

# Organizational Diversity in the U.S. Advocacy Sector

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*Academic observers of contemporary American politics tend to portray the political sector as characterized by little variation in the options for citizen-based action, represented by professional advocacy organizations that provide few avenues for meaningful civic involvement. This article challenges this dominant imagery and examines how much variety exists in the organizational models available for citizen voice at the national level in the United States and how the observed models are linked to the goals, strategies, and claims advanced by a diverse set of national advocacy groups. Analysis of a sample of Washington, DC-based political organizations identified five distinct models of organizing that differ significantly in terms of their structural characteristics and their association with the goals and activities that animate collective action at the national level in the United States. Keywords: advocacy, interest groups, social movements, civic engagement, organizational diversity.*

The “advocacy explosion” (Berry 1997) that followed in the wake of the 1960s protest wave in the United States has been extensively documented by social scientists concerned with the reconfiguration of the political system to accommodate a broader range of citizen groups seeking to influence public opinion and public policy. This proliferation of organizations at the national level—variously denoted as professional social movement organizations, advocacy groups, and citizen groups in order to differentiate them from established interest groups that represent business, labor, and professionals—has come in for both criticism and praise. On the one side stand those that Theda Skocpol (2003) characterizes as optimists, proponents of the view that “more is better” in terms of the number and range of issues represented and the options for political involvement available to a variety of constituencies (see, e.g., Berry 1999; Minkoff 1995, 1997). On the other side are those scholars who question the qualitative dimensions of the expansion of the advocacy sector, taking particular issue with these organizations in terms of their limited accountability to a mass membership base, the replacement of meaningful civic participation with check writing and other forms of low-cost involvement, and their reinforcement of narrow identity- or issue-based categories at the expense of alliances that might transcend salient lines of social division (Putnam 1995; Skocpol 2003; see Fung 2003 for a useful review).

Setting aside the normative dimensions of this debate, what each side seems to share is the assumption that a new model of political organization has come to dominate the interest group sector—one that encourages “variety and voice” (Skocpol 2004:A7) with respect to the many issues now represented in national politics and political discourse, but one that is also

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highly professional in its operating structure and in its relationships to its constituency and established political actors. Theoretically and historically, such a convergence in the “organizational repertoire” (Clemens 1993) makes sense, although there are also reasons to expect more diversity than posited by the standard account. As a result, the prevailing imagery potentially distorts our understanding of the range of options for citizen involvement in political affairs (McCarthy 2005).

In this article, we take up the question of how much variety exists in the organizational models available for claims making that is concentrated in the center of national politics in the United States. Our primary goal is to determine whether there is, in fact, a delimited set of organizational models observed across what we conceptualize as the national advocacy sector. In addition, we ask whether certain groups are more likely to adopt specific organizational forms and how this may influence the kind of political action they pursue. These questions are addressed empirically with a cluster analysis that uses data on nationally oriented political organizations that locate their base of operation in and around Washington, DC. These groups vary widely in their issue focus, ranging, for example, from civil rights, AIDS activism, women’s rights, and environmental advocacy, to conservative causes such as abortion restriction and family values. However, they have all chosen to promote political claims from the center of national decision making in the United States, which is expected to constrain the kinds of organizational models available to them. Documenting the range of available organizational forms is substantively and theoretically important, given the role that national advocacy organizations play in establishing an enduring infrastructure for challenges to the state, providing a resource niche for future activism and organization building, and shaping public discourse and securing access to civil society (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Fung 2003; Minkoff 1997).

In the next section, we clarify our focus on what we refer to as the national advocacy sector. We then review the literatures that posit limited diversity in organizing models within this sector, followed by a consideration of alternative perspectives that suggest that there may be more variation than expected. We also take up the question of how available models of political organization may be related to the goals, activities, and issues that motivate organized advocacy. The remainder of the article provides a description of the data and methods we use to derive an empirically grounded picture of the national advocacy sector and to examine the relationship between available models and modes of claims-making activities by national political organizations. After presenting our results, we revisit the animating debates in the field and suggest some implications of our analysis for both popular and scholarly understandings of the current contours of the national advocacy sector in the United States.

### **Defining the Advocacy Sector**

We follow Kenneth Andrews and Bob Edwards (2004) in defining advocacy organizations as “groups and organizations that make public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change that, if implemented, would conflict with the social, cultural, political, or economic interests or values of other constituencies and groups” (p. 485). As they note, this broad, synthetic definition bridges scholarship in the areas of social movements, interest groups, and nonprofits, and encompasses such discipline specific terms as citizen groups and public interest groups (Berry 1997; Walker 1991), social movement organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977), interest organizations (Burstein 1998), and nonprofit policy advocates (Jenkins 1987). Rather than assuming *a priori* categorical differences between organizational forms based on such factors as, for example, the group’s willingness to use disruptive tactics, whether or not group interests are routinely represented in political decision making, or the organization’s reliance on a mass membership or volunteer base for resources and influence, this definition allows analysts to treat such features as goals, strategies, and organizational

form as variables to be studied (Andrews and Edwards 2004). By organizational form we refer to the structural properties of advocacy organizations that serve as the “basic blueprints for transforming inputs into organizational products or responses” (Aldrich and Ruef 2006:115), in this case, their operating structures, membership strategies, and resources (Andrews and Edwards 2004:487–89).

The advocacy *sector* as we conceptualize it is similar to what Roberta Garner and Mayer Zald (1987) define as the social movement sector: “the *configuration* of social movements, the structure of antagonistic, competing and/or cooperating movements that in turn is part of a larger structure of action (political action, in a very broad sense) that may include parties, state bureaucracies, the media, pressure groups, churches, and a variety of other organizational factors in a society” (p. 297; emphasis in original). This definition places relatively broad boundaries around the advocacy sector at the same time that it locates it in the broader system of political action. Also important for our purposes is Garner and Zald’s (1987) observation that the organizational form adopted by social movements is a “characteristic of the movement sector as a whole, and not merely a characteristic of individual movements” (p. 297). This formulation implies that, while commitment to a specific cause may motivate an organization’s existence, the ways in which it operates cannot be explained by its substantive focus or political objectives alone (see David Meyer and Doug Imig [1993] for an alternative sector definition). At a minimum, the relationship between organizational identities and organizational forms and activities needs to be taken as an empirical question, something we address below.

## Homogeneity or Diversity in the Advocacy Sector

### *Voice without Variety*

Analysts working in the areas of social movements and civic engagement provide a set of loosely related arguments in support of the view that the national advocacy sector in the United States is composed of a limited range of organizational models. Beyond this broad generalization, however, the research literature offers only minimal guidelines with respect to deriving testable hypotheses about the composition of the sector. Rather, our objective here is to draw on this work to specify a set of expectations to guide our empirical analysis.

Early resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977) outlines a set of empirical and theoretical propositions that draw attention to the rise of a new form of social movement organization (SMO), the professional SMO, that targets its appeals for resources to conscience adherents (as opposed to beneficiaries) and relies more heavily on paid, professional staff than members for organizational labor. Professional SMOs are also likely to be centralized, in contrast to the federated form that predated them. Another distinguishing feature of these new, professional SMOs is the use of modern technologies of mobilization, such as direct mail (and, more recently, the Internet), to overcome the “infrastructural deficits” (McCarthy 1987) characteristic of conscience constituents and demographically and geographically dispersed participants.

