Throughout the world, nonprofit organizations face an increasingly turbulent environment. This includes greater competition for resources, partly because of constrained public budgets; new regulatory policies; rising demands for a broader scope of community services; growing social fragmentation along racial, ethnic, or religious lines, and escalating inequality.

Pivotal to many of these challenges is the intricate and complex interactions that have emerged between nonprofits and government in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Many nonprofit agencies, especially in the social and health services, receive extensive direct and indirect government financing, yet nonprofits also serve as key representatives of citizen and community interests in the policymaking process. At the same time, public policy increasingly emphasizes accountability and transparency in the delivery of services, with many policy fields, such as health and social services, facing sharply higher levels of regulation and government oversight.

Given the importance of public policy for the role of nonprofits in society, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (NVSQ)* sponsored this special issue in the interest of supporting cutting-edge research on the relationship between public policy and nonprofit organizations. The collection of articles included here builds directly on a series of four symposia sponsored by ARNOVA and financially supported by the Gates Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, and the C.S. Mott Foundation. *NVSQ* issued a call for proposals in late 2016 with a deadline of early 2017.

The ten articles included in this special issue reflect the product of a very competitive and extensive peer-review process. We thank all authors who submitted manuscripts for consideration in the special issue and regret that we were unable to include more because of space limitations. We are especially grateful to the many anonymous reviewers who participated in the review process, in some cases reviewing multiple revisions of the original manuscript. And we thank the authors of the included articles for their patience and willingness to respond to comments from reviewers and the editors.

Broadly speaking, these papers address two major topics: service delivery and state-voluntary action relations. The latter includes papers that focus on advocacy and public engagement at respectively the micro level, meso level and macro level. They include also two papers that provide more specific guidelines for future research on advocacy.

Service Delivery
This special issue includes three articles that address challenges related to nonprofit delivery of services. In "Pantries and Policy Implementation: Using Nonprofit Priorities to Understand Variation in Emergency Food Assistance," Rachel Fyall and Jamie Levine Daniel focus on emergency food assistance, primarily through the use of nonprofit food pantries. Importantly, they conclude that providers are not simply delivering services as envisioned by policy makers, but deliberately or by default impose their own priorities on the service system. Fyall and Daniel find evidence that nonprofit mission, values, constituency groups, collaboration networks, and specific service approaches need to be taken into consideration. While need, service accessibility, organizational capacity and service processes (all standard policy considerations) are important, specific organizational priorities and how policies are implemented shape service delivery above and beyond standard administrative considerations.

A second article in this group, "Examining Youth Outcomes of African American-Led Nonprofits" by Susan T. Gooden, Lindsey L. Evans, Michael L. Perkins, Caper Gooden, and Yali Pang, entitled" also focuses on program implementation and outcomes. The authors examine whether the leadership profile of nonprofit organizations is associated with different client outcomes, specifically, whether African American-led service organizations have more positive outcomes for the minority youths being served, than do service organizations without a racial alignment between leadership and youths being served. Overall, they find that African American-led service organizations embrace a "relationship approach" characterized by "high expectations, respect, encouragement, praise, and constructive criticism." The result are positive outcomes for service users as measured by self-reports on academic performance, deviant behavior, family and social support, and self-esteem and resiliency.

A third and final article in this group, Compassionate Bureaucracy: Assuming the Administrative Burden of Policy Implementation" by Kimberly Wiley and Frances Berry, examines what happens on the ground, when nonprofit service organizations face conflicting requirements from government funding agencies with diverse and competing programmatic groups. Wiley and Berry examines what happens in the case of Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations which typically receive funding multiple government agencies at all levels of government aligned more or less closely with three major federal agencies and related policies: Housing and Urban Development (Emergency Shelter Grants), Health and Human Services (Family Violence Prevention and Services), Justice (Victims of Crime, Violence Against Women). Each of these three major federal funding streams has its own program goals and regulatory requirements. For these Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations, clients are particularly vulnerable and there is a deep commitment to support and advocate on behalf of clients, forcing agencies to either deny clients certain services or buffer them from the contradictory requirements.

