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Chao Guo and Gregory D. Saxton

Abstract

How do participatory constituent practices affect the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy? In this study, we examine this question through survey data from a random sample of charitable nonprofit organizations in Arizona in 2007. Our findings show that the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy tend to increase with constituent board membership, communication with constituents, and level of constituent involvement in strategic decision making. However, the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy tends to decrease with increased government funding and private contributions. These findings suggest important implications for organizations wishing to be more effective in influencing public policy.

KEYWORDS: advocacy, nonprofit organizations, participation, representation

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Advocacy is regarded by some as “the quintessential function of the voluntary sector” (Kramer, 1981: 212; O’Neill, 2002). Through advocacy activities, nonprofit and voluntary organizations contribute to democratic governance by representing the interests of citizens and influencing public policy. We argue here that to provide an accurate voice for their constituents, organizations must first establish governance mechanisms permitting constituents to participate in the shaping of the organization’s mission, vision, and strategies (Guo & Musso, 2007; McCambridge, 2004). This idea of an implicit connection between constituent voice and advocacy output dovetails with a long line of citizen participation research (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Brady et al., 1995; Putnam, 1993, 1995). However, no empirical research to date has been done on the relationship between constituent participation (Voice In) and nonprofit advocacy (Voice Out) at the organizational level.

This insight has led us to the following research question: how do participatory constituent practices affect nonprofit organizations’ advocacy activities? We empirically examine this question by analyzing survey data using a random sample of nonprofit organizations in Arizona in 2007. Our findings show that the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy tend to increase with constituent board membership, communication with constituents, and level of constituent involvement in strategic decision making, yet decrease with growth in government funding and private contributions.

This study makes several theoretical and empirical contributions. Most notably, it represents one of the first empirical investigations into the relationship between constituent inputs and nonprofit organizations’ advocacy activities. It fills a critical void in the literature on the representational and democratic role of nonprofit organizations. This study also yields valuable baseline data useful for informing the making of advocacy-related laws and regulations. At the same time, our study helps enhance managerial understanding of organizations’ advocacy-related activities, the factors driving the selection of advocacy strategies, and, more generally, the impact of giving greater voice to constituents on the strategies and tactics an organization employs to fulfill its mission.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Berry (1994) argues that “[g]overnance questions are questions about representation. More specifically, they are questions about how well people’s views are represented within an organization, and how members’ views correspond to what their lobbying organization communicates to government” (p. 23). In accordance with this view, our general theoretical framework is built on the notion of “representation” in nonprofit organizations.

In particular, we generate our hypotheses using a recent theoretical synthesis developed by Guo and Musso (2007). The literature has long noted the multi-dimensional nature of constituent representation (e.g., Pitkin, 1967). Guo and Musso (2007) synthesize these practices into a five-dimensional representational framework, with truly “representative” organizations using a mix of constituent-focused practices. Their framework implicitly posits a system of representational “inputs,” covering formal, descriptive, and participatory representation, and representational “outputs” in the form of substantive and symbolic representation. Our study makes this relationship explicit and examines the connection between constituent-focused inputs and outputs. Our guiding proposition is that the quality of representational outputs, or “voice out,” is determined by the quality of representational inputs.

“Voice Out” – Nonprofit Advocacy

The representational output we are concerned with here is public policy-related *advocacy*, or efforts to influence or change governmental policies at the local, state, or federal levels. Although the word “advocacy” may create images of direct lobbying of politicians, an organization planning to conduct public policy advocacy can in fact choose from a broad array of potential advocacy strategies, including litigation, public education, judicial advocacy, administrative lobbying, the mobilization of grassroots support and, yes, the direct lobbying of politicians. In terms of the Guo and Musso (2007) representational framework, there are compelling arguments that advocacy is an essential indicator of *substantive representation* and *symbolic representation*¹ – or how well an organization’s representatives “act for” and “stand for” the interests of their constituents (Pitkin, 1967). Our central argument is that those organizations receiving more constituent inputs – particularly in terms of descriptive and participatory representation – will have more substantive and symbolic representation on the “output” side in the form of meaningful advocacy efforts.