In broad terms, John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1973) link the rise of the professional SMO to post-World War II affluence and economic expansion, which contributed to the availability of discretionary resources that could be committed to social causes and the creation of career opportunities for professional advocates. While not the only available SMO form, the close articulation of the professional SMO with the rise of a middle class constituency that was available for relatively routine, low-cost contributions on behalf of various causes—even (or especially) those from which they did not necessarily directly benefit—promoted this model’s dominance on the national political scene. These trends have also contributed to the more general expansion of advocacy organizations after the 1970s in the

United States (Berry 1997; Walker 1991). The current view is that the use of formal, professional organizations by a wide range of constituencies has become increasingly routine, in tandem with the institutionalization of social protest as a regular feature of democratic politics (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Paul Burstein (1998) makes an even stronger argument that interest groups, social movement organizations, and political parties have become indistinguishable with respect to their mechanisms of influence on political processes.

Starting from rather different concerns, analysts of civic engagement, such as Skocpol (1999, 2003) and Robert Putnam (1995), draw attention to the national dominance of staff-run advocacy organizations that tend to have “paper memberships” where joining is a matter of writing a check and which fail to actively involve members in the operation of the organization itself. As Skocpol (2003) argues, “[p]rofessionally run advocacy groups and nonprofit institutions now dominate civil society, as people seek influence and community through a very new mix of largely memberless voluntary organizations” (p. 126). These “associations without members” (Skocpol 1999) have little or no avenues of accountability to their membership base, in comparison to traditional federations that integrated and actively engaged citizens through a rich web of local chapters and opportunities for connecting at the state and regional level. The contrast here is between large voluntary associations such as the National Congress of Parents and Teachers/PTA, the Young Men’s Christian Association, and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and their modern-day counterparts such as the Children’s Defense Fund and the Women’s Economic Roundtable.

The relatively dramatic shift from “membership to management” (Skocpol 2003) in the civic realm can be attributed to a combination of push and pull factors, such as the delegitimation of traditionally segregated membership associations following the civil rights and feminist movements; the availability of new resources, technologies, and opportunities for centralized lobbying that minimizes the need for volunteer participation and support; and “changes at the top” of the American class structure that created a constituency for both running and benefiting from a more professionalized, expert-centered organizational form (Skocpol 2003: ch. 5). Added to this is the expansion of organizations such as think tanks, political action committees, and foundations that are nonmembership by design (Skocpol 2003:149–50). From Skocpol’s perspective, the expansion of professional advocacy organizations is both symptom and cause of what she refers to as “diminished democracy” in the United States.

Robert Putnam (1995) is equally critical, arguing that the ties forged in national advocacy organizations are weak and do not produce substantial stocks of social capital—from his perspective, the foundation of a strong civil society and vibrant democracy. While acknowledging the political importance of the post-1970 increase in advocacy organizations, he characterizes national mass-membership groups such as the Sierra Club, the National Organization for Women, and the American Association of Retired Persons in terms quite similar to Skocpol (Putnam 1995:71). Such “mailing list” and “single issue” lobbies, although providing multiple venues for making political claims, promote a “constricted notion of citizenship—citizen as disgruntled claimant, not citizen as participant in collective endeavor to define the public interest” (Putnam 1996:27). A further consequence is that members lack meaningful opportunities to develop civic skills that are transferable to the political arena, which is especially troublesome for groups that have lower levels of civic engagement to begin with (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; see Barakso 2005 for an alternative argument). At the sectoral level, Jeffrey Berry (2005) suggests that governmental regulation of lobbying by nonprofit service providers further restricts the opportunities for civic involvement available to more marginal groups, with the implication being that national issue-based advocacy organizations are more widely available as representatives of the middle and upper classes. And, even those national organizations that intentionally practice “affirmative advocacy” (Strolovitch 2007) on behalf of politically and economically disadvantaged constituents are ultimately constrained in their efforts to do so.

Despite broad agreement across both the social movement and civic engagement literatures with the proposition that professional advocacy organizations have come to dominate the national political scene, there is little theoretical consensus on the processes of compositional change in the sector. The more prominent arguments reviewed here emphasize the importance of socio-historical developments, such as the centralization of federal power or increasing societal affluence, in accounting for the convergence on a dominant model of national political organization. To the extent that the processes that contribute to sector development are specified theoretically, analysts tend to focus on institutional and resource-based arguments. For example, John McCarthy, David Britt, and Mark Wolfson (1991) describe the “tangle of incentives,” negative legal and material sanctions and less explicit normative considerations, that favor citizen organizations that formally incorporate and accept some degree of accountability to the state. Others have examined the competitive and resource-related mechanisms that shape the existing field of movement organizations (Jenkins 1998; Minkoff 1994), as well as cultural constraints that set boundaries on available models of political organization and the prospects for innovation in organizational forms (Armstrong 2002; Clemens 1993).

Although the mechanisms posited vary, the insight of these approaches is that advocacy organizations normally operate in the context of significant resource and political constraints that tend to promote a great deal of similarity—or, isomorphism—among organizations and, by extension, a high level of structuration in the organizational field and very little diversity in organizing models (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991). This is particularly likely to be the case among organizations that operate in the national political arena, where power and decision making are centralized and organizational legitimacy is a valuable political resource.

### *“Variety and Voice”*

Although most scholarship supports the expectation that there is limited variety in available models of political organization in the national advocacy sector, some recent research on social movements and organizational fields points to potential sources of diversity—or at least countervailing pressures against the assumed tendency toward homogeneity. John McCarthy (2005), for example, has developed a fairly specific taxonomy that identifies eight logical possibilities for national SMO forms based on whether they have individuals as members and operating units below the national level (i.e., some combination of state, regional, and local chapters) (McCarthy 2005:Figure 7.1). This work points in the direction of at least some greater variety in organizational forms at the national level than is posited by the standard account.

Debra Minkoff’s (1995, 1999) research on the civil rights and feminist movements also presents empirical evidence for a relatively circumscribed, but nonetheless diverse, set of organizational models defined by core strategies. The composition of these social movements reflects the greater ability of more established and professional organizations to respond to, and survive, changes in the political and resource environment, with the result being the dominance of reform-oriented advocacy organizations over protest groups and organizations that favor service provision and cultural production. Importantly, however, the field continues to provide a niche for these alternative strategies, suggesting that the introduction of new organizational forms does not necessarily undermine the continued existence of older ones—although it may displace their dominance in the organizational repertoire. Skocpol (2003) alludes to this possibility, noting that “[t]he upheavals of the sixties might have left behind a reconfigured civic world, in which some old-line membership associations had declined, some new federations had emerged, and still others had reoriented and reenergized themselves to take advantage of new issues and sources of support” (p. 139). However, in the contemporary period, she argues that these large membership federations “were not only bypassed in national politics after the 1960s; most of them also dwindled” (Skocpol 2003:153). Here the contrast is between a model of competitive replacement and one of community evolution in

which populations are sorted into differentiated and interdependent niches, contributing to the maintenance of multiple organizational forms (Aldrich and Reuf 2006:240).

