

Studying Organizational Advocacy and Influence: Reexamining Interest
Group Research

Marie Hojnacki
Penn State University
Department of Political Science
213 Pond Lab
University Park, PA 16802
814.865.1912
marieh@psu.edu

David C. Kimball
University of Missouri-St. Louis
kimballd@msx.umsl.edu

Frank R. Baumgartner
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
frankb@unc.edu

Jeffrey M. Berry
Tufts University
jeffrey.berry@tufts.edu

Beth L. Leech
Rutgers University
leech@polisci.rutgers.edu

Abstract: In *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science* (1998), Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech characterized a series of problems in the interest group research published between 1950 and 1995. In this essay, we assess whether recent research has become more theoretically coherent, more attentive to context, and broader in both scope and topical focus, all of which are crucial to advancing the systematic study of interest groups and their policymaking activities. Overall, we observe relatively more large-scale and longitudinal studies than was the case in the period before 1996. This newer literature also is much more likely to focus on key issues for students of politics, and to give attention to the context in which organizations operate to affect public policy. However, we see minimal evidence that scholars addressing similar questions within the subfield are operating from one or a few shared theoretical frameworks.

Keywords: lobbying, policymaking, public policy

In *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science* (1998), Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech note “the behaviors of groups have often been studied in isolation from the complexities of the policy process” (174). In what could be characterized as a call to action to scholars, the authors suggest “the next generation of studies should combine the sensitivity to context of the case study and the generalizability of the survey ... [N]either approach so far has succeeded in creating a broad view of lobbying activities with sensitivity to political context” (174). Equally important, the authors argue, is the absence of a coherent theoretical framework that would guide research. In this essay, we consider how these issues are addressed in scholarship produced since the publication of *Basic Interests*.

In order to set some boundaries for our review, we drew a sample of published work about interest groups. Specifically, we identified articles published either in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *The Journal of Politics*, or *Political Research Quarterly*, as well as books published by a major university press or Brookings between January 1996 and July 2011.¹ To be included, the work had to give substantial attention to the activities of organized interests or social movements, or the outcomes of their efforts. These criteria produced a diverse set of 110 books and articles.²

¹ Although Baumgartner and Leech examined some work published after 1995, their more systematic assessment of the literature (including their analysis of articles published in the *American Political Science Review*) ended in that year.

² The sampled work is listed in the bibliography or, if not cited here, in Appendix A. The sample is also accessible at <http://lobby.la.psu.edu> under “related projects.”

For each book and article in the sample, we coded the following information: the topical focus; the number of groups, issues, and policy domains studied; the unit of analysis and dependent variable; the nature of the data and research design used; the time period covered in the analysis; whether and what type of context was considered; and the primary argument and results presented. We then use these data to assess whether the work published after Baumgartner and Leech's (1998) review has become more theoretically coherent, more attentive to context, and broader in both scope and topical focus, all of which are crucial to advancing the systematic study of interest groups and their policymaking activities. Overall, we observe some advancement in all areas but opportunities for further accumulating systematic knowledge about groups and public policy remain.

I. THEORETICAL COHERENCE

As our sample of research demonstrates, an impressive amount of interest group scholarship has been completed in the past 15 years. Consequently, one might expect that this bountiful harvest would yield both empirical work and theory to guide it. Such a presumption, however, is not warranted. Our assessment is that the interest group subfield remains relatively theory poor. Scholars investigating the same topics are not motivated by common sets of questions or shared theoretical outlooks.

Ironically, to look back into the intellectual history of the interest group field is to see a subfield that was at one time defined by grand theory (McFarland 2010). By grand theory we mean a framework for understanding the broader political system, not just interest group behavior. Indeed, the debate over pluralism that

emerged out of interest group literature in the post war era washed over the entire American government field. This debate over grand theory -- was America a true democracy? -- was a debate about the very core of interest group behavior: who had power in America and how was it organized? The theories were nothing if not expansive. Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956) was theory in the sense of conjecture, although it did encourage empirical research about the interrelationships of political and economic elites that Mills described.

What may have been the most contentious battle in political science over theory erupted in the wake of the publication of Robert Dahl's *Who Governs?* (1961), which ostensibly demonstrated that in one American city, New Haven, Connecticut, interest group democracy or "pluralism" flourished. Like power elite theory, pluralism stimulated an enormous wave of studies aimed at proving or disproving this vision of America where groups are instruments of democracy rather than impediments to it.

In the recent interest group literature there is little to be found in the way of grand theory on the scale of elitism or pluralism. McFarland' *Neopluralism* (2004) stands out as a rare exception. Neopluralism focuses on the group dynamics of public policymaking without making the normative argument that America is highly democratic. McFarland's deeply thoughtful work consciously moves away from abstractions about the distribution of power in America to what he calls a "theory of the political process" that emphasizes the need to specify the direct connections between interest group advocacy and the formulation of policy by governmental institutions.

In a review of the interest group literature, Lowery and Gray (2004) adopt the neopluralism label to describe a wide swath of the interest group scholarship from the late 1990s. But they describe neopluralism as an “approach” rather than “a coherent theory of interest representation,” one that adopts many of the insights of pluralist theory while avoiding the assumption that the outcomes of pluralistic processes will always be normatively advantageous. Lowery and Gray argue that the scholars adopting the neopluralist approach (including much of their own work and the work of Heinz et al. 1993; Kollman 1998; Berry 1999; Gerber 1999; Goldstein 1999; and Hojnacki & Kimball 1998, 1999) share an appreciation of the contingent nature of interest group influence and a willingness to consider the interactions and feedback between interest groups and other parts of the political system. And yet, neopluralism in their view remains a “gaggle of models” and far from a single grand theory of interest representation.

Grand theory may be a bridge too far for contemporary scholars. But if we cannot really expect such all-encompassing theories, certainly it is fair to examine whether scholars working in similar areas within the subfield “are investigating parts of the same puzzle” (Baumgartner & Leech 1998, 171). In the fashion of normal science, is there theoretical work that provides cohesiveness to related research in the subfield, allowing scholars to build directly upon earlier work? To answer this question we look, in turn, at normative theory, formal theory, and empirical theory.

Normative Theory

Interest group scholars are prone to address this central question: to what degree do active interest groups represent the actual interests present in society? Directly or indirectly, the empirical question is accompanied by a central normative concern: to what degree should the interest groups active at any one time represent existing interests? The difference between groups that are active and groups that should be active so that all interests are fairly represented is the degree of bias in the system. Interest group scholars have been consumed with studying this bias, conceptualizing and measuring it in many different ways. Indeed, there is scholarship that shows promise in influencing future work along distinct normative lines. Strolovitch's *Affirmative Advocacy* (2007) uses the concept of "intersectionality" to analyze the representation of disadvantaged groups who fall along cross cutting demographic dimensions (see also Minkoff 1999; Nelson 2003; Hancock 2007; Frasure & Williams 2009; Weldon 2006a, b; 2011). Her concern is the marginalization of the most disadvantaged when grouped in an interest group with other constituencies. In a forthcoming book not included in our sample, Schlozman and her colleagues (2012) relate the bias they have documented in terms of political voice to treatment of equality in classic western political thought.

Many works in the subfield attempt to understand how the bias in representation may be overcome, or alternatively, explain why the bias persists. For example, Berry's *The New Liberalism* (1999) adapts postmaterialism theory from comparative politics to explain the rise of liberal citizen groups in Washington politics. In *Disarmed* (2006) Goss considers rational self-interest as a means of understanding why no real gun control movement has ever risen in the United

States. Although the scholarly understanding of bias is advanced by these books, the theories articulated are better described as explanations of the data uncovered rather than as foundations of the research design. They are books that strongly embody normative concerns about representation, but do not emerge from or develop theories that other researchers can build on.

Formal Theory

Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965) had a profound impact on interest group scholarship. Olson and his many disciples energized the subfield with a rigorous, formal approach to understanding the incentive systems of interest group formation and maintenance. A large literature grew out of Olson's book and extended the theory of collective action to explain more of the lobbying world. Despite its provocative insights the theory is also fundamentally flawed as it does not fully explain the mobilization of citizen groups. When Olson's book was published in 1965, he could rationalize the small number of citizen lobbies as anomalous. As the number of advocacy groups grew exponentially in the 1970s, it became increasingly untenable to make such claims.

