

The Co-evolution of Groups and Government

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ABSTRACT

Theories of growth and development of interest group populations have often focused on supply effects: Groups multiply when social and economic forces provide the resources for them to overcome barriers to collective action. We note here that there are important government demand effects. In fact, the interrelations between the size of government and the size of the interest-group system are so tight that no theory of one should be attempted without incorporating the other. Here we focus on a co-evolutionary perspective showing the mutual dependencies of growth in groups, the number of issues on the political agenda, and the size of government. We illustrate these links with longitudinal data on the growth and development of the U.S. group system, comparing it with indicators of the size of government and the range of government activities. We show similar longitudinal evidence from five specific policy areas. Then we conduct a cross-sectional comparison of interest-group and congressional activities across the full range of policy areas from 1996 to 2000, showing that groups are most active in the areas where Congress is the most active.

Introduction

In this paper we argue that to understand the overall distribution of lobbying in Washington—or before any level of democratic government—knowledge about the activities of that government is as important as knowledge about the organizations themselves.¹ Who lobbies depends in part on the areas in which government is active. To make this point, we link the study of agenda setting to the study of interest mobilization, showing how the degree of government involvement in an issue area contributes to the size of the populations of organized interests in those areas. This, essentially, is the demand side of why interest groups become active in particular areas of public policy. While the existing supply of organized interests and potential constituents in an issue area are certainly important, so too is the governmental demand for attention to that area. In any given issue area, then, we should expect trends in interest mobilization to parallel trends in governmental activity. While government may grow as a result of interest-group demands, government activity itself has a strong effect in mobilizing interests to establish a Washington presence.

Theories of growth and development of interest group populations have often focused on supply effects: Groups multiply when social and economic forces provide the resources for them to overcome barriers to collective action. But in fact, the interrelations between the size of government and the size of the interest-group system are so tight that no theory of one should be attempted without incorporating the other. Evidence from across modern U.S. history, across the entire range of policy areas, suggests a more co-evolutionary perspective. Social movements are often seen to push various issues onto the government agenda, with attendant changes in the structure of government itself. As government becomes involved in a greater number of issues,

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groups are further mobilized. Government involvement not only provides further resources for groups to be sustained, but it also mobilizes groups that may be affected by the new government activities, including those who are opposed to them. So the growth of government is partly due to the growth in the group system, and the growth in the group system is partly due to the growth of government: a positive feedback system. While this is not an inevitable growth cycle (since exogenous forces can affect or retard the growth of both government and groups) the two are tightly linked. In this paper we show the tight links between areas of government activity and intensity of interest group activity. Our findings are similar to those of Mahoney who also reports both longitudinal and cross-sectional evidence confirming the coevolution of groups and government institutions in the context of the European Union. Similarly, Lowery et al. (2003) have recently shown parallel results in their studies of the American states.

The traditional approach to explaining differentials in mobilization has been to consider the organized interest itself. Numerous scholars have analyzed internal organizational characteristics—size, goals, resources—and have repeatedly come to similar conclusions. These studies depict a world in which concentrated economic interests are advantaged, where businesses and trade associations dominate numerically, and where truly “public” interest groups whose goals are unrelated to occupation are relatively rare (see, e.g., Schattschneider 1960, Walker 1983, 1991; Schlozman and Tierney 1983, 1986; Baumgartner and Leech 2001).

Truman (1951), Bentley (1908), and the early pluralists emphasized external forces such as threats and economic dislocations in their explanations of the growth and development of the group system. V.O. Key (1964) and Herring (1967) specifically noted the impact of wars and government activity on the group system. After Olson’s (1965) critique of these pluralist assumptions, however, most scholarly attention shifted to internal factors associated with the group itself and the individuals it attempted to mobilize (e.g. Salisbury 1969; Moe 1980a, 1980b,

1981; Marwell and Ames 1979, 1980, 1981; Rothenberg 1988, 1992; Sabatier and McLaughlin 1990). In these subsequent models of group membership and growth, government activity was not a fundamental concern.

Government can act as a powerful catalyst, however, leading potential members of a group to be more willing to expend effort on a group's mission and prompting group leaders to decide to expend precious time and other resources on a particular issue. Given that government activity in an issue area is not constant, it cannot safely be excluded from empirical studies or theoretical treatments of group mobilization. Government activity varies dramatically over time, as well as from one policy domain to another. This government activity creates a demand effect in which organizations find it necessary to lobby because of the increased importance of the government in their issue area. The government activity could include many things. Often it means laws and regulations that affect the lives and businesses of members and potential members. It may also come in the form of direct subsidies or payments to an organization or the members and potential members of the organization.

While internal characteristics of organizations are clearly important factors in mobilization, an emerging consensus within the study of political behavior at many levels encourages us to look beyond these internal questions and toward the political context in which individuals and organizations find themselves. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) pioneered the self-conscious inclusion of community as a variable in voting behavior studies. The social movement literature has turned its attention away from grievances and resources and toward such issues as political opportunities and framing structures (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Gray and Lowery's (1995, 1996) population ecology approach to interest group populations shifted the focus to the energy, stability, and area within an interest-group environment, while a series of scholars has begun considering the issue context in which particular organized interests make

lobbying decisions (Hojnacki 1997; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Kollman 1998; Leech 1998; Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 2001). Historical approaches to interest group mobilization have as well focused explicitly on changing political contexts (Skocpol and Ganz 2000, Crowley and Skocpol 2001, Tichenor and Harris 2003). Finally, in the study of policymaking more generally, scholars have moved beyond the consideration of resources and individuals in policy outcomes to also consider the broader effects of agenda setting and issue definition (e.g. Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 2002; Jones 1995, Leech et al. 2002a).

The political context or environment is an essential part of any explanation of the size and scope of the interest-group system. Even in a hypothetically ideal pluralist world in which all points of view were represented fairly, there would be no reason to expect that all points of view would mobilize and lobby equally. If government had no authority over or involvement in an issue, then there would be little point in forming an interest group for the purpose of lobbying on that issue. This suggests that we should expect mobilization to occur not when an opinion or need exists in the world, but when that opinion or need *and the possibility of government action* intersect. This, indeed, is the definition of “interest” presented by Heinz et al. (1993, 24):

It is at the intersection of public policy and the wants and values of private actors that we discover interests. What we call the interests of the groups are not simply valued conditions or goals, such as material riches, moral well-being, or symbolic satisfaction. It is only as these are affected, potentially or in fact, by public policy, by the actions of authoritative public officials, that the valued ends are transformed into political interests that can be sought or opposed by interest groups.