Finally, cultural or cognitive constraints, such as ideological commitments and organizational values, may also be a source of variety in the advocacy sector. Whereas institutional theory highlights the role that “logics of appropriateness” (Friedland and Alford 1991) derived from normative and regulatory environments play in keeping actors oriented to more legitimate models of organization and action, research on social movements has drawn attention to a countervailing tendency among political actors to creatively adapt dominant models of organizations in ways that lead to innovation in organizational forms (Clemens 1993; Clemens and Cook 1999). Such adaptations introduce new or hybrid models of organization that contribute to some degree of heterogeneity in organizational forms at the population level (Armstrong 2002; Campbell 2005). An even more extreme check on sectoral homogeneity is the tendency for some political actors to reject (or at least resist) dominant models of organization on strategic and/or ideological grounds. As Francesca Polletta (2002) argues, the meanings attached to organizational forms can both motivate or preclude their adoption, as was the case with the varied history of participatory democracy in the civil rights and subsequent social movements. By extension, to the extent that they are successful in establishing and maintaining alternative forms of organization, the sector will be composed of a more diverse set of options that reflect different ideological commitments, as has been demonstrated in the case of feminist, new Left, and environmental movements (Breines 1980; Brulle 2000; Feree and Martin 1995; Staggenborg 1988). However, given the greater mobilization and maintenance obstacles faced by less formal and more ideologically committed organizations (Minkoff 1999; Staggenborg 1988), it seems unlikely that they will have any substantial representation in the national advocacy sector.

### *Summary and Empirical Expectations*

The dominant imagery in the literature on the United States is that of a national-level political-organizational sector characterized by few options for citizen-based action and comprised mainly of national advocacy organizations “without members and with checkbook members” (McCarthy 2005:195). Our primary goal in the remainder of this article is to evaluate the empirical validity of this characterization of the advocacy sector, which we have suggested may overstate the degree of convergence in organizational forms.

We start by giving greater weight to accounts that stress homogeneity in the sector, given that they dominate both social scientific and policy debates about the character of national advocacy organizations. Our baseline expectation is that we will observe very little diversity in identifiably distinct organizational models. To the extent that diversity exists, we expect that national organizations with centralized operating structures and direct membership strategies will be more prevalent than federated membership associations that link participants through networks of regional and local chapters. Nonmembership organizations run by professional staffs are also likely to comprise a core component of the advocacy sector. Importantly, we anticipate that there will be some continued representation in the sector of those organizational forms that have presumably been displaced by the transition from “membership to management” in American civic life—namely, mass-based federations with a structure of chapters that link members to centers of organizational decision making. Here the interesting question is their status vis-à-vis newer models of political organization.

### **Issues, Goals, and Tactics in the Advocacy Sector**

Given the intensity of debates surrounding the advocacy sector’s potential for citizen engagement, detailing its structural composition is, in and of itself, important. Going beyond this descriptive objective, we are also interested in whether the composition of the sector is

related to the issues and goals that motivate nationally active groups and how this, in turn, influences the types of activities by which they make their claims. In effect, our broad conceptualization of the advocacy sector, based on the premise that organizational models are relatively neutral tools, or resources, available to actors across the political spectrum, gives us the opportunity to treat issues, goals, and activities as variables to be analyzed (Andrews and Edwards 2004).

Here, again, the literature provides some guidelines but no specific testable hypotheses. We expect, however, that the same processes thought to encourage diversity at the sector level are also likely to influence the propensity of different groups to adopt different organizational forms. For example, to the extent that logics of appropriateness direct groups toward or away from certain practices, there may be a correlation between organizational constituencies and goals and the organizational models they are most likely to adopt. To illustrate, one plausible expectation is that groups espousing more radical or progressive social change goals will tend to favor organizational forms that are structured around grassroots participation and political mobilization over professionally managed advocacy groups that are thought to have a higher risk of cooptation (Piven and Cloward 1977). As another illustration, we might expect constituencies who lack structured opportunities for face-to-face interaction to rely more heavily on the staff-run advocacy form in order to compensate for these “infrastructural deficits” (McCarthy 1987; Minkoff 1997).

A related consideration is that “advocacy” itself comprises a broad set of strategies such as lobbying, litigation, and information dissemination, as well as protest and other forms of political disruption that are considered to be the province of social movement organizations in particular. Once we identify the dominant organizational models in the sector, we are in a position to analyze whether and how, at the sector level, organizational form influences a group’s likelihood of pursuing specific lines of action—an issue that has animated debates about the institutionalization of social movements and political organizations more generally (see Clemens and Minkoff 2004). Here we are interested in such questions as, for example, whether organizations adopting the professional SMO form are more likely to pursue conventional lobbying or media activities and/or less likely to engage in protest activities.

## Study Design

This research draws on an organizational census of a range of domestic issue domains that correspond with more broadly mobilized social movements over the post-World War II period. These domains include: AIDS, disability rights, gay/lesbian rights, immigration, labor, poverty and social justice, progressive social change, racial and ethnic civil rights, reproductive rights, student/youth activism, women’s rights, women of color, environment/ecology, civil liberties, peace and anti-militarism, public interest, Christian right, conservative, and right-to-life.<sup>1</sup> A range of published directories, media sources, movement-related publications, and Web sites were used to develop the organizational database. The key directories consulted were the *Encyclopedia of Associations/Associations Unlimited*, *Public Interest Profiles*, *Washington Information Directory*, *Washington Representatives*, and *Who’s Who in Washington Non-profit Groups*. Organizations were also located through Internet searches and publications such as *The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook* (Utter and Storey 1995) and *AIDS Crisis in America: A Reference Handbook* (Lerner and Hombs 1998).

1. These issue areas were initially selected to match the issue foci included in the national protest event data collection project led by Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, Susan Olzak and Sarah Soule (NSF Grant SES-9911296, “Collaborative Research on the Dynamics of Collective Protest in the U.S., 1950–1995”).

After identifying organizations according to their central issue area, the inclusion criteria limited data collection to nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations whose central purpose is to influence national domestic policy and public debate (in contrast to, e.g., providing services or benefits directly to the organization's members or constituency; see Andrews and Edwards 2004). More specifically, group efforts targeted at national-level institutions and elected representatives, as well as toward grassroots mobilization and influencing public opinion across broad sectors of society, were included. Organizations must have indicated substantial national involvement, meaning that their activities/objectives were not limited to local- or state-level politics or targeted at specific institutions (e.g., educational, social welfare, professional, religious), although they could also have been engaged in efforts to influence practices or policies across geographic, political, and institutional arenas.

The same sources listed above were used to collect as much information as possible to describe the sector in terms of such features as primary location, membership structure and size, number of staff, founding date, resources (budget, assets and income), activities and organizational goals. Data on staff size and membership were primarily collected from *Associations Unlimited* (Gale Group). Information on political activities and goals were coded from *Associations Unlimited* and Web sites, using a standardized coding instrument (available from the authors). The primary source of financial data was *Guidestar* (Philanthropic Research, Inc.), a Web-based resource on nonprofit organizations that posts financial information (including scanned IRS returns). All data refer to organizational characteristics of the sector in the year 2000.

In this article, we focus specifically on 699 organizations identified by our research as being active in national-level advocacy and having their headquarters or an office in the Washington, DC area (which excludes advocacy groups located in Washington but focused only on District issues). This operational definition of the national advocacy sector follows the approach of interest group research in political science (see, for example, Berry 1997; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991). Given the "centralization of political change in Washington DC." (Skocpol 1999:70), our premise is that political organizations located closest to the center of national politics are the most susceptible to the legitimacy pressures that set strict limits on the range of available organizational forms. Theoretically, their proximity to, and involvement in, the center of national political decision making in the United States provides substantial incentives to adopt the dominant organizational model. The research design is therefore weighted in favor of arguments that point to a circumscribed range of organizational forms that dominate the sector. Our strategy, in effect, is to look for variation where we least expect to find it.

