THE STRATEGIC CHOICES OF CHILD ADVOCACY GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

Public interest groups have many strategic options, including “insider” strategies, “outsider” strategies, coalition-building, and public policy research. Although group resources should affect these strategic choices, the presence of friends and enemies in the political environment should matter as well. We examine the evidence by assessing the behavior of 50 child advocacy groups that seek to influence public policy at the state level. We find that enemies motivate public interest groups more than friends but that friends also matter, at least for decisions to invest in public policy research.

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In recent years, we have learned a great deal about the origins of interest groups (Walker 1983; Olson 1971) and the incentives of interest group members (Olson 1971; Salisbury 1969). We have also learned a fair amount about the policy impacts of interest groups (Kalt and Zupan 1984; Wright 1990; Heinz et al. 1993; Smith 1995; Baumgartner and Leech 1998: 128-136). The dynamics of interest group strategies and tactics have received less attention. Although we know which strategies predominate, at both the federal and state levels (Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Nownes and Freeman 1998), we know less about why interest groups select particular strategies and tactics. For example, do interest groups choose different strategies when they encounter enemies, as opposed to friends, in their political environment?

In this paper, we assess the strategic choices of child advocacy groups active in state politics within the U.S. We have focused on child advocacy groups, which have become more conspicuous as children's issues have attracted the interest of prominent politicians. The passage of child care, child health, and child support legislation at the national level is due in part to the influence of child advocacy groups (Cohen 2001; Rosenbaum and Sonosky 2001; Crowley 2003). Child advocacy groups have also played an important role in the adoption of children's programs at the state level (Raden 2002; Gormley 2005). We have focused on child advocacy groups at the state level, because this enables us to capture fairly sharp differences in the groups' political environment. A national-level focus might yield groups with different goals and resources but would require considerable longitudinal data to capture variation in the political environment.

We begin with a brief literature review and several predictions on the relative importance of friends and enemies. Second, we describe our research methodology, which involved in-

depth interviews and questionnaire surveys of child advocacy group leaders. Third, we specify our model and describe the data base we utilized. Fourth, we present our findings. Fifth, we discuss the implications of our findings for our understanding of interest group behavior.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

When interest groups scan their political environment, they encounter a mix of threats and opportunities. Enemies pose threats (or risks of losses), while friends present opportunities (or chances for gains). We predict that groups make some strategic choices based on the presence of enemies (or opponents), other strategic choices based on the presence of friends (or allies). In short, friends and enemies both matter, but for different strategic choices.

Literature Review

From relatively early research, we know that threats play a role in interest group origins. According to Truman (1971), disturbances in the environment encourage group formation. Such disturbances may include wars, recessions and depressions, migration, technological developments, and other changes or threatened changes in group relationships to other groups or institutions. Truman explicitly notes that the presence of organized opponents (e.g., trade unions) may encourage the formation of groups with contrary interests (e.g., employer associations). Truman, however, is discussing group formation rather than the strategic choices of established groups.

Unlike Truman, Gamson (1968) stresses the relationship between group perceptions of political authorities and political intervention. Confident groups and alienated groups, he argues, are most likely to attempt to influence public policy. Confident groups, which trust public officials and the system they represent, believe that their intervention is likely to be efficacious. Alienated groups, which distrust public officials and the political system as a whole, believe that

intervention is urgent and that the mobilization of bias must be changed. According to Gamson, neutral and ambivalent groups are less likely to intervene. Presumably, confident groups are more likely to recognize friends in their political environment.

Other political scientists have discussed the relative importance of friends, enemies, and fence-sitters as targets of lobbying groups. In general, groups seek out sympathetic legislators when deciding whom to lobby (Denzau and Munger 1986; Hall and Wayman 1990; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). They do so, apparently, in the hope that they might influence other legislators and in the hope that they will be more attentive to group views at all stages of the policymaking process. There is, however, some evidence to the contrary (Austen-Smith and Wright 1994). In particular, groups sometimes engage in "counteractive lobbying," where they lobby friendly legislators because such legislators are being wooed by opposing groups. Whatever the merits of these debates, they tell us how interest groups behave once they've decided to engage in legislative lobbying, not what determines their inclination to embark on this strategy in the first place.

Fortunately, political scientists have helped to illuminate the extent to which friends and enemies help to shape interest groups' strategic choices. Gais and Walker (1991) find that groups facing a more conflictive political environment engage in more aggressive lobbying, including both direct and grassroots lobbying. Hojnacki (1997) shows that the presence of allies or opponents affects group decisions to participate in a coalition with other groups. Holyoke (2003) demonstrates that the presence of allies or opponents (especially strong allies or opponents) affects group decisions to lobby at all and to lobby intensively.

In these accounts, interest groups' strategic choices are shaped by friends, enemies, or both. But when do friends matter more and when do enemies matter more?

