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What Makes a Successful Policy Research Organization in Transition and Developing Countries?

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Abstract

Identifying the attributes of policy research organizations (PROs) associated with their success in the policy process is a very important task. Having the answer could help guide the way PROs organize their policy research, staffing, and communications to be more effective. Similarly, supporters of PRO development in transitional and less developed countries could better structure their assistance programs to such organizations. This paper presents a quantitative analysis of factors associated with PROs in transition and developing countries being successful in the policy arena. The analysis employs a unique data set using responses from a survey of policy community participants in 19 countries on the effectiveness of 34 PROs. Five dimensions of success are analyzed. A principal finding is that it is possible to establish statistically significant relationships between indicators of PRO success, on the one hand, and the attributes of policy research organizations, the way the operate, and the environments in which they operate, on the other.

KEYWORDS: developing countries, think tanks, policy analysis

INTRODUCTION

Identifying the attributes of policy research organizations (PROs) that are associated with their success in the policy process is a very important task. "Success" in this context is a strong reputation for being constructively engaged in multiple ways in the policy process. Knowing the salient attributes could help guide the way PROs organize their policy research, staffing, and communications to be more effective. Similarly, supporters of PRO development in transitional and less developed countries could better structure their assistance programs to such organizations. Substantially because of data limitations and definitional issues, little statistical analysis of success has been undertaken to date.

This paper presents results of exploratory research on the topic for transition and developing countries; this is a cross-country, cross-institution analysis. More specifically, the analysis relates a PRO's perceived performance in the policy arena to variables indicating its capacity for research and communications, the focus of its work, the kinds of communications strategies and practices it employs, and the environment in which it operates, e.g., the extent of press freedom.

This work has a specific place within the large literature on PROs, a group that includes both think tanks and research advocacy organizations, i.e., advocacy NGOs that take an evidence-based approach to advancing their causes. The literature is dominated by attention to think tanks. To maintain focus, we omit several classes of literature in setting the stage: (a) the limited number of in-depth case studies that examine the role of one or more think tanks in the development and adoption of a particular policy; sometimes these include the influence of the results of social experiments (e.g., Pautz, 2008); (b) histories or overviews of individual think tanks (e.g. Solow, 2008; Talbot, n.d.); and, (c) edited volumes presenting overviews of the structure of the think tank industry in each of a number of countries (e.g., McGann and Weaver, 2000; Weaver and Stares, 2001; Stone and Denham, 2004).

One research direction on think tanks in industrialized countries has been the analysis of the roles and performance of think tanks in the policy development process in a particular country. These often include identification of those institutions rated as successful in terms of policy influence and a qualitative analysis of why they are influential. Interviews with policymakers and counts of media citations figure prominently (Rich, 2004; Abelson, 2002).

A notable entry in this literature is the analysis by Hird (2005), who surveyed 750 U.S. state legislators to obtain their views on the impact of non partisan policy analysis organizations on policymaking in their states. Using information on characteristics of state-funded PROs and legislators' ratings using regression analysis, he found strong association between the size and type of

policy research these organizations undertook and legislators' assessment of the utility of PROs' analyses.

The literature for transition and developing nations is more limited but more relevant because Western PROs such as those studied by Hird are generally larger, better resourced, and operate in policy environments that are more open to input from policy research organizations.[1] This literature has had three primary directions. The first are region-level monographs that qualitatively assess PROs' policy effectiveness in a region. Struyk's (1999) book covering four countries in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, for example, relies on the views of a sample of policymakers in each country to make assessments. The second line consists of "good practice" studies which highlight strong research, communications, and administrative practices internationally or in specific regions that evolving PROs can emulate (Lusthaus et al., 2002; Struyk, 2006). A new entry is an edited volume of essays highlighting success stories in the research-to-policy cycle with a goal of establishing PROs as credible contributors to evidence-based policy development (Kosak et al., 2010).

Third, and most relevant in this context, is a series of cross institution and cross country studies of successfully introducing policy research results into the policy process, the so-called "bridging research-to-policy" studies (e.g., Carden, 2009; Court and Young, 2006; Lavis et al., 2003; Woelk et al., 2009). Results from these studies are employed in formulating hypotheses for this analysis.

To our knowledge, our analysis is the first of this type, and we view it as frankly exploratory in nature. The central hypothesis is that statistically significant relationships can be established between PRO qualities and actions and conditions in the countries in which they operate, on the one hand, and positive views on PROs' success by those in the policy community.

"Success" is broader than positively influencing the adoption of a specific policy supported by a PRO's research. A PRO may be viewed as a strong policy community member if its senior staff advise government officials or serve on parliamentary committees considering policy issues, the organization may organize productive roundtable discussions of prominent issues although it does not have new research to present, or it may help build coalitions of nonprofits to support policy changes on topics where it has not done research. Activities such as these influence public perceptions of an organization beyond the quality of its research and the ways in which it is communicated, although it is likely that a policy research organization that is strongly positively viewed in the policy community does these tasks well.

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[1] Larger organizations can support a greater degree of specialization in functions ranging from sophisticated econometrics to a professional PR person (Struyk, 2006).

The balance of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 defines more fully the concept of Policy Research Organizations. Section 3 describes the data available for the analysis, defines the measures of "success" employed, and sets out a series of hypotheses about the country conditions and PRO attributes associated with success. It also discusses a prominent methodological issue that arises in analyzing success across countries. Section 4 presents the results of estimating cross-country and within country regression models where success indicators are the dependent variables. Section 5 discusses an issue raised by our data and compares the findings from research-to-policy studies with those of the estimated models. Section 6 offers some conclusions.

