

## 20     **ADVOCACY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

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PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS, FORMAL AND INFORMAL, always have played an integral role in social change. In the United States, recognition of the power of private organizations to advocate for causes and shape public policy informed the establishment of the Republic itself. In Federalist Paper number 10, written in 1787, James Madison defended the proposed regulatory framework of the Constitution as a safeguard against private organizations acting as “mischiefs of faction” that could undermine democratic governance (Cohen and Rogers 1992). Respect for personal liberty and freedom of association nevertheless limited federal restrictions on such organizations, and in his 1835 book *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville emphasized that private organizations also could serve as bulwarks against the “tyranny of the majority.” Whether viewed as supporting or weakening democracy, private organizations clearly could exert considerable influence in the nascent democratic polity. Echoes of these competing perspectives persist in the contemporary context. Questions associated with how, when, and why private organizations shape social change have generated an extensive body of empirical research across multiple disciplines. The expansive breadth of studies on this topic makes it difficult to establish boundaries for a review of the literature (Jenkins 1987, 2006; Burstein 1998; Andrews and Edwards 2004).

The challenge of synthesis is compounded by the presence of a relatively separate body of work on the influence of private organizations on public (civic and political) engagement (Campbell 2008; Grønbjerg and Prakash 2017). In addition to spurring change directly, some private organizations contribute to social transformations indirectly by fostering commitment to community activism and broader public policy reform (Han 2016). The tendency of individuals to form and become members of voluntary associations was a

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central focus of Tocqueville's authoritative investigation into democracy in early America, a pattern so extensive and noteworthy that the United States became characterized as a "Nation of Joiners" (Schlesinger 1944). These foundational observations inspired substantial academic inquiry, demonstrating that membership organizations often model democratic processes and participatory practices (Clemens 2006). Besides reinforcing democracy by acting as "laboratories for citizenship," many membership organizations also mediate the relationship between individuals and their government by driving political engagement (Han 2016; Minkoff 2016). Much like the scholarship on direct social change activity by private organizations, questions about how, when, and why these groups foster public engagement have generated long-standing, multidisciplinary lines of research (Knoke 1986; McFarland 2010; Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005).

Drawing on both of these domains of academic inquiry, for the purposes of the chapters on advocacy in this book, organizational advocacy is defined as "public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change that, if implemented, would conflict with the social, cultural political, or economic interests or values of other constituencies or groups" (Andrews and Edwards 2004:481). This chapter specifically examines the social change activity of organizations that are formally chartered as tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations—that is, service-providing public charities (Burstein 1998; Andrews and Edwards 2004; Jenkins 2006; Hojnacki et al. 2012; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). These organizations have received comparatively little attention in the literature on organizational advocacy, presumably because they are perceived as having limited influence on public policy. Nonprofits that explicitly prioritize social change activity must incorporate under other designations such as 501(c)(4) (social welfare organizations), 501(c)(5) (labor unions), 501(c)(6) (business leagues and chambers of commerce), or 527 (political groups). Given that the primary purpose of public charities must be service provision—not advocacy—what justifies a focus on their social change activity?

I argue that advocacy is developing into a core component of the tactical repertoire of 501(c)(3) public charities and becoming a legitimate tool or strategy for pursuing mission in the nonprofit sector (Avner 2010; Crutchfield and Grant 2012; Fyall 2016a, 2016b; Suárez and Esparza 2017; Hwang and Suárez 2019). In addition, I suggest that public charities are increasingly well positioned to blend organizational advocacy with civic engagement, a dynamic and powerful approach for achieving social change (Marwell 2004, 2007; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Han 2014; Levine 2016). Finally, although many studies find that organizational characteristics influence advocacy outcomes, the topic has not been explored systematically (Salamon 2002a; Child and Grønbyerg 2007; Suárez and Hwang 2008; Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Guo and Saxton 2010; Mosley 2010; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Han and Argyle 2016; Lu 2018a, 2018b). As a means of facilitating such an undertaking, this chapter presents a novel theoretical framework for investigating advocacy by charitable nonprofits. The framework specifies five aspects of public charities that, in addition to institutional context, inform advocacy outcomes: external operational environment, managerialism, collaboration and relational embeddedness, funding model, and mission and organizational field.

In order to develop the main arguments, the following section situates the roles and activities of social change organizations in historical and legal context. Besides documenting

key regulatory changes that have shaped the historical trajectory of advocacy organizations in the United States, the section highlights three trends that inform advocacy by public charities today: the transformation of public engagement, the advocacy group explosion, and the tremendous growth of public sector contracting and collaboration (Berry 1977, 1999; Clemens 1993, 1997; Smith and Lipsky 1993; Grønbjerg and Salamon 2002; Minkoff 2002; Skocpol 2003; Frumkin 2005; Hwang and Powell 2009; Bromley and Meyer 2017). Building on these observations, the next section develops the arguments and elaborates the conceptual frame. The focus of the framework is on the inputs or independent variables (organizational characteristics and features of the organizational environment) that shape advocacy outcomes. The concluding section attends to the opportunities and challenges associated with investigating those advocacy outcomes.