The particular research illustrates the diverse approaches managers use when faced with conflicts between externally imposed policies. They may comply (or at least appear to comply), bypass or work around regulations (finding loopholes), or ignore rules, in order to minimize risks for clients and the long-term survival of the agencies. The latter suggests that the nonprofit form is particularly important in this service field, given for-profit incentives to minimize costs and government incentives to adhere to regulations.

State-Voluntary Action Relations
Five of the articles in this special issue address state-voluntary action relations, especially advocacy and civic engagement. Each paper uses discourse analysis to illustrate the complex dynamics in this relationship between state actors and voluntary efforts, but differ in the level of analysis, ranging from micro-level (one paper), to the meso level (two papers) and macro level (also two papers).

"Managed Participation: City Agencies and Micropolitics in Participatory Budgeting" by Celina Su examines policy-making at the micro level. She provides an intriguing look at the challenges encountered when local government invites community members to participate in setting budget priorities for policies that govern them - "participatory budgeting". Her analysis focuses on two key dynamics – (1) balancing local and technical knowledge in setting budget priorities and (2) navigating contested politics.

The author draws on survey data, participant observations, and semi-structured interviews with participants – both private citizens and government employees – and finds that these two dynamics, technical vs. local knowledge and contested politics, limit the ability of constituents to substantively shape state priorities. The fact that these micro-political processes occurred in the

context of budgetary austerity, undoubtedly contributed to the frustrations encountered by both city bureaucrats and community members. However, budgetary austerity is very prevalent in most local government which also means that budgetary decisions are likely to be highly contested. Without sustained attention to securing buy-in from city bureaucrats and training of community members, participatory budgetary processes are likely to have only limited impact on budgetary decisions and risk undermining the legitimacy of the participatory process itself.

Moreover, the author finds that "budget delegates" (volunteer community members), who spend many hours of time and energy on their involvement, experience the participatory budgeting process as demoralizing and frustrating. They do not believe that they are making a difference. These significant findings thus have significant implications for our understanding of the volunteer experience, the relationships among volunteers, and the way in which these relations shape volunteer motivations. Thus, the findings extend much more broadly than the role of volunteers in participatory budgeting.

"Inter-organizational Advocacy in Strategic Action Fields: Exogenous Shocks and Local Responses by Katherine Chen, examines policy advocacy at the meso-level, in between the community and government. This paper examines networks of organizations active in a particular policy field (serving older adults aging in place) during a period of significant shifts in public policy directly affecting the service field. Her analysis shows how the networks initially focused on making sense of the new policy developments so as to determine impacts of the change on their clients and their organizations.

However, as new competitors began to enter the field as a result of the policy shift, the coalitions shifted their focus and began to highlight how the policies endangered client welfare, increased costs, and created opportunities for fraud. In the process the networks created new meanings of the policy developments. Notably, the networks did not seek to change the policies as such, but to modify regulations so as to mitigate these threats and, not coincidentally, to protect the positions of their own organizations.

This analysis suggests that collective action in the form of advocacy by coalitions of service providers serves to protect turf held by incumbent organizations along with client welfare. However, the composition of coalitions and characteristics of the participants shape actions taken (or not taken) by the coalitions, raising important questions about the extent to which they are able to undertake systemic advocacy.

A second paper at this meso-level of analysis, "Cross-Sector Partnerships in Human Services: Insights and Organizational Dilemmas" by Michal Almog-Bar and Hillel Schmid, also focuses on networks. This paper examines organizations with differential institutional logics (nonprofits, government, and for-profits) that form partnerships, with particular attention to the structure of their collaborative activity and the impact of those structures on partnership goals and priorities. Partnership objectives can include specific service-delivery goals as well as increasing efficiency.

