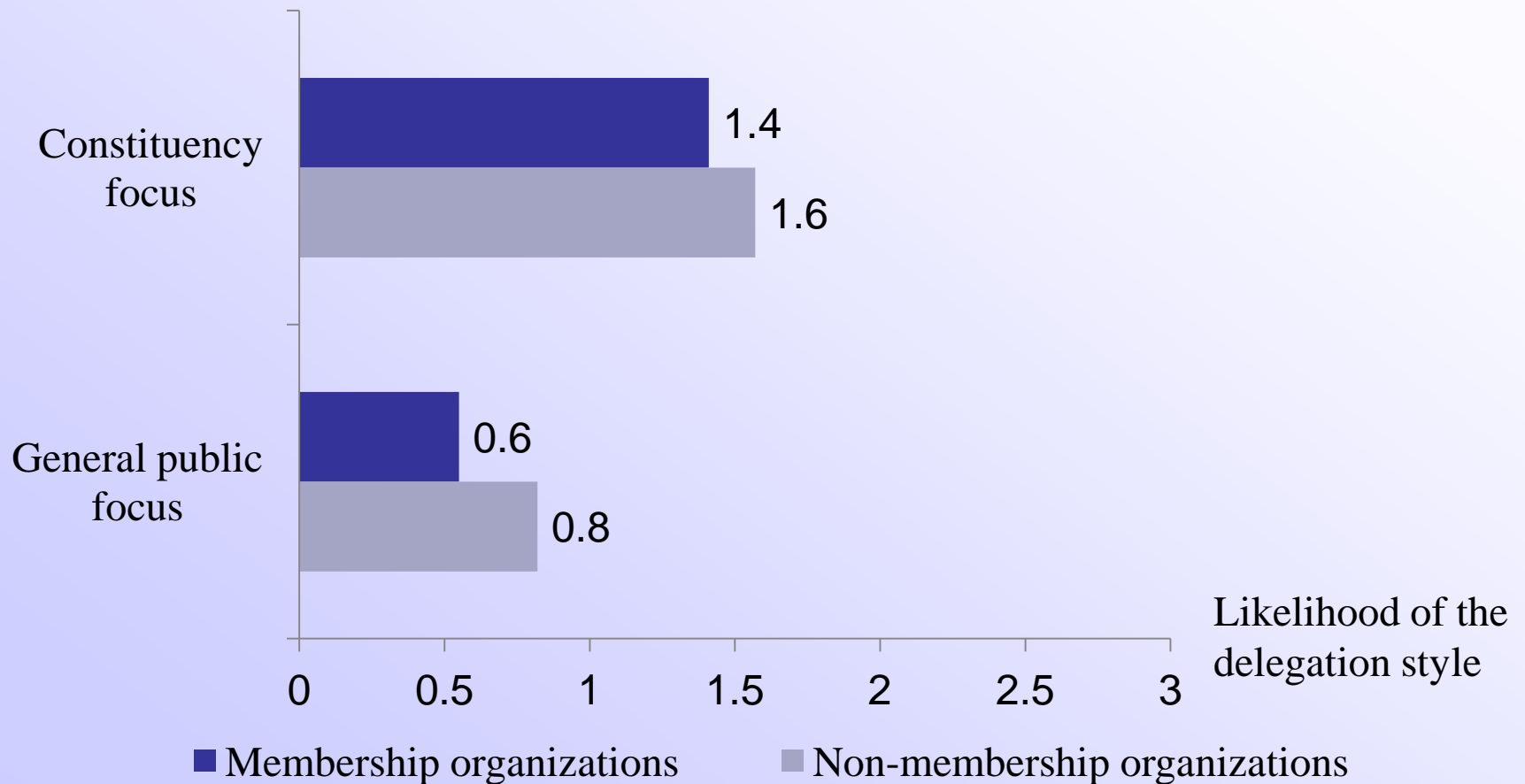
## Comparison of the likelihood of nonprofits following donors' policy preferences, by levels of dependence on donations