### **The Contemporary Landscape for Nonprofit Advocacy**

The current conditions of U.S. nonprofit advocacy have their roots in the early republic. A striking feature of the United States in the nineteenth century was its large number of voluntary associations (Tocqueville [1835] 1969). Although active associations during the colonial period were primarily religious organizations, the number of other voluntary groups grew rapidly after independence was declared—most notably in the period following the Civil War (Schlesinger 1944). Many of these groups were established in response to local needs or unique community conditions, yet associations grew at least as rapidly in rural areas as in urban areas, and much of the increase was attributable to the expansion of membership federations that drew on the Constitution as a model for their structure (Gamm and Putnam 1999; Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson 2000; Hall 2006). These patterns indicate that growth in associations was influenced not only by modernization and demographic pressures from urbanization and immigration but also by the consolidation of the nation-state and the growth of the federal government, such as the establishment of the U.S. Post Office (Weir and Ganz 1997; Gamm and Putnam 1999; Skocpol et al. 2000; Crowley and Skocpol 2001).

Though not all early associations were active in promoting social change, they are relevant for understanding contemporary advocacy organizations because they provided citizens “with their greatest school of self-government,” according to Schlesinger (1944), who noted that citizens “have been trained from youth to take common counsel, choose leaders, harmonize differences, and obey the expressed will of the majority. In mastering the associative way they have mastered the democratic way” (Schlesinger 1944:24). The growth of associations began to plateau around 1940, an important shift given their important role in political socialization (Verba and Nie 1972; Gamm and Putnam 1999). The dwindling number of individual memberships and interpersonal interactions in associations since the 1960s marks another significant recent change, signaling a broader transformation away from involvement in associations and a weakening of traditional forms of public engagement (Putnam 1995, 2000; Gamm and Putnam 1999; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Skocpol 2003, 2004).

Despite the historical significance of membership associations as venues and vehicles for civic and political participation, the transformation of public engagement is relevant for understanding current organizational advocacy dynamics because declining

participation in associations suggests that these groups have become less central as social change actors. The transformation of public engagement, however, is not just a simple story of decline and decay; at least some evidence suggests that new forms of participation have emerged (Paxton 1999; Guo and Saxton 2014). Although public engagement (as well as typical measures of social capital) does seem to be diminishing overall, the means by which individuals participate—for instance, through social media campaigns and other “virtual” modalities promoted by many types of organizations—have not remained static over time. Furthermore, for-profit organizations have started to become more adept at, and interested in, building support for their causes by outsourcing public engagement initiatives to consulting firms (Walker 2014). Undoubtedly very different from conventional participation in associations, efforts of this nature nevertheless do constitute public engagement, further shaping the present landscape for nonprofit advocacy.

The same period that saw decreased individual participation in associations and the emergence of new forms of public engagement also marked the beginning of an advocacy group “explosion” (Berry 1977; J. Walker 1991; Clemens 1993; Minkoff 1994, 1999, 2002; Strolovich 2007). The civil rights movement, which contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and many other reforms, spurred the dramatic growth of advocacy organizations. Many of the advocacy organizations that emerged during this time were informal social movement groups that mobilized people for protests and demonstrations in support of civil rights, but others were formal nonprofits that relied entirely on professional staff to achieve their missions (Berry 1977, 1999; McFarland 1984; Jenkins and Eckert 1986; Staggenborg 1988). Unlike participation in social movement groups or membership associations that promote public engagement, participation in these new public interest groups often was achieved exclusively through financial donations—critiqued as “check-book advocacy” (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Skocpol 2003, 2004).

The advocacy group explosion that began decades ago is consequential for understanding current organizational advocacy dynamics not only because it contributed to the current number and variety of advocacy groups but also because this phenomenon initiated the dramatic rise of professionally staffed rather than member-driven advocacy organizations. These staff-focused citizen lobbies have not necessarily replaced membership groups, nor is the field of advocacy limited to these two basic types of organizations, yet professional groups that represent public interests have become increasingly visible and consequential players in policy reform (Berry 1977, 1999; Skocpol 2003; Minkoff, Aisenbrey, and Agnone 2008; Walker, McCarthy, and Baumgartner 2011). Moreover, the dramatic expansion of advocacy organizations that began during the civil rights era contributed to the legitimization of advocacy among identity-based charities (e.g., women, ethnic and racial minority groups) (Clemens 1993; Minkoff 1994, 2002). These groups, which had focused on service provision before the 1960s, began to integrate advocacy into their organizational repertoire during this period. Additionally, many social movement organizations incorporated formally as charitable nonprofits while maintaining their interest in policy reform, indicating that this nascent blending of services and advocacy was not driven entirely by identity-based charities (Edwards 1994; Cress 1997).

These integrative developments are surprising when viewed in light of the long-standing and divisive regulatory debates concerning political activity by charitable nonprofits. For

example, tax-exempt status for Margaret Sanger's American Birth Control League was denied in 1930 based on the argument that providing a tax break for an organization lobbying the legislature for greater access to birth control constituted a public subsidy for political advocacy (Jenkins 2006). Because of lack of consensus, limitations on charities' advocacy were not defined precisely even after the establishment of the 501(c) designation in 1954 (Hall 1992, 2006; Reid 1999; Boris and Krehely 2002; Jenkins 1987, 2006). During the 1950s and the 1960s, organizations such as the NAACP and the Sierra Club were deemed excessively political and had their status as public charities revoked; they were forced to become 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations (Berry and Arons 2003; Jenkins 1987, 2006). These enforcement actions by the federal government had their legal basis in an undefined "substantial expenditure test" for lobbying, to which all charitable nonprofits were subject until the Tax Reform Act of 1976. Even today, this vague regulation is the default test for 501(c)(3) status upon incorporation (see Table 20.1 for a brief overview of advocacy regulations for 501(c)(3), 501(c)(3)-PF, 501(c)(4), and 527 nonprofits).

