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Independent Study and Mentorship

Speice 4B

20 October 2017

<u>**Non-Profit Organizations - Working for a Change**</u>

<u>**Research Assessment 5**</u>

Subject:

State Public Policy

Works Cited:

Tsujinaka, Yutaka, et al. *Nonprofits and Advocacy : Engaging Community and Government in an*

   Era of Retrenchment. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. EBSCO*host*,

   search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=662182&site=ehost-live.

Assessment:

   This excerpt from Tsujinaka, titled *Nonprofits and Advocacy: Engaging Community and*

Government in an Era of Retrenchment, works to highlight on the specific relationships between

nonprofit organizations and public policy at the local level. The author details specific examples

of real-world situations from where such trends are derived, and articulates his desire to expand

more on the breadth of nonprofits' advocacy in today's modern society. Within the beginning of

the excerpt, Tsujinaka underlines his plan of action towards tackling the issue at hand, discussing how he hopes to uncover basic principles essential to understanding the relationship between "local policymakers" and nonprofit participation in various levels of American communities. Afterwards, the author highlights the structure of his experiments in comparing real-world data and situations to his hypotheses, where he then points out the purpose of such comparison to work towards testing the hypotheses for veracity.

From this article, I have been able to connect more deeply the purpose of structuring nonprofits in such a way that empowers the common citizen to champion their cause. Concepts where nonprofits work specifically on the charitable motivations of others underlines how, in order to develop an impetus for change in public policy, there must be a substantial amount of support for such an agenda to make a large enough impact on elected officials. Not only that, but the work has provided for me greater contemplation on the purpose of nonprofits, to where Tsujinaka believes they are founded not to empower the community, but rather to "maximize their influence in...government." From such analysis, I have developed an understanding of how nonprofits operate, as well as how their stature in the community in working at the local, city, state, or national level, influences the degree to which their work leads to reform on their championed issue.

In comparing my lessons learnt from Tsujinaka to those from the previous week's article on the influence of lobbyists, I am able to draw many similarities, but also key differences, in how each type of organization influences public policy. Namely, both lobbyists and nonprofits have the same goal in mind; advancing their agenda and reform for their issue in society is their most crucial aspiration. However, the methods in which they attempt to do so vary greatly. As

the definition of lobbying suggests, these groups or businesses work specifically to appeal to elected officials in any level of government through voluminous amounts of donations or money spent on advocating their issue. Contrastly, nonprofits work more towards influencing the citizen view on their issue in order to work towards reform commissioned by representatives; these organizations must establish a base in the public's realm of interest in order to gain enough support to change American policy towards their agenda.

Indeed, nonprofit organizations are mediums for change - their inherent values work specifically to champion a cause and reinforce citizens' will to support such reform. Through developing a context in how such organizations are run and how their mission impacts their drive for reform, I am able to connect their beliefs to those of lobbyist groups to understand the unique capacity this channel has towards influencing both the current stature and future creation of public policy.

In this chapter we analyze nonprofit advocacy in city politics, emphasizing their interaction with local policymakers. First, we discuss what we call the "politics of place" in cities, examining the participation of three types of citywide and neighborhood nonprofits. Second, we develop two lines of inquiry and articulate a set of hypotheses that grow out of a theoretical construct relating to low barriers to entry. Next, after describing the empirical methodology, we test those hypotheses with data derived from large-scale surveys in 50 of the nation's largest cities.

Cutting across these specific lines of inquiry is a more normative concern: how might nonprofits empower themselves in city politics? To the degree they're engaged in advocacy, nonprofits often speak for those who are chronically underrepresented in the political process. *(See Robert J. Pekkanen and Steven Rathgeb Smith's introduction to this volume for an elaboration of what constitutes nonprofit advocacy.)* Are there ways in which nonprofits can design their organizational structures and allocate their resources to maximize their influence in city government? This may seem like a relatively straightforward question, but for nonprofits there are many complicating factors. Resources can be scant, sometimes to the point of amounting to little more than a few volunteers' time. Their expertise and experience may be no match for that possessed by city councilors and agency bureaucrats. Nevertheless, nonprofits can and do influence public policy, and here we look for patterns that may help us to understand advocacy in the context of city government.