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**INSTITUTIONALIZED PLURALISM:
ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL POLICYMAKING**

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This paper combines chapters three and five of *The Not-So-Special Interests: Organized Representation in American National Politics*, Matt Grossmann's dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley. Portions of the text were presented at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association and the Midwest Political Science Association. The Institute of Governmental Studies provided generous support for the research project. Jill Hammerbeck and Scott Janczyk assisted with data collection. Nelson W. Polsby, Laura Stoker, Andrew McFarland, Chris Ansell, Todd LaPorte, Neil Fligstein, Margaret Weir, Paul Pierson, and Henry Brady provided useful comments on previous versions of this paper. Participants in the American Politics Colloquium also provided helpful feedback.

Abstract:

How do advocacy groups become actively involved in national policymaking? Why are some of these non-governmental organizations able to become major players in Congress, the administration, and the courts while others remain peripheral participants in American politics? Current research, using surveys of organizations or case studies, emphasizes mobilization and strategy. Scholars seek to understand influence on policy outcomes but have yet to determine the factors that generate its precursor, active involvement in policymaking. I present an alternative theoretical and empirical approach. Adapting organizational and institutional theory, I argue that advocacy organizations succeed in Washington by becoming taken-for-granted position advocates in policy debates as representatives of public constituencies. An organization's longevity, the scale of its Washington presence, the scope of its political agenda, and its formal ties to public supporters and policy expertise will govern its level of involvement in policymaking in all major venues. Using new data on the involvement of more than 1,600 advocacy organizations in Congressional testimony, presidential directives, administrative rulemaking, and federal litigation, I demonstrate that these hypotheses are largely correct. An organization's age, the size of its political staff and issue agenda, and its ties to public membership and issue expertise are the primary determinants of its involvement in all branches of government, rather than its lobbyists or its Political Action Committee. Yet, due to barriers to participation and lack of policymaker control, the types of interests that are involved in agencies and courts are less representative of the organizational population than those involved in Congressional and Presidential policymaking.

Depending on your perspective, either Washington is overrun by the special interests or it features the world's most active civil society. There are now more than 150 organizations representing ethnic and religious groups in Washington and almost 200 organizations representing other social groups such as women and the elderly. There are also more than 700 single-issue or ideological groups and more than 600 professional associations and unions with a Washington presence. With the vast array of advocacy groups in Washington, whose voice gets heard in the national political debate?

Despite the ubiquity of organized representation, not all advocacy organizations are actively involved in national policymaking. Relatively few of the more than 1,600 advocacy organizations in Washington become prominent players in national politics. Many of these groups make the same representative claims as others, derive their support from similar constituencies, and compete for attention from the same sets of policymakers; there are advocacy groups available to speak on many different sides of most major policy issues. Yet it is not immediately obvious why any outside groups should be brought into the policymaking process or why Washington organizations should be sought to speak on behalf of whole categories of people or widely-held issue positions. Why are some of these non-governmental organizations able to become major players in Congress, the administration, and the courts while others remain peripheral participants in American politics? Are some types of interests more likely to be actively involved? Do these organizations need to mobilize public supporters? Do they need to hire lobbyists and make campaign contributions?

Answers to these questions could inform ongoing debates about the nature of political mobilization, interest intermediation, and the policymaking process. Popular and scholarly commentators regularly critique the influence of interest group money in politics and the rise of

special interest advocacy as a replacement for traditional civic engagement.¹ Claims that interest organizations buy influence or subvert democratic participation are central to these critiques. This discussion would benefit from an empirical foundation. If we learn how the public gets represented by organizations in political debates and why the representatives of some political factions succeed where others fail, we can better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current political system and be better equipped to assess critiques and proposed alternatives.

One important piece of the empirical puzzle is an analysis of how organizations that claim to speak on behalf of public groups or issue perspectives become actively involved in national policymaking.² Much has already been made of the most well-known bias in the interest mobilization process: the over representation of business interests and other institutions (see Salisbury 1984). Previous research has also revealed how the characteristics of industries determine the level of political activity among business policy offices and trade associations (see Grier *et al.* 1994; Hansen and Mitchell 2000). The representation of public constituencies by advocacy groups is often seen as an important countervailing force against the strength of this business representation (see Berry 1999). Yet we do not know why or how some advocacy groups become actively involved in policymaking or which kinds of groups are most involved. The National Rifle Association, the American Association of Retired Persons, and the American Medical Association, for example, are unquestionably important players in national politics; yet thousands of other organizations in

¹ Fiorina (2002) presents an overview of the empirical debates. For normative commentary, see Putnam (2000) and Skokpol (2003).

² I label these groups “advocacy organizations,” following Andrews and Edwards (2004). They define advocacy organizations as those that “make public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change that, if implemented, would conflict with the social, cultural, political, or economic interests or values of other constituencies or groups” (Andrews and Edwards 2004, 481). My interpretation includes organizations that claim to represent social categories, occupational groups, and issue perspectives. This is more expansive than the population that Berry (1999) identifies as “citizen action groups.”

Washington who seek to speak on behalf of public constituencies are not as important in the policymaking process. We need to build knowledge of the determinants of their success or failure.

Yet advocacy organizations often compete in multiple policymaking venues such as Congressional committees, administrative agencies, and courts; success in one venue does not guarantee influence on policy outcomes. Each venue offers different rules of interaction and different decision-makers. Which types of organizations are most involved in Congress? Do the same factors influence involvement in administrative rulemaking, presidential directives, and federal litigation? Interest group research has traditionally viewed these questions as a matter of organizational strategy. Scholars have studied how organizational leaders select venues and lobbying targets, often by asking them directly in surveys and interviews. Because we rely on self-reported strategies, we know which tactics leaders view as influential but we have little broad-based knowledge about how the character of organizations affects their involvement in each venue or about which types of interests are represented in Congress, the administration, and the courts.

This paper helps to fill this gap our knowledge. First, I review current research on advocacy organization involvement in policymaking. Second, I adapt organizational and institutional theory to propose a new explanation for how advocacy groups succeed: they become taken-for-granted position advocates in policy debates as spokespersons for public constituencies. Third, I outline a new empirical strategy to assess my account: I introduce broad indicators of involvement in different policymaking venues and describe how we can analyze which organizational factors promote success in each venue. Fourth, I present the results of my analysis of the determinants of involvement in Congressional committee hearings, Presidential policymaking, administrative rulemaking, and federal litigation. Finally, I review the implications of this analysis for our knowledge of the policymaking process, the representation of public interests, and the structure of interest intermediation.

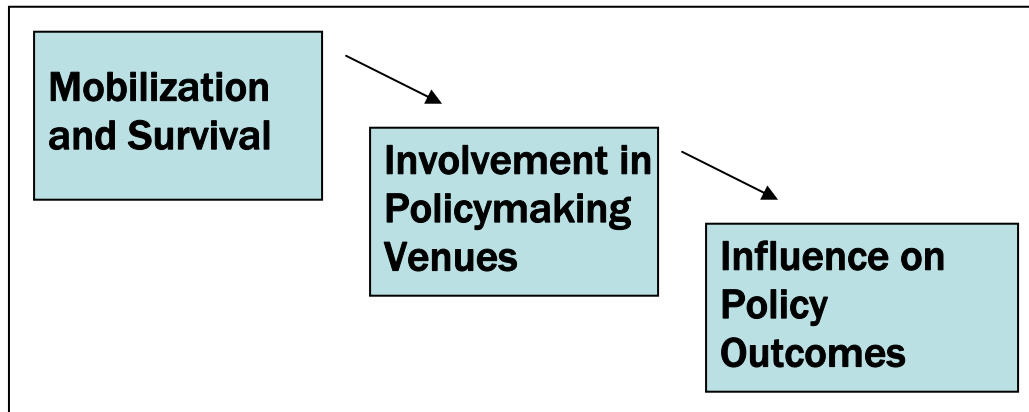
Previous Research

Extant broad studies of advocacy groups have focused on mobilization and self-reported strategic assessments. From mobilization research and analysis of organizational directories, scholars have identified the factors that enable advocacy organizations to originate, attract financial support, and survive (see Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991; Gray and Lowery 1996). In their review of current research on advocacy organizations, Andrews and Edwards (2004) argue that too much emphasis has been placed on interest mobilization; they call for more research on organizational access to policymakers and influence on policy outcomes. Unfortunately, that is easier said than done. Research on the success of interest organizations in policymaking has focused on the influence strategies selected by organizational leaders because influence on policy outcomes is difficult to assess (see Baumgartner and Leech 1998). As a result, attempts to investigate influence have been limited to analyses of specific policy areas (Heinz et al. 1993, Fernandez and Gould 1994), specific sectors of organizations (Skrentny 2002; Berry 1999), or specific tactics of influence, such as Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions.

This case-specific research does not provide the leverage to assess which organizational factors determine success but it does indicate that advocacy organizations are often influential in the policymaking process. Baumgartner and Jones (1993), for example, provide evidence that organized scientists, anti-tobacco and safety advocates, and environmentalists all had major effects on policy development. Melnick (1994) argues that anti-hunger organizations and those representing the handicapped and welfare recipients were instrumental in the development and enforcement of public policy. Skrentny (2002) profiles the success of representatives of ethnic groups and women in achieving fundamental policy change. Berry (1999) reviews the activities of liberal public interest groups and concludes that they often direct the Congressional agenda. In their meta-study of research on the influence of political organizations in sociology and political science, Burstein and

Linton (2002) find that interest organizations have a substantial impact on policy outcomes in most studies, especially when they represent widely-held perspectives. According to Patashnik (2003), even in the high-profile cases where advocacy organizations reportedly fail to influence legislation, they alter the policy outcomes after debate moves to other venues.

We can conclude that advocacy organizations are often influential in the policymaking process but, because we use limited cases to analyze how these organizations move beyond survival to succeed in political influence, our knowledge of the causes of success is more limited. Yet there is an important intermediary step in the process of organizing political interests to influence policy outcomes. Many organizations survive but few become prominent and active players in national policymaking. Figure 1 illustrates how we can advance the state of the field by conceptualizing involvement in policymaking venues as an important precursor to policy influence. Active involvement is more reflective of influence than mere presence in Washington. We can also measure involvement for a large population of organizations without making slippery judgments about the determinants of policy outcomes. Involvement can be seen as a necessary but insufficient condition for major policy influence. If organizations are regularly included in the events and debates of the Washington political community, they have achieved far more than survival but have not necessarily influenced particular policy outcomes. If an organization is involved in Congressional committee hearings, presidential directives, administrative rulemaking, and federal court litigation, they have become an important player in national policymaking. Organizations that achieve this status should be seen as successful; from a position outside the government, they have become active participants in policymaking that have the capacity to influence government decisions. Investigating how organizations become involved thus offers an alternative method of assessing the causes of success.

Figure 1: *Between Mobilization and Influence**Venue Selection and Interest Group Strategy*

Research on policymaking involvement is typically limited to one venue. It often assumes that organizations make venue selection decisions that determine their level of involvement.

Hansford (2004), for example, argues that groups select a lobbying target as a critical early decision:

“When an organized interest participates in the policy process, it has to make a series of tactical decisions. This decision process begins with the organized interest choosing the policy venue, or set of venues, in which to focus its lobbying efforts. For example, the interest could opt to lobby Congress, the courts, a federal administrative agency, or some combination of these venues” (Hansford 2004, 172).