We believe that friends and enemies both matter but for different strategic choices. In general, the presence of friends will encourage insider strategies and strategies that rely on persuasion. The presence of enemies will encourage outsider strategies and strategies that rely on constraint. Enemies will matter for coalition-building, and friends will matter for public policy research.

Let us begin with insider strategies, such as legislative lobbying, legislative testimony, and its equivalents in the executive branch of the government. Insider strategies presuppose access, and access presupposes sympathy or support. As Tarrow (1998) notes, organized interests are more likely to lobby when lawmakers signal support and offer opportunities. In fact, some forms of legislative intervention, such as testimony before a legislative committee, literally require an invitation to appear. Without such an invitation, or signal of support, a group cannot provide legislative testimony, though it can converse with legislators and their staffs. If access is important, so too is the degree to which groups trust political authorities and institutions. As Gamson (1968: 164) argues, "a confident solidary group will tend to rely on persuasion as a means of influence." By confidence, Gamson means trust. Thus a group that trusts legislative (or executive) branch targets will be more likely to lobby them. And whom do groups trust? Friends, not enemies. This leads us to our first hypothesis:

H1: *The presence of friends encourages interest groups to utilize "insider" strategies, such as direct lobbying of public officials*

Outsider strategies involve efforts to expand the scope of conflict beyond decisionmakers themselves. Examples include public education campaigns, mass media overtures, and protests and demonstrations. The use of outsider strategies suggests that insider strategies haven't worked or won't work or won't be sufficient. According to Gamson (1968: 169), "an alienated

solidary group will tend to rely on constraints as a means of influence." By this, he means that alienated groups, which perceive public officials as enemies rather than friends, will be more likely to engage in protests and demonstrations. Of course, outsider strategies are much broader than protests and demonstrations. What motivates groups to turn to outsider strategies generally? Building on Schattschneider's (1960) seminal work, Kollman (1998) argues that outsider strategies should be viewed as a form of "conflict expansion." Interest groups utilize outsider strategies when the existing mobilization of bias is unfavorable (too many enemies) and when an expanded audience is likely to prove more sympathetic. The intent of outsider strategies may be to educate the public, increase the salience of a particular issue to the public, or coordinate a public response (Kollman 1998: 103-105). Regardless, outside appeals reflect frustration with the present sentiments of public officials and powerful interest groups. This leads us to our second hypothesis:

H2: *The presence of enemies encourages interest groups to utilize "outsider strategies," such as grassroots lobbying, mass media appeals, and political protests.*

In recent years, interest groups have turned to coalitions as a device for enhancing and sustaining their influence (Hula 1999). The presence of enemies, in public office or in the interest group environment, has the potential to trigger coalition-building behavior. A coalition can be an effective antidote to reluctant public officials, a hostile interest group, or a hostile coalition. In a study of 702 organizations active on energy tax, striker replacement, campaign finance, job training, and family leave issues, Hojnacki (1997) found that the strength of opposition groups in a particular policy domain was a good predictor of coalition formation. In a study of 26 organizations active on financial modernization issues in 15 venues, Holyoke (2003) found that lobbying in a venue was more likely when the group faced opposition from other

groups in the venue and when opposing groups were working in a coalition in the venue. He also found that lobbying intensity was related to the presence of opposition from other groups in the venue. It is, of course, possible that these results do not apply to public interest groups or to child advocacy groups in particular. It is also possible that a hostile political environment promotes coalition formation but also corrodes such coalitions, once formed. Nevertheless, these findings encourage us to formulate our third hypothesis:

H3: *The presence of enemies encourages interest groups to form coalitions with other interest groups*.

It is tempting to treat public policy research as just another example of an insider strategy. Certainly, it is often utilized in conversations with public officials, though, as Berry (1977: 244) notes, it may also be directed at the general public, through press releases and other devices. More importantly, public policy research differs from other insider strategies (and outsider strategies) in the amount of effort required to produce a credible product or output. To conduct public policy research well, a group needs to hire expert staff members, such as persons with an advanced degree in economics, public policy, social work, law, or public health. Investments in computer hardware and software, professional conferences, and library research may also be necessary. These activities involve shifts in resources and in thinking. They cannot be accomplished overnight. The presence of friends in the political environment helps to ensure that an investment in public policy research will yield some tangible benefits. In addition, public policy research often requires an outside backer before it will be undertaken. Advocacy groups, like think-tanks and universities, can engage in research on their own but are more likely to do so if a private foundation, government agency, or other funding source provides funding for a specific research project. In this sense, the decision to undertake public policy research is

fundamentally different from, let's say, a decision to meet with a particular public official or a decision to send out a mass mailing to supporters. With these considerations in mind, we advance our final hypothesis:

H4: *The presence of friends encourages interest groups to produce public policy research reports.*

METHODS

To obtain data on the strategies and tactics of child advocacy groups active at the state level, we worked through a group called VOICES for America's Children, formerly known as the National Association of Child Advocates. VOICES is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has 59 affiliated groups in 44 states and the District of Columbia. All of these groups engage in child advocacy at the state level.

