Abstract

The field of nonprofit and voluntary action in the United States originates in the 1970s and has since grown to encompass multiple scholarly associations around the world and graduate degree programs producing faculty with NVA as their primary scholarly focus. This paper introduces readers to the NVA field by describing the development of the field, its scholarly associations and publication venues, and education programs. The second section discusses three areas of foundational research: why nonprofit organizations exist, why people give, and nonprofit relations with government. Each of these areas can be drawn upon by public policy scholars to more fully understand the how individuals and nonprofit organizations participate in the policy process. The final section identifies three nexuses with policy process: policy design, advocacy, and the role of foundations. These are three areas that have significant potential for research collaborations to connect NVA with policy process literature.
Introduction

The field of nonprofit and voluntary action (NVA) began emerging in the 1970s and is the newest of the three overview perspectives presented in this volume. NVA scholars contribute knowledge focused on the phenomena of people coming together for a common purpose. That purpose varies extensively from faith-based congregations, joining a club, nonprofit provision of social welfare services, to mobilizing for policy change. These phenomena vary to the degree to which the activities take place in voluntary, informal settings to institutionalized nonprofit organizations. In the U.S. context, the federal income tax code includes 29 different 501(c) designations all of which receive tax exemption (Internal Revenue Service 2016). There are approximately 1.4 million nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS (McKeever 2015) of which nearly 90,000 are foundations (Foundation Center). The nonprofit sector contributed approximately $900 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013, which is 5.4% of GDP (McKeever 2015). NVA scholars are drawn to studying these institutions and the people who participate in them and yet as a prominent nonprofit scholar writes, “it is surprisingly difficult to comprehend how pervasive, ubiquitous, and complex the sector is” (Grønbjerg in Ott and Dicke 2012, p. XII).

Research on U.S. nonprofit and voluntary action can be traced back to de Tocqueville’s discussion of the role of communal institutions to moderate despotism of the majority and the mores, which he referred to as “habits of the heart,” that underlay American democracy (1969, pp. 287-290). Historian Peter Dobkin Hall provides a rich perspective, as only an historian can, on how the actions by individuals to “do good” evolved in the United States. His work is important for reminding scholars that 501(c) designation by the Internal Revenue Service is a 20th century innovation. Prior to the creation of the tax code for nonprofit organizations, those
who came together to “do good” were organized in a variety of ways, some closely associated with religion, government, and private enterprises (Hall 2006).

The temporal and comparative variation in what governments choose to do or not to do (Dye 1979) creates the environment in which NVA can flourish or founder. Public Policy and NVA are deeply entwined in the empirical world but that has not translated to the scholarly world as much as one might expect. Some notable NVA scholars are also public policy scholars; however, there are surprisingly few NVA-related publications in the Policy Studies Journal (PSJ). The earliest contribution is in 1983 titled, “Policy Directions and the Nonprofit Sector: Elements of an Integrated, Comprehensive Agenda” (Schooler). It was followed in 1985 with a second attempt to connect policy and nonprofit research (Miller and Collins) but it was not until about 16 years later that additional NVA research appeared in PSJ. To date, PSJ published NVA research related to implementation of public policy (LeRoux 2011, Chambré 1999), venue shopping (Buffardi et al. 2015), donor contributions and fundraising (Nicholson-Crotty, Brooks 2004), professional associations (Candler 1999), lobbying and advocacy (Wyszomirski 1998, ), nonprofit management (Brooks 2006), impacts of public funding (Jung and Moon 2007) and most recently, a conceptual approach to understanding the service delivery and advocacy roles of nonprofit organizations (Fyall 2016).ii These are important cross-field contributions but there are more that can be made.

The purpose of this paper is to identify nexuses between public policy and NVA that will lead to fruitful paths of knowledge generation. It is important to note that because the focus of this paper is on connections between NVA and public policy; it is not intended to exhaust the entirety of the NVA field. Consequently, there are important areas of NVA research that will not be included such as social enterprises and associational activity unrelated to the public policy.
There is a vast literature on nonprofit management that will receive only brief attention (see Sowa this volume for nonprofit/public management connections). But just as it is difficult to bound the NVA field, it is necessary to bound the public policy field. In this paper my objective is to identify connections between policy process research and NVA research. There are considerable opportunities to connect research on particular policy domains, implementation (see Sandfort and Moulton 2015), and evaluation but the policy process focus reflects that of Weible and Carter (in this volume).

In the paper below I begin with a description of the evolution of NVA as a field of study including its scholarly associations and education programs. From there I summarize contributions to foundational areas of NVA scholarship that can inform public policy including: why nonprofit organizations exist, voluntary giving of time and resources, and the relationship between nonprofit organizations and government. With that background information, I then turn to three nexuses for future research: policy design, advocacy, and the role of foundations in the policy process. The paper concludes with current efforts to bridge NVA/PP research, cross-field publication venues, and developing cross-field research networks.

I. The Evolution of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Field

The origins of the field come from disparate people coming together to ask basic questions about the role of nonprofit organizations as legal entities and the evolving scope of private actions in the name of the public good. An important impetus was the Tax Reform Act of 1969, which created a host of new rules for nonprofit organizations, and particularly for foundations. Tensions between foundation giving and government monitoring were not new but the extent of debate over the role of private philanthropy led John D. Rockefeller III to fund a private citizen board titled the Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs, but better known
as the Filer Commission. The board commissioned studies and, after two years of study, made recommendations that supported the case for the independence of a “third sector” distinct from government (Commission 1970).