POLICY RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

PRO is a deliberately broad concept that includes advocacy-research organizations that emphasize an evidence-based approach to their advocacy work as well as think tanks, which often have the same goals as the advocacy organizations but generally employ more sophisticated analytic techniques and devote a smaller resource share to advocacy. Conceptually, one can place such organizations along two continua. One is for advocacy and communication that has at one end delivering a research report to a client and posting it on the organization's web site, and at the other end developing a specific communications plan for the findings, tailoring products to the different audiences to be reached, and building a coalition of NGOs to advocate adoption of the recommendations. The second continuum is for research that at one end has simply putting data from secondary sources in good order and making points based on it, and at the other end conducting sophisticated statistical analysis to validate causal relations, for example, between program design features and participation rates. While the two types of organizations tend to cluster at certain points along the two continua, there is a wide scatter; and, members of both groups can, for individual projects at least, be found everywhere along each continuum.

The PROs included in this analysis have some characteristics in common. With the exception of one government-supported research-training institute, all 34 organizations are non profits. Secondly, all are participating in one of two research-advocacy projects that document government service delivery performance in the health, education, and water sectors with the goal of increasing accountability.[2] Public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS) are a commonly

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[2] The programs were being executed by the Global Development Network and the Results for Development Institute. The baseline evaluation reports are Struyk, Damon, Haddaway (2009 and 2010).

employed method, for example. Both programs provide training in research techniques as a principal component. Participating organizations revealed their interest in this kind of research by going through a quite demanding application process. This description makes clear that the sample is not representative of the PRO community in transition and developing countries. It is nevertheless suited to testing our central hypothesis.

Table 1 provides some basic information on the 34 PROs in this analysis. (The source of the sample is described below.) The differences among the organizations included in the projects are striking. Half self-classify themselves as think tanks or Research NGOs, but a quarter are Advocacy NGOs and the balance other organizational types. Similarly, 32 percent classify their advocacy-research work mix as 75 percent or more advocacy, while 39 percent classify it as 75 percent or more research. The type of work these PROs do, in terms of the rigor of their analysis, mirrors this pattern.

The distribution of full time employees is interesting: on average, PROs have 28 total staff, four of which are communications/PR staff. Because it is common for these organizations to engage researchers on a part-time basis, the actual relative research capacity is understated in the figures. We show figures on full-time staff because our experience is that PROs' capacity beyond simple project execution is carried primarily by full-time staff. Lastly, it is notable that about 40 percent of included PROs have operated for less than 10 years. It is probable that after a decade even comparatively small PROs should have established a niche in the policy development process; so a clear majority of the included organizations are established players. The diversity of study PROs is expected to facilitate the statistical analysis.

STRUCTURING THE ANALYSIS

Data Assembled

The analysis focuses on how PRO performance is perceived by policy community members. Therefore, a survey of the overall community is needed, not one of just one or two components such as senior government officials or MPs.

The primary data source for this analysis is the Policy Community Survey (PCS) conducted for 34 organizations in 19 countries with a total of 507 responses. (Countries are listed in Annex B.) This survey gathers information on how someone involved in policy views the intensity of use of evidence and analysis in the policy process and the effectiveness of a particular PRO in the process. The questionnaire was piloted in 2007 in two countries and the revised version was used in the studies from which our data come.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Included Organizations

Participating Organization Type		% of PROs
	Think tank	29.4
	Research NGO	20.6
	Advocacy NGO	26.5
	Other type of civil society organization	8.8
	Part of an academic institution	8.8
	Other	5.9
Work Mix		
	10% research - 90% advocacy	14.7
	25% research - 75% advocacy	17.6
	60% research - 40% advocacy	29.4
	75% research - 25% advocacy	32.4
	90% research – 10% advocacy	5.9
Work Type		
	Mostly qualitative work	20.6
	Qualitative work and some in-depth analysis	55.9
	Mostly in-depth quantitative policy analysis	23.5
Organizational Motivation and Goals		
	A need for better research and/or information on policy questions	32.4
	A need for outside, informed voices in the policy process	26.5
	Blend of the above two items	17.6
	Saw a strong need for advocacy	23.5
Full Time Employees		
	Mean number of research staff	11.5
	Mean number of communications/PR staff	3.8
	Mean number of total staff	28.1
Organization age		
	1-9 Years	38.2
	10-14 Years	26.5
	15 Years and Older	35.3

Two identical PCSs were conducted in 2009 as baseline surveys for evaluations of PRO-capacity building programs. The projects worked with 15 and 20 PROs, respectively. (The PCS was conducted for 34 rather than 35 PROs because one was conducting a conflicting survey.) Survey respondents were identified by participating PROs and were composed of (a) persons who occupy official positions at the national and local level in the sector(s) where the organization is active (e.g., education or health); (b) leaders of NGOs in the topic areas on which the PRO was working; and, (c) other relevant professionals involved in the local policy process, such as journalists, educators, business leaders, and persons at international organizations like the World Bank.[3]

Each PRO compiled a list of 30-40 persons to include in the survey. The potential bias of PRO selecting respondents is recognized, but the evaluation team did not have detailed knowledge of the local policy market in these countries and the resources were not available to engage a local policy expert to identify PCS respondents. Therefore, participating PROs were asked to nominate respondents. (Information on the distribution of responses is provided below.)

A respondent could be queried in any of three ways, depending on which method was recommended by each PRO: most commonly via an email sent by the evaluator, NORC; the PRO delivering a hard-copy questionnaire to targeted respondents; or the PRO organizing an in-person interview with the respondent.[4,5] PROs recommended the method that would most likely succeed in getting a completed interview; e.g., many senior officials are unlikely to participate in an eSurvey. At the same time PROs were aware that resources from project organizers for in-person interviews were limited. NORC did the initial two rounds of follow-up with respondents for the eSurvey, but then asked the local organization to continue if necessary. eSurveys were sent to 959 possible respondents, 105 surveys were delivered to respondents by PROs, and 217 in-person interviews were attempted. The two projects employed somewhat different incentives for PROs to help in completing interviews. In the end, a total

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[3] There is some evidence from other contexts that there may be little consistency in the perceptions of different stakeholder groups. Friedlander and Pickle (1968) had this result when they examined 97 small businesses, in particular the views of employees, owners, clients, suppliers and creditors on employee, owner, and societal fulfillment. This means that establishing relationships with diverse respondentas may be particularly challenging.