After identifying the 59 groups, we contacted the executive director of each organization and attempted to arrange an interview. Ultimately, 50 groups (from 40 states and the District of Columbia), agreed, for a response rate of 85 percent. Most of the interviews were conducted during July and August 2003; a small number of interviews were conducted later in the calendar year. Almost all of the interviews were conducted by telephone.

In each interview, we asked respondents to identify their top three issues for 2003. For each issue, we asked about issue framing, strategies to influence public officials, strategies to influence citizens or voters, and coalition partners. Beyond the top three issues, we asked about frequent coalition partners, frequent political opponents, mass mobilization, public policy research, and organizational resources (see Appendix A).

To get more precise information on strategies and tactics for the full calendar year, we contacted each group in January 2004 and asked the executive director to complete a brief

questionnaire survey. The survey focused on the allocation of time and effort between "insider" and "outsider" strategies, the frequency of use of particular strategies, coalition activity, mass media coverage, public policy research, and funding sources, for calendar year 2003 (see Appendix B). Eventually, all 50 of the groups interviewed in the summer participated in the survey as well.

To estimate the effects of state-level and organization-level variables, we used OLS regression analysis when dealing with interval-level variables, ordered logit analysis when dealing with ordinal-level variables. Our dependent variables come from the interviews and the end-of-year survey. Our independent variables come from a wide variety of sources, described below. Together they enable us to measure both organizational characteristics and state characteristics.

DATA

Our independent variables include two *organizational* variables. First, we asked our respondents to specify the total number of organizational employees.[1] Second, we asked our respondents to specify the percentage of their organization's funding from the following sources: membership dues; government grants or contracts; private foundation grants or contracts; and individual gifts. From these responses, we crafted a Funding from Patrons variable that represents the percentage of each organization's funding from private foundations and government agencies combined. In general, we expect larger organizations to utilize all strategies more frequently; as for funding, we expect that groups more dependent on patrons will be more committed to public policy research.

Our independent variables also include a number of *political* variables, which can be grouped into three categories: targets (public officials); peers (interest groups); and constituents

(voters).

For *targets*, we obtained the following data, for 2003: 1. Republican Affiliation, State Legislators – the percentage of state House members affiliated with the Republican party; 2. Republican Governor -- a dichotomous variable, with 1 representing a Republican governor, 0 representing a Democrat (there were no Independent governors in 2003); and 3. Legislative Session Length -- a measure of how long each state legislature remained in session (the number of months). We expect Democratic officials to be more sympathetic to child advocacy groups and their concerns than Republican officials; we also expect more "insider" activity in states with longer legislative sessions.

For *peers*, we obtained the following data: 1. Interest Group Density -- the ratio of the state's gross state product to the number of organizations registered to lobby before the state legislature, 1990 (an inverse measure of density, with higher numbers indicating a lower density, from Gray and Lowery, 1996); 2. Interest Group Diversity – the percentage of all interest groups in the state that were nonprofit organizations, 1990 (from Gray and Lowery, 1996); and 3. Opponents -- an ordinal-level measure (0-3) of the number of groups that have opposed the child advocacy group in the past (derived from our interviews). It appears that interest group density affects the strategic choices that interest groups make (Gray and Lowery 1996: 193-94), and higher interest group diversity may encourage outsider strategies or coalition-building. We expect groups with more opponents to invest more in outsider strategies and coalition-building.

For *constituents*, we obtained the following data: 1. Citizen Ideology – a measure of each state's citizens' ideology, based on public opinion data from 1988, 1990, and 1992 (Norrander 2001), with higher numbers reflecting a more conservative citizenry. We expect more conservative citizens to be less sympathetic to child advocacy groups.

Given the subject matter of our inquiry, we also included as a control variable a measure of Child Poverty – the percent of children who were officially poor, 1999 (Kids Count 2003).

Our dependent variables include measures of "insider" strategies, "outsider" strategies, coalition-building, and public policy research. All of the dependent variables refer to calendar year 2003.

As measures of insider strategies, we obtained four indicators from our end-of-year survey: 1. Legislative Testimony – the number of times someone from the group testified before the State Legislature; 2. Conversations with Legislative Personnel – the number of times someone from the group met with a state legislator or a state legislative staff member to discuss public policy; 3. Conversations with Administrative Officials – the number of times someone from the group met with a state administrative official to discuss public policy; and 4. Conversations with Governor, Governors' Staff – the number of times someone from the group met with the governor or a member of the governor's staff to discuss public policy. We also created an index of insider strategies, by standardizing all four variables and adding up the standardized scores.[2]