It is important to acknowledge two limitations to our research design. The first is that our analyses overlook the extensive network of locally based social movement and advocacy organizations operating "beyond the Beltway," which tend to have different organizational profiles than those that are the focus of our research (Edwards and Foley 2003). Our specific interest, however, is in providing an empirical evaluation of debates that refer to organizations engaged in national-level advocacy. Theoretically, we would have less reason to expect the same sort of convergence on a limited set of organizational models if a more inclusive definition of the sector was employed, since there is much wider variation in the political-organizational fields in which local groups are embedded, at least compared to the national ones analyzed here.

An arguably more fundamental criticism of our case selection is that it excludes organizations that are outside the Beltway in a different sense, i.e., they do not have a physical presence in Washington but they are very much involved in national politics, for example organizations based in New York City that aim most of their activities and advocacy towards the federal government. From this perspective, an independent judgment of program activities might provide a better measure of involvement in DC-based politics, although this still leaves open the issue of developing a sampling frame for collecting such data on activities or



organizations. Nonetheless, we maintain that advocacy organizations without a routine physical presence in Washington are less subject to the kinds of isomorphic pressures we expect to constrain those organizations located there, itself a testable proposition as more inclusive data become available.<sup>2</sup>

## Data and Measures

As we detail in the next section, our first analytic task is to use the tools of cluster analysis to answer the question of whether multiple organizational models can be distinguished within the advocacy sector and to determine their defining characteristics. Given our interest in identifying distinct organizational forms defined in terms of structural features, we focus on three central dimensions of advocacy organizations: organizational structure, membership strategies, and resources (Andrews and Edwards 2004:487). The second part of our analysis examines the relationship between organizational clusters and goals, activities, and the primary issues or objectives that define the group. In this section we describe the measures we use in both of these analyses, which are summarized in Table A1 in the Appendix.

By *organizational structure* we refer to the formalization of procedures for task performance and decision making (Staggenborg 1988), which are often described in terms of the core elements of bureaucracy and authority (Andrews and Edwards 2004:487). Formalization itself is associated with greater reliance on paid staff than on volunteer leaders and members for the operation of the organization (Staggenborg 1988:586, 590). Such reliance on paid staff is considered to be the defining feature of professional advocacy organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Skocpol 2003). Following Minkoff (1999), we measure this dimension of organizational structure by the number of paid staff. More staff-intensive organizations are assumed to be more formalized, both because professional staff are more likely to institute explicit decision-making structures and practices and formalized organizations are more likely to secure the resources necessary for hiring and maintaining paid staff (Staggenborg 1988:594).<sup>3</sup>

Informed primarily by Skocpol's (2003) work, *membership strategies* are conceptualized as having two central dimensions: (1) whether the organization is a voluntary association with individuals as members and (2) whether the organization provides the structural opportunity to integrate members or participants through a federated structure defined by formally constituted units that operate below the national level (e.g., chapters or affiliates at the regional, state, or local levels) or through a centralized national structure (see also McCarthy 2005). Four logically possible and mutually exclusive variables representing distinct members strategies can be derived from these two dimensions: decentralized membership; centralized membership; centralized nonmembership; and decentralized nonmembership. We also include a measure of whether the organization claims other formal organizations as members since this represents a distinct membership strategy (Andrews and Edwards 2004; McCarthy 2005).

2. See Strolovitch (2007) for a recent study that uses a more expansive and less geographically constrained definition of national advocacy organizations working in the social justice arena.

3. Staff size is clearly contingent on the scope of the organization's operation, including whether or not it requires potentially resource-intensive member maintenance activities (Andrews and Edwards 2004); the number of paid staff, therefore, is not necessarily an indicator of the degree of professionalization. Earlier reviewers of this article suggested an alternative measure of the ratio of staff/members or members/staff for each organization since this would better capture the relationship between organizational size and reliance on paid staff for routine task performance. However, not all organizations in our sample have members and a value of zero on this measure could either mean a low level of formalization or the absence of members. We do, however, calculate the ratio of members to staff based on the results of the cluster analysis (see below p. 537).

*Resources* represent the third dimension of organizational form that we expect to differentiate organizations in the sector. We measure resources in terms of: (a) reported assets controlled by the organization, which we consider to be a measure of financial strength and resource mobilization potential; (b) organizational age, calculated from the reported year of founding and conceptualized as years of experience; and (c) membership size, as measured by the reported number of individual members, which can be conceptualized as an indicator of grassroots support (coded 0 if nonmembership or comprised only of other organizations).

The second part of our analysis examines the relationship between organizational clusters and goals, activities, and the primary issues or objectives that define the group. *Issue focus* refers to the primary objective of the organization with respect to the domains outlined above (see also Table 1). In terms of *goals*, information coded on expressed orientations toward political change was used to construct three mutually exclusive dummy variables: whether the group indicated a radical or progressive orientation; whether or not the group indicated a liberal or reform orientation; and whether or not the group expressed a conservative political or social agenda. Using information collected on specific *activities*, we identify the organization's strategic orientation by a series of five nonexclusive dichotomous measures (based only on reported information). "Policy advocacy" (Jenkins 1987) indicates whether the organization employs conventional modes of political influence (a category that includes, for example, testifying in governmental forums, formal and informal lobbying of political officials, policy research and development, letter-writing or e-mail campaigns, and litigation); "electoral" measures explicit involvement in the electoral process, through, for example, candidate endorsement and voter registration and turnout efforts; "media" refers to whether the organization explicitly pursues a media strategy (e.g., running ads, developing media contacts); "protest" measures whether the organization indicates any involvement in, for example, organizing and participating in marches or demonstrations, boycotting, or other forms of political disruption; and "infrastructure building" indicates an explicit commitment to coalition building or providing technical assistance to affiliated groups.

## Methods

We conducted a cluster analysis in order to identify subgroups within the sector based on measures of organizational form (organizational structure, membership strategies, and resources). The logic of a cluster analysis is that observations are inductively grouped (i.e., "clustered") into subgroups based on meaningful similarities with respect to specified variables and differentiated from other sets of observations that likewise share defining—although possibly different—features. Resulting clusters represent observations (in our case, organizations) that are grouped on the basis of small within-cluster variation relative to between-cluster variation. More concretely, organizations within identified clusters are most like each other and most different from those in the other identified clusters. Cluster analysis is basically an exploratory data reduction technique that "attempts to reduce the information on the whole set of  $n$  objects to information about, say  $g$  subgroups, where  $g < n$ " (Dillon and Goldstein 1984:160); this process is limited to the specific sample being analyzed (see also Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984).

Clustering methods traditionally vary in terms of their reliance on different kinds of (dis)similarity coefficients and the algorithm (hierarchical or partitioning) chosen to allocate observations to clusters, with the choice of a specific similarity or dissimilarity coefficient contingent on the measurement level of the variables. An alternative to traditional cluster methods is a relatively new two-step clustering procedure, which we use because it can handle both continuous and categorical variables in one process and automatically detect the number of clusters (for a detailed description of TwoStep Clustering see Bacher 2004; Bacher,

Wenzig and Vogler 2004; Chiu et al. 2001).<sup>4</sup> Given that our model includes both continuous and categorical variables, the log-likelihood distance measure is appropriate. The likelihood function is computed using the normal density for continuous variables and the multinomial probability mass function for categorical variables. Continuous variables are standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing it by the standard deviation. The distance between two clusters is related to the decrease in log-likelihood when they are combined into one.

