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Interest Group Branding and the Private Donation Habits of Lobbyists

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of Honors Requirements
for the Department of Political Science

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Abstract: Recent studies have looked at the private donating behavior of lobbyists to better understand the level of partisanship in the interest group environment, finding that individual lobbyists and the firms they work for are increasingly polarized along party lines. In this study, I examine whether the identity characteristics of the interest groups for whom they lobby affects the private behavior of lobbyists. In particular, I adopt Heaney's (2004) typology of interest group branding strategies, and find that the interest groups for whom lobbyists work impacts their private donating behavior.

Enshrined in our constitution is the chief principle of freedom in any country, the freedom of speech, and its corollary, the right to petition our government. There are thousands of registered lobbyists in Washington, many of whom have particular specializations, waiting to assist individuals and groups wanting to exercise their right to petition. Lobbying has grown from a practice where individuals would actually stand in the lobby of Congress the Congressional building and attempt to persuade members of Congress on their way or coming from meetings into a much more complex and institutionalized relationship. In recent years, the interest group landscape has changed even further due to the increasing numbers of lobbyists and interest groups lobbying an unchanged number of lobbying targets. It is becoming more important that lobbyists and the groups that they represent differentiate themselves from their peers and communicate their value proposition.

At the same time, an atmosphere of increasing polarization has gripped Washington and serves to further complicate this relationship. After the Republican takeover in 1994, signaling the end of one-party dominance in Congress, the lobbying sphere was strongly affected, as lobbying became an increasingly partisan endeavor, with party leaders using initiatives such as the K Street Project to reshape the relationship between lobbyists and elected officials. In turn, skepticism toward lobbying has become more closely intertwined with complaints of partisanship in Washington. When the details of the corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff's scandal in 2004 began to circulate, the legitimacy of the lobbying profession came into question and Congress responded with tough new legislation. Abramoff, who pleaded guilty to fraud, tax evasion, and conspiracy to bribe public officials, became the face of a profession in which that behavior was not encouraged (Schmidt, Grimaldi and Smith 2006). The most important aspect of the Abramoff scandal was his close affiliation with the

Republican Party. The media began to refer to him as a “Republican lobbyist” based on his close ties with Republican lawmakers and his pattern of donating mostly, but not exclusively, to Republican politicians and organizations (Schmidt, Grimaldi and Smith 2006). In more recent years, partisan behavior by lobbyists has been put under a microscope, as evidenced by the 2008 presidential campaigns of Barack Obama and John McCain. Early into the primaries and well into the general election, both candidates pledged to accept no donations from lobbyists.

This shift is notable because in the traditional thinking about lobbying, lobbyists are tacticians and “free agents” (Koger and Victor 2009) and have allies of all political persuasion to ensure continued access and relevance should political winds change (Allard 2008). Traditionally, discontent against lobbyists stemmed from a belief that the interest group sphere may be unrepresentative. E. E. Schattschneider wrote that in the interest group environment, the interests of the general public were neglected and that “the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent.” (Schattschneider 1960).

In this new, more competitive, and more partisan interest group environment, interest groups and their lobbyists thus face a pressing need to differentiate themselves and offer unique value propositions. In doing so, interest groups are increasingly seeking to cultivate strong identities and branding strategies (Heaney 2004), which are just as relevant in the increasingly competitive interest group environment as they are in other industries. Through their brands, interest groups can make a statement that they are better at something than anyone else and through this brand, they hope to forge relationships with members of Congress and the bureaucracy.

These trends also lead to important questions about the new landscape of lobbying, particularly whether all lobbyists have become loyal supporters of one political party or the other. Much of the research on campaign donations by political interests has focused on political action committees (PACs), which collect money from several donors and then donate to multiple candidates and causes. This view is incomplete, however, because it does not draw a strong enough distinction between interest groups and the private donating behavior of lobbyists. PACs reward legislators who have much influence such as incumbents and committee leaders (Koger and Victor 2009), and in their professional capacity, lobbyists tend to concentrate their attention on political allies, and avoid their ideological adversaries. However, such patterns may simply reflect the political strategies of the interest groups involved. By looking at the private donating behavior of lobbyists, we can better understand the extent to which lobbyists themselves are become partisan actors. This would be consistent with patterns found in the fledgling literature on private donations by lobbyists, which finds that there is a pattern of polarization in lobbyists' donations (Koger and Victor 2009).

