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978-0-521-19838-7 - Advocacy Organizations and Collective Action

Edited by Aseem Prakash and Mary Kay Gugerty

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Advocacy Organizations and Collective Action

Advocacy organizations are viewed as actors motivated primarily by principled beliefs. This volume outlines a new agenda for the study of advocacy organizations, proposing a model of NGOs as collective actors that seek to fulfill normative concerns and instrumental incentives, face collective action problems, and compete as well as collaborate with other advocacy actors. The analogy of the firm is a useful way of studying advocacy actors because individuals, via advocacy NGOs, make choices which are analytically similar to those that shareholders make in the context of firms. The authors view advocacy NGOs as special types of firms that make strategic choices in policy markets which, along with creating public goods, support organizational survival, visibility, and growth. Advocacy NGOs' strategy can therefore be understood as a response to opportunities to supply distinct advocacy products to well-defined constituencies, as well as a response to normative or principled concerns.

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To Mummy and Papa – Aseem

To Mom and Dad – Mary Kay

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Preface

This volume outlines a new agenda for the study of advocacy. We focus on particular advocacy actors, NGO advocacy organizations, involved in public advocacy. We begin with the premise that since advocacy is a collective endeavor, advocacy NGOs should be viewed as actors pursuing collective action. Collective action issues should therefore bear upon their emergence and strategies. We draw on the firm analogy, modeling advocacy NGOs as “firms” operating in competitive policy markets. The firm analogy is instructive because individuals via advocacy NGOs make analytically similar choices regarding the collective organization of their social, political, and economic activities.

The book makes three contributions to the study of advocacy. First, unlike the dominant NGO politics and social movement literatures that tend to focus on advocacy *campaigns*, our book focuses on advocacy *actors*, specifically their emergence and strategies. Second, we outline a new way of thinking about advocacy actors. While many advocacy NGOs are motivated by normative goals, they have instrumental objectives as well. They operate in competitive arenas for funds, media visibility, and support from well-defined constituencies. They pay attention to organization survival and growth. We systematically examine how *both* normative and instrumental concerns influence their emergence and strategies. Third, by employing the collective action perspective to study advocacy, this volume seeks to integrate the study of advocacy in the broader collective action research program. This should foster greater analytical clarity regarding advocacy NGOs’ emergence and strategies, and support analytic comparisons across various types of NGO as well as comparisons of advocacy NGOs with other forms of collective action.

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We began working on this project in the summer of 2007. We developed an introductory concept chapter and carefully identified scholars doing interesting work on NGO advocacy. Thanks to generous financial support from the Center for International Business Education Research (CIBER) and additional support from the Lindenberg Center and the West European Studies Center, all at the University of Washington, we organized a workshop for the authors at the University of Washington in May 2008. At this workshop, the contributors presented the first drafts of their chapters. They received valuable feedback from each other and from UW graduate students and faculty who served as discussants. These were: Stephan Hamberg, Joaquin Herranz, Christopher Heurlin, Erica Johnson, Sanjeev Khagram, Stephen Page, Robert Pekkanen, and Scott Radnitz. After the workshop, we provided detailed feedback on every chapter. The chapters were revised in the summer and early fall of 2008. The result is a series of very strong chapters which respond to the theoretical framework outlined in the introductory chapter and which cohere. We believe the empirical chapters together make the volume greater than the sum of its individual contributions.

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We express our gratitude to John Haslam, the commissioning editor, for his support for this project. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support we have received from our families over the years. We gratefully dedicate this volume to our respective parents.