If “interests” are created by the actions of government, then interest-group mobilization must be affected as well. As government becomes more active in a particular area, so too will the corresponding interest groups. That is, we should expect government activity to affect lobbying activity. If it does not—or if it does so for some types of interests but not for others—then representation is threatened. For this reason, studying populations of interest groups and their policy context is equally as important as studying individual interest groups and their resources.

Gray and Lowery (1996) explicitly focus attention on these processes by adopting the ESA—energy, stability, area—theory from population ecology. They argue that the number of interest groups in a population will be dependent not only on the number of potential members and other resources organizations have (the area), but also on the interests created by potential government goods, services, and regulations (the energy).

In this paper, we focus on the political environment aspect of mobilization—a concept that corresponds closely with Gray and Lowery’s energy term. We further focus on one aspect of that environment – government attention – and predict that levels of lobbying will increase as government activity increases, and we expect these processes to be issue-specific as well as general. That is, the group–government relation is felt mostly within the confines of a given policy area, so government activity and group growth can best be studied within particular issue-areas. Government involvement in regulation of transportation should not be expected to increase lobbying on trade policy; proposals to end tariffs on textiles should not be expected to raise the level of lobbying on welfare policy. In essence, a governmental decision to become involved in an issue area sets the agenda for existing and potential organized interests, who are thus encouraged to come to the capital to defend their interests and advocate particular solutions to perceived problems. As government has grown over the decades, it has not grown equally in all issue-areas. We take advantage of these unequal patterns in government activity to demonstrate the links between government attention and the mobilization of interests. Through the aggregation of all these policy areas, there should be observable system-level effects as well. We study both a range of issues and the overall system in this paper.

A distinction should be made here between the role of governmental patronage and the role of governmental attention. Previous studies have shown that the U.S. government often serves as a patron to fledgling interest groups, providing them with start-up capital and grants

(Walker 1991, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Cigler and Nownes 1995). Walker points out, for example, that the organizations that became the American Farm Bureau Federation were created by the Department of Agriculture to serve as advisors to county agents, and the National Rifle Association was begun with the help of the Department of Defense, which wanted to prepare citizens for future wars (1991, 31). Although such cases are dramatic, the impact of direct government support of interest groups may be less important than the impact of indirect effects of increased government involvement in a policy area.

Our empirical strategy is largely exploratory at this point. We use three different types of evidence here: longitudinal evidence about the growth of the group system as a whole as well as about the growth of government; issue-specific evidence about the development of social movements and interest groups in five particular issue areas along with evidence about congressional activities in these same areas; and finally comprehensive evidence stemming from congressional lobby disclosure reports linking 56 areas of lobbying with data from the Policy Agendas Project (see Baumgartner and Jones 2002 and <http://www.policyagendas.org/>) on congressional activities in those same areas.

Government and Groups Over Time

The growth of the group system in America can be linked over time with the growth of government. Both reflect trends in the other. There are many potential measures of the size and growth of the group system over time and, unfortunately, none are perfect. Similarly, the size of government is easier discussed than precisely measured. (Paul Light's efforts to measure the "true size of government" are noteworthy here; 1999; see also Howard 1997.) In this section, we make use of Jack Walker's retrospective estimates of the size of the interest-group population in America, based on his 1985 survey of groups.

While other estimates may show slightly different trends, Walker's data correspond with the generally acknowledged "interest-group explosion" of the 1960s and they are among the best available. Walker's study of interest groups was limited to membership associations that were active in public policy in some way at the federal level. Therefore it excluded purely non-political organizations, though those included were not necessarily partisan in any way. An alternative source of information might be the annual *Encyclopedia of Associations*, which includes non-political organizations such as sports clubs as well as organizations that may be involved in lobbying and other political activities such as trade associations. As part of the ongoing Policy Agendas Project, this source is being used in order to develop a retrospective of the size and structure of the associational landscape and to link the areas of group activities with the policy areas of the agendas project. We expect to be able to trace more completely the growth of the group system as it relates to government activities across different policy domains when this data source is complete. In particular, this will allow us to distinguish between the creation of new groups and the mobilization into lobbying and government affairs of previously existing associations and institutions that had once not been involved in government relations. Those analyses will have to wait the completion of this large data collection effort.

Baumgartner and Leech reported some preliminary findings from a review of the overall numbers of groups in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* in ten-year increments from 1959 (1998; see Table 6.1). These data showed that areas of the greatest growth in the associational system included public affairs and health care, two areas of great growth in government activity. However, some areas of relatively little government activity, such as sports and recreation, and hobby and cultural groups, were also areas of important growth in the associational field. Therefore we must shy away from any theory that would posit that government growth is the only, or even necessarily the most important, factor in explaining the development of a nation's

associational system. It is, however, quite often critical in decisions these existing associations make to become *interest* groups, that is, the decisions they make to become political and to petition government.

We measure the size of government in two ways: the number of civilian federal employees, and the size of the federal policy agenda. Figures 1 and 2 show the relationship between the size of the interest-group population and these two measures of the size of the federal government.

(Figure 1 about here)

Figure 1 shows that the dramatic expansion in the size of the interest-group system followed on the huge growth of government after World War Two. Government grew dramatically during the War, and of course the group system did not. Immediately after World War Two, however, we see a rapid increase in the size of the interest-group system, and sustained increases in subsequent decades that generally mirror the growth of the size of the civilian federal work-force. Both reach their periods of most rapid and sustained growth during the 1960s and appear to reduce or indeed to stall their growth entirely after the late-1970s. In any case, the figure suggests a general correspondence between the growth of government and the growth of groups, though the timing and sequence of spurts of growth are not always identical.

Figure 2 shows the link between the same developments in the group system with an alternative indicator of the size of government. This is drawn from the Policy Agendas Project, and consists of a measure of the size and diversity of the governmental agenda (See Baumgartner and Jones 2002; see also <http://www.policyagendas.org/>). Specifically, the measure is the number of distinct subtopics from the Agendas Project on which Congress held a hearing in a given year.