Holyoke (2003) similarly portrays venue selection as an open decision where organizations select both their target of influence and their level of activity directed toward that target. In each venue, scholars find particular strategic factors that effect these decisions.³

Despite these hypothesized differences across venues, almost every organization with a Washington presence seeks to participate in almost every venue. Schlozman and Tierney (1986), for example, find that the vast majority of interest organizations believe that Congress (97%) and executive agencies (93%) are important to their activities. Most organizations also believe that the

³ According to Hansford (2004), for example, analysis of interest group participation in the courts requires knowledge of whether organizations agree with the court’s priorities and policies. Wright (1996) argues that the need for information about policy and its electoral consequences governs a unique set of interactions between Members of Congress and interest groups. Furlong and Kerwin (2004) argue that participation in administrative rulemaking also requires a distinct causal analysis.

White House is an important target (87%), though fewer believe that the courts are an important target (49%). Schlozman and Tierney find that 99% of interest organizations seek to participate in Congressional hearings. Furlong and Kerwin (2004) find a slightly lower rate of participation in administrative agency rulemaking (82 per cent). Most interest organizations thus attempt to regularly voice their concerns with many types of policymakers.

In each venue, policymaking involvement requires some proactive behavior on the part of advocacy groups and some receptivity from policymakers. Policymakers often have a primary role in encouraging involvement by some groups and erecting barriers to participation by others. Both the President and Members of Congress regularly solicit participation from interest group leaders and attempt to win over interest group support for their proposals (see Shaiko 1998). Since almost all organizations seek to participate in policymaking in many venues, we need to know which factors enable organizations to become actively involved, rather than which targets they choose.

Asking organizations how and why they choose particular venues and strategies may provide a poor explanation for which groups become actively involved in policymaking. Because scholars have used this method, the current scholarly conventional wisdom is that organizations make strategic choices about their venues, their targets, their issue agendas, and their coalition partners (see Schlozman and Tierney 1986, Walker 1991). The implication is that some organizations choose winning strategies and some choose losing strategies; some pick the right targets and the right issue positions and some choose the wrong side of political debates. This explanation does not provide predictive power. In an expansive review of the research program, Baumgartner and Leech (1998) argue that current research strategies have limited the accumulation of knowledge and the ability of scholars to create and test theories of interest group success.

Corporate Political Activity

Studies of organizational involvement in policymaking often treat corporate political activity and advocacy organization activity as indistinct. Theories of interest group success likewise propose grand explanations for the behavior of all organized interests. In a review of research on corporate political activity, Hart (2004) convincingly argues that business organizations mobilize and achieve influence through different processes than organizations that seek to represent public groups or political perspectives. Corporate policy offices and trade associations are thus influential in the policymaking process but not for the same reasons as advocacy organizations.

Empirical work on business political activity has largely relied on business-specific factors to analyze relative levels of mobilization. Salaman and Siefried (1977), for example, argue that industry structure is a critical variable for business mobilization, Grier et al. (1994) present a multivariate analysis of business representation focused on factors unique to business, and Hansen and Mitchell (2000) follow up with a similar analysis of domestic and foreign corporate activity. Scholars of business political activity have found that economic factors are central to the explanation for corporate involvement but they have not claimed that their work is generalizable to advocacy organizations. Similarly, advocacy organization involvement in policymaking requires a unique theoretical formulation and empirical analysis.

Theory and Hypotheses

The first lesson of understanding advocacy organization involvement in policymaking is that policymakers seem to find the list of participants in any given policy area rather obvious.

Congressional staff, administrative agency officials, and advocacy organization leaders commonly assert that the actively involved community in their area is readily apparent. In interviews, this set of organizations was referred to as “the usual suspects,” “the primary stakeholders,” “the short list,”

“the universe of groups,” and “the obvious players.”⁴ Yet this agreement on which organizations make the cut for inclusion in policymaking may mask the underlying causes of how they reach this status. It is one problem to list who is at the table and quite another to understand why they were included and how they became the obvious participants in policymaking.

It is not intuitively clear why any advocacy organizations should be involved in policymaking. These unelected organizations have not been appointed by elected officials to carry out any tasks. They lack clear sources of direct power in government or legitimacy with the American public. Many claim to represent the public interest or the interests of large public groups; yet it is not a trivial problem to understand why non-governmental organizations gain this status among policymakers. Policymakers, after all, officially and legally represent a public constituency or work as public servants; by involving advocacy groups, they are relinquishing status and authority.

To help decipher this puzzle, I rely on the framework offered by institutional theories of organizations. In the interdisciplinary field of organizational theory, scholars have long studied the problem of how organizations legitimate their activities and become stable embodiments of social purposes. Selznick (1957, 17) originally defined institutionalization as the “[infusion] with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand.” In the new version of this theoretical framework, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that organizations are subject to pressures that legitimate particular forms and behaviors as the taken-for-granted means to achieve social goals:

“In modern societies, the myths generating formal organizational structure have two key properties. First, they are rationalized and impersonal prescriptions that identify various social purposes as technical ones and specify in a rulelike way the appropriate means to pursue these technical purposes rationally. Second, they are highly institutionalized and thus in some measure beyond the discretion of any individual participant or organization. They must, therefore, be taken for granted as legitimate,

⁴ These anonymous in-person interviews with Congressional staff, administrative agency officials, and advocacy group leaders took place in June 2006 in Washington. Information about the interview procedures is included in the methodological section of the paper.

apart from evaluations of their impact on work outcomes.” (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 343-344).

The idea that organizational purposes become “taken-for-granted” moves beyond traditional notions of legitimacy. It emphasizes that neither those involved in an organization nor outsiders have to consciously accept the normative premises that underlie organizational behavior. Whether or not individuals have strongly held beliefs about the goals of an organization or about its effectiveness, they often behave as if they acknowledge some collective agreement on its function.

DiMaggio (1997) argues that cognitive science offers support for this institutional perspective on the connection between ideas and behavior:

“The parallel [between cognitive science and] sociological accounts of institutions is striking. [In cognitive models,] typifications (mental structures) influence perception, interpretation, planning, and action. [In sociological models,] institutionalized structures and behaviors (i.e. those that are both highly schematic and widely shared) are taken for granted, reproduced in everyday action... Thus the psychology of mental structure provides a microfoundation to the sociology of institutions.”

The mental processes underlying institutionalization typically stay below the surface when organizations speak and act. Yet sometimes the language used by advocacy organizations mirrors that used in institutional analysis. For example, one official told me that their involvement in administrative policymaking was the product of collective assumptions: “I think it was taken-for-granted that we would participate. We were one of the organizations working on the program and we had an interest in [continuing to be involved].” Asked if their participation was a conscious step to achieve a goal, the official said they had only a general interest in continuing their involvement: “You want to get on the record. Often times there is a sense that you’re bearing witness... you know you are not going to carry the day... you just want to be part of it.”⁵

⁵ These quotations are from an anonymous in-person interview in June 2006.

Any theory of advocacy organization success, however, must adapt generic institutional theories of organizations to the unique institutional environment that they face. As Friedland and Alford (1991, 248-251) argue, each arena has a particular symbolic logic that structures behavior:

“Each of the most important institutional orders of contemporary Western societies has a central logic—a set of material practices and symbolic constructions—which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate... [The logic] of democracy is participation and the extension of popular control over human activity... Institutions constrain not only the ends to which [organizational] behavior should be directed, but the means by which those ends are achieved... This conception of institution is consistent with recent work in cognitive psychology which argues that individuals do not approach the world in an instrumentally naïve way, but rather learn routines, that their individual strategies and behaviors contain within them certain institutional priors.”

In applying institutional theory to specific sectors of organizations, therefore, we should find the core myths that constrain and legitimate behavior in the sector.

In representative democracies, the most legitimated goal of political actors is representation of public interests and ideas. As Dahl (1961) argues, competition and compromise among political elites is justified by their presumed role in representation:

“because a democratic creed is widely subscribed to throughout the political stratum... overt relationships of influence between leaders and subleaders will often be clothed in the rituals and ceremonies of ‘democratic’ control, according to which the leaders are only the spokesmen or agents of the subleaders, who are ‘representatives’ of a broader constituency.” (Dahl 1961, 102).

For government officials, the process of legitimating activities through elections and policymaking institutions is direct and unproblematic. In contrast, advocacy organizations must become recognized representatives and position advocates in policy debates without an obvious path.

Advocacy organizations are able to fill these legitimated roles because the policymaking process is justified by the presumption that it receives public input and considers alternative views. This presumption is customary across national institutions. As Hertzke (1988) argues, Congress claims to incorporate many constituencies and views: “[The] consensus-seeking Congressional

process aims to accommodate simultaneously many conflicting interests and values.” A “White House veteran” interviewed by Patterson (2000, 175) says that the same is true of the White House:

“The Public Liaison Office, the Public Affairs Office: they have people in there who are assigned to very small constituencies. And when that happens, as soon as you assign someone to constituency X, constituency Y begins to demand White House time. What Presidents have done, over the decades, is to incur an expectation for attention on the part of all kinds of people in the American public.”

This need to hear from representatives of different interests and perspectives extends to some degree to the administrative state (see Kerwin 2003) and to the courts (see Kagan 2001). American political institutions do not always incorporate the many interests and perspectives that they hear but they feel obliged to at least go through the motions of listening to and claiming to be responsive to a wide set of interests and ideas.

As Heaney (2004) argues, interest organizations thus seek to develop an identity as a representative of a social group or an advocate of an issue perspective in national politics.⁶ He finds that most organizations attempt to shape their identities as constituency representatives and position advocates; they adjust their behavior to instill that identity among policymakers. Through this process, advocacy organizations make their way onto the internal lists of obvious participants in the heads of policymakers. I add that government officials may never be consciously convinced that advocacy organizations should stand in for public stakeholders or widely-held policy positions, but they behave as if they take it for granted because representation and policy deliberation are the animating principles supposedly behind their work. Advocacy organizations are engaged in two interrelated forms of institutionalization: they are attempting to become taken-for-granted

⁶ In the health care field, Heaney (2004) finds that 78% of organizations view themselves as representatives of social groups and believe that representation is part of their organizational identity. The most common secondary dimension of organizational identity is issue area, with 50% of organizations mentioning that they are identified with an issue perspective.

representatives of a public constituency and taken-for-granted informed position advocates in policy debates.

To understand which organizations achieve this status, however, institutional theories of organization suggest that we look at the structural attributes of organizations and how they match up to the institutional logic governing behavior in their sector. In the interest group literature, scholars have also suggested that we pay attention to organizational structure. Anderson and Loomis (1998), for example, argue the basic characteristics of organizations, such as their links to members and supporters, often determine how they are seen by outsiders. I argue that advocacy organizations become taken-for-granted representatives and policy advocates by aligning their structure with the democratic purposes of policy deliberation and interest intermediation.