Given the centrality of Olson's work in the discipline, we expected our review to document a strong cohort of formal theorists working in the interest group field. Instead, what we found is that formal theory has not been greatly utilized in recent interest group research. There is some work to be sure, but this perspective has not become a driving force within the subfield (see Grossman & Helpman 2001, 2002; Iaryczower et al. 2006; Hall & Deardorff 2006; Ashworth 2006; Godwin et al. 2008). Hall and Deardorff (2006), for example, developed a highly sophisticated model of

lobbying as congressional subsidy. Washington lobbyists build relationships with congressional offices and offer support in the form of political intelligence, information, campaign finance, and assistance in building coalitions. Yet it is not clear at this time whether Hall and Deardorff's ideas will become a shared perspective for formal or empirical studies of lobbying. In addition, some scholars working from the Olsonian perspective continue to define lobbying as a transaction, whereby campaign contributions or other benefits are provided in exchange for a favorable change in public policy, often one that only benefits a particular industry or company. Examples of these instances of "private rent-seeking" include procurement contracts or exemptions from regulation (for recent applications of this approach, see Godwin, et al. 2008, and Grossman & Helpman 2001). Yet these studies, well crafted as they are, remain modest in number.

Empirical Theory

Finally, we turn to something of a catchall category of research built around context and particular empirical approaches. The bulk of interest group research surely falls into this broad category. Some of this scholarship is best described as policy science, focused on a particular field of public policy and building on the research in that topical area. For instance, we know more about crime policy from Miller (2008), education and unions from Moe (2011), and gender violence from Weldon (2006a, b). Much of the remaining empirical work outside of policy studies is institutional or behavioral in nature. Contextually, what lobbying tactics are used in what kinds of situations? Who contributes to PACs and what motivates people to

give? Beyond the substantive question asked is a theory, or frequently a step toward a theory, that underlies the enterprise.

When we look at the literature that falls into this category, we are impressed by its quality and by how much more we now know about groups than we did in 1995. The key question is whether scholars working on similar topics within the subfield – lobbying strategies and tactics, coalitions and networks, mobilization of interests, and the like – are adopting a common theoretical outlook as they address shared concerns. Our review suggests that progress on this front has been limited.

Consider, for example, recent work by Kollman (1998) and Goldstein (1999). Both address the question of how interest groups decide to incorporate grassroots efforts into their lobbying campaigns. Both studies use interviews with Washington lobbyists as well as other data. Kollman develops a theory based on public preferences while Goldstein delineates a probability model that specifies the likelihood that an individual will respond to a stimulus from a group; he then estimates the ultimate value of that mobilization to a group. These two studies were well executed and well received within our field. One might expect that they would serve as a foundation for mobilization research but that has not yet happened. The reasons are familiar ones: it is difficult to replicate the studies, they were large-scale research projects that required substantial funding, and a scholar who closely follows a well-known and admired work with something that is clearly derivative may not receive the professional payoff that would accrue with something more distinctive.

It is at least encouraging that there is some commonality in the questions asked by those engaged in empirical-based theory. The work on lobbying tactics and strategies does revolve around some basic concerns such as resource allocation, lobbying efficacy, and alliance behavior. There are also some strains of empirical theory building that have moved forward on a normal science track. The work by Gray, Lowery, and their students on the population ecology of interest groups has grown into a substantial collection of articles that complement Gray and Lowery's book (1996a) on the subject. Moreover, the study of state interest group populations has been expanding as scholars explore how the initiative process affects interest mobilization (Smith & Tolbert 2004; Boehmke 2005a), and how mobilization affects political and electoral activity (Boehmke 2005b; Hogan 2005). Nevertheless, in looking at topics of study within the subfield, theoretical coherence remains elusive. To be clear, we do not take issue with the fact that interest group scholars ask too many diverse questions or work across too many research areas—those are familiar characteristics of all political science subfields. Rather, interest group scholars have not been able to bring common, overarching, theoretical questions to bear on ongoing streams of research.

II. TOPICS OF STUDY

Baumgartner and Leech described the interest group subfield in 1998 as having defined itself into a state of “elegant irrelevance” as a result of its near obsession with formal extensions of Olson's work on why people join groups and a disconnection from the policymaking process. It is here, in the topics of work undertaken, that we see the greatest shift since the publication of *Basic Interests*.

More than a third of the studies that we consider focus in some way on trying to measure interest group influence in the policymaking process, and another third focus on tactics and lobbying behavior in an effort to understand how interest groups try to achieve that influence. Although studies that in some way consider mobilization or participation in interest groups also comprise about a third of our sample, this literature has evolved and broadened in scope, with very few studies considering individual decisions about membership and many more connecting participation to politics.

While interest group research in the decades immediately following the publication of Olson's book spent a great deal of effort modeling the decision-making processes of individuals, trying to understand why anyone would contribute to collective action, only two of the more current studies take such an approach (Schur et al. 2005 and Lubell et al. 2006; in addition, Shaiko 1999 and Goss 2006 consider the motivations of individual members as part of a larger project). Much of the current mobilization literature draws on social movement theory to explain why and how groups form rather than relying on the Olsonian approach of considering the individual decision in a contextual vacuum (for example, Banaszak 1996; Skocpol et al. 2000; Crowley & Skocpol 2001; Goss 2006; Weldon 2006a, b, 2011). The shift in approach has two important implications. First, the unit of analysis becomes the group rather than the individual. Second, as a result of asking why a group successfully formed, the researcher's attention turns toward variables measuring social and political context. Thus Banaszak (1996) discusses how the differing cultural norms and governmental transparency in the United States and

Switzerland affected the women's suffrage movement in each of those countries, while Crowley & Skocpol (2001) show how the Civil War and involvement with the union army increased the growth of civic associations in the post-war decades.

When mobilization is studied at the organizational level, the findings often are relevant to the study of interest group tactics and strategy. Many of the articles in our sample that dealt with mobilization or participation considered interest group decisions to join some larger political process or to lobby at all (e.g. Gray and Lowery 1996a, b; Lowery et al. 2004, 2008; Gray et al. 2004; Lowry 2005, Leech et al. 2005; Holyoke 2009). When we move beyond individual decision making to consider the conditions under which interest organizations arise or become involved in politics, we reconnect mobilization processes to the political process more generally. Thus from the work of Gray and Lowery and their coauthors we learn how political competition and agenda size affect the size of interest group populations, from Leech et al. (2005) we see that congressional attention to an issue contributes to the level of interest group lobbying, and from Baumgartner and his collaborators (2011) we learn that when the president is attentive to an issue, less effort may be devoted to lobbying Congress. This increased awareness of the interconnectedness of political actors and of the feedback processes present in politics is a welcome change to the literature.

In the case of work that measures influence, what was notable about the literature Baumgartner and Leech examined was its heavy reliance on political action committee (PAC) campaign contributions as the sole measure of interest group activities and its intense focus on congressional roll call votes as the

behavioral target of groups' efforts. But a relatively small number of organizations contribute to campaigns and groups do so much more than try to influence final legislative votes (Baumgartner & Leech 1996). It is significant, then, that the more recent literature on influence has dropped the largely exclusive focus on PACs. Only three of the articles we review here use PACs as their sole measure of interest group efforts at influence (Wawro 2001; Fellowes and Wolf 2004; Witko 2006).³ These newer studies (and other, similar studies that fall outside our sample, see, e.g., Fellowes, Gray, and Lowery 2006) also show a more nuanced understanding of interest group activities. For example, Witko uses both roll call votes and participation in committee as indicators of potential PAC influence. As a result, he is able to show that PACs are able to influence voting on issues that are non-ideological, while on ideological issues they are able to influence the amount of effort a member of Congress expends in committee. Despite these advances, the basic contradictions pointed to by Baumgartner and Leech back in 1998 still remain: while Witko and Fellowes and Wolf all find that PACs have influence under some conditions, Wawro uses panel data to control for preexisting member attitudes and finds no consistent PAC influence. Helpfully, as we describe in the next section, the current literature has at least made efforts to specify the conditions under which PACs, and groups more generally, may or may not be influential.

Studies of interest group influence were also less likely to use roll call votes as the primary dependent variable. Some studies followed in the footsteps of

³ There also is one formal model of PAC influence and five articles that consider the strategies that PACs use. PAC contributions are included as one part of some broader models of policymaking (e.g. Baumgartner et al. 2009). Still, this is a far cry from the 33 studies of PAC influence documented in *Basic Interests*.

Hansen (1991) and Hall and Wayman (1990) and used attention by policymakers or by the media as the primary measure of success (for example, Berry 1999; Esterling 2007; Hall & Miler 2008). Others use a researcher-coded measure of policy outcomes (e.g. Evans 1996; Yackee & Yackee 2006; Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner et al. 2009) or a more qualitative assessment of success (Banaszak 1996; Clemens 1997; Mitchell 1998; Sheingate 2001; Rich 2004). Studies of agenda setting remained rare (but see Fellowes, Gray, and Lowery 2006). Most of the studies found evidence of at least some interest group influence, although fourteen of them focused on the conditions under which interest groups might wield such influence and six of the studies either found no influence or emphasized how very limited that influence was. Unfortunately, this variation may say as much about biases in case selection as it says about the contingencies of group influence. A meta-analysis by Burstein and Linton (2002), looking at all 53 studies of interest group influence published in major political science and sociology journals from 1990 to 2000, found interest groups as being influential less than half the time. Burstein and Linton point out that because most journals have a publication bias against null findings, the actual effects of interest group influence are likely even weaker.