(Figure 2 about here)

The growth of the group system has not been only from an increase in the overall size of government, but in the diversity of its activities. This is to say that our theory of the interactions and effects of government on groups and groups on government has to do with their activities and interests in a particular issue area. As mentioned, an increase in groups in one policy area should not lead to more government activity in unrelated issue domains. This is why our measure of the diversity and the size of the overall governmental agenda is the most appropriate measure of the size of government for the purposes of this paper. It is closely paralleled, of course, by the number of civilian employees, an indicator more easily available for other governments as well (the two correlate at 0.94). Both of these indicators reflect the diversity of government activities, not only the size of the checks government may be writing.

Mahoney's (2003) analysis of the development of the group system in the European Union shows findings similar to these. In contrast to the U.S. government, which has been constitutionally stable over the period of our study, the institutions of the EU have undergone dramatic expansions at various points through new treaties beginning with the Treaty of Rome, which was effective in 1958. Looking at the various treaties that expanded the competencies of the European Union, and tracing the creation dates of interest groups active at the European level, Mahoney shows that surges of group formation followed several of the most important treaties. Evidence suggests therefore that the groups reacted to the increasing importance of the new level of government by mobilizing to be present there.

Our theory leads us to expect that the demand effects of government activity should have an impact most strongly in the policy area where government becomes involved. This allows us some leverage in efforts to disentangle the generally parallel trends of growth in government and growth in the group system. In the remaining part of this section we look at five distinct issue-areas, showing the growth in the number of groups closely relating to the development of active

government policies in those same areas. Then, in the next section, we take a fully cross-sectional view, noting the relation between the areas of greater and lesser congressional activity with the number of interest groups active in each of 56 distinct issue-areas.

Figures 3 through 7 show the number of interest groups and the number of congressional hearings in the areas of women's issues, the environment, human rights, civil rights, and the elderly (where we use an alternative indicator for group mobilization: the membership size of the American Association of Retired Persons, rather than the number of groups, reflecting the unusual near-monopoly status of the AARP in this area).

(Figures 3 through 7 about here)

Separately two of us have discussed each of these policy areas in some detail, explaining our data sources and linking to case-studies that help inform the peculiarities of each issue area (see Baumgartner and Mahoney 2004). For the purposes of this discussion, we can limit our attention to a very simple point: Government growth is not simultaneous in all areas, and neither is group activity. Rather, government and groups tend to grow simultaneously in response to each other and to social and economic trends in the policy area, not so much in response to general trends affecting the entire society or the government as a whole. (Of course general factors such as the state of the economy or war can indeed have such an impact, but there will be additional factors affecting different sectors of the economy in different ways.) This allows us to see that groups and government have grown in tandem, sometimes with initial activity by groups followed by later growth in government, sometimes following the opposite pattern. However, each of the series in Figures 3 through 7 shows periods of growth in one, followed by growth in the other. It is worth noting that these periods of growth in the different policy areas are not the same historical periods across time. While we do not have information on every possible issue-area, it does appear that the separate trends apparent in Figures 3 through 7 correspond with the

larger aggregate findings in Figures 1 and 2, above. That is, if we had data on every issue-area, we would find that their sums would follow a trend similar to the aggregate data presented in those figures. Government growth has led to the mobilization of groups just as group mobilization has led to growth in government. These trends can be seen by looking at the overall size of the two systems and by looking at individual policy areas one at a time.

Figures 3 through 7 show a variety of patterns in the relations between group mobilization and government activity. In some cases group mobilization appears to precede government activity; in others the opposite occurs. In some areas government activity remains high after an initial surge in attention; in other areas it declines, though not to its previous level. The relations between these two variables are not perfectly correlated. This is because there are many factors in addition to group mobilization that compel Congress to hold hearings in an area, and there are many reasons other than government activity why groups would mobilize. The timing and, in particular, the delay in impact of one variable on the other are not clear, and there is little reason to expect it to be identical from case to case or from one historical period to another. So there are many things left out of these figures, and much further research to accomplish before we have a full understanding. On the other hand, we can see a general correspondence between the two series and very little in any theory to make us think that such a link would be purely spurious. To be sure, the demand effect of government is not the only cause of the growth of groups, and the growth of groups is not the only cause of increased government activity in a policy area. But each is an important factor in explaining the other.

Why do groups multiply in the same areas as government becomes more involved? Agenda-setting has something to do with it. In areas where groups mobilize, we can also expect to see increased media attention, perhaps a revised way of thinking about the underlying social issue, or increased activities by local levels of government. In any case, whatever the initial

impetus for increased attention to the policy area, many social institutions can be expected simultaneously, or in close proximity, to react to it. Groups may gain more members or multiply in number; media attention may grow; congressional interest in the area may increase; new agencies may be created to address the issue; and over time all these developments can be institutionalized. As they are, another change develops: Previously apolitical voluntary associations become interest groups, and new interest groups are formed. That is, as government activity becomes important in this new area of public policy, institutions, associations, firms, and others that had previously perhaps been involved in the area but had not been involved in lobbying find that they should have a Washington presence. In the next section of the paper, we address lobbying more specifically. Here we turn our attention to lobby disclosure reports, which are reflections of significant efforts to monitor or affect legislation in Congress. We will see that these data also point to a conclusion that groups are mobilized at least in part in reaction to those areas where government is most active.

Congressional Activities and Interest-Group Registrations

In this paper we have argued that levels of lobbying and levels of government activity tend to go hand-in-hand, each contributing to the other. We expect, however, that these processes should be more issue-specific than general. As government has grown over the decades, it has not grown equally in all issue-areas. By taking advantage of these unequal patterns in government activity, we can see the links between government attention and the mobilization of interests.

We show this using data on the number of hearings from the Policy Agendas Project and data on the number of organizations registering to lobby before the federal government from the Lobbying Disclosure Data Set (Baumgartner and Leech 2001). The Lobbying Disclosure data allows us to identify the number of organizations active in Washington in 74 government-designated issue areas, the number of issues lobbied on, and the amount spent on lobbying,

biannually between 1996 and 2000. Of the government-designated areas, 56 have direct parallels in the Policy Agendas data. These 56 areas comprise 85 percent of the total lobbying during the four-year period (for details of these linkages, see Leech et al. 2002b).