Given the lack of prior research on this connection, we provide below our logic on how the various dimensions of constituent inputs might be expected to affect an organization’s advocacy efforts. There is a growing body of literature on

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¹ *Symbolic representation* generally occurs when an organization is trusted by its constituents as their legitimate representative. *Substantive representation*, in turn, refers to the extent that an organization’s representatives “act for” the interests of their constituents, or acts in a manner responsive to them; it is often measured by the congruence between leaders and constituents on salient issues. Guo and Musso (2007) argue that substantive representation and symbolic representation are the most direct measures of the democratic capacities of nonprofit organizations.

nonprofit advocacy (e.g., Berry & Arons, 2005; Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1998; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Frumkin, 2002; LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009; O'Connell, 1994, 1996; Saidel, 2002; Suárez & Hwang, 2008) and its “democratic” functions. The literature shows that, not only is advocacy important for those organizations that engage primarily in external representational activities (e.g., activist and advocacy groups), but it is also relevant to charitable organizations (e.g., hospitals, universities, museums, churches, and human service organizations). Though advocacy remains outside their core mission, charitable organizations have enormous potential to improve the lives of their constituents by influencing public policy and empowering their constituents to represent themselves more effectively (Guo, 2007; O'Connell 1994; LeRoux, 2009). In short, nonprofit advocacy is often seen as not just another “service,” but as a critical component of a nonprofit organization's responsibility to its constituents as well as civil society as a whole.

Nonprofit advocacy can be broadly defined as “attempts by nonprofits to influence government decisions” (Reid, 1999: 291). There are many ways to influence a decision, thus scholars typically disaggregate this umbrella term into various discrete activities or strategies. For example, Reid (1999) proposes a useful typology of nonprofit advocacy that includes ten categories: legislative advocacy, grassroots advocacy, public education and public opinion shaping, electoral advocacy, among others. Avner (2002) similarly identifies ten basic advocacy strategies: direct lobbying, grassroots lobbying, research, media advocacy, administrative advocacy, public education, coalition building, voter registration, public events/direct action, and lawsuits and courts. Hoefer (2001) identifies seven tactics used by human services interest groups: developing consensus among experts, pursuing issues in court, aiding the election of particular candidates, participating in public hearings, bringing current regulations to executive branch attention, taking changes to proposed regulations to the issuing agency, and offering drafts of regulations prior to publication in *The Federal Register*. In our discussion of the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy, we follow the typologies of advocacy activities and strategies listed and defined in Appendix I.

“Voice In” – Constituent Inputs

How might different forms and levels of constituent inputs affect an organization's advocacy efforts? Our examination of “voice in” centers on two constituent input mechanisms in the Guo and Musso (2007) framework: “descriptive” and “participatory” representation.

Constituent Input I: Descriptive Representation. Descriptive representation offers one possible, albeit indirect, mechanism for receiving constituent input. This form of voice occurs when leaders of an organization are in some respects “typical” of the organization’s constituents (Guo & Musso, 2007). Austin and Woolever (1992) argue that, “[if] participation in [an] organization is completely random, we would expect the composition of membership and boards to reflect community population characteristics” (p.183). Moreover, if nonprofits perform a mediating function between citizens and the larger social institutions, then “the extent to which voluntary organizations represent the actual populations of their constituent geographic domains . . . in governance” should be of central concern (p.181). Accordingly, descriptive representation in board governance might provide an effective mechanism by which the needs and concerns of multiple constituents are relayed to organizational leadership. A nonprofit leader nicely illustrates this point:

“True diversity means bringing unlikely perspective to the board table so that they inform and enrich debate about the mission and action of the organization. . . . [Through building boards of trustees that reflect the diversity in the community,] board dialogue becomes a conversation across communities and among stakeholders that illuminates the organization’s mission and life in new ways.” (Dodson, 1992; as quoted in Widmer & Houchin, 2000: 130)

In a recent study of nonprofit service organizations, LeRoux (2009) finds a positive association between descriptive representation and nonprofits’ political activities. In particular, her findings show that, when organizational leadership is more racially reflective of the clientele served, nonprofits display increased efforts to engage in four civic “intermediary” activities: political representation, education, mobilization, and assimilation.

To a lesser extent, scholars have also related organizational representation to broader, societal- and citizen-level impacts. Zimmermann (1994), for instance, suggests that nonprofit organizations “might serve better as training grounds for democracy” if their boards are “more truly representative” of the community (p.401). Smith and Lipsky (1993) argue that nonprofit organizations are “tangible, significant manifestations of community” and pathways to citizen participation (p. 22), and that “[boards] of directors, more than any other aspect of nonprofit organizations, embody and represent community interests” (p. 74). Implicitly, at least, these arguments provide a link between descriptive representation and advocacy.