The growth of public sector contracting also informs the current environment for advocacy by charitable nonprofits (Frumkin 2005; Marwell 2004, 2007, 2010; Barman 2006; Hwang and Powell 2009; MacIndoe 2010; Mosley 2012; Levine 2016). The public sector in the United States has a long history of contracting with nonprofits and participating in other types of public-private partnerships. The triumph of neoliberalism and New Public Management during the 1980s led to extensive decentralization and devolution of government—to the point that some scholars began to describe the federal government as a "hollow state" (Smith and Lipsky 1993; Salamon 1995; Kettl 1997; Milward and Provan 2000; Grønbjerg and Salamon 2002). Much of the initial research on government contracting anticipated that public sector revenue would dampen nonprofit advocacy because it was assumed that contracted organizations would not want to "bite the hand that feeds" (Smith and Lipsky 1993; Berry and Arons 2003).

Contrary to expectations, most studies instead find a positive relationship between government contracting with nonprofits and nonprofit advocacy for social change (Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004; Leech 2006; Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2012; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Lu 2018a). Rather than "buying silence" from nonprofits through co-optation and resource dependence, greater government funding has brought nonprofits into regular contact with government, providing public charities with opportunities to advocate for greater resources, establish patronage relationships with elected officials, and act as nonelected neighborhood representatives (Marwell 2004, 2007, 2010; Kelleher and Yackee 2009; Mosley 2012; Levine 2016). Meanwhile, the earlier emphasis on "arm's length" or transactional contracts in public management has declined, giving way to networks of service provision and collaborative forms of governance as strategies for mitigating intractable social problems (Ansell and Gash 2008; Osborne 2010; Suárez 2011; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2015). These collaborative arrangements have provided new channels for nonprofits to engage with public agencies, often complementing the opportunities provided by contractual ties (Mosley 2010, 2011; Fyall 2016a, 2016b; Suárez and Esparza 2017). Like the transformation of public engagement and the advocacy group explosion, public management reform clearly is relevant to the contemporary context for nonprofit advocacy.

**Table 20.1** Advocacy-relevant federal regulations: 501(c)(3), 501(c)(3)-PF, 501(c)(4), and 527 nonprofits\*

|                           | <i>501(c)(3)<br/>Public charities</i>                                                                                           | <i>501(c)(3)-PF<br/>Private foundations</i>                                                                                           | <i>501(c)(4)<br/>Social welfare organizations</i>                                    | <i>527<br/>Political Organizations</i>                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tax status                | Tax-exempt; contributions are tax-deductible                                                                                    | Tax-exempt; contributions are tax-deductible                                                                                          | Tax-exempt; contributions are not tax-deductible                                     | Tax-exempt; contributions are not tax-deductible                                                                           |
| Disclosure of donors      | No                                                                                                                              | Yes                                                                                                                                   | No                                                                                   | Yes                                                                                                                        |
| Lobbying activities       | Permitted, as long as expenditures are “insubstantial”; (h) electors have more clearly defined expenditure limits               | Prohibited, though grants for general operating support may be used for lobbying                                                      | Permitted, no limit on expenditures                                                  | Permitted, as long as expenditures are “insubstantial”; may be taxable if not furthering political purposes                |
| Political activities      | Prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities; nonpartisan voter registration is permitted                          | Prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities; grantmaking for nonpartisan voter registration is restricted but permitted | Permitted, but must be secondary activity (generally less than half of expenditures) | Permitted, no limit on expenditures                                                                                        |
| Other advocacy activities | Unlimited mission-related public education, policy research, litigation, rulemaking, community mobilization and/or organization | Unlimited, may engage in all (non-lobbying) activities permitted for a 501(c)(3)                                                      | Unlimited, may engage in all activities permitted for a 501(c)(3)                    | Limited, may engage in all activities permitted for a 501(c)(3)—for influencing the outcomes of elections to public office |
| Advocacy targets          | Government, business (for-profit), nonprofit                                                                                    | Government, business (for-profit), nonprofit                                                                                          | Government, business (for-profit), nonprofit                                         | Government                                                                                                                 |

Note: This table should not be treated as a substitute for legal advice.

\* Regulations for 501(c)(5) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits most closely resemble those of 501(c)(4) nonprofits.

Sources: Reid 1999; Avner 2010; Lyon 2014; Alliance for Justice 2015; Schadler 2018.

In summary, three key trends or processes have played a critical role in shaping the nonprofit advocacy landscape: the transformation of public engagement, the advocacy group explosion, and the growth of public sector contracting and collaboration. In the section that follows, I link this overview to the main arguments and present a conceptual frame for future research examining advocacy among charitable nonprofits.