I label this theory “institutionalized pluralism” to indicate that it is an attempt to synthesize traditional group theories of politics (e.g. Truman 1951) with institutional theories of organizations in order to help understand the representation of public constituencies by advocacy organizations.⁷ The theory does not seek to adjudicate longstanding debates over the sources of political power or the degree of inequality in influence over policy outcomes. It does not aspire to explain the workings of the political system as a whole but it can serve as a guide for understanding a large and important subset of the interest group universe.⁸

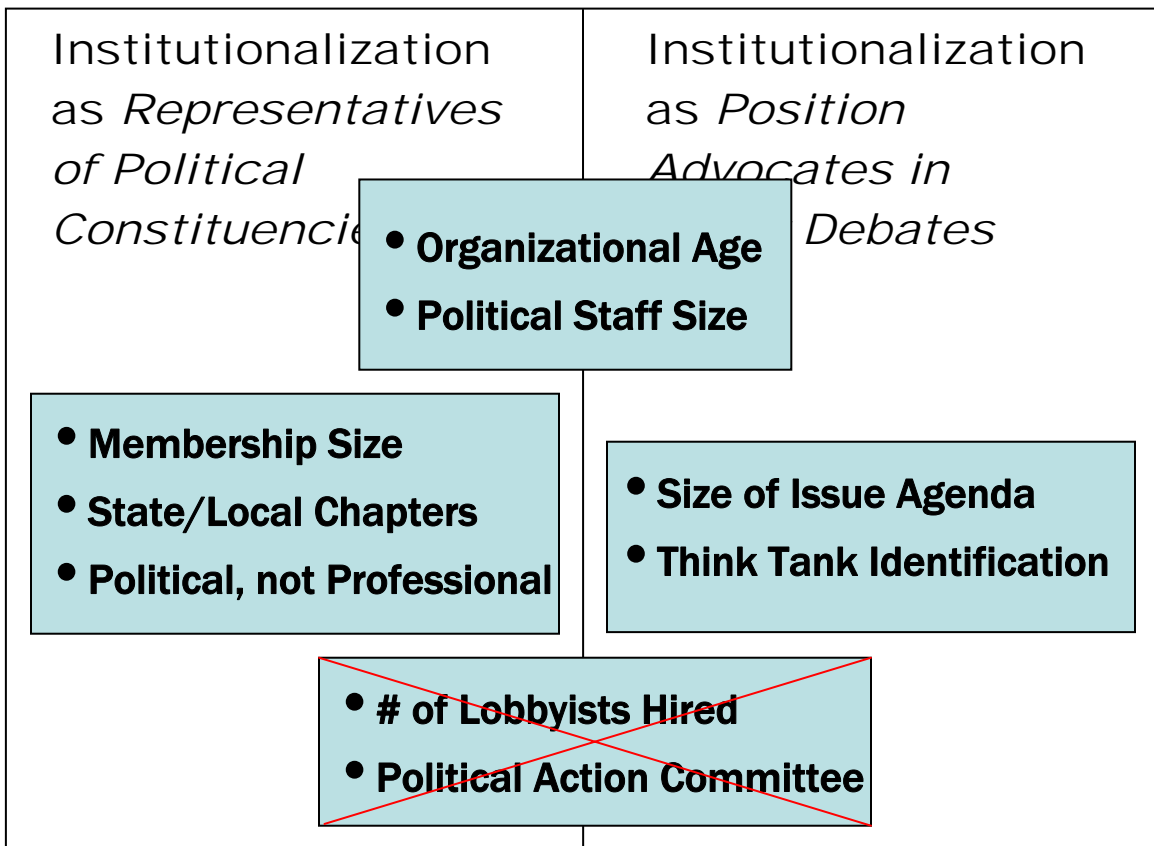
Hypotheses

⁷ The theory is part of an ongoing research program designed to combine traditional group theories of politics with the contemporary analysis of organizational behavior. This type of theoretical approach is typically called the “neopluralist perspective” (see Gray and Lowery 2004; McFarland 2004; Baumgartner and Leech 1998).

⁸ Kernell (1997), for example, uses the moniker “institutionalized pluralism” to suggest a bygone era where presidents used existing party coalitions to advance their legislative agendas prior to the rise of the “going public” strategy. I do not seek to challenge that set of findings or the research agenda that it spawned.

Which structural characteristics of advocacy organizations will lead to institutionalization as representatives of political constituencies and institutionalization as informed position advocates in policy debates? As illustrated by Figure 2, some attributes will promote both types of institutionalization, whereas others will help with only one process. Yet some attributes often thought to influence interest group success will not help with either institutionalization process. To determine whether each organizational attribute is likely to influence institutionalization, I ask two key questions. First, does the attribute help to align the structure of the organization with the democratic purposes of policy deliberation or constituency representation? Second, does the attribute encourage other participants in policymaking to view the organization as a stable embodiment of its purposes?

Figure 2: Factors Involved in Two Institutionalization Processes



Two key attributes of advocacy organizations should help contribute to both institutionalization processes, an organization's longevity and the scale of its national political operations. As previous research suggests (see Smith 1984; Schlozman and Tierney 1986), organizations with a long tenure in Washington become better known as policymaking participants and develop capacity to act as informed participants in policy debates and to effectively mobilize their constituencies. As institutional theory suggests, longevity also indicates that insiders and outsiders perceive the organization as a stable actor with a coherent purpose. The age of an organization is commonly used as a proxy for institutionalization because extended survival provides evidence that an organization has adapted to the requirements of operating in its sector. For advocacy organizations, longevity signals a history of presence in policy debates and support from some constituency. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Older advocacy organizations will be more involved in Washington policymaking than newly established organizations.

The other major indicator of an organization's stable presence and purpose is the scale of its national political operations. Previous research (see Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991) suggests that a large political staff in Washington enables organizations to establish a reputation with many policymakers and to become visible to stakeholders. Institutional theories suggest that organizations of greater scale have mobilized more people to support the organization's operations and purposes; this can inspire outsiders to take their function and their behavior for granted. For advocacy organizations, a large political staff in Washington indicates that an organization seeks to participate as professionals in policy debates and to represent its constituency regularly and actively. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: The larger an advocacy organization's internal staff of political representatives, the more involved it will be in Washington policymaking.

In addition to incorporating these hypotheses of interest group research, institutionalized pluralism suggests additional unique predictions. First, institutionalization as a representative of a political stakeholder will be advanced if organizations have formal connections to a public constituency. If an organization nurtures a large individual membership, they will be more likely to be assumed to be acting in a representative role. If they are tied to an active membership through federated local or state chapters, they are also likely to be seen as maintaining in-person ties to their public supporters. Recent critics of the decline in civic engagement have implied that mass organizations no longer wield the power they once did. Putnam (2000) and Skokpol (2003) bemoan the decline of locally organized political groups and the shift in emphasis to Washington. Institutionalized pluralism, however, suggests that local organization and national representation are not in conflict. Individual membership will help an organization be recognized as a representative of a public concern. Local chapters will help indicate that an organization is linked to their constituency via a multi-level structure of representation. This leads to two additional hypotheses:

H3: The larger the membership of a constituency organization, the more involved the organization will be in Washington policymaking.

H4: Federally-structured constituency organizations that have state or local chapters will be more involved in Washington policymaking.

Though individual membership is a visible signal of constituency support, some types of membership organizations are more likely to be seen as spokespersons for private interests without active political support. If advocacy organizations must be seen as representatives of public constituencies, organizations that arise to promote professional development should face a disadvantage in being seen as representatives of the political ideas of their supporters. Though Olson (1971) argues that the ease with which small economic groups organize represents a distinct advantage over other social interests, this mobilization around narrow goals lacking political content

is unlikely to produce an organized leadership that is seen as representing a political constituency.

This leads to an additional hypothesis:

H5: Advocacy organizations representing professional interests, rather than social groups or political perspectives, will be less involved in Washington policymaking.

Institutionalized pluralism suggests that a different set of factors may help organizations become institutionalized as informed position advocates in policy debates. First, the scope of an organization's political agenda helps establish it as a presence in multiple areas of political discussion. Organizations with a more expansive scope, which produce a large agenda of public policy goals, are likely to see themselves as participants in more debates; they will also come to the minds of policymakers more often as they consider various policy issues. Previous research contrasts with this emphasis. Browne (1990), for example, argues that interest organizations adapt to potential competition by finding a policy "niche," a smaller issue agenda with a smaller constituency. Institutionalized pluralism suggests that niche-seeking organizations will incur a clear cost; organizations will be obvious participants in fewer policy debates. This leads to a sixth hypothesis:

H6: The greater the size of an advocacy organization's issue agenda, the more involved it will be in Washington policymaking.

The second factor that should influence institutionalization of organizations as participants in policy debates is formalized policy expertise. Organizations that become identified as informed policy advocates will be seen as proponents for policy positions that are well-versed in policy background. In previous research, Rich (2004) argues that 'think tanks,' providers of expert policy information from a political perspective, have become important in national politics. Yet almost all interest organizations claim to produce expert information (see Schlozman and Tierney 1986). Institutionalized pluralism suggests that an advantage will be gained by those that can establish an image of fulfilling the formal role of expert policy proponents. This suggests a seventh hypothesis:

H7: Advocacy organizations that establish a reputation as a "think tank" will be more involved in Washington policymaking.

The theory of institutionalized pluralism also distinguishes itself from other theories by identifying factors that should not produce policymaking involvement. First, previous research suggests, but does not conclusively show, that mobilizing resources to hire lobbyists will increase the success of an interest organization (see Heinz et al. 1993; Wright 1996). Building from a simple resource mobilization model, this hypothesis seems straightforward. Yet hiring external lobbyists does not help an organization become a stable leadership for a public constituency or help it establish itself as an informed position advocate in policy debates. An organization that has outsiders working on its behalf, rather than internal staff, is unlikely to be seen as the site of public representation or the site of expertise for policy deliberation. It may even suggest that an organization is attempting to compensate for lack of internal leadership by looking outside organizational boundaries. This suggests another hypothesis:

H8: Advocacy organizations that hire a larger number of external lobbyists will **not** be more involved in Washington policymaking.

Previous research has also suggested, but not demonstrated, that PAC contributions are a route to political involvement and influence (see Smith 1995; Grenzke 1989). Starting a PAC, however, does not help an organization become a recognized advocate for a constituency or a policy position. It may even convey the message that an advocacy organization plans to gain influence by providing financial contributions, rather than by representing public interests and participating in policy discussion. This leads to a ninth hypothesis:

H9: Advocacy organizations that found an associated PAC will **not** be more involved in Washington policymaking than those organizations that do not.

Policy Venues and the Limits of Strategic Targeting

Advocacy organizations are in the midst of a generalized process of institutionalization as well as specific attempts to become involved in each policymaking venue. Institutionalized pluralism suggests that the benefits of institutionalization should be apparent across the political system.

Institutionalized organizations should be more involved in Congress, the administration and the courts. Yet each set of political institutions has requirements for organizational access and each set of policymakers may respond to different types of organizations. This set of facts has led scholars of interest groups to view involvement in policymaking as a two-stage process of “venue selection” on the part of interest organizations and responsiveness on the part of policymakers. Scholars have become convinced that particular organizational strategies and policymaker interests drive involvement in each venue.