In this paper, I examine whether patterns in the private behavior of lobbyists is influenced by the organizations who employ them, and more specifically, the brand identities of those organizations. Although lobbyists are certainly politically conscious citizens independent of their employment with interest groups, it is nonetheless possible that working for interest groups encourages or suppresses one's political tendencies. Lobbyists who work for overtly ideological and politicized interest groups may be act differently in private from lobbyists who work for less politicized organizations that emphasize professionalism and the craft of lobbying.

In the sections that follow, I begin by providing a review of the relevant literature on lobbying, interest group branding, and political donations. Then, I will provide and explain the theory of my research. Next, I describe my data, and conduct univariate and bivariate analyses of my data. Lastly, I will provide a conclusion of my findings and their normative implications for our understanding of partisanship in lobbying.

Literature Review

Scholars have differing conceptions of what the primary goals of interest groups are and with the field of interest groups growing each year, understanding how they differ sheds light on these phenomena. Organizational survival and policy influence are goals that most all interest groups would want to achieve but they are not always concurrent goals. That said, influencing and changing policy is still a critical goal of interest groups. Influencing policy would be a milestone for any group and would boost its credibility and status as an effective organization. However, the achievement of some policy end or a favorable gesture from the government is not always an organizations first priority.

In Lowery's (2007) research, he deconstructs the idea that interest groups' sole motivation is policy influence by presenting a multi-context theory of lobbying that illustrates the organizational behavior of interest groups in context. With the field of interest groups growing and the number of lobbying targets remaining relatively unchanged, some groups are simply fighting for survival.

For some groups, seeking out alliances is a beneficial strategy in the face of these threats. Joining an alliance can provide a group's members with expanded access to resources, political networks and greater collective wisdom (Hojnacki 1997). The idea of

alliances and close allies also ties closely with interest group identity which is discussed in the literature. When a group's interest in an issue is narrow, and when a group's potential allies signal that they have little to contribute to a collective advocacy campaign, the costs of joining an alliance will likely outweigh any benefits that may accrue (Hojnacki 1997). But when organizations perceived to be “pivotal” to success are members of an alliance, and when groups represent expressive interests or perceive a strong organized opposition, the benefits of joining coalitions appear substantial (Hojnacki 1997). Interest groups may be cautious before entering into alliances and working groups for a variety of reasons, particularly because maintaining a distinct identity is vital.

For this reason, interest groups have devoted considerable attention to developing and maintaining distinct interest group brand identities (Heaney 2004). Groups have to create, nurture, and guard their own unique identity and assess their position within the larger network of groups. Finally, they have to deduce how to leverage that identity for their members' benefits. Articulating this value to their members, perspective members, and peer groups is essential to the overall group survival (Berry and Wilcox 2009). Heaney (2004) finds that groups are very concerned with their identities and spend significant amounts of time discussing it internally. Identity is also a crucial factor in devising effective lobbying strategies (Berry and Wilcox 2009). For example, a group that is particularly strong in drafting policies may perhaps purposefully target committee chairs and provide legislative expertise on the crafting of a bill.

In addition to branding and identity, groups must continue to be innovative in the ways that they maintain contact, and contribute to their relationships with members of Congress and lobbying targets in the changing landscape. While traditional theories of

lobbying have focused on vote buying, contributions, and persuasion, Hall and Deardorff (2006) argue that lobbying is a form of “legislative subsidy,” in which lobbyists provide policy information and political intelligence to their lobbying targets. Interest groups must be able to demonstrate, as part of their branding strategy, that they can actually provide such value to their lobbying targets.