Likelihood of nonprofits following donors' preferences



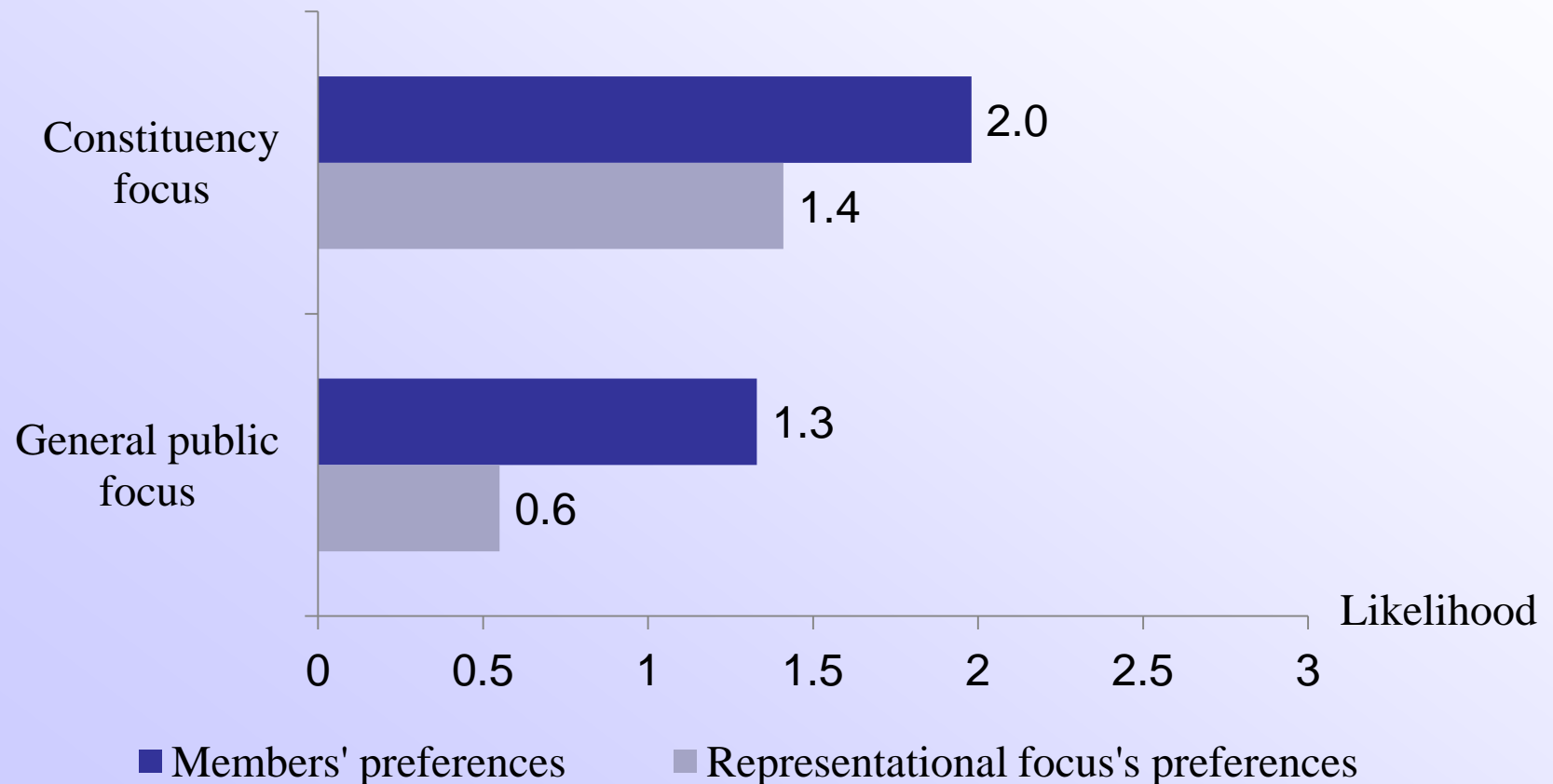
# Analysis

**Comparison of the likelihood of membership and non-membership organizations adopting the delegation style, by type of representational foci**



