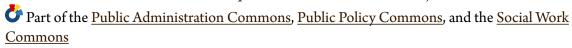2013

The "L" Word: Nonprofits, Language, and Lobbying

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Despite the many benefits associated with policy advocacy, many nonprofit organizations do not lobby. Recently, scholars have called attention to the possibility that the vagueness and ambiguity of the term lobbying may hinder policy advocacy activities, though few studies have systematically explored the relationship between nonprofit professionals' perception of this term and political activity. This study explored the social construction of the term "lobbying" by examining nonprofit leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding lobbying activities. Participants reported having a strong aversion to the term "lobbying" and preferred alternative language to describe their political activities. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

Key words: *Lobbying, nonprofit organizations, social construction, policy advocacy*

The nonprofit sector has historically fulfilled an important role in shaping American policy through its advocacy efforts (Boris & Krehely, 2002) and has been recognized as an outlet for civic participation for community members, particularly through organizations' lobbying activities (Berry & Arons, 2003; Frumkin, 2002; Mosely, 2011). Although lobbying may help nonprofits advance their mission to serve society

(Hessenius, 2007), many organizations within the sector do not lobby due to a number of barriers, such as time constraints, limited resources, fear, and lack of knowledge (Bass, Arons, Guinane, Carter, & Rees, 2007; Child & Grønbjerg, 2007; Taliaferro, 2012). A small number of studies have also suggested that perceptions of the term *lobbying* within the nonprofit sector may also affect political participation (Bass et al., 2007; Berry, 2005). However, this topic has not been fully explored in the literature. This research contributes to the current understanding of nonprofit policy advocacy by examining nonprofit administrators' perception of the language associated with lobbying and the impact of language and word use on policy advocacy activities.

Lobbying Defined

Within the literature on civic engagement, there is no distinct referent for describing activities aimed at influencing public policy decisions. Lobbying is a type of political activity that Nownes (2006) defines as "an effort designed to affect what the government does" (p. 5), which includes activities aimed at influencing government activity beyond legislative efforts. Other scholars have used a myriad of terms to describe "effort designed to affect what the government does," such as regulatory politics (Hoefer & Ferguson, 2007), advocacy (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007), nonprofit advocacy (Bass et al., 2007), and policy advocacy (Boris & Krehely, 2002). The literature also lacks consensus on the definition of the term *lobby*, though it is often viewed as a subset of activities that falls within civic engagement and/or political advocacy (Boris & Krehely, 2002; Frumkin, 2002; Smucker, 2005). This may include *direct lobbying*, which involves communication activities aimed at individuals who are directly related to the policy process with the intent of influencing policy (Rocha, 2007; Smucker, 2005) and *grassroots lobbying*, where communication is aimed at influencing the opinions of the general public with the intent that a large number of individuals will demonstrate to legislators the importance of their view on a particular policy issue (Nownes, 2006; Smucker, 2005). Lobbying is a separate, but related activity to election campaigning, which is another political activity in which nonprofit organizations participate (Hula & Jackson-Elmoore, 2001; Kerlin & Reid, 2010).

The Internal Revenue Service also provides definitions of lobbying to guide nonprofit advocacy activities. According to the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), lobbying is defined as activities aimed at "carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation..." (IRC, 2010a). Section 4911 of the IRC (commonly referred to as the "h-election"), provides further definitions for nonprofit organizations, describing lobbying as "any attempt to influence any legislation through communication with any member or employee of a legislative body, or with any government official or employee who may participate in the formulation of the legislation" (IRC, 2010b). This section also defines grassroots activities as behaviors aimed at influencing "any legislation through an attempt to affect the opinions of the general public or any segment thereof" (IRC, 2010b).

Nonprofits and Lobbying

There are many reasons why nonprofit organizations lobby, such as interests in increasing public awareness, increasing funding for particular programs, and protecting government programs that serve their constituents (Bass et al., 2007). Given that nonprofit organizations act as outlets and agents for civil engagement for the (often disadvantaged and vulnerable) communities they serve (Berry & Arons, 2003; Frumkin, 2002, Reisch & Sommerfeld, 2002), nonprofits also have a moral imperative to lobby. Similarly, political advocacy has been emphasized as having a vital role in improving the social conditions of those seeking human services by social work scholars and practitioners (Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010), and has led to the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) incorporation of political advocacy in their Code of Ethics for all social workers (NASW, approved 1996, revised 2008). Social workers have traditionally involved themselves with political activities, such as lobbying, in an effort to improve the social and economic conditions of their clients (Ezell, 1993; Schneider & Netting, 1999).