In some sense, this perspective and institutionalized pluralism describe the same process in different language. Yet the theories emphasize different parts of the process and they disagree about how much individual agency organizations and policymakers have in selecting strategies and choosing participants. Institutionalized pluralism recognizes that each venue has unique participation processes and requirements but does not concur that organizational strategy determines involvement. After organizations have defined their constituency and their goal to influence national policy, remaining strategic choices are limited; successful institutionalization implies that organizations will become stable embodiments of their implied purposes.

The current interest group literature fails to recognize limits to strategy because it uses either conventional notions of strategy derived from the discourse of political operatives or rationalist ideas about strategic action derived from game theory. Institutionalized pluralism instead adapts theories of strategy used in organizational theory. Miles and Snow (1978), for example, argue that “organizations within one industry or grouping develop over time a strategy of relating to their market or constituency.” “A given market strategy,” they claim, “[is] best served by a particular type of organizational structure, technology, and administrative process” (Miles and Snow 1978, x). Though Miles and Snow emphasize that organizations may initially cycle through different strategies, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that in settings with highly institutionalized rules, organizations

focus on adaptation to norms of behavior. Most institutionalized organizations, DiMaggio and Powell find, are likely to be caught up in administration of their operations rather than constant re-evaluation of strategy.

Applied to advocacy organizations, theories of organizational strategy suggest that de facto strategic decisions are made before the organizations, or the scholars studying them, know that they have been made. All advocacy organizations have made the decision to represent particular interests or concerns before government. Since the organizations cannot alter the basic requirements of participation in national political institutions, this decision produces a set of strategic imperatives. Organizations are unlikely to be making major strategic decisions each time they act. Instead, their basic structure and external image will provide a certain capacity to be involved in policymaking.

If the requirements for participation in each venue leave little room for strategic decisions by organizational leaders, differential participation across venues should be seen as a product of basic institutional differences. I have argued that policymakers, when they have control over participation, involve multiple representatives of taken-for-granted stakeholders and multiple informed participants in policy debates. Differences across venues will thus be a product of the barriers to entry in each arena and policymaker control over the scope of participation.

Previous research indicates that Congressional committees and the President play an active role in empowering certain organizations to participate in their venues (see Shaiko 1998). Administrative agencies, in contrast, are required to publicly announce their rulemaking procedures and proposals and be somewhat responsive to the official comments that they receive (see Kerwin 2003). Courts only hear cases that are brought to them by litigants and primarily reference briefs that are submitted by interested parties (see Kagan 2001). Though each set of policymakers will seek recognized voices of stakeholders and recognized advocates of policy positions, each set of political leaders has a different level of control over advocacy organization involvement. Congressional

committees make collective decisions to solicit information from the sides of political debates and the representatives of public stakeholders that they seek to appease (see Wright 1996). Presidents are interested in responding to the broad national constituencies that they seek to represent (see Patterson 2000). Administrative agencies and courts, which have less control, primarily enable involvement by those who have the capacity to participate.

Agencies and courts also have greater barriers to entry. One former Office of Management and Budget official who is now an advocacy group leader compared the barriers to participation in Congress and the administration:

“Most lawyers in Washington work the Hill... The price to [the administrative] game is a pretty high price... It’s detailed work... Congressional staff [will often listen because they] are overwhelmed... You go talk to [an agency,] there’s someone who worked on that rule for 11 years... there’s very high barriers to entry in this game.”⁹

Kagan (2001) argues that the barriers of administrative procedures correspond to the high complexity of participation in the courts. Advocacy group involvement in the courts, he reports, is often tied to previous administrative policymaking. This suggests a final hypothesis:

H10: Advocacy organization involvement in Congressional and Presidential policymaking will be more representative of a cross-section of the types of advocacy groups in Washington than involvement in administrative agencies and courts.

Data and Method

Despite an abundance of previous hypotheses about how advocacy organizations succeed, there has been no large-scale effort to investigate which factors lead to higher levels of involvement in policymaking. Whereas many studies of the mobilization of interest organizations have been conducted on large populations, most studies of organizational involvement in policymaking have been conducted via case studies (see Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Thus, no datasets were available

⁹ This quotation is from an anonymous in-person interview in June 2006.

for testing the hypotheses of institutionalized pluralism. I therefore use original data on a broad population of advocacy organizations, including new data on organizational attributes and new measures of policymaking involvement.

Population

I investigate the characteristics of more than 1,600 advocacy organizations that speak on behalf of social groups or political perspectives in national politics. The population includes all organizations with a presence in the Washington area that aspire to represent a section of the public broader than their own institution, staff, and membership. I therefore combine the study of the organized representation of ethnic, religious, demographic, and occupational groups with the study of the organized representation of particular ideological or issue perspectives. The names, reference text descriptions, and Web sites of the organizations in the population indicate that they seek to represent American public constituencies in national politics. Corporate policy offices, charities, governmental units, and trade associations of corporations are not included in the population.

I use the entire population of Washington advocacy organizations to ensure complete representation of all types of advocacy groups and all combinations of organizational attributes. The population is not intended to be a sample of all interest organizations in Washington. Corporations, governments, and their associations represent a large portion of the interest group community but theory and previous research indicate that they are likely to be subject to different opportunities and constraints in their efforts to become involved in policymaking. Since most studies of advocacy groups include only a small portion of the population, such as religious representatives, the results of this analysis are already generalized to a much larger community of organizations than extant research. The results cannot be generalized to help understand the activities of business; if corporations operate differently and succeed via a different process, a different theory and analysis will be necessary to understand their behavior; if they operate similarly and succeed through a similar

process, this analysis will need to be conducted on a larger population of organizations to draw that conclusion.¹⁰ Some scholars believe that professional associations and unions constitute a separate category that is a grey area between corporations and advocacy organizations. Yet they are included in this population because they seek to represent broad occupational categories rather than specific institutions. In the analysis, I note where the attributes of these organizations differ from those of other groups in any way that may affect the conclusions.

To identify advocacy organizations, I relied on reference sources and organizational Web sites. I primarily used the *Washington Representatives* directory but I also checked for additional organizations in the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, *The Capital Source*, the *Government Affairs Yellow Book*, *Public Interest Profiles*, and the *Washington Information Directory*. With two research assistants, I content analyzed the reference text descriptions and Web sites of all organizations to confirm that they seek to represent social groups or issue perspectives in national politics and to categorize them by the constituencies that they seek to represent.¹¹ Our categorizations were consistent for more than 90% of the organizations. Where available, we compared our categorizations with those used by scholars of sectors of the advocacy group universe (*e.g.* Hertzke 1988; Hofrenning 1995; Berry 1999; Shaiko 1999; Hays 2001).¹²

Dependent Variables

¹⁰ Either way, no information about the behavior of corporations would threaten the validity of the inferences of this study, as they apply only to advocacy organizations. The existence of another population of organizations will not impede this study's ability to draw conclusions about the population under study, any more than studies of the House of Representatives are affected by data on the Senate; problems only arises when scholars seek to generalize the results to all interest groups or to Congress as a whole.

¹¹ If an organization's Web site was not listed in reference text descriptions, we searched for the organization's site using *Google*. If we found no indication that the organization was still in Washington, we attempted to contact the office to ensure that the organization existed. Less than 100 advocacy organizations remaining in Washington did not have Web sites.

¹² Our categorizations were also consistent with those used by other scholars for more than 90 per cent of organizations.

To analyze organizational involvement in policymaking venues, I use one measure for each venue: Congressional committee hearings, Presidential announcements, administrative agency rulemaking, and federal court proceedings. In analyses of particular issue domains, measures of organizational participation in these venues are common (see Hays 2001; Laumann and Knoke 1987; Berry 1999; Holyoke 2003; Salisbury 1984). Yet no one has collected general measures of the level of involvement in policymaking venues across many different types of advocacy organizations.

To assess involvement in Congressional policymaking, I use the number of times that each organization participated in committee hearings. I search for organizational names in the sections describing those who gave testimony from 1995-2004 in the database of *Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony* maintained by *Congressional Quarterly*. Congressional hearing testimony was the best available measure of involvement in Congress. It requires some proactive participation on the part of advocacy groups and some proactive expression of interest by policymakers but it is not a comprehensive measure of all participation in Congress. Validation checks confirmed that it is closely correlated with the number of times an organization is mentioned in Congressional floor proceedings and in media reports aimed at Congress. One former hill staffer, who is now an official at a prominent advocacy organization, also confirmed the face validity of this measure:

“I would say [that testimony] is a measure of involvement. It is objective criteria... It is a way of validating, even your opposition. It is not [directly influential] but two of the things that cause you to be invited to testify [also] cause influence: the committee staff have respect for [the organization]. That helps your case, you have credibility. [Second,] they are aware of your work. If your name does not come to mind for a hearing, it is not likely to come to mind when they are considering legislation.”¹³

To assess involvement in Presidential policymaking, I use a search for organizational names in the *Papers of the Presidents* from 1995-2004. This database includes the writings, press releases, executive orders, nominations, proclamations and other materials issued by the White House under

¹³ This quotation is from an anonymous in-person interview in July 2006.

Clinton and Bush; it also includes transcripts of radio addresses, Presidential speeches, and news conferences. It is used by scholars of the Presidency to assess each President's attention to various issues and the President's participation in policymaking. Though the process of Presidential policymaking is often obscure, the President and the offices surrounding him make critical decisions of importance to advocacy organizations and involve them in their discussions. The Presidential papers include much of their correspondence and the President's public attention to the groups.

To assess organizational involvement in administrative agency rulemaking, I search for organizational names from 1995-2004 in the database maintained by *LexisNexis* that contains the Final Rules and Administrative Decisions issued by over 100 executive branch decision-making bodies. Interest organizations commonly appear in these rules and decisions if they are participants in an administrative dispute or if administrators are responding to their written comments submitted in a public review of proposed rule changes or public comment period. Organizations that regularly submit comments are included in this database often but being mentioned also requires some proactive action on the part of agencies. Administrators typically refer directly to an organization in final rules when they are quoting or responding to their submission.

To assess organizational involvement in federal court proceedings, I search for organizational names from 1995-2004 in the database maintained by *LexisNexis* that contains case law and legal documents from the Supreme Court, all U.S. District Courts and Courts of Appeal, and several specialty federal courts. Advocacy organizations commonly appear in these decisions and documents if they are participants in litigation or submitted *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") briefs to federal courts. Organizations that often pursue lawsuits are commonly mentioned in this database but being mentioned frequently also typically requires active attention from the courts; organizations who have their briefs cited by judges, for example, receive more mentions.

Independent Variables

For each organization, I use data on all of the organizational attributes thought to be relevant to involvement in policymaking. To assess longevity, I use data on the age of the organization as reported on organizational Web sites or descriptions in reference texts. To assess the scale of their Washington operations, I use the number of internal political representatives on their Washington staff as reported in *Washington Representatives* (2004). This measure leaves out staff dedicated to other pursuits, such as administration and membership maintenance; it reflects the organization's political presence in Washington. To assess an organization's formal ties to a public constituency, I rely on membership size and the existence of local chapters. I use the number of individual members reported on organizational Web sites or in reference texts and record whether an organization has a federated membership structure or associated local or state chapters. To assess the scope of an organization's policy agenda, I use the number of policy issues on which they lobby, as recorded in *Washington Representatives* (2004). To assess whether an organization has formal links to policy expertise, I record whether they were identified as a think tank in Rich's (2004) interview-based study. To test the importance of variables thought to be important by other scholars, I use the number of external lobbyists an organization's has hired, as reported in *Washington Representatives* (2004) and I record whether they have an associated PAC.¹⁴ The analysis includes complete information on 1,454 organizations out of 1,710 in the population.¹⁵

Design and Analysis

The analysis includes descriptive data on independent and dependent variables, multivariate models of organizational involvement in all four venues, and qualitative data to illustrate the

¹⁴ When independent variable information is unavailable from the sources listed, I supplement the information with data from scholarly studies of specific interest group sectors and Washington media reports.