To measure government attention, we use a 10-year moving average, lagged one year, of congressional hearings held in each issue area. The average over the 10-year period is important for two reasons: the random annual variation that exists in hearings, and the time it takes groups to mobilize. In the first case, a 10-year average of the number of hearings held in an issue area is a more accurate indicator of government activity than the number of hearings in a single year, since hearings can fluctuate quite rapidly from year to year. In the second case, however, mobilizing an interest group is not as easy as scheduling a hearing. An organization's decision to lobby is time consuming and expensive, especially if it involves setting up an office in Washington (or Brussels or a state capital, for that matter) or adding permanent staff to that office. In addition, organizations are not unitary actors—there may be multiple constituencies within the organization to convince, and organizational actors may not immediately recognize that their interests have been threatened or that an opportunity has arisen because of government action (see Martin 1995). For these reasons we expect long-term changes in government activity to be more important in affecting lobbying activity than short-term changes in attention (and Leech et al. 2002b find support for that expectation). Further, we do not expect groups to mobilize immediately, or to demobilize on short notice as government activity undergoes small-scale adjustments. (The inertial qualities of group mobilization may also help explain some of the difficulties in specifying the correct lag structures in any time-series model. We also have no reason to assume these delays would be equal across issue areas.)

In other work (Leech et al. 2002b) we have analyzed these data longitudinally, but such analysis is problematic because there is minimal time-series variation in the reports. Most areas

of U.S. public policy are home to quite stable patterns of interest-group involvement, at least in the short term. To take the example of banking, a minimum of 107 and a maximum of 135 organizations filed lobbying reports in that area during the four-year period. In the case of medical and disease research, between 62 and 83 groups filed lobbying reports. This degree of variation is swamped, however, by the vast degree of cross-sectional variation in the data, with some issue areas showing much greater activity than others. For example, taxation issues show an average of 563 organizations registering to lobby, whereas unemployment issues average just eight lobbying reports. Comparing the means and standard deviations of the issue areas confirms the cross-sectional dominance of the variation. On average, for all 74 issue areas combined, the average number of lobbying reports is 16 times greater than the standard deviation over the eight reporting periods. That is, very few issue areas show large changes in the number of lobbying reports over time compared to their average, but there is great variation across the issue areas. Still, these data make abundantly clear that there is a close parallel between the number of organizations active in an issue area and the amount of government activity in that area.

A bivariate analysis of the relationship between these two variables is shown in Figure 8. Here we see the relation between the average number of hearings in a six-month period over the previous 10 years and the average number of organizations registering to lobby in each of 56 issue areas during a six month period.

(Figure 8 about here)

Some areas, clustered in the upper-left corner of the figures presented, show great group activity but little legislative action as measured by hearings. These are such issue areas as taxation, where major decisions are made and massive numbers of lobbyists are active, but where few hearings are scheduled. Others, at the bottom-right, are home to considerable legislative activities but not much lobbying. This includes Government Operations, which includes ethics

investigations, oversight, nominations, claims against the U.S. government, and other routine topics that require legislative activity and generate hundreds of congressional hearings each year but are not home to the equivalent level of lobbying intensity. The general pattern of the data, however, is consistent with our argument, showing a Pearson's r of .46. For every additional hearing in a year, we show an increase of about 1.2 additional groups registered to lobby in that area. Since the number of hearings in an issue area in a given year range from zero to 119 during the years we consider, the potential effects of this relationship is far from negligible. The pattern we see in figure 8 represents the *average* amount of lobbying activity in each issue area across the four years for which we have data, but if we were to look at all 392 data points rather than 56 (that is, the 56 issue areas multiplied across seven points in time), the pattern we find is virtually identical and Pearson's r remains at .46 (see Leech et al. 2002b). This is the result of the minimal variation across time within each issue area, as we mentioned above.

Of course, we expect the relationships between government attention and lobbying to be stronger in some areas than others. Some areas will have great group activity but little legislative action as measured by hearings. These are such issue areas as taxation, where major decisions are made and massive numbers of lobbyists are active, but where few hearings are scheduled (taxation is represented by the outlier in the upper left-hand corner of Figure 8). Other areas may be home to considerable legislative activities but not much lobbying. This includes Government Operations, which includes ethics investigations, oversight, nominations, claims against the U.S. government, and other routine topics that require legislative activity and generate hundreds of congressional hearings each year but are not home to the equivalent level of lobbying intensity.

Establishing a Washington presence is not an automatic outgrowth of the development of a business, a trade group, or a non-profit. There is no reason to do it if government activities are not an important concern for the organization. As government has become more active in a

greater range of issue-areas in the last fifty years, a greater range of groups have found it important to be present, permanently represented, in Washington. While here we focus on cross-sectional variation in mobilization in different issue-areas during a four-year period, our findings also suggest an explanation for some longer-term trends. There is no mere coincidence in the fact that the “interest-group explosion” that many authors have noted occurred after the 1960s. Not only were there important social movements, entrepreneurs, and a growing economy; there were important changes in the structure of government. Government grew larger, of course, over the decades from World War II to the present. However, it is not the mere size of government that is the most important driving force in fostering the growth of groups, but rather the dramatic increase in the *range* of government activities that has been most important in causing the group explosion. Baumgartner and Jones’ analysis of the federal agenda shows not just a growth in government, as many have shown, but a dramatic increase in the numbers of distinct policy areas in which the federal government is involved (see Baumgartner and Jones 2002; Baumgartner, Jones, and MacLeod 2000). In the terms of Gray and Lowery’s population ecology theory of interest groups, this increase in range has the effect of increasing the “area” in which interest groups may operate and encourages new types of organizations to flock to Washington.

We noted above that our longitudinal data were reflected in similar findings by Mahoney in the context of the European Union. Rather than size of government, she used the passage of certain important treaties to indicate the increased importance of the EU as a policymaking body. We can also compare our findings across issue-areas with analogous findings by Mahoney in her study. She compared the number of groups mentioning activities in 18 issue-areas with the size of the staff of the relevant Directorate-General, or executive department. If the size of the staff of the relevant department is a rough indicator of the level of policy activity, then this analysis can be seen as similar to that reported in this section of our paper. Mahoney (2003) shows a strong

relation between the two, stronger in fact than we report here between hearings and lobby registrations. Clearly, the links between groups and government activities are general, not peculiar to any governmental design.