The board staved off calls for greater regulation of foundations but it also spurred the growth of research on nonprofit organizations. Foundations funded the creation of the Independent Sector in 1980 to build research capacity and strengthen the sector. Independent Sectoriii, through the efforts of Virginia Hodgkinson, worked to create basic data sources through the National Center for Charitable Statistics (now housed at the Urban Institute’s Center of Nonprofits and Philanthropy). At the time there were varied state policies and charity ratings (e.g., Better Business Bureau Wise Giving) but national-level data were inaccessible. Efforts to develop those data led to the creation of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities code and the translation of the Internal Revenue Service form 990 into usable data (Elizabeth Boris, personal communication by phone, March 29, 2016). By the 1990s these data sources, funded by foundations and created by NCCS through concerted efforts by important founders of the NVA field, made it possible to analyze the scope and variation of the sector. Foundations continue to be important sources for funding NVA research. The Aspen Institute, with funding from multiple foundations and under the leadership of Elizabeth Boris, created Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, to provide grants for dissertation fellowships and nonprofit research. Scholars such as Mark Hager, currently the editor of Nonprofit Management and Leadership, and the author’s dissertation research were funded through Aspen’s fellowship program. Aspen shifted its focus to Philanthropy and Social Enterprise but continues to fund important work on the sector (see discussion of Hammack and Anheier (2013) and Anheier and Hammack (2010) below).
A. Scholarly Associations and Publication Venues

Two scholarly associations, formed in the 1970s, focused attention on understanding nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations, respectively. The first association, formed in 1971, was the Association for Voluntary Action Scholars (AVAS). Founder David Horton Smith chose “voluntary action” based on the 1948 book by William Henry Beveridge with that title (Smith, D.H. 2003). AVAS drew scholars, particularly from social work but also other disciplines, who shared an interest in understanding voluntary, common interest associations. The second association, founded in 1978, was the Program on Non-Profit Organizations (PONPO) at Yale University with the mission “to foster interdisciplinary research aimed at developing an understanding of nonprofit organizations and their role in economic and political life” (PONPO 2016). Law professor John G. Simon served as the first director, in cooperation with eminent public policy scholar Charles E. Lindblom, until 1982. The focus was on both nonprofit organizations and philanthropy, a topic discussed in more detail below. This was an important hub that created foundational research for the new NVA field of study. An important foundation of the field is that both of these associations attracted scholars from multiple disciplines. There continues to be recognition among nonprofit and voluntary action scholars that no one discipline can provide answers to the questions we commonly ask. Our disciplinary training provides a lens to understanding research questions but there is an appreciation that we need to bring multiple disciplinary approaches to answer those questions.

It is challenging work to organize across disciplines, something that public policy and NVA scholars have in common. In the 1980s efforts mounted to expand AVAS to include research on nonprofit organizations. David Horton Smith recounts those challenges (2003) but for the purposes of this paper the important issue is the marriage of VA with NO in the early 1990s.
Through the efforts of presidents Thomasina Borkman (1991-1992) and co-presidents Richard Steinberg and Kirsten Grønbjerg (1993-94) AVAS was renamed the Association for Research on Nonprofit and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). The current description of the association reads, “ARNOVA is the leading interdisciplinary community of people dedicated to fostering through research and education, the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge on nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, civil society and voluntary action” (ARNOVA 2016). Throughout the 1990s ARNOVA grew into the hub for NVA scholars and currently has about 1,200 members (ARNOVA 2016). ARNOVA publishes *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (ranked 8 out of 41 journals in Social Issues with an impact factor of 1.491) (Sage Journals 2016). The sections of ARNOVA reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the association: Community and Grassroots Associations; Theories, Issues and Boundaries; Values, Religion, Altruism, and Drawbacks; Social Entrepreneurs/Enterprise; Governance; Emerging Scholars. Similar to public administration, there are ongoing efforts to connect theory with practice; ARNOVA has a Pracademics section that connects academics and practitioners and also a Teaching section. ARNOVA developed with primarily U.S.-based membership and its conferences have been held in the United States (and once in Canada).

An internationally focused association of mainly European scholars formed their own association in 1992. The International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) chose a different term to capture its focus on “promoting research and education in the fields of civil society, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector” (ISTR 2016). With 600 members and an annual conference that rotates around the globe, it attracts a more geographically diverse membership, although approximately 50 percent of its members are European and 20 percent from North America (ISTR 2014 Annual Report). There are regional networks in Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin American and Caribbean, and Europe. ISTR publishes *Voluntas* whose aim is to be the “central
forum for worldwide research in the area between the state, market, and household sectors” (Springer 2016). ISTR also launched a Nonprofit and Civil Society book series (Paul Dekker and Lehn Benjamin editors). There are also country-based and regional associations emerging across the globe. In Great Britain the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) convenes scholarly conferences and publishes the Voluntary Sector Review. In the southern hemisphere the Australia and New Zealand Third Sector Research (ANZTSR) has been active for 20 years with biennial conferences and publishes the journal Third Sector Review (for history see Onyx 2011).