¹⁵ By removing organizational age and membership information from the models, I can analyze almost the entire population of organizations. The results of the models without these two variables are substantially similar to those presented here.

mechanisms that relate organizational attributes to policymaking involvement. The descriptive information is twofold. First, I present data on the distribution of types of advocacy organizations with a presence in Washington and compare it to the distributions of Congressional testimony and total mentions in Presidential papers, administrative rules, and court documents for all organizations. Second, I present statistics on the central tendency and spread of the independent and dependent variables.

To assess which organizational attributes influence involvement in Congressional committees, presidential directives, administrative rulemaking, and court litigation, I present one model for each venue. To account for differences across types of organizations, the models include the same organizational attributes as well as three dichotomous variables representing the categories of professional associations, unions, and identity groups. The excluded category in these regressions is representatives of issue perspectives.¹⁶

Because all four dependent variables are integer counts, I use maximum-likelihood count models to estimate the effects of each variable. To select among count models, Long and Freese (2001) recommend using tests of overdispersion to determine whether to use Poisson or Negative Binomial count models and likelihood ratio tests to determine whether to use the zero-inflated versions of these models. Using these tests, I determined that zero-inflated negative binomial models were most appropriate for predicting involvement in each venue. This procedure is also the most sensible theoretically, because some factors may influence whether organizations are involved at all in each venue and others may influence how much they are involved. The zero-inflated models

¹⁶ In the model for federal court documents, I include an additional dichotomous variable for whether or not organizations represent environmental concerns. The excluded category for this model is therefore organizations that represent issue perspectives other than environmental concerns. The results indicate that environmental organizations appear to be much more likely to use the courts than other organizations and are not properly grouped with other issue organizations when predicting court involvement. Separating environmental organizations in the other models does not substantially change the results or significantly improve the fit of the models.

assess both sets of factors. The results include two coefficients for each variable; the binary coefficients correspond to the model predicting whether organizations will receive a count of at least one and the other coefficients correspond to the model predicting the number of times that an organization will testify or be mentioned.¹⁷ The procedure is similar to using a logit model to predict whether or not organizations will be involved at all in each venue and then using a count model to predict how often those that are involved will be involved (see Long and Freese 2001).

This type of data analysis, like all research methodologies, has its strengths and weaknesses. The primary strengths are the breadth of analysis and the reliance on measures of actual involvement rather than reported involvement. The primary weakness is the reliance on only publicly available data. Yet this research strategy does compare favorably to others pursued in the field and it fills large gaps in our knowledge. In their review of the literature, Andrews and Edwards (2004) argue that survey-based research has had the benefit of large samples but has offered a poor indication of policymaking influence whereas other interest group studies have been too narrow. They recommend an intermediary approach like that offered here. In large-n interview and survey-based research on interest groups, response rates are also notoriously low. Furlong and Kerwin (2004), for example, report response rates of 15 per cent and 25 per cent for their two surveys of interest organization participation in rulemaking. The two major surveys by Walker (1991) had response rates of 55 per cent and 65 per cent. I collected complete information on a much larger proportion of the organizations in my population (85 per cent).

Given the broad focus of organizational theory, this research design is also open to some theoretical criticism. Because some institutional theory envisions a bright line between

¹⁷ I use an alternate version of zero-inflated negative binomial models. In most models, the binary coefficients of these models assess whether an organization has zero mentions. The results of these models as typically reported are not intuitive, because negative binary coefficients indicate that a variable increases the chance that an organization will be mentioned. The alternate procedure corrects for this problem in interpretation without substantively altering the results.

institutionalized organizations and others, some readers may question statistical tests that imply probabilistic causality and use continuous variables to measure attributes of institutionalization. Yet the institutionalization process examined here does not rely on a dichotomous distinction. First, organizations may be in the midst of becoming institutionalized and their attributes may reflect this intermediary stage. Second, organizations may be institutionalized only as constituency representatives or only as policy debate position advocates. Third, organizations may only be recognized as fulfilling these roles by some policymakers. In any of these circumstances, their attributes would reflect an intermediary level of institutionalization.

Generic problems with cross-sectional data collection and analysis may also pose concerns for some readers. Institutionalization implies an over-time process. Organizations are likely to become more involved in policymaking as they become institutionalized; the inclusion of organizational longevity in these models accounts for this process. Yet over-time data is needed to pose additional tests for the mechanisms implied by the theory. Though there is a possibility of some feedback effects from policymaking involvement to organizational characteristics, this is not a serious concern for this analysis. Congressional committee hearing appearances and mentions in policymaking documents are unlikely to directly or strongly affect an organization's structure and purpose. These models represent the closest attempts at causal inference yet pursued in this research area and meet the standards of conventional cross-sectional models in social science.¹⁸

Interview Materials

The broad quantitative study offers the best analysis to date of the causes of advocacy organization involvement in policymaking and the best tests of the theory of institutionalized pluralism. Yet the theory implies mechanisms that involve mental processes; these mechanisms may

¹⁸ Just as all cross-sectional analyses of voting behavior are vulnerable to criticism on the grounds that they do not include past voting behavior and opinions, this analysis would be superior if it also included over time data on involvement and organizational attributes.

be better observed with qualitative data. Though it would be impossible to observe the minds of policymakers or advocacy organization leaders or to ask all of them about their perceptions of policymaking, interviews can provide illustrative examples of the mental processes at work. Since the theory implies a process that is not always conscious, we cannot always rely on stated judgments; since policymakers often have internal lists of involved organizations and since advocacy group leaders closely track their successes, however, interviews can provide complimentary information to assess the plausibility of the mechanisms implied by the theory.

The quotations referenced thus far and in the results derive from 20 anonymous interviews with Congressional committee staff, administrative agency officials, and advocacy organization spokespersons. These 30-minute in-person or telephone interviews took place in the Washington area in June 2006. They cannot be said to constitute a random sample of any population. I did not have a previous personal or working relationship with any of the interviewees, however, and I have no reason to believe that they are unrepresentative of the wider community of relevant individuals involved in national policymaking. Anonymity was requested by interviewees and ensured openness.

Results

Much of advocacy organization involvement follows from the distribution of organizations with a Washington presence, as illustrated in Figure 3. 42% of advocacy organizations speak on behalf of general issue perspectives; this category includes liberal and conservative ideological groups, foreign policy advocates, environmental groups, consumer groups, and liberal, conservative, and other single-issue groups. 33% of the organizations represent occupational interests; this category is dominated by professional associations but also includes unions. The other 25% of advocacy organizations speak on behalf of identity groups; this category includes representatives of ethnic, religious, and gender groups, other social groups, and intersectional identities.

Figure 3: Distribution of Washington Advocacy Organizations

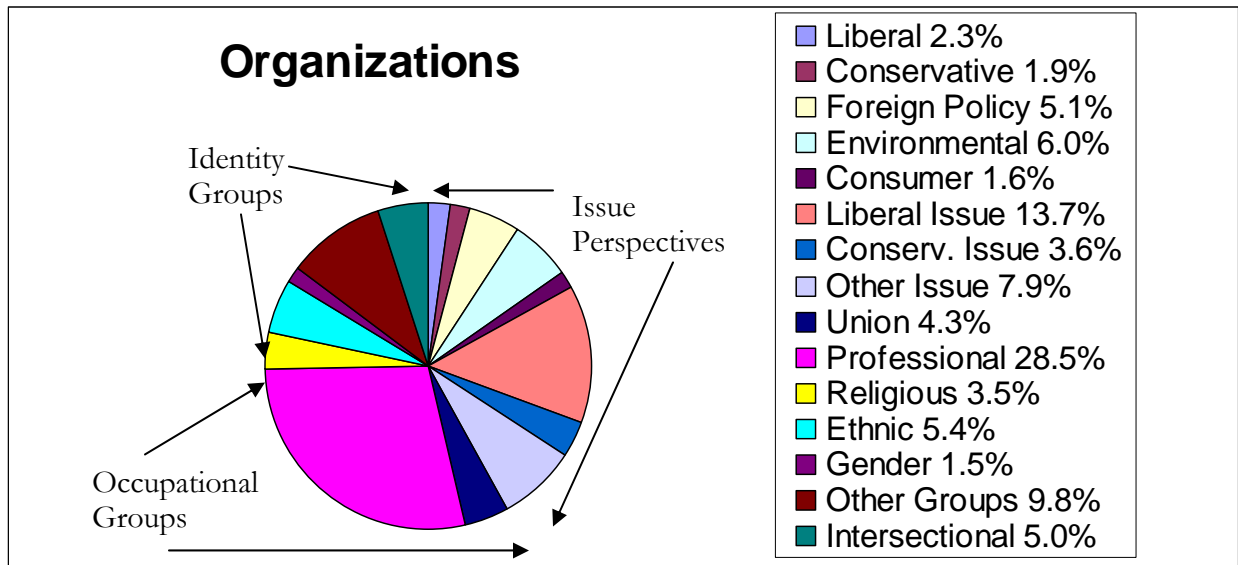


Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of Congressional testimony among all advocacy organizations. The proportions are quite reflective of the organizational population. The main differences are that organizations representing identity groups and professional associations are underrepresented in comparison to their organizational population whereas unions and organizations representing most types of issue perspectives are overrepresented.

Figure 4: Distribution of Congressional Committee Testimony among Advocacy Organizations

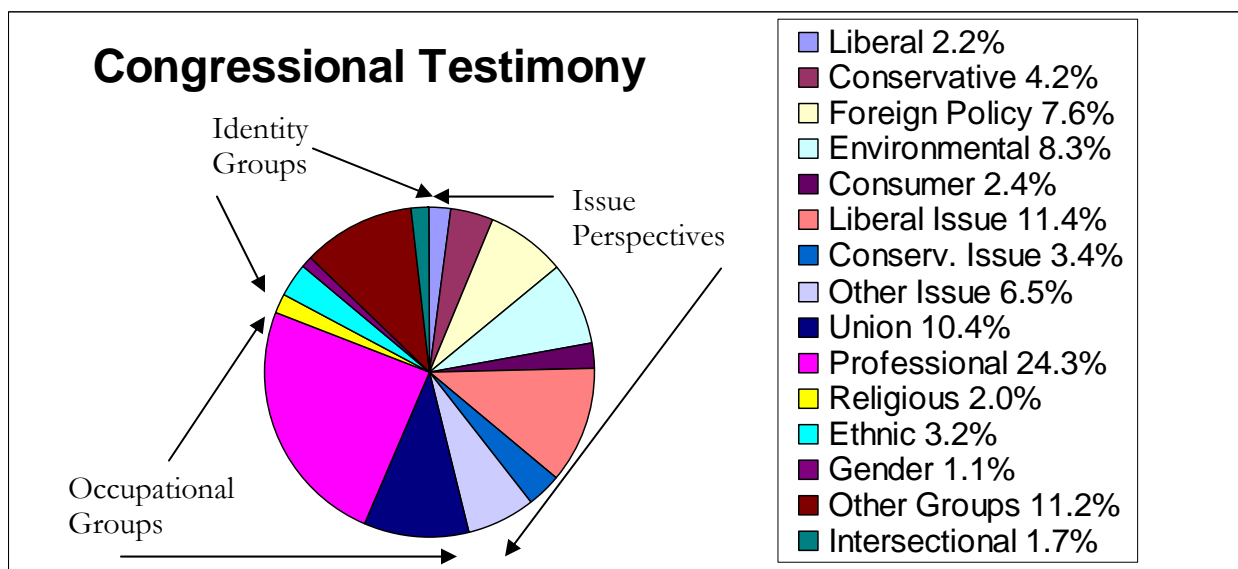


Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of mentions in the *Papers of the President* among all advocacy organizations. The proportions, which include mentions in the Clinton and Bush administrations, are again largely reflective of the organizational population. The main differences are that unions and identity groups are overrepresented whereas professional groups and issue groups are underrepresented in comparison to the organizational population.