Conclusions: The Coevolution of Groups and Government

To understand the mobilization of interests before government, knowledge about the activities of that government is as important as knowledge about the organizations themselves. Who lobbies depends in part on the areas in which government is active. While social movements and the organizations they spawn certainly sometimes drive this process, as several of our examples show, in other cases the demand force of government involvement in an issue area seems to be the motivating factor. Clearly, groups often mobilize in areas where there is little or no government regulation. Social, economic, and cultural forces unrelated to government often are sufficient by themselves to explain the mobilization of certain kinds of organizations. After all, we see thousands of soccer leagues, sports groups, ethnic solidarity groups, fan clubs, and professional associations that were organized in the absence of any serious government intrusion into their areas of activity. Government is not the sole driver of the interest-group system by any means.

But government activity is an important factor in most areas of group mobilization, and perhaps the most important factor in many areas. Theories of group mobilization have focused on social supply factors rather than demand factors, leading to one-sided explanations that underplay the important role of government in setting the stage for group mobilization. The structure of the group system that a government deals with is endogenous to the structure and activities of government itself. That is, outside “pressure” cannot be said to exist only outside of government. Government creates that pressure by its own activities, or influences and shapes it. Thus, our theories of government growth must incorporate the efforts and unintended

consequences of government activity on the growth of groups. Similarly, our theories of group system development cannot ignore the activities of government. These activities are not only through the direct subsidization of groups, by any means. More important than these direct efforts to shape the group system are indirect effects stemming from activities such as creating agencies, promoting regulations and laws that affect new populations, and otherwise affecting the social environment within which groups operate. Many groups mobilize to oppose government activity, or at a minimum they mobilize defensively because they recognize that they must keep themselves abreast of the activities in Washington if they are to remain competitive in the business environment, for example. So government's effects on the group system are much larger when we think of the indirect effects rather than only the direct effects (which are also considerable) stemming from subsidies, grants, and contracts. In any case, the government and the interest-group system co-evolve over time. Explanations of one should not ignore the other.

This paper may raise more questions than it answers. It certainly provides no definitive answers to the questions that interest us, such as the magnitude and mechanisms of the impacts of these two systems on each other. One challenge for future research is to begin further to specify the types of issues, types of social/historical settings, and types of institutional structures in which groups or government tend to lead the other. Another is to note more specifically the other factors that affect both government growth in an issue-area and group development as well. The evidence we present here is not adequate to fully answer these questions, but it does clearly show that the questions are worth asking. Group mobilization cannot be discussed without considering the role of government; government's own mobilization into new policy areas similarly should not be discussed without considering the roles of groups.

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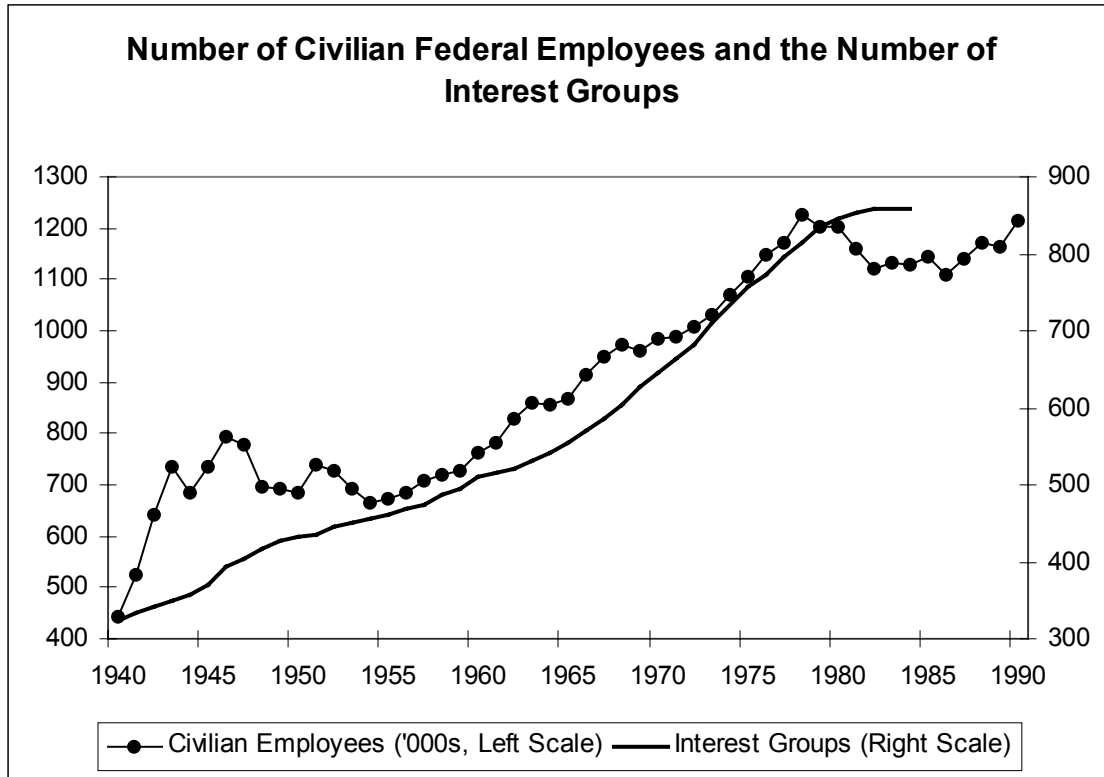
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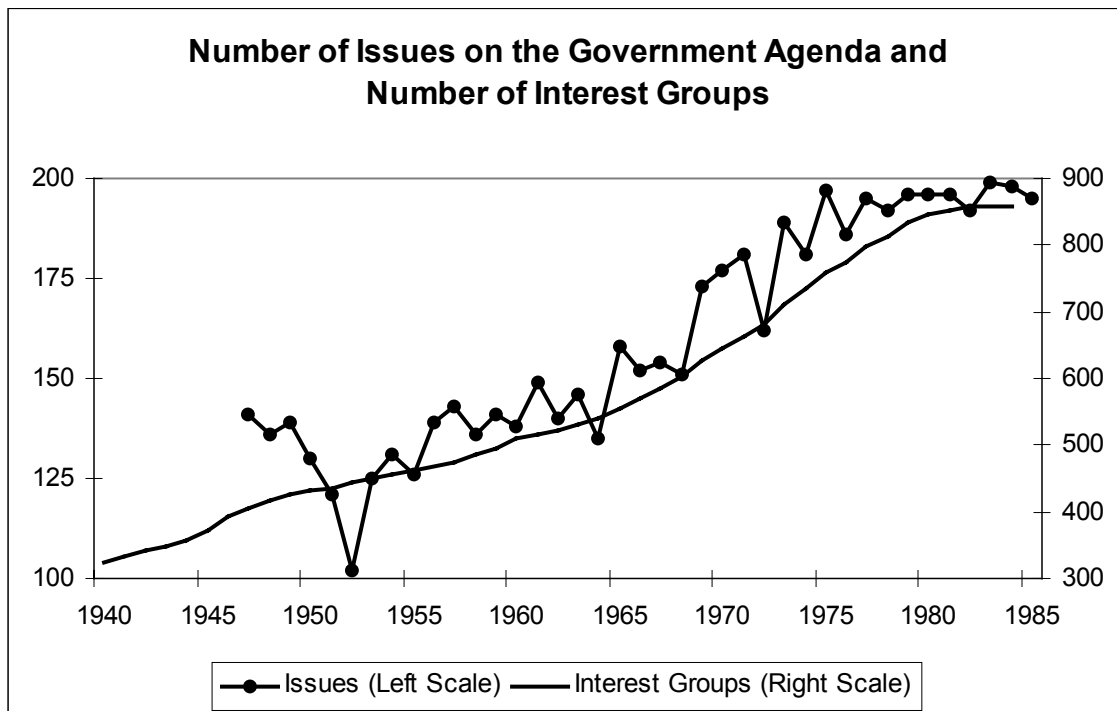
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Figure 1. The Size of Government and the Size of the Interest-Group Population