NVA scholars specializing in nonprofit management participate in management associations and publish NVA research. The Public Management Research Association includes nonprofit organizations as “public institutions” when they contract with governments and because of their distinct public purposes and implications (PMRA 2016). Articles with nonprofit management topics appear in the association’s Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory. Academy of Management, while mainly focused on the business sector, explicitly includes nonprofits in the Public and NonProfit Division. The Division had 855 members in 2015 and has a number of sponsored publications (Academy of Management Public and Nonprofit Division 2016). The American Society for Public Administration created a separate section for nonprofit scholars and practitioners through its Nonprofit Policy, Practice and Partnership section and its journal, Public Administration Review, publishes research featuring nonprofit organizations.

The public management and NVA connections are well established through research networks and publication venues and this extends to hybrid associations such as the Association for Policy Analysis and Management. This association focuses on both policy and management, which attracts NVA scholars, particularly those whose research focuses on management of service delivery nonprofit organizations. Its journal, the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,
publishes NVA articles; A search for journal articles with “nonprofit” in the title resulted in over 450 articles.

B. Specialized Educational Programs

Similar to the professional degree programs in public policy and public management, there are specialized educational programs for training nonprofit managers. The impetus came from the Independent Sector that, with foundation funding, encouraged the formation of nonprofit academic centers to professionalize managers of service delivering nonprofit organizations. The first Nonprofit Masters program was created in the 1980s at the Mandel Center at Case Western Reserve University and the number has now grown to 260 universities with nonprofit management curricula (some of which are degrees) and 49 Ph.D. programs that include nonprofit management education courses (Seton Hall University Nonprofit Management Education 2016). Similar to the accreditation process through Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council created standards for nonprofit degree programs (NACC 2016).

The growth of academic programs, in turn, created rapid growth and fundamental shifts within the NVA community. As someone who entered the field in the late 1990s, the pace of growth is nothing short of astounding. The field is heterogeneous in its research topics, its disciplinary perspectives, and research methods (Bushouse and Sowa 2012). Within the scope of this paper, my objective is to focus on those areas of NVA scholarship that overlap, or should overlap, with the study of the policy process. In the section below I focus on NVA contributions in three foundational areas that serve as a starting point for a discussion of NVA/PP nexus: social origins of the nonprofit itself, voluntary giving of time and resources, and nonprofit-government relationships. It is beyond the scope of any one paper to summarize the contributions of the
NVA field in its entirety and there are admittedly important contributions that are excluded that could inform public policy research. But I encourage future authors to expand and deepen this dialogue.

II. The NVA Field as it Relates to Public Policy

Scholars drawn to research on NVA bring disciplinary lenses from political science, economics, sociology, public administration, social work, history, and legal studies to our research. The challenge for NVA scholars is that the choice of theory depends on the research question, far more than in public policy research. Unlike policy process theories, there is no culminating event akin to passage of legislation. This is reflected in the “state of the field” publications. Sabatier and Weible’s (2014) *Theories of the Policy Process* is the result of three editions of dialogue among different strands of theory. These debates over what constitute theory enriched the public policy field through its dialogue. In the NVA field, *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* edited by Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg, 2nd edition published in 2006, is the “state of the field” text available for NVA researchers and students. Its 27 chapters are divided into 6 parts that cumulatively make it a weighty volume, both literally and intellectually. Its chapters present the state of knowledge for a particular topic. Meaningful dialogues tend to zoom into a particular research topic and are featured in edited volumes and journal special issues.

In the section below I begin with a review of three areas of NVA scholarship that bridge to public policy. A fundamental question for NVA scholars is why nonprofits exist. There are established theoretical perspectives that differ in their basic assumptions. I then turn to a discussion of why people give their time and money. This topic is of central importance in NVA literature because civil society and the nonprofit sector fundamentally depend on giving for their continued
existence. The final section focuses on the relationships between government and nonprofit organizations with a discussion of the U.S. historical context and important contributions.

A. Why do Nonprofits Exist?

The multidisciplinary NVA field as we understand it today is based on contributions with disciplinary roots. The first two discussed, Contract Failure and the Three-Failures approach focus on explaining commercial, entrepreneurial nonprofits (i.e., those with self-perpetuating boards who sell services in the marketplace). Thus it attempts to explain a segment of the nonprofit sector. Civil society, social movement, and neoinstitutionalist explanations incorporate expressive motivations for voluntary action, which may or may not lead to the creation of a nonprofit organization. Frumkin defines expressive as the “fellowship and self-actualization experienced by those who give or volunteer (2002, p.23). These latter approaches recognize the civic and political engagement functions of NVA and their use as vehicles for expressions of values and faith.

Contract Failure Theory

Legal Scholar Henry Hansmann (1980) developed the Contract Failure theory of demand: individuals will choose to purchase goods and services from nonprofit organizations when it is difficult to assess their quality (e.g., care for an elder with Alzheimer’s disease) because of the “nondistribution constraint,” which is the Internal Revenue Service’s requirement that all 501(c)-designated nonprofit organizations reinvest all profit back into the social mission of the organization. Theoretically this requirement would decrease the incentive for service providers to cheat the customer even when cheating would be difficult to discover. The assumptions are that (1) the nondistributional constraint actually affects the quality of service delivery and (2)
that consumers are knowledgeable enough to know the auspice of the service provider.