In an exploratory method, the best indicator of whether the results are valid is the plausibility of the results and their theoretical interpretability. In addition, a common way to validate a cluster analysis is to conduct a discriminant analysis of the identified clusters and the variables included in the clustering process. How well the model of a discriminant analysis performs is usually reported by the classification efficiency, that is, how many cases would be correctly assigned to their groups. In our case, 87 percent of organizations were correctly classified by the discriminant analysis. The internal validity of a cluster analysis can also be scrutinized by testing for differences between the clusters in the variables used to obtain the clusters. For categorical variables we conducted a chi-square analysis and for continuous variables we conducted an analysis of variance (see Table 2). These tests provided additional support for the validity of the cluster solution we report here.

### *Sample Restrictions*

Listwise deletion of cases due to missing data distributed over the variables used in the clustering process initially limited the sample to 341 of the 699 organizations identified. The main data loss is due to missing values on the continuous variable for individual membership size. For the variables included in the cluster analysis we analyzed the missing data and decided to use mean-imputed data for individual membership size based on issue focus (only for those organizations that claim to have individual members). Our decision to use issue focus as the basis for imputing membership was both theoretically informed and pragmatic. In principle, the potential number of members in a voluntary association is constrained by the available pool of beneficiaries and conscience constituents (McCarthy and Zald 1977), as well as by secular and sociodemographic trends that place competing demands on individuals for their time and other resources (McPherson and Rotolo 1996). By imputing membership size based on issue focus, our premise is that all organizations with similar concerns have a shared membership potential.<sup>5</sup> Pragmatically, information on issue focus was available for all cases, allowing for the minimal loss of information with respect to this critical dimension of grassroots support.<sup>6</sup>

4. Bacher and associates (2004) raise three main issues in their evaluation of the two-step clustering procedure available in SPSS v. 11.5 that we use here. The first is the problem of overlapping clusters, which can lead to a false detection of the number of clusters. In the context of the other validation measures that we use and discuss below, we feel comfortable with a distance ratio change of 2.4 between the cluster solutions from four to five. The second issue is the dependence of the outcome on the starting point of the clustering process. We examined this by randomly resorting the data in multiple iterations, documenting that there was no relationship between the order of the cases and the number of clusters and the organizations included within them. The third issue is the higher weighting of categorical variables in the clustering process which, in our case, turns out not to be a problem.

5. One reviewer, noting the correlation between age and size established by research on firms, suggested that we impute membership size based on age. However, there is little empirical work that supports a similarly strong correlation between the age and size of political associations, at least when size is measured by membership. Even to the extent that a correlation exists, it is unlikely to be linear given sociodemographic constraints on available membership pools. Our approach requires that we make fewer assumptions about the form of the relationship between membership size and issue focus and therefore yields a more conservative estimate.

6. We also considered using mean imputation based on issue area for other metric variables to increase the number of cases for analysis, but decided that this would impose a relatively high level of homogeneity within the sector and elevate the importance of issues focus since it would effectively decrease the within-issue standard deviation on measures of staff, membership, assets, and age. We also reconstructed the full sample using multiple imputation methods (Allison 2002). However, based on our analysis of missing data, we were more confident about using only cases for which original information was available, even if it meant working with a smaller number of cases.

**Table 1 • Distribution of Organizations by Issues**

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
AIDS	7	1.6
Disability rights	21	4.9
Gay/lesbian	11	2.6
Immigrant	7	1.6
Labor	7	1.6
Poverty/social justice	77	17.9
Progressive social change	12	2.8
Racial/ethnic civil rights	61	14.2
Reproductive rights	15	3.5
Student/youth	6	1.4
Women's rights	41	9.6
Women of color	3	.7
Environment/ecology	64	14.9
Civil liberties	8	1.9
Peace/anti-militarism	5	1.2
Public interest	29	6.8
Christian right	5	1.2
Conservative	43	10
Right-to-life	7	1.6
Total	429	100

Using the mean imputation for membership size yielded a sample of 429 organizations. This sample includes the 341 organizations for which full data are available on all variables of interest and the 88 organizations with full data and imputed membership size. We conducted an analysis of missing values through mean comparison (*t*-tests) for the continuous variables and chi square tests for dichotomous variables. Comparing the group of excluded cases with the cluster sample we find no significant differences in the variables included in the cluster analysis (see top panel, Table A2 in the Appendix). In a next step, we compare the two groups with respect to goals and strategies (bottom panel, Table A2). In the sample group, we find a statistically significant overrepresentation of organizations coded as having liberal/reform goals and a somewhat less significant underrepresentation of groups with conservative goals. In addition, groups indicating some involvement in protest activities are significantly underrepresented in our sample. We assess the implications of these sample differences below.

Table 1 provides an overview of the national advocacy sector in terms of the issues represented by Washington-based organizations. In general terms, the sector is dominated by poverty/social justice (18 percent), combined racial and ethnic civil rights (14 percent), women's rights (10 percent), environmental (15 percent), and self-identified conservative organizations (10 percent). These dominant issue areas correspond to social movements mobilized over the post-World War II period, including those more recently visible ones such as the environmental and conservative movements.

### **Dominant Models in the U.S. Advocacy Sector**

The general expectation informing the current analysis is that we would observe relatively little organizational diversity in the national advocacy sector. What we find, however, are multiple models that highlight some variation in organizational forms, although within a

fairly delimited range of options. Using cluster analysis, we identify five distinct groups of organizations active at the national level in the United States. Table 2 presents descriptive information on each of the clusters, including means for the continuous variables and the percentage of organizations in each category of the dichotomous measures. For example, the average staff size of the organizations in the first cluster (denoted as “National”) is 23, 100 percent are centralized organizations with individual members, and 18 percent of them also claim other organizations as members. We also present means and percentages for the full sample in the last column. Note that this table only provides information on those variables included in the cluster analysis.

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that there are significant differences *between* the clusters for all of the variables included in the cluster analysis (significance denoted by †). We also examined whether each variable’s distribution *within* a cluster is significantly different from the variable’s overall distribution, which provides a measure of the importance of a variable for a cluster’s identity and guides our discussion of the central cluster characteristics (significance indicated by \*). Variables that are not statistically significant are not considered to be a distinguishing feature of the cluster. Returning to the example of the “national” cluster in column one: the average staff size of this cluster is significantly different than the rest of the sample, but the percentage of advocacy groups with organizational members does not distinguish the “national” cluster from the others.

The first two clusters described in Table 2 represent models that dominate debates surrounding the composition of the advocacy sector—what we refer to as the “national” and “federated” models. These clusters represent 32 and 27 percent of the sector, respectively, and comprise voluntary associations that are mainly distinguished by whether they integrate members through a centralized or federated structure. The national model is characterized by a centralized membership structure, with all of the organizations in this cluster falling into this category. This organizational form is comparable to what Skocpol (1999) refers to as “associations without members”—exemplified by Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, and the Eagle Forum. Although all of the organizations in this cluster are, strictly speaking, voluntary associations, they do not offer local avenues of involvement to their members. With respect to organizational structure, this cluster is less staff intensive compared to other models and has a slightly higher average membership size than the federated model, which would be expected from those groups relying on low-cost “paper members.” Using reported information on mean number of members and paid staff, the ratio of members per staff in this cluster is 5,363. The average age of national organizations is 30 years of activity, although this feature does not significantly distinguish this model from others in the sector. Average assets (\$4.4 million) are relatively modest compared to the sector average of \$9.1 million.