The primary focus of research on interest group influence, then and now, is Congress (and occasionally other legislative bodies). A handful of studies have continued the work of Caldeira and Wright (1988, 1990), considering the impact of amicus briefs on Supreme Court decisions (Spriggs & Wahlbeck 1997; Hansford 2004; Collins 2007) and the influence of groups on judicial nominations (Caldeira & Wright 1998). Studies that consider the influence of interest groups on the

bureaucracy are even more rare, although there are more now than there were 15 years ago (good examples include Drope & Hansen 2004; Kelleher & Yackee 2006; Yackee & Yackee 2006.). A few new topics arise in the post-1995 studies, including the influence of interest groups on parties (Karol 2009) and on elections (Gerber & Phillips 2003; McDermott 2006).

In this newer literature, a great deal of attention is focused on the tactics and strategies that interest groups use. Thirty of the articles in our sample take tactics and strategy as their primary focus, and many more of the articles on mobilization or influence spend substantial time on the topic as well. As a topic of research it has the advantage of being political relevant while avoiding the extremely difficult problem of how to measure influence. And so, Hojnacki (1997, 1998), Hula (1999), and Holyoke (2009) consider the conditions under which interest groups decide to join coalitions; Kollman (1998) studies why interest groups decide to use grassroots campaigns rather than inside lobbying; and several studies analyze which policymakers interest groups decide to contact and why (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998, 2001; Goldstein 1999; Carpenter et al. 2004; Heberlig 2005; Naoi & Krauss 2009). The attention to the ways in which interest groups lobby is especially important because it leads to changes in the ways in which we formulate future quantitative models of success. Analyses of tactics and strategies have led to some of our most important theoretical extensions of recent years, including the idea of lobbying as subsidy and the collaborative nature of lobbying (Hall & Deardorff 2006; Baumgartner et al. 2009), the importance of distinguishing between private and

public goods sought by groups (Hansen et al. 2005; Godwin et al. 2008), and the importance of the status quo (Hojnacki & Kimball 1998; Baumgartner et al. 2009).

Finally, among the more dramatic change in the topics taken up since 1995 is a more pronounced focus on comparative work. Our sample of literature includes ten contributions with a comparative focus, ranging from general studies of lobbying effectiveness in the United States and the European Union to studies of individual-level group involvement across European democracies; labor unions in Argentina; business influence; gender violence; agricultural politics; and trade policy (see Banaszak 1996; Mitchell 1998; Sheingate 2001; Bowler et al. 2003; Iaryczower et al. 2006; Weldon 2006a; Mahoney 2008; Woll 2008; Naoi & Krauss 2009; Yadav 2011). Of course the comparative literature is much broader than this, since much of it is published in other countries and therefore in journals not included in our systematic review. Perhaps the best single place to get a feel for the burgeoning research taking place in various European universities is a special issue on the state of the interest group subfield in *West European Politics* (volume 31, number 6, November 2008). In their contribution to that issue, Mahoney and Baumgartner (2008) write that U.S.-based scholars remain relatively unconcerned by work done in other countries, but that scholars working in Europe typically are much more aware of theoretical trends and findings in U.S.-based work as well as that done elsewhere. There is nothing new in this. What is new is that some of the EU-focused work is indeed gaining attention, and a new generation of younger scholars in Europe is working with a set of research skills rivaling that of U.S. scholars. These trends toward greater integration and theoretical coherence of

comparative work provide a number of opportunities for consideration of the contextual effects of lobbying, as institutional designs differ dramatically in comparative perspective.

III. ATTENTION TO CONTEXT

When Baumgartner and Leech surveyed the landscape of research on lobbying and PAC contributions they were critical of inconsistencies in this body of work that left the subfield with little conclusive to say about the political behavior and influence of organized interests. One of the central reasons for this uncertain state of knowledge, they argued, was a lack of attention to the context in which organizations were operating. That is, rather than trying to determine “whether interest groups are ever influential,” researchers should have been investigating “when, why, and to what extent they are powerful on what types of issues” (Baumgartner & Leech 1998, 134). Instead, research on advocacy offered little systematic understanding either of the conditions under which groups and other political actors were likely to have a significant impact on policy outcomes, or of the variables that constrained and facilitated the efforts of groups to achieve their goals.

The question we consider in this section is whether and to what extent scholars have become more attentive to variation in context in their efforts to learn about organized interests and their place in the policymaking process. Such attentiveness could conceivably yield big gains. Efforts to systematically observe groups in the environments in which they develop, make decisions, and take action, and in a way that recognizes the variation in those environments, could advance not

only our understanding of groups, but also what we know about politics and policymaking more generally.

It is good news, then, that our sample of the post-1995 literature shows considerable progress in scholars' efforts to give consideration to and develop measures for different dimensions of context. Overall, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the sampled research takes into account the conditions or contexts under which groups and interests operate. Although the type of context that is considered by researchers varies a great deal across the 70 studies that attend to it, some elements have drawn the attention of a relatively substantial number of scholars. Table 1 shows the main categories of context that we identified. Here we describe how scholars have taken context into account, focusing on the types of context that are considered in at least 10 percent of the studies in our sample.

As Table 1 indicates, interest group scholars are especially likely to consider how characteristics of the policy issues that groups are active on as well as characteristics of the groups themselves affect their behavior and their prospects for achieving their policy goals. About a quarter of all the studies in our sample incorporate at least one of these two types of context.

Within the issue context category, the vast majority of studies examine issue salience and how it affects organizations' participation in policy debates (Caldeira, et al. 2000; Baumgartner & Leech 2001; Hansford 2004; Strolovitch 2006; Baumgartner et al. 2009); the level of their lobbying efforts (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998, 1999; Holyoke 2009); their ability to achieve favorable policy outcomes (Smith 2000; Witko 2006; Collins 2007; Mahoney 2008); and advocates' choices of

tactics (Caldeira, et al. 2000; Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner, et al. 2009; Holyoke 2009). Overall, these studies lend strong support to the ideas that more organizations are actively engaged in debates over more salient issues and that advocates on these issues tend to expend relatively greater effort (e.g., lobbying more members of Congress). Importantly, in the case of participation, no study has tried to suggest that there is a clear and unidirectional causal link between salience and participation. Rather, it makes sense to assume that there is a feedback loop in which salience increases as more organizations take an interest in an issue, which in turn attracts the interest of more participants (Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner, et al. 2009). Hypotheses about the interplay between issue salience and participation as well as ideas that draw on Schattschneider's claims about participation, visibility, and conflict, can be tested in studies that incorporate measures of issue salience.

Whether and how salience affects advocates' tactic choices and policy success is a bit less clear. In the case of tactic use, both Baumgartner and his colleagues (2009) and Caldeira and his collaborators (2000) find no evidence that different tactics are used in the case of more or less salient issues. However, Mahoney (2008) reports that the use of outside lobbying and coalition membership is relatively more common among advocates working on salient issues in both the U.S. and U.K. In the case of salience and outcomes, it is a bit more difficult to sort through the findings of the few studies that consider this link because each study has a different unit of analysis (e.g., a legislator, court cases, a set of advocates who share policy goals), and seeks to explain a somewhat different outcome variable (e.g., committee participation, roll call votes, Supreme Court opinions, whether

advocates' policy goals were achieved) with a different range of independent measures. Taken together, these studies probably say less about the "true" relationship between salience and outcomes than they do about the potential importance of public opinion and the stage of the policy process as intervening variables in that relationship (see Smith (2000) on the relationship between success, salience and public support and Witko (2006) on the relationship between salience, success, and stage of the policy process).

The other studies that take issue context into account have not concentrated on a single characteristic as has been the case with salience. Somewhat surprisingly, only a handful of studies consider either how the presence of opposition from organizations and government officials (Hojnacki 1997, 1998; Holyoke 2003; Holyoke et al. 2007; Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner et al. 2009) or how competition with other organizations (Godwin, et al. 2008; Holyoke 2009; Young 2010) affects group behavior and success. Overall, both competition and opposition tend to limit organizations' behavior and policy success, with increasing evidence that government officials can serve as formidable constraints on groups' efforts to take action and succeed as advocates (Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner et al. 2009). Other measures of issue context, suited to the particular focus of the research, include issue type, such as whether the issue involves private or collective benefits or whether it is distributive or regulatory (Fellowes & Wolf 2004; Witko 2006; Godwin, et al. 2008; Holyoke 2009); issue scope (DeGregorio 1997); and the amount of uncertainty and ambiguity the issue evokes (Esterling 2004).