Constituent Input II: Participatory Representation. Existing literature also alludes to the connection between participatory representation and advocacy outcomes. In Guo and Musso's (2007) framework, the notion of participatory representation entails the extent of direct participatory relationships between organizational leaders and their constituents. This form of representation highlights the importance of maintaining a variety of communication channels and decision-making processes with constituents. The prevalence of participatory representation is indicated by the existence of "inclusive" organizational and governance practices. Inclusive practices can differ depending on organizational need, but at a minimum include communicating decisions to the people affected and obtaining statistical information about constituents and the larger community. Much of the early empirical evidence shows that levels of participatory representation vary, yet are often low among nonprofit organizations. Knoke's (1990) national association study finds on a four-point scale ranging from "never" to "regularly," average internal participation is closest to "rarely;" most association members are not active on the set of internal issues nominated by their leaders. In a study of representative and participatory democracy in neighborhood organizations, Cnaan (1991) similarly indicates a trend of minimal constituent participation in neighborhood associations and that the "iron law of oligarchy" predominates in those organizations (Michels, 1962). More recently, "new media" have begun to open unprecedented opportunities for innovative systems of participatory representation based upon direct, unmediated communication and interaction between constituents and organizations (Saxton, Guo, & Brown, 2007).

In the context of charitable organizations, where *formal representation*² – the selection of leaders through the medium of frequent, free elections – is virtually absent, constituent participation in the decision-making process offers stronger control over the direction of the organization. Constituent participation practices engage constituents in an on-going public dialogue within an organization through which matters of public concern can be communicated and deliberated, and thus improve the control of the organization by its constituents. Evidence suggests that participatory mechanisms, in the forms of inclusive organizational practices and feedback processes, facilitate the organizations' representation of and sensitivity to constituents (Brown, 2001), and improve organizational performance, accountability, and responsiveness (Campbell, in press). Moreover, constituent participation also performs an educational function, allowing those involved to develop a keener understanding of the system, and facilitating the development of political and civic skills of ordinary constituents.

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² According to Guo and Musso (2007), *formal representation* refers to the formal organizational arrangements that establish the ways in which its leaders are selected by constituents.

Summary of Theoretical Propositions

In sum, our central proposition is that representational outputs are affected by the nature of representational inputs; that is, Voice In affects Voice Out. Our concern in this paper is with the effects of two key forms of constituent-related inputs – descriptive representation and participatory representation – on advocacy, which we argue to be a key indicator of representational output. Accordingly, we have our main hypothesis:

The scope and intensity of a nonprofit organization's advocacy efforts (Voice Out) is positively related to the extent of constituent inputs (Voice In).

METHOD AND DATA

In January 2007, 1,600 charitable nonprofit organizations in the State of Arizona were mailed a letter inviting them to participate in a nonprofit organizational and governance practices survey.³ The survey covered advocacy activities in eleven broad categories: research, media advocacy, direct lobbying, grassroots lobbying, public events and direct action, judicial advocacy, public education, coalition building, administrative lobbying, voter registration and education, and expert testimony. The survey also contained numerous questions about organizational and governance practices. A total of 174 highest-level staff members (such as executive directors) provided valid and complete survey responses (response rate: 12.7%; 174 of 1,347).

Since a low response rate can produce biased samples, it is important to know if our sample differs from the state and national data in potentially nontrivial ways. Of the 174 participating organizations in the present sample, 57 (33%) were human service organizations, 19 (11%) were education and research organizations, 14 (8%) were health organizations, and 12 (7%) were arts organizations, among others. By comparison, the NCCS core data file for 2006 reports the following breakdown of registered public charities in Arizona: human service organizations, 25%; education and research organizations, 15%; health organizations, 9%; and arts organizations, 10%. While the overall distribution pattern of the current sample appears to be consistent with those of the state data,

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³ A modified Dillman method was used for the survey. The mailing list was derived from the pool of 13,451 charitable organizations in the State of Arizona included in the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) core data file for 2006. The NCCS is a national repository of data on the nonprofit sector in the United States; its core data file comprises 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations and contains information obtained from form 990, the annual financial disclosure to the IRS. By the end of July 2007, 253 invitation letters were later returned as incorrect addresses, thus reducing the total number of eligible organizations to 1,347.

it should be noted that human service organizations are over-represented, while arts and educational organizations are slightly under-represented, in our sample.

In terms of organizational background, the average organization in our sample was 24.5 years old (min.:1; max.: 99), had 16 full-time equivalent paid staff members (min.:0; max.: 400), had \$1.42 million of total revenues (min.: 0; max.: \$30 million) and \$1.34 million of total expenses (min.: 0; max.: \$30 million) in the most recently completed fiscal year. On average, the organization's revenues came from several major sources: nearly 18% from government or public agencies (e.g., grants, fees, sales, appropriations), slightly over 39% from donations and gifts (e.g., United Way, foundations, individuals, corporations), about 17% from special events, and over 11% from dues/membership fees.⁴

MAIN FINDINGS

In this section we first report the initial descriptive findings of the organizations' scope and intensity of advocacy activities as well as the prevalence of constituent input mechanisms. We then discuss the results of the multiple regression analyses.

