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Abstract

Policy advocacy is widely regarded as an eminent feature of nonprofit organizations' activities, allowing them to represent their constituencies. The article presents a literature review of research on nonprofit policy advocacy that has been published over the last decade, focusing on advocacy by nonprofit human service organizations (NPHSOs) and its unique characteristics and contributions. The review focuses on several key topics, including: the definitions and origins of the term advocacy and its current uses in studies related to NPHSOs; the current situation and prevalence of NPHSO advocacy activities; organizational and structural variables as they relate to policy advocacy; dependence on external funding sources and policy advocacy; strategies, tactics, modes of operation, and the effectiveness of NPHSO policy advocacy. The article presents and discusses the implications of this research and suggests directions for future research.

Keywords

advocacy, policy-making, human service organizations.

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Introduction

Policy advocacy is widely regarded as an eminent feature of nonprofit organizations' activities, allowing them to engage and represent their constituencies; give voice to diverse views and demands, promote economic, and social justice; contribute to a more vital, active civil society, and strengthen democracy and equality of opportunity. However, the abundant literature on nonprofits published through the years has paid limited attention to the ways in which nonprofits represent their constituencies in political and policy-making processes and arenas (Berry & Arons, 2003).

This article presents a literature review of research on nonprofit policy advocacy published over the last decade, focusing on nonprofit human service organizations (NPHSOs). While interest in nonprofit advocacy has grown in recent years, many studies have focused on "advocacy organizations," defined as organizations whose main goal and core activity is advocacy. However, these amount to only a small percentage of the nonprofit organizations active in many countries. Most nonprofit activity is undertaken by organizations that combine advocacy with the provision of services, usually their primary goal.

The political and social environments in which NPHSOs operate have changed dramatically in the last two decades in many countries. These changes relate mainly to processes of welfare state retrenchment following the introduction of a neoliberal ideology that has led to privatization, devolution, and the contracting-out of social services. Consequently, the number and scope of activities of NPHSOs—the main providers of social services—have grown significantly. Although previously they tended to control the field of social services, they are now competing with for-profit organizations in the same field (Schmid, 2004). As a result, NPHSOs providing services largely funded by government are more attuned to political fluctuations and policy changes. Their dependence on governmental resources enables the government to impose on them policies, regulations, and work procedures as a condition for ensuring a steady stream of resources that they need for their activities and survival. However, these organizations have additional roles in enhancing human and social rights, to protect and advance the well-being of the clients they represent: *advocacy*, an essential component of their mission as civil society organizations.

This article presents an extensive review of the literature discussing the current situation of advocacy activities employed by NPHSOs, and discusses the dilemmas associated with these activities and their effectiveness. We focus mainly on studies conducted in NPHSOs and do not review the extensive literature that addresses interest groups and social movements. While one can learn extensively from this rich body of research and the similarities that are evident between these types of organizations and NPHSOs, many differences remain. Those relate to the fact that interest groups and social movements are in many cases not considered to be formal organizations as NPHSOs, most of them do not receive funding from the government and they do not provide services to populations in need. In addition, they are usually less bureaucratic in their nature and their organizational culture tends to be more organic than

mechanistic (Christiansen et al., 2010). These make advocacy activities in NPHSOs unique and they deserve careful examination. Our goal is to present a critical examination of the literature on advocacy by NPHSOs from an international, comparative perspective, and to shed light on topics still to be covered or discussed and requiring further development in both theory and research.

A review and analysis of the literature has led us to focus on several key topics, providing a basis for a comprehensive examination of the unique characteristics and contributions of NPHSO policy advocacy. The article begins with a presentation of the origins and definitions of the term *advocacy* and its current uses in studies related to NPHSO advocacy. The following sections deal with different aspects of advocacy that are crucial for these organizations: the current situation and prevalence of advocacy activities of NPHSOs; organizational and structural variables, and their relation to policy advocacy; dependence on external funding sources and policy advocacy; strategies, tactics, and modes of operation, and the effectiveness of NPHSO policy advocacy. There are certainly other important topics related to NPHSO advocacy, such as the involvement of their constituencies in advocacy (Smith & Pekkanen, 2012) or regulatory policies for advocacy by nonprofits (Reid, 2006), which is more relevant to the understanding of nonprofit advocacy in the United States. These and other topics are excluded from our review, due to space limitations. Finally, we present and discuss the implications of the research on NPHSO advocacy and suggest directions for future research.

Definitions and Origins of the Term “Advocacy”

In recent years, interest has been growing in the role of nonprofit human service organizations in policy advocacy. These organizations engage in advocacy in addition to their core activity as providers of social services. They represent disadvantaged, disenfranchised, excluded, and vulnerable populations, mediating between these groups of citizens and governmental agencies (Berry, 2001; Dalrymple, 2004; Ezell, 2001; Hoefer, 2002; Hudson, 2002; LeRoux, 2009; LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009; Reid, 2006; Salamon & Geller, 2008; Schmid, 2004; Strolovitch, 2006). An attempt to understand the origins of the term “advocacy” brings us back to the root “advocate,” meaning “coming to someone’s aid.” According to the Free Online Dictionary (2000), advocacy is defined as “the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support.” Synonyms proposed for advocacy include active espousal, aid, approbation, approval, auspices, championship, countenance, encouragement, and endorsement. All express the desire to provide help and support and to encourage individuals who need support. Late Middle English forms that appear in the World English Dictionary are “advocacy” and “advocatia.” The Merriam Webster Dictionary (1982) offers a different definition: “the act or process of advocating or supporting a cause or proposal.” This broad definition of advocacy activity, reaching beyond assistance to individuals, focuses on supporting, promoting, or defining a certain cause or proposal in an attempt to change laws, policies, practices, and attitudes. This kind of activity, which began with the Citizen’s Advocacy Movement in

the United States and Canada in the mid-1970s, derived from the principle of normalization developed by Bengt Nirje (Nirje, 1969).