In contrast to the studies that incorporate issue context, the work that gives attention to group-specific context includes a very heterogeneous set of measures. In fact, of the 29 studies that account for group context, no more than nine focus on the same characteristic – group type. Among this group of studies, most are directed toward explaining variation in the patterns of participation among different types of groups (Gais 1996; Baumgartner & Leech 2001), or the advocacy activities they undertake (DeGregorio 1997; Hojnacki 1997; Apollonio & LaRaja 2004; Hansford 2004). The evidence presented in this work supports the idea that member-based groups reflecting the non-occupational interests of citizens do indeed make different choices relative to business-focused interests, including those with members and those without. It appears, for example, that citizen groups' relatively more limited resources require that they be more selective and consider the visibility of their efforts when they embark on an advocacy campaign (Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Hansford 2004). Although citizen groups' limited resources surely do explain their need to focus primarily on issues that draw attention to them and their concerns, it is also possible that citizen interests are drawn to issues of broad scope and visibility because they do relatively well in this type of context. That group type and salience might interact to explain organizations' participation in policy debates and their policy success is consistent with Gerber's (1999) evidence that citizen groups are relatively effective at passing ballot initiatives – a visible type of advocacy -- but less successful than economic interests at blocking passage of or in pressuring the legislature to act in lieu of placing a measure on the ballot.

In addition to studies that consider how differences across types of groups shape behavior and success, there are five that take organizations' goals into account (Hojnacki & Kimball 1999; Goldstein 1999; Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Young 2010); three each that consider the preferences of group members (Strolovitch 2006, 2007; Holyoke 2009), organizations' support in legislative districts (Hojnacki & Kimball 1998, 1999, 2001), or organizations affiliations with PACs (Hojnacki & Kimball 1998, 1999, 2001); and another two studies that focus on the age of organizations (Apollonio & LaRaja 2004; Holyoke et al. 2007). At least 15 other types of group context – e.g., a group's ideological orientation, its degree of centralization, an organization's access to policymakers -- are measured by only a single study (Banaszak 1996; Hojnacki 1997; Shaiko 1999; Hula 1999; Hojnacki & Kimball 1999; Holyoke 2003; Hansen et al. 2004; Rich 2004; Strolovitch 2006; Holyoke et al. 2007; Woll 2008; Naoi & Krauss 2009; Karol 2010; Young 2010). To be sure, the diversity characterizing these efforts to tap group-specific differences can steer scholars to new dimensions of difference that may shape advocacy. However, the high degree of diversity evident in this work does little to help the subfield accumulate knowledge about when advocacy behavior and policy outcomes are likely to reflect differences in the population of advocates under study.

Although conditions related to groups and issues have received the vast majority of scholars' attention, another category of context considered by researchers in recent years focuses on the institutional arrangements that characterize the political and policymaking processes. As shown in Table 1, 16 of our sampled studies (15 percent) consider how institutions affect the character and

development of advocacy communities (Clemens 1997; Skocpol et al. 2000; Smith & Tolbert 2004; Boehmke 2005a; Lowry 2005; Boehmke & Bowen 2010; Weldon 2011); the participation of organizations and the tactics they employ (Hula 1999; Heitshusen 2000; Smith & Tolbert 2004; Hogan 2005; Mahoney 2008; Woll 2008; Godwin et al. 2009; Naoi & Krauss 2009; Yadav 2011); or their success (Sheingate 2001). With only a few exceptions, the studies that account for institutional context consider either how the characteristics or structure of government and governing institutions (e.g., the degree to which policymaking or governing power is centralized, the accountability of decision-makers to citizens) affect organized interests and their involvement with and success at policymaking, or how the presence and use of the initiative process affects organizational communities and their behavior.

The relatively small set of studies (there are five) that give attention to the initiative process provide some evidence that having the option of putting initiatives on the ballot creates incentives for interests to mobilize (Boehmke 2005a; Smith & Tolbert 2004). But whether all types of groups are responsive to “initiative-based mobilization,” and, if so, to what degree, is less clear (Smith & Tolbert 2004; Boehmke 2005a; Lowry 2005). Evidence linking the initiative process and political participation is also mixed: individuals in initiative states are more likely to be active in organizational politics (Smith & Tolbert 2004; Boehmke & Bowne 2010) but no more likely than citizens in states without direct ballot access to engage in election-related activities (Hogan 2005).

The eight studies that focus on the characteristics of government and governing institutions are consistent in showing that institutions affect organized interests and their policymaking activities. But the characteristics considered by these researchers are quite varied. For instance, within this group of studies, there is evidence that a decentralized decision making structure has implications both for how groups participate as advocates (Hula 1999; Heitshusen 2000) and for their success (Sheingate 2001). In addition, it appears that the government decision-making structure that organizations must contend with – e.g., who participates, whether decisions are made at different levels of government – affects both the tactics organizations employ (Mahoney 2008), and the positions they develop on issues (Mahoney 2008; Woll 2008). Given the increase in comparative research described above, it is quite possible that research exploring how group systems and group activity are affected by the structure and type of government institutions will become more prominent in the future.

As reported in Table 1, two additional types of context are given attention by at least 10 percent of the studies in our sample: political context and the context created by either coalitional activity or the networks in which organizations are active. Unlike the studies that focus on the contexts created by groups and institutions, these relatively small categories share common focal points. But given that less than half the number of studies that give attention to either group- or issue-related context are focused on political conditions or coalitions, the knowledge gained through the common foci is probably best treated as preliminary

and only suggestive of conditions that affect organizations' efforts in the policy process.

Among the 12 studies that consider the implications of political context on groups, six focus on either the degree of partisanship characterizing an issue and its implications for groups' policy success (Baumgartner et al. 2009), or how interest mobilization is affected by the extent of partisan competition in states (Gray & Lowery 1996a, b; Crowley & Skocpol 2001; Lowery, et al. 2004, 2008). The mobilization studies consistently show that party competition is associated with higher levels of interest mobilization. The logic underlying this linkage is that partisan competition creates greater uncertainty in the political environment providing potential opportunities for new interests, and threatening the interests of those who benefit from the status quo. Other studies that consider political context give attention to how organizations' participation, advocacy strategies, or success are affected by variables such as legislators' preferences on policy issues, election outcomes, the ideological climate, legislative professionalism, and the strength of social movements (Tauber 1998; Hogan 2005; Smith 2007; Miller 2008; Holyoke 2009; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Weldon 2011).

The 11 studies that examine how coalitions and networks affect the participation and policymaking activities of organizations focus primarily on one of three coalition-related conditions: how membership in an alliance affects organizations' contact with policymakers (Hojnacki & Kimball 1998, 1999, 2001; Holyoke 2003; Holyoke et al. 2007); how organizations' interactions with others are affected by the characteristics of their collaborative relationships or network

positions (Hojnacki 1997, 1998; Carpenter et al. 2004; Leach & Sabatier 2005); or how experience with coalitions or other associations facilitate participation in alliances or organizations (Hojnacki 1997; Hula 1999; Crowley & Skocpol 2001). Overall, these studies provide solid evidence that organizations' advocacy behavior is very much affected by their interactions with others and the nature of the associational ties they share. Newly emerging work, much of which is not included in our sample, that explicitly analyzes organizations' network affiliations, including the strength of their ties within broader partisan networks (Heaney 2006; Heaney & Rojas 2008, 2011; Koger et al. 2009, 2010), as well as studies that consider both organizations and policymakers as collaborators in advocacy (Mahoney 2008; Baumgartner, et al. 2009), have the potential, then, to contribute important information to a systematic understanding of groups' policymaking activities.

So have scholars become more attentive to context in the time since Baumgartner and Leech's analysis? As our review of the sampled work indicates, they most certainly have. But it remains difficult to say whether this heightened attention has moved (or has the potential to move) the field forward. On the positive side, salience has been established as an important variable for researchers to consider when studying organizations' participation and advocacy efforts. In addition, evidence has begun to accumulate showing how partisanship affects interest mobilization and how groups' collaborations with other political actors affect their behavior as advocates. On the negative side, our review also makes clear that a significant amount of the attention to context in the sampled work is specific to individual research projects. Consequently, our knowledge of the conditions that

matter most for understanding the policymaking efforts of organizations remains incomplete.

IV. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Accumulation of knowledge about interest group behavior and influence also depends upon research having a broad scope, specifically studies that include multiple groups, issues, and venues. Such broad-based research designs tend to allow for a closer examination of the many contingencies of interest group influence. In considering the scale of recent interest group research, we focus on studies that tested theoretical propositions. Our findings about the number of groups, issues, and policy domains examined in those studies, along with the findings originally reported by Baumgartner and Leech (1998, 175), are presented in Figures 1 through 3.