Scope and Intensity of Advocacy Activities – Voice Out

To measure the scope of advocacy, we included an item in the survey tapping the frequency with which organizations employed different advocacy strategies. As shown in Figure 1, respondents evaluated a number of different strategies nonprofits can employ in their efforts to work for policy change. Overall, about two-thirds of the responding organizations (111 out of 165⁵) participated in some form of advocacy, with public education, coalition building, media advocacy, and grassroots lobbying being the most commonly used strategies. However, except for public education, none of the strategies was extensively used by more than half of the respondents.

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⁴ Respondents were also asked whether their organizations currently had members (other than board members); not surprisingly, the majority of the responding nonprofits (54%) did not have members.

⁵ Among the 174 valid and complete survey responses, nine of them did not have their own boards of directors and therefore were excluded from our analysis,

In terms of the intensity of advocacy, the organizations reported the level of resources (time, money, etc.) they spent on advocacy activities. Figure 2 shows a histogram of the number of organizations reporting various proportions of resources devoted to their advocacy efforts. Interestingly, the vast majority of the organizations (109 out of 165 or 66%) reported spending no resources on advocacy activities, while only a small percentage of organizations (9 out of 165 or 5.4%) reported devoting at least one-fifth of their resources to advocacy.⁶ Among those organizations that reported advocacy-related spending, the average level of resources devoted was fairly low (9%); it also varied greatly among organizations, with some organizations as high as 40 percent and others as low as 1 percent or less.

⁶ Interestingly, a considerable proportion of nonprofits that reported participating in some form of advocacy (50.5%; 56 out of 111) did not devote any time or money to it at all.

Constituent Inputs – Voice In

We were interested in two constituent input mechanisms: 1) descriptive representation in board governance and 2) participatory representation. In terms of the former, we asked survey respondents to break down the composition of their boards of directors. In particular, we asked them to provide the number of “primary constituents” serving on their boards. Figure 3 shows a histogram of the organizations reporting different numbers of primary constituents on the board of directors. Among the 165 organizations that had their own boards of directors, 90 of them (nearly 55%) had at least one constituent representative serving as a board member. As shown in the figure, the range is broad: the sampled organizations had anywhere from 0 to 40 primary constituents currently serving on the board.

Figure 3. Histogram, Number of Primary Constituents Serving on Board (Descriptive Representation)

Source: Arizona Nonprofits Survey, n=165

Figure 4. Organizational Communication with Constituents

Source: Arizona Nonprofits Survey, n=165

In terms of participatory representation, we focused on three participatory practices: organizational communication with constituents, scope of constituent involvement in making strategic decisions, and level of constituent involvement in making strategic decisions. Figures 4 through 6 highlight our findings regarding these three elements. First, Figure 4 shows responses to a series of seven items regarding organizations' communication with their constituents. For each of these items, roughly half to two-thirds of organizations agreed they were communicating well with their constituents.

Next, we included a series of questions related to different facets of constituent participation in organizational decision-making. As shown in Figure 5, we asked respondents to indicate on a 1 – 5 scale (1 = not at all involved, 5 = completely involved) how extensively the organization's primary constituents were involved in making major strategic decisions. In an important extension to this involvement component of decision-making, we then asked what level of involvement primary constituents had in making the ultimate decision. Figure 6 reports these results. Figures 5 and 6 collectively show that the typical organization does not allow high levels of involvement for primary constituents in their strategic-level decision-making.

Multivariate Analyses

We now turn to hypothesis testing. Our primary hypothesis is that the extent of constituent inputs in an organization (Voice In) will be positively related to the scope and intensity of that organization's advocacy efforts (Voice Out). To test this hypothesis, we develop empirical measures of constituent involvement and advocacy as well as various control variables. We employ these variables to conduct a series of multivariate regression analyses to examine the association between constituent input and advocacy outputs, controlling for other relevant organizational factors.

Appendix II contains details on the measurement procedures for all variables included in our regression analyses. For dependent variables, we test the effects on two different measures of advocacy. First, we create a variable measuring the *Scope of Advocacy*, a composite measure of the scope of advocacy strategies employed by an organization. We base this index on the eleven advocacy strategies (research, lobbying, public education, etc.) shown in Figure 1. Specifically, we define our advocacy strategy index as the total number of these eleven advocacy strategies employed by each organization.

Our second dependent variable, *Intensity of Advocacy*, is a continuous variable measuring the level of organizational resources spent on advocacy activities. As seen in Figure 2, it derives from a survey item that asked, “If your organization is involved in any advocacy work, what proportion of your organization’s resources (time, money, etc.) is spent on it? (Enter rough percentage from 0-100).”