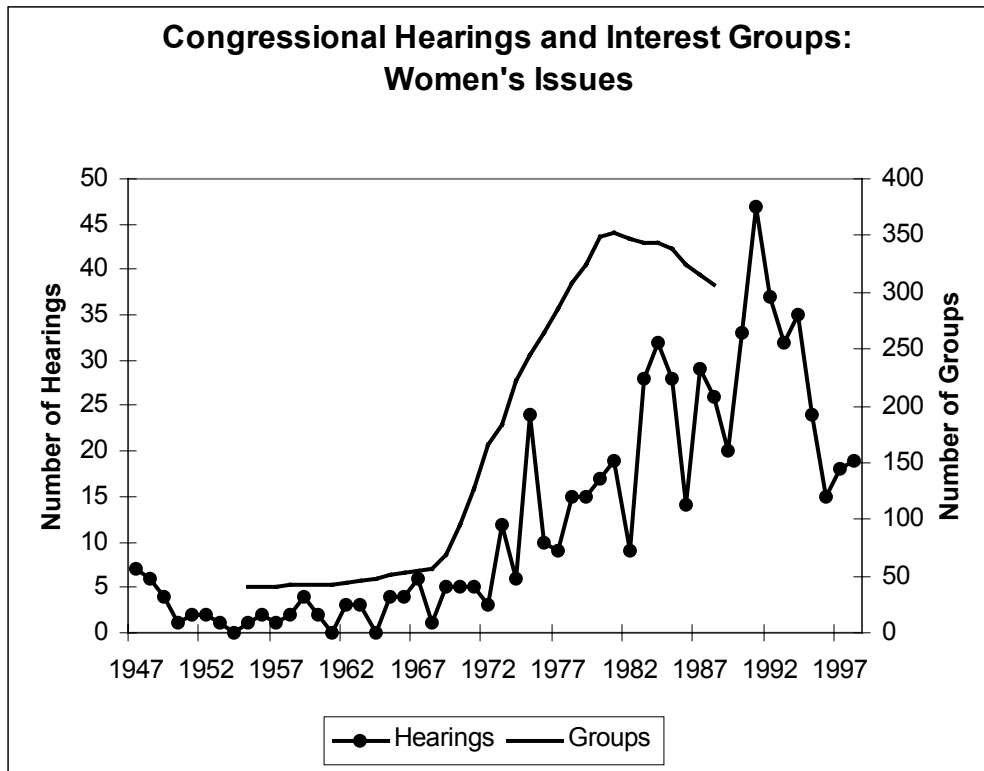
(Source: Civilian Employees, US Budget, Historical Tables, Table 17.1; Groups, from Walker 1991; see Baumgartner and Jones 1993, chapter 9.)

Figure 2. The Size of the Governmental Agenda and the Size of the Interest-Group Population.



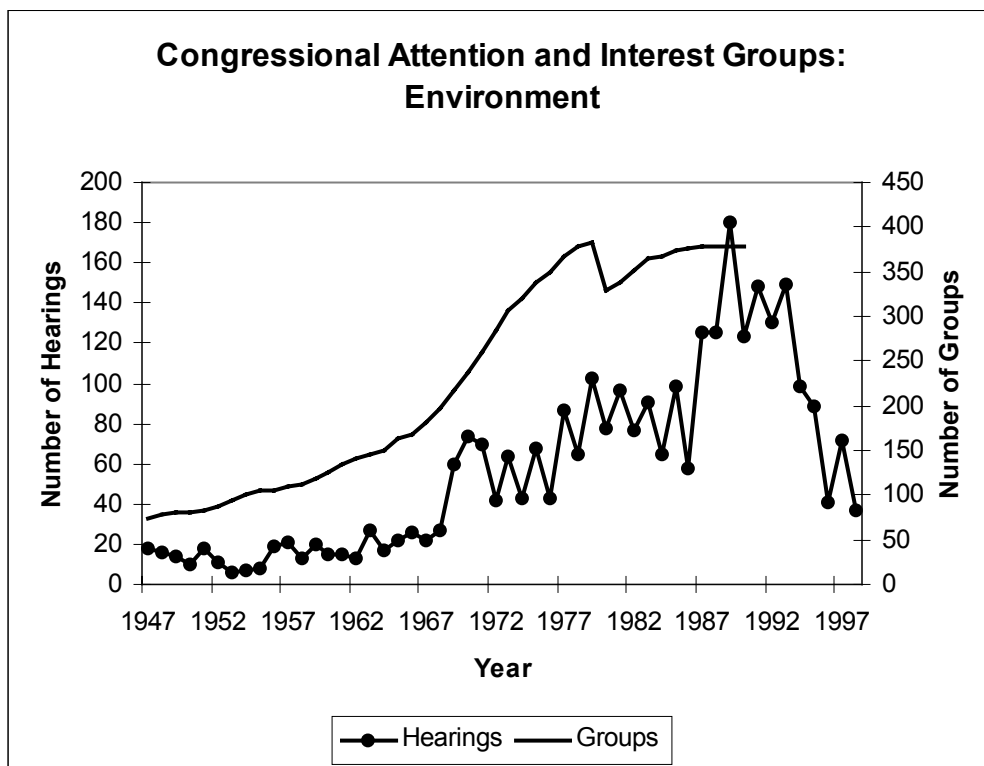
(Source: Issues: Policy Agendas Project; Groups: Walker 1991.)