# Analysis

**Comparison of the likelihood of membership organizations following their members' preferences and their representational foci's preferences, by the type of representational foci**



# Results

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- **The degree to which nonprofits adopt the delegation, trusteeship, educational styles varies by those whom they aim to mainly serve.**
- **H1a is supported:** Nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their members are more likely to adopt the delegation style than the trusteeship style.
- **H1b is supported:** These nonprofits, among all types of nonprofits, are most likely to practice the delegation style.
- **H2a is supported:** Nonprofits that aim to advocate primarily for the general public are more likely to utilize the trusteeship style than the delegation style.
- **H2b is supported:** These nonprofits, among all types of nonprofits, are most likely to employ the trusteeship style.

# Results

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- **The degree to which nonprofits adopt the delegation, trusteeship, educational styles varies by those whom they aim to mainly serve (cont.).**
- **H3a is rejected:** Nonprofits that aim to chiefly serve their constituents are somewhat more likely to embrace the trusteeship style than the delegation style.
- **H3b is partially supported:** For these nonprofits, some nonprofits adopt different representational styles depending on the type of constituency that they aim to mainly serve.

# Results

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- **The four characteristics of representational foci can partially explain relationships between representational foci and styles.**
- **H4a is rejected:** Controlling for the four characteristics of members, constituents, and the general public, representational foci have smaller but still measurable effects on the degree to which nonprofits practice the delegation and trusteeship styles.
- **H4b is rejected:** Controlling for the four characteristics of constituencies, Some types of constituencies have smaller but still discernible effects on the degree to which these nonprofits utilize the delegation and trusteeship styles.

# Results

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- **Donations affect representational styles.**
- **H5a is partially supported:** Nonprofits that rely more on giving are less likely to employ the delegation style but are more likely to adopt the trusteeship style.
- **H5b is partially supported:** For nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their constituents, nonprofits that depend more on volunteers are less likely to embrace the trusteeship style.

# Results

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- **Membership status affects representational styles.**
- **H6a is supported:** For nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their constituents or the general public, membership organizations are less likely than non-membership organizations to practice the delegation style.
- **H6b is rejected:** The size of membership has no measurable effect on the degree to which nonprofits that aim to chiefly represent their constituents adopt the delegation style.

# Implications

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- **Nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their members may play a role as their members' delegates in political representation.**
- These nonprofits are most likely to directly convey their members' voices to policy makers.
- These nonprofits may accurately reflect their members' voices because they often survey their members' concerns and they perceive that almost all of their members agree with them.

# Implications

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- **Nonprofits that aim to advocate primarily for the general public may play a role in cultivating and constructing the political interests of the general public rather than in conveying its voices to policy makers.**
- These nonprofits are most likely to act on their own initiatives based on their own assessment of policy issues and to work toward educating the general public.
- There are some concerns about how accurately these nonprofits reflect the real interests of the general public, since they rarely survey the general public's concerns and they perceive that only a minority of the general public agrees with them.

# Implications

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- **Nonprofits that aim to speak chiefly for their constituents may play a role as their constituents' trustee in political representation.**
- These nonprofits are somewhat more likely to pursue what they consider to be the best interests of their constituents than to follow their constituents' opinions.
- These nonprofits can accurately reflect their constituents' voices to some extent, because they sometimes survey their constituents' concerns and they perceive that a large majority of their constituents agrees with them.
- However, the degree to which these nonprofits accurately reflect their constituents' voices may vary depending on the type of constituency that they aim to mainly serve.

# Implications

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- **Giving may increase the independence of nonprofits in representational roles.**
- Donations do not affect representational roles of nonprofits from the viewpoint of organizational maintenance-related concerns.
- As nonprofits depend more on donations, they are more likely to act on their own initiatives based on their own assessment of policy issues.

# Implications

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- **Membership status may affect representational styles differently depending on those whom nonprofits aim to mainly serve.**
- Membership status may decrease the degree to which nonprofits that aim to advocate mainly for their constituents or the general public follow policy preferences of those whom they aim to mainly serve.
- Membership status may increase the degree to which nonprofits that aim to mainly serve their members follow their members' mandates.

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