### **Service-Providing (Charitable) Nonprofits as Advocates**

In this section, I argue that advocacy is becoming a legitimate component of the toolkit that charitable nonprofits use to pursue mission. I further suggest that opportunities are growing for public charities to blend organizational advocacy with civic engagement. These conclusions run counter to some scholarly expectations; many studies indicate that service-providing nonprofits are reluctant to engage in advocacy (Boris and Krehely 2002; Berry and Arons 2003; Bass et al. 2007; Avner 2010). Considerable evidence demonstrates that few charitable nonprofits lobby, even though it is legal for them to do so. Because many nonprofit leaders are uncertain about restrictions, they eschew advocacy altogether in order to avoid jeopardizing their organizations' tax-exempt status (Reid 1999; Berry 2005; Bass et al. 2007; Suárez and Hwang 2008; Mosley 2013). Despite their reluctance to lobby and clear restrictions against electioneering (endorsing or aiding candidates for elective office), there are some indications that nonprofit advocacy is becoming increasingly prevalent.

As noted earlier, many identity-based public charities began to engage in advocacy during the civil rights movement. Moreover, incorporating social change activity into their repertoire bolstered the likelihood of organizational survival (Clemens 1993, 1997; Minkoff 1994, 1999, 2002). Although there is not yet longitudinal research exploring the extent to which the blending of services and advocacy has expanded beyond identity-based nonprofits, cross-sectional studies and research focused on specific fields (i.e., civil/human rights, environment, human services) indicate that involvement in some form of advocacy is now rather common (Sampson et al. 2005; Child and Grønberg 2007; Leroux 2007, 2009, 2011; Kelleher and Yackee 2009; Nicholson-Crotty 2007, 2011; MacIndoe and Whalen 2013; Fyall 2016a, 2016b; Hwang and Suárez 2019). Moreover, the body of research on public sector contracting and collaboration shows that (a) interdependence between government and nonprofits continues to grow and (b) as discussed in the previous section, this interdependence facilitates and even spurs advocacy (Chaves et al. 2004; Mosley 2012; Pekkanen, Smith, and Tsujinaka 2014; Suárez and Esparza 2017; Lu 2018b). These findings suggest that advocacy expands in fields with public–nonprofit ties—and because public agencies interact regularly with public charities in a broad array of fields (i.e., education, health, human services), the opportunities for this expansion are many and varied.

The argument that nonprofit advocacy is becoming more pervasive is also strengthened by recent research on a related but unique type of nonprofit organization—philanthropic foundations (see Reckhow, Chapter 8, “Politics, Philanthropy, and Inequality”). Private foundations, which are public charities whose primary purpose is to distribute grants to nonprofits, have a distinctive designation that prohibits any lobbying or electioneering (501(c)(3)-PF). Even though foundations are permitted to provide grants for advocacy, and although they can engage in advocacy directly as long as they do not support or

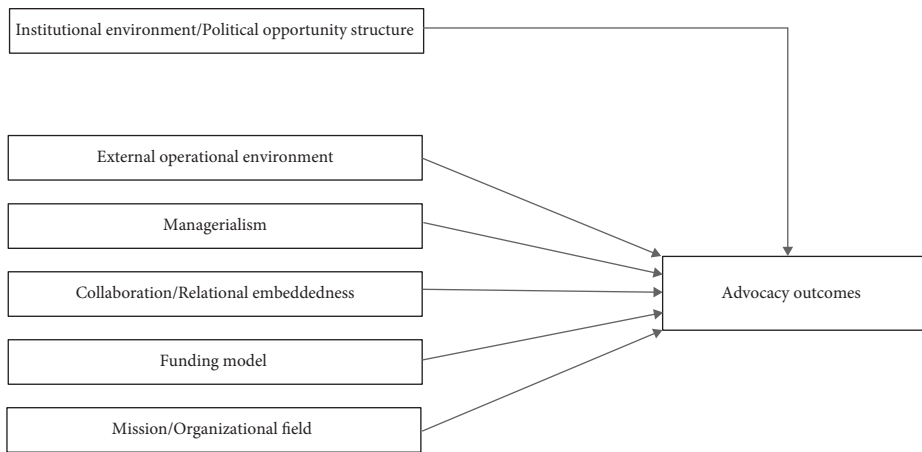
oppose legislation, considerable evidence indicates that philanthropic institutions historically have had just modest involvement in policy activity (Jenkins and Eckert 1986; Jenkins 1987, 1998; Suárez 2012). Nevertheless, recent evidence suggests that foundations have become emboldened in their social change agendas, acting as institutional entrepreneurs by using their voices and philanthropic resources to pursue policy reform (Rich 2004; Bartley 2007; Reckhow 2013; Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, and Meyerson 2014; Goss 2016; Tompkins-Stange 2016; Suárez, Husted, and Casas 2018). Given that philanthropic institutions face greater restrictions on advocacy than the public charities they support, their growing willingness to pursue social change sends a strong positive signal to other nonprofits about the legitimacy of the activity.