Many nonprofit organizations engage in the policy process and several factors have been found to increase an organization's likelihood to become politically involved, such as staff members dedicated to policy advocacy, technological access, and/or organizational missions that are health, environmental, and/or advocacy-related (Bass et al., 2007; Child

& Grønbjerg, 2007; Suárez & Hwang, 2008). However, a large number of nonprofits do not lobby. For instance, the Aspen Institute's Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP) found that 50.2% of nonprofits surveyed never or infrequently lobby for or against legislation, and 58.2% never or infrequently testify at legislative or administrative hearings (Bass et al., 2007). Similarly, in Berry and Arons' (2003) study, only 12.1% of nonprofits reported engaging in a high level of activity in lobbying for or against legislation, and only 20.6% reported that they frequently encourage their members to contact policymakers. The reluctance of nonprofit organizations to engage in the policy process has been attributed to several barriers, including include a lack of resources (Bass et al., 2007; Child & Grønbjerg, 2007), a lack of skills (Bass et al., 2007), conservative policy environments (Nicholson-Crotty, 2007), and government initiatives aimed at inhibiting nonprofit lobbying, such as changes in tax laws and Circular A-122 (Bass, et al., 2007; Berry & Arons, 2003; Boris & Krehely, 2002; Frumkin, 2002).

A small number of studies also suggest that misuse, traditional suspicion, and distrust of the term *lobby* may also influence nonprofit managers' political participation (Bass et al., 2007; Berry, 2005). For instance, several scholars have underscored that the terms used to describe lobbying are vague or ambiguous (Berry, 2005; Berry & Arons, 2003), which may create confusion about what activities actually encompass lobbying. Furthermore, the politics involving social policies have a scandalous past (Butler & Drakeford, 2003; Gainsborough, 2010), which may explain why social workers have been historically uncomfortable with the power and questionable ethics often associated with political activity (Ezell, 1993). A second issue relates to the negative connotation that nonprofit managers associate with the language related to the term *lobby* (Bass et al., 2007; Berry, 2005). Despite these assertions in the literature, few studies have systematically explored in depth the relationship between language use and lobbying.

Semantics and Socially-constructed Meaning

The study of semantics, or word meaning, is a highly developed and complex subfield of linguistic inquiry that considers a range of knowledge related to word meaning and use—from

referential denotation, ambiguity of meaning and synonymy, to connotation, pragmatic intention, and stylistic felicity (Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2007; Saeed, 2009). The intention of this paper is not to offer a technical, semantic analysis of the term *lobbying*, but to consider how its socially constructed uses have affected patterns of use and avoidance within the nonprofit sector. In terms of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), that is, the theory of language use that includes speaker's intentions and purposes in selecting utterances, it is essential to understand how the use or non-use of *lobbying* reflects an underlying ideology about the function and role of this named activity in nonprofit organizations.

The verb *lobby* and its associated participle *lobbying* have been socially constructed over the past two centuries in such a way as to evoke strong connotative associations and ideological contextualization (Fairclough, 1989). The verb *lobby* was etymologically derived from the earlier noun, *lobby*, which was primarily denotative and connotatively neutral. However, as early as 1820, the term lobbying was used to describe persuasive political activity (Gelack, 2008) and was used to discuss the persuasion efforts of law makers in Congress. In its grammatical conversion from a concrete referent for a waiting area or corridor within an edifice, this relatively neutral, concrete noun was then "metaphorically extended" (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2007, p. 357) semantically to denote an abstract, persuasive social process. Its use as a verb therefore has strong, socialized political overtones that have now become legally instantiated. According to the etymological timeline of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verbal grammatical use of *lobby/lobbying* has been documented for almost two centuries now in this transitive extension, leading to legal definitions and laws governing permissible and impermissible efforts of lobbying. This research contributes to the existing knowledge of nonprofit lobbying by examining the possible effects that nonprofit professionals' perceptions of the word *lobby* have on lobbying activities.

Methods

This study utilized mixed methods in which participants completed a brief demographic survey and participated in a

focus group or individual interview. The participants included nonprofit administrators in central North Carolina who represented a variety of organizations having diverse foci. The data were examined in an effort to gain an understanding of the practices and perspectives within the nonprofit context. The findings presented here are part of a larger study regarding the lobbying behavior of nonprofit organizations (See Author, 2008; Taliaferro, 2008).