The federated model includes long-established associations such as the League of Women Voters and the Japanese American Citizens League, as well as more recently established groups such as Americans for Tax Reform and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (more popularly known as P-FLAG). These organizations have a national office or headquarters in Washington, DC, but also have a membership structure that reaches down from the national level into the state and local levels through affiliated units. All of the organizations in this cluster are characterized by a decentralized individual membership structure. Interestingly, they have the smallest base of support (with mean membership size of approximately 115,000), which suggests that national federations no longer have the same mass reach as they did historically, even though their membership strategy is formally similar. They are also slightly older than average and have a higher mean staff size than associations in the national cluster, although neither of these variables differentiates this cluster from the rest of the sector. Notably, the organizations in this cluster appear to be less staff-intensive than in the national cluster (the calculated member/staff ratio is 3,193), while controlling strikingly similar levels of financial

**Table 2 • Comparison of Cluster Characteristics (Means and Percentages)**

Cluster	National	Federated	Mature	Nonmember	Network	Total
<i>Mean (standard deviation)</i>						
Staff††	23** (28.9)	36 (51.8)	260** (192.1)	22* (36.1)	62 (95.7)	46 (89.8)
Age††	30 (22.5)	37 (25.9)	62** (38.6)	25** (13.8)	31 (20.1)	33 (24.5)
Assets (millions)††	4.4* (9.6)	4.3* (8.8)	62.5** (58.9)	2.6* (4.9)	17.7 (36.3)	9.1 (25.2)
Members††	123,353 (184,358)	114,956 (158,385)	1,349,182** (1,855,882)	0** (0)	0* (0)	161,105 (590,265)
<i>Within cluster percentages</i>						
Decentralized w/members††	0**	100**	31.0	0**	0**	29.1
Centralized w/members††	100**	0**	44.8	0**	0**	34.5
Centralized nonmember††	0**	0**	24.1	100**	0**	26.6
Decentralized nonmember††	0**	0**	0	0**	100**	9.8
Organizational members††	17.8	22.4	6.9	19.6	50.0**	21.9
Total % (n)	32 (135)	27 (116)	7 (29)	25 (107)	9.8 (42)	100 (429)

Notes: P-values (\*) indicate significance for a test of equality of a variable's distribution within a cluster versus the variable's overall distribution; F-statistics for continuous variables and Pearson chi-square for dichotomous variables. P-values (†) indicate significance for a test of equality of a variable's distribution among the five clusters; analysis of variance for continuous variables and Pearson chi-square for dichotomous variables.  
 \*, †p < .01 \*\* ††p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

resources as the national model (\$4.3 million). Overall, however, the distinctiveness of this cluster rests in its dominant federated membership structure.

A third cluster, which we designate as the mature advocacy model (Bosso 2003), is distinguished by its age profile, its disproportionate control of resources, and its substantial reliance on paid staff. The organizations in this cluster clearly represent the most established and resourceful model in the sector: they are the most experienced and operate with large staffs (with a mean age of 62 and an average staff size of 260). In addition, organizations in this cluster have the largest reported base of grassroots support (mean membership is over 1.3 million) and the highest level of average assets (\$62.5 million). Despite this cluster's substantially higher mean staff and membership size, the number of members per staff is 5,189, which is almost as high as in the national cluster. Some widely known examples of organizations within this cluster are Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Conservative Caucus, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). What these selected examples also illustrate is that this cluster is very heterogeneous with respect to the presence of organizations with a range of membership strategies. In fact, this is the only cluster within which there is any variation across these measures, although centralized membership associations are more likely to be represented, along with a substantial proportion of organizations with federated membership structures (45 percent and 31 percent, respectively). It may be that the historic residue of the large federations described by Skocpol (2003) are located in this cluster, but that they are now more similar to other organizations that dominate the sector with respect to their disproportionate control over members and resources.

At the other end of the spectrum from these associational models, we find a substantial cluster defined by the dominance of organizations with no individual members. This nonmembership model represents 25 percent of the sector; it is three times the size of the mature advocacy cluster and roughly the same size as the federated cluster. Examples of organizations included in this cluster are the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Center for Responsive Politics, and the National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund. The defining feature of the organizations in this cluster is that they are all nonmembership organizations that are centralized at the national level. This set of organizations is also the youngest in the sector, with a mean of 25 years of activity, suggesting that this organizational form is a relative newcomer, arriving on the national scene in tandem with the 1970s expansion of the advocacy sector. Organizations in this cluster are also, on average, less resource and staff intensive (mean staff size of 22 and average assets of \$2.6 million), which makes sense in terms of the concentration of operations at the national level and the absence of member maintenance activities. In this respect, the similarity between this cluster and the national model with respect to average staff size is noteworthy, suggesting that centralization may offer some economies of scale, independent of whether the organization has individual members. The key difference, however, is that the organizations in this cluster seem to require substantially fewer financial resources for their operation than the membership-based models identified in the sector.

The final distinct organizational cluster can be described as a network model that comprises 10 percent of the sector. The defining characteristic of this cluster is the dominance of decentralized, nonmembership organizations. This is a somewhat diverse category, which includes coalitions of nonmembership organizations that are themselves active at the regional, state, or local level, as well as national advocacy organizations that maintain offices or chapters throughout the country. Organizations in this cluster refer to themselves as coalitions, networks, partnerships, and alliances, for example. Some illustrative organizations include the AIDS Action Council, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. It also includes the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), which Skocpol (2003) uses as a central example of the shift "from membership to management," but which appears to represent a somewhat different organizational form. The CDF is headquartered nationally, but it is also composed of a

number of state offices that potentially increase accessibility and influence across the nation. This cluster is also notable for the significant presence of organizations that define membership in terms of organizational, not individual, involvement, a dimension of organizational form that is only significant in differentiating this cluster from others in the sector.

The cluster analysis presented in this section confirms the consensus that national centralized membership associations and nonmembership organizations comprise a large segment of the advocacy sector (combined, 57 percent of all organizations fall into these two clusters). At the same time, our analysis has identified a broader set of available organizational models, including: a cluster of associations that adopt a federated membership model that, in principle, provides more direct opportunities for member integration; a small but viable cluster of mature advocacy organizations that are relatively staff intensive and highly experienced, and which claim significant control over financial resources and mass-based membership support; and the presence of an organizational network model that is based on interorganizational linkages that reach down from the national to the local levels.

### Strategic Variation across the Advocacy Sector

The analytic approach we have used in documenting dominant models within the sector essentially brackets the issues and political orientations that motivate advocacy organizations, as well as differences in the activities they adopt in making their claims. In effect, our model assumes that goals, activities, and substantive issues do not factor into the assignment of organizations to clusters. In this section, we conduct a series of analyses in order to gain some preliminary insight into how the distribution of issues, goals, and activities is related to the available organizational models in the sector.

Our first question is whether there is any observable association between social change goals and cluster membership, which we model with a series of bivariate logistic regression models. We are interested in the different probabilities of cluster membership that groups espousing radical/progressive or conservative goals have compared to the baseline category of liberal/reform goals. Each column in Table 3 presents the odds ratios from five separate models; cluster membership is the dependent variable and goals are modeled as the independent variable (values above 1 indicate a higher probability of being in a cluster and those below 1 indicate lower odds, compared to the baseline group).