Nonetheless, effecting policy change is still at the forefront of many interest group strategies (Hojnacki 1997). Interest groups must choose whether developing alliances or relying on one’s own capabilities will be more effective (Hojnacki 1997; Hall and Deardorff 2006), and simultaneously considering one’s brand only adds complexity to that decisions. For example, if an organization worked alone and was successful, it would raise its profile within its peer group, but if they were to join an alliance, they might be able to leverage far more resources and perhaps advance their collective agendas further.

The decision of whom to lobby is also an important question in the planning phase of interest groups. This decision includes complexities such as determining which personal connections need to be leveraged in order for goals to be met and the perimeters of potential alliance building. Hojnacki and Kimball (1998) find that although interest groups seek to expand their supportive alliances, they work to directly affect the content and fate of bills referred to committees. In order to accomplish these goals, they give highest priority to lobbying their legislative allies in committees, while avoiding their enemies, and lobbying undecided infrequently (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Hall and Deardorff 2006). Organizations with access to a strong resource base, however, can and do move beyond their allies and friends and work directly to expand support outside of their established connections (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998).

Given these tendencies, it is perhaps not unsurprising that the field of lobbying could become more polarized in response to increased competition in both Washington politics and the interest group sphere. The question is the extent to which lobbyists themselves have actually become “partisan agents” (Koger and Victor 2009). In other words, has the imperative for lobbyists to lobby their allies translated into a tendency for lobbyists to be partisan in their private behavior?

In seeking to understand the private donating behavior of lobbyists, previous studies of donors more generally suggest a number of explanations. Francia et al. (2003) describe three distinct donor types: the “investor,” the “ideologue,” and the “intimate.” “Investors” are individuals who contribute to political causes to protect or advance their personal business interests. For example, in Gordon, Hafer and Landa’s (2007) research on corporate executive donations, they find that giving is largely instrumental meaning that they are made with the hope of reciprocity. Additionally, they report a robust relationship between political contributions and the sensitivity of pay to company performance. Their research illustrates that contributions are often best understood as purchases of good will with the hope of positive returns.

The “ideologue”, on the other hand, donates because they care deeply about the important issues and causes facing the country. They tend to donate to specific organizations which support their favored cause(s) in the hopes that the organization will push their agenda. There is no shortage of interest groups geared toward collective action issues such as the Sierra Club or the MADD and it is through the efforts of “ideologue” donors that support those organizations.

Lastly, the “intimate” donates because they enjoy mingling with friends, colleagues, and politicians who populate the world of fund-raising (Francia et al. 2003). Their goal, then, is primarily social rather than instrumental or policy-oriented. Other scholars argue that donating behavior has less to do with goals and motivations and more to do with an individuals’ personal upbringing and other predictors of civic involvement. Verba et al.’s (1995) civic volunteerism model cites many elements that affect political participation and donating, including time and money, civic skills and involvement, institutions and recruitment, and multi-generational influence.

The question, then, is whether the private donating behavior of lobbyists is driven primarily by the same personal factors that inspire other political donors, or whether there is an aspect of lobbyists “bringing their work home with them.” Koger and Victor (2009) suggest that the pattern observed in lobbying is directly reflected in private donations: lobbyists target their friends and allies and infrequently lobby fence-sitters. As a result, their donation patterns are highly partisan. Magleby (2009) finds evidence that since 2002 interest groups and candidates have a much closer relationship, due to the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. Magleby reasons that interest groups and candidates today share a closer role partly because of the change in fundraising laws and also a shift in the political landscape.

While it is possible that these trends in interest group and lobbyist partisanship are universal, it is also possible that variation in the private donating behavior of lobbyists is tied to the different survival strategies of which interest groups are increasingly availing themselves (Lowery 2007). In the next section I develop the theoretical expectations regarding the linkages between interest group strategies and the private behavior of the lobbyists for whom they lobby.