Next, four key explanatory variables explain the four distinct dimensions of constituent participation shown in Figures 3 through 6: 1) *Constituent Board Membership*, a raw count of primary constituents serving on the board; 2) *Organizational Communication*, a summative index of organizations’ responses to the seven constituent-communication items shown in Figure 4; 3) *Scope of Constituent Involvement*, measuring on a 1 – 5 scale the extent of involvement and effort of the organization’s primary constituents in “making major strategic decisions” for the organization (see Figure 5); and 4) *Level of Constituent Involvement*, as shown in Figure 6, which directly measures on a 1-6 scale the level of decision-making authority the organization’s primary constituents have in making strategic decisions.

To control for the effects of other relevant factors, we incorporate a series of variables related to *Organizational Age*, *Staff Size*, *Revenue*, levels of *Government Funding* and *Private Contributions*, and whether the organization is in the *Human Services*, *Education and Research*, or *Arts and Culture* industries. The incorporation of these standard controls will better allow us to determine the predictive power of constituent involvement in explaining levels of organizational advocacy above and beyond that explained by the control variables.

Method & Results

Note that the first dependent variable in this study – *Scope of Advocacy* – was a count measure based on the eleven advocacy strategies (research, lobbying, public education, etc.) shown in Figure 1. In the case of a count variable, the ordinary least squares method tends to result in biased, inefficient, and inconsistent estimates. To deal with this problem, we conducted a Poisson regression analysis.⁷ The second dependent variable, *Intensity of Advocacy*, is a continuous measure based on reported percentage of organizational resources spent on advocacy activities, truncated at zero. To accommodate the relatively large number of zeroes in this dependent variable, we conducted a Tobit analysis, a

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⁷ To deal with count outcomes, researchers have developed various nonlinear models based on the Poisson and negative binomial distributions. In this study, both analyses were conducted and produced similar results. We thus only present the results from the Poisson regression analysis.

censored regression technique.⁸ Before the regression analyses, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the possible correlations between independent variables (multicollinearity). No unusually high correlations were discovered (see Appendix III for the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix).

Table 1: Poisson and Tobit Regressions on Scope and Intensity of Advocacy

Variable	Scope of Advocacy (Poisson)	Intensity of Advocacy (Tobit)
Age	0.01	0.11
Staff size	0.18***	0.06
Revenue size	0.03***	0.36
Percentage of government funding	-0.01*	0.01
Percentage of private contributions	-0.01***	-0.12***
Arts	-0.64***	-10.87*
Education	-0.39***	-4.69
Human services	-0.29**	-4.84
Constituent board membership	0.02***	0.36*
Organizational communication	0.04***	0.38*
Scope of constituent involvement	-0.04	0.57
Level of constituent involvement	0.10***	0.80
<u>Goodness of Fit</u>		
N	165	165
Log Likelihood	-448.90	-267.86
χ^2	182.62***	35.90***

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Our main hypothesis maintains that the scope and intensity of a nonprofit organization's advocacy activities are positively related to the extent of constituent inputs. As shown in Table 1, the results are consistent with our prediction. In terms of the scope of advocacy activities, three of the four variables measuring various aspects of constituent inputs have positive significant coefficients, indicating that the scope of advocacy increases with constituent

⁸ In the case of censored and limited dependent variables, linear estimators (e.g., ordinary least squares) likely underestimate the hypothesized relationships between the predictor and outcome variables (e.g., Baba, 1990). The use of Tobit models is considered more appropriate for variables with truncated distributions.

board membership, communication with constituents, and level of constituent involvement in strategic decision making. Similarly, our analyses show that the intensity of advocacy activities is positively associated with two of the representational input variables – the number of primary constituents serving on the board and the quality of constituent-focused organizational communications. Among the control variables, the percentage of government funding is negatively related to an organization's scope of advocacy, whereas the percentage of private contributions is negatively associated with both the scope and the intensity of advocacy activities. In addition, measures of organizational size (staff size and revenue size) are positively associated with the scope of advocacy activities, while the arts, education, and human services organization dummy variables are negatively associated with the scope of advocacy. Arts organizations are also negatively associated with the intensity of advocacy. Since health, environment/animals, and mutual benefit organizations are included in the omitted category, our findings indicate that these organizations are positively associated with both the scope and intensity of advocacy efforts.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this exploratory study, we seek to better understand the capacity of nonprofit organizations to offer political representation to their constituents. Specifically, with data from a large-scale mail survey of nonprofit organizations in Arizona, we investigated whether organizations' governance arrangements influence their lobbying and other advocacy efforts. This study yields valuable baseline data for informing the making of laws and regulations and enhancing managers' understanding of their organizations' advocacy-related endeavors.