Readers familiar with the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (Ostrom 2011, Ostrom et al. 2014) will quickly recognize that the nondistributional constraint is a metaconstitutional rule but that service delivery is an operational-choice level action arena. Whether it actually has an impact on service delivery depends on the monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms at the meta, constitutional and collective-choice levels (see Bushouse 2011 for an application to child care service delivery). Two supporting arguments were made in favor of greater trustworthiness of nonprofit organizations: “entrepreneurial sorting” might draw people to work in the nonprofit who have different personal objectives than those who work in for-profit firms (Hansmann 1980; Young 1983, 1986) and Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1993) hypothesized that demand-side stakeholder involvement in the nonprofit organization (donors, members, clients) would positively impact trustworthiness.

The nondistribution constraint led scholars to search for evidence that nonprofit provision of services was superior to that of for-profits, particularly in services for which quality of services is hard to evaluate such as hospitals (Ferris and Graddy 1989), nursing homes (Weisbrod and Schlesinger 1986, Weisbrod 1988, Ben-Ner and Ren 2015), and child care centers (Kagan 1991). Sector-based behavioral assumptions became more problematic as nonprofit organizations diversified revenue streams. Fee for services and revenue generation through sales led to concerns about nonprofits losing sight of their social missions or the phenomena of “for-profits in disguise” as nonprofits (Hirth 1999) and nonprofits with “paper boards” (Bushouse 1999). Particularly after the 1996 U.S. welfare reform legislation that led governments to contract with for-profit firms to deliver human services in the belief that the profit motive would yield efficiencies, scholars critically assessed the meaning of “nonprofit” when services are bought and sold similar to profit-maximizing firms (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004).
Three-Failures Theory

Economist Burton Weisbrod (1977) developed the Demand-Diversity Model to explain government and nonprofit provision of goods under conditions of market failure. The choice between nonprofit or government provision depends on the heterogeneity in the quantity of collective goods xiii demanded for a given tax level. He hypothesized that governments would tend toward the median voter’s preference for supply levels, which results in government failure for those whose demand is unmet. Individuals with excess demand may decide to form a voluntary association to supply additional services. ix In this formulation the emergence of nonprofit organizations is the result of market and government failure. Political Scientist Lester Salamon countered with the theory of Voluntary Failure in which it is the failure of voluntary associations to meet demand that then leads to government provision. Voluntary failure can result from (1) philanthropic insufficiency (demand outpaces supply); (2) particularism (under provision for some ethnic groups, religions, geographic areas, or ideological beliefs; (3) paternalism (divergence of perceived problem and solutions between those providing and those receiving); (4) amateurism (Salamon 1987, 1995).

Cumulatively these are known as the Three-Failures Theory (Steinberg 2006), which is an elegant framework, if only it consistently explained empirical reality. Steinberg details these shortcomings and focuses on developing a more complete theory of supply of nonprofit organizations. Steinberg notes that the efficiency-based models do not represent the full range of values important to understanding nonprofit organizations (Steinberg 2006, p. 128-29). These are similar concerns as exist in the policy literature when discussing efficiency versus equity (Stone 2012). There are values beyond efficiency that are important to consider in the supply of and demand for nonprofit service provision. The desire to hold on to the uniqueness
of the nonprofit organizational form is further challenged by the evolution of social enterprises. The legal forms for enterprises that seek to achieve both profit and social missions are evolving into hybrid forms some of which are for-profits (Schmidt 2016).

A recent contribution by Paul Dragos Aligica (2015) seeks to replace the Three-Failures Theory, with its origins in neoclassical economics assumptions of equilibrium and optimization, in favor of a “symbiotics” framework informed by Hayekian economics. Rather than market-based assumptions of allocative efficiency, the symbiotics framework focuses on questions of adaptive learning that occur in the context of rules, incentives and beliefs. In this perspective, there is no optimization objective in a market exchange. Since this is a recent publication, its potential for forthcoming contributions remains to be developed.

**Civil Society Explanations**

Origins explanations for nonprofit organizations in the U.S. often begin with Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation that America’s democracy rests on the intermediary role of it voluntary associations. Hayek’s critique of the modern welfare state (1960, 1979) was that centralized planning by the government reduces freedom and can lead to tyranny. Research from this perspective views government intervention as having a depressing effect on community and voluntary associations. In contrast, the communitarian view is that government and voluntary associations support one another (see the works of Amitzai Etzioni and Benjamin Barber). Communitarians are far more focused on the creation of norms and place important emphasis on the role of voluntary associations in mobilizing demand for policy change. Robert Putnam (1993) brought attention to the role of voluntary associations in bringing people together for the common good. In this view government policies can have both positive and negative impacts on nonprofit organizations and their ability to create social capital (Putnam
But as Smith and Grønbjerg conclude, “Although some scholars have challenged the validity of Putnam’s arguments and evidence, his perspective has gained popular acceptance with far-reaching effects on public policy, the relation between government and nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit views of themselves and their relations to the community (2006, p. 231).