Writing approximately fifteen years ago, Baumgartner and Leech lamented the limited scope of interest group research. They observed a large number of case studies that analyzed no more than a single issue or policy domain. Furthermore, fewer than half of the articles they assessed included observations of more than five interest groups. In sum, they described a fractured interest group literature without much accumulated knowledge. How does the interest group literature look now? While we do not observe a seismic shift in the scope of research, there is clearly a move toward more ambitious broad-based studies. For example, Figure 1 compares the number of groups analyzed in studies published during the earlier and more recent periods. It indicates that almost two-thirds of the studies published in the past fifteen years examined more than five groups, a notable improvement over the

1950 to 1995 period. There remains a substantial share of recent studies that do not analyze the behavior of any specific interest groups, but many of these studies examine broad features of the interest group system, such as the shift in economic framing of policy debates (Smith 2007), interest group membership (Boehmke & Bowen 2010), and the impact of groups on the positions of political parties (Karol 2009). Moreover, many of these studies have other features, noted below, that add to their generalizability.

Another positive trend is that single-issue or single-group case studies appear to be relatively less common in the more recent period than they were prior to 1996. Only fourteen of the studies in our sample include cases studies as one component of their analysis and almost all of these studies include multiple cases that allow for some comparison -- albeit limited -- across groups, issues, time, and governments (Banaszak 1996; Tauber 1998; Mitchell 1998; Shaiko 1999; Esterling 2004; Barakso 2004; Weldon 2006a; Goss 2006; Woll 2008; Miller 2008; Young 2010; Goss & Heaney 2010; Moe 2011; Yadav 2011). The case studies included in these projects typically are just one component of a more extensive and often quantitative analysis.

We see additional signs of the expanding scope of interest group research when we compare the number of issues and domains covered in the studies. In the last fifteen years roughly one-fourth of interest group studies focused on more than five issues, an increase over the 1950-1995 period (see Figure 2). Finally, over forty percent of recent studies examined multiple policy domains, double the share found in the earlier literature (see Figure 3). The shift toward a wider scope of study

comports with efforts noted above to examine the group and issue context of interest group behavior.

Several studies stand out as examples of the payoff to be gained from a research design with a broad scope. For example, Karol (2009) examines several issues and policy domains in his study of changing party positions. Karol tests different theories of party position change, some of which include a more prominent role for organized interests. As a result of his research design, he uncovers different mechanisms for party position changes for different types of issues. For example, Karol finds that party leaders are more likely to change their issue positions to incorporate new groups into their coalition or to accommodate the changing demands of their interest group supporters. As a result, interest groups are more likely to influence the policymaking process when they are a real or potential constituency of one of the major parties.

As another example, Miller (2008) gathers a wide array of data from news reports, government hearings, lobbying disclosure reports and interviews to examine interest group involvement in the framing of crime policy debates at the local, state, and national levels. Through her comparison of debates and participation at different levels of government, Miller uncovers patterns that are at odds with Schattschneider's (1960) claim that expanding the scope of conflict tends to benefit disadvantaged groups. She observes that when crime policy moves from the local to the state and national levels, the number of mobilized interests contracts and debate is dominated by policy alternatives related to police, prisons, and harsher punishment rather than the quality of life issues that concern advocates at

the local level. Federalism, it appears, constrains the representation of group interests.

In addition, in a recent large-scale study of ninety-eight issues (a representative sample of issues being pushed by registered lobbyists) over several years, Baumgartner and colleagues (2009) uncovered a number of patterns in the advocacy process that would have been difficult to detect in a smaller-scale study focused on a single point in time. For example, although entrenched political power in Washington favors the status quo, when advocates for policy change do succeed -- an outcome that often occurs only after years of trying -- policy tends to change significantly. In addition, because groups' policy success depends a great deal on the preferences and priorities assigned to issues by the White House and allied government officials, the timing and outcomes of elections emerge as important factors that shape interest group influence.

We also see signs of progress in other areas of research design. Whereas much of the research published between 1950 and 1995 involved cross-sectional designs, we identify thirty-three studies that include a more ambitious historical or longitudinal examination of interest groups. Importantly, many of these studies give researchers leverage in understanding the development of groups and the interest group system, as well as how development affects activity and behavior.

For example, Smith's (2000) research on business interests and economic policy demonstrates that the Chamber of Commerce is less effective at influencing policy than some may believe, and that business interests depend on public support for policy successes. The robustness of his results is tied to his ability to look across

myriad issues the Chamber has acted on over time, and consider whether those issues resonated with the public. In later work, Smith (2007) points to relationships that developed between the Republican Party and conservative think tanks after 1970 to explain the GOP's success in framing policy debates in economic terms that benefited how the party was perceived by the public at managing the economy. As another example, Berry (1999) uses longitudinal data to examine the impact of the growing number of citizen groups in American politics and observes that liberal citizen groups shifted the congressional agenda toward more post-material issues between 1960 and 1990.

Relatedly, a number of studies in our sample look to history to explain group mobilization, formation, and activity over time (Clemens 1997; Skocpol et al. 2000; Crowley & Skocpol 2001; Young 2010). For instance, working from the perspective of American political development, Young (2010) argues that the organizational structure and leadership established during a group's founding may influence a group's ability to re-position itself in response to changing political circumstances. Consequently, he explains how the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) shifted from an organization primarily aligned with Democrats in Congress to a stalwart supporter of the Republican Party.

When considering the scope and research design of recent interest group studies, we see reasons for optimism. Our data reveal that the scope of interest group research has expanded in the past fifteen years. Indeed, there are many examples of large-scale and longitudinal research that have improved the empirical testing of theories of interest group behavior.

V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Our goal in this essay has been to assess whether the research on interest groups has become more theoretically coherent, more attentive to context, and broader in both scope and topical focus, than it was when Baumgartner and Leech wrote *Basic Interests* (1998). Our working assumption is that improvement in each of these areas is essential to advancing the systematic study of interest groups and their policymaking activities. Generally speaking, our assessment offers reasons to be optimistic about advancement in the subfield. As we document above, the more recent work includes relatively more large-scale studies than was the case in the period before 1996, and many more of these projects are designed to examine interest groups and their activities over time. Moreover, this broader scope has been accompanied by a substantively important shift in the topics scholars address.

This newer literature is much more likely to focus on key issues for students of politics -- interest group influence, or the tactics and strategies that organizations employ in their efforts to achieve it. We also observe considerable improvement in scholars' attention to the context in which organizations operate to affect public policy. Researchers today are indeed trying to understand the conditions under which interests mobilize, engage in different advocacy activities, and achieve their goals. These developments go a long way toward improving our understanding of groups and their activities. But as we note above, there remains a lot we do not know about the contingencies of groups' policymaking activities and the impact of their efforts; accumulation of knowledge is difficult when much of the work that attends to context does so in a way that is very specific to individual projects. In

addition, our sample of post-1995 research offers minimal evidence that scholars addressing similar questions within the subfield are operating from one or a few shared theoretical frameworks. Given our evaluation of the recent literature, we offer here a few ideas about how researchers can maintain the progress made and take steps to address the remaining limitations observed in our sample of research.

The first suggestion is a practical one that was previously endorsed by Baumgartner and Leech (1998). Interest group researchers should collaborate more than they currently do. The difficulties of acquiring appropriate data to investigate group activity, along with the myriad contingencies of interest group influence, create hurdles for scholars who are interested in addressing the types of questions that can move the subfield forward. Working with others will not eliminate the hurdles – to that we can attest. However, collaboration makes projects of broader scope more possible. Additionally, collaboration between researchers has the potential to improve our understanding of how context affects the political behavior and influence of organized interests. The research-specific contingencies that we observe in our sample of recent literature could, in combination, provide researchers with greater leverage in understanding the conditions that affect what groups do and how they affect public policy.

A second suggestion is that greater effort should be made to link the study of groups to the study of the policymaking process and politics in general. For example, systematic attention to the degree of partisanship that characterizes the environments in which groups operate, to the opposition they encounter from both within and outside of government, and to the characteristics of institutions that

constrain and facilitate their efforts provides interest group researchers with opportunities to link their findings to scholars in other subfields. Work that consciously imbeds interest groups in the environments in which they develop, make decisions, and take action, advances both our understanding of groups, and also what we know about the broader political and policymaking processes.