As measures of outsider strategies, we obtained four indicators from our end-of-year survey: 1. Press Conferences – the number of press conferences the group held; 2. Press Releases – the number of press releases the group issued; 3. Mass Mailings – the number of times the group distributed a mass mailing to supporters; and 4. Protests – the number of times someone from the group participated in a rally or demonstration on behalf of the organization. Here also, we created an index, by standardizing three of the four variables and adding up the standardized scores.[3]

We have two measures of coalition-building: 1. The Number of Partners, by Group – an

ordinal-level measure (0-3) that indicates whether the group participated in a coalition with a business group (1 point), a religious group (1 point), or a nonprofit organization (1 point); and 2. The Number of Partners, by Issue -- an ordinal-level measure (0-12) that indicates the number of coalition partners for the first of three issues, for a maximum of four mentions (0-4), the number of coalition partners for the second of three issues, for a maximum of four mentions (0-4), and the number of coalition partners for the third of three issues, for a maximum of four mentions (0-4). Our first measure came from the end-of-year survey, while our second measure came from the in-depth interviews, in which we zeroed in on three issues of special concern to the group in 2003.

We also have two measures of public policy research: 1. The Number of Policy Reports – the number of public policy reports issued by the group (from our end-of year-survey); and 2. Research Commitment – an ordinal-level measure (0-4) that indicates the depth of the group's commitment to public policy research (it combines a 0-2 measure of policy research capacity with a 0-2 measure of policy research utilization), from our interviews.

FINDINGS

Insider strategies have long been important to interest groups generally and continue to be important to liberal public interest groups in particular (Berry 1999). But which interest groups are more likely to invest in insider strategies?

As Table 1 suggests, child advocacy groups are more likely to invest in insider strategies if they perceive a larger number of "opponents" in their political environment, which we did not predict. Such opponents include the Eagle Forum, Focus on the Family, the Chamber of Commerce, taxpayers' groups, religious groups, and many others.[4] Contrary to expectations, the presence of more friendly public officials does not trigger a greater reliance on insider strategies.

The results for particular insider strategies vary a bit, though the overall theme is the same: opponents matter! As Table 2 indicates, this is true for legislative testimony, meetings with legislators/legislative staff members, and meetings with governors/gubernatorial staff members, all of which are more likely if the number of opponents is larger. Legislative testimony is more likely if the number of employees is larger; meetings with governors and gubernatorial staff members are more likely if the legislative session is longer and if interest group density is higher.[5]

Our findings for outsider strategies do confirm our expectations -- more use when the number of opponents is higher (Table 3). More specific findings are not fully consistent with our predictions, as Table 4 indicates. The number of opponents is unrelated to the number of press releases or the number of press conferences. Contrary to expectations, the number of press releases is lower when the governor is Republican, and the number of press conferences is lower when there are more Republicans in the state house of representatives. We do find, however, that participation in rallies or demonstrations is more likely if the number of opponents is relatively high. Participation in rallies or demonstrations is also higher if the legislative session

is longer.[6]

Coalition-building is one way in which an interest group might respond to a threat in its political environment, and it is an increasingly popular option (Hojnacki 1997; Hula 1999). But which interest groups find coalitions more attractive?

As Table 5 indicates, child advocacy groups are more likely to join a coalition with a business group, a religious group, or another nonprofit organization if they perceive a larger number of opponents in their political environment. We examine the same question, through the use of a different dependent variable – namely, the number of key issue areas in which a group joined a coalition with any other group. Here also we find that child advocacy groups are more likely to join a coalition when they face a larger number of hostile interest groups. In short, our expectations on coalitions are fulfilled. Interest group density also has an impact on coalition-building, for the first of our two measures (coalition-building is more likely if interest group density is higher).

In recent years, at least one leading scholar has highlighted the potential importance of public policy research by public interest groups (Berry 2001). But which interest groups prefer to invest in such research?

As Table 6 indicates, child advocacy groups are less likely to issue public policy reports in states where Republicans control a larger percentage of seats in the state house of representatives, as our final hypothesis predicts. In other words, the presence of this particular threat results in *fewer* public policy research reports, not more. To put it more positively, the presence of a more Democratic house of representatives encourages the production of *more* public policy research reports. This finding coincides with a recent study that found more support for policy analysis among Democratic state legislators than among Republicans (Hird

2005: 150). As expected, the number of interest group opponents does not influence the number of public policy reports issued by child advocacy groups. Also as predicted, child advocacy groups are more likely to issue public policy research reports if they receive a more substantial share of their funding from private foundations and government agencies, which tend to value public policy research. Surprisingly, a higher child poverty rate results in fewer public policy research reports, even though one might argue that such reports are needed more in states with higher child poverty rates.

We examine the same question, through the use of a different dependent variable – namely, a measure of each group's commitment to public policy research. Here also, the number of interest group opponents has no impact, but the presence of a Republican governor discourages a commitment to public policy research. The presence of a more conservative citizenry also discourages a commitment to public policy research, as predicted. Not surprisingly, groups with more employees have a stronger commitment to public policy research, presumably because they can afford it. Groups in states where nonprofit organizations represent a higher percentage of all interest groups are less committed to public policy research, perhaps because they count on other groups to do this.