[4] NORC provided PROs with a separate sealed envelope for each respondent which was delivered to the respondent. When the form had been completed, the respondent placed it in an envelope supplied by NORC, sealed it, and wrote her name across the seal. The sealed envelopes were returned in a batch to NORC.

[5] NORC developed a training manual for use by the interviewers. Because the questionnaire had been designed to be self-administered and is very simple, no real training on how to use it was needed. Local partners were to hire persons not on their staff as interviewers so that the respondent would not be reluctant to be fully open in their answers.

of 507 interviews were completed. The number of 'completes' ranged from 4 to 33 among the 34 PROs. The variance in responses is attributed primarily to the energy that PROs devoted to encouraging respondents to complete the form or take an interview. The overall response rate was 39.6 percent. This compares with a response rate of 25 percent for Hird's mail out survey.

The PCS was complemented by a quite detailed survey of the activities of the participating PROs. Information obtained included how the organization rated itself in terms of the relative emphasis on research versus advocacy, its size (budget, staff), the type and number of products it uses (both written and events) and its procedures for targeting audiences, and the rigor and coverage of its quality control process, and several other areas. Lastly, information was assembled for the 19 countries from several cross country governance and related indices and economic status indicators.

Hypotheses About Success Determinants

Many factors can affect how well PROs succeed in producing strong analysis and communicating their results to policymakers and other members of the policy community. The results of the bridging research-to-policy case studies by Court and Young (2006) provided a good source of hypotheses for the analysis. The success concept defined above is clearly broader than achieving a "policy success," but one expects a PRO that achieves policy successes to be more positively viewed within the policy community. The findings of the Court and Young (2006) analysis of 50 research-to-policy case studies for the research-to-policy findings are very briefly summarized below in three blocks. Each of these factors was found to be associated with success.

   A. Context: institutional and policy environment
      1. Access to data, press freedom, open political system
      2. Policymaker demand; reasonable incidence of high level political commitment
      3. Stable political environments
   B. Evidence: credibility and communication
      1. Credibility: policy relevance; solution is likely to work, especially when results of pilot are available; analysis source is trusted—well-established institution, major organization
      2. Communication and packaging: strong communications strategy, tailoring the message and products; successfully building coalitions
   C. Links: influence and Legitimacy
      1. Continuing close relations among research, policy, implementation and monitoring communities

2. Building informal networks around projects or programs.

Based on these points and other inputs, we formulated a series of hypotheses that appear in six groups summarized below. After each statement is a notation indicating which of the Court-Young findings relate to the hypotheses. At this level of generalization, clear expectations on the direction of relationships are difficult to define.

1. Mission – organizations that place a higher emphasis on advocacy will devote more resources to communicating results and building coalitions to advance positions in the policy arena, and they are more likely to be perceived as effective. On the other hand, some in the policy community will place greater weight on analytic quality and see think tanks as more effective. C&Y: B1, B2

2. Focus – PROs' choice of clients, ranging from persons in senior government agency positions to leaders of advocacy NGOs, affects how well they succeed in promoting certain policies and on their perceived effectiveness. The choice of concentrating on government officials or MPs may be particularly important. The broader the range of persons worked with, the more likely an organization is to be recognized as active and possibly effective in the policy arena. C&Y: C1, C2

3. Capacity – larger organizations have more opportunity for specialization. One dimension is in having a communications or public relations staff with relevant training. Another aspect of 'capacity' is the ability to work on current policy issues. PROs with a larger share of their budget in unrestricted funds have an advantage. Also, it takes some years for a new PRO to develop credibility in the policy community; so a PRO's age can be important. Older PROs can, however, fail to keep abreast of analytic and communications developments or to maintain ties among policymakers and lose respect among their peers. C&Y: B1, B2

4. Communications strategy – more successful organizations develop their plans early in a project's life so that products and events are geared to informing the most important audiences, are attuned to the public's interest in certain issues, have a good reputation for communicating its mission and interests, and select appropriate communication vehicles. PROs with more inclusive programs, i.e., events more open to the public and frequent, substantive postings on their web sites, may develop respect among policy community members. C&Y: B2, C1

5. Environment – political freedom, including freedom of the press, and strong governance facilitate strong analysis through data access and permit open discussion of options. Richer countries have more resources to devote to policy development and possibly better developed channels for receiving input from PROs. It is unclear how this affects perceptions of PROs' efficacy. C&Y: A1, A2, A3

6. Research quality – the policy community can tell the difference between strong and weak analysis and those producing more rigorous work are viewed as being more effective in the policy arena. The strength and coverage of quality control systems are used as proxies for analytic rigor in the absence of critical product reviews. C&Y: B1

More refined hypotheses in each area are stated in the first column of Table 2 where they are defined in terms of the variables available to test them. They remain fairly broad, however, as they are not specific to each of the five dependent variables. The second table column gives each variable's definition, the third provides a short name for each, and the last presents the mean value. Data for these variables are drawn from the baseline survey completed by PROs and the policy community survey.

Analysis Structure

A key estimation issue concerns how to control for differences in the local policymaking environments in which PROs operate so that the role of PRO characteristics can be identified. In principle including variables measuring the quality of governance and the extent to which the country is a liberal democracy in the regression models should do this. However, if the responses of those in the policy community on PRO performance (the dependent variable) take into account the environment, then two effects may result. First, these control variables will be insignificant in cross-country estimates because respondents have already made the adjustment. Second, cross-country comparability is diminished because the ratings of PRO performance are not made on the same scale. An analogy might be made with grading high school student essays. A student in her own school may receive high marks but get a much lower grade on a national exam. Variables explaining strong performance at the school level are likely to differ from those explaining the variance in pooled school scores.

