Institution Advocacy and The Political Behavior of Charter Schools

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Abstract

Scholars know that institutions such as corporations and nonprofits make up much of the lobbying community, yet there is no general theory as to why these organizations, which are not primarily established for advocacy, would ever choose to do it. By integrating the literatures on advocacy in economics, sociology, and political science we propose a theoretical framework using the broad dimensions of organizational mission and external environment that we test with data on charter school advocacy from a four-state survey. The results support our framework and provide greater insight into advocacy choices regarding venue shopping, tactical choices, and resource allocation.

In spite of Robert Salisbury's (1984) often cited claim that the political advocacy landscape is disproportionately populated by "institutions," or organizations established to pursue goals other than policy change and lacking memberships in the traditional sense, there is as yet no general explanation for why such organizations choose to become politically active. If organizations such as business firms and social service nonprofits are designed to make profits or pursue philanthropy, why would they ever choose to direct scarce resources towards lobbying? Though the literature is hardly quiet regarding political engagement, most work has focused on collective action, the choice individuals make to form associations for the purpose of representation. The result is a rich literature on overcoming barriers to collective action by offering incentives (Olson 1965; Wilson 1973), reacting to threats (Truman 1951; J. Hansen 1985), or providing outlets for strong political feelings (Sabatier 1992). In other words, a lot of effort has gone into explaining the formation of the types of organizations Salisbury claimed are a minority in state and national lobbying communities. The literature that does exist focuses either on corporations or nonprofits, producing no general framework for understanding why institutions, including the charter schools we study, are frequently seen lobbying.

We argue that by synthesizing existing research on nonprofit behavior, the economics literature on industry advocacy, and the comparative politics and sociology literatures on politically structured opportunity, we can construct a more general theoretical explanation as to why different types of institutions are motivated to lobby. Using this integrated framework we develop a set of hypotheses that we then subject to empirical probing by analyzing the advocacy of charter schools, organizations that, though formally nonprofit, frequently take on either for-profit or mission-driven nonprofit characteristics. The results largely support our framework and, we feel, shed important new light on institution advocacy and the motivation to lobby.

Synthesizing the Literatures on Corporate and Nonprofit Advocacy

Though there is no integrative theory of institution advocacy, there are numerous studies examining why specific *types* of organizations choose to pursue goals through political advocacy.[1] What connects these literatures is that they all deal with organizations for which providing political representation to a faction of society is *not* their primary reason for existence, thus differentiating them from public interest groups, trade associations, and labor unions. Yet, as Salisbury (1984) saw, it is these non-membership organizations that make up the bulk of national and, we suspect, state lobbying communities. Though they may lobby only intermittently and focus on more personal concerns rather than broad policy questions, their impact is often substantial so it is important for us to understand their motivations towards advocacy. By focusing only on organizations with similar internal structures and goals, such as the *Fortune* 500 companies (e.g., W. Hansen and Mitchell 2000) or nonprofits (e.g., Berry and Arons 2003), we are left without a general explanation embracing both types. What we need is a single framework that harnesses variation in organizational structures and motivations along with changing political environments to help us understand and predict institution advocacy.[2] We argue that we can create such a framework by drawing on the incentive theories of Olson (1965) and Wilson (1973), notions of path-dependence, and environmental opportunity. Specifically, we identify two general motivations for political action, one pro-active and internal to organizations, which we refer to as *orientation towards government*, and the other reactive given the environment in which they are embedded called *government structured opportunity*.

Orientation Towards Government

Facing the same environmental incentives and constraints, some organizations are more inclined than others by internal norms, structures, and ideologies to view the public sector as a natural arena for pursuing goals so that political advocacy becomes a fairly routine activity. We identify two sources of this internal pro-government orientation, the first stemming primarily from the purposive motivations impressed on organizational structures and norms by founders, current leaders, and even those who supply operating capital. Just as liberal elites tend to see government intervention as an equitable and desirable solution to social problems, so too might public service-minded individuals establish organizations to provide services unattainable in the private sector. Though they may have different missions, such as providing social services for little compensation or seeking to make a profit by managing public schools, these organizers share two qualities. First, they view government as a benevolent partner, a natural ally because its mission is consistent with, and complementary to, their own. Second, the motivations of these founders, and ultimately of the organizations themselves, are purposive in that they are pro-actively seeking the state's assistance in providing non-excludable benefits (public goods) desired or needed by citizens but that are otherwise unavailable (see Moe 1980: Ch 5). They are not merely trying to gain an exclusive benefit for themselves that might provide an edge over their competitors.

The type of organization that perhaps most clearly fits this description is the social service nonprofit, though we believe that others do as well. The Internal Revenue Code forbids nonprofits from engaging in direct lobbying, and many may be reluctant to characterize their contact with government as "lobbying" (Boris 1999; Reid 1999), but Berry and Arons (2003) argue that much of what nonprofits do can only be called pro-active advocacy. Nor is this

surprising. The voluntary sector has grown as the size and scope of government responsibility has grown (Walker 1983; Skocpol 2004) and scholars recognize that nonprofits have come to develop increasingly tight, symbiotic relationships with local, state, and national governments (Smith and Lipsky 1993; Salamon 1995). For its part, government has found it increasingly useful to deliver public services through grants and contracts with nonprofits because they often exhibit greater flexibility; higher levels of energy, commitment, and expertise; and often serve constituencies that can be counted on to support the continuation of these benefits (Feigenbaum et al. 1998). Mission-driven nonprofits, including some that historically have been wary of entanglement with government, are increasingly looking to government for additional, deeper-pocketed, and more reliable source of revenue than foundations, charitable contributors, and corporate philanthropy provide (Smucker 1999). This combination of mutual dependence and a shared belief in the state's role in caring for society's disadvantaged makes government not just an obvious target for social-service nonprofit advocacy, but often the *only* avenue for advancing organizational goals.

