

**Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science; Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies**



Review Author[s]:  
Harold M. Waller

*Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 32,  
No. 3 (Sep., 1999), 596-597.

Stable URL:  
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-4239%28199909%2932%3A3%3C596%3ABITIOG%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>

*Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* is currently published by Canadian Political Science Association.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/cpsa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

reflect a broad and eclectic "Moorist" inspiration: they define and address morally compelling political and social issues and respect both deep historical causation and the contingency of human relations. In an age when amoral and ahistorical quantitative and instrumental-rationalist perspectives dominate the social sciences, the most appropriate tribute to Moore is one which demonstrates the fecundity not of any one of Moore's works but of his attitude.

LAURENCE McFALLS *Université de Montréal*

### **Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science**

Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. xxii, 223

### **Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies**

Ken Kollman

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. xiv, 215

American politics as a field has long featured a great emphasis on the study of interest groups, which have played a central role in the development of key theoretical constructs. Moreover, scholars have often contended that the role of interest groups in the United States represents a critical difference in comparison to other industrialized systems. Indeed it can be argued that US interest groups have assumed many of the functions that are carried out by political parties in other systems. Moreover, Baumgartner and Leech contend, very much in accord with traditional scholarship, that they "are at the heart of the political process" and "are central to the process of representation" (188). Given the centrality of groups in American politics, it is hardly surprising that there has been so much controversy about just what effect they do have.

Arguably the focus on groups in American politics can be traced back to James Madison, whose theoretical analysis remains a starting point for many contemporary debates. Alexis de Tocqueville added immeasurably to our understanding of the unique role played by voluntary associations. During the current century, scholars such as Arthur Bentley, David Truman, V. O. Key, Robert Dahl, Mancur Olson, Theodore Lowi and Kay Lehmann Schlozman and John Tierney have made major contributions to our knowledge of interest groups. Yet after all these years and so many studies, there remains a sense of unease as to where we as a profession stand in terms of advancing knowledge in this area.

In different ways each of the books under review has contributed to a resolution of that concern. Baumgartner and Leech have produced an exhaustive review and critique of the literature in the field, while Kollman has carried out an innovative theoretical and empirical research project on a neglected dimension of interest group politics. Both are worth intensive study by anyone with a serious interest in the subject.

Baumgartner and Leech have actually produced much more than an admirable compilation of all of the relevant studies. More importantly they ask penetrating questions about priorities and resource allocation within the profession, in particular about how specific research projects advance the discipline. That enables them to explain why the literature developed as it did and to assess where research in the field stands today. Furthermore it leads them to analyze research agendas and to suggest specific research designs that might advance the discipline to a greater degree than those previously employed. Implicit in this analysis is the criticism that the designs that have been utilized may have generated a considerable amount of data without comparable theory

development. As they contend, it is "a literature that grows but does not accumulate" (17). Thus they seek to break down the barriers to accumulation by clarifying problems and identifying fruitful directions for theory-building research. In so doing they range over various types of studies, from mobilization to lobbying to internal democracy to collective action, always demonstrating a keen perception of just how it all fits together. In particular, they focus on the classic dilemma of unequal resources of groups and the biases that this introduces into the interest group system. This leads them to be sharply critical of research strategies that fail to combine studies of particular issues with the systematic treatment of tactics and specific actions, thereby inhibiting more detailed analysis of bias problems. After examining articles on interest groups in the *American Political Science Review* between 1950 and 1995, they found that the research designs were not sufficiently ambitious to develop an accumulative literature. Finally, they conclude with suggested new research designs (for example, network analysis, contextual studies, qualitative designs) and the recommendation that "the work that will rejuvenate the field is that which combines sensitivity to context, is large in its empirical scope, and addresses important empirical questions" (186). It is a challenging agenda and well worth remembering.

Kollman's *Outside Lobbying* is a work of an entirely different sort. It is an ambitious attempt to extend our theories of interest group behaviour beyond conventional approaches to lobbying, which concentrate on the direct interaction between the lobbyist and the policy maker or decision maker. Kollman argues persuasively that during recent decades interest groups have learned how to utilize ordinary citizens to do a significant part of their lobbying. Thus his research is designed to identify the linkage between public opinion and interest group behaviour. He accomplishes this through an innovative combination of rational choice modeling and empirical research. The latter encompasses both interview data from his study of various interest groups as well as general public opinion data. His goal is to show us how and why groups organize outside lobbying activities and under what circumstances they succeed.

Kollman's theoretical model contains two main elements: signaling and conflict expansion. He contends that outside lobbying fulfills this dual purpose. On the one hand it signals to policy makers that the issue has salience with at least a portion of the public and that they need to take cognizance of that. At the same time, it can expand the conflict by raising the salience of the issue among the citizenry. This can be a potent combination when mobilized properly, a powerful supplement to conventional lobbying techniques.

The empirical side of Kollman's book combines analysis of public opinion data with data from interviews of interest group leaders. The analysis enables him to explain the circumstances in which groups will decide to employ outside lobbying techniques as well as the strategic considerations that are taken into account, such as when an expansion of the conflict with policy makers is sought and what its consequences might be.

Kollman has done an admirable job with the phenomenon of outside lobbying, especially rational decision making among group leaders, but this is just one dimension of what interest groups do. By focusing on only a segment of a group's activities, he leaves us satisfied but still waiting for a more comprehensive theory of interest groups.