Organizations such as Scope in the United States are associated with advocacy activities initiated in 1954, which demanded that every child in the country be entitled to education. In 1946 Judy Fryd began a campaign to provide support and promote the rights of children with special needs and learning difficulties. Ms Fryd, whose own son had a learning disability, established the National Association for Parents of Backward Children which later changed its name to Mencap. Over the years, other organizations—primarily for mental health services—joined the effort to protect the rights and well-being of disabled patients, whose needs were being ignored by the government. According to Reid (2000), the term “advocacy” describes a wide range of individual and collective expression or action for a cause, idea, or policy; it may also refer to specific activities or organizations. Thus, Reid also modified the definition of advocacy to include the venue of a political action.

Accordingly, the literature presents additional definitions that expand the meaning of the word advocacy beyond that of providing assistance, protection, and support to individuals. These new definitions include activities in the political arena; they focus on attempts to change policies or influence the decisions of elite government and state institutions through enhancement of civic participation, in order to promote a collective goal or interest (Berry, 1999, 2001; Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1998; Jenkins, 1987, 2006; Warren, 2001). Similarly, it has been argued that advocacy and political activity aim to effect changes in existing or future practices for a group of citizens with a common interest (Ezell, 2001), as well as to protect basic civil rights (Boris & Krehely, 2003; Frumkin, 2002; McCarthy & Castelli, 2002; Mosley, 2010; Rektor, 2002; Schoff & Stevenson, 1998). According to Boris and Mosher-Williams (1998), building social capital, facilitating civic participation, and providing a public voice are activities central to an analysis of the interaction between nonprofits and public policy in a democratic civil society. Andrews and Edwards (2004) emphasize the act of advocacy in “promoting or resisting social change that, if implemented, would conflict with the social, cultural, political, or economic interests or values of other constituencies and groups” (p. 481).

Other definitions relate to advocacy as a tactic for managing the external environment in an attempt to mobilize support and change power-dependence relations (Mosley, 2010); others emphasize social justice (Mickelson, 1995), advocacy toward corporations and the business world, a topic which has not been developed intensively so far (Nelson, 2007; Ottinger, 2009), and global advocacy (Bryer & Magrath, 1999; Edwards, 1993). In addition, the literature deals extensively with different types of advocacy. Important distinctions relate to direct versus indirect advocacy (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Casey, 2011), pragmatic versus legislative advocacy (Kimberlin, 2010; Laws, 1997), and case advocacy versus policy advocacy (Mosley, 2010). Direct advocacy refers to lobbying and other appearances before key decision-makers by organizational representatives on behalf of others; indirect advocacy describes the participatory aspects of advocacy in nonprofits, particularly the capacity of groups to stimulate individual citizens to take action on their behalf. Legislative advocacy means

reliance on the state and the federal legislative process as part of a strategy for creating change. "Case advocacy is when the interests of a particular individual, family or organization are being represented. It is different from policy advocacy, because it generally does not include changing policy" (Kimberlin, 2010, p. 508).

There is also a distinction between self-interested organizational advocacy (e.g., advocacy to protect agency funding contracts) and progressive advocacy, which "seeks to advance the interests of nonprofit constituents rather than the organization's interests, and fully engage constituents in the advocacy process" (Donaldson, 2008, p. 26).

It is important to note the distinction between two closely related terms: advocacy and lobbying (Mosley, 2010; Salamon & Geller, 2008). "Lobbying" has a legal and IRS definition for nonprofit organizations and refers to advocacy efforts that aim to influence specific legislation through appeals to policy-makers or individuals. This is a specific form of advocacy, which involves promoting a position on specific pieces of legislation to legislators or legislative staff, either directly or indirectly (Salamon & Geller, 2008).

It is also important to note the distinction between an "advocacy organization" and advocacy as performed by nonprofit organizations. Some studies concentrate on a narrow set of organizations defined as "advocacy organizations," whose core function is advocacy (Kimberlin, 2010). However, as McCarthy & Castelli (2002) remind us, advocacy is widespread across the entire spectrum of nonprofit organizations. Participation in advocacy is not limited to organizations that define themselves as "advocacy organizations" and thus should be studied as an activity, and not as an organizational classification.

In sum, advocacy as a component of the mission and activities of NPHSOs has shifted over the years from an emphasis on assisting and representing individuals, to the representation and protection of disadvantaged, disenfranchised, marginalized groups (Hyman, 1983). Advocacy activities initiated by nonprofit human service organizations are channeled toward the political arena in which policies are formulated and decisions are made about allocation of resources for different purposes and populations (Berry, 1999; Verba, Scholzman, & Brody, 1995).

The Current State of Advocacy in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations

Research findings indicate that the scope of advocacy activities is limited, and that advocacy does not play a major role in NPHSOs, which concentrate more on the provision of social services. Findings suggest that most nonprofits are ambivalent about advocacy. In a study on advocacy by UK-based development NGOs Hudson (2002) reports on the unease and suspicions directors of services had about advocacy unit that was in charge of promoting advocacy activity, saying "they're working on issues which are nothing to do with us"(p.408). Some do not engage in it at all, and many participate in some form of advocacy, even though it is not part of the organization's mission-related activities or primary goals. Only a small proportion of nonprofits

devote considerable resources to advocacy and limited positions, but this pattern differs significantly among different types of organizations (Berry & Arons, 2003; Boris & Krehely, 2003; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; DeChesnay & Robinson-Dooley, 2011; Nicholson-Crotty, 2007).