Our third suggestion is also tied to issues of generalizability and relevance beyond the subfield. Scholars should consider what is known about bias and inequality in the group system in terms of implications for public policy – i.e., whether and how it affects the policies that emerge from government, shapes the agenda of issues that government considers, affects the preferences and priorities of the public, and the like. One very clear benefit to connecting inequities and bias in the group system to outcomes is that doing so allows interest group scholarship to enter into the broader scholarly dialogue about representation, much of which occurs with little attention paid to groups. Indeed, scholarship on representation typically focuses on the extent of government responsiveness to public opinion, or individual legislators' responsiveness to constituents with nary a mention of whether and how interest organizations might affect the degree of representation we observe. Efforts to understand where, how, and when the upper-class bias characterizing the interest group universe affects public policy and political outcomes would allow interest group scholars to play a more central role in the dialogue about political representation. Taken together, these suggestions offer a preview of how scholars studying groups and advocacy can extend the progress that has been made in building knowledge about the activities of groups and the

outcomes of their efforts, and broaden the impact of interest group scholarship by relating this knowledge to our general understanding of the policymaking process.

APPENDIX A: WORK INCLUDED IN THE SAMPLE BUT NOT CITED IN THE TEXT

- Anzia SF. 2011. Election timing and the electoral influence of interest groups. *J. of Politics*. 73:412-27.
- Arceneaux K, Kolodny R. 2009. Educating the least informed: group endorsements in a grassroots campaign. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 53:755-70.
- Richter BK, Samphantharak K, Timmons JF. 2009. Lobbying and taxes. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 53:893-909.
- Lubell M. 2007. Familiarity breeds trust: collective action in a policy domain. *J. of Politics*. 69:237-50.
- McCormick JM, Mitchell NJ. 2007. Commitments, transnational interests, and Congress: who joins the congressional Human Rights Caucus? *Political Res. Q.* 60:579-92.
- Bowler S, Hanneman R. 2006. Just how pluralist is direct democracy? the structure of interest group participation in ballot proposition elections. *Political Res. Q.* 59:557-68.
- Brunell TL. 2005. The relationship between political parties and interest groups: explaining patterns of PAC contributions to candidates for Congress. *Political Res. Q.* 58:681-88.
- Lowry RC, Potoski M. 2004. Organized interests and the politics of federal discretionary grants. *J. of Politics*. 66:513-33.
- Berry JM, Arons DF. 2003. *A Voice for Nonprofits*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Balla S, Wright JR. 2001. Interest groups, advisory committees, and congressional control of the bureaucracy. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 45:799-812.
- Haider-Markel DP. 1999. Redistributing values in Congress: interest group influence under sub-optimal conditions. *Political Res. Q.* 52:113-44.
- Flemming R, MacLeod M, Talbert J. 1998. Witness at the confirmations? the appearance of organized interests at Senate hearings on federal judicial appointments, 1945-1992. *Political Res. Q.* 51:583-617.
- Leighley J. 1996. Group membership and the mobilization of political participation. *J. of Politics*. 58:447-63.

McCarty N, Rothenberg LS. 1996. Commitment and the campaign contribution contract. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 40:872-904.

Nownes AJ, Neely G. 1996. Public interest group entrepreneurship and theories of group mobilization. *Political Res. Q.* 49:119-46.

LITERATURE CITED

(* indicates work not included in our sample)

- Apollonio DE, La Raja RJ. 2004. Who gave soft money? the effect of interest group resources in political contributions. *J. of Politics*. 66:1134-54.
- Ashworth S. 2006. Campaign finance and voter welfare with entrenched incumbents. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 100:55-68.
- Banaszak LA. 1996. *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barakso M. 2004. *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Baumgartner FR, Berry JM, Hojnacki M, Kimball DC, Leech BL. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner FR, Larsen-Price HA, Leech BL, Rutledge P. 2011. Congressional and presidential effects on the demand for lobbying. *Political Res. Q.* 64:3-16.
- Baumgartner FR, Leech BL. 2001. Issue niches and policy bandwagons: patterns of interest group involvement in national politics. *J. of Politics*. 63:1191-1213.
- *Baumgartner FR, Leech BL. 1998. *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- *Baumgartner FR, Leech BL. 1996. The multiple ambiguities of "counteractive lobbying." *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 40:521-42.
- Berry JM. 1999. *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Boehmke FJ. 2005a. *The Indirect Effect of Direct Legislation: How Institutions Shape Interest Group Systems*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.
- Boehmke FJ. 2005b. Sources of variation in the frequency of statewide initiatives: the role of interest group populations. *Political Res. Q.* 58:565-75.
- Boehmke FJ, Bowen DC. 2010. Direct democracy and individual interest group membership. *J. of Politics*. 72:659-71.
- Bowler S, Donovan T, Hanneman R. 2003. Art for democracy's sake? group membership and political engagement in Europe. *J. of Politics*. 65:1111-29.

- *Burstein P, and Linton A. 2002. The impact of political parties, interest groups, and social movement organizations on public policy: some recent evidence and theoretical concerns. *Social Forces*. 81:381-408.
- Caldeira GA, Hojnacki M, Wright JR. 2000. The lobbying activities of organized interests in federal judicial nominations. *J. of Politics*. 62:51-69.
- *Caldeira GA, Wright JR. 1988. Organized interests and agenda-setting in the U.S. Supreme Court. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 82:1109-1128.
- * Caldeira GA, Wright JR. 1990. Amici curiae before the Supreme Court: who participates, when, and how much? *J. of Politics*. 52:781-806.
- Caldeira GA, Wright JR. 1998. Lobbying for justice: organized interests, Supreme Court nominations, and the United States Senate. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 42:499-523.
- Carpenter DP, Esterling KM, Lazer DMJ. 2004. Friends, brokers, and transitivity: who informs whom in Washington politics? *J. of Politics*. 66:224-246
- Clemens ES. 1997. *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Collins Jr, PM. 2007. Lobbyists before the U.S. Supreme Court: investigating the influence of amicus curiae briefs. *Political Res. Q.* 60:55-70.
- Crowley JE, Skocpol T. 2001. The rush to organize: explaining associational formation in the United States, 1860s-1920s. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 45:813-29.
- *Dahl R. 1961. *Who Governs?* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- DeGregorio C. 1997. *Networks of Champions: Leadership, Access and Advocacy in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Drope JM, Hansen WL. 2004. Purchasing protection? the effect of political spending on U.S. trade policy. *Political Res. Q.* 57:27-37.
- Esterling KM. 2004. *The Political Economy of Expertise: Information and Efficiency in American National Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Esterling KM. 2007. Buying expertise: campaign contributions and attention to policy analysis in congressional committees. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 101:93-109

- Evans D. 1996. Before the roll call: interest group lobbying and public policy outcomes in House committees. *Political Res. Q.* 49:287-304.
- *Fellowes M, Gray V, Lowery D. 2006. What's on the table? the content of state policy agendas. *Party Politics.* 12: 35-55
- Fellowes MC, Wolf PJ. 2004. Funding mechanisms and policy instruments: how business campaign contributions influence congressional votes. *Political Res. Q.* 57: 315-324.
- *Frasure LA, Williams, LF. 2009. Racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in political participation and civic engagement." In *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice*, eds. BT Dill, RE Zambrana, pp. 203-28. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gais T. 1996. *Improper Influence: Campaign Finance Law, Political Interest Groups, and the Problem of Equality.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gerber ER. 1999. *The Populist Paradox: Interest Group Influence and the Promise of Direct Legislation.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gerber ER, Phillips JH. 2003. Development ballot measures, interest group endorsements, and the political geography of growth preferences. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 47:625-639
- Godwin RK, Lopez, EJ, Seldon BJ. 2008. Allocating lobbying resources between collective and private results. *Political Res. Q.* 61:345-59.
- Goldstein KM. 1999. *Interest Groups, Lobbying, and Participation in America.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goss KA. 2006. *Disarmed: The Missing Movement for Gun Control in America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goss KA, Heaney MT. 2010. Organizing women as women: hybridity and grassroots collective action in the 21st century. *Perspectives on Politics.* 8: 27-52.
- Gray V, Lowery D. 1996a. *The Population Ecology of Interest Representation: Lobbying Communities in the American States.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Gray V, Lowery D. 1996b. Environmental limits on the diversity of state interest organization systems: a population ecology interpretation. *Political Res. Q.* 49:103-18.