Theory

Of the interest group differentiation strategies, I argue that interest group branding will provide a fruitful avenue for gaining a more nuanced understanding of the private donating behavior of lobbyists. Identity is defined as “the individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognized.” Brand is defined as “a particular product or a characteristic that serves to identify a particular product.” Branding and identity are important factors that any group or organization in any field. Groups ask themselves questions such as, “where do we fit into the ecology of our respective field? How are we able to differentiate ourselves from our peers and competitors?” Through these brand identities groups can differentiate themselves from their peers and communicate specifically what they uniquely have to offer.

Heaney (2004) identifies four major branding strategies that interest groups use: representation, issues, techniques, and ideology. The representation-oriented branding focuses on the interest group’s ability to speak for the entire group it claims to represent. The issue-oriented branding highlights the interest group’s particular strengths in expertise in research and technical knowledge on its chosen issue. Techniques-oriented groups have expertise in specific practices such as litigation, maintaining a PAC, interacting with the media, or grassroots mobilization. Finally, ideology-oriented groups make a claim that they combine a specific expertise or capability with a specific ideological orientation (Heaney 2004).

These brand orientations may influence the private behavior of the lobbyists who work for such groups. For lobbyists who work for ideology-oriented interest groups, the increasing politicization and partisanship of the interest group sphere may be reinforced most heavily. To the extent that the workplace environment influences private political

participation, we might expect these lobbyists to be the most engaged and the most partisan. Since the issue-oriented brand identity focuses on issue expertise rather than simply ideological orientation, the private behavior of lobbyists who work for such organizations may be less politicized and less partisan than those who work for ideologically-oriented groups. Representation-oriented groups may instill in lobbyists a sense that they are surrogates rather than political actors, which may suppress even further both private political participation in general, and to the extent that such participation still occurs, it may be less partisan. Likewise, lobbyists for technique-oriented interest groups may view themselves as skilled professionals and thus act more in accord with the "free agent" conception of lobbyists; once again we might expect both less participation and less partisan participation from such lobbyists. These predictions are summarized in my first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: An interest's group's branding strategy will influence the private donating behavior of its lobbyists.

I also consider the possibility that other characteristics of organizations and their lobbyists will influence private donating behavior. Going back to Schattschneider (1960) there has been recognition that some parts of the interest group sphere are more successful or influential than others. It is in turn possible that different types of interest groups will communicate different attitudes or norms, which will in turn influence private donating behavior. Heaney (2004) specifically identifies eight organizational types: academic, citizen advocacy, nonmember advocacy, government officials, professional society, trade association, labor union, and veterans' groups. This leads to my second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: An interest group's organization type will influence the private donating behavior of its lobbyists.

Finally, I chose to look at whether a lobbyist had served in a “covered positions” prior to beginning a career as a lobbyist. A covered position is a position that was held within the government such a legislative aide, a policy analyst, a congressman or congresswoman, assistant secretaries, and other similar positions would all be considered covered positions. Scholars have long noted the “revolving door” phenomenon (Berry and Wilcox 2009) of individuals leaving governmental positions after several years and joining lobbying firms to leverage their government access and contacts for client gain. It is plausible, then, that the private donating behavior of such lobbyists will be systematically different from that of other lobbyists. This leads to my third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Whether or not a lobbyist held a covered position prior to lobbying will influence his/her private donating behavior.

Data and Methods

The primary sources of my data are The Center for Responsive Politics and Heaney’s (2004) research on interest group branding. The Center for Responsive Politics’ database tracks and contains the names of registered lobbyists, the contributions that they have made over the past years to various political organizations, whether they held a covered position within the government and in what capacity, and the names of the different interest groups that they represent.