Findings reported by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2010) indicate that less than 1% of all registered nonprofits in the United States identified advocacy as their primary purpose. Of 1.5 million registered nonprofits there, only 11,463 identified their primary purpose as civil rights, social action, and advocacy; furthermore, only 159 indicated that the Public Interest Law—also connected with advocacy—is relevant to them.

Salamon (2002) examined 3,400 public benefit organizations in 16 regions throughout the United States in the early 1980s. His findings indicate that only 16% of them had spent any funds on advocacy activities, and that half of the agencies reporting advocacy expenses spent less than 10% of their operating funds on advocacy. Boris and Krehely (2002) reveal that, between 1989 and 1998, only 1.2% to 1.5% of 501c(3) organizations reported advocacy and lobbying expenses. Salamon and Geller (2008) report that 85% of the organizations examined in their study reported expenses for advocacy amounting to less than 2% of their budget for such activities.

Similar findings are presented by Schmid, Bar, and Nirel (2008), indicating that the scope and intensity of political activity in Israeli NPHSOs is moderate and limited. The organizations allocated a limited number of staff positions and most of the workers were engaged in provision of services. Lack of appropriate resources restrained the organizations' ability to initiate political activity.

Onyx et al. (2010) found that in Australia many organizations that grew out of earlier social movements have lost their strong activist orientation and collectivist work practices, and instead adopted more bureaucratic and professional structures, while seeking out stable and secure funding sources primarily from the government. They concluded that in Australia overt political advocacy is repressed and in decline (see also, Casey & Dalton, 2006). Other findings have revealed more comprehensive advocacy activity in these organizations. In a study conducted jointly by the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest and OMB Watch, Berry & Arons (2003) find that 75% of the participating organizations have engaged in certain forms of policy activity. Bass, Arons, Guinane, and Carter (2007) find that most of the organizations examined in their survey (75%) have engaged in some type of advocacy, and nonprofit executive directors feel strongly that advocacy is a critical component in achieving mission-based goals. Salamon & Geller (2008) find that 73% of 311 nonprofit organizations in four key fields—children and family services; elderly housing and services, community, and economic development and the arts—reported engaging in some type of policy advocacy during the previous year. Engagement in policy advocacy is found to be somewhat frequent, as 61% of the organizations engaging in advocacy efforts reported doing so at least once a month. Mosley (2010) finds that 57% of 641 NPHSOs in California reported participating in advocacy in 2002.

The discrepancies between the different studies of advocacy participation can be explained partly by the different ways in which advocacy is defined and measured.

Generally, studies that define advocacy more broadly, based on a more detailed set of policy activities, report higher rates of nonprofit participation in advocacy activities (Bass et al., 2007; Mosley, 2010; Salamon & Geller, 2008).

However, most studies reveal low levels of advocacy, indicating that political advocacy is marginal and limited in scope. Resources are not allocated and very few staff positions are assigned for this purpose (Bass et al., 2007; Donaldson, 2007; Salamon & Geller, 2008). NPHSOs have not assimilated advocacy activity into their organizational culture; nor have they integrated it appropriately into their work programs (Balassiano & Chandler, 2010; Kimberlin, 2010; Saidel, 2002; Schmid, 2012).

What are the reasons for the limited scope and intensity of advocacy in these organizations? Various explanations have been provided, supported by organizational theories analyzing the relations between NPHSOs and their funding sources (governmental or private). According to resource dependence and neoinstitutional theories, NPHSOs are highly dependent on external resources and do not bite the hand that feeds them (Bass et al., 2007; Donaldson, 2008; Gormley & Cymrot, 2006; Leech, 2006; Schmid et al., 2008). They conform to government policies to ensure funding streams, and are reluctant to engage in advocacy because it can endanger their survival (D'Aunno, Sutton, & Price, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Philanthropic funding sources are also hesitant to support advocacy activity because it could be perceived as a protest against the government. Instead, they are interested in supplementing or complementing the government's role, and seek to share responsibility for initiating and promoting social service programs (Atlantic Philanthropies, 2008; Guo, 2007).

Other explanations for the limited scope of NPHSO advocacy activity relate to laws that provide nonprofit organizations with benefits and tax deductions. NPHSOs are concerned with ensuring the continued receipt of government grants, benefits, and subsidies that they are entitled to under these laws, and are therefore reluctant to engage in advocacy activities. Furthermore, some organizations lack knowledge about their options for engaging in political advocacy activities (Berry & Arons, 2003; Raffa, 2000).

The low level of advocacy activities in nonprofit organizations has also been associated with their executive directors' lack of organizational skills. Findings indicate that these office-holders lack the professional knowledge and appropriate education, skills, and competence to enter the political arena, which is inherently different from the provision of services (Ezell, 2001; Gronbjerg & Smith, 1999; Minkoff, 1994; Mosley, 2010; Pawlak & Flynn, 1990; Schmid et al., 2008). Advocacy activity is also time consuming. Furthermore, in order to meet with politicians, government officials, policy-makers, and others who influence public opinion, it is necessary to work beyond regular work hours and outside the premises of the organization. This requires a considerable personal investment that not all directors are willing to make (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Sosin, 1986). Finally, the lack of adequate resources limits the scope of the advocacy activity because executives are primarily committed to the provision of services to their clients.