Social Movement Origins

Social movements encompass a broad area of scholarship with many variants but all involve the process of people coming together to advocate for change (Tarrow 1994, Gamson 1975, Benford and Snow 2000). Social movements, “provide the organizational and political mechanisms for translating private concerns into public issues” (Smith and Grønbjerg 2006, p. 232). These mechanisms are important areas of study to understand how voluntary action becomes institutionalized as nonprofit organizations. The social movement itself may develop into a new nonprofit (e.g., the Civil Rights movement led to the creation of Children’s Defense Fund) or bring together a range of nonprofit organizations into a coalition (Imig 2014) and, if the movement results in policy change, then nonprofit organizations may implement those changes (Sandfort 2014, Fyall 2016).

Neoinstitutionalists

Neoinstitutionalists “bring the state back in” to the social origins debate (Skocpol 1999, Rothstein and Steinmo 2002, among others). They emphasize the role of legal and political institutions on the origins and roles of the nonprofit sector. Salamon and Anheier (1998) created a country classification system for the nonprofit sector based on interactions between citizens and institutions. Countries are classified across four regime types (liberal, corporatist, social
democratic, statist) according to government social spending and size of nonprofit sector. The emergence of the regime is due to the historical interactions between political regimes and their interaction with social classes. This approach is particularly important for distinguishing among the different types of institutions and the roles that they play in the provision of goods and services, supporting/competing with one another, and how these interactions change over time. Critics of this approach include measurement methodology (underestimating the role of religious organizations) and its inability to explain rapid change in the sector (Moore 2001, Morgan 2002, Smith and Grønbjerg 2006). But critics aside, it has created a methodology and supported data collection that facilitate cross-country comparative research.

**B. Voluntary Giving**

In 2015, over $373 billion was donated for charitable purposes with seventy-one percent donated by individuals and the remaining from foundations (16%), bequests (9%), and corporations (5%) (Giving USA 2016). The phenomenon of philanthropic giving occupies many NVA scholars’ research agendas. NVA researchers have extensive descriptive statistics on the who, what, and how of giving through empirical data collected by universities, think tanks and government reports (Havens et al. 2006); however the “why” requires theory-driven research and this focus preoccupies many NVA scholars. In the research on why people give, there is an emphasis on tax policy and the incentives it creates (Simon 2006, Wilson 2012); however, instrumental models of behavior are not able to explain why people give, choose not to give, or have the desire but are unable to give. This requires attention to the expressive functions of giving (Frumkin 2002).

NVA scholars research philanthropic giving and also individuals’ time through voluntary action to nonprofit organizations, social movements, and membership associations (nonprofits that rely
on their members’ donations of time and/or money for their continued existence). There is voluminous scholarship on the act of volunteering time from a management perspective (Brudney and Meijs 2009, Brudney and Hager 2005, Handy et al. 2007, Brudney and Gazley 2002 and 2006, Brudney et al. 2009). Similar to the research on philanthropy, the theoretical understanding of why people volunteer cannot be fully explained by instrumental reasons. Recent research on membership and mutual benefit organizations advance a systems theory approach for understanding why individuals join and actively participate in associations. In a 2014 special issue of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, editors Gazley and Tschirhart point scholars in the direction of expanding from instrumental motivations toward models incorporating “bridging and bonding dynamics; socialization effects, and structural, technical, and political barriers to membership” (Tschirhart and Gazley 2014, p. 11S).

C. Nonprofits and Government

Nonprofit organizations and voluntary actions by individuals intersect with government at every level and every part of the policymaking process. Nonprofit organizations are both the target population for policy (state incorporation and tax laws and federal tax laws), the mediating institutions for delivering government services, and the advocates for target populations who receive government services. Incorporation and tax laws create the fundamental tensions between nonprofits and governments (Brody and Cordes 2006, Abramson et al. 2006). NVA scholars Elizabeth Boris and Eugene Steuerle’s capture the expansive and complex relationships in their edited volume Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and Conflict (2006). With a 3rd edition published in 2016 the volume provides important knowledge on topics of policies, practices and values that create collaboration in some areas and conflicts in others.
Recent U.S. history illustrates why “collaboration and conflict” is in the title. The sector experienced rapid growth in the 1960s in response to new programs created as a result of the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty. The federal government shifted from contracting through states who, in turn, contracted with nonprofit organizations, to contracting directly with local nonprofit organizations. This changed effectively bypassed structural racism in state governments and it also created pressures for professionalization of nonprofit organizations (to administer programs) and increased demand for nonprofit organizations. From this moment forward the number of nonprofit organizations skyrocketed to reflect increasing prevalence of contracts for the delivery of publicly funded programs.

