

# Lobbying Coalitions

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# Plan for this Afternoon

1. Definition: What are lobbying coalitions?
2. Motivation: Why should we care?
3. Major Theoretical Frameworks
4. Research Approaches
5. Research Questions / Dependent Variables
6. Theories / Arguments / Independent Variables
7. Exemplar Studies
8. Directions for Future Research
8. Discussion
9. Bibliography

# 1. Definition: What are lobbying coalitions?

Lobbying coalitions are

- **coordinated** efforts to engage in
- **lobbying** by a set of
- **autonomous**
- **advocacy organizations** that seek to
- **influence decisions** on some aspect of
- **public policy.**

What is included /excluded by this definition?

# Included by definition

- Short-term efforts and long-term efforts
- Informal efforts and formal efforts
- Public efforts and secret efforts
- Small coalitions and large coalitions

## Excluded by definition

- Uncoordinated lobbying by advocates on the “same side” of a public policy debate, since that violates “coordinated” criterion
- Lobbying by federations (e.g., a federation of labor unions, trade association), since that violates “autonomous” criterion
- Lobbying by members of the same governmental body on one another (e.g., caucuses, legislative member organizations, party whips)
- Grassroots campaigns that do not meet directly with public officials (e.g., protest mobilizations)

These are all legitimate topics to study. But they are not what we mean by “lobbying coalitions”.

## 2. Motivation: Why should we care?

- The proliferation of interest groups means that that they often work together as opposed to working independently.
- Public policy debates are more likely to be swayed by coalitions of groups than by individual groups.
- Almost all public policy issues involve organized coalitions to some degree.
- Almost all interest groups use coalitions to some degree.
- Even if an interest group doesn't join coalitions, their strategies are affected by the fact that other groups do.
- The behavior of interest groups in coalitions may lend insight to coalition politics in other domains.
- Other reasons?

# 3. Major Theoretical Frameworks

- Cost-Benefit Analysis
- Transaction Cost Analysis
- Network Analysis

# Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Treats interest groups as rational actors
- Coalition behavior is explained as a function of lobbying organizations' goals and maintenance needs

Hojnacki (1997)

# Transaction Cost Analysis

- Focuses on where is the best organizational location for lobbying to take place.
- Should it be governed by the interest group or should it be contracted out?

Beyers and Braun (2013)

Williamson (1981)

# Network Analysis

- Views coalitions as one of several different types of connections that advocacy organizations have with one another
- Advocacy organizations occupy positions within coalitions as well as between coalitions
- The set of coalitions that a group is a part of is known as a **coalition portfolio**.
- Network structures affect the ability of advocacy organizations to engage in **brokerage** or not.

Beyers and Braun (2014)

Heaney (2006)

Heaney (2014)

Heaney and Lorenz (2013)

## 4. Research Approaches

- Case studies
- Surveys / interviews with individual interest groups
- Surveys / interviews with coalition representatives
- Documentary sources, such as amicus curiae briefs and regulatory comments
- Text analysis of media and other discursive sources

# Case Studies

- In-depth analysis of coalition activities and decisions by policymakers
- Process-tracing approach is prominent
- Comparative analysis is prominent

Phinney (2017)

Tattersall (2010)

# Surveys / interviews with individual interest groups

- Sometimes based on a set of policy issues
- Sometimes based on a random sample of advocates
- Ask advocacy organizations about participation in coalitions
- Limited perspective on the coalition itself
- Very commonly employed approach

Hojnacki (1998)

Heaney (2006)

# Surveys / interviews with coalition representatives

- Generate a sample of coalitions
- Sometimes based on a prior survey or interviews

Heaney and Leifeld (2014)

# Documentary Sources

- Amicus curiae briefs
- Regulatory comments

Box-Steffensmeier and Christenson (2014)

Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2013)

Nelson and Yackee (2012)

# Text Analysis

- Examine coalition activities by mining information from media, government documents, and other media sources

Kluver (2011)

# 5. Research Questions /Dependent Variables

- Why / when do coalitions form?
- Why do interest groups join coalitions? Why do dyads enter into alliances?
- When and to what extent do interest groups participate in coalitions? What roles do they play within coalitions?
- When and to what extent do coalitions influence public policy decisions?
- When and to what extent do coalitions affect the ability of interest groups to influence public policy decision?
- What tactics do coalitions use?
- How do coalitions affect the tactical choices of individual interest groups?
- Other questions?

## 6. Theories / Arguments / Independent Variables

- Organizational identity
- Resources
- Composition (heterogeneity / diversity)
- Coalition size
- Institutional structure and context
- Organizational competition
- Network position
- Reputation
- Issue context (salience, complexity, conflict)
- Organizational type
- Others?

# 7. Exemplar Studies

- Junk (2019)
- Heaney and Leifeld (2018)
- Mahoney (2007)
- Hojnacki (1997)

## 8. Directions for Future Research

- Greater sensitivity to how institutional differences affect coalition politics and their effects
- More attention to the fact that individual interest groups have memberships in more than one coalition at a time and that
- More attention to the internal power dynamics of coalitions
- More attention to how resources interact with other factors to produce coalition politics
- More attention to coalition politics outside the United States and Europe

## 9. Discussion

- What do you think some of the strengths have been in the study of coalitions?
- What do you think some of the weaknesses have been in the study of coalitions?
- Do you think that coalition politics itself is changing? How?
- How does the study of coalitions apply to YOUR research?

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