Dependence on External Funding and Policy Advocacy

One of the main concerns raised in the literature is how dependence on external funding influences policy-advocacy activities. Some researchers report a positive association between these factors, indicating that government funding causes nonprofit organizations to become active in advocacy (Beck, 1970; Berry & Arons, 2003; Chaves, Stephens, & Galaskiewicz, 2004; Donaldson, 2007; Jenkins, 1987; Leech, 2006; McCarthy & Castelli, 2002; Mosley, 2011; Silverman & Patterson, 2010; Wolch, 1990). These studies clearly indicate that increased institutionalization and dependence on government funding provide an incentive for advocacy activities, particularly in NPHSOs (Mosley, 2011). According to Mosley, organizations that are dependent on government funding may advocate for the protection of vital funding streams that can ensure funding stability. They also build relationships with decision-makers, creating advocacy opportunities that would not arise otherwise. A slightly different perspective is presented by Chaves et al. (2004), who argue that the receipt of government funding does not suppress involvement in nonprofit advocacy. Leech (2006) reveals similar findings, indicating that federally funded 501C(3) organizations lobby federal agencies slightly more often than those without such funding. Berry and Arons (2003) find that 26% of executive directors whose organizations receive funding from the government participate at high levels in policy or planning groups with government officials, putting directors not only in close contact with official decision-makers, but often also in a position to influence those officials. Similarly, Jenkins (1987) argues that government funding could be viewed as a form of social control by institutional elites who choose to fund particular organizations that they feel comfortable supporting. Moreover, in an analysis of partnerships between the government and NPHSOs, Salamon (1995) argues that government funding encourages advocacy activity by instilling values and norms of public service such as democratic participation in decision-making, and enforcement of the laws that bind nonprofit organizations. As such, government funding helps them promote their civil and social ideology.

In contrast to these studies, another group of researchers argues that dependence on government funding neutralizes and obstructs advocacy activities in NPHSOs (Bass et al., 2007; Cruz, 2001; Grogan & Gusmano, 2009; Guo & Saxton, 2010; Maddison & Dennis, 2005; Roelofs, 1987; Schmid et al., 2008; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). All these studies reveal negative relationships between the extent of government funding and the scope of NPHSO advocacy efforts. Child and Gronbjerg (2007) reveal slightly different findings: that government funding is unrelated to participation in advocacy, but organizations that receive more than half of their funding from the government are more likely to engage in advocacy as a secondary activity than as a core agency pursuit.

The differences in the findings of the various studies can be attributed to the different contexts and political environments in which the organizations operate, and to the nature of their special relations with the government and other funding sources.

In addition, differences are found in the scope and intensity of policy advocacy and its relation to external funding sources among nonprofit organizations, in the United States and other countries. In many countries, nonprofits are not subject to legal constraints on political advocacy, whereas in the United States there are clear definitions and legal restrictions on such activity. However, although American organizations are legally permitted to allocate the budgets at their disposal for advocacy and lobbying, they are often cautious about the way in which they define those activities (Reid, 2000). These findings are supported by earlier studies that have examined social movements and their responses to external funding and support (Piven & Cloward, 1977). Dependence on government funding causes social movements to moderate their responses to state institutions, reducing their effectiveness in attaining their espoused goals.

Organizational and Structural Properties and Their Relationship With Policy Advocacy

Various organizational properties are found to be associated with measures of political advocacy in NPHSOs: the size and age of the organization; the existence of organizational and financial support networks; the accessibility of information systems; and partnerships with other organizations, professional leadership, and administrative experience. The scope and intensity of political advocacy has been found to be greater in organizations with larger budgets and a larger number of workers (Bass et al., 2007; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Cruz, 2001; DeVita, Mosher-Williams, & Stengel, 2001; Donaldson, 2007; Gibelman & Kraft, 1996; Mosley, Katz, Hasenfeld, & Anheier, 2003;

In contrast, small organizations are less institutionalized, formal, and bureaucratic; they are less obligated to governmental and public agencies, and engage less in advocacy than larger organizations. The organization's age has a positive impact on advocacy. Findings clearly reveal that older organizations enjoy broad legitimization from government agencies. This ensures a flow of resources, which are also allocated for advocacy (Donaldson, 2007; Minkoff, 1998; Salamon & Geller, 2008). Similarly, it has been argued that administrative experience affects the promotion of advocacy in organizations. Experienced managers are less hesitant to advocate and lobby for their clients than are inexperienced, young managers who are still at the stage of establishing themselves and therefore invest limited personal and financial resources in advocacy (Schmid, 2012).

Furthermore, the organization's financial capacity to promote advocacy plays an important role (Berry & Arons, 2003; DeVita, Montilla-Williams, & Stengel, 2004; LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009). Organizations that are financially stable and have a solid organizational infrastructure invest more resources in promoting advocacy. Notably, these organizations have the ability to mobilize resources, and are not threatened by governmental fluctuations that might adversely affect the flow of resources. This is also true of other variables, such as the accessibility of information technology in the

organization (McNutt, 2008; McNutt & Boland, 1999), and the existence of alliances, partnerships, and coalitions with other organizations for the purpose of promoting social initiatives (Belzer, 2011; Geller & Salamon, 2009; LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009; Newhouse, 2010; Reid, 1999; Salamon, 1995; Sandfort, 2011). Commitment to and awareness of leadership also are found to play an important role in promoting advocacy (Cohen, 2001; Donaldson, 2007; LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009; Saidel & Harlan, 1998).

Finally, a study conducted by Guo and Saxton (2010) reveals that the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy tend to increase as a function both in the board members' communication with constituents and the level of constituent involvement in strategic decision-making.