Governments reliance on nonprofit organizations to deliver the services created opportunities for collaboration but also tensions within nonprofit organizations around professionalization and advocacy. The Reagan Administration’s efforts to decrease the role of government led to greater reliance on contracting out public services resulting in the “hollow state” (Milward and Provan 2000). The heavy reliance on contracting arrangements, particularly for social welfare services, created deep connections between public managers responsible for the contracts and nonprofit organizations to deliver the services (Smith and Lipsky 1995, Gronbjerg and Salamon 2012). It is in this broad area of research that public management and NVA scholars connect most (see Sowa in this volume). There are important core topics of management that public and nonprofit scholars share (e.g., leadership, human resource management, strategic decision-making, program evaluation, contracting, collaboration, among others) but there are important divergences related to managing volunteers (see Brudney references above), boards (Ostrower and Stone 2010), and the “double bottom line” of attaining financial goals and mission.
III. NVA Nexus with Public Policy

In this section I focus primarily on connecting the policy process framework literature with NVA. While there are many other nexuses that can be explored to advance knowledge of public policy through greater integration of nonprofit and voluntary action, the following three are particularly promising directions: policy design, nonprofit advocacy, and the role of foundations in the policy process.

A. Policy Design

Policy scholars concerned with the role of citizens in democracies focus on the impacts of policy design on citizen participation through frameworks such as the social construction of target groups (Schneider and Ingram 1997), policy feedback theory (Mettler and SoRelle 2014), narrative policy framework (McBeth, Jones and Shanahan 2014), and institutional analysis and design framework (Ostrom 2011; Ostrom with Cox and Schlager 2014). These policy process frameworks all focus, to some extent, on the messages citizens receive from government and the subsequent impacts on their participation in democratic processes. But they do not draw on NVA literature to the extent one would expect. Smith and Lipsky’s Nonprofits for Hire (1993) is the classic source for bringing attention to the role of mediating institutions in communities to provide services. Devolution and the rise of contracting out led to the professionalization of nonprofit organizations and mounting tensions between mission and government funding reliance (Frumkin 2002). The subsequent rise of the accountability movement further exacerbated the administrative demands on nonprofit organizations and a host of other impacts that have direct consequences for the target population (Phillips and Smith 2011). All of these developments have been central topics of NVA research. For public policy scholars who study
policy design and its impacts on target populations, there are abundant opportunities for cross-fertilization.

**B. Policy Advocacy**

There is a great deal of attention on advocacy in the NVA literature, some of which crosses into policy literature (Fyall 2016, Buffardi et al. 2015, Pekkannen 2014). NVA scholars research the dynamics of advocacy both within the nonprofit organizations (capacity, constraints) and across the sector (impacts of government funding on advocacy) and can be drawn on to expand what is now the lumped category of interest groups in the broader Political Science literature (Berry with Arons 2005). The heterogeneity of the NVA sector has not been sufficiently reflected in the interest group literature or in the policy process theories and frameworks. Political Science tends to focus on those nonprofit organizations whose primary focus in advocacy (501(c)4 and 527 nonprofit organizations whereas NVA scholars tend to focus on 501(c)3 nonprofits whose primary focus is service delivery but who also advocate for their target populations. Shared work in this area would inform theoretical expansion of policy process frameworks through deeper understandings of the complex array of associational activity in the mobilization for policy change.

Two recent contributions to the NVA advocacy literature are of note. Schmid and Almog-Bar’s 2014 symposium in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* provides an international perspective on advocacy and engagement by nonprofit organizations delivering human services. Some empirical research indicates that as nonprofit organizations contracted with governments to deliver human services, their advocacy activities decreased (Berry with Arons 2005, Boris with Maronick 2012) whereas other researchers found contrary evidence (Chaves and Galaskiewicz 2004, Mosley 2011). The symposium’s articles include new theoretical directions for
understanding advocacy including use of moral frames for advocacy (Garrow and Hasenfeld 2014), Bourdieu’s theory of Capital Benefit (Greenspan 2014) as well as empirical studies of advocacy activities including funders directing advocacy (Jung et al. 2014) and use of Twitter (Guo and Saxton 2014).

The second contribution is an edited volume focusing on nonprofit and advocacy through the lens of government retrenchment. Editors Pekkanen, Smith and Tsujinaka discusses the challenges of studying advocacy due its definitional and measurement challenges. They define advocacy as, “the attempt to influence public policy, with directly or indirectly” (2014, p. 3). Using insider/outsider and indirect/direct activity they distinguish among lobbying, policy advocacy, protest and public education. This volume addresses important definitional variation within the policy advocacy literature. Because the actual activities undertaken vary and the organizations undertaking these activities can be organized (at least in the U.S. context) as different types of 501 (c) nonprofit organizations with differing laws governing their activities, precision in language is of paramount importance. The volume’s chapters focus on the dimensions of advocacy at the local, state, and national levels and the politics, strategy and tactics nonprofits employ on behalf of target populations such as children (Imig 2014), human service recipients (Sandfort 2014) and marginalized groups due to post-hurricane Katrina (Strolovitch 2014). Many of these authors are political scientists and that bodes well for creating cross-field awareness but there are opportunities for building specifically with public policy scholars.