- Gray V, Lowery D, Fellowes, M, McAtee A. 2004. Public opinion, public policy, and organized interests in the American states. *Political Res. Q.* 57:411-20.
- Grossman GM, Helpman E. 2001. *Special Interest Politics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Grossman GM, Helpman E. 2002. *Interest Groups and Trade Policy*. New York: Princeton University Press.
- Hall RL, Deardorff AV. 2006. Lobbying as legislative subsidy. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 100:69-84.
- Hall RL, Miler KC. 2008. What happens after the alarm? interest group subsidies to legislative overseers. *J. of Politics.* 70:990-1005.
- * Hall RL, Wayman FW. 1990. Buying time: moneyed interests and the mobilization of bias in congressional committees. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 84:797-820.
- *Hancock AM. 2007. When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: examining intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics.* 5:63-79.
- *Hansen JM. 1991. *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919-1981*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hansen WL, Mitchell, NJ, Drope, JM. 2004. Collective action, pluralism, and the legitimacy tariff: corporate activity or inactivity in politics. *Political Res. Q.* 57:421-29.
- Hansen WL, Mitchell, NJ, Drope, JM. 2005. The logic of private and collective action. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 49:150-67.
- Hansford G. 2004. Information provision, organizational constraints, and the decision to submit an amicus curiae brief in a U.S. Supreme court case. *Political Res. Q.* 57: 219-30.
- *Heaney MT. 2006. Brokering health policy: coalitions, parties, and interest group influence. *J. of Health Politics, Policy, and Law.* 31:887-944.
- *Heaney MT, Rojas F. 2008. Coalition dissolution, mobilization, and network dynamics in the American antiwar movement. *Res. in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change.* 28: 39-82.
- Heberlig ES. 2005. Getting to know you and getting your vote: lobbyists' uncertainty and the contacting of legislators. *Political Res. Q.* 58:511-20.

- *Heinz JP, Laumann EO, Nelson RL, Salisbury RH. 1993. *The Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policy Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Heitshusen V. 2000. Interest group lobbying and U.S. House decentralization: linking informational focus to committee hearing appearances. *Political Res. Q.* 53:151-76.
- Hogan RE. 2005. State campaign finance laws and interest group electioneering activities. *J. of Politics.* 67:887-906.
- Hojnacki M. 1997. Interest groups' decisions to join alliances or work alone. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 41:61-87.
- Hojnacki M. 1998. Organized interests' advocacy behavior in alliances. *Political Res. Q.* 51:437-59.
- Hojnacki M, Kimball DC. 1998. Organized interests and the decision of whom to lobby in Congress. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 92:775-90.
- Hojnacki M, Kimball DC. 1999. The who and how of organizations' lobbying strategies in committee. *J. of Politics.* 61:999-1024.
- Hojnacki M, Kimball DC. 2001. PAC contributions and lobbying contacts in congressional committees. *Political Res. Q.* 54:161-80.
- Holyoke TT. 2003. Choosing battlegrounds: interest group lobbying across multiple venues. *Political Res. Q.* 56:325-36.
- Holyoke TT. 2009. Interest Group Competition and Coalition Formation. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 53:360-75.
- Holyoke TT, Henig JR, Brown H, Lacireno-Paquet N. 2007. Institution advocacy and the political behavior of charter schools. *Political Res. Q.* 60:202-14.
- Hula KW. 1999. *Lobbying Together: Interest Group Coalitions in Legislative Politics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Iaryczower M, Spiller PT, Tommasi M. 2006. Judicial lobbying: the politics of labor law constitutional interpretation. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 100: 85-97.
- Karol D. 2009. *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kelleher C, Yackee SW. 2006. Who's whispering in your ear? the influence of third parties over state agency decisions. *Political Res. Q.* 59:629-43.

- *Koger G, Masket S, Noel H. 2009. Partisan webs: information exchange and party networks. *British J. of Political Sci.* 39:633-53.
- * Koger G, Masket S, Noel H.. 2010. Cooperative party factions in American politics. *Am. Politics Res.* 38:33-53.
- Kollman K. 1998. *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Leach WD, Sabatier, PA. 2005. To trust an adversary: integrating rational and psychological models of collaborative policymaking. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 99:491-503.
- Leech BL, Baumgartner FR, LaPira TM, Semanko NA. 2005. Drawing lobbyists to Washington: government activity and the demand for advocacy. *Political Res. Q.* 58:19-30.
- Levi M. 2003. Organizing power: the prospects for an American labor movement. *Perspectives on Politics.* 1:45-68.
- Lowery D, Gray V. 2004. A neopluralist perspective on research on organized interests. *Political Res. Q.* 57:163-75.
- Lowery D, Gray V, Anderson J, Newmark AJ. 2004. Collective action and the mobilization of institutions. *J. of Politics.* 66:684-705.
- Lowery D, Gray V, Monogan J. 2008. The construction of interest group communities: distinguishing bottom up and top down models. *J. of Politics.* 70:1160-76.
- Lowry RC. 2005. Explaining the variation in organized civil society across states and time. *J. of Politics.* 67: 574-94.
- Lubell M, Vedlitz A, Zahran S, Alston, LT. 2006. Collective action, environmental activism, and air quality policy. *Political Res. Q.* 59:149-60.
- Mcdermott ML. 2006. Not for members only: group endorsements as electoral information cues. *Political Res. Q.* 59:249-57.
- McFarland AS. 2004. *Neopluralism: The Evolution of Political Process Theory.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- *McFarland A. 2010. Interest group theory. In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*, eds. L. Sandy Maisel and Jeffrey M. Berry, pp. 37-56. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Mahoney C. 2008. *Brussels Versus the Beltway: Advocacy in the United States and the European Union*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- *Mahoney C, Baumgartner FR. 2008. Converging perspectives on interest-group research in Europe and America. *West European Politics*. 31:1251–71.
- Miller LL. 2008. *The Perils of Federalism: Race, Poverty and the Politics of Crime Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- *Mills CW. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- *Minkoff D. 1999. Bending with the wind: organizational change in American women's and minority organizations. *Am. J. of Sociology*. 104: 1666-703.
- Mitchell NJ. 1998. *The Conspicuous Corporation: Business, Public Policy, and Representative Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Moe TM. 2011. *Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America's Public Schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Naoi M, Krauss E. 2009. Who lobbies whom? special interest politics under alternative electoral systems. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 53:874–892.
- *Nelson J. 2003. *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*. New York: New York University Press.
- *Olson M. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rich A. 2004. *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- *Schattschneider EE. [1960] 1975. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- *Schlozman KL, Verba S, Brady HE. 2012. *Unequal Advocacy: Political Voice and the Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.
- Schur L, Shields T, Schriener K. 2005. Generational cohorts, group membership, and political participation by people with disabilities. *Political Res. Q.* 58:487-96.
- Shaiko RG. 1999. *Voices and Echoes for the Environment*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Sheingate AD. 2001. *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State: Institutions and Interest Group Power in the United States, France, and Japan*. New York: Princeton University Press.
- Skocpol T, Ganz M, Munson Z. 2000. A nation of organizers: the institutional origins of civic volunteerism in the United States. *Am. Political Sci. Rev.* 94:527-46.
- Smith DA, Tolbert CJ. 2004. *Educated by Initiative: The Effects of Direct Democracy on Citizens and Political Organizations in the Am. States*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Smith MA. 2000. *American Business and Political Power: Public Opinion, Elections, and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith MA. 2007. *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Spriggs J, Wahlbeck P. 1997. Amici curiae and the role of information in the Supreme Court. *Political Res. Q.* 50:365-86.
- Strolovitch DZ. 2006. Do interest groups represent the disadvantaged? advocacy at the intersections of race, class, and gender. *J. of Politics.* 68:894–910. (Erratum. 2007. *J. of Politics.* 69:281.)
- Strolovitch DZ. 2007. *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tauber SC. 1998. On behalf of the condemned? the impact of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund on capital punishment decision making in the U.S. Courts of Appeals. *Political Res. Q.* 51:191-219.
- Wawro G. 2001. A panel probit analysis of campaign contributions and roll call votes. *Am. J. of Political Sci.* 45:563-79
- Weldon SL. 2006a. Inclusion, solidarity, and social movements: the global movement against gender violence. *Perspectives on Politics.* 4:55-74.
- Weldon SL. 2006b. Women's movements, identity politics, and policy impacts: a study of policies on violence against women in the 50 states." *Political Res. Q.* 59:111-22.
- Weldon SL. 2011. *When Protest Makes Policy: How Social Movements Represent Disadvantaged Groups*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Witko C. 2006. PACs, issue context, and congressional decision making. *Political Res. Q.* 59:283-95.

Woll C. 2008. *Firm Interests: How Governments Shape Business Lobbying on Global Trade*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Yackee JW, Yackee SW. 2006. A bias towards business? assessing interest group influence on the U.S. bureaucracy. *J. of Politics*. 68:128-139.

