

Interest Group Research in the United States

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Objectives of the session

- Review recent, leading research on interest groups in the U.S.
- Consider the role of theory in motivating innovative research.
- Consider the development of new data sets in studying interest groups.
- Discuss how methodological innovations have led to advances in the subfield.

Selected readings

- Anzia, Sara F. 2019. "When Does a Group of Citizens Influence Policy? Evidence from Senior Citizen Participation in City Politics." *Journal of Politics* 81(1): 1-14.
- Crosson, Jesse M., Alexander C. Furnas, and Geoffrey M. Lorenz. 2020. "Polarized Pluralism: Organizational Preferences and Biases in the American Pressure System." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1117-1137.
- Dwidar, Maraam. 2022. "Coalitional Lobbying and Intersectional Representation in American Rulemaking." *American Political Science Review* 116(1): 301-321.
- Han, Hahrie, Andrea Louise Campbell, and Elizabeth McKenna. 2022. "Civic Feedbacks: Linking Collective Action, Organizational Strategy, and Influence Over Public Policy." *Perspectives on Politics*, First View, 1-15.
- Strickland, James M. 2019. "The Declining Value of Revolving-Door Lobbyists: Evidence from the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 64(1): 67-81.

Theoretical perspectives

- Representation: Who sings in the heavenly chorus?
 - ❑ Crosson et al. 2020
 - ❑ Dwidar 2022
- Feedback Effects: How do interest group politics change politics? And how does that change interest group politics?
 - ❑ Anzia 2019
 - ❑ Han et al. 2022
- Influence: Who shapes policy?
 - ❑ Anzia 2019
- Institutions: How do rules shape politics?
 - ❑ Strickland 2019

Sources of data

- MapLight data on interest group positions
 - ❑ Crosson et al. 2020
- Lobbying records
 - ❑ Strickland 2019
- Case studies
 - ❑ Han et al. 2022
- City and state records
 - ❑ Anzia 2019
- Regulatory comments
 - ❑ Dwidar 2022

Methodological innovations

- Bayesian Item Response Theory (IRT) Framework
 - ❑ Crosson et al. 2020
- Text analysis using Wcopyfind Comparison
 - ❑ Dwidar 2022

Key lessons by article

Anzia 2019

- Having a constituency that is cohesive is more important than having a constituency that is large.
- Local interest group politics provides a great source of variation to study.
- Availability of data on interest group activities can be a major challenge in research.

Crosson et al. 2020

- The overall interest group community in the United States is not as biased as is commonly assumed.
- What kind of data that are used to measure interest group activity can make a huge difference in the conclusions that are reached.
- Looking at PAC and lobbying data only leads to the conclusion of conservative bias. These are the most intensive participants in the policy process.
- Looking at all groups that take positions shows a more representative distribution of groups.

Dwidar 2022

- Intersectionally marginalized groups are more likely to lobby in coalition than to lobby alone.
- Intersectionally marginalized groups are more influential when they lobby in coalitions.
- Co-signing regulatory comments is one way to measure coalition membership.

Han et al. 2022

- Interest group politics can have several kinds of civic feedbacks:
 - ☐ The development of constituent capacities;
 - ☐ Facilitating the recruitment of others willing to engage new issues;
 - ☐ The network of elite relationships.

Strickland 2019

- The marginal value of revolving door lobbyists decreases as they grow in numbers. Revolvers are worth more when there are fewer revolvers.
- The value of revolving door lobbyists varies with institutional context.
- State governments can use lobbying regulations to affect how fast the revolving door spins.

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- What is missing from the cutting-edge studies of interest groups in the United States that we discussed today?
- What are the most promising new directions for interest group research in the United States?

Final thoughts