Advocacy Strategies, Tactics, and Modes of Operation by NPHSOs

The literature presents an extensive repertoire of potential advocacy activities that NPHSOs may use in their efforts to influence public policy. Berry (1977) distinguishes between a strategy, which he defines as a general, long-range approach to advocacy, and a tactic, that he defines as actions taken to advance specific policy positions. However, in most studies there is no clear demarcation between strategy and tactics, and they are usually grouped into several clusters that include: legislative advocacy; administrative advocacy; grassroots advocacy; judicial (legal) advocacy; electoral advocacy; media advocacy; research and public education, coalition building; and direct actions (Casey, 2011; Guo & Saxton, 2010; McCarthy & Castelli, 2002; Reid, 1999).

What are the advocacy tactics that NPHSOs use in their efforts to influence public policy? Several studies suggest a division between different types of tactics and activities. Berry and Arons (2003) divide nine different advocacy tactics into two groups: the first comprises more legislative, aggressive, and confrontational tactics, including tactics such as lobbying for a bill or policy, testifying in hearings, releasing research reports, and encouraging members to write or call policy-makers. The second group comprises administrative—less aggressive—tactics, including more cooperative forms of interaction such as meeting with government officials, working in a planning or advisory group, responding to requests for information, and socializing with government officials. They find a strong tendency among the surveyed nonprofits to rely on administrative advocacy and more cooperative tactics. The authors suggest that the consistent strategic approach of most nonprofit leaders who work with government is to create a set of relationships that enhances the position of their organization within the governmental process. The key for these leaders is to understand what governmental bureaucracies want from nonprofits, build those capacities into the organization, and develop personal relationships with the policy-makers who make the decisions affecting the nonprofit. As trust is established, the nonprofit hopes it will be integrated increasingly in the governmental process and will be able to work alongside of

policy-makers. They conclude that “nonprofit leaders do not think so much of tactics of advocacy as they do of ways to insinuate themselves inside government” (Berry & Arons, 2003, p. 104).

Onyx et al. (2010) distinguish between radical and institutional tactics. Radical advocacy is associated with external democratic processes that are overtly political and, therefore, open to dispute. They find that Australian NPHSOs are much more likely to undertake institutional than radical advocacy action. These actions—which the authors term *advocacy with gloves on*—are perceived as more professional, enabling organizations to establish constructive working partnerships with government and facilitating access to policy-making processes while protecting them from punishment and government repression. In a similar vein, Donaldson (2007) finds that NPHSOs prefer elite strategies, which rely more on the expert power of professionals, to empowerment and mass strategies, which rely on encouraging the active participation of clients in policy-making and protest activities.

Similarly, Schmid et al. (2008) and Salamon and Geller (2008) find that activities vis-à-vis governmental agencies such as correspondence with, visiting or calling government officials—which are perceived as less demanding—are the most prevalent tactics among NPHSOs in Israel and the United States, while more radical, demanding tactics such as “protest activities” and grassroots lobbying are the least prevalent.

Onyx et al. (2010) and Hoefer (2000) also refer to the importance of the strategy of sector coordination, which involves partnerships and coalitions formed across the non-profit sector. They perceive this as a culture of fostering advocacy as well as enhancing collective sectoral power and the ability to achieve broader support in society.

Other studies use a more common classification of activities, differentiating between insider and outsider strategies and tactics (Gais & Walker, 1991; Gormley & Cymrot, 2006; Onyx et al., 2010). Insider tactics are intended to change policy by working directly with policy-makers and other institutional elites that emphasize working “inside the system.” Outsider tactics, sometimes termed indirect tactics (Mosley 2011), refer to extra-institutional tactics that emphasize working outside the system, such as public education; mass media; protests, boycotts, and demonstrations.

These studies point to NPHSOs’ preference and greater use of insider tactics over outsider tactics, such as participating in the development or revision of regulations. These tactics are considered more important and effective in influencing policy (Bass et al., 2007; Donaldson, 2007; Gormley & Cymrot, 2006; Hoefer, 2001; Mosley, 2010). In line with resource dependence and institutionalization theories, the greater use of insider tactics is associated with higher rates of institutionalization and government funding (Mosley, 2011).

What can explain the greater usage of insider, institutional, and less aggressive tactics by NPHSOs? Processes of privatization and contracting out of services have led to the growing mutual dependency of NPHSOs and government agencies. Government is increasingly dependent on local nonprofits to provide services, feedback, and expertise in the implementation of programs and relating to social needs, while nonprofits are dependent on government for contracts. The increased collaboration on program design, implementation, and evaluation may be making more insider

tactics a part of the routine interactions between nonprofits and government (Bass et al., 2008; Mosley, 2011). In fact, as Berry and Arons (2003) suggest, partnering with government should be seen as form of lobbying by nonprofits. Collaborative work creates an opportunity to shape policies and programs, and to exert influence. While fundamental decisions about funding and the broad outlines of social policy lie far beyond the reach of nonprofit executives, at the next level of decision-making—regarding the specifics of public policy and the allocation of funds within the sector—the directors of nonprofits have a real opportunity to take part and influence these processes. However, while institutional, insider tactics may ensure access to key players and deliver policy change, in a reality of nonprofit dependency on state resources it may create a close elite group of nonprofits that is, in effect, a part of the state machinery of participation. These are vulnerable to cooption, risking the alienation of advocates from memberships and constituencies (Onyx et al., 2010).