There is also a second reason apart from providing social services that might incline organization leaders towards a more positive attitude regarding work with government, though the motivations are not as clearly purposive. For-profits, as Stigler (1971) and Peltzman (1976) argued, often seek regulatory protection from competitors by forging long term relationships with government that become as tight as any nonprofit's. Conscious of government's power to shape market environments through taxes and barriers to entry, for-profit founders and leaders may see the state as an ally worth soliciting. Unlike mission-driven organizations, these for-profit leaders may have started lobbying when the political atmosphere favored them (something we discuss below), or when politicians offered them select incentives allowing them to gain an

advantage in concentrated markets (see Grier et al. 1991; 1994). But over time they may have become so dependent on the tax breaks, contracts, and regulatory protections government provides that they cannot survive without them. Thus maintaining state support and seeing it as a partner rather than as a barrier to profit making again becomes embedded in the organizational psyche and advocacy an organizational norm.

This positive, path-dependent orientation towards government may even spread to an entire class of organizations in a for-profit market or nonprofit niche. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that there is a "herd mentality" among organizations where market participants, especially recent entrants, imitate and incorporate the behavior of older firms seen as being successful (mimetic isomorphism). For nonprofits or for-profits, successful advocacy by older organizations in response to select incentives becomes the standard business practice across the entire industry or niche. Executives are more likely to be hired for their connections with government and knowledge of the public sector rather than their success in the private.

In sum, whether the desire to pursue goals in the public sector originated as a purposive desire to achieve social service goals, or as a recurring effort to obtain a selective benefit that became habitual, advocacy sticks with the organization and becomes deeply embedded in its norms, traditions, and structures. The behavior becomes path-dependence in that it has left the organization and its leaders a positive orientation towards government so that advocacy is regular and desirable. So deeply engrained does the attitude become that advocacy will likely continue even when ideological change in government no longer favors the goals of the nonprofit or industry's for-profit.

Government Structured Opportunity

Organizations lacking this internal positive orientation towards government might still choose to lobby if at a given point in time the political environment favors their goals. Just as a basketball player who prefers to pass instead of shoot will take advantage of an easy shot if left unguarded, so too do true entrepreneurs, who might normally see the state as an enemy of free market enterprise, still lobby when they see clear opportunities to be exploited. Responding to the offering of such select incentives may benefit both for-profits and nonprofits and allow them to gain edges over their competitors.

Political and economic systems have long been understood to be composed of highly interdependent actors constraining and facilitating each others' behavior. Policy benefits offered openly or subtly hinted at become incentives enticing, and even pressuring, for-profits and nonprofits alike to react with advocacy. Organizations with little history of political advocacy might suddenly begin lobbying when they see their goals as aligned with those of a recently empowered set of political elites. In order to keep a large employer headquartered in their district, a legislator may be willing to supply select incentives such as tax benefits and protectionist regulation, thereby creating opportunities for entrepreneurial lobbying by firms that would otherwise avoid the public sector (see W. Hansen and Mitchell 2000; Godwin et al. 2004). Perhaps the services they offer reflect the ideological leanings of constituents, as is the case with the charter schools we study below. Though these firms may not be run by individuals with overly pro-government attitudes, as entrepreneurs they are nonetheless willing to react by taking advantage of such government structured opportunities. The re-mobilization of business in the 1980s is often attributed to the opportunities for deregulation and tax-relief presented by the arrival of the Reagan Administration (Vogel 1989; but see Plotke 1992).

Our concept of government structured opportunity also draws sustenance from the comparative politics literature. Sidney Tarrow, for example, uses Opportunity Theory to explain successful lobbying by marginalized social groups in Europe, arguing that groups not part of entrenched political networks are encouraged by lawmakers to engage in advocacy because the latter see it as in their own political interests to address the needs of these groups (Tarrow 1988; 1994). Direct applications of this theory in American politics are few (but see McAdam 1982), though there is evidence that as the American government grew and decentralized, individual lawmakers increasingly found opportunities to advance their own political careers by helping to stimulate the formation of new interests (McFarland 2004 argues that these cycles occur periodically through out history). But whereas the case of businesses lobbying discussed above is largely a response to select incentives, here lawmakers are offering opportunities to pursue more purposive missions. What they have in common is that both for-profits and nonprofits, regardless of how internally inclined they are to see government as an ally, will react and take advantage of politically structured opportunities when they are offered by engaging in advocacy.