Figure 3. Congressional Attention to Women's Issues and the Number of Interest Groups



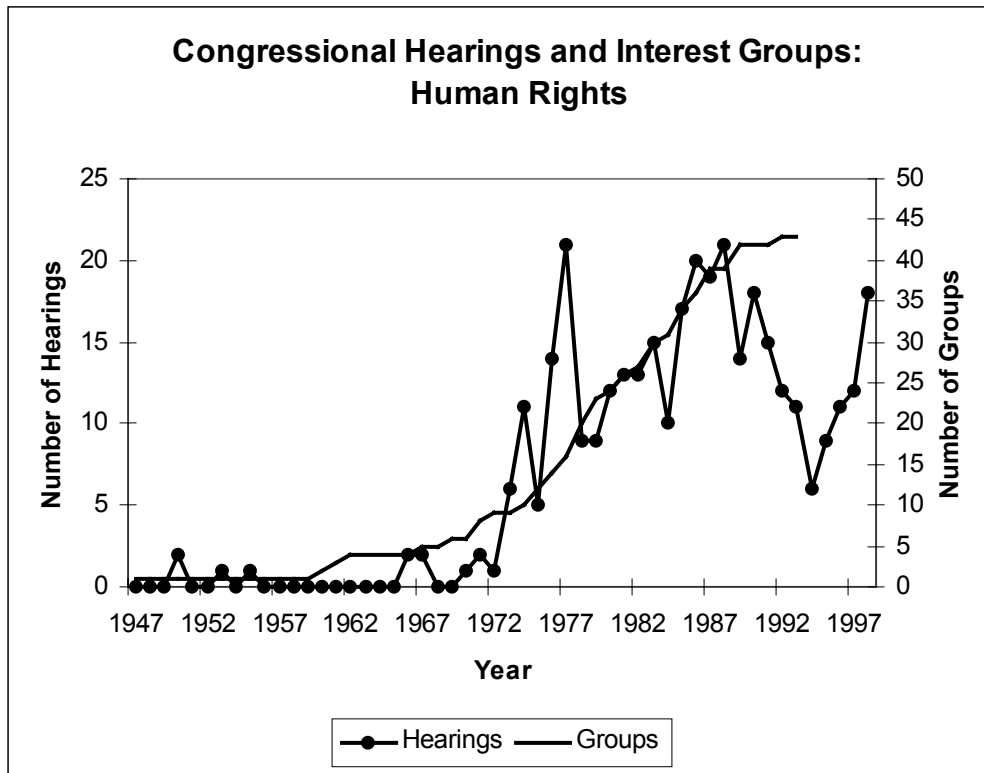
Source: Hearings, Agendas Project; Groups, Minkoff 1995.

Figure 4. Congressional Attention to Environmental Issues and the Number of Interest Groups



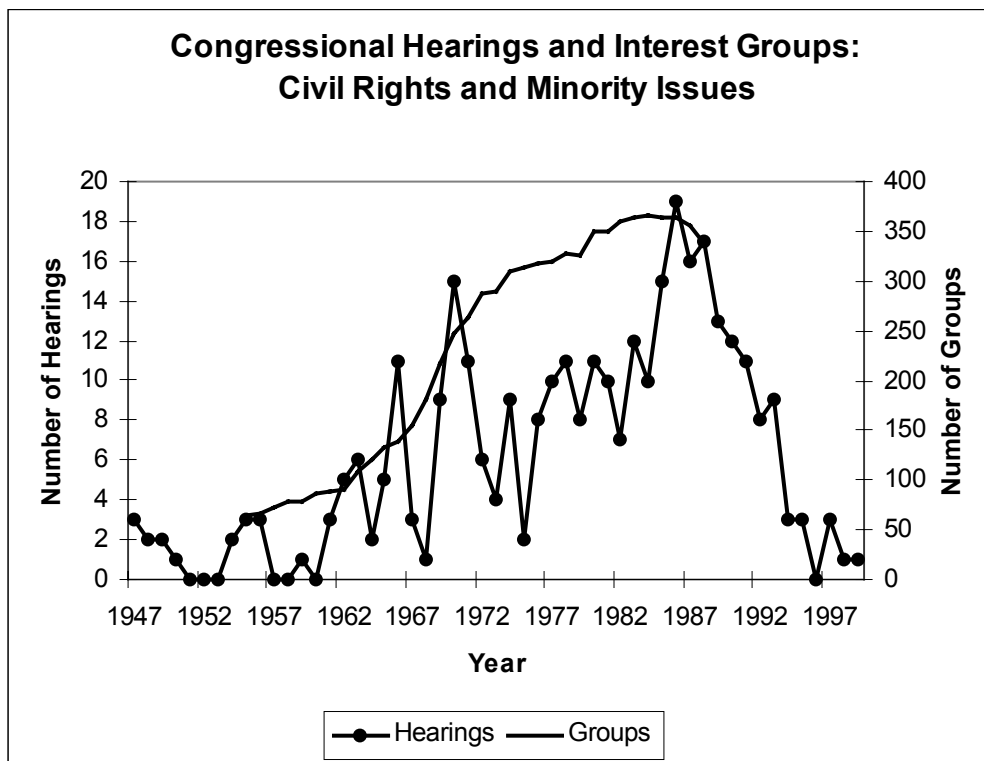
Sources: Hearings, Agendas Project; Groups, Baumgartner and Jones 1993.