This study makes several significant contributions to the literature. Most notably, it is one of the first empirical investigations into the relationship between constituent inputs and nonprofit organizations' advocacy activities. Therefore, it fills a critical void in the existing studies of the representational and democratic role of nonprofit organizations. Our results demonstrate a strong association between constituent participation in organizational decision making and an organization's lobbying and advocacy activities. We find that the scope of advocacy practices increases with constituent board membership, communication with constituents, and level of constituent involvement in strategic decision making. These findings suggest that, as organizations solicit constituent inputs indirectly through board appointments and directly through communicating with constituents and involving them in organizational decision-making processes, they also tend to increase the scope and intensity of their advocacy activities. Our study thus offers some preliminary evidence on a mutually reinforcing

relationship between constituent participation (Voice In) and engagement in advocacy activities (Voice Out).

The finding that increased private funding is associated with lower levels of advocacy warrants further discussion. Institutional theory offers a possible explanation: an organization tends to conform to institutional pressures that constrain its action when it is heavily dependent on the source of those pressures (Oliver, 1991). Private funding agencies, such as foundations, are worrisome of engaging in lobbying that may compromise their charitable status, and many of them prohibit any lobbying or advocacy in projects that include their money — going so far as to refusing to fund organizations that engage in lobbying or advocacy. Such funders might use grant language that discourages nonprofit grantees from engaging in advocacy activities (Reid, 2000). Therefore, to the extent that a charitable organization is dependent on private contributions (particularly foundation grants), the danger of losing funding might cause the organization to steer away from any activity considered lobbying or advocacy.

Our conclusion, that health, environment and animals and mutual benefit organizations are associated with the increased scope and intensity of advocacy activities, is consistent with prior studies. Child and Gronbjerg (2007) report that organizations in these fields engage in more advocacy practices. Suárez and Hwang (2008) similarly find that rights groups, environmental organizations, hospitals, and PTOs are more likely to lobby than other types of organizations. Our finding thus joins prior studies in suggesting that an organization's industry mission and focus can influence the amount of advocacy it undertakes.

Several important lessons can also be drawn for nonprofit organizations wishing to become effective policy advocates. First, our results strongly suggest that nonprofits need to restructure their boards and their relationships with primary constituents if they want to be more effective in influencing public policy. To start, our raw data vividly show that the level of participatory representation — which exists to the extent there is a direct, unmediated and participatory relationship between an organization and its constituents — is relatively low in the typical nonprofit organization. For example, in fully one-quarter of our study's organizations, primary constituents are not even *consulted* before making strategic decisions.⁹ Including constituent representatives in the governing body has symbolic value, delivering a clear message that the organization cherishes constituent input, and it empowers constituents by offering them a representative mechanism for influencing organizational strategies and outcomes. In addition to the appointment of constituent board members, this study suggests that nonprofits establish and maintain more direct communication

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⁹ Such an approach is certainly not recommended. As the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) once counseled, "Stubborn opposition to proposals often has no other basis than the complaining question, 'Why wasn't I consulted?'"

(through a variety of channels) and participatory practices to engage constituents in the organizational decision-making process.

These findings are in line with a nascent body of research (e.g., Brown, 2001; Moynihan, 2003), suggesting inclusive governance practices have a variety of profound organizational impacts. This remains an understudied area. In fact, our study provides some of the first empirical evidence of the organizational outcomes of participatory organizational practices. Overall, this study strongly supports the view that, in order to develop an effective advocacy program, organizations should leverage the knowledge and expertise of their constituents by establishing inclusive governance mechanisms (Donaldson, 2008).

Nevertheless, a chief barrier to greater participation is that most organizations lack the organizational structure as well as the institutional capacity and suitable framework within which effective stakeholder participation can occur. In response to these limitations, many organizations resort to web-based technologies. Since most stakeholders avoid meetings and committing large amounts of time to group affiliations, technology may serve a key role for newer generations and marginal participants. In “The Will to Govern Well,” Peter Meyer argues that the “next generation of leaders and members will expect associations to use technology to enable them to participate ... without having to travel to a certain place at a certain time” (Meyer, 2004). Through the use of advanced technology, avant-garde organizations can work to facilitate the participation of a broader range and new generation of constituents. Organizations can also use technology to help implement non- and semi-permanent participatory decision-making processes such as Open Space technology, Future Search meetings, and “citizen summits” (see Moynihan, 2003 for an overview). Such techniques are useful *temporary* ways to use participatory organizational forms to decide major strategic issues in what are otherwise hierarchical, command-and-control organizations.

