

The Impact of Advocacy and Social Justice Work on Nonprofit Funding and Support



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Introduction

- The **mission statement** “is a guide to every action taken by the organization and is the principal standard against which its performance should be measured” (Worth, 2019, p. 64).
- **Vision:** organization’s long-term goals and directives (BoardSource, 2016)
- **Values:** guidelines for an organization’s practices (BoardSource, 2016)
- **Organizational identity** is created from the combination of internal and external definitions of the organization - the beliefs and viewpoints held about the organization by outsiders combine with the views and beliefs held about the organization by insiders to create the full organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Lecy & Ashley, 2019).
- Organizational identities can be flexible, but can lead to mission drift (Kreiner et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

- Nonprofits are pulled in different directions by their supporters, which can cause **conflict among their mission, vision, values, and organizational identity**
- Especially problematic when nonprofits are resource dependent on a specific funder(s) (Worth, 2019)
- Decisions that will be effective in moving the mission forward **may not always be the best move from a financial standpoint** (Young, 2005) - i.e. - advocacy or social justice work
- Nonprofits that focus on endeavors that are financially beneficial, but not aligned with mission, vision, values, may experience **mission drift** (Worth, 2019).
- Advocacy and social justice work have the potential to alienate supporters (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012; Neumayer et al., 2015)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to **examine the effects of advocacy and social justice involvement on 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations.**

- Lack of diverse funding sources and/or resource dependency can make it difficult to pursue mission
- How can nonprofits balance the need to steward their donors, especially long-time supporters, while taking a stand on social issues that may not align with its donors' beliefs?



Research Questions

- How do supporters impact a nonprofit's organizational identity?
- What factors can lead to mission drift and how can nonprofit organizations combat it?
- How does advocacy and social justice work impact funding for 501(c)(3) nonprofits?



Significance of the Study

- Conflicts between organization values/beliefs and those of supporters can have serious social and financial consequences
- Marion Public Library and supporting organizations lost support for hosting a Drag Queen Story Time in honor of Pride Month (Jette, 2019)
- Metropolitan Museum of Art cut ties with Sackler family because of connection to opioid crisis (Rendon, 2019; Harris, 2019)

Significance of the Study, cont.

- Nonprofits that are profit focused and pursue revenue sources not related to their mission can alienate donors (Jones, 2007)
- Lack of current research on impact of nonprofit participation in advocacy on funding and support
- Extremely relevant in current climate (BLM, LGBTQI+, election, etc.)

Literature Review



Literature Review - Key Findings & Synthesis

- Nonprofit organizations must be strong in their mission, vision, and values **to guide decision-making** (Gooding, 2014; Krug & Weinberg, 2004; Macedo et. Al, 2015; McLaughlin, 2009)
- May experience **mission drift** when they stray from their stated purpose to pursue funding opportunities (Balser & McClusky, 2004; Gooding, 2004; Jones, 2007; Ma et. al, 2018; McLaughlin, 2009; Samimi, 2010)
- Advocacy work can help combat mission drift, but **not all participate** (Bronstein, 2006; Levinger, 2020a; Nicholson-Crotty, 2009)
 - Organization size
 - Funding
 - Mission
 - Nonprofit Industrial Complex (Samimi, 2010)
 - Current political climate

Implications for Professional Practice

- Advocacy is beneficial for nonprofit organizations
 - Raise awareness for an organization's mission
 - Gain more supporters
 - Prevent policies/legislation that could be detrimental for clients/organization
 - Amplify voices of those in need and encourage change
- All stakeholders should be involved in advocacy
- Different types of advocacy
 - Lobbying or legislative advocacy
 - Administrative advocacy
 - Legal advocacy
 - Community advocacy
- Funders must support advocacy work



Recommendations for Future Research

- Research is currently lacking
 - How does implementing advocacy impact an organization's relationship with supporters/financial support?
- Research variables
 - Size of organization
 - Type of organization
 - Focus of mission
 - Funding sources
- What is the impact of rejecting gifts?
- Effective advocacy strategies for nonprofit organizations

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Questions?