Predicting Organizational Advocacy Behavior

If these two general dimensions of internal orientation towards government and external government structured opportunity explain organizational advocacy behavior, then it should be possible to identify particular features of each that can be measured and subjected to empirical verification. Though higher scores for an organization on either of these measures should lead to more frequent political advocacy, at this stage we argue that the effects are independent of each other. Higher scores on both do not necessarily lead to more frequent advocacy behavior than on just one. For internal orientation towards government we develop hypotheses related to

organizational hardwiring and path-dependency that consistently incline it to proactively seek out government support regardless of the receptiveness of the political environment. Our first is suggested by the nonprofit literature we discussed. Since the New Deal government has assumed more responsibility for providing economic and social safety nets. Organizations providing such services as their overall missions are likely to have attitudes of "government-as-ally" impressed on them by founders and see advocacy for public support, including non financial support such as regulatory and tax-exemptions, as obvious strategies for advancing these goals. They are also, as Salisbury (1984) suggests, more likely to be able to take advantage of pre-existing connections with government. Therefore:

Mission Hypothesis: Organizations built around missions of social service are more likely to engage in frequent political advocacy.

The second internal orientation hypothesis follows from DiMaggio and Powell's argument that there is a herd mentality among organizations in a common market or niche so that younger organizations seeing older firms successfully working with government will develop similar internal structures and procedures involving regular government advocacy. Therefore:

Imitation Hypothesis: The more inclined older organizations are towards political advocacy, the greater the likelihood that younger organizations in the same market and/or geographic niche will also engage more frequently in advocacy.

For government structured opportunity we focus on two reasons why organizations at a point in time might believe that government would support them so that expending resources on advocacy is worth while, regardless of whether they are inclined to see it as a natural ally or something to be exploited. One deals with the ideological supportiveness of a political

jurisdiction, whether national, state, or local, for an organization's goals; the other with government's willingness to spend public resources in support of public programs:

Ideological Support Hypothesis: The more ideologically supportive of an organization's goals is a political jurisdiction's culture, the more frequently the organization will lobby;

Government Expenditure Hypothesis: The greater the willingness of lawmakers to fund public programs, the more likely an organization it is to pursue its goals by engaging in frequent advocacy.

If these hypotheses regarding the frequency of advocacy are empirically verified, thus supporting our theoretical framework, then we should also be able to explain more complex and, arguably, interesting advocacy behavior. Given an organization's motivations, who would it target? What tactics might it use? How intensely would it lobby? How constrained would it be by resource availability? We start by portraying both general dimensions in Figure 1 as an aid to hypothesis development. As advocacy by nonprofits and for-profits positively oriented towards government can occur when opportunity is not present, their advocacy might be intended to pro-actively "soften-up" lawmakers, persuading them to support organizational goals. Specifically, their advocacy should be broad rather than focused on one specific institution because widespread support from legislators and executive branch officials is often necessary for building support for new public programs. Thus we expect to see them targeting multiple advocacy venues instead of only targeting lawmaking venues with a supportive political ideology. They are trying to persuade, not preach to the choir. Targeting more venues, and more lawmakers within venues, also requires a wider arsenal of tactics because what may successfully convince lawmakers in one may fall flat in another. Thus:

Venues Hypothesis: The more positively oriented towards government is an organization, the more lawmaking venues it should target for advocacy;

Tactics Hypothesis: The more positively oriented towards government is an organization, the greater the likelihood that it will use multiple advocacy tactics to persuade government officials, including low-intensity/cost as well as high-intensity/cost tactics.

---- Insert Figure 1 about here ----

This also suggests that organizations inclined to see government as an ally may be less sensitive to the costs of different tactics and the number of venues lobbied, while those lacking this characteristic will be more restrained:

Resources Hypothesis: The fewer resources possessed by an organization *not* positively oriented towards government, the less frequently it will engage in any type of advocacy.

Alternatively, institutions less internally oriented towards government, but are presented opportunities for entrepreneurial advocacy, are more likely to re-direct energy and resources from other work into very intense lobbying campaigns. They are attempting to quickly take advantage of opportunities rather then work to create them so their advocacy should manifest as relatively short-term bursts designed to exploit these windows of opportunity. Therefore:

Intensity Hypothesis: The greater the inclination of government officials to provide policy benefits, the more frequently organizations will advocate by making personal contact with government officials rather than relying on letters, e-mail, and even phone calls.

Finally, because they are not conducting long, drawn out advocacy campaigns to soften-up lawmakers, but taking advantage of opportunities by engaging in short bursts of advocacy, we expect that non-government oriented organizations will strategically target only those venues where lawmakers are ideologically supportive and the opposition is weak (Holyoke 2003).

Under these circumstances only variables operationalizing the supportiveness of the political environment that will exhibit significant effects on the frequency of advocacy:

Selective Venue Hypothesis: The greater the willingness of government officials in a particular venue to provide policy benefits, the greater the likelihood that organizations not positively oriented towards government will primarily target that venue for advocacy.