Table 2. Hypotheses on Factors Affecting Effectiveness in the Policy Arena, Corresponding Variable Definitions, and Summary Statistics

Hypothesis	Variable		Mean value	Min value	Max value
	Definition	Short name			
Mission					
Organizations that see themselves as advocacy-oriented are more active in policy process and will be perceived as good communicators and effective in achieving change	Var=1, if organization classifies its work mix as 75% or more as advocacy (vs. research)	ADVOI	0.375	0	1
Focus—organization					
Works primarily with government agencies—could be insider game and therefore less well known to the broader policy community; net effect is ambiguous as it could be perceived as more or less effective.	Var=1, if organization says it works primarily with government (rather than parliament)	GOV	0.541	0	1
Working equally with government agencies and the parliament should give its positions relatively broad exposure and increase perceived effectiveness.	Var=1, if PRO reports working equally with both	BOTH	0.416	0	1
Focus—respondent					
Respondents in different positions may have different views on effectiveness of different organizations, which depends in part on the focus and content of communications activities	Dummy variables for position of respondent. Groups are as follows:	--	--	--	--
	National gov official; senior advisor	POS1	0.149	0	1
	Other official	POS2	0.105	0	1
	Member of parliament	POS3	0.038	0	1
	NGO or think tank connected	POS4	0.408	0	1
	Media connected	POS5	0.048	0	1
	Academic, other	POS6	0.252	0	1

Hypothesis	Definition	Variable			
		Short name	Mean value	Min value	Max value
Respondents' views may vary systematically depending on degree of exposure; knowing an organization very well signals the respondent finds its work sufficiently useful to invest time in learning about the organization	Dummies for how familiar the respondent is with the organization; question is on a 5 point scale, with KNOW1 being "very familiar" and KNOW5 being "not familiar at all"	KNOW1	0.548	0	1
		KNOW2	0.302	0	1
		KNOW3	0.089	0	1
		KNOW4	0.034	0	1
		KNOW5	0.028	0	1
Respondents who believe an organization is selecting priority policy questions for analysis are more likely to rate its role in the policy process higher	Dummy variable for the highest policy relevancy rating	PRIORITY1	0.616	0	1
	Dummy variable for the second highest policy relevancy rating	PRIORITY2	0.303	0	1
Capacity					
Offsetting factors at work: It takes some years for a PRO to establish itself in the policy arena and become effective. Long-established PROs may not keep up with newer analytic and communications methods and may not pursue policy influence as energetically as more youthful counterparts.	Number of years the organization has existed	AGE1	12.562	1	37
	Var=1, if organization is at least 10 years old	AGE2	0.665	0	1
Larger organizations can have greater specialization and resources to be active in the policy process.	Total number of full-time employees	SIZE	29.470	4	88
Professional PR and communications staff improve the organization's image and better communicate its positions	Number of communications/PR staff	PR	5.207	0	49[a]
Organizations with unrestricted funds can focus on highly relevant policy issues and can spend these funds to prepare more rigorous analyses or on campaigns to advance its policy positions	Percent of funds where research topic not defined by the funder	FREE$	54.165	0	100

Hypothesis	Variable				
	Definition	Short name	Mean value	Min value	Max value
Communications strategy					
By consulting well with the public, organization gains exposure and credibility	Var=1, if the organization is given the highest rating by respondents for consulting with the public	CONSULT	0.423	0	1
Reputation for good communications implies broad exposure and should help advance policy positions.	Var=1, if respondent gives the organization the highest rating for communicating its mission, activities, findings	COMMWEL	0.368	0	1
Designing a communications plan for a project at its beginning indicates real focus and thought on communicating results	Var=1, if plan drafted at beginning of project	EARLY	0.370	0	1
Communications strategies are stronger if all relevant staff are involved in determining target audiences and tailoring the messages.	Var=1, if all relevant people involved in preparing the comm. plan from the start	COM-TEAM	0.581	0	1
For communicating the organization's analytic results on a policy under active discussion by the government, choice of method is important. But local practices and traditions influence choice of methods. So no clear hypothesis about which methods are more effective.	Set of dummy variables for various communications tools cited for case listed in hypothesis:	--	--	--	--
	Personal contact with officials	COM-STRAT1	0.294	0	1
	Small roundtable discussion with officials and key stakeholders	COM-STRAT2	0.181	0	1
	Public roundtable with officials & press	COM-STRAT3	0.268	0	1
	Policy brief and letter to official	COM-STRAT4	0.369	0	1
	Presentation to officials; follow-up in press	COM-STRAT5	0.150	0	1
	Press conference & panel discussion	COM-STRAT6	0.152	0	1
	Work with media to influence gov't	COM-STRAT7	0.229	0	1

	Variable				
Hypothesis	**Definition**	**Short name**	**Mean value**	**Min value**	**Max value**
Environment					
Information sources used in making policy decisions, and perceived utility and frequency of use of alternative information sources, vary systematically with the level of development and political and economic liberalization.	Per capita GNI	GNI_CAP	1310.73	290	9980
Political freedom and quality of governance have a strong effect on quality of decision making and interest in research findings. Need to control for differences in these conditions to prevent bias estimates for other variables.	FH press freedom score[b]	FHpress	50.27	32	74
	FH political rights	FHpol	63.45	16.67	100
	FH civil liberties	FHcivil	59.76	16.67	83.33
	WGI-accountability	WGI-acct	-0.19	-1.02	0.48
	WGI-government effectiveness	WGI-effect	-0.43	-0.98	0.18
	Open Budget Index	OBI	46.60	5	67
Research quality					
Stronger quality control procedures result in higher quality analysis being presented to the policy community and the higher quality work is more effective in developing an organization's reputation and persuading policy makers.	Quality control policy is that reports to clients and policy memos to officials are always reviewed before being sent. Var=1, if PRO has a quality control policy and meets this standard	QC1	0.51	0	1
	Quality control system overall is rated as comprehensive and effective based on description given during interview. Var=1, if PRO has quality control policy meeting this standard	QC2	0.50	0	1

a. Second largest value for an organization is 10.
b. These are defined in Annex A.