Lastly, our results highlight the need for advocacy-inclined organizations to buffer themselves from implicit and explicit pressures that build as they take on more government and philanthropic funding. Both types of funding sources are negatively associated with advocacy efforts. Still, that the percentage of government funding is negatively related to the scope of an organization’s advocacy efforts requires further attention. Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz (2004) find no relationship between government funding and political activity by charities and congregations. Based on data from a large survey of Indiana nonprofit organizations, Child and Gronbjerg (2007) find no relationship between government funding and participation in advocacy in a series of logistic regression analyses; however, in their multinomial regression analyses they find the odds of doing core advocacy compared to peripheral advocacy decreased with substantial reliance on government funding (i.e., 50% or more of total revenue

from government). Similarly, in a survey of Israeli nonprofits, Schmid, Bar, and Nirel (2008) observe that reliance on funding from local authorities decreased the scope and intensity of advocacy and political activity. Overall, while our results tend to corroborate arguments regarding the suppressive effects of government funding, the jury is out on the exact impact of government funding on nonprofit advocacy.

The limitations of our study suggest several paths for future research. One important limitation is that our data are cross-sectional and based on a relatively small sample from a single state. Although our results suggest the association between various measures of constituent voice and advocacy efforts, the cross-sectional nature of the survey data does not permit causal inference. Moreover, all the sampled organizations in our study operate in the state of Arizona. Prior research, however, indicates that what explains advocacy in one state may not be the same as in others (Hofer, 2005). Therefore, we use caution when generalizing findings and applying them to organizations in different settings. Future research should aim to collect longitudinal data from multiple states to examine lagged effects of constituent input as well as other organizational and contextual factors.

Another important limitation is our focus on the scope and intensity of advocacy, not the content of specific advocacy efforts. Although most of the work in this field focuses on the amount of activity in which a nonprofit engages, the influence of governance arrangements and other factors on the content of the advocacy efforts is also important (e.g., Are these groups advocating for their constituents or are they advocating for their own organizational interests? To what extent are these groups willing to challenge the status quo?). In a recent study of social service providers in the state of Connecticut, Grogan and Gusmano (2009) find that government contracting might have a differential effect on the intensity and content of advocacy. As the dynamics of contracting change from collaboration to competition, nonprofit service providers may increase advocacy efforts to secure a favorable role at the price of compromising their ability to act as representatives of the disadvantaged. Unfortunately, the data on which we base our analysis do not allow us to address these questions. It would be helpful to further explore this issue and its implications for theory and practice.

Despite its limitations, our study provides important baseline data for better understanding the strategic effects of enhanced constituent representation—on how giving greater voice to constituents can have an impact on the advocacy strategies and tactics an organization employs to fulfill its mission. We find a strong relationship between the amount of voice given to constituents on the input side and the nature and quantity of advocacy rendered on the output side. Given the centrality of advocacy to the nonprofit sector and civil society, this is a relationship worthy of further exploration.

Appendix I: Definitions of Advocacy Strategies

Research: original analysis or research on specific legislation or broad social or political problems.

Media advocacy: working for policy change via press releases, media events, letters to editor, op/ed pieces, and relationship-building with editors and journalists.

Direct lobbying: efforts to influence legislation by persuading politicians to support a particular position, normally through direct communication with elected officials or their staff.

Grassroots lobbying: mobilizing the public to support or oppose specific legislation (aka “indirect lobbying”).

Public events and direct action: strikes, protests, demonstrations, “sit-ins,” and other public actions.

Judicial advocacy: working for change through the legal system (e.g., class-action and amicus curiae litigation).

Public education: efforts to inform and educate the public about public policy issues.

Coalition building: working for policy change through coalitions with other advocacy and lobbying groups.

Administrative lobbying: influencing the administration through meetings with government officials, commenting on administrative rulemaking, etc. (aka “regulatory advocacy”).

Voter registration and education: efforts to register voters or encourage citizens to vote.

Expert testimony: providing testimony / advice at committee hearings, etc. upon request from a legislative body.

Appendix II: Measurement of Variables

Unless otherwise specified, data for all variables is derived from our survey of Arizona nonprofit organizations.

Independent Variables: Voice In

Constituent Board Membership. This variable is derived from a survey item that asked executives to break down the composition of the board of directors into several categories, including “primary constituents” of the organization, “rank-and-file employees,” “government officials,” etc. *Constituent Board Membership* is a raw count of the number of primary constituents serving on the board.