Research Design

Our hypotheses require variation across organization types and motivations, making exclusively corporate or nonprofit data sets inappropriate; we therefore study the advocacy behavior of charter schools. Sold to lawmakers by choice-in-education proponents essentially as businesses competing for students in a less regulated educational marketplace, these publicly funded but largely independent schools have nonetheless been observed engaging in political advocacy (Henig et al. 2003). Though usually constrained by state law to adopt a formal nonprofit structure, many charter schools partner with profit-oriented education management corporations. Both these and other charter schools exhibit behaviors more typically associated with for-profit-oriented firms than with those devoted to a particular social mission; for example, by altering their pedagogical offerings and recruitment tactics to attract more students and achieve economies of scale. Ultimately they may become more like traditional nonprofits, but today many doe behave like businesses (Hess 2002) Yet there are also many who have clearly chosen social service missions, often serving disadvantaged populations and filling educational niches, and are more akin (and are often established by) mission-driven nonprofits.

As we have shown elsewhere, these differences can lead to distinctly different forms of behavior (Lacireno-Paquet et al. 2002; Brown et al. 2004; also see Miron and Nelson 2002).

Furthermore, because the political environments in which they operate vary from state to state and even city to city, we believe that charter schools offer an excellent opportunity to operationalize the two broad dimensions of our theoretical framework and test our organizational advocacy hypotheses. Finally, though the charter schools in the jurisdictions we selected are old enough (up to nine years) to have developed fairly institutionalized structures and norms of behavior, they are young enough that we can still identify the characteristics of the founders and financial backers that may have shaped their ideologies and missions.

In 2001 we mailed surveys to all charter schools in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia, all of which had charter school laws in place for at least six years but vary considerably in political ideology, as measured by Erickson et al. (1993), and support for minority populations, as measured by Hero (1998). Out of all schools to whom we mailed surveys, 270 responded for a response rate of 35 percent.[3] The respondents included a wide range of school types, including 43 directly affiliated with large education management corporations and exhibiting the most obvious for-profit characteristics with as many as 1,450 students, while others were surprisingly small with as few as twelve. The surveys contained both open and closed-ended questions regarding the frequency of contact with selected political officials as well as characteristics regarding the schools themselves. The survey was also supplemented by in-person interviews with several charter school founders as well as state and local politicians and leaders of associations representing charter schools.

Our main dependent variables are the schools' frequency and type of contact with certain political officials. Baumgartner and Leech (2001) consider advocacy to primarily constitute direct contact with legislators where advocates push for change in policy, what is traditionally called direct lobbying. Others examine wider ranges of activity such as advocacy contacts with

policymakers more broadly defined, such as bureaucrats (e.g., Balla and Wright 2001), or look at more indirect methods of contact through telephone campaigns (e.g., Berry and Arons 2003). We follow these broader approaches by defining advocacy as contact with a broad range of elected and appointed policymakers with jurisdiction over charter school policy in both state and local government institutions. To tap the extent of each charter school's advocacy behavior we asked a battery of questions regarding its frequency of pro-active contact with state legislators (those representing the school's district as well as others), governors, mayors, city council members, and school district officials.[4] The questions asked respondents to indicate whether the contact with each was "rare," coded 0, "occasional," coded 1, or "frequent," coded 2.[5] We then averaged each school's response regarding contact with state-level officials to create a single state contact variable and then did the same with local officials for a second. Out of the 264 schools supplying usable data, 164 (or 62%) had at least occasional contact with political officials by mail, though only 53 (20%) did so on a regular basis, and 172 (65%) and 60 (23%) doing so occasionally and regularly by telephone respectively. Across all jurisdictions the frequency of contact through indirect means (mail, telephone, and e-mail) was almost one standard deviation greater than the mean scores for direct contact. In order to perform a complete analysis with only one dependent variable, we created a data matrix with two observations for each school, one for contact with state officials and the other with local elites. The independent variables described below capturing features of state or local political environments are therefore different for each of a school's two observations but the internal orientation ones are the same.

Our Mission Hypothesis requires us to identify those schools exhibiting relatively clear social-service mission characteristics. We did this with data on the characteristics of those who founded and financially supported the school. In the survey schools were asked to identify the

types of organizations that played a role in their founding with a broad selection of answers they could choose from, including social service nonprofits, for-profit corporations, and even trade unions and parents and teachers.[6] Schools indicating that they were at least partially founded by social service nonprofits, or nonprofits dedicated to serving the local business community, were coded 1 as a dummy variable indicating a distinct mission-orientation (67 schools were so coded).[7] Interestingly, we found that several of the schools affiliated with corporations, those less likely to exhibit a philanthropic side, were coded 1.

The variable for the Imitation Hypothesis uses the age of the schools and the degree of political contact they engage in. In our calculation p is the averaged state and local political contact score of every ith school in set N. Each jth is the city containing all charters in the same metropolitan area as the one observed that were established the same year the state law was enacted or the subsequent year:

$$x = 1 - \left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_j} 1/\, p_i}{N_j} \right)$$

Each older school's averaged level of political contact (which is at least 1) was divided into 1, the scores of all schools in N_j then summed and averaged to create a score that decreases as their level of political contact increases. To get a score that *increases* as older school contacts increase, we subtracted this score from 1. The result is an independent variable capturing the degree of advocacy pursued by those schools established early in geographic markets that then become organizational models for younger schools.