Yadav V. 2011. *Political Parties, Business Groups, and Corruption in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Young M. 2010. *Developing Interests: Organizational Change and the Politics of Advocacy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Figure 1. Number of Groups Analyzed, by Study Period

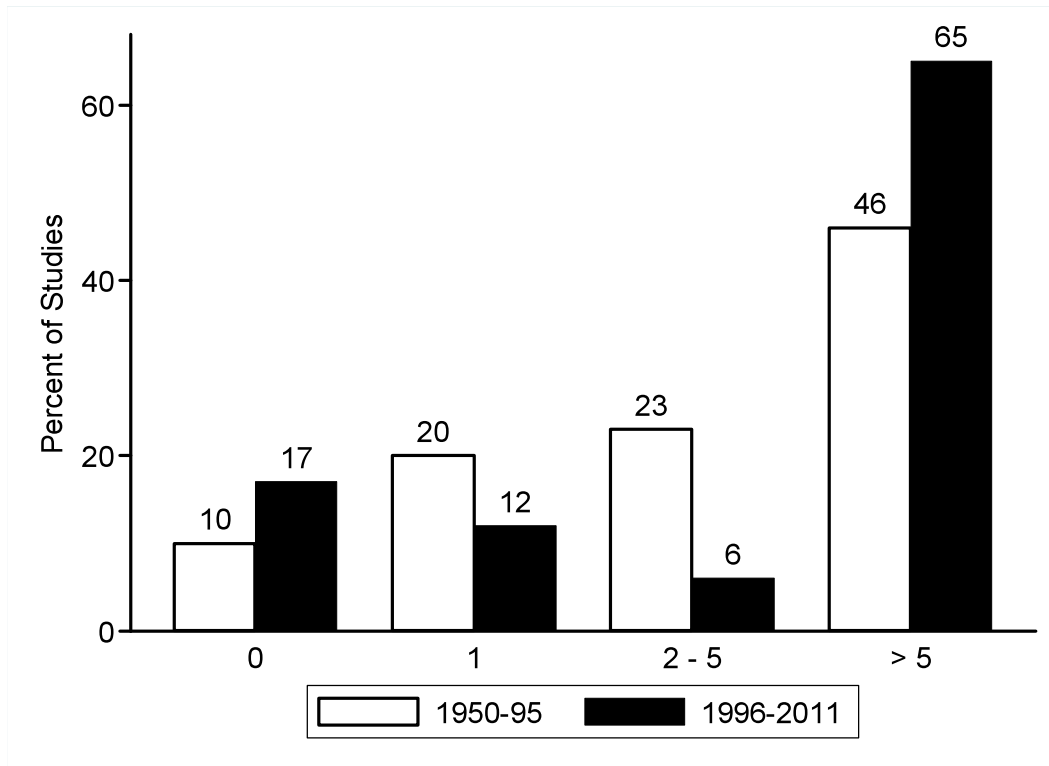


Figure 2. Number of Issues Analyzed, by Study Period

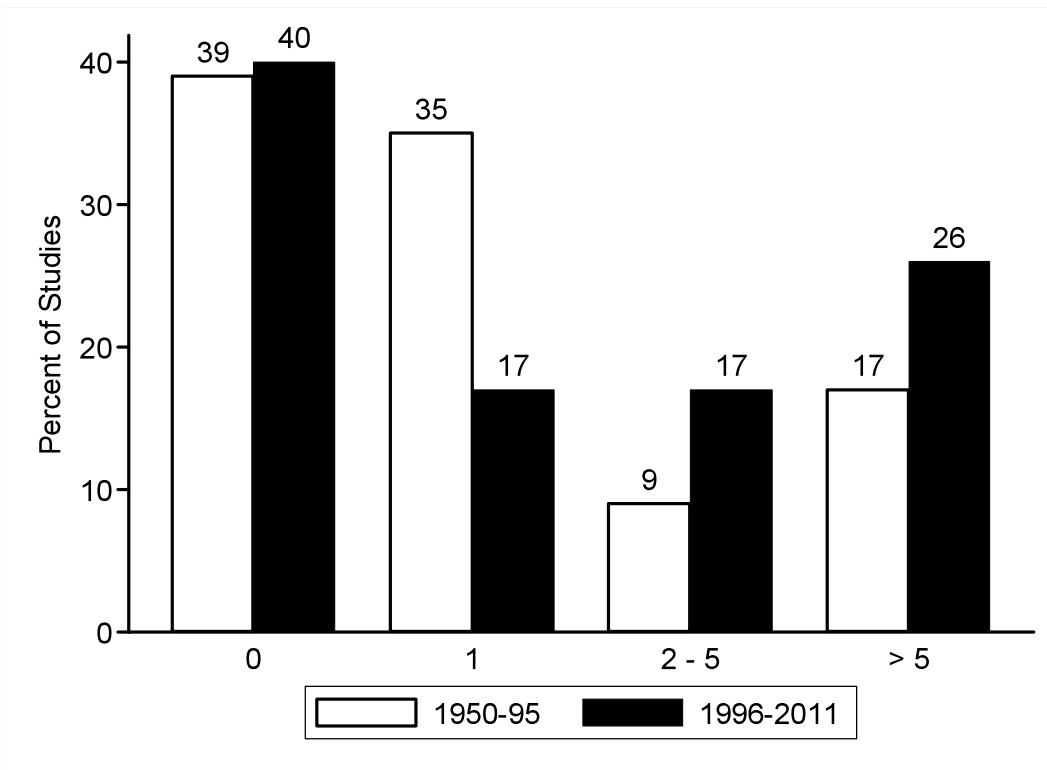


Figure 3. Number of Domains Analyzed, by Study Period

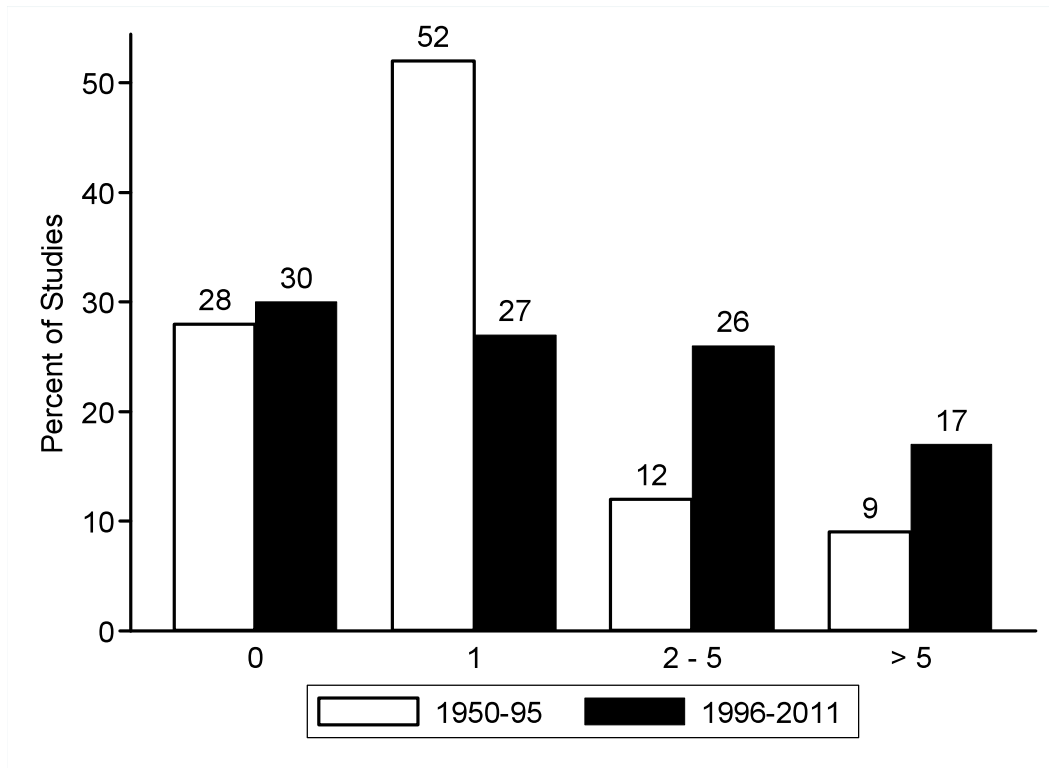


Table 1: Types of context incorporated in the literature, 1996-2011

Type of Context (examples)	Number of Studies	Percent of Studies
Group (group type, goals, member support)	29	26.4%
Issue (salience, issue type, opposition)	25	22.7
Institutional (ballot initiative, electoral system, institutional friction)	16	14.5
Political environment (party competition, ideological climate, legislative professionalism)	12	10.9
Network/collaborative environment (coalition characteristics, network location, participation of allies)	11	10.0
Group environment (strength, diversity & size of interest group community)	10	9.1
Governmental (public sector spending, government activity; support from government officials)	10	9.1
Stages of the process/time (committee v. floor, socialization of generational cohorts, access v. messaging)	8	7.3
Economic environment (state of the economy, market regulation, market competition)	6	5.5
Other (patron support, prior policy success, incentives for joining a group)	6	5.5
Any context incorporated	70	63.6

Note: There are 110 studies in our sample of the literature. Two of those studies are excluded from this examination of context because they review existing research (Lowery & Gray (2004) and Levi (2003)).