Sample. Purposive and snowball sampling, methods commonly used for qualitative studies (Gosine & Pon, 2011), were used to recruit focus group and interview participants. Administrators were targeted through a database of organizations developed and maintained by the North Carolina State University Institute for Nonprofits. Participants were asked to recommend other nonprofit leaders for inclusion in the study. Key informants who were unable to attend the focus groups due to distance or schedule conflict were invited to participate in an in-person or telephone interview. Only six participants required an interview. Ultimately, study participants included administrators from nonprofit organizations predominantly in the Triangle (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill), Greensboro, Charlotte, and Wilmington areas of North Carolina. The study garnered responses from 53 participants of which 86% were Caucasian, 10% were African American, and 4% were Hispanic/Latino. The majority of the participants (60%) were female. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 66 years, the average being 53 years. All would be considered middle- to upper-management in their respective organizations, having some level of governance and administrative responsibility. Their professional roles included executive director/chief executive officer/president, communications director, and board member. A full 89% of the participants were employees of nonprofit human service organizations. However, a few board members of smaller organizations were included in the sample due to their very "hands on" roles in the organizations. Therefore, the term *administrator* is used to be inclusive of all of these roles.

Organizational budgets ranged from $55,000 to $5,000,000 with a median budget of $1,000,000. Most of the organizations (83%) had three or fewer staff members with some level of responsibility for public policy. The organizations were

predominantly direct service agencies that provided myriad services. The most often cited program areas were: dhildren, youth, and family; education; health; housing; and low income services. However, organizations providing other services (e.g., employment, violence prevention, palliative care, and disability services) were also included in the sample. Only three organizations classified themselves as advocacy organizations.

Procedures. Five focus groups were held during October and November of 2006. The groups had a minimum of seven and a maximum of 12 participants. The focus group methodology provides a systematic way of exploring the research question, promoting a "thick" analysis of the information (Umana-Taylor & Bamaca, 2004). Six personal telephone interviews lasting from one-half to one and one-half hours were conducted during December 2006 and January 2007. The interviews and focus groups were conducted using semi-structured interview schedules and a topic guide, respectively (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). The focus groups and interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for analyses. Both interviewees and focus group participants were asked several questions, including: "What comes to mind when nonprofit lobbying is suggested?" "Define lobbying." "Discuss how it [lobbying] is different than advocacy." and "Who sets the lobbying agenda in the agency?"

Data Analysis

The transcripts were hand coded by the first author and a research assistant. The data were then organized into meaningful units and categories (Coleman & Unrau, 2005). Inductive coding was used to determine the initial themes and a three-layer process was used to code the data: identifying, organizing, and interrelating themes. First, the significant themes that appeared across most or all study participants' interviews were identified as patterned regularities in the data (Wolcott, 1994). Next, themes were organized according to their frequencies of occurrence, devoting more time to the themes that were common across study participants. Then, various themes were interconnected by contextualizing the topics in a broader analytical framework and making connections to the research literature (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Through this analysis process, several themes regarding the term *lobbying* emerged from

the data. These included discomfort with the term *lobbying*, reputation preservation, and fear of repercussion. The following section details findings drawn from the focus group discussions and field interviews.

Findings

Discomfort with the Word "Lobbying"

Lobbying was not defined for the participants. Focus group members and interviewees were asked to define lobbying in their own terms. Most of the respondents had an understanding of lobbying and what it could accomplish. Pragmatically, they were not averse to engaging in lobbying activities and expressed the value of lobbying. Participants further understood that they engaged in the activity, though were resistant to call it lobbying. Lobbying had a clear, negative connotation in the minds of many nonprofit participants, who often used less emotionally-charged and value-laden terms such as *education* or *awareness* to describe behavior that could be defined as lobbying. One example was seen through a human services administrator from Raleigh who insisted that he did not lobby but went on to describe his organizations' activities using the following terms:

> I have spoken to all the school board members, one-on-one, about that, so I've presented that. I've spoken to a couple of city council members; I've spoken to a couple of county commissioners; I've spoken to the mayor of [town name]....

When probed about the context of the activities, he acknowledged that they were done in his role as executive on behalf of the organization. So, while he was adamant about not calling his actions *lobbying*, by most definitions, they would be classified as such.