To test for the possibility that pooling PCS-based success scores across countries affects the identification of success determinants we estimate models for two PRO populations: (a) all PROs across all countries, and (b) PROs in two individual countries (India and Uganda). Countries for the second analysis were selected balancing two considerations: (1) the presence of several PROs that were the subject of a PCS so that there would be sufficient diversity among them to avoid numerous dummy independent variables being omitted from the regression models because they have the same value for all PROs, and (2) a sufficiently large number of completed PCS interviews.

The unit of observation is a rating by a respondent for the PCS. The first sample includes all PCS responses across all participating organizations. So there are 507 observations for the analysis; for some models the number is smaller because not all respondents answered all questions. The second set of samples includes all the responses for two countries: for the Uganda case, there are four included PROs and 42 completed PCS questionnaires; for India there are four PROs and 59 questionnaires.

The independent variables used in the analysis are listed in Table 2. Those defined for a participating country have the same value for all PCS responses from the country in which the PRO is located. Models were estimated using the ordered logit procedure. The dependent variables used are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Questions Used in Constructing Dependent Variables for Policy Effectiveness Analysis

Variable	Short name	Rating			
		Very much	Somewhat well	Not much	Not at all
Is the organization a valuable source of research, data, and statistics?	RSCH	54.7	37.3	6.7	1.3
Are the organization's policy recommendations helpful?	POLREC	66.0	32.3	1.7	0.0
Does the organization's work positively impact public policy or administration?	PUBPOL	42.8	46.6	10.3	0.3
Does the organization have an influence on the budget making process in terms of openness, quality or equity of budget choices?	BUDGET	13.6	41.9	37.7	6.8
Does the organization have an impact in holding the government accountable for public expenditure quality, i.e., efficient and honest use of public resources?	ACCOUNT	27.8	45.9	23.8	2.5

STATISTICAL RESULTS

The cross-country regression models are presented first and then those for India and Uganda. Note that we ran many more models than what is presented here. The models presented were chosen for their predictive power, and the variables included in each model represent those that were most consistently significant.

Cross-Country Results

The results of the final ordered logit models for each of the five dependent variables are shown in Table 4. All models are highly statistically significant and have pseudo R-square values in the 0.2-0.3 range, as anticipated for models estimated with such micro data. We identified some relationships between perceived performance and PRO attributes.

The independent variables are listed in the table in the same order as they appear in the hypothesis list in Table 2. Interestingly, organizations that see themselves as heavily advocacy-oriented (ADVO1) are rated as 0.8 points less effective than others as a source of research (RSCH) and 0.5 points less than others in effectiveness in the budget process (BUDGET), after taking other factors into account, and both are significant. The distances between cutoff points[6] 2 and 3 are about 3 points and 2.5 points, respectively, in the RSCH and BUDGET models. This implies that ADVO1 has a substantial effect after controlling for other factors.

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[6] The models can be read as if they were typical OLS regression models estimating continuous dependent variables, Y*. The cutoff points provide estimated boundary points of the actual categorical dependent variable, Y. This is best described by example: in the model for RSCH in Table 4, observations with Y*<-3.188 have a predicted Y value of 1 (i.e. RSCH= Not at all); observations with -3.188<Y*<-0.915 will have a predicted Y of 2; those with -0.915<Y*<1.932 have a predicted Y of 3; and those with Y*>1.932 have a predicted Y of 4.

Table 4. Pooled Country Regression Results

Dependent Variables:	Coefficients				
	POLREC	**RSCH**	**PUBPOL**	**ACCOUNT**	**BUDGET**
Cutoff Points					
=1	a	-3.188***	-1.695*	-1.454***	-2.690***
=2	0.153	-0.915	1.136	0.928*	-0.278
=3	4.394***	1.932**	4.172***	3.343***	2.347***
Independent Variables:					
Mission					
ADVO1		-0.842***			-0.499**
Organization Focus					
GOV				-0.379*	
Respondent Focus					
KNOW1	0.939***	0.621***	0.644***	0.502**	0.437**
PRIORITY1	1.278***	1.007***	0.738***	0.835***	1.014***
PRIORITY2					
Capacity					
SIZE		-0.013***		0.002	-0.017***
PR	-0.05***			-0.177**	
Communications Strategy					
CONSULT	0.925***	0.709***	0.656***	0.46*	0.721***
COMMWELL	0.438	0.528**	0.889***	0.596**	0.061
EARLY	0.042				
COMTEAM	-1.166***				
Environment					
FHPRESS	0.052***	0.022*	0.033***	0.022**	-0.005
WGIeffect	-2.665***	-0.31	-0.909*		0.3
Research Quality					
QC2	0.232				
Summary Statistics					
Pseudo R-Square:					
Cox and Snell	0.301	0.244	0.237	0.224	0.200
Nagelkerke	0.381	0.288	0.274	0.246	0.221
-2 Log Likelihood	316.361	501.199	439.354	551.492	593.567
Chi-Square	129.433	118.493	119.723	90.167	85.214
Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	362	424	443	355	381
Mean of Dep. Var.	3.553	3.432	3.255	2.823	2.635

* $p < 0.1$
** $p < 0.05$
*** $p < 0.01$
a. There were no observations where POLREC=1, so a cutoff point cannot be computed.

Some of the most consistently significant variables with large coefficients are the dummy variables for respondents' ratings of their knowledge of an organization (KNOW1) and their view that the organization is working on high priority policy questions (PRIORITY1). Respondents give high ratings to organizations that they know well and that they think work on high priority issues; this makes sense because they would only invest in acquiring additional information on an organization that provided a good return on their effort. While knowledge of the organization and the rating of whether it is working on priority policy questions are logically related, they have independently significant effects in the models. Generally, the highest rating for PRIORITY1 increases the value of the dependent variable by about one full point after controlling for other factors, a substantial effect in light of the distance between the cutoff values. This result is consistent with Court and Young's (2006) analysis, which showed that policymaker demand is key to getting research used in the policy process: research on priority issues is more likely to be used than other findings.