Mettler’s Submerged State (2011) provides an illustrative example of the opportunity for forging deeper connections with NVA literature. In her study she focuses on the growing distance between the beneficiaries of government policies and their knowledge that the government is
providing those services due to the hollow state phenomenon. As a policy scholar she is surprised at the lobbying of “charities” to oppose changes to the tax code related to health care reform because the change would have reduced the tax deduction for donations. By contrast, an NVA scholar would expect those nonprofits with budgets dependent on charitable giving to oppose changes. Similarly, Mettler’s account does not recognize that the Chamber of Commerce, National Federal of Independent Businesses, and AFL-CIO are all nonprofit organizations. The heterogeneity of the sector often gets reduced to the 501(c)(3) “charities” without recognition of the full array of nonprofit forms, including those whose main purpose is lobbying such as 527 Political Action Committees, as well as the lobbying activities of 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations or 501(c)(5) unions. This is not a criticism of Mettler but rather an illustrative example for how policy scholars would benefit from a broader understanding of the heterogeneity of nonprofit organizations and the substantial research on the varying roles of nonprofit organizations in policy advocacy.

Two Policy Studies Journal articles recently featured cross-field research. Fyall (2016) proposes the Advocate-Provider framework to explicitly recognize that nonprofit organizations participate in both policy formation through advocacy and policy implementation through their service delivery. Buffardi et al. (2015) study informs the process of venue shopping (legislative/executive, level of government) and venue specialization (concentrating on one venue versus shifting among venues). Each of these studies represents how cross-fertilization between NVA advocacy research and public policy can advance knowledge.

C. Role of Foundations in the Policy Process

Foundations are important players in the policy process and yet they receive scant attention from current day public policy scholars (Bushouse 2009). But back many decades ago,
sociologists and political scientists debated the role of elites in society and foundations were included in their models of policymaking. The work of C. Wright Mill, G. William Domhoff and Thomas Dye from the elite power theory perspective clashed with the pluralist perspective of Robert Dahl, among others. The elite power theorists gave foundations a privileged role in the policy process. In Domhoff’s (1998) version of elite power theory, foundations play a role in both policy formation and the “ideology” process (i.e., the formation, dissemination, and enforcement of attitudes and assumptions that permit the continued existence of policies and politicians favorable to the wealth, income, status and privileges of members of the ruling class.

In Thomas Dye’s (1979) schematic of the policy process, foundations receive their money from wealthy individuals and corporations that then provide grants to major universities and policy think tanks that, in turn, provide research personnel to government commissions and councils. These experts are featured by the national news media and affect all branches of the government through their policy reports and recommendations and generation of media attention.

The challenge is that there are 90,000 foundations in the U.S. and they are far more diverse in their missions and giving programs than ideology processes; however, there has not been theory developed that can encompass their role in policy processes. There are rich case studies of big foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation (Lagemann 1989) and the Rockefeller Foundation (Brown 1979) and for particular eras such as Sealanders’s (1997) history of foundations and public policymaking from the Progressive Era to the New Deal and Weaver’s (1969) history of American foundations through the mid-1960s. There are studies critical of the role of foundations in society, most notably Waldemar Nielsen’s The Big Foundations (1972) and The Golden Donor (1985). More recently historian David Hammack and Helmut Anheier published two books, funded by the Aspen Institute, focusing on history and modern day

Other NVA scholars focus on the practice of foundation giving with the goal of improving effectiveness of their giving programs. Since its creation in 2000, the University of Southern California Center of Philanthropy and Public Policy uses research to inform philanthropic decision-making with particular focus on foundations that engage in public policy to solve community problems (see Ferris 2000; Ferris and Williams 2010, 2013; Ferris with Sharp and Harmssen 2010; and also http://cppp.usc.edu/ for additional research). The success at USC is the result of sustained connections forged between California foundations and USC. But in general, the challenge for research on foundations is, as foundation insider Joel Fleischman (2007) notes, their lack of accountability and transparency. Scholars utilize public data from IRS form 990-PF and annual reports (see Mosley and Galaskiewicz (2010, 2015 use of these data to analyze foundation giving for social change leading up to the 1996 welfare reform legislation). Bushouse (2009) utilizes backward mapping of funder acknowledgements to track giving to universal preschool research and advocacy, which is useful for uncovering opaque giving strategies for policy change. But beyond these sources and methods, access depends on the foundation and its gatekeepers. It also depends on the researchers’ ability to fund research that...
may result in critical findings of foundations’ giving programs. Biting the hand that feeds is not a particularly effective strategy for researchers who seek access or funding.

All of the works cited above are dealing with power, whether indirectly or directly but none of these contributions attempts to provide a theory of foundations’ role in public policy. Part of the challenge is that the term foundation includes a such a vast diversity of organizational sizes, missions and giving strategies (Smith 2010). Even if we limit to those foundations with giving programs aimed at policy process, there is still tremendous variation in activities and scope. While there is important scholarship on improving the practice of philanthropy (such as Ferris 2010 and Frumkin 2006), theory on the role of foundations in public policy remains an underdeveloped, but potentially fruitful, path for shared NVA and public policy research.

**Future Directions**

The three nexus identified in the paper represent promising areas in which cross-field collaboration could advance knowledge. Cross-field collaboration is already occurring in some research projects, new publication venues, and scholarly networks. From the NVA perspective there are several new developments connecting NVA and public policy research. The policy field framework being development by Grønbjerg and Smith (2015) focuses on the relationships among government and nonprofits but also the market and informal sectors. To date the authors examined variation among five policy fields and the factors responsible for the variation. The authors state, and I agree, that the framework “offers the predictive capacity to generate hypotheses and research designs for additional research” (Grønbjerg and Smith 2015, p.1). An alternative approach developed by Stone and Sandfort (2009) uses the same term, policy field, but the focus is on the bottom up view in local policy contexts. These are two
different approaches to understand the array of actors and their actions in the policy process that more accurately reflect the diversity of nonprofits and their roles in public policy.