DISCUSSION

Although three of our four hypotheses are substantiated, it would appear that we have overestimated the importance of friends and underestimated the importance of enemies in predicting the use of insider strategies. Perhaps, as Kahneman and Tversky (1979; 1984) suggest, threats (the possible loss of some valued good) trigger stronger reactions than opportunities (the possible gain of some valued good). In the context of interest group behavior, this implies that interest groups should react vigorously to the presence of enemies in their

political environment. An enemy poses the threat of a loss, such as a rollback in the number of children served by a health insurance program, a cutback in the quality of child care provided, or a reduction in the number of caseworkers assigned to child welfare cases. Avoiding losses will be a high priority for most individuals and most groups. This perspective helps to explain the relatively greater impact of enemies than friends in almost all of our empirical findings. The sole exception is public policy research, where the relatively high degree of effort required gives groups pause before investing substantial resources.

Another possibility is that we have done a better job of measuring enemies than friends. Our best measure of enemies – an open-ended question inviting groups to name as many as three groups that have opposed them in the past – has the advantage of tapping political opposition from all sources faced by each group. For other measures of enemies and friends, we have relied on the assumption that Democratic politicians are more sympathetic toward child advocacy groups than Republican politicians. This is a fairly reasonable assumption, because the issues child advocacy groups focus on -- child care, child health, child welfare -- often trigger substantial partisan disagreements (Cohen 2001: 241; Rosenbaum and Sonosky 2001: 92). On the other hand, these issues are probably less partisan than "morality" issues such as abortion, gay rights, and family planning. For example, state legislative votes establishing universal pre-kindergarten programs in Oklahoma, West Virginia, Massachusetts, and other states have generated bipartisan legislative support, and Republican governors have often signed these bills into law. In short, it would be useful to move beyond party-based measures of friends and enemies, at least for the kinds of issues considered here.

Are our findings unique to child advocacy groups, to public interest groups, or to groups facing severe fiscal constraints?

Child advocacy groups are different from many other groups in that they represent a constituency that is positively constructed but powerless (Schneider and Ingram 1993). Because they represent a relatively weak but positively regarded constituency, child advocacy groups find outsider strategies attractive. Of the groups in our sample, 24 devoted more time to outsider strategies, 15 devoted more time to insider strategies, and 11 devoted the same amount of time to both. Following Schattschneider's (1960) advice, child advocacy groups seek to "expand the scope of conflict." One reason for this may be that all of the child advocacy groups in our sample are 501c3 groups, which are restricted by law from engaging in "substantial" legislative lobbying, a key insider strategy (Berry and Aron 2003). This may reduce the emphasis of child advocacy groups on insider strategies.

Still, it does not follow that child advocacy groups should be uniquely sensitive to opponents in their political environment. Certainly, other public interest groups respond to threats in their political environment. Indeed, it is a well documented fact that environmental interest groups were able to use enemies in the Reagan administration (Anne Gorsuch, James Watt) to good advantage, by demonizing them. This strategy resulted in huge increases in environmental group memberships during the 1980s (Bosso 1997: 62-63). Similarly, groups representing the homeless achieved considerable gains in mass media attention in the 1980s by staging protests against the Reagan administration's social policies and budget cutbacks (Imig 1998: 165-167). Public interest groups are not alone in responding to threats in their political environment. A historical study found that the Farm Bureau, the Home Builders, and the League of Women Voters all experienced sharp membership increases in threatening times (Hansen 1985).

In at least one key respect, public interest groups are different from other kinds of interest

groups – they possess fewer financial resources. Groups with relatively modest finances may face bigger hurdles in overcoming formidable opponents. If so, they may respond to opponents more quickly and more fiercely than some other groups do. On the other hand, groups with more robust finances, such as business groups, are better able to respond to opponents, should they wish to do so. The empirical evidence on this point is inconclusive. Although Gais and Walker (1991: 117-118) found that business groups invest more in inside strategies when conflict (or opposition) is high, they found no relationship between conflict and business groups' investments in outside strategies. Case studies of business group mobilization are equally ambiguous. Thus, while public interest groups clearly differ from other groups in their financial resources, it is not clear how important this is for the strategic choices that groups make.

A final circumstance worth considering is budget constraints. A direct consequence of the budget constraints facing state governments in the early 21st century is that child advocacy groups – and other groups – have been forced to fight a lot of defensive battles aimed at protecting social benefit programs (child care assistance, the Children's Health Insurance Program, etc.) from budget cuts. When they faced opponents in the late 1990s, the risk was that they might be unable to launch new policy initiatives. When they face opponents today, the risk is that they may lose important benefits for vulnerable constituents. If Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984) are right, the current fiscal climate should provoke a stronger response.