Figure 5: Distribution of Presidential Papers Mentions among Advocacy Organizations

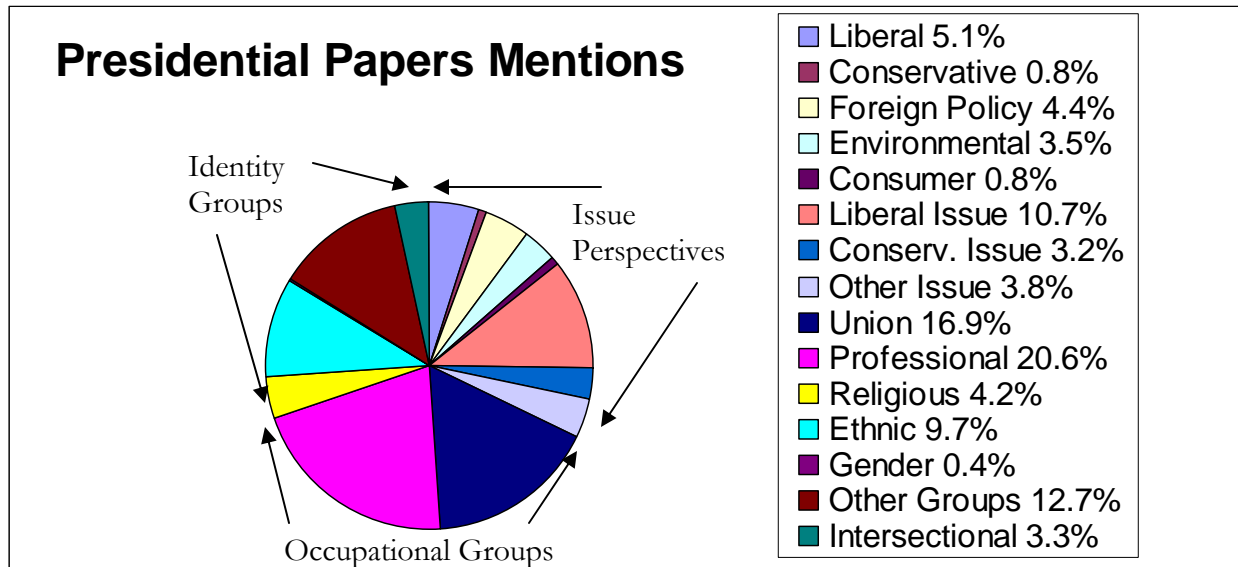


Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of mentions in administrative agency rules and decisions among all advocacy organizations. As hypothesized, this distribution is much less representative of the organizational population. Unions and professional associations account for a majority of all mentions. Other social groups, such as veterans, are also overrepresented in comparison to their organizational population.

Figure 6: Distribution of Administrative Agency Rule Mentions among Advocacy Organizations

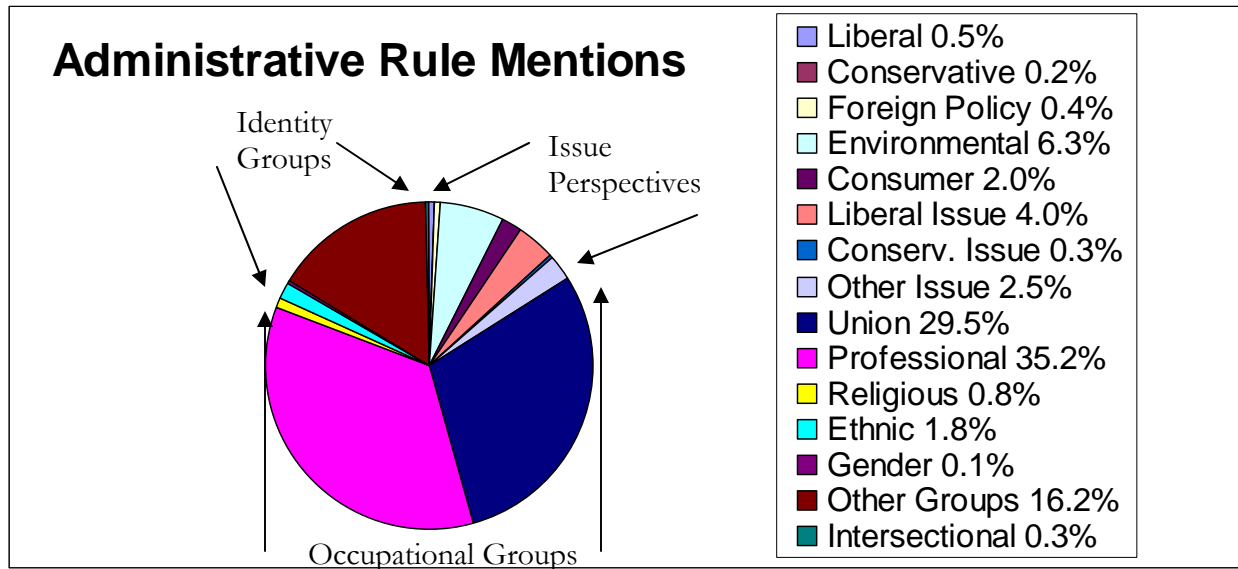
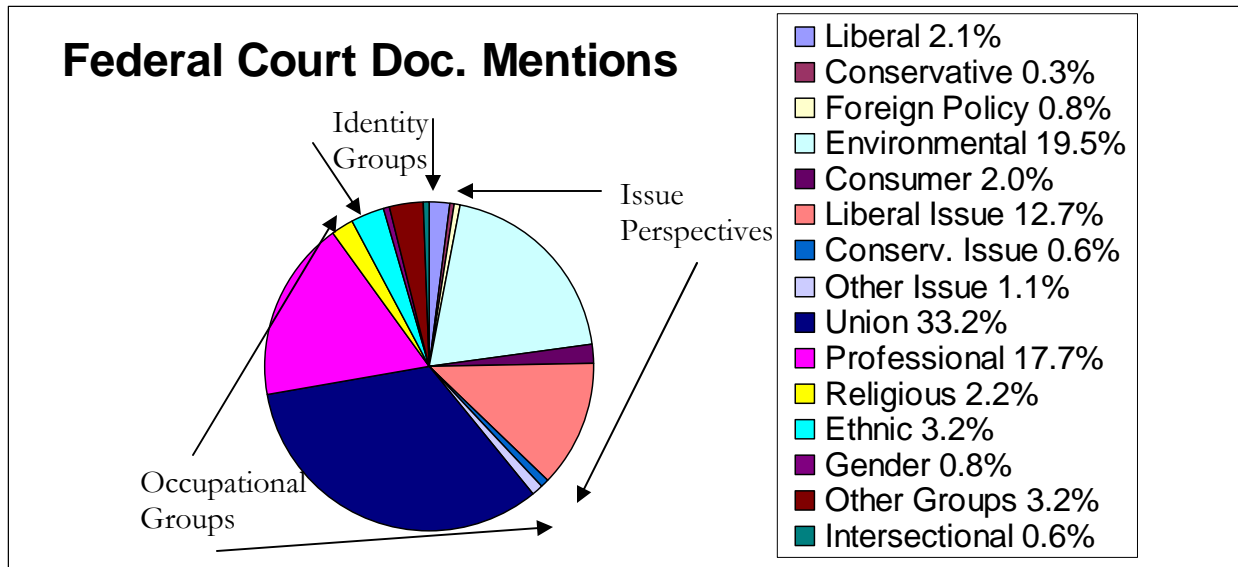


Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of mentions in federal court documents among all advocacy organizations. As hypothesized, this distribution is again not as representative of the organizational population. Unions and professional associations account for approximately half of all mentions. Unions and environmental issue groups are substantially overrepresented in federal court documents, with union mentions accounting for more than seven times their share of the organizational population and environmental group mentions accounting for more than three times their share of the population. In comparison, there are few mentions of identity groups.

Figure 7: Distribution of Federal Court Document Mentions among Advocacy Organizations



To further outline the distribution of these measures of policymaking involvement among organizations, Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for each variable. For Congressional testimony, the mean among all organizations was 4.7 appearances; 628 of the organizations did not testify at all during the period. Fewer organizations appeared in the *Papers of the President* at all over the decade; the average number of mentions was also quite low (1.1). For administrative agency mentions, the average number of mentions was almost 40 and the spread was substantial. For federal court documents, the average organization was mentioned more than 30 times.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Dependent Variable Distributions

	Mean	Standard Deviation	# of Zeros
Congressional Committee Testimony	4.7	13.1	628
Mentions in Presidential Papers	1.1	5.1	1140
Mentions in Agency Rules / Decisions	39.9	295.3	632
Mentions in Fed. Court Documents	31.9	176.2	662

To understand how organizations become involved in policymaking and why some organizations are more involved than others, the analysis relies on several important organizational attributes. Table 2 describes the distributions of these attributes. The average advocacy group has been in Washington for more than four decades, has three political representatives on its Washington staff, has a membership of more than 200,000, has two issues on its agenda, and has hired one external lobbyist. There is substantial variation in age, staff size, issue agenda, and the number of lobbyists hired. Less than one-fifth of advocacy groups have local chapters, just over one in ten have a PAC, and very few are identified as think tanks.

Table 2: Descriptive Characteristics of Independent Variable Distributions

	Mean or Proportion	Standard Deviation
Organizational Age	41.9	32.7
Size of Political Staff	2.6	3.3
Size of Membership	224,441	1,972,247
Has Local Chapters	19.2%	<i>n.a.</i>
Size of Issue Agenda	2.1	4.2
Think Tank	1.1%	<i>n.a.</i>
# of Lobbyists Hired	1.0	2.7
Has Associated PAC	11.3%	<i>n.a.</i>

To draw conclusions about the causes of organizational involvement in each venue, we must move to multivariate models. Table 3 presents zero-inflated negative binomial regression models to predict testimony before Congress, an indicator of organizational involvement in Congressional policymaking. According to the model, political staff size, age of organization, breadth of issue agenda, and think tank identification all positively and significantly increase involvement in Congressional testimony. Political staff size increases both the chance that an organization will testify at least once and the number of times that those organizations that are involved will testify. As hypothesized, being a professional association rather than an issue organization is negatively and significantly related to testimony.