Scope of Constituent Involvement. Based on a survey item asking, "...how extensively [are primary constituents] involved in your organization's strategic decision-making?", this variable measures on a 1 – 5 scale (1 = "Not at all involved" and 5 = "Completely involved") the extent of involvement of the organization's primary constituents in "making major strategic decisions" for the organization (see Figure 5). This taps the amount of effort constituents expend in the decision-making process.

Level of Constituent Involvement. Directly measures the level of decision-making authority that the organization's constituents have in making strategic decisions. More specifically, this variable measures on a 1 – 6 scale primary constituents' decision-making authority, with 1 indicating primary constituents are "not consulted" and 6 indicating they are "empowered to directly select, implement, vote on, and change alternatives" (see Figure 6).

Organizational Communication. As shown in Figure 4, our survey included seven items that we believed would tap "constituent communications," or the quality and extent of communication between the nonprofit and key organizational constituents. Our organizational communication index here is defined as the sum of the organization's scores on these seven items. As expected, a confirmatory factor analysis verified a single factor with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, which suggests a solid degree of internal consistency for this index.¹⁰

Dependent Variables: Voice Out

Scope of Advocacy. Composite measure of the scope of advocacy strategies employed by an organization. We base this index on the eleven advocacy strategies (research, lobbying, public education, etc.) shown in Figure 1. To create the composite index, we recoded each item such that an organization received a score of 1 if it utilized a particular strategy (values 1, 2, or 3 in the original scale), and 0 if it never utilized the strategy. Believing these eleven items formed a coherent summative index, we then conducted a confirmatory factor analysis; a principal factors analysis (PFA) showed a single factor (eigenvalue = 5.26) on which all eleven items load at .47 or greater.¹¹ Moreover, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91 suggested a high degree of internal consistency.¹² We thus

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¹⁰ Specifically, a principal factors analysis (PFA) showed a single factor (eigenvalue = 2.79) on which all 7 items load at .51 or greater. All other factors had eigenvalues less than 0.34. A Scree plot similarly confirmed the existence of a single factor.

¹¹ Using the Kaiser (1960) criterion, we should retain only those factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1; all other factors here had values less than 0.33. A Scree plot similarly confirmed the existence of a single factor.

¹² Nunnally's (1978) rule of thumb is that alpha should generally be a minimum of 0.70.

define our advocacy strategy index as the total number of these eleven advocacy strategies employed by each organization.

Intensity of Advocacy. Continuous variable that measures the level of organizational resources spent on advocacy activities. It is derived from a survey item that asked, “If your organization has been involved in any advocacy work, then what proportion of your organization’s resources (time, money, etc.) are spent on it? (Enter rough percentage from 0-100).”

Control Variables

Organizational Age. Age of the organization in years.

Staff Size. The number of full-time equivalent paid staff members in a given organization.

Revenue. The average total revenue of an organization in the year prior to the survey.

Human Services. Binary variable with value of 1 indicating an organization operates in the social and legal services industry, 0 otherwise.

Education and Research. Binary variable with value of 1 indicating an organization operates in the education and research industry, 0 otherwise.

Arts and Culture. Binary variable with value of 1 indicating an organization operates in the arts and culture industry, 0 otherwise.

Government Funding. The percentage of an organization’s revenues from government or public agencies.

Private Contributions. The percentage of an organization’s revenues from donations and gifts (e.g., United Way, foundations, individuals, corporations).

Appendix III: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Obs.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	165	24.1	19.2	1.00											
2. Staff size	165	16.8	48.9	0.15	1.00										
3. Revenue (mil. \$)	165	1.0	3.1	0.09	0.72	1.00									
4. Government funding	165	18.3	31.5	-0.004	0.40	0.29	1.00								
5. Private contributions	165	38.8	38.8	0.11	-0.19	-0.12	-0.41	1.00							
6. Arts (%)	165	7.3	26.0	0.03	-0.09	-0.06	-0.04	-0.09	1.00						
7. Education (%)	165	10.3	30.5	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.03	-0.07	-0.09	1.00					
8. Human services (%)	165	33.9	47.5	-0.23	-0.08	0.05	-0.003	0.03	-0.20	-0.24	1.00				
9. Const. board member	165	4.4	6.7	0.20	-0.09	-0.05	-0.17	0.04	0.20	-0.05	-0.15	1.00			
10. Org. communication	165	24.6	7.5	0.06	0.03	0.02	0.09	-0.08	-0.06	0.01	0.09	0.07	1.00		
11. Scope of involvement	165	2.8	1.2	0.01	-0.06	-0.07	0.03	-0.13	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.28	0.08	1.00	
12. Level of involvement	165	2.6	1.3	0.17	0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.11	0.02	0.003	0.04	0.25	0.04	0.57	1.00

Note: The numbers in bold font are the associations that are statistically significant.

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