For the Ideological Support Hypothesis we must operationalized the political ideology of both state and local jurisdictions. We did this by using the percentage of the 2000 presidential vote for George W. Bush in each state and city from Gaquin and DeBrandt (2004). Republicans

and ideological conservatives, and President Bush in particular, have strongly advocated for greater choice in elementary and secondary education, therefore the percentage vote captures the broad support of state or local constituencies (some cities may be more supportive even when the state is not) and the level of ideological support for aiding charter schools. Though the measure captures each electorate's ideology, we presume that the politicians they elect are likely to share this disposition and are willing to support greater choice-in-education in general and charter schools in particular. The Government Expenditure Hypothesis is operationalized by the overall level of financial support for public programs with per capita general budget expenditure for state and city governments in which each charter school is located from Gaquin and DeBrandt.

To varying degrees the resources held by an organization constrain or facilitate its advocacy behavior, so although we test our Resources Hypothesis later, in our initial analysis we use the variable as a control. Charter school revenue comes primarily from state governments according to the number of students enrolled, so we use each school's enrollment as a proxy measure of their financial resources. Because we need to distinguish between schools with considerable resources from those with less, we created a binary variable coded 1 if the school had an enrollment one standard deviation higher than the mean for all schools in that state. Like most organizations, charter schools may engage in indirect advocacy through their advocacy associations. All four jurisdictions contained charter school associations and even though collective action is not the focus of our research, we do believe that we must control for participation in these associations. In the survey we asked respondents how frequently they interacted with their association and coded the responses 0 if "never," 1 if "rarely," 2 if "occasionally," and 3 if "regularly" and used this as our control variable.

Organized opposition from other interest groups has also been found to have an influence on the tactics and strategies of advocates and should be controlled for (see Holyoke 2003). In our in-person interviews with charter school leaders, as well as leaders for potential opposition organizations such as state and local teacher's unions and school board associations, we asked questions assessing whether there was organized interest group opposition to charter schools.[8] If there was a clear indication of opposition, a binary variable was coded 1 with separate assessments made for observations on the dependent variable at the state level and at the local level so that each school has separate state and local scores. In addition, though all schools are close enough to their city governments and local school boards to engage in direct advocacy, not all are geographically close to their state capitals and this might influence the type of political contact in which they engage. Accordingly we coded a binary variable 1 if the school is located in the state capital (all D.C. schools were coded 1).

Because charter school operators who have lived a long time in their communities may have developed closer connections to local lawmakers than operators moving into a locality, we asked survey respondents if the school was started by individuals with longstanding ties to the community and coded a dummy variable 1 if they answered "yes." Path-dependence was an integral part of our theoretical development and we expect there to be some behavioral differences between older and younger schools. We therefore asked each school the year they opened, subtracted that from 2001, and entered the difference as a control variable. Finally, whether a school is located in an urban, suburban, or rural area may impact their ability to contact political officials. Accordingly, using the Census Bureau's classifications, we coded a binary variable 1 if a school was classified as being in an urban or suburban census tract.[9]

Data Analysis and Discussion

We test our four basic hypotheses in a single equation using the frequency of political contact at both the city and state levels as the dependent variable. This is a discreet categorical variable so we used the ordered probit method and present the maximum likelihood estimates and standard errors in the first results column of Table 1. The Wald statistic is significant, indicating that the results of our estimation are significantly different from what we would expect to find due to random chance.[10]

---- Insert Table 1 about here ----

The results provide some support for each of our four core hypotheses. Charter schools taking on social service mission characteristics or who structure themselves similar to older, more politically active schools do appear to engage more frequently in advocacy. Receptiveness of the political environment as measured by jurisdictional ideology and public spending also matters significantly, as seen in the positive and statistically significant estimates for the Ideological Support and Government Expenditure Hypotheses. Many of the control variables, surprisingly, do not exhibit significant effects on the level of advocacy contact schools reported with political officials. For instance, though participation in an advocacy association correlates with greater levels of individual school advocacy, the resources held by schools, as measured by student enrollment, does not.

Our field research provides a substantive example of what these statistical relationships mean. One charter school in Washington, D.C., though not founded by or affiliated with a social service nonprofit, nonetheless proved very successful in its advocacy. Though it was a relatively poor school that normally avoided advocacy, it was in desperate need of a building to house itself. What its leaders had were friends on the staff of the U.S. Senate Appropriations

Committee. Taking advantage of this relatively unique political opportunity, the school's founders convinced Congress to give them a one time line-item to buy a building, something other charter schools could only dream of. For this school it was a favorable political environment and, interestingly, the lack of available resources for pursuing alternatives, which motivated their advocacy.

Though the effects of our four core explanatory variables are statistically significant, their substantive effects are fairly modest. Holding all other explanatory variables at their mean or modal values, we estimated first differences by examining changes in the probability of our categorical dependent variable taking on a larger value by increasing one at a time the four key independent variables by one standard deviation. Changing the value of the social service-orientation dummy from 0 to 1 decreases the probability of the dependent variable taking on a value of 1, rare contact, by 10 percentage points and increased the probability of taking on a value of 2, occasional contact, by 7 percentage points. The other three variables have similar effects for a standard deviation increase.