In light of these emerging trends, it appears that although many public charities have been reluctant to embrace advocacy, this pattern is shifting toward greater social change engagement. There are also indications that public charities are increasingly well positioned to blend direct organizational advocacy with political forms of public engagement—a trend that could have important implications for the power of service-providing nonprofits to influence social change (Marwell 2004; Han 2014; Han and Argyle 2016; Levine 2016). Although individual involvement in civic groups and membership in associations are declining in the United States, many conventional service-providing nonprofits promote public engagement (Putnam 1995; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Skocpol 2003; Campbell 2008). Often, the types of public engagement these public charities encourage are non-political, such as volunteering, and those that do promote activism undoubtedly differ in their effectiveness (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005; Guo and Musso 2007; Baggetta 2009; Lichterman and Eliasoph 2014; Minkoff 2016; Longhofer, Negro, and Roberts 2018). Nevertheless, a growing body of research finds that common civic events like festivals, fund-raisers, and efforts to clean up or restore local landmarks (such as parks) increasingly incorporate social change elements—or “blended social action” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; McAdam et al. 2005; Sampson et al. 2005).

The implication of these findings is that many public charities no longer draw sharp distinctions among different forms of public engagement. Increasingly, nonprofits that foster nonpolitical civic participation are extending those activities in political directions. Service-providing nonprofits have thus become a locus of collective social change activity, and public sector reforms may enable these organizations to leverage their public engagement for policy influence. In other words, the growth of public sector contracting and public–private collaboration provides avenues for service-providing nonprofits to exert direct policy influence, and these reforms also reinforce the potential for public engagement to serve as a tool for indirect policy change. As an example, Nicole P. Marwell (2004, 2007, 2010) demonstrates that some public charities have developed “reliable voting constituencies” for elected officials by mobilizing their stakeholders to support candidates that protect their services—which the elected officials then reward with ongoing public sector funding for those nonprofits. As the breadth and depth of the public services that charities provide has expanded in this era of public sector devolution, some public charities have even superseded elected politicians as representatives of their communities, granting them considerable informal authority over the distribution of public resources and input into policy (Levine 2016).

A recent review of the literature on civic engagement concluded that a key to strengthening the influence of public participation is to “invest in organizations, and focus especially on organizations that a) can link authentic grassroots power with elite lobbying relationships, and b) have strategic capacities” (Han and Argyle 2016:5). Public charities, which are constrained by vague yet persistent lobbying regulations, face far greater obstacles in developing “elite lobbying relationships” than corporations or social welfare groups (i.e., AARP, Planned Parenthood). Nevertheless, the transformation of public engagement has led some service-providing nonprofits to develop their grassroots power and strategic capacities, not only by becoming more active in policy engagement but also by investing in new technologies (like social media) as a means to pursue change (Guo and Saxton 2014). Just as important, contemporary approaches to public management have created novel opportunities for nonprofits to combine organizational advocacy with public engagement in the pursuit of social change (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012; Lyon 2014; E. Walker 2014). Taken together, these observations suggest that nonprofit advocacy is becoming more prevalent among public charities, but no systematic evidence exists to support or refute this argument or to examine whether nonprofits are becoming more influential as social change actors.

A conceptual framework is therefore needed to test these arguments, demonstrate change in the sector over time, and explain variation in social change activity among nonprofits. The discussion of the contemporary landscape for nonprofit advocacy established the current institutional environment and political opportunity structure that public charities face in pursuing their missions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). This landscape can change over time, becoming more or less favorable for nonprofit social change activity. This landscape is not the only consequential context for public charities, however. The conceptual frame I propose, presented visually in simplified form in Figure 20.1, prioritizes five aspects or dimensions of public charities that, besides institutional context, inform advocacy outcomes: the external operational



**Figure 20.1** Conceptual framework for the drivers and determinants of nonprofit advocacy

environment, managerialism (professionalization and rationalization), collaboration and relational embeddedness, funding model, and mission and organizational field. These five elements are presented here as the key drivers and determinants of nonprofit advocacy; however, which factors are most salient in a particular situation likely depends on the advocacy outcomes under consideration. Although the concluding section attends to some of the advocacy outcomes that merit greater research attention, the following section concentrates primarily on the inputs or independent variables that matter for advocacy outcomes.

### **The Drivers and Determinants of Nonprofit Advocacy**

*External Operational Environment:* In contrast to institutional effects, which have a sweeping and pervasive influence on organizations, the influence of the external operational environment works at a more local level (Bromley and Meyer 2017; Bromley, Chapter 4, “The Organizational Transformation of Civil Society”). As an example, Christof Brandtner and Claire Dunning (Chapter 11, “Nonprofits as Urban Infrastructure”) emphasize cities as an important context for nonprofits—which nonprofits shape and also by which nonprofits are shaped. Nonprofits contribute to civic capacity, to urban governance, and to many other aspects of city life, and those nonprofits similarly are influenced by local regulations, by the spatial or geographic layout of the cities in which they provide services, and by many additional features of cities. Viewed in this manner, the external operational environment is nested within the broader institutional environment, both of which can have consequential and independent effects on the behavior of organizations—in this instance in relation to public charities and advocacy outcomes.

Another aspect of the external operational environment for nonprofits is competition—for clients and other resources—which several studies indicate influences advocacy outcomes such as lobbying, the advocacy tactics that nonprofits adopt, and the resources that nonprofits dedicate to advocacy (Suárez and Hwang 2008; Guo and Saxton 2010; MacIndoe 2010, 2014). Urban–rural distinctions often are consequential for advocacy outcomes as well, as are specific characteristics of the communities and clients that public charities serve, such as wealth, political orientation, and ethnic or racial diversity (Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley and Galaskiewicz 2015; Kim and Mason 2018; Suárez et al. 2019). These indicators by no means constitute an exhaustive list; many aspects of context are substantively relevant to public charities’ advocacy. Indeed, a recent review of the literature emphasized that concerted attention to context is necessary for advancing the field of research on organizational advocacy, implying that a comprehensive conceptual frame should take many aspects of the external operational environment into account (Hojnacki et al. 2012).