One of the advocacy tactics that has received growing scholarly attention is online advocacy (“e-advocacy”). Nonprofits are increasingly using electronic media for advocacy, mainly because most nonprofit organizations do not allocate adequate resources for the promotion of their activities. The use of electronic media aims to increase efficiency in terms of costs and benefits, and to increase the possibilities for engaging in advocacy over distances and for mobilizing new groups and supporters (McNutt, 2010). The most common means of expanding advocacy activities are online petitions, blogs, and social media sites (Bhagat, 2005; Browning, 1996; Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1997; Grobman & Grant, 1998; Hart, Greenfield & Johnson, 2005; Hick & McNutt, 2002; McNutt, 2006; McNutt & Boland, 1999; Schwartz, 1996; Suárez, 2009; Turner, 1998). However, insufficient information is available on the contribution and effectiveness of these activities. In addition, there is a lack of information on advocacy campaigns and their relationship with policy advocacy (Bergan, 2009; Gerber, 2004). Moreover, common theoretical models and approaches for the assessment of organizational effectiveness have yet to be adapted to an evaluation of the quality and impact of online political advocacy (McNutt, 2010).

The Effectiveness and Impact of NPHSOs’ Policy Advocacy

Measuring the effectiveness of NPHSOs’ advocacy is a complex topic for research, mainly because of the methodological difficulties involved in examining this activity and its ultimate impact in the political arena (Hoefer, 2000, 2001, 2005; Hoefer & Ferguson, 2007; Hudson, 2002; McNutt, 2010). However, evaluation of the effectiveness of advocacy activities is needed in order to learn how to advocate more effectively, to develop advocacy skills and capacities, and to make more informed decisions about resource allocation. It is also needed in order to demonstrate the value of advocacy, both to external stakeholders and within the organization (Hudson, 2002, p. 416).

Evaluations of the effectiveness of advocacy have usually focused on input and building organizational capacities, training managers to engage in advocacy and the

strategies and tactics that organizations use in these processes (Sandfort, 2011; Starling, 2010; The Evaluation Exchange, 2007; The Urban Institute, 2010). Another approach that has been proposed for evaluating the effectiveness of policy advocacy distinguishes between internal and external factors that affect this activity (Berry & Arons, 2003). Internal factors include the strategies and tactics that organizations employ to implement advocacy activity, and structural-organizational factors such as the degree of organizational autonomy, the extent of centralization of authority and power at the management level, and the quality of leadership in the organization. External factors include the context in which the organization operates and the availability of resources for advocacy activity. Other factors found to contribute to the effectiveness of nonprofit advocacy are: the staying power of the organizations maintaining their long-term commitment to work on selected issues, and presence on an ongoing basis; policy expertise, including technical knowledge and production of materials based on research conducted by specialists, and the allocation of resources to the development of staff and the enhancement of the organization's potential for advocacy (Berry, 1999, 2001). In addition, Rees (2001) finds that highly effective nonprofit advocacy organizations are characterized by building personal relationships with policy-makers and their staff members; they engage in ongoing efforts to connect policy-makers to the organization's grassroots constituents. These effective advocacy organizations maintain a strong focus on a small number of core issues. The rational for measuring effectiveness of organizational processes and attaining resources for the purpose of achieving goals is well presented and justified in the literature (D'Aunno, 1992; Forbes, 1998; Herman & Renz, 1999; Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967).

While most studies deal with the usage and prevalence of different advocacy tactics, not enough is known about the effectiveness of these tactics. Which strategies and tactics do NPHSOs perceive as more effective in influencing policy? It is interesting to note that, while the studies on the usage of tactics clearly point to a preference of institutional and insider tactics over radical, outsider tactics, studies that have explored the effectiveness of different advocacy tactics portray a more complex picture. Onyx et al. (2010) find that the organizations studied perceive elite strategies of advocacy such as direct lobbying and participating in governmental committees as only moderately successful in changing policy. The most effective advocacy strategies described are campaigns and combined elite, empowerment, and mass strategies: these include activities such as initiating meetings between government officials and clients; helping clients to prepare and submit their own policy recommendations, training clients in self-advocacy; and facilitating media space in which clients can speak about their experiences. For example, when trying to effect changes in welfare regulations, Hoefer (2000) finds that coalition building and bringing the current regulations to the attention of both Congress and officialdom are perceived as the most effective strategies for achieving this goal.

However, it is important to draw a distinction between effectiveness and influence or impact. Effectiveness is a narrower concept than influence, power, or impact. One expression of this is the degree to which a goal is attained. Berry and Arons (2003) claim that the goal of NPHSO advocacy is to develop a cooperative relationship with

government and work together to resolve public issues. This involves the incorporation of delegates of these organizations into administrative policy-making. While the goal of a joint production of public policy may be achieved, and these organizations may take an active part in the production of public policy, we still do not know whether they have had an impact on the process of policy-making.

Notwithstanding these difficulties and constraints, there have been some attempts to propose possible models and measures for understanding the influence of nonprofit advocacy (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Berry & Arons, 2003; Donaldson & Shields, 2009; McNutt, 2010). Casey (2004) proposes a framework for understanding the outcome of nonprofit organizations' advocacy in the policy process. This framework is composed of elements from the interest groups theory, social movement theory, and organizational theories; it focuses on environmental (external) and organizational factors that are likely to influence the outcome of nonprofit advocacy, defining four groups of determining factors:

1. The political and socioeconomic environment in which the advocacy efforts take place, including dominant political discourses; institutional policy structures, the strength of political parties, and the spectrum of advocacy actions.
2. The policy in question, including the nature of the policy conflict and the phase of the policy cycle toward which the advocacy is directed.
3. The characteristics of NPHSOs, including their ideology and culture; organizational capacity; resource mobilization and membership, representation and the status that the organization has achieved in terms of the way it is viewed by official policy-makers.
4. The network of other actors involved in the field relevant to the issue with which a particular organization deals.