Based on these models, it appears that national advocacy groups are not more or less likely to be represented in particular clusters based on their goals, although there are two significant effects that are potentially interesting. The first is that groups that pursue conservative goals are twice as likely to be found in the national cluster than are those with liberal reform goals. The effectiveness of recent conservative movements, however, has tended to be attributed to their investment in building a grassroots organizational and institutional infrastructure (Diamond 1998). Our results add to this characterization by suggesting that conservative advocates at the national level are also investing in the centralized membership form of

**Table 3 • Organizational Goals and Cluster Membership: Logistic Regression Estimates (Odds Ratios) (N = 339)**

Cluster	National	Federated	Mature	Nonmember	Network
<i>Goals (baseline: liberal/reform)</i>					
Radical/progressive	.89	1.45	3.45*	.18	.89
Conservative	2.07*	.62	1.01	.71	.76
Prob > Chi-sq	.049	.287	.123	.182	.853

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests)



**Table 4 • Cluster Membership and Organizational Activities: Logistic Regression Estimates (Odds Ratios) (N = 429)**

Activities	Policy	Electoral	Media	Infrastructure	Protest
<i>Cluster (baseline: federated)</i>					
National	1.53	.41*	.94	.55*	.48
Mature	2.29	.18	1.65	.71	1.78
Nonmember	1.52	.25**	.32**	.85	—
Network	3.19**	.13*	.63	2.79*	.79
Prob > Chi-sq	.046	.013	.013	.001	.397

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests)

organization—significantly more so than the liberal advocacy groups thought to be especially reliant on such national associations characterized by low-cost membership (Fisher 2006; Skocpol 1999). Given that conservative groups are underrepresented in our sample, this interpretation is provisional, since it could also reflect a greater tendency for organizations in the national cluster to explicitly identify as ideologically conservative. The second significant result is also striking: commitment to progressive social change goals increases the odds of membership in the mature advocacy cluster by 250 percent compared to groups with liberal/reform-oriented goals. Granted, such groups are relatively few in number (approximately four percent of the sample analyzed here), but it is noteworthy that they are located within the most resource-rich and well-established component of the sector.

The second set of analyses takes up the question of whether different clusters represent significantly different potentials for political action, which we measure in terms of the probability that organizations in each cluster are likely to deploy different types of activities. To model this association, we treat cluster membership as the independent variable and a series of dummy variables that measure discrete strategies as dependent variables; the baseline category is the federated cluster. Table 4 presents results from a series of bivariate regression models that estimate the odds ratios for adopting a specific activity for each cluster.

As a first point, each of the models predicting activities are significant except for the model estimating the association between cluster membership and involvement in protest; given the small number of cases in the sample (16 or 3.7 percent), this is not that surprising (note, as well, that the nonmember cluster drops out of the analysis since all cases are coded 0 on the protest indicator). The other models demonstrate that there are some significant differences across clusters in the probability of employing different kinds of activities. For example, although policy advocacy is the most dominant activity across the sector (see Table A1 in the Appendix), organizations within the network cluster are significantly more likely than those organized along a federated model to pursue this method of influence; the other clusters also indicate higher odds of policy advocacy than the federated cluster, but the coefficients are not significant. A more marked contrast is apparent with respect to involvement in electoral mobilization. With the exception of the mature advocacy cluster, organizations in the other clusters are significantly less likely than those in the federated cluster to focus on the electoral process. This finding is most pronounced for organizations in the nonmember and network clusters that have, respectively, a 75 and 87 percent lower chance of engaging in electoral activities compared to the federated model. Put differently, these results can be interpreted as provisional evidence that the potential for electoral mobilization is highest in the federated cluster, which lends some support to arguments in favor of using local networks as the “foot soldiers” of electoral mobilization (Fisher 2006).

Turning to the remaining set of activities, the bivariate results suggest that organizations in the nonmembership cluster are significantly less likely than federated groups to pursue a

**Table 5 • Distribution of Clusters by Issues (Percentages)**

<i>Issue</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Federated</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Nonmember</i>	<i>Network</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>n</i>
AIDS	14	14	0	29	43	100	7
Disability rights	19	52	5	19	5	100	21
Gay/lesbian	27	45	0	27	0	100	11
Immigrant	43	0	14	29	14	100	7
Labor	0	0	43	29	29	100	7
Poverty/social justice	21	24	3	35	18	100	77
Progressive	58	8	8	17	8	100	12
Racial/ethnic civil rights	26	36	0	25	13	100	61
Reproductive rights	27	13	7	33	20	100	15
Student/youth	50	50	0	0	0	100	6
Women's rights	32	39	5	19	5	100	41
Women of color	33	33	0	33	0	100	3
Environment/ecology	39	22	16	20	3	100	64
Civil liberties	12	50	25	12	0	100	8
Peace/anti-militarism	100	0	0	0	0	100	5
Public interest	38	21	3	34	3	100	29
Christian right	20	20	20	20	20	100	5
Conservative	42	23	9	19	7	100	43
Right-to-life	43	14	0	43	0	100	7
Total %	31	27	7	25	10	100	
<i>N</i>	135	116	29	107	42		429

media-centered strategy. On the face of it, this is somewhat puzzling since newer organizational forms tend to be characterized as the most media savvy in the sector. The results presented here qualify this view by demonstrating that organizations in the federated cluster are comparatively prolific in their use of the media to make their claims. In contrast, infrastructure-building activities, such as providing technical assistance and coalition strategies, are most closely linked with membership in the network cluster; such organizations are almost three times as likely as those in the federated cluster to invest in coalition-based activities and provide technical assistance to other groups in the sector. Investment in sector development is comparatively lower among the other clusters, significantly so in the case of organizations in the national cluster compared to those in the federated one.

As a final point, although the model predicting involvement in protest activities is not significant, it is noteworthy that organizations in the mature advocacy cluster have an almost 80 percent higher probability of using this strategy than those in the federated cluster. One implication that follows provisionally from this result, in combination with the finding that progressive organizations are more likely to be found in the mature advocacy cluster, is that this niche of large, experienced, and resource-rich organizations may hold the most potential for activism and progressive social change in the sector. The underrepresentation of groups indicating protest involvement in our sample suggests the need for caution in interpreting these results, since it may also be the case that the more established organizations in the mature advocacy cluster are less risk averse with respect to being explicit about their involvement in protest activities.

The last question that we address is whether certain issues are significantly more likely to be represented in some clusters compared to others, which might account for the distinctiveness of each cluster. The answer appears to be a qualified "no." Table 5 presents the percentage

distribution of issues across clusters. Although there are some noticeable differences with respect to the distribution of issues within each of the five clusters, in most cases there is no significant association between this central dimension of organizational identity and location in the sector.<sup>7</sup>

Examining differences between the five issue areas that comprise at least 10 percent of the sector, however, is informative (rows highlighted in Table 5). Conservative and environmental organizations are substantially more likely to be represented in the national cluster compared to poverty/social justice, racial/ethnic civil rights, and women's organizations. Women's and civil rights groups, in contrast, are much more likely than others to be in the federated cluster. None of these larger issue areas are substantially represented in the mature advocacy sector, although environmental groups appear to be more likely than the other larger issue domains to be found in this organizational niche. Poverty/social justice organizations are disproportionately represented in both the nonmembership and organizational network clusters, which can be taken as some provisional confirmation of Skocpol's (2003) claim that advocacy organizations are oriented more toward "doing for" than "doing with" when it comes to representing the interests of more marginalized sectors of American society (see also Strolovitch 2007). Despite such differences, the lack of significant association between issue focus and cluster membership across the majority of issue domains reinforces Garner and Zald's (1987) insight that available organizational forms are a characteristic of the sector and do not simply reflect the organizing templates adopted by specific constituencies.

## Conclusions and Implications

We began this article with reference to the concerns about civic engagement that have animated debates about recent trends in the advocacy sector. Although our analysis cannot directly address these fundamental debates, we have, at a minimum, provided an empirically informed counterweight to generalizations about the kinds of organizational vehicles available to activists and advocates in the national political arena in the United States. We have also provided a starting point for considering how the composition of the national advocacy sector is linked to the issues, goals, and strategies that give form and focus to collective efforts at social change.