CONCLUSION

Like other public interest groups, child advocacy groups active in state politics have difficult choices to make. As they consider insider strategies, outsider strategies, and coalition-building possibilities, they are shaped more by threats than by opportunities. In contrast, investments in public policy research are shaped more by opportunities than by threats. Public

policy research requires more time, money, and effort than many other strategic options. Before making a major commitment to public policy research, child advocacy groups give their political environment a hard look.

Whether these findings apply to other interest groups, such as business groups, remains to be seen. Because they have deeper pockets, business groups may be more willing to invest in public policy research, even if political support seems weak. Business groups may also be less willing to engage in protests and demonstrations, even if political opposition seems strong. Clearly, more research is needed to investigate these possibilities.

We also need more research on the effectiveness of different strategies. Are child advocacy groups wise to pay such close attention to opponents in their political environment? Should they pay more attention to public opinion? Should they lobby more vigorously in states where Republicans control a larger share of legislative seats? Should they form more coalitions in states with Republican governors? Should they produce public policy reports regardless of whether private foundations and government agencies support them?

Case studies suggest that child advocacy groups can score impressive victories when they reach out to Republican politicians. In New Mexico, for example, a tiny citizens' group, Think New Mexico, convinced a reluctant Republican governor, Gary Johnson, to support full-day kindergarten by first enlisting the support of the governor's wife and one of the governor's closest allies in the state senate (Raden 2002). In Massachusetts, Strategies for Children won legislative passage of universal pre-K legislation and avoided a veto by Republican Governor Mitt Romney by framing the proposal as an education initiative (not a child care initiative), by enlisting the support of prominent business leaders, and by phasing the program in gradually rather than suddenly (Gormley 2005).

Finally, we need more research on the effectiveness of public policy research. Apparently, policy research supplied by outside groups has a greater impact during the early stages of the policymaking process than during the later stages, when public officials turn to other public officials for cues (Mooney 1991). But what is the nature of that impact? Does policy research produced by interest groups help to persuade policymakers to place an issue on the agenda? Does it help to reshape the substance of the policy proposal? We also need to understand the kind of research that makes a difference. What issue frames are most productive? What are the tradeoffs between methodological sophistication and user-friendliness? And what factors contribute to a group's credibility? More broadly, we need to understand how child advocacy groups – and advocacy groups generally – can make meaningful contributions to public policy debates that will affect the well-being of our youngest citizens.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL, ABBREVIATED VERSION

1. POLICY AGENDA

I'd like to know about your organization's advocacy agenda. Specifically, what are the top three issues you've focused on in 2003 and what have you been trying to accomplish?

2. ISSUE FRAMING

For your first (second, third) issue, what's the fundamental argument you use to try to convince people to do this?

3. COALITIONS

(a) For your first (second, third) issue, did you work with any other interest groups to promote a common goal in the first half in 2003? If so, which ones?

(b) Please name three groups that have sometimes opposed you in the past.

4. POLICY RESEARCH

I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about whether and how your organization uses research when you communicate with other organizations and people in government. From talking to people in organizations like yours, I've noticed that some emphasize research and try to supply their representatives with a steady stream of original research and data to be used in presentations with government officials, their aides, and others. Others say that if research or data are needed they can be gotten from think tanks, universities, research organizations, or consultants. And then there are others who don't spend a lot of time gathering issue-related research at all.

Where along this continuum would you place your organization? Do you rely a lot on research when you talk to people in government/other groups? If so, do you do much research in-house?

5. BACKGROUND

How many people are employed by your organization at the present time?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY, ABBREVIATED VERSION

1. ALLOCATION OF TIME AND EFFORT

As you think about your organization's policy-oriented work, approximately what percentage of your organization's time in 2003 was devoted to the following activities? (Note: Your answers should add up to 100%)

________________ insider strategies (legislative lobbying, legislative committee testimony, direct contacts with agency officials, direct contacts with gubernatorial aides, etc.)

________________ outsider strategies (press releases, mass mailings, interviews with reporters, press conferences, op-ed pieces, rallies and demonstrations, etc.)

________________ other (service delivery, fund-raising, managing your organization)

2. INSIDER STRATEGIES

(a) How many times would you estimate that someone employed by your organization testified at a state legislative hearing in 2003?

____

(b) How many times would you estimate that someone employed by your organization spoke with a member of the State Legislature or a state legislative staff member on a public policy matter in 2003 (not including testimony before a legislative committee)?

____

(c) How many times would you estimate that someone employed by your organization spoke in person with a state administrative agency official on a public policy matter in 2003? (This does NOT include telephone conversations or emails.)

____

(d) How many times would you estimate that someone employed by your organization spoke in person with someone from the governor's office on a public policy matter in 2003? (This does NOT include telephone conversations or emails.)

3. OUTSIDER STRATEGIES

(a) How many press conferences would you estimate that your organization held in 2003?