The results for organizations' capacity as indicated by their staff size (SIZE) and the number of PR staff are generally contrary to expectations. In the two models where SIZE is significant, the coefficient is negative but small. This may signal that after some number of staff, controlling for other factors, organizations become less agile in the overall policy process—perhaps taking their influence somewhat for granted. It may also signal that as organizations grow the ability of a charismatic leader to substitute partially for management systems diminishes. Similarly, the negative coefficient values for PR were unexpected and indicate diminishing returns. The authors have seen multiple cases where a PRO's communications effectiveness was dramatically improved through hiring one PR professional; hiring the second may well have sharply lower, even negative returns.

On the other hand, the results for the variables in the "communications strategy" group are generally in line with expectations. Organizations given the highest rating for consulting with the public (CONSULT), including advocacy NGOs, are consistently rated as being more effective in policy arena. The coefficients for three dependent variables (POLREC, RSCH and BUDGET) range between 0.70 and 0.92, large given the distances between the cutoff points. Similarly, the highest rating of the quality of an organization's communicating its mission and findings has a significant and large impact on RSCH, PUBPOL, and ACCOUNT. Against this, the practices of formulating project-level communications strategies early in the project cycle (EARLY) and involving the relevant participants in the planning (COMTEAM) have no effect or actually a large, significant negative effect in one case (POLREC) that we cannot explain.

Organizations with strong quality control practices for their policy research products (QC2) are not perceived by the policy community to offer better policy recommendations, research products or otherwise to be more effective.

Lastly, some effects of the variation in the environment in which these organizations operate are captured by two independent variables—those for freedom of the press as rated by Freedom House (FHPRESS) and government effectiveness as scored in the World Governance Index (WGIeffect). Both of these variables are continuous, rather than the dummy variable specification used for most other variables in the models. FHPRESS, whose values for the included countries range from 32 to 74 on a scale from 0 to 100 with higher values indicating greater freedom, has significant effects in four of five models after controlling for other factors. In all cases, PROs are more effective where press freedom is rated as greater. WGIeffect measures the quality of (a) public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures; and (b) the quality of policy formulation. The scale is from -2.5 to 2.5 with higher values indicating stronger performance (see Annex). This variable has statistically significant effects in two models, POLREC and PUBPOL. In both cases the effect is negative. One interpretation of this finding is that as a government's abilities in policy formulation and program administration improve, the standard for PRO effectiveness is raised, i.e., it is more difficult for PROs to be rated as being major contributors in the policy research arena.

Hird's findings in a similar analysis for a class of U.S. PROs are somewhat different, possibly because there are important differences in variable definitions. His two primary independent variables were PRO capacity, measured by the number of policy analysts, and a "work typology" where a PRO's analysis was characterized by a three-level variable that ranged from "mostly descriptive work, with little or no in-depth analysis" to "significant on-going policy analysis capacity." Both variables had a consistent, highly significant positive relationship to various measures of strong performance as rated by legislators. SIZE in our analysis corresponds roughly to Hird's number-of-analysts variable, but they have opposite signs. On the other hand, ADVO1 signals weaker analysis and it has a consistently negative effect on performance ratings, in the same way that stronger analysis by U.S. PROs has a large positive effect.

In terms of the hypothesis stated earlier that respondents' ratings took into account the environment in which PROs operate in completing the questionnaire, the results suggest that this was not fully the case. Policy environment conditions do have important independent effects.

Within Country Results

Tables 5-7 present estimated ordered-logit models for India and Uganda. To facilitate comparisons, each of the three tables shows in three columns the results of the models estimated for sample PROs in all countries and for PROs only in India and only in Uganda.

Results are only presented for three of the five dependent variables defined earlier: ACCOUNT, BUDGET, and RSCH. These dependent variables were selected because their estimated models are stronger than for the other two variables, PUBPOL and POLREC, which were quite weak. In general the models for the individual countries are not as robust as the multi-country ones, presumably because of the much smaller sample sizes used to estimate them. The Uganda ACCOUNT model is only marginally significant, for example. On the other hand, however, the explanatory power of the single-country models is often greater than for the pooled models, particularly for BUDGET and RSCH.

Table 5. Estimated Models for ACCOUNT Using Pooled, India, and Uganda Samples

	Coefficients		
Sample	**Pooled**	**Uganda**	**India**
Dependent Variables:	ACCOUNT	ACCOUNT	ACCOUNT
Cutoff Points:			
=1	-1.454***	a	3.347
=2	0.928*	21.197***	5.001**
=3	3.343***	23.087***	10.009***
Independent Variables:			
Mission			
ADVO1		2.173	2.455*
Organization Focus			
GOV	-0.379*	1.766**	
Respondent Focus			
POS1			4.032*
POS2			1.355
POS4			-0.368
POS5			-1.021
KNOW1	0.502**	18.539***	3.394**
KNOW2		17.993	2.651*
PRIORITY1	0.835***		
Capacity			
AGE1			0.228**
SIZE	0.002		-0.001
PR	-0.177**		
Communications Strategy			
CONSULT	0.46*		
COMMWELL	0.596**		0.721
Environment			
FHPRESS	0.022**		
Summary Statistics			
Pseudo R-Square:			
Cox and Snell	0.224	0.239	0.367
Nagelkerke	0.246	0.274	0.421
-2 Log Likelihood	551.492	21.182	46.566
Chi-Square	90.167	7.637	17.839
Sig.	0.000	0.106	0.058
N	355	28	39
Mean of Dep. Var.	2.823	2.679	2.692

* p<0.1
** p<0.05
*** p<0.01
a. There were no observations where ACCOUNT=1, so a cutoff point cannot be computed.