The study focused on partnerships that have endured and, like Katherine Chen's article, points to the complexity of relationships among partners and especially the importance of interpersonal trust among those representing participating organizations. Thus effective partnerships require positive personal relationships and engagement, not simply participatory decision-making structures and shared goals. Consequently, partnerships are likely to be relatively fragile and uncertain, raising major questions about the extent to partnerships will endure to address long-term goals and underlying policy issues.

Two papers examine government-voluntary relations at the macro, societal level. In "State-Voluntary Relations in Contemporary Welfare Systems: New Politics or Voluntary Action as Usual" Tracey Coule and Ellen Katherine Bennett focuses on broad historical contours of the relationships between the state and voluntary action. Their analysis examines how these relationships have played out in the U.K. over the last forty plus years, using text analysis of two major reviews of the role played voluntary organizations in the U.K. welfare state – The Wolfenden Committee Report on "The Future of Voluntary Organizations" (1978) and the Deakin Commission Report on "Meeting the Challenge of Change: Voluntary Action into the 21st Century" (1996).

The authors argue that the two efforts shared important strategies – highlighting continuity with key elements of the historical past as a way to establish legitimacy for the review, while also claiming to have established important new directions going forward. However, as the analysis shows, even the postulated new directions draw on elements from the past. The analysis leaves us wondering whether renewal efforts are cyclical or whether it is a matter of selectively endorsing and rejecting established features with very little true innovation – pouring new wine into old bottles or old wine into new bottles. However, choices about which historical features to endorse (or reject) and how are critical. As the authors note, welfare systems evolve over time, but the symbiotic relationships between state and voluntary actors remain.

A second article also investigates advocacy and government-nonprofit relationships at the macro level. "Transnational Advocacy without Northern NGO Partners: Vietnamese NGOs in the HIV/AIDS Sector Christopher Pallas and Lan Nguyen examines lobbying by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Vietnam active in the HIV/AIDS sector. In this significant paper, the authors demonstrate that the success of Vietnamese NGOs was facilitated by a combination of factors: (1) their own organizational capacity (reflecting government regulations); (2) use of insider strategies built on connections, local knowledge and credibility; and (3) a power lacunae created by a scarcity of local NGOs (because of legal restrictions) and reluctance of international NGOs to participate in advocacy on Vietnam-related policy issues (because of government sensitivity to advocacy). This particular combination of features may still be relatively unique to Vietnam, but not necessarily so in the long run. Overall, the authors make an important conceptual distinction between the transnationalilty of networks and transnationality of advocacy. The former has been the traditional pattern, but may become less prevalent as Southern NGOs gain expertise and influence.

Two final papers in the special issue provide more specific guidelines for future research by summarizing and analyzing wide range of studies on nonprofit advocacy. Both identify significant new sources of data for analyzing lobbying, a particular form of advocacy.

In "Organizational Antecedents of Nonprofit Engagement in Policy Advocacy: A Meta-Analytical Review" Jiahuan Lu directly addresses the inconsistent findings in the existing literature regarding the factors that shape nonprofit advocacy activities. Lu does so by employing a meta-analysis of 46 studies on nonprofit advocacy. The results fail to confirm the importance of a number of factors identified in prior research, while lending support to other factors, most notably size and various indicators of professionalization, organizational capacity, and environmental factors. However, the author also highlights the need for additional research to delve more deeply in the role of different factors in the willingness and capacity of nonprofits to engage in advocacy.

The final paper in this symposium, "The "State" of Nonprofit Lobbying Research: Data, Definitions, and Directions for Future Study" by Christopher Prentice, identifies an important source of data for examining lobbying activities by nonprofits that few researchers have explored. Using North Carolina as a case, Prentice examines state registration of organizations engaged in lobbying at the state level. In the process, he provides a welcome discussion of what constitutes nonprofit lobbying, major federal lobbying reporting requirements, and inadequacies of Form 990 data for analyzing nonprofit lobbying.

Overall, the papers in the symposium underscore the diversity of the nonprofit sector and the government-nonprofit relationship. Collectively, the papers also offer new theoretical insights and direct implications for policy and practice. Equally important, the papers inform the research agenda for the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies.

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