Having found empirical support for our two general dimensions of advocacy, we can now turn to our hypotheses on venue selection, tactics, and resources. To test the Venues Hypothesis we developed a new dependent variable, one counting the number of different lawmaking venues schools targeted for advocacy. We took the survey responses where school leaders indicated their frequency of contact with different state and local lawmakers and created a count variable where one point was added to each school's observation every time they indicated that they lobbied "occasionally" or "regularly." Scores ranged form 0 to 5. To test the Tactics Hypothesis we created another count variable from an entirely different set of survey questions. Every school was asked how frequently they had contact with lawmakers in any venue by mail,

telephone, e-mail, or personal meetings. Every time a respondent indicated that they used a tactic "occasionally" or "regularly" we added a 1 to a new variable to produce a count of the number of tactics employed by each school. Again, scores ranged from 0 to 5. We used the Poisson technique to estimate the models and included the same independent variables as above. Our expectation is that the two internal orientation variables would exhibit a significant effect. The results are presented in the last two columns of Table 1.

Our expectations are met for both the social service-oriented and imitation variables show statistically significant and positive effects. First differences reveal that having social service characteristics increases the number of venues lobbied by one. While most charter schools proactively contacted school district officials, perhaps the most obvious target for advocacy, those with social service affiliations were also likely to report more contact with state legislators. Increasing the concentration of older, more politically active schools in a jurisdiction produced a similar increase in the number of venues lobbied. To our surprise, the Bush vote variable also has a statistically significant and positive effect on both dependent variables, though more so in the likelihood of making personal contact than in the number of venues lobbied. We surmise that the overall receptiveness of governments in jurisdictions supportive of the Bush education agenda encouraged charter school leaders of all stripes to not only engage in low cost advocacy by making phone calls and writing letters, but by making personal contact as well.

Again, there is a substantive side to these results. Schools with social service mission on average were likely to report "occasional" contact with state legislators and even governors' offices, while the average score for schools lacking this characteristic was "rare." In fact, non-social service oriented schools did not report more frequent contact with *any* type of lawmakers than with mission-orientations. Comparing two cases in Arizona is illustrative. One small

school lacking affiliations with either a nonprofit or a management corporation told us that what little pro-active contact they had was with their oversight agency, the state education department, regarding the availability of new buildings. The school director told us that she had no real contact with legislators because it never occurred to her to do so and she did not know what good it would do. By contrast, a nonprofit affiliated school we interviewed frequently contacted not only the regulatory agencies, but many in the legislature, governor's office, and even the Office of the Mayor of Phoenix. The message content of these schools, however, was the same: an immediate need for physical space and grant money for additional programs. We found similar lobbying priorities in the other three jurisdictions we studied.

We now turn to our hypotheses on the effect of the political environment on the advocacy behavior of charter schools. For the Intensity Hypothesis, using high cost tactics over low in a favorable political environment, we again use the data on the types of tactics employed that we used for the Tactics Hypothesis. Here our interest is in whether the receptiveness of the political environment, and the opportunity this created, made schools more likely to lobby through personal contacts, an effect we do not expect to see for "low effort" advocacy tactics, such as writings letters, sending e-mail, or even picking up the telephone. Traveling to the state capital or city hall takes more time and is more likely to be done when lawmakers signal that the effort will likely be rewarded. We therefore broke the tactics variable into two new binary variables, one "low effort" and coded 1 if the school reported engaging in advocacy by mail or phone, and the other "high effort" coded 1 if the respondent reported engaging in advocacy by meeting directly with lawmakers. We used the same independent variables to estimate both of these binary dependent variables and our results are in the first two results columns of Table 2.

---- Insert Table 2 about here ----

Our expectations are only partially fulfilled. As expected, the Bush vote variable only shows a statistically significant effect at $p < 0.10$ for low effort tactics but is significant at $p < 0.05$ for the high effort dependent variable and a first difference change increased the probability of engaging in this type of advocacy by 10 percentage points. Unfortunately, the government expenditure variable is not statistically significant in either model. When it comes to low and high cost tactics, the perceived receptiveness of a venue due to ideological congruence played the role we predicted, but a general willingness on the part of government to make more public financing available did not. In other words, sympathetic ideology proved more important than government largess. A lobbyist for a charter school management company actually told us that they chose Arizona because the ideological sympathies of citizens and lawmakers provided a customer base and a state government willing to help gestate a thriving community of schools.

We address the Resources and Selective Venue Hypotheses by returning to the frequency of political contact dependent variable used to test our first four hypotheses. Our expectation for the latter hypothesis is that the external environment variables should only be statistically significant for those venues where the reigning ideology has been one of sympathy for charter schools. In the case of the four jurisdictions we studied, all of the state governments (the federal government in the case of D.C.) have traditionally advocated for charter schools, whereas most localities have generally been indifferent at best and openly hostile at worst. We therefore ran separate estimates of contact with policymakers at the state level (governors and members of the state legislatures) and at the local level (mayors, city councils, and school district officials).[11] For the Resources Hypothesis it is the charter schools themselves that we divided into two groups by the level of resources they possessed as measured by student enrollment. Since it is the wealthier schools that should have the disposable resources for engaging in advocacy, we

categorized resource rich charter schools as those with enrollments one standard deviation above the mean. Our expectation for this hypothesis is that the Bush vote and government expenditure variables should exhibit a greater effect for these schools than those with fewer resources.[12]

The results for these tests are also presented in Table 2 in the designated columns. Our Selective Venue Hypothesis is strongly supported for the two political environment variables are positive and statistically significant for advocacy in state venues and show no significant effect for local venues. Furthermore, a one standard deviation increase in each raised the probability of greater contact by 13 percentage points in the case of ideology and 19 points for public spending. Openly supportive state institutions it seems are drawing advocacy to them. By contrast, in most of our interviews school leaders expressed considerable frustration with most local lawmakers regarding the latter's indifference to whether charter schools failed or succeeded.