*Managerialism:* Several relevant concepts and indicators are encapsulated under the umbrella label of *managerialism*, which refers to ideologies that structure nonprofit attention to the technical or “businesslike” aspects of their work (Maier and Meyer 2011; Maier, Mayer, and Steinbereithner 2016). Professionalization is one aspect of managerialism, which refers to the reliance on formally trained (credentialed) and/or paid staff for service delivery. Over the past few decades, charitable nonprofits have become much

more professionalized, favoring paid staff with academic credentials over volunteers and “amateurs” (Smith and Lipsky 1993; Karl 1998; Frumkin 2005; Hwang and Powell 2009; Suárez 2011). Professionalization appears to have a positive effect on nonprofit advocacy, but many aspects of professionalization have not been explored in great depth (Mosley 2010; Marshall and Suárez 2014; Lu 2018a). The effects of distinctive types of formal training for staff (managerial versus substantive) on advocacy have not received much attention, for instance, nor have the relative effects of formal training and reliance on paid staff (Hwang and Powell 2009).

Rationalization is another component of managerialism, which refers to the formal “construction of charitable organizations as ‘actors’ with clear identities” (Hwang and Powell 2009:272). As with professionalization, nonprofits have become more rationalized over time, incorporating policies and practices that are presumed to strengthen organizational accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness (Barman and MacIndoe 2012; Meyer et al. 2013; Marshall and Suárez 2014; Maier, Buber, and Aghamanoukjan 2016; Bromley and Meyer 2017; Hwang and Suárez 2019). Rationalization has been posited to drive engagement in advocacy, based on the premise that advocacy is becoming an accepted “best practice,” much like performance evaluation or strategic planning, yet little research has explored the idea (Hwang and Suárez 2019).

A holistic conceptual frame for the study of nonprofit advocacy should incorporate measures of managerialism because research has demonstrated their explanatory power, but attention to professionalization and rationalization may also clarify one of the most consistent findings in the literature: organizational size has a positive effect on public charity engagement in advocacy (Child and Grønberg 2007; Lu 2018a). Organizational size tends to be used as a proxy for capacity, suggesting that larger public charities are more likely to engage in advocacy because they have the requisite skills to do so, yet this measure provides no information about what organizations actually do. In contrast, managerialism attunes research on advocacy to the human resources within nonprofits and to the operational tools, rules, and routines that nonprofits embrace (Maier et al. 2016; Bromley and Meyer 2017). Though managerialism is not necessarily a better synonym for capacity than organizational size, the incorporation of measures of professionalization and rationalization should help specify the underlying mechanisms driving size’s consistent positive effect.

*Collaboration and Relational Embeddedness:* Collaboration and relational embeddedness refer to the diverse social ties and networks that nonprofits develop with actors beyond their organizational boundaries (Powell 1990; Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, and Dowell 2006; Small 2006; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Clemens and Guthrie 2010). Collaboration entails interorganizational cooperation to achieve a common goal by sharing information, resources, programs, or expertise (Bryson et al. 2015). Such partnerships demonstrate a willingness to engage external audiences to pursue mission, which could provide skills that are useful for advocacy—especially in coalitions (Hojnacki 1997; Fyall and McGuire 2015). Consistent with this argument, a growing body of research finds that collaboration has a positive effect on nonprofit advocacy (Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2010; Hwang and Suárez 2019). However, this research could benefit from becoming more nuanced. Public

charities can collaborate in numerous ways with other nonprofits, for-profit businesses, government agencies, and actors from multiple sectors, yet it remains unclear how the characteristics of these ties shape advocacy outcomes.

Relational embeddedness entails ties between public charities and other actors that are not limited to formal interorganizational collaborations, such as social relationships with legislators. As with collaboration, these ties can be formed with actors in the nonprofit, for-profit, or government sector and tend to have a positive effect on advocacy outcomes (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Marshall and Suárez 2014; Han and Argyle 2016; Lu 2018a). For instance, a study examining influences on outcomes of policy debates found that the organizational constituency or alliance (i.e., pro, con) with more high-level government allies won on the policy issue 78 percent of the time, and the side with more midlevel government allies won 60 percent of the time—percentages that were among the highest of the indicators they considered (Baumgartner et al. 2009). Relational embeddedness also refers to informal (i.e., noncontractual) community bonds, ties to civil society and community stakeholders that can be activated for public engagement. As with linkages to individuals in government, evidence suggests that nonprofits that involve constituents in activities and have more extensive links to the local communities they serve tend to have a positive effect on advocacy involvement (Han 2014; Marshall and Suárez 2014; Lu 2018a). Collaboration and relational embeddedness are therefore integral components to examine in research on advocacy by public charities.