Each interest group in the dataset (and by extension, each lobbyist’s employers) is classified based on Heaney (2004). Heaney contacted and interviewed representatives at 168 interest groups working on health care-related issues. Health care was selected because it contains a combination of high salience and low salience issues, it involves interests from across the spectrum of American politics, and the issues in the domain mix distributive,

redistributive, and regulatory concerns (p. 621). A lobbyist for the National Associations of Physicians Colleges would also be more likely to lobby for the Federation of Hospital Nurses because of specialization in the that area. This is also reflected in the dataset as many of the lobbyists lobby of behalf of similar organizations because of specialty.

Of those 168 groups, this study utilizes 141 of those health care-related groups.¹ The branding categories were created by asking respondents how they perceived the identities of their organizations.²

The list of organizations from Heaney (2004, p. 642-646) was used to construct the list of lobbyists used for this study. Given the large amount of data associated with any given year, I chose to focus on 2007, a year in which there was no major election or major health-care legislation pending in Congress.³ I then matched this list of lobbyists and organizations against Heaney's four branding identities to view donating behaviors among the different branding types. In total, there are 2,099 lobbyists representing 141 interest groups.

For each lobbyist listed from one of these 141 groups, I collected information regarding their affiliations, whether or not they served in a covered position, and how much money they gave to Republican and Democratic Party interests. Next, by aggregating lobbyists according to the interest group(s) on behalf of whom they lobbied, I created a second dataset in which the interest group was the unit of analysis. I calculate the number of lobbyists that the group employs, the percentage of the group's lobbyists who made

¹ I used 141 of Heaney's 168 interest groups because for the year 2007, 27 of the groups that he had listed had lobbyists who made no contributions in the 2007 donation cycle and no information was available for them at The Center for Responsive Politics.

² More specifically, respondents' answers were coded them into one of 10 different categories, and the brand identity of the group was based on the branding strategy mentioned "first" in the interview.

³ Choosing a single year always poses potential problems. While the year 2007 has some desirable characteristics, there are some ways in which 2007 may not have been representative of all years. Among other things, 2007 featured a change in party control of Congress and changes made to the House of Representatives ethics rules.

contributions, the partisan distribution of the amounts contributed by the group's lobbyists, and the percentage of the group's lobbyists who had served in covered positions.

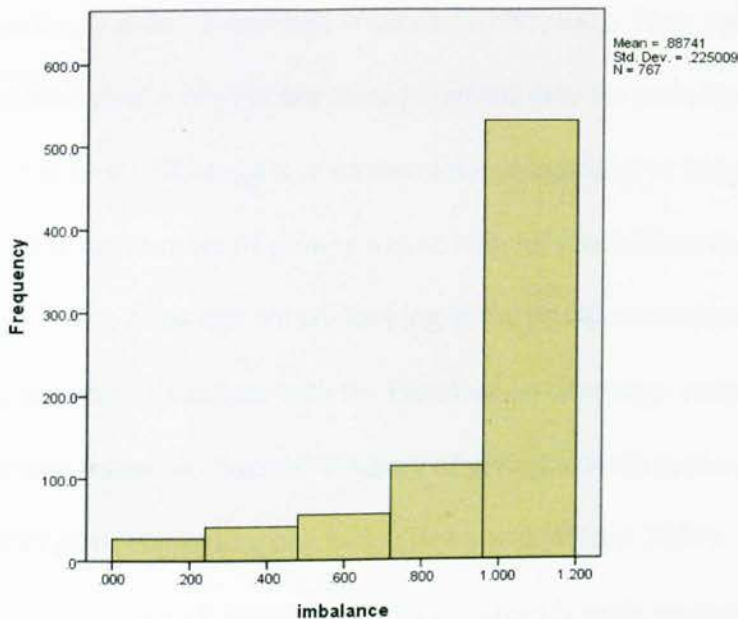
Although these two arrangements of the data are similar, it is fruitful to view the lobbyist and the interest group as different units of analysis. Since we are interested in private donating behavior, the individual lobbyist makes the most sense as the primary unit of analysis. However, by aggregating contribution patterns to the interest group level, we can also gain an understanding of how interest groups construct lobbying "teams." For example, individual lobbyists many are loyal partisans but interest groups may prefer to employ lobbyists than can provide bipartisan representation. Finally, these parallel analyses allow me to compare my results to the dual analyses founded in Koger and Victor (2009).