Some scholars are actively utilizing public policy frameworks to explore NVA research topics. Bushouse, Never and Christensen’s 2016 special issue of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* features papers utilizing the tools and frameworks developed by Elinor and Vincent Ostrom and colleagues (e.g., Institutional Grammar Tool, Social-Ecological Systems, Institutional Analysis and Design Framework). The papers included in the volume build connections between what had previously been parallel research traditions.

In terms of publication outlets, in addition to the potential for NVSQ and PSJ to feature cross-field research, there *Nonprofit Policy Forum* was created in 2010 “to serve as an international journal that publishes original research and analysis on public policy issues and the public policy process critical to the work of nonprofit organizations” (Walter De Gruyter 2016). With funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (2016), the journal is available in open access format to facilitate distribution of knowledge (Dennis Young, personal communication by Skype, March 4, 2016).

There are promising developments within both public policy and NVA scholarly associations. In addition to the inclusion of NVA in this PSJ special issue, the American Political Science Association convened a philanthropy working group at the 2016 annual conference. This first gathering of scholars is directly attributable to having public policy and NVA scholar Steven Rathgeb Smith as the executive director of the American Political Science Association. From the NVA perspective, in 2015 a public policy community of interest met at the annual ARNOVA conference and are beginning to identify ways to create networks among scholars and begin the process of identifying shared research agendas.
In closing, there have been important cross-field publications and collaborations in the past that advanced knowledge, particularly in the area of policy advocacy. In the future, we have the opportunity to forge scholarly networks that can grow into research collaborations with publications in both NVA and public policy journals. The nexus identified in this paper are a first step in charting our three areas for collaboration. But these are by no means the only and some may argue that others areas that should have been highlighted. In the spirit of intellectual curiosity, I encourage readers to go forth and prosper.
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Endnotes

i Nonprofit organizations are created at the state level but must register with the IRS to gain tax exemption.

ii PSJ publishes multiple articles on voluntary approaches to environmental regulation of firms (Prakash and Potoski 2007, Berliner and Prakash 2015, Blackman 2008, among others); however, these are focused mainly on business-government relationships.

iii At its founding, Independent Sector was the hub for bringing together researchers to study the nonprofit sector. Since that time the focus of Independent Sector evolved into a resource for nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. Its activities focus on advocating for the sector, providing resources and training for nonprofit leaders, and an annual thematic conference.


v The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management focuses on public management and does not explicitly include reference to nonprofit organizations (APPAM 2016) and therefore was excluded.

vi The data from Seton Hall is collected by Roseanne Mirabella (former president of ARNOVA) collects annual data on nonprofit management education and publishes it in a searchable database geared toward matching potential students with programs.

vii There are several nonprofit management textbooks designed for teaching (e.g., Renz et al. 2010, Tschirhart and Bielefeld 2012) and Ott and Dicke have published several edited volumes of collected works. But the Powell and Steinberg volume is the only one focused on research.

viii Weisbrod uses the term “collective-consumption good” which he defines as a good that “can be enjoyed by a number of people simultaneously” (1977:11). It is important to note that this definition only includes jointness of use and not exclusion. If he had included exclusion, then he could have distinguished more carefully public, toll, and common pool resources. This is particularly important for toll goods because they often have mixed industries of public, nonprofit and for-profit (e.g., child care, nursing homes, hospital, schools).

ix Weisbrod lays out three other options for individuals with excess demand: move to a different political unit, form a lower-level government unit to provide additional service to themselves, or substitute private-goods for the collective goods (1977:60).

x Smith and Grønbjerg (2006) provide a careful articulation of this literature dividing it into civil society, social movement, and regime and neoinstitutional perspectives.

xi Indiana University-Purdue University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy has an array of research projects that provide useful data and analysis including: (1) Giving USA is an annual report published since 2000 on the donations by individuals, corporations, foundations and bequests to charities and religious organizations (see givingusa.org); (2) the Philanthropy Panel Study is a bi-annual, longitudinal study of family’s giving and volunteering in the U.S.; (3) other studies target particular types of donors (e.g., high amount, high net worth, gender) as well as categories of donations (e.g., disaster relief, faith-based). x The nonpartisan think tank, The Urban Institute Center of Nonprofits and
Philanthropy publishes the *Nonprofit Almanac* that includes data on charitable giving and volunteering (see McKeever 2015 for a brief report on trends) and recently published the first survey of family foundations (Boris et al. 2015). There are also government sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Expenditure Survey (see [http://www.bls.gov/cex/](http://www.bls.gov/cex/)) that provides interview survey and diary survey data on the buying habits of American consumers.

xii Fyall and McGuire published “Advocating for Policy change in Nonprofit Coalitions” in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Quarterly* (2015). Taken together Fyall’s work speaks effectively to both NVA and PP scholars.

xiii See Sandfort and Stone (2008) for an application of their policy field approach to teaching.