Following Burstein (1985), Andrews & Edwards (2004) suggest examining the potential influence of advocacy organizations through measurement across six different dimensions of the policy process: agenda setting; access to decision-making arenas; achieving favorable policies, monitoring, and shaping their implementation, and shifting the long-term priorities and resources of political institutions. The model assumes that each part of the policy process is shaped by different factors, so the influence of advocacy organizations should vary in different stages or components of the policy cycles. Similarly, Casey (2011) proposes a model that consists of six possible levels of outcome of advocacy. The first level is *access*: the voices of previously excluded stakeholders are now heard. The second is *agenda*: powerful decision-makers support a desired policy change. The third is *policy*: the desired change is translated into new legislation or regulations. The fourth is *output*: the new policy is implemented as proposed. The fifth is *impact*: the new policy has the intended consequences, and the sixth is *structural*: the new policy is widely accepted as the new norm. However, to the best of our knowledge, these models have yet to be tested empirically in studies that focus on NPHSOs.

While influence and impact are usually treated as general terms, it is important to note that policy advocacy can achieve different types of impact and influence. Scott, Deschenes, Hopkins, Newman, and McLaughlin (2006) have studied the role of three advocacy organizations in restructuring the field of youth services in California. They suggest that these organizations have achieved different kinds of impact: They have promoted new ways of understanding youth, new ways of working toward a common goal for youth and new types of policies to address issues confronting youth. In their efforts, these organizations have utilized processes and techniques associated with emergent social movements—namely, the construction of collective meanings, shared objectives, and overarching frameworks for spanning diverse groups and interests. Other studies also point to the impact of nonprofit advocacy in framing processes and changing discourses about social problems (Cress & Snow, 2000; Howse, Weiss, & Green, 2006).

Despite these efforts, studies still point to the difficulties in measuring outcome, because the goals of advocacy are broadly defined and tend to be amorphous and ambiguous (McNutt, 2010; Mosley, 2010). In addition, the process of evaluating effectiveness is complex, because policy advocacy is related to the activities of other agencies and organizations as well as to the activities of individuals, interest groups, and communities. Hence, it is difficult to evaluate the differential contribution of each of these actors. For example, passing (or not passing) laws is not a direct outcome of the activity of the organization that engages in promoting or preventing legislation. This process involves the legislators themselves, interest groups and other organizations that join the campaign to enact or defeat the law. External factors, constraints, and changes in the task environment that are not directly related to or controlled by the organization also affect its ability to achieve the goals of advocacy (Bergan, 2009; Gerber, 2004; Guigni, 1998; Guthrie et al., 2005).

In the same vein, public policy-making and efforts to influence policy-makers cannot be evaluated or measured on the basis of one group or organization, because these processes consist of several stages and streams involving different actors (Kingdon, 1995). Strategies, tactics, and modes of action are also indeterminate, and there is little empirical evidence to determine the success of one given strategy and the failure of another.

One possible explanation for the lack of systematic, rational evaluation and measurement of the effectiveness of advocacy relates to the organizations' lack of motivation and interest in investing their limited resources in this kind of activity. It can be assumed that the directors of these organizations prefer to report on their activities and on the public relations associated with them, and are less interested in measuring their effectiveness, because it is likely that their success is limited. By limiting evaluation, organizations can maintain ambiguity and avoid criticism from the funding sources and constituencies that are involved in these activities. By contrast, it can also be argued that if there were more research evidence on successful efforts to protect minority groups and disadvantaged populations, and if there were evidence of success in placing issues on the public agenda and influencing public policy-makers, more

resources might be allocated for advocacy. This, in turn, might increase the scope and intensity of advocacy activity.

Conclusion

In the last decade, there has been an increasing interest and empirical research on political advocacy by nonprofits in general and on advocacy by NPHSOs, in particular. To date, studies have mainly focused on the scope and prevalence of nonprofit advocacy; the complex relationships between organizations that engage in advocacy and their funding sources, organizational properties related to advocacy and advocacy strategies, tactics and modes of operation. While these studies have advanced our understanding of these topics, advocacy by these organizations still deserves further investigation in light of the important role that policy advocacy plays in promoting the goals of NPHSOs and their relations with their constituencies. Reviewing the state of knowledge presented and described in this article brings us to the following understanding, insights, and conclusions.

First, it seems that the goals, organizational structure, organizational culture, and budget constraints of NPHSOs are the driving forces in the provision of services, rather than engagement in policy advocacy. The lack of intensive advocacy activity in these organizations and the perception of service provision as their core activity have prevented them from fulfilling their social and civic missions. While some studies have addressed these concerns, more scholarly attention should be given to the perceptions of nonprofit leaders as policy advocates, the importance of their relations with government, and the ways in which these perceptions affect their decisions and choices with regard to policy advocacy.

Second, studies have dealt extensively with various methods, strategies, and tactics that nonprofit organizations in general—and advocacy organizations in particular—adopt in order to carry out their mission. However, not enough interest has been shown in organizational dilemmas relating to advocacy activities. Questions related to the choice of advocacy goals, targets, strategies and tactics, as well as to decision-making processes governing these choices, deserve more attention (Gormley & Cymrot, 2006).