The results for the Resources Hypothesis, however, are the opposite of what we had anticipated. It is for those charter schools with fewer resources that the receptiveness of the political environment matters the most. Perhaps schools with significant resources may have less need of government support and would not see any need for advocacy. The external environment still matters when it comes to the decision to engage in advocacy, simply in a manner opposite from that we had hypothesized. Lack of organizational resources is apparently not a constraint to advocacy, but an inducement, just as it was with the D.C. school that asked the Senate to help them obtain a building they could not otherwise afford. Those who had resources seem to have less need for more, but those who have less need to find more.

Conclusion

In this paper we developed an integrative theoretical framework to explain advocacy by organizations whose primary reasons for existing are not policy change, the very kinds of organized interests Salisbury claims are the most numerous in the political system. Drawing on diverse literatures we argued that there are two general driving motivations influencing the advocacy decisions of these organizations, including both nonprofits and for-profits. Those with structures and norms giving them an internal orientation, or a "natural" inclination, towards seeing government as an ally and source of significant support are more likely to pro-actively engage in advocacy regardless of how receptive lawmakers may be to their goals. At the same time, the friendliness or hostility of political environments vary from state to state, city to city, and lawmaking venue to venue. The more political elites see their own careers benefiting from the work of these organizations, the more inclined they are to support these goals and to encourage entrepreneurial leaders to react with advocacy. Finding empirical support for these general propositions in charter school advocacy, we then found that we could use this framework to explain more nuanced aspects of organization advocacy, such as the number of venues lobbied, the types of tactics chosen, and the willingness to commit scarce resources to advocacy.

We acknowledge the limits of our work. It is difficult to separate internal beliefs from external environmental stimuli and there is some artificiality in the sharp conceptual distinctions embedded in our framework. In addition, it is risky to generalize from charter schools to other types of for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Our intent here is less to confirm a broad theory than to stir the pot of future work in both the interest group and charter school subfields. We have out on the table a unified framework for explaining advocacy by organizations other than traditional member-based interest groups and supported it with evidence from the advocacy of a

particular class of organizations, charter schools. Charter schools take on a wide range of organizational forms, some resembling for-profits while others clearly line up with traditional mission-driven nonprofits. They can be large, economies-of-scale seeking for-profit institutions as well as small, niche filling social service nonprofits. Both of these types, and many falling in between these two poles, appeared in our data set. Moreover, their genesis in state law, but subjection to some local / municipal regulation, means there is also considerable variation in the political environments they face. They even have some freedom to cherry pick the levels of government and lawmaking venues they will target for advocacy. This flexibility in organization form and attitude, and variation in external environments, we believe, made them exceptionally well suited to be the subject of organization advocacy research. It would be interesting to return to these states in the future to see if the charter schools still vary in terms of nonprofit or for-profit orientations. Perhaps successful advocacy by many of these schools will have encouraged the others to abandon market competition and also develop close, almost symbiotic, relationships with government. If so, then the whole charter school community may, like other social service nonprofits, become extensions of the state.

Finally, we hope that we have started an integration and synthesis of several diverse literatures all addressing the same general research question – why do non-political organizations lobby? Economists, sociologists, and political scientists have all had much to contribute, but each has tended to claim a particular type of organization or type of activity as its subject of study. We feel there is much more to be gained by pursuing integrated research agendas and we believe that we have taken some steps, hopefully significant steps, in the right direction.

Figure 1
Predictions of Organization Advocacy Behavior

External Characteristics – Government Structured Opportunity	Internal Characteristics – Government Orientation: Low	Internal Characteristics – Government Orientation: High
Low	No Advocacy Organizations have little inclination and little incentive to lobby. They are more likely to seek advantage by altering internal structures in response to market incentives	Pro-Active Advocacy Will initiate proactive advocacy with supportive and un-supportive lawmakers. They will only be moderately concerned about the cost of advocacy and will lobby in many venues.
High	Re-Active / Targeted Advocacy Organization advocates primarily in ideologically supportive venues, but employs more high cost tactics for bursts of intense lobbying.	General Widespread Advocacy Organization has long relationships with supportive lawmakers who continue to make opportunities available. Will use moderately costly tactics generally, but willing to use high cost tactics in especially friendly venues

Table 1
Basic Estimates of Internal and Environmental Hypotheses and of Venues and Tactics Chosen
Maximum Likelihood Estimates (Robust Standard Errors)