Table 6. Estimated Models for BUDGET Using Pooled, India, and Uganda Samples

Sample	Pooled	Uganda	India
	Coefficients		
Dependent Variables:	BUDGET	BUDGET	BUDGET
Cutoff Points:			
=1	-2.690***	-23.763***	-2.009***
=2	-0.278	-20.188***	.457
=3	2.347***	-13.917**	3.907***
Independent Variables:			
Mission			
ADVO1	-0.499**	-12.854***	
Respondent Focus			
KNOW1	0.437**		-1.000
KNOW2			
PRIORITY1	1.014***	4.580***	1.220*
Capacity			
AGE1		1.609**	
SIZE	-0.017***	-1.979**	
Communications Strategy			
CONSULT	0.721***		2.242**
COMMWELL	0.061		0.360
Environment			
FHPRESS	-0.005		
WGIeffect	0.3		
Summary Statistics			
Pseudo R-Square:			
Cox and Snell	0.2	0.429	0.304
Nagelkerke	0.221	0.497	0.338
-2 Log Likelihood	593.567	19.144	40.555
Chi-Square	85.214	21.823	13.793
Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.008
N	381	39	38
Mean of Dep. Var.	2.635	2.513	2.632

* $p<0.1$
** $p<0.05$
*** $p<0.01$

Table 7. Estimated Models for RSCH Using Pooled, India, and Uganda Samples

	Coefficients		
Sample	**Pooled**	**Uganda**	**India**
Dependent Variables:	RSCH	RSCH	RSCH
Cutoff Points:			
=1	-3.188***	a	-9.059***
=2	-0.915	-17.909	-6.300***
=3	1.932**	-13.865	-2.442
Independent Variables:			
Mission			
ADVO1	-0.842***		
Respondent Focus			
POS1			4.476**
POS2			3.012**
POS4			2.128**
POS5			3.505
KNOW1	0.621***	0.131	1.793
KNOW2			0.331
PRIORITY1	1.007***	2.566**	
Capacity			
AGE1		-1.780	-0.265***
SIZE	-0.013***		-0.055***
Communications Strategy			
CONSULT	0.709***		2.444**
COMMWELL	0.528**	2.158**	2.566*
COMTEAM			-2.439*
COMSTRAT1		14.108*	
COMSTRAT2		14.102*	
Environment			
FHPRESS	0.022*		
WGIeffect	-0.31		
Summary Statistics			
Pseudo R-Square:			
Cox and Snell	0.244	0.477	0.540
Nagelkerke	0.288	0.576	0.613
-2 Log Likelihood	501.199	35.091	49.742
Chi-Square	118.493	25.938	33.367
Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	424	40	43
Mean of Dep. Var.	3.432	3.500	3.279

* $p<0.1$
** $p<0.05$
*** $p<0.01$
a. There were no observations where RSCH=1, so a cutoff point cannot be computed.

Considering the results for ACCOUNT first, one sees differences between the country and pooled models as well as similarities. Several differences stand out:

- A PRO with a strong advocacy orientation (ADVO1) is more likely to be effective in holding government accountable in the Indian model, perhaps because of India's lively media. This is not the case for the pooled results.
- In Uganda, PROs that focus on working with government officials (GOV) are more effective than others, while in the pooled results those working with such officials are viewed as less effective.
- In India, older PROs are rated as more effective, holding other factors constant, presumably because they have had more time to build policy networks.
- Somewhat surprisingly, the communications variables constructed from respondents' high ratings of a PRO consulting with the public (CONSULT) and communicating its activities, mission and findings (COMMWELL) are not significant in the single country models but are in the pooled models. One explanation is that within these two countries, as with many transition and developing countries, holding government accountable may be more effectively done quietly than through mobilization of interested parties.

There is one strong similarity in the results between the pooled and individual countries: How well respondents know an organization (KNOW1, KNOW2) powerfully affects a PRO's ratings. As stated earlier, presumably respondents are only investing their time in learning about a PRO if they think it produces useful information and analyses.

Turning now to PROs' effectiveness in the budget process (BUDGET), one is struck by the differences between results for the two countries as well as differences with the pooled model results. In both the pooled and Uganda models, advocacy-oriented organizations (ADVO2) are rated as significantly less effective than more research-oriented PROs; the quantitative effect in Uganda is very large; in terms of the distance between the cutoff values the effect is large enough to drop an organization from the third to the first cutoff point. There is no consistent effect in India after controlling for other factors.

In Uganda two PRO attributes—age and size—are significant and have very large coefficients. While longer established PROs are rated as more effective in the budget process, larger ones are rated as significantly less effective. This result suggests that as organizations become particularly large, they take on other roles and responsibilities that lessen their effectiveness in this area where detailed analysis is often very important. In contrast to this pattern, consulting

widely with the public (CONSULT) increases effectiveness in India. The only factor where the results are consistently significant across all three models is that PROs rated highly for working on the most policy relevant topics are effective in the budget process

The results of the models for ratings of the value of a PRO's research (RSCH) are quite robust and the models differ substantially from each other. For example, in the pooled model strongly advocacy-oriented PROs were significantly more effective; this is not consistently a factor in Uganda and India, after controlling for other factors.

In the Indian results, effectiveness ratings depend on the position of the rater (POS1 to POS5): national government officials, senior advisors to them, and MPs all give higher ratings than others to the usefulness of PRO-produced research. This may well reflect careful targeting of research results to individuals in these positions. Also, institution age and size are both highly significant in this model. In this case, as opposed to the results for BUDGET, both variables have negative effects, suggesting older and bigger organizations are less agile and perhaps less committed to effectively delivering research results to the policy community.

Several communications variables are significant in each of the three models. The variable indicating PRO success in communicating its activities and findings (COMWELL) is significant and positive in all three. Being viewed as effectively consulting with the public (CONSULT) is significant in the cross-country and India models. In the Uganda model, two variables indicating PROs' strong use of meetings with senior officials to advance policy ideas (COMSTRAT1, COMSTRAT2) have very large effects. Although these variables are only marginally significant, they suggest that in Uganda policy influence is generally more of an "insiders' game" than in India.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses one methodological issue and then compares the findings presented above with those from the research-to-policy literature.

An obvious issue is the selection of PCS respondents by the PROs they are asked to comment upon. There is a strong temptation to select respondents whom the PRO believes view its work favorably. As shown in Table 2, there was substantial variance among responses; so the "favorable selection effect" may have been to shift the whole distribution upward rather than skew it toward highly positive responses. Another possibility is that only some PROs were biased in respondent selection. The mixing of responses about the two types PROs could significantly affect the estimated model results. At this point we have no way of identifying any biases. We are beginning a new monitoring project where a third

party in each country will identify respondents for some of the same PROs, and we should be able to contrast the results.