Moreover, advocacy activities are intended to influence policy-making processes. It is important, therefore, to ask how these activities, strategies, and tactics relate to different stages and components of the policy-making process. Strikingly, there are very few studies that have examined the advocacy activities of NPHSOs in relation to policy-making processes that use public policy-making theories or building on knowledge from policy studies. Berry and Arons (2003, p. 111) point to the “penetration of nonprofits into the budgetary and policymaking process,” which is especially manifest in stages of policy design and formulation where the specifics of policy and the allocation of funds within the sector are discussed and decided. Other scholars have pointed to the potential influence of nonprofits in different stages of the policy-making process, from agenda setting through participation in decision-making, policy enactment, and implementation (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Jenkins,

2006). Agenda setting is still considered the stage at which advocacy organizations will have their greatest influence (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Jenkins, 2006). However, in the case of NPHSOs there is insufficient research to show any clear results that link advocacy activities to different public policy-making stages or phases.

In addition, the current literature lacks analysis and evaluation of the extent to which methods, strategies, and tactics are adapted to different organizational cultures (Onyx et al., 2010). The cultural context is important as it effects perceptions of advocacy and the wider environmental context in which this activity takes place. With very few exceptions, most of the existing literature on nonprofit advocacy is based on experience in the United States, disregarding advocacy activities in other parts of the world. Thus, most of the explanations that have been provided in these studies relate to the political, legal, and social context of the United States; such contexts are, of course, quite different in other countries. In order to further our understanding of advocacy by nonprofits in general, and by NPHSOs in particular, it is important to study these activities from a cross-cultural perspective, which will allow for comparison between different regimes, political, legal, and administrative systems and cultures.

Furthermore, while existing research has examined a diverse repertoire of strategies and tactics, it does not offer a critical analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. Nor have existing studies examined the extent to which the NPHSOs have succeeded in achieving their stated goals. Fundamental questions relating to the impact and efficacy of these activities thus remain unanswered. Unfortunately, Andrews and Edwards (2004, p. 500) are still correct in their assertion, made almost a decade ago, that "the area most lacking in the contemporary scholarship is the influence of advocacy organizations on politics." This lack of knowledge about the consequences of advocacy may deter these organizations from participating in such activities, as there is no certainty that the outcome is worth the effort involved. Directors of NPHSOs prefer to invest in training workers to provide services as well as participating in the processes themselves (e.g., maintaining relationships with policy-makers in the legislature, and with politicians and senior officials at national and local levels). As a result, they invest less in examining the outcomes of advocacy activities, which are more difficult to measure and assess objectively. In our view, it is possible that the limited achievements of advocacy activity derive from the extensive time investment and long processes required to attain visible outcomes. The complexity of these processes, which includes the amendment and initiation of laws; enactment of new legislation, changing policies, and changing priorities for allocating funds to assist disadvantaged populations, does not provide an incentive for an evaluation of outcomes and achievements.

We have also learned that most of the studies on advocacy have related to a number of leading theories, including the resource mobilization theory, neo-institutional theory, and resource dependence theory. There have been no developments of these theories or any further theories in recent years. Without a doubt, each of these theories provides explanations that shed light on the organizational behavior of nonprofit

organizations in the context of advocacy. Nonetheless, there is still a need to seek innovative explanations that can provide new perspectives on existing knowledge. In this context, efforts need to be made to gain a deeper theoretical understanding of why the level of advocacy is still relatively low in these organizations, and what needs to be done in order to intensify this activity—assuming that this is perceived as one of the main roles of civil society organizations. In a similar vein, studies related to strategies and tactics and to their effectiveness have used two main scholarly approaches: interest groups and social movements. While there is much to learn from this abundant body of literature, and while there are certainly some similarities between interest groups, social movement organizations, and NPHSOs, there are some inherent differences that call for different explanations and point to other factors that determine advocacy activity. Thus, one of the crucial tasks for scholars in coming years will be to develop new models and theoretical approaches that focus on the unique organizational characteristics of these organizations, and the diverse contexts in which advocacy activities are taking place. Some scholars have developed such models for nonprofit advocacy in general (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Casey, 2004), but more work is needed in research and theory.

A review of existing research in the field indicates that little attention has been paid to developing and enhancing professionalism in the implementation of advocacy activities. For the most part, studies have described and analyzed advocacy activities, strategies and tactics, and raised interesting questions. Nonetheless, there is a vacuum with regard to the issue of skills, abilities, and the professional qualifications needed for strengthening the advocacy mission. As discussed above, directors and workers are trained and skilled to provide services rather than to advocate for their clients. Advocacy skills relate to political, personal, and interpersonal interactions with actors in the political arena (e.g., legislators, heads of interest groups, heads of lobby organizations and groups, and senior executives), whom they need to persuade to promote social rights. The existing literature neither devotes enough attention to these aspects nor offers advanced theories for dealing with the dilemmas that NPHSOs confront. Continuous development of theoretical and empirical knowledge can provide explanations relating to the transition from management based on past experience, intuition, and benchmarking to evidence-based management. This can result in changing the organizations' approach regarding the added value of advocacy, and bring it closer to the center of the organizations' activity, while developing sector-wide capacities that will support advocacy.

In conclusion, research in the last decade has shown that, while still limited, advocacy is becoming a more common NPHSO practice, and is gradually being recognized as a necessary way of coping with the uncertain, complex environments in which they operate. This research has made progress and presents more findings on the scope, intensity, and modes of operations of nonprofit policy advocacy; however, in order to expand our understanding of the role of advocacy employed by NPHSOs, more work is needed—especially in the areas of the effectiveness and impact of policy advocacy and its relation to processes of policy-making.

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