Participants were much more comfortable calling their activities education. When asked if their organizations lobby, most of the participants suggested that it was "Education. That's what we call it [Laughter]." Another administrator of a housing agency responded that "It's a very delicate, fine line that we try to walk. I think it's leaning more towards the educative community about issues so they can make an informed

decision on something." Another participant suggested: "I think we're public awareness versus aggressive hard sell with lobbying. It's more making them aware and the public aware of what we're doing."

In addition, alternative terms were often used to create a distinction between their lobbying activities, which they viewed as advancing their organization's mission, and other lobbying activities, which were associated with money ex-change and bribery. An administrator from a women's focused organization in Charlotte said:

> I don't see it as necessarily going out and lobbying people in the common sense that we all think of lobbying as, you know, guys on Capitol Hill and all that stuff and money changing hands and dinners and that sort of thing. I see it more as advocating for the program and the services and the patients that we serve. So I don't really call it lobbying.

Many participants indicated that they knew their activities were considered lobbying, but purposefully described these actions using other terms to deflect the negative context associ-ated with the term. The following facetious comment reflected the attitudes of the participants: "Oh no, we don't [lobby]... except when we talk to our friends who happen to be legisla-tors about the things we need them to do." In the same vein, another administrator of a nonprofit that received significant government funds said with a wink, "I think I'd noticed that in one of your [survey] questions [asked if we lobby]. I actually wrote in, 'No, we do not lobby, we *educate* [emphasis that of the speaker].'" Another said with a shrug: "We don't lobby, we educate, and I talk to legislators [whom] I know."

Some participants were careful about the words used for their activities because they received government funds and were acutely aware of the prohibition against using govern-ment funds for lobbying activities. One administrator of a child-serving organization described it by saying:

> One of the things that I felt that my role of the non-profit director here was, was to be an advocate. I'm not allowed to spend [the organization's] dollars on advocacy, so we educate... But I really do believe that

because of the way my organization is now structured … that our role is … to look at children's outcomes, but the biggest thing that we can do for the community is to be the voice of early childhood.

Reputation Preservation

This negative perception of lobbying served as a strong deterrent to associate with these activities. Participants asserted that nonprofits need to maintain an image that is beyond reproach, and being associated with lobbying could potentially hinder their reputations. Part of the hesitancy to use the term *lobbying* had to do with the perceived less savory nature of lobbying, as that was an intrinsic part of the participants' definition of lobbying. The egotism of their definition of lobbying was in stark contrast to the altruism typical of nonprofit missions. When asked to differentiate between the terms education, advocacy, and lobbying, one child welfare administrator from Greensboro suggested:

> You know, lobbying to me is somebody going to somebody who has the ability to move money for the purpose of self-gratification. Meaning I'm going out and getting the money either for my constituent or on behalf of my constituent to make them even richer. And when I think about what we do, we're not making people rich but we're making them healthier. We're making them more informed, et cetera … So, I mean, I think there's a major distinction between what we do … as non-profits.

Participants' perception was that their lobbying involved altruistic effort to reallocate resources and wealth. One education-related nonprofit administrator asserted:

> We all try to re-direct resources … I think our approach should be re-directing resources not to line pocketbooks and those sorts of things. It's lining the pocketbooks of non-profits [as opposed to individuals] so that we can do more than what we do.

It was important to the participants that the perception of their education and awareness activities be externally focused, and

to the benefit of the organization and constituency.

This differed from their perception of for-profit lobbying activities as being corrupt. An administrator from the Wilmington area asserted:

> I hate that companies, businesses, corporations, have these cutthroat lobbyists that do anything to get the company's point across... And I hate that we sometimes have to be that way. But I think we need to be when it comes to lobbying. I hate that our system is like that, but I think we have to be just as cutthroat as ... they [are]."

Similarly, a nonprofit administrator from Charlotte described the "traditional" view of lobbying as a "self-gratifying, sleazy activity with lavish dinners, money trading hands, and men in shiny shoes and slick expensive suits."

Many participants associated lobbying with bribery. An environmental organization administrator described her negative feelings about lobbying activities:

> Well, on the state level I really felt like I was in the belly of the beast. It was just this horrible way that really deals are made and everything else. And it was, um, was just very cutthroat, and it just didn't feel good. ... You know, you don't have the finances or the money to, to, um, line their pockets. I hate to say that, it's like, you know, you don't really have any clout.

Nonprofit participants were loathe to be associated with those connotations, so they were resistant to the idea of labeling their activities *lobbying*.