*Funding Model:* Although the consistent, positive effect of government funding on nonprofit advocacy has been discussed already, nonprofits have a variety of other potential sources of revenue that could inform advocacy outcomes (Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2010, 2012). Foundations, for example, are powerful patrons that exert coercive, normative, and mimetic pressure on the behavior of nonprofit organizations (Hwang and Powell 2009). Research on foundation grants for advocacy indicates that this source of revenue deters organizations from engaging in contentious or transgressive social movement activity—though it may increase the likelihood of organizational survival and even bolster nonprofit capacity for achieving a moderate social change agenda (Jenkins 1998, 2006). With the recent evidence of greater foundation involvement in advocacy, however, the persistence of these patterns is unclear (Quinn et al. 2014; Goss 2016; Suárez et al. 2019).

Another source of revenue that some have found consequential for advocacy is earned income, or market-based revenue (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004; Meyer et al. 2013; Maier et al. 2016). Whereas government funding (grants and contracts) tends to generate advocacy by public charities, and foundation funding often channels nonprofits away from contentious tactics, several studies have found that market revenue decreases the likelihood of nonprofit advocacy (Galaskiewicz et al. 2006; Hwang and Suárez 2019). Nonprofits that pursue market revenue may decrease their organizational advocacy for a number of reasons. They may have concerns about alienating clients and customers, market-based activities may be time-consuming and “crowd out” opportunities for advocacy, or extensive earned income activity may foster a transactional relationship with clients and lead nonprofits to become less involved in their communities (Galaskiewicz et al. 2006; Hwang and Suárez 2019). Whatever the explanation, earned income appears to have substantive importance for organizational advocacy.

In addition to attending to nonprofit revenue sources, research on nonprofit advocacy should also consider funding diversity. The important distinctions here are between specific sources of revenue (i.e., foundations, government agencies, earned income), the extent to which an organization relies on any particular source of revenue, and the overall breadth of revenue sources on which a nonprofit relies. Though there are some studies on how the presence of a given source of nonprofit revenue (i.e., a dichotomous indicator for foundation grants) affects advocacy outcomes, much less research exists on how the dependence on specific revenue sources or the total number of funding sources drive advocacy. An extensive body of research nevertheless emphasizes the effects of resource dependence on organizational strategy, reinforcing the value of attending to funding models in research on nonprofit advocacy (Leroux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2010).

*Mission and Organizational Fields:* An organizational field is a set of organizations within a recognized domain, which in nonprofit research is often defined as the primary industry or subsector to which a nonprofit is dedicated (i.e., education, arts, human services, health) (Scott 2001). Many studies have demonstrated that organizational fields structure nonprofit involvement in advocacy, typically finding that environmental organizations and human services organizations are more engaged in advocacy than organizations in other fields (Child and Grønbjerg 2007; Suárez and Hwang 2008; Guo and Saxton 2010). Although organizational fields capture one dimension of the nonprofit work that informs advocacy outcomes, organizations within fields have distinctive missions that are also relevant to advocacy outcomes (Minkoff and Powell 2006). For instance, all arts organizations are part of the same broad organizational field, but the mission and identity of the organizations within that field contribute to variation in advocacy involvement (Kim 2017; Kim and Mason 2018).

More concretely, some service-providing nonprofits specify a commitment to social justice, social change, or rights (i.e., civil, political, human), and organizations that adopt this discourse tend to be substantially involved in advocacy (Suárez 2012; Suárez et al. 2019). Though the mission of an organization can be specified narrowly on its website or in Internal Revenue Service (IRS) documents, mission statements can be loosely coupled with the work that nonprofits actually undertake, implying that a clear understanding of nonprofit programs and activity is critical for elucidating the role of nonprofits in advocacy (Bromley and Powell 2012; Powell, Horvath, and Brandtner 2016). Some organizations have a long history of engaging in advocacy as institutional entrepreneurs, for instance, and prior involvement in social change activity undoubtedly matters for a host of advocacy outcomes (Mintrom and Vergari 1996; Suárez 2009, 2012; Quinn et al. 2014). This operational or enacted mission manifests in other ways as well, some of which are relevant for research on nonprofit advocacy—such as hiring management staff with lobbying experience or pursuing the 501(h) election (an opt-in alternative to the ambiguous “substantial expenditure” test for lobbying) (Leroux and Goerdel 2009; MacIndoe and Whalen 2013; Lu 2018a).

These five aspects or dimensions of public charities—when considered along with the institutional environment—constitute a holistic conceptual frame for the study of advocacy by public charities. Propositions and hypotheses were not elaborated because there was no expectation that each element of the conceptual frame would have the same effect

regardless of the advocacy outcome, although the framework did strive to identify and build on previous empirical findings. Moreover, no effort was made to produce a comprehensive list of indicators and measures that align with each aspect of the conceptual frame. The primary purpose in introducing this framework was to establish a basic theoretical model for the organizational behavior of public charities that could be applied to cross-sectional and longitudinal data on a broad range of advocacy outcomes. The following section reprises the arguments made in the chapter and discusses some of the advocacy outcomes that, with sufficient empirical testing that builds from a consistent conceptual frame, have the potential to strengthen core knowledge in the field.