How do the results of analyzing perceived PRO success on several dimensions of policy participation compare with findings from the research-to-policy literature? For some areas included by Court and Young (2006), the data set used in this study does not contain parallel information. These include what they label as the "political process," e.g., high level political commitment, international interactions, and the importance of donors. The results referred to below are for the cross-country models.

The political environment in which PROs operate, meaning being able to gather evidence freely and to assess and communicate results openly, was found by both studies to have a strong influence on policy adoption and a PRO's perceived success.

Court and Young also found "credibility and communication" to be important. More specifically they state that relevance, credibility, and provision of solutions are key dimensions (p.450). The results presented above are highly consistent with this point. Relevance is associated with the PRO working on priority issues (PRIORITY1) and credibility with how well the respondent knows an organization (KNOW1), with the assumption being that people invest time in learning more about an organization if they think it is producing good work. Research quality is a positive factor, especially when it conveys results of pilot projects, in the research-to-policy findings. Our analysis used the strength of quality control procedures (QC) as a proxy for quality; and it was consistently insignificant, possibly due to measurement error.

The research-to-policy results also show that ongoing PRO dialog with policymakers and collaborating with networks and policy communities are important factors for policy adoption. In our analysis the corresponding variables are for consulting with the public on policy issues (CONSULT) and having a strong reputation for communicating its activities and findings (COMMWELL). Both of these variables are consistently and highly significant.

Regarding communications, Court and Young find that policymaker uptake of recommendations is more likely if "there has been a clear communications strategy throughout the research process" and "how the research is transmitted and packaged to make it palatable to policy makers" (p. 452). In contrast, in our analysis the statistical results for variables on when and how communications strategies were developed were consistently insignificant, possibly because of differences in accepted communications practices across countries. In Ghana, for example, PROs use the media to pressure policymakers and get their attention, whereas in many other countries small meetings with senior policymakers are often viewed as a very effective approach to informing and influencing them.

In sum, there is substantial but far from universal general correspondence between the findings of the research-to-policy analysis and the determinants-of-success analysis presented here.

CONCLUSIONS

The principal finding of this work is that it is possible to establish significant statistical relationships between measures of PRO performance, attributes, and conditions in the policy markets where they operate. The specific factors associated with a PRO's strong rating by members of the policy community depend on the dimension of performance being addressed and which country or group of countries' PROs are being analyzed. This is as one might anticipate, i.e., attributes that garner strong ratings for research usefulness may well not be those that are effective in holding government accountable. A clear example is whether a PRO defines itself as being much more concerned with advocacy than with research. In the two models estimated with data pooled from many countries where the variable is significant, the effect is negative. But in the Uganda and India models the findings are more mixed, e.g., having a strong advocacy orientation has a significantly positive effect in India in holding government accountable for public expenditure quality. Hence, broad generalizations on what makes an effective policy research organization may be inaccurate for a specific country.

The exploratory nature of this analysis is stressed, the ability to establish some relationships notwithstanding. Both sides of many of the hypotheses outlined in Table 2 have strong proponents. Additional analysis of larger, especially single country, data sets may yet provide a clearer answer to the question posed in the title of this article.

ANNEX A. GOVERNANCE INDEX DEFINITIONS

Freedom House: Freedom in the World. This index is based on categories drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It provides a rating from 1-7 with 1 representing the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest level of freedom. Regional experts use a broad range of sources of information—including foreign and domestic news reports, academic analyses, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, individual professional contacts, and visits to the region to provide ratings for a checklist of 10 political rights questions and 15 civil liberties questions. For the purposes of analysis, the rating was flipped and adjusted to 0-100, with 100 representing the highest degree of freedom.

Political Rights sub-score measures the ability to:

- Participate freely in the political process;

- Vote freely in legitimate elections;

- Have representatives that are accountable to them;

Civil Liberties sub-score measures the ability to:

- Exercise freedoms of expression and belief;

- Be able to freely assemble and associate;

- Have access to an established and equitable system of rule of law;

- Have social and economic freedoms, including equal access to economic opportunities and the right to hold private property.

Source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15
Data source : http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2009

Freedom House: Freedom of the Press This index is based on article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Countries are given a total score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of a set of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories of: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. Regional experts reach their conclusions after gathering information from professional contacts in a variety of countries, staff and consultant travel, international visitors, the findings of human rights and press freedom organizations, specialists in geographic and geopolitical areas, the reports of governments and multilateral bodies, and a variety of domestic and international news media. For the purposes of analysis, the rating was flipped so that 100 represents the highest degree of freedom.

Source:
http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=350&ana_page=348&year=20
08
Data Source : http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=470

World Wide Governance Indices These indices consist of an aggregation of a data sources drawn from a diverse variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. These sources are

aggregated to provide a rating of -2.5 to 2.5 and countries' percentile ranking is provided for easy comparison.

Voice and Accountability: measures the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

Government Effectiveness: measures the quality of public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures; and the quality of policy formulation.

Source: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp
Data source: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_country.asp

Open Budget Index This index measures public access to budget information. Civil society researchers rate countries on 91 questions; 58 of these questions focus on the public availability and comprehensiveness of the Executive's Budget Proposal. Each of the answers to the questions is given a score from 0-100 and all the answers are averaged to produce the final rating. The index was first compiled in 2006 and a second round of research was completed for the 2008 index. Two more rounds of research are expected for a 2010 and 2012 index.

Source: http://openbudgetindex.org/files/MethodologyEN.pdf
Data Source : http://openbudgetindex.org/files/Rankings2008-Revised.pdf

ANNEX B. COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS

Ghana	Uganda	Guatemala
India	Kenya	Tanzania
Indonesia	Peru	Cameroon
Pakistan	Zambia	Nepal
Nigeria	Malawi	Philippines
Bangladesh	Armenia	Argentina
Mexico		

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