Figure 5. Congressional Attention to Human Rights and the Number of Interest Groups



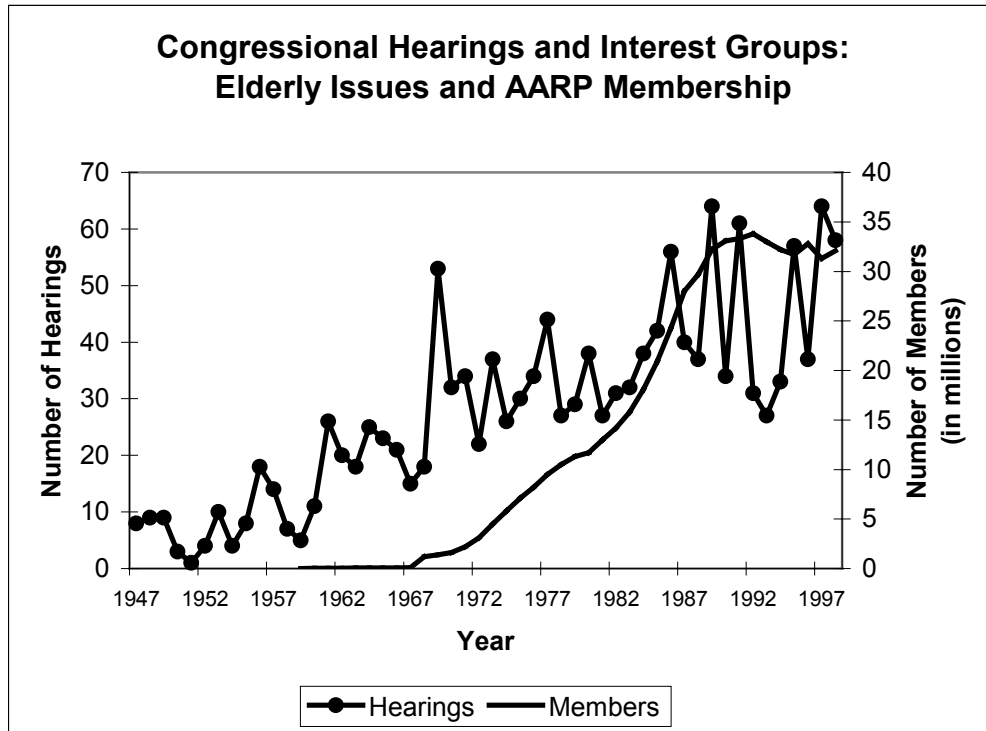
Sources: Hearings, Agendas Project; Groups, Encyclopedia of Associations.

Figure 6. Congressional Attention to Civil Rights and the Number of Interest Groups



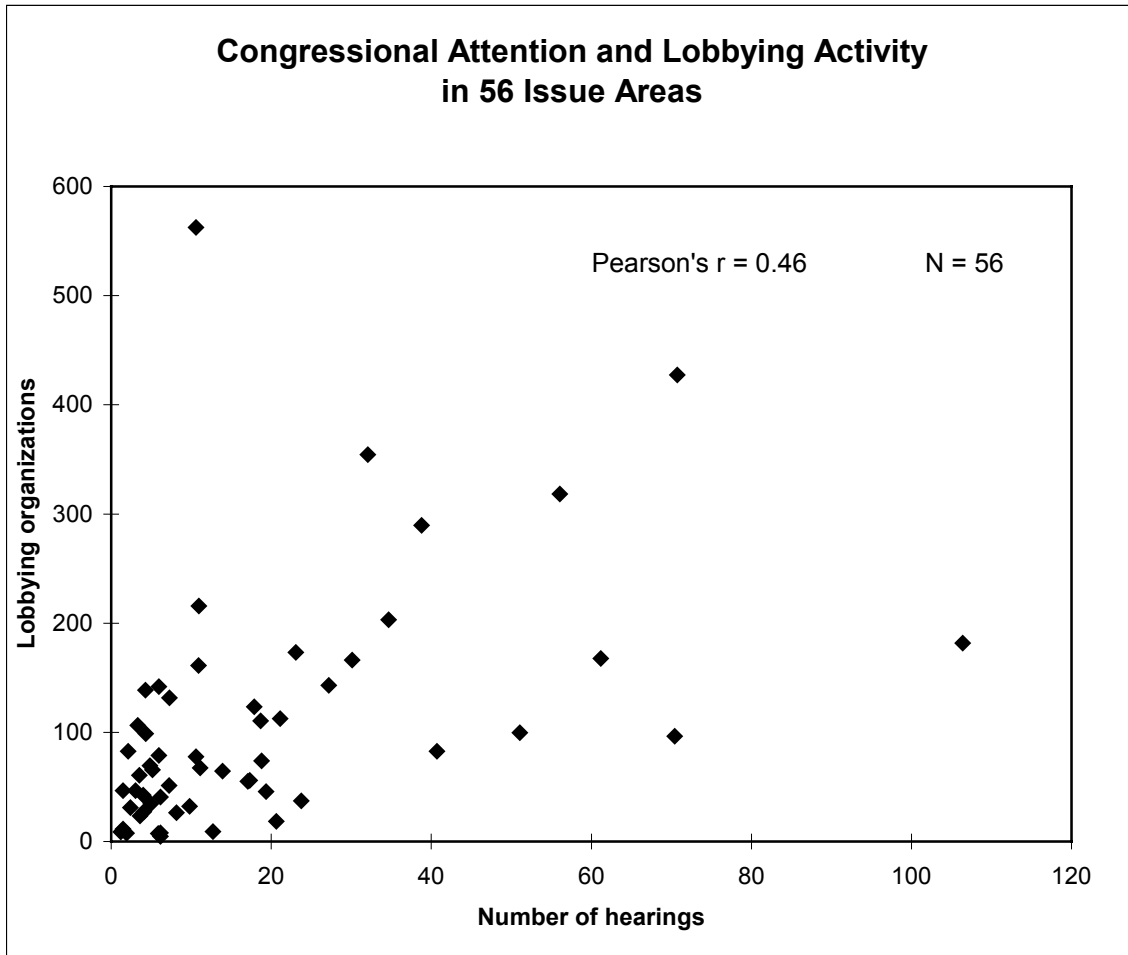
Sources: Hearings, Agendas Project; Groups, Minkoff 1995.

Figure 7. Congressional Attention to Elderly Issues and AARP Membership



Sources: Hearings, Agendas Project; Membership, AARP.

Figure 8. Congressional Attention and Average Lobbying Activity in 56 Issue Areas



Sources: Hearings, Agendas Project; Lobbying activity, Lobbying Disclosure Database (see Baumgartner and Leech 2001).