### Discussion

Advocacy research explores consequential questions about the roles, representativeness, and relevance of advocacy organizations—as well as the influence of diverse social forces on public (civic and political) engagement—yet reviews of the literature consistently uncover few empirical generalizations (Jenkins 1987, 2006; Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Andrews and Edwards 2004; Baumgartner et al. 2009; McFarland 2010; Hojnacki et al. 2012; de Figueiredo and Richter 2014). The conclusion from a widely cited review is typical: “The research reviewed here presents promising leads but few conclusive patterns” (Andrews and Edwards 2004:491). Part of the difficulty in generalizing from available research stems from the breadth of advocacy outcomes that get explored in this body of work. Simply defining advocacy as a concept is not a trivial task, as associated activities can be direct or indirect as well as social or political (Reid 2000; Jenkins 2006). An additional obstacle to identifying consistent patterns in the literature is that conceptual frames differ across studies, even within disciplines. This chapter has concentrated on addressing this latter problem in relation to public charities.

Although the lack of a consistent conceptual frame, definitional ambiguity, and the diversity of possible outcomes all inhibit broad inferences about nonprofit advocacy, innovative research on many questions would contribute to the literature. This chapter has argued that advocacy is becoming a more socially acceptable and common tool for pursuing mission among public charities and that these service-providing nonprofits are increasingly well positioned to combine organizational advocacy with civic engagement in the pursuit of social change. These arguments merit attention because public charities play diverse, underappreciated roles as political actors, and institutional change could be amplifying their involvement and power (Sampson et al. 2005; Marwell 2010; Han 2014; Han and Argyle 2016; Levine 2016). Other emerging avenues of productive inquiry include research on the tactics that nonprofits utilize for advocacy (i.e., insider, outsider), the venues they select (i.e., local, state, federal, international), the targets they pursue (i.e., nonprofit, for-profit, government), and the scope and intensity of their social change efforts (Guo and Saxton 2010; Mosley 2011, 2012; Walker et al. 2011; MacIndoe and Whalen 2013; Buffardi, Pekkanen, and Smith 2015; Fyall 2016a).

There is no shortage of advocacy outcomes worth investigating in relation to public charities, and this chapter did not even attempt to address the limited literature on the organizational consequences of engagement in advocacy, such as whether advocacy leads to an increase in fund-raising, growth in volunteer recruitment, or success in program

implementation. Considerable work also remains to be done in establishing a convincing link between public charities' advocacy activities and policy outcomes of interest. For example, lobbying outcomes are studied frequently in research on advocacy organizations, demonstrating that corporations and trade groups are responsible for the preponderance of lobbying expenditures and that organizations with considerable resources are more likely to lobby independently than smaller groups (de Figueiredo and Richter 2014). At the same time, "numerous studies have attempted to estimate the effects of lobbying on policy outcomes. However, the validity of their results depends on the dataset and econometric methods employed to identify and isolate the causal effect of lobbying" (de Figueiredo and Richter 2014:168–169).

When researching the effects of advocacy organizations on the policy process, causal attribution is equally difficult and faces significant barriers. Public charities contribute to many aspects of the policy process, from setting the policy agenda to policy enactment, implementation, and monitoring, yet only limited progress has been made in identifying the conditions under which advocacy organizations are likely to be successful in any component of their policy reform efforts (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Jenkins 2006; Hojnacki et al. 2012). The chapter on advocacy in the previous edition of this volume offered a trenchant summary, concluding that research on policy impacts "has been limited in its coverage of multiple types of impact, time sequences, and the range of relevant factors that might condition the effectiveness of nonprofit advocacy. Few studies are multivariate, and few capture the political context that may influence the effectiveness of different types of advocacy work" (Jenkins 2006:324). Given that advocacy nonprofits are pervasive and widely viewed as consequential political actors, discerning their effects on policy outcomes remains a critical research topic (Sampson et al. 2005; Hojnacki et al. 2012; Bushouse 2016).

Finally, novel research on advocacy by public charities needs to be undertaken in relation to the policy efforts of other types of organizations. Even though the chapter has claimed that advocacy among public charities is increasing and that public charities are increasingly well positioned to blend public engagement with direct organizational advocacy, their overall influence may not be growing despite these developments. As a result of the *Citizens United* case, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010, restrictions on political campaign expenditures were eased for for-profit corporations and other types of politically active groups. For-profit corporations have always had a financial advantage in the world of special interests, contributing to the observation that democracy in the United States is sustained by unequal voice—an "unheavenly chorus" of actors—and the lifting of restrictions could exacerbate these inequalities (Schlozman et al. 2012; see also recent research on efforts by for-profits to manufacture civic participation (E. Walker 2014; Walker and Oszkay, Chapter 21, "The Changing Face of Nonprofit Advocacy").

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the social change activity of service-providing nonprofits, an organizational form that has not received much attention in the broader literature on advocacy. The chapter elaborated two arguments, positing growth in the prevalence of advocacy among public charities and an increase in their power as they take advantage of opportunities to blend advocacy with civic engagement. Applying a common conceptual frame is critical for testing these and many other arguments effectively, yet extensive variation in the application of theory has limited the comparability

of results across studies. Though many features of organizations and their environments influence the work they undertake, the five dimensions put forth in the proposed conceptual frame can be applied to a wide variety of advocacy outcomes. Ultimately, research that consistently implements a robust conceptual frame will advance the field and contribute to demonstrating the effects of nonprofit advocacy on policy, inequality, democracy, and other meaningful societal outcomes.