These results are substantively important for determining the level of involvement of an organization in Congressional testimony. According to the model, each additional political staff member increases the probability that an organization will testify by a factor of almost 2 and increases the expected number of testimony appearances by a factor of 1.15. The age of an organization and the size of its issue agenda also have substantively significant effects on Congressional involvement. A standard deviation increase in age increases an organization's expected number of testimony appearances by 1.2 and a standard deviation increase in the size of their issue agenda increases the expected count by a factor of 1.1. Professional associations are also much less involved in Congress than organizations that represent issue perspectives; being a professional association rather than an issue group decreases an organization's expected number of testimony appearances by a factor of 0.7. In addition, think tanks are much more involved in testimony than other organizations; being a think tank increases the expected number of appearances by a factor of 4.

To provide a sense of the combined effects of these differences, I estimated the predicted probabilities of being involved in testimony for two different types of organizations, each with no lobbyists, PACs, or members. The model predicts that a 5-year-old single-issue professional organization with 1 staff member has a .8 probability of not testifying at all before Congress. In contrast, a 20-year-old issue advocacy group with 5 issues on their agenda and 10 political staff members has only a .2 probability of not testifying before Congress. If that same organization is identified as a think tank, the probability decreases to less than .1. Many of the organizations that are involved in Congressional testimony are large issue advocacy organizations; the oldest, largest, and broadest of these organizations are the most involved.

Table 3: Involvement of Advocacy Organizations in Congressional Committee Hearings

	Congressional Committee Testimony	
	Count Coefficients	Binary Coefficients
Political Staff Size	.14*** (.02)	.65*** (.14)
Age of Organization	.005** (.002)	.005 (.006)
Breadth of Issue Agenda	.03* (.01)	.20 (.20)
Number of Lobbyists Hired by Organization	-.02 (.02)	.41 (.30)
Organization Has Associated PAC	.06 (.14)	.15 (.62)
Size of Membership (in Thousands)	-.00 (.00)	.01 (.01)
Organization has State or Local Chapters	.15 (.14)	-.52 (.38)
Organization Identified as Think Tank	1.38*** (.33)	2.91 (8.48)
Organization Is a Professional Association	-.34** (.13)	-.76 (.36)
Organization Is a Union	.08 (.23)	.62 (1.65)
Organization Represents Identity Group	-.22 (0.13)	-.26 (.35)
Constant	.87	.11
Log Likelihood	- 3063.3	
N	1412	

Table entries are Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of times an organization testified before Congressional committees from 1995-2004, as recorded in the Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony database. The binary coefficients correspond to a model predicting whether organizations will testify at least once.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 4 presents the model to predict mentions in the *Papers of the President*. Political staff size and organizational age significantly increase the chance that an organization will receive at least one mention. Among organizations that are mentioned at least once, having local chapters significantly increases organizational mentions and having a PAC significantly decreases mentions. Being a professional association rather than an issue group significantly decreases the chance of being mentioned, whereas representing an identity group has conflicting effects.

These results are also substantively significant. According to the model, a standard deviation increase in the number of political staff makes an organization almost three times as likely to be mentioned in Presidential papers. A standard deviation increase in the age of an organization decreases the chance than an organization will not be mentioned by a factor of .63. Having state or local chapters also has a significant effect; among mentioned organizations, being federated into chapters increases the expected number of mentions in Presidential papers by a factor of 2.5.

Table 4: Involvement of Advocacy Organizations in Presidential Policymaking

	Mentions in Presidential Papers	
	Count Coefficients	Binary Coefficients
Political Staff Size	.03 (.02)	.32** (.12)
Age of Organization	.006 (.003)	.014** (.005)
Breadth of Issue Agenda	.02 (.02)	0.03 (0.05)
Number of Lobbyists Hired by Organization	.00 (.03)	.06 (.07)
Organization Has Associated PAC	-.62** (.30)	.39 (.55)
Size of Membership (in Thousands)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Organization has State or Local Chapters	.93*** (.27)	- 0.32 (0.39)
Organization Identified as Think Tank	1.09 (.55)	2.42 (2.02)
Organization Is a Professional Association	-.50 (.31)	-.94* (.38)
Organization Is a Union	-.63 (.42)	1.32 (1.19)
Organization Represents Identity Group	-.58* (.24)	.93** (.35)
Constant	-.46	2.06
Log Likelihood	- 1240.7	
N	1412	

*Table entries are Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of times that an organization was mentioned in the Papers of the President from 1995-2004, as recorded in the LexisNexis database. The binary coefficients correspond to a model predicting whether organizations will be mentioned at least once. *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (two-tailed).*

Table 5 predicts organizational involvement in administrative rulemaking. Political staff size and organizational age increase both the chance that an organization is mentioned and the number of times that an organization is mentioned. Among those that are mentioned, breadth of issue agenda and having a PAC increase mentions whereas the number of lobbyists hired decreases mentions. Being a professional association rather than an issue group decreases mentions; being a union or identity group increases mentions. These results are similarly substantively significant.

Table 5: Involvement of Advocacy Organizations in Administrative Agency Policymaking

	Mentions in Agency Rules / Decisions	
	Count Coefficients	Binary Coefficients
Political Staff Size	.05*** (.01)	.55** (.20)
Age of Organization	.014** (.001)	.05* (.02)
Breadth of Issue Agenda	.03*** (.008)	.06 (.09)
Number of Lobbyists Hired by Organization	-.05*** (.01)	.02 (.09)
Organization Has Associated PAC	.49*** (.12)	.70 (.89)
Size of Membership (in Thousands)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.04)
Organization has State or Local Chapters	.45*** (.11)	-.60 (.61)
Organization Identified as Think Tank	.35 (.39)	7.70 (36.35)
Organization Is a Professional Association	-.28* (.11)	.27 (.50)
Organization Is a Union	1.15*** (.16)	5.94 (15.67)
Organization Represents Identity Group	.35* (.14)	-.60 (0.36)
Constant	1.21	1.04
Log Likelihood	- 4173.7	
N	1411	

Table entries are Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of times that an organization was mentioned in the final rules or decisions of administrative agencies from 1995-2004, as recorded in the LexisNexis database. The binary coefficients correspond to a model predicting whether organizations will be mentioned at least once.

p<.05 **p<.01 *p<.001 (two-tailed).*

Table 6 presents the results for involvement in the federal courts. Political staff size and organizational age again significantly increase the chance that organizations will be involved and their level of involvement. Among mentioned organizations, breadth of issue agenda significantly increases mentions whereas being identified as a think tank significantly decreases mentions. In addition, there are substantial differences in involvement across organizational types. Compared to non-environmental issue advocacy groups, professional associations are mentioned less often and less likely to be mentioned at all; unions and environmental groups are likely to be mentioned more often and identity groups are likely to be mentioned less often.

These results are also substantively significant. A standard deviation increase in political staff size increases an organization's expected number of court document mentions by a factor of 1.4 and decreases the chance that they will be absent entirely from the courts by a factor of .2. A standard deviation increase in organizational age increases an organization's expected number of mentions in court documents by a factor of 1.9 and also decreases the probability that they will not be involved at all by a factor of .2. In addition, the model predicts that a standard deviation increase in the breadth of an organization's issue agenda will increase the number of mentions by a factor of 1.3 and a standard deviation increase in membership size will increase mentions by a factor of 1.2. The differences across types are also substantial. Compared to non-environmental issue organizations, being a professional association decreases the expected number of mentions by almost half whereas being a union increases the expected number of mentions by a factor of 4.2 and being an environmental group increases expected mentions by a factor of 2.1. To see how these important effects combine to produce major differences in involvement, I estimated the predicted probabilities for the two different types of organizations mentioned earlier, each with no lobbyists, PACs, or members. The model predicts that a 5-year-old single-issue professional organization with 1 staff member has a .9 probability of not being involved in the courts. In contrast, a 20-year-old issue

advocacy group with 5 issues on their agenda and 10 political staff members has only a .3 probability of not being mentioned.

Table 6: Involvement of Advocacy Organizations in the Federal Courts

	Mentions in Court Documents	
	Count Coefficients	Binary Coefficients
Political Staff Size	.11*** (.02)	.47** (.16)
Age of Organization	.02*** (.00)	.05 *** (.02)
Breadth of Issue Agenda	.06** (.02)	.11 (.09)
Number of Lobbyists Hired by Organization	-.01 (.03)	.00 (.06)
Organization Has Associated PAC	-.23 (.21)	1.83 (1.54)
Size of Membership (in Thousands)	.0001* (.00004)	.005 (.004)
Organization has State or Local Chapters	-.06 (.18)	.16 (.54)
Organization Identified as Think Tank	- 1.91*** (.58)	-.24 (1.75)
Organization Is a Professional Association	-.59** (.19)	-.88* (.41)
Organization Is a Union	1.43*** (.31)	2.69 (4.34)
Organization Represents Identity Group	-.52** (.18)	.03 (.36)
Organization Represents Environmentalists	.76** (.29)	.20 (.56)
Constant	1.79	1.26
Log Likelihood	- 3872.9	
N	1411	

*Table entries are Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of times that an organization was mentioned in federal court documents from 1995-2004, as recorded in the LexisNexis database. The binary coefficients correspond to a model predicting whether organizations were mentioned at least once. *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (two-tailed).*

As hypothesized, the results for these four models indicate that many of the same organizational attributes are responsible for increasing the level of involvement of advocacy organizations in several policymaking venues. Despite important differences across venues, the key

factors associated with institutionalizing organizations as representatives of political constituencies and position advocates in policy debates performed largely as expected. Organizational age and political staff size, which serve as indicators for a group's longevity and the scale of its Washington presence, were hypothesized to help organizations with both institutionalization processes; they had particularly consistent positive effects on involvement in policymaking.

Qualitative evidence also provides support for the theory's description of the mechanisms at work in the effects of these variables. Interviewees provided illustrations of the mechanisms involved in each variable's impact. The president of a prominent advocacy organization, for example, provided an explanation of the effect of age that matches a theory that emphasizes how organizations become taken-for-granted:

“If you have history of working on [the] issues, they know what you have to say... It's a legitimacy issue but it's also a time issue [and it] goes with name recognition. There is certainty about what you are going to say.”

A former Congressional staffer who is now an official at a prominent advocacy group added that age helps establish organizations as credible spokespersons:

“Having been around longer, being established, gives you credibility, makes you better known... It's name identification [but also] associating with an issue, being here for years as a [particular type of] group.”

Interviewees also explained why a large internal staff of political representatives helps advocacy organizations become institutionalized. One Congressional committee staffer compared the benefits of internal political staff to hired lobbyists:

“I'd rather talk to someone who knows the issue... I don't care that you hired someone from K-street who called to set up a meeting... If you come talk to me about an issue, you have to have some depth. I think external lobbyists sometimes don't have that.”

The chief of staff for the majority side of a Congressional committee agreed that internal staff have more credibility with policymakers:

“[If organizations have internal staff rather than lobbyists], they look less like hired guns or paid advocates. They have more credibility... I can think of a couple of hearings where we identified experts but held back [on inviting them to testify] because they were a lobbyist.”