Independent Variables	**Estimation of Basic Model**	**Number of Venues**	**Number of Tactics**
School's Social Service Orientation	0.38**	0.31**	0.10***
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.04)
Imitation of Older Schools	1.52***	1.58***	0.25*
	(0.44)	(0.45)	(0.14)
Percentage Vote for Bush in 2000	0.02***	0.02***	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Per Capita General Expenditure in 2001	0.01***	−0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of Enrolled Students	0.04	0.29	0.07
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.06)
Frequency of Participation in Advocacy Associations	0.22***	0.30***	0.06**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.03)
Years the School has been Open	−0.05	−0.09**	−0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.01)
School is Located in the State Capital	−0.02	0.13	0.09*
	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.05)
School is Located in an Urban or Suburban Census Tract	0.06	−0.20	−0.02
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.06)
There is Organized Opposition to Charter Schools in the Jurisdiction	0.05	0.02	0.02
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.06)
School's Founders have Roots in the Local Community	−0.29*	−0.01	0.15*
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.08)
Wald X^2	62.42***	42.44***	35.19***
N	285	305	305

** p < 0.10* *** p < 0.05* **** p < 0.01*

Table 2
Estimates of Charter School Political Environment on Choices of Advocacy Efforts, Venues, and Resource Expenditure
Maximum Likelihood Estimates (Robust Standard Errors)

Independent Variables	Low Effort Tactics	High Effort Tactics	State Venues	Local Venues	Low Resources	High Resources
School's Social Service Orientation	0.41**	0.37**	0.45**	0.27	0.36**	0.68
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.20)	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.63)
Imitation of Older Schools	0.73	0.85*	1.56***	1.10	1.36***	2.37**
	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.52)	(0.89)	(0.50)	(1.06)
Percentage Vote for Bush in 2000	0.01*	0.01**	0.04***	0.01	0.02***	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Per Capita General Budget Expenditure	0.01	(0.01)	0.01**	0.01	0.01***	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of Enrolled Students	0.01	0.59**	0.11	0.07		
	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.22)	(0.33)	–	–
Frequency of Participation in Associations	0.24**	0.06	0.24**	0.28**	0.20***	0.35
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.22)
Years the School has been Open	−0.05	−0.05	−0.01	−0.12*	−0.04	−0.17
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.18)
School is Located in the State Capital	0.22	0.54***	0.06**	−0.09	−0.03	−0.12
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.31)	(0.26)	(0.19)	(0.98)
School is Located in Urban / Suburban Tract	−0.02	−0.08	−0.11	0.13	0.14	0.35
	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.26)	(0.19)	(0.50)
There is Organized Opposition to Charters	0.06	0.05			0.01	0.27
	(0.22)	(0.22)	–	–	(0.21)	(0.55)
School's Founders have Roots in Community	0.48**	0.10	−0.19	−0.47*	−0.37**	0.43
	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.49)
Wald X^2	31.58***	23.09**	48.10***	18.50**	51.14***	23.88***
N	305	305	172	113	249	36

** p < 0.10* *** p < 0.05* **** p < 0.01*

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[1] In this paper we substitute the word "organization" for Salisbury's "institution." We feel it is less ambiguous than "institution" which often refers to an organ of government.

[2] We wish to be clear that we are discussing explanations for engaging in advocacy behavior, not the rates of success for different types of organizations.

[3] To gauge how representative our sample was, we compared our results to those of the 1999 – 2000 Schools and Staffing Survey of the U.S. Department of Education. In our survey the mean enrollment was 276 students, in theirs it was 220 for the same jurisdictions. Sixty-two percent of our schools reported some pedagogical theme, while 56% of theirs did so. The fact that the schools in our sample are marginally larger reflects the fact that these schools have grown.

[4] The question was worded as follows: "Please indicate how frequently someone from your school actively initiates contact with the following people and institutions in order to inform them of interests and concerns regarding government policies or their implementation." The targets, as we explain in the paper, were a variety of lawmakers including oversight agencies, legislators, and governors. The underlined words are from the original survey emphasizing that the charter school is choosing to proactively raise a new subject with policymakers. We felt that this structure comes as close as we dare to actually calling this contact lobbying which, as Berry and Arons (2003) remind us, is not a good word to directly raise with nonprofits as they don't want their advocacy activities to be considered as lobbying.

[5] For D.C., Congress, which has authority over the District, is considered to be the state venue while the D.C. mayor, city council, and public school system are considered to be local officials.

[6] Specifically, respondents were asked "Thinking about the individuals and organizations that played central roles in starting your charter school, please indicate which of the following best

apply. *Please check all that apply*:" (italics in the original survey). There were eight categories of responses: converted from traditional public school, converted form private school, extension of a social service organization, founded by former public school teachers, founded by for-profits, founded by parents, founded by the local business community, and a write-in.

[7] We include nonprofits serving local businesses, such as local chambers of commerce or business associations, because, like most trade associations, they tend to be heavily oriented towards politics. In the history of charter school policy, business organizations desiring to improve education standards often mobilized to support choice in education (citation removed).

[8] Each was asked whether there was any organization advocating against charters and only coded the variable "1" if they indicated with certainty that competing interests were actively lobbying.

[9] A list of Census Bureau regions can be found at http://www.census.gov/geo/www/reg_div.txt.

[10] Initially we incorporated dummy variables for our states into the analysis to capture state to state differences in the regulatory environment. We found, however, that in every model these dummies failed to have statistically significant effects, nor did they result in significant changes in the performance of other variables. We therefore chose to exclude them in the paper as all they appear to do is eat up degrees of freedom.

[11] We removed the organized opposition variable as it is too closely related to friendliness or hostility of state and district venues.

[12] For this test we removed the resource variable from the vector of explanatory variables.