Two organizational forms—national "associations without members" and nonmembership organizations—tend to dominate the imagery of the national advocacy sector. These models also comprise a substantial component of the real world of national political organization, with respect to their prevalence and, by extension, their standing as legitimate models of organizing. However, they operate alongside an equally significant cluster of organizations that model themselves after the national federations Skocpol (2003) credits with more democratic and accessible relationships between leaders and members, as well as more proximate opportunities for direct citizen engagement. Although case study research can better demonstrate how such modern federations operate on the ground (Barakso 2005), the continued visibility of this organizational form serves as a caution against more pessimistic views of its demise and a reminder of the continued need for

7. The exception is the progressive social change area, which has a substantially higher proportion of organizations located in the national cluster. With progressive social change organizations excluded, Fisher's exact test indicates a marginally significant nonrandom association between cluster and issue ( $p = .10$ ); with these organizations included, the association is significant at the .05 level (results available from authors). Given the small size of this issue domain, however, we are cautious about overinterpreting this result.

systematic research on its development in the context of the evolution of the advocacy sector (McCarthy 2005).

Despite the federated model's long historical roots (Skocpol 2003), our analysis suggests that those organizations with the longest lineage and more significant control over resources are located in what we have identified as the mature advocacy cluster. Although the smallest component of the sector, this cluster is a potentially significant one given its extensive membership reach, substantial control of available resources, and the long tenure of the organizations within it. In this context, the fact that organizations with expressed commitments to progressive social change are more likely to be in this cluster and that they are also more likely to indicate involvement in protest activities takes on added significance. One tentative implication that we want to advance here is that this mature cluster may have the potential to serve as an organizationally based "ideological envelope" (Kim and Bearman 1997) necessary for mounting conflictual claims at the national level. At the other end of the spectrum is the organizational network model, a relative newcomer on the national scene that is most directly involved in developing and consolidating the advocacy infrastructure, which suggests that it plays a critical role in the sector despite its reliance on other organizations as opposed to direct citizen involvement.

If, as we have suggested, available organizational models represent different potentials for action that are, at least to some extent, associated with particular issues and orientations toward social change, it is worth considering whether diversity in organizational forms is a necessary condition for tactical and goal diversity (Olzak and Ryo 2007). Equally critical is the question of the political consequences of sector diversity, especially in terms of such central components of the policy process as agenda setting, policy achievement and monitoring, and deeper forms of institutional change (Andrews and Edwards 2004:492). As a property of the sector, does organizational diversity provide multiple avenues of political influence or is it a latent source of competition and fragmentation? If diversity represents a division of labor within the sector, some forms of organization may be more effective at setting the policy agenda, others at directly influencing decision-makers or ensuring that political gains are consolidated instead of rolled back, and still others at guaranteeing the flow of resources into and across the sector. If, however, diversity intensifies competition for resources and legitimacy, political access and influence may be compromised.

Answering such questions about the political implications of the composition of the advocacy sector requires knowing whether different organizational clusters themselves represent distinctive potentials for goal attainment, either because they are constrained internally by the mix of actors, activities, political orientations, and resources that comprise them or because relevant actors in the broader political field—authorities, sponsors, and the public—identify them as such. The extent to which such identifications determine the willingness of powerful outsiders to be responsive to group claims is likely to have consequences that go well beyond concerns about "variety and voice" in the civic arena.

Appendix

Table A1 • Description of Variables

Concept	Operationalization	Indicator	Sample Descriptives (n = 429)
Organizational structure	Formalization	Number of paid staff	Mean (std. dev.) = 45.9 (89.8); median = 15.00; min = 0; max = 747
Membership strategies	Logical combination of: individual members AND centralization of operations (national office only vs. decentralized structure with chapters or offices at regional/state/local level) Organizational members	<i>Mutually exclusive variables:</i> Decentralized with members (yes = 1; no = 0) Centralized with members (yes = 1; no = 0) Centralized without members (yes = 1; no = 0) Decentralized without members (yes = 1; no = 0)	<i>Frequency (%)</i> 125 (29.1) 148 (34.5) 114 (26.6) 42 (9.8) (100%)
Resources	Financial	Any organizational members = 1; no = 0	<i>Frequency (%)</i> 1 = 94 (21.9%); 0 = 335 (78.1) (100%)
	Experience	Reported assets (in millions)	Mean (std. dev.) = 9.1 (25.1); median = 1.2; min = 0; max = 192.0
	Grassroots support	Age (based on founding year)	Mean (std. dev.) = 32.9 (24.5); median = 25.00; min = 3; max = 156
Goals	Orientation toward political change	Number of individual members (coded 0 if none)	Mean (std. dev.) = 161,000 (590,265); median = 5,000; min = 0; max = 650,000
Strategic orientation	Activities	<i>Mutually exclusive variables:</i> Radical/progressive (1 = yes; 0 = no) Liberal/reform (1 = yes; 0 = no) Conservative (1 = yes; 0 = no)	<i>Frequency (%)</i> 19 (4.4) 265 (61.8) 55 (12.8) 90 (21.0) (Missing) (100%)
		<i>Nonexclusive dichotomous variables:</i> Policy advocacy (1 = yes; 0 = no) Electoral advocacy (1 = yes; 0 = no) Media advocacy (1 = yes; 0 = no) Infrastructure-building (1 = yes; 0 = no) Protest involvement (1 = yes; 0 = no)	<i>Frequency (%)</i> 1 = 270 (62.9); 0 = 159 (37.1) (100%) 1 = 36 (8.4%); 0 = 393 (91.6) (100%) 1 = 86 (20.0%); 0 = 343 (80.0) (100%) 1 = 212 (49.4%); 0 = 217 (50.6) (100%) 1 = 16 (3.7%); 0 = 413 (96.3) (100%)
Issue focus	Primary issue/constituency	See Table 1	See Table 1

**Table A2 • Missing Values: Comparison of Excluded Cases and Cluster Sample (Means and Percentages)**

<i>Variables included in cluster analysis</i>				
	<i>Mean (n)</i>	<i>Excluded</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>All Cases</i>
Paid staff		31 (144)	46 (429)	42 (573)
Assets (millions)		3.7 (52)	9.1 (429)	8.5 (481)
Age		31 (245)	33 (429)	32 (674)
Membership size (thousands)		139 (173)	114 (341)	122 (514)
	<i>Percentage (n)</i>	<i>Excluded</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>All Cases</i>
Individual members		69 (270)	64 (429)	66 (699)
Centralized structure		38 (265)	39 (429)	39 (694)
Organizational members		27 (270)	22 (429)	24 (699)
<i>Variables not included in cluster analysis</i>				
	<i>Percentage (n)</i>	<i>Excluded</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>All Cases</i>
Goals				
Radical/progressive		9 (215)	6 (339)	7 (554)
Liberal/reform**		62 (215)	78 (339)	72 (554)
Conservative*		28 (215)	16 (339)	21 (554)
<b>Strategies (nonexclusive)</b>				
Policy advocacy		57 (270)	63 (429)	61 (699)
Electoral advocacy		11 (270)	8 (429)	9 (699)
Media advocacy		15 (270)	20 (429)	18 (699)
Infrastructure-building		50 (270)	49 (429)	50 (699)
Protest**		11 (270)	4 (429)	7 (699)

Note: P-values (\*\*) indicate significance; t-statistics for continuous variables and Pearson chi-square for dichotomous variables.

\* $p < 0.01$  \*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed tests)

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