Though the four models did not indicate that membership size and federal structure each have consistent effects on involvement across policymaking venues, they did indicate that at least one of these indicators of formal ties to a constituency helps organizations in most venues. A chief of staff for a Congressional committee explains why:

“If they represent a constituency, we do give more weight to [their] testimony... If they are large, their support will be more important. They are established.”

Though the variables related to issue expertise and position taking also had somewhat inconsistent effects, the results were largely supportive of the hypotheses. One Congressional committee staffer helps explain how a broad agenda and think tank identification often jointly establish formal expertise:

“Think tanks are broader... they do not have specific narrow policy goals. They have credibility... they are a bank of policy experts.”

Finally, interviewees also helped explain why starting a PAC to make campaign contributions did not produce a greater level of involvement among advocacy groups. As one Congressional chief of staff told me, “[Whether an organization has a PAC] doesn’t come up. No one bothers to look it up.” Another committee staffer echoed these sentiments: “I usually don’t even know about stuff like [PACs]. It usually doesn’t even come into my thinking.”

Discussion

The theory of institutionalized pluralism offers a predictive framework for understanding how advocacy organizations become actively involved in Washington policymaking. The hypotheses offered by the theory were mostly confirmed. H1 proved accurate. Age increases organizational involvement in all policymaking venues and sometimes increases both the likelihood of involvement

and the level of involvement. H2 was also universally confirmed. The size of an advocacy organization's political staff was related to their involvement in every policymaking venue. H3 was confirmed only for limited cases. A larger membership base only significantly increases involvement in the federal courts. H4 was partially confirmed. Local chapters increase involvement in presidential and administrative policymaking but not in other venues. H5 was universally confirmed. Representing professional groups rather than an issue perspective makes an organization less involved in every policymaking venue. H6 proved mostly correct. Breadth of issue agenda significantly increased involvement in Congressional committee testimony, administrative agency rulemaking, and federal court litigation. H7 was confirmed only in limited cases. Being identified as a think tank significantly increases involvement in Congressional testimony but significantly decreases involvement in the federal courts.

The hypotheses offered by institutionalized pluralism also performed well in contrast to those offered by other theories. H8 proved universally correct. In every model, the number of lobbyists that an organization hires was insignificantly or negatively related to their policymaking involvement. H9 proved mostly accurate. According to the models for each venue, starting a PAC decreases involvement in presidential directives, increases involvement with administrative agency rulemaking, and has no effect on involvement in other venues.

The theory's analysis of the limits to organizational strategy and the differences across policymaking venues also held up well in the empirical analysis. H10 was confirmed. The distribution of organizational involvement in Congressional committees and in Presidential announcements was broadly representative of the population of advocacy organizations in Washington. The distribution of organizational involvement in administrative agencies and federal courts was less reflective of the organizational population. As expected, administrative agencies and courts did not have a representative cross-section of participants.

Some additional important differences across venues were not expected by the theory. The descriptive distributions of involvement in each venue suggested that issue groups were more involved in Congressional committees, identity groups were more involved in Presidential announcements, and economic groups were most involved in administrative policymaking and the federal courts. Regression analysis indicated that organizations representing issue perspectives had an advantage over all other categories of organizations in committee testimony. There were mixed results for Presidential attention that did not show a clear pattern of preference for identity groups. Unions had a large advantage in involvement in both agencies and courts. These results suggest that institutionalization as an informed position advocate in policy debates may be more important in Congress whereas institutionalization as a constituency representative may be more important in Presidential policymaking. The results for the attributes associated with each institutionalization process seemed supportive of this difference. Due to their lack of control over participation, agencies and courts may enable more participation by direct stakeholders. Yet there was no clear indication that resources spent on lobbyists or PACs could overcome the structural disadvantages of small, young, narrowly-focused, or professional groups in any venue. Though the distribution of types of involved organizations differed across venues, institutionalized organizations were most involved in all venues.

In contrast to the theory's expectations, there were two key findings that may indicate strategic variation across organizations. First, unions were more involved in administrative policymaking and the courts. Second, environmental organizations were very active in the courts, despite the minimal participation of other issue groups. These findings deserve further study. Yet observing that policies on industrial organization are commonly fought out in administrative agencies and courts and that environmental policy is a major area of court intervention does not seem to require a close analysis of strategic decision-making by organizational leaders. Over the

course of their development, some policy issues have migrated to administrative agencies or the courts. Organizational leaders likely had some role in this migration, though the participation requirements of each venue also played a role.

The results presented here offer a new starting point for research on advocacy organization involvement in policymaking. The models identify many of the most important factors but leave room for further investigation of other factors. Future research could determine why some organizations outperform others with similar characteristics. Other factors may also be relevant to analyzing the involvement of some advocacy organizations in only one policymaking venue. Despite the remaining work, however, the results largely confirm a new model of the success of advocacy organizations in national politics. They leave no doubt that the involvement of an organization is largely dependent on their structural attributes. In contrast, the results provide little support for a theory of organizational success that relies only on resource mobilization. According to these data, resources used to build a larger Washington presence are well-spent but not all expenditures produce policymaking involvement, especially those directed toward hiring lobbyists and starting PACs.

Institutionalized pluralism has proven able to incorporate long-standing ideas about how advocacy organizations succeed and to make original predictions that proved accurate. The initial evidence indicates that the process of becoming actively involved in Washington policymaking entails being recognized as a taken-for-granted representative of a public constituency and being recognized as an informed position advocate in policy debates. Whether organizations represent identity groups, occupational groups, or issue perspectives, they are subject to similar constraints in their attempt to become prominent players in national politics. Their success is not just a matter of deploying the right tactics; it requires articulating a representative purpose and creating a structure to advance that purpose.

Conclusion

There are important limits to the current scholarly approach to advocacy group involvement in policymaking, which emphasizes case studies and the tactical decisions of organizational leaders. I have offered a promising new approach to investigate the success of advocacy organizations in national politics. The key is to investigate an intermediary step in the process of mobilizing organizations to influence policy outcomes, active involvement in policymaking venues. Rather than asking leaders how and why their groups participate in American politics, we can observe their behavior. Instead of assuming that advocacy organizations are engaged in constant strategic analysis and asking them to confirm our assumptions, we can examine the factors that influence their active involvement in policymaking.

The theory outlined here offers a promising new approach to understanding the success of advocacy organizations in national politics. Using the tools of institutional and organizational theory, we can shift the emphasis of scholarship toward how organizations become taken-for-granted participants in policymaking by aligning their structure with their presumed roles as informed advocates of policy positions and representatives of public constituencies. By understanding this process, scholars will be able to identify the factors that assist organizations in this dual institutionalization process. The theory of institutionalized pluralism directs attention toward the core attributes of organizations that support taken-for-granted assumptions about the role of organizations in policymaking. The models suggested by the theory provide a good starting point for an analysis of the success of advocacy organizations in becoming prominent players in national politics that are regularly involved in policymaking. The predictions made by the theory proved mostly correct, though not in all cases. Some of the theory's most original contributions were consistent with most of the empirical evidence. An organization's longevity, the scale of its political

operations, the scope of its political agenda, and its formal ties to constituency support and issue expertise clearly help to determine its policymaking involvement.

The results have important implications for our perspectives on policymaking, public representation, and interest intermediation. First, the distributions of involvement reported here may serve as proxies for the extent to which policymaking in each venue takes into account a range of views as well as proxies for the types of interests that are advanced in each arena. Scholarship on advocacy organizations may add substance to current debates over the benefits and weaknesses of policymaking in each branch of government. If certain types of organizations are more successful in some venues than others, the explanation may lie in the “rules of the game” in each governing arena rather than the strategic decisions of particular political actors. The American political system offers multiple opportunities for the organized claimants of constituency representation. Each branch of that system appears to be subject to some universal processes that legitimate certain participants and some distinct elements that make policymaking a little different in each competitive arena and policy domain. To understand the “mobilization of bias” in the American political system, we must examine both the generic processes of institutionalization that allow organizations to stand in for wider constituencies and political perspectives in policymaking and the particular factors that influence the scope of participation in each venue.

Second, the findings offer a new angle for the study of public representation in the political process. Many of the institutions that allow outside organizations to have a voice in government decision-making, such as open hearing requirements, public liaison offices, administrative procedures, and *amicus curiae* opportunities, are justified by the goals of involving the public in governance and providing public forums for policy deliberation. Because most of the public is disinterested or inattentive to everyday policymaking, these forums rarely involved a broad cross-section of the American public. Instead, they empower advocacy organizations to play the role of

representing public groups and widely-held public interest perspectives. These organizations compete not only with other advocacy groups but also with traditional stakeholders that have a direct role in administering or complying with public policy, such as government units and corporations. Thus, institutions designed to empower public participation have created a system of weak stakeholder governance, wherein constituencies without direct interests are assumed to be represented by organizations that gain some semblance of constituency support and general policy perspectives are believed to be advanced by organizations with some claim to speak as informed advocates of policy positions. Many of these organizations are rightly viewed as important sources of countervailing power in the political system, but a large part of the source of that power appears to be the myth of their fulfillment of underlying democratic purposes. As policymakers and stakeholders have come to take the role of advocacy groups for granted, they have become another primary source of public representation in policymaking; the mechanisms behind this representative role are far less straight-forward than those provided by elections or delegated powers, but no less important. We have much to learn about whether and how advocacy groups represent public interests and ideas.

Third, the results offer a new perspective on interest intermediation. Interest groups are often listed along with political parties, social movements, and the news media as intermediaries that stand between political institutions and the American public. I have illustrated how advocacy organizations serve as intermediaries in many policymaking venues, not just as claimants of public support but as placeholders for various constituencies and policy perspectives. In an important sense, advocacy group involvement in policymaking is much more reflective of the social and ideological diversity of the American public than the involvement of parties or movements. Whereas there are advocacy organizations that regularly pursue the interests of many ethnic, religious, social and occupational groups in national politics, there are no parties or movements to fulfill this role.

Whereas there are advocacy organizations that represent many different issue publics and ideological views, the two-party system cannot reflect the same diversity of issue viewpoints and issue salience. Should advocacy organizations therefore be seen as embodiments of the pluralist ideal? They are true intermediaries which are evidently constrained by their capacity to mobilize constituents and provide partial issue perspectives for policy debates. Yet they are rarely held directly accountable or required to confirm that their constituencies share their views. Even the limited accountability mechanisms offered by political party primaries, for example, seem to have few equivalents in advocacy group behavior. In addition, corporations and other institutions are often treated as comparable participants in policymaking even though advocacy groups have a unique role in intermediation. Though the involvement of advocacy groups in policymaking relies on weak associations with democratic theories of interest intermediation, therefore, the facts on the ground are not easy to reconcile with any normative theory of governance or representation. Research on advocacy group involvement in national politics provides a unique perspective on interest intermediation, public interest representation, and the policymaking process. Understanding the factors that govern advocacy organization involvement in policymaking is not only important for building knowledge about one set of actors in American politics, but also for providing a broader view of key empirical debates in political science and helping to answer central questions about the connection between theories of democracy and governance and their execution in American national political institutions.

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