It is also important to note that the participants made an explicit distinction between the act and the actor and suggested that it was common knowledge that paid lobbyists are "cutthroat." One immigration-related administrator detailed it in the following terms: "There's 'lobbying' [used finger quotes] and then there's lobbyists. I think lobbyists definitely [have] the negative, you know, connotation." It was clear from the agreement from the rest of the participants that the lobbyist was deemed less desirable than the act of lobbying.

Fear of Losing Resources

Given the negative perceptions of the term *lobbying*, the potential repercussions of engaging in the activity loomed large for the participants. One human services administrator summed up the underlying concern: "Quite honestly, fear. Fear of coming out on the wrong side of a position, coming out on the wrong side of an election." The participants cautiously weighed the potential negative outcomes of a failed lobbying campaign and sometimes found the positives did not outweigh the potential negative consequences in regard to public perception, funding, political capital, and other intangible considerations. The fear of the public's perceptions was also a strong deterrent to lobbying activities.

Of those who were most reluctant to participate in lobbying activities, fear of alienation was a real and imminent influence on participants' behavior. As one administrator stated: "You know, you just can't afford to alienate half the community. [Community decision-makers] may want to [provide social welfare services], but they don't want to [provide social welfare services] if they think you're pushing a political agenda." This participant's comments speak to the hesitancy of her organization, and possibly her own reluctance to engage in lobbying activities. It is important to note that this statement was made with arms crossed and head shaking in the negative.

Another administrator from the Charlotte area discussed how lobbying may place funds or resources at risk: "[Lobbying] could really freak people out. A real concern is that people would not want to bring their funds to [organization name], or they would want to move it someplace else if we did that." Having weighed the benefits of lobbying and potential loss of resources, participants indicated that they were strategic about their advocacy activities. One human services administrator stated: "...so it's just choosing those issues and trying to think how would that affect those people, because you still have to bring in the money from the donors."

Discussion

The interaction between politics and human services involves a historical account peppered with scandal (Butler & Drakeford, 2003; Gainsborough, 2010). It is understandable

that today's nonprofit administrators might want to avoid the appearance of engaging in an activity that has negative associations and overtones of political persuasion, even coercion, bribery, and favor. The avoidance strategy extending to the use of the term may, in effect, speak to a kind of principled stance that has developed within the nonprofit sector that sets it apart from other advocacy institutions in society. The underlying ideology may assume that the missions of non-profits are inherently transparent and positive and therefore must avoid any perception of coercive politicized activity. This kind of institutional and political exceptionalism among nonprofits would differentiate their status and causes from other institutions so that they would view themselves as institutionally "above" the often-negative connotative associations that are evoked by the term *lobbying* in its broader societal context.

A number of participants in the focus groups made important distinctions between "education" and "lobbying," readily admitting to the former but disassociating from the latter. In terms of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), the verb *lobby* constitutes a type of "request," whereas the speech act "educate" involves the transmission of needed knowledge without the illocutionary force that requires the recipient to take an action on behalf of the agent. The felicity conditions for requests assume that: (a) the speakers believe the action has not yet taken place; (b) the speaker wants the action to be taken or thinks that the action should be taken; (c) the speaker believes that the listener/recipient is able to take the action; and (d) the speaker/agent believes that the hearer/recipient may be willing to take the action for the speaker. In contrast, the felicity conditions for the act of education simply assume that a speaker/agent has knowledge of some type that the listener/hearer does not have and has need of, without any necessary condition about the listener/recipient's capability or willingness to carry out an action for the speaker/agent related to that knowledge.

At the same time, the use of the term *educate* in the nonprofit sector may carry a conversational implicature (Grice 1975, 1989). The label "educate" avoids any of the legal entanglements of "lobby," carries positive rather than negative connotations, and presumes that recipients' education will lead to the desired results of change without an explicit request for

action. In this sense, then, the nonprofit sector maintains its exceptionalist ideology as an institution within the political system.

"Lobbying" as a Dirty Word

The findings from this study support the existing literature, which states that the public perception of lobbying oftentimes entails deceit and questionable transactions (Bass et al., 2007; McConnell, 2004). Much of the tarnished image of lobbying has been attributed to public scandals involving lobbyists, such as recent incidents involving Jack Abramoff and Tom DeLay (Bass et al., 2007). A further complication relates to the IRC institutionalizing a definition for lobbying, describing it as "activities of which is carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation..." (IRC, 2010a). Berry (2005) states that the use of the word "propaganda" in the legislation is particularly problematic, because the term is "a rather inflammatory word that suggests manipulative and dishonest communication" (p. 571).