____

(b) How many press releases would you estimate that your organization issued in 2003?

____

(c) How many times would you estimate that your organization distributed a mass mailing to interested supporters in 2003? (This includes printed or electronic communications.)

____

(d) How many times would you estimate that someone employed by your organization participated in a rally or demonstration in 2003 as a representative of your organization?

____

4. COALITIONS

(a) Did you participate in a coalition with a business group in 2003?

____

(b) Did you participate in a coalition with a religious group in 2003?

____

(c) Did you participate in a coalition with a non-religious nonprofit organization in 2003?

____

5. PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

How many public policy research reports did your organization publish in 2003?

6. FUNDING SOURCES

What percentage of your organization’s total budget came from the following sources in 2003? (Note: Your answers should add up to 100%.)

_____________ membership dues

_____________ government grants or contracts

_____________ private foundation grants or contracts

_____________ individual gifts

APPENDIX C

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Independent Variables			
Number of Employees	10.800	8.000	0 – 40.000
Percent Funding from Foundations, Government	77.478	21.592	0 – 100.000
Percent Republicans in the House	0.503	0.146	0.147 – 0.767
Number of Opponents (0-3)	1.740	1.065	0 – 3.000
Interest Group Diversity (Gray-Lowery)	30.114	5.791	20.810 – 44.210
Length of Legislative Session in Months, NCSL	6.204	3.663	1.000 – 12.000
State Governor is Republic (1)	0.327	0.474	0 – 1.000
State Ideology	3.505	0.216	3.220 – 4.010
Percent of Children in Poverty 1999 – Kids Count	0.327	4.544	10.000 – 29.000
Interest Group Density 1990 (inverse)	189.651	142.773	28.300 – 517.350
Dependent Variables			
Index of All Insider Strategies	-0.021	2.789	-3.564 – 7.392
Outsider Alternative Index Without Mass Mail	0.000	2.211	-3.268 – 6.198
Legislative Testimony	11.100	10.616	0 – 40.000
Conversations with Legislators/Staff	103.490	125.805	0 – 600.000
Conversations with Civil Servants	45.760	68.924	0 – 450.000
Conversations with Governor, Staff	13.200	12.790	0 – 50.000

Mass Mailings	56.020	141.330	0 – 1000.000
Press Releases	12.520	9.146	0 – 30.000
Press Conferences	3.640	3.089	0 – 12.000
Participation in Rallies, Protests	3.760	5.220	0 – 25.000
Partner with Non-Profits, Religious Groups, Business Groups (0-3)	2.500	0.763	0 – 3.000
Number of Partners for Issues (1-3)	5.500	2.964	0 – 12.000
Number of Policy Reports Published in 2003	5.840	7.087	0 – 35.000
Policy Research Commitment	2.620	1.086	0 – 4.000

Table 1. Strategic Choices: Insider Index

Variable	Regression Coefficient (N=47)	Standard Error
Number of Employees	0.033	0.020
Government/Foundation Funding	0.005	0.008
% Republicans, House	0.478	1.272
Number of Opponents	0.316	0.152[b]
Interest Group Diversity	0.004	0.028
Length, Legislative Session	0.007	0.056
State Ideology	-0.827	0.861
Republican Governor	-0.209	0.311
% Children, Poor	-0.000	0.044
Inverse, Interest Group Density	-0.002	0.001

Adjusted $R^2 = .17$.

[b] $p < .05$.

Table 2. Strategic Choices: Specific Insider Strategies

Variable	**Legislative Testimony** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)		**# of Conversations w/ Legislators, Leg. Staff Members** N=47 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)		**# of Conversations w/ Governor, Gov. Staff** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)	
Number of Employees	0.055	(0.017)[b]	0.028	(0.019)	-0.003	(0.021)
Government/Foundation,Funding	-0.011	(0.006)[b]	-0.002	(0.007)	0.011	(0.007)
% Republicans, House	0.783	(1.056)	1.547	(1.207)	-1.421	(1.325)
Number of Opponents	0.266	(0.128)[b]	0.352	(0.144)[b]	0.329	(0.161)[b]
Interest Group Diversity	-0.011	(0.023)	-0.009	(0.027)	0.017	(0.029)
Length, Legislative Session	-0.070	(0.045)	-0.034	(0.054)	0.124	(0.056)[b]
State Ideology	-1.112	(0.720)	-1.174	(0.816)	0.208	(0.903)
Republican Governor	0.203	(0.258)	-0.102	(0.295)	-0.243	(0.324)
% Children, Poor	-0.017	(0.035)	0.045	(0.041)	-0.016	(0.044)
Inverse, Interest Group Density	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.002	(0.001)	-0.004	(0.002)[b]
Adjusted R^2	0.38		0.17		0.12	

[b] $p < .05$.

