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 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?
10. Bibliography