This study also found that the negative perception of the word "lobby" was directly related to nonprofit professionals' discomfort with calling their political advocacy activities *lobbying*, with some participants reporting fear of using the term to describe their advocacy activities. This finding supports evidence from the Aspen Institute's Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP) study (Bass et al., 2007), which suggests that nonprofit administrators are more comfortable with using terms *advocate* and *educate* to describe lobbying activities. Some respondents in the SNAP study clearly described their involvement with lobbying activities, but reported that their organization does not lobby. This was also found true of participants in the current study.

The current study builds upon the SNAP findings by capturing the reasons that nonprofit administrators use alternative terms to describe their lobbying activities. It found that in many cases, nonprofit administrators do, in fact, lobby and know that they are engaging in lobbying activities. However, these nonprofit managers purposefully used such terms as *educate* and *advocate* when they indeed were aware that they engaged in lobbying activities. In other words, the nonprofit managers in this study were not confused about whether

their activities were considered lobbying; they sought benefits in lobbying and then strategically claimed that their activities were *education* to avoid the negative association with lobbying. Essentially, lobbying is a necessary and valued activity. However, among nonprofits, the ideology that drives the word usage, or lack thereof, is the desire to maintain the exceptionalism of nonprofit organizations within the political milieu.

Implications

Findings from this study have several implications for nonprofit educators, practitioners, and researchers. While there are many meanings to the term *lobbying*, federal lobbying legislation was crafted as a response to corruption in politics, thus creating a connotation of the word that implies wrongdoing. Although there is a larger definition of lobbying that reflects democracy and civic engagement, the non-profit sector has continued to focus on the more restrictive meaning of the term that is used by the federal government. Practitioners within the nonprofit sector need to create further and more frequent dialogue on political advocacy that emphasizes the larger, more encompassing meaning of lobby.

It is important for nonprofit educators to reinforce the clear message that lobbying is part of nonprofit management practice and it does not compromise the image of nonprofits to lobby. The good work that is done for individuals, families, and communities via non-profit lobbying should be celebrated and not hidden. If new non-profit practitioners do not enter the field understanding the benefits of lobbying, time is wasted learning the nuances of engaging in lobbying without calling it lobbying. That is time when others with competing agendas can access decision-makers unfettered and control the discourse on important policy issues.

Findings from this research indicate that limited knowledge was one of the larger barriers to nonprofit lobbying. This was the case for nonprofit managers who had limited knowledge about lobbying and therefore were not confident in engaging in lobbying activities. This was also the case for nonprofit managers who were knowledgeable about lobbying, but felt that limits in other stakeholders' knowledge (for example, board members, donors, larger public) imposed barriers to

lobbying, since they feared that negative perception of their activities would result in lost resources. Both scenarios indicate that education on lobbying and advocacy may address these barriers and lead to more effectiveness and more positive outcomes from lobbying activities. To increase leaders' capacity and confidence to engage in lobbying activities within the nonprofit sector, it is suggested that nonprofit leaders participate in professional development opportunities that will expose them to effective lobbying strategies within the broader context of lobbying that reflects democracy and civic engagement. Nonprofit leaders should then reinforce this definition of lobbying through their communication with other stakeholders. Additionally, to illuminate the process further, nonprofit managers should also utilize the IRC h-election, given that it provides clear guidelines of the amount of effort and funds they are allowed to use for lobbying

Findings from this study have implications for researchers who focus on the political behaviors of nonprofit organizations. First, without a standard definition of lobbying that applies across institutions, research participants may be inappropriately selected or deselected for studies or provide inaccurate data, because the conceptualization of the term *lobby* within a single study sample may vary greatly. Also, negative perceptions of the term *lobby* may cause research participants to underreport the amount of lobbying in which they engage. Finally, given that the operationalization of the term *lobby* varies greatly across individual studies, there may be difficulty in comparing results across studies.

While this study was a relatively small qualitative analysis, it does support and provide a context for larger studies on nonprofit lobbying and advocacy. Nonprofits fill a void created by the lack of government capacity and the lack of private sector will. It is imperative that these organizations utilize their full complement of resources and tools for furthering their respective missions. While the word *lobbying* holds a powerful set of attributes constituting its meaning and thus determining the range of objects to which it may be applied, it cannot be abandoned as a resource for nonprofits.

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