Table 3. Strategic Choices: Outsider Index

(N=48)

VARIABLE	REGRESSION COEFFICIENT	STANDARD ERROR
Number of Employees	0.020	0.047
Government/Foundation Funding	0.009	0.016
% Republicans, House	-1.843	2.970
Number of Opponents	0.751	0.360[b]
Interest Group Diversity	0.128	0.065[a]
Length, Legislative Session	0.209	0.126
State Ideology	1.575	2.026
Republican Governor	-0.371	0.727
% Children, Poor	0.074	0.099
Inverse, Interest Group Density	-0.003	0.003

Adjusted $R^2 = .08$

[a] $p < .10$.
[b] $p < .05$.

Table 4. Strategic Choices: Specific Outsider Strategies

Variable	**Mass Mailings** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)		**Number of Press Conferences** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)		**Participation in Rally or Demonstration** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)	
Number of Employees	0.039	(0.023)	0.002	(0.020)	0.000	(0.021)
Government/Foundation Funding	-0.000	(0.008)	0.007	(0.007)	0.002	(0.007)
% Republicans, House	0.416	(1.483)	-2.713	(1.248)[b]	0.180	(1.364)
Number of Opponents	-0.122	(0.180)	0.189	(0.151)	0.375	(0.165)[b]
Interest Group Diversity	-0.022	(0.033)	0.059	(0.027)[b]	0.048	(0.030)
Length, Legislative Session	-0.069	(0.063)	0.026	(0.053)	0.126	(0.058)[b]
State Ideology	0.732	(1.012)	0.309	(0.851)	0.693	(0.930)
Republican Governor	-0.082	(0.363)	0.130	(0.306)	0.134	(0.334)
% Children, Poor	-0.038	(0.049)	0.024	(0.041)	0.043	(0.045)
Inverse, Interest Group Density	0.002	(0.002)	-0.000	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.002)
Adjusted R^2	-.09		.16		.08	

[a] $p < .10$.
[b] $p < .05$.

Table 5: Strategic Choices: Coalition-Building

Variable	**Coalitions w/ Specific Types of Partners** N=48 Logit Coefficient (Standard Error)	**Coalitions, Top Three Issues** N=48 Logit Coefficient (Standard Error)
Number of Employees	-0.032 (0.057)	0.037 (0.041)
Government/Foundation Funding	0.028 (0.016)	-0.018 (0.014)
% Republicans, House	-4.426 (3.379)	-0.981 (2.567)
Number of Opponents	1.371 (0.448)[c]	0.861 (0.313)[c]
Interest Group Diversity	0.007 (0.066)	-0.029 (0.054)
Length, Legislative Session	0.210 (0.137)	-0.087 (0.102)
State Ideology	-0.737 (2.351)	-0.518 (1.718)
Republican Governor	0.294 (0.765)	-0.057 (0.659)
% Children, Poor	0.125 (0.124)	0.112 (0.082)
Inverse, Interest Group Density	-0.008 (0.004)[a]	-0.003 (0.003)
Pseudo R^2	.21	.08

[a] $p < .10$.
[b] $p < .05$.
[c] $p < .01$.

Table 6. Strategic Choices: Public Policy Research

Variable	**Number of Policy Research Reports** N=48 Regression Coefficient (Standard Error)	**Research Commitment** N=48 Logit Coefficient (Standard Error)
Number of Employees	0.163 (0.124)	0.075 (0.043)[a]
Government/Foundation Funding	0.077 (0.041)[a]	0.015 (0.014)
% Republicans, House	-20.839 (7.840)[b]	-1.625 (2.738)
Number of Opponents	0.298 (0.951)	-0.223 (0.318)
Interest Group Diversity	0.027 (0.173)	-0.143 (0.060)[b]
Length, Legislative Session	-0.297 (0.334)	-0.042 (0.105)
State Ideology	4.440 (5.348)	-4.321 (1.846)[b]
Republican Governor	-2.454 (1.920)	-1.344 (0.659)[b]
% Children, Poor	-0.972 (0.261)[c]	-0.013 (0.087)
Inverse, Interest Group Density	0.001 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.003)
	Adjusted R^2=.29	Pseudo R^2 = .16

[a] $p < .10$.
[b] $p < .05$.
[c] $p < .01$.

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[1] Like Kollman (1998: 53), we posit that a group's staff size is a better measure of organizational capacity than its budget, because many groups receive in-kind contributions and volunteer help.

[2] The Cronbach's alpha for the four-item index is .65.

[3] We excluded mass mailings from the index because of a relatively weak fit with the other variables. The Cronbach's alpha for the three-item index is .58.

[4] Groups were free to mention any type of opponent. A handful of respondents mentioned a particular political party or a particular group of politicians, but the overwhelming majority of opponents mentioned were other interest groups

[5] We did not examine effects on meetings with administrative officials because the equation produced a negative adjusted R^2.

[6] We did not examine effects on the mass mailings, because the adjusted R^2 was negative.