The first of the dependent variables I examine at the lobbyist level measures whether a lobbyist made **any contribution** to a partisan (Republican or Democratic) candidate or organization. This variable is a dummy variable, coded as either a "0" or a "1," depending on whether they made any such contribution. Of the 2,099 individual lobbyists in the data-set, 767 (36.5%) of them made a contribution to one or both major political parties.

The second dependent variable measured at the lobbyist level is the individual's a lobbyist's contribution **imbalance**. Figure 1 is a histogram of the variable **imbalance**, which displays how it is distributed in the dataset, with a mean of 0.88 and a standard deviation of 0.22. Of the 767 lobbyists who made donations, 520 (68%) of them donated exclusively to one party or the other. Thus, in this histogram, the data is negatively skewed. There were, however, a small number of individual lobbyists who donated in a bipartisan manner. For example, 78 lobbyists (10%) had imbalance scores that were 0.5 or lower, indicating that they gave at least 25% of the total amount to each party.

These findings echo Koger and Victor (2009), who found that lobbyists are highly partisan in their donation habits. They found that 56% of individual lobbyists donated exclusively to one party. What is more telling is that individual lobbyists who made five donations or more to either a Republican or Democratic incumbent did so with more imbalance, meaning that when they are donating multiple times it is to one party. Additionally, as was found in this study, only a small percentage (6.3%), gave at least 40% of their total donations to the both parties.

Figure 1: Distribution of the Imbalance Scores of Lobbyists' Contribution



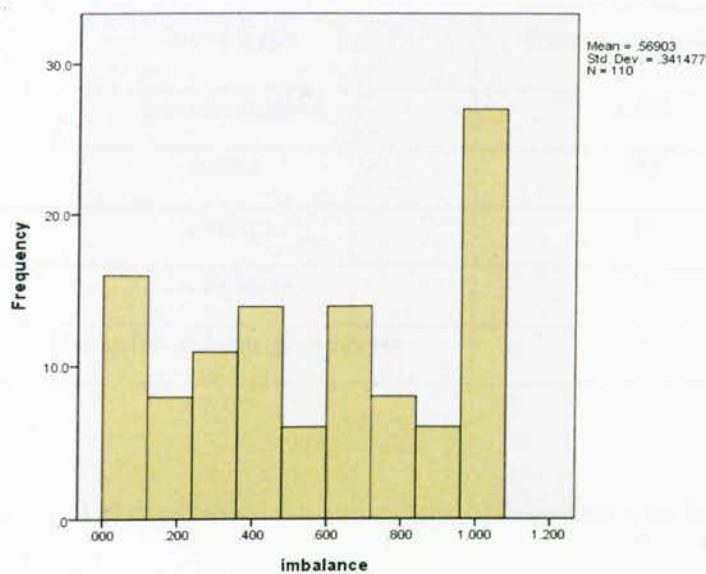
Turning to the dataset for the interest group–level analyses, the first of the dependent variables is *percent contributing*, which is the percentage of lobbyists in a given interest group who made a contribution. The variable was constructed by dividing the number of lobbyists who made a contribution by the number of lobbyists working for the interest group. For example, if an individual interest group had 6 lobbyists working for them and only 2

made a contribution the value of **percent contributing** would be 0.33. This variable has a mean is 0.36 (standard deviation 0.28), indicating that the average interest group had 36% of its lobbyists make contributions, which is very comparable with the overall percentage of lobbyists who made contributions.

The second dependent variable is **aggregate imbalance** of contributions, which is constructed in the same way as above, except in this case, all contributions made by lobbyists for the interest group are included in the calculation. Figure 4 displays the histogram of this variable, which has a mean of 0.56 and a standard deviation is 0.34. There were 24 groups (17%) in which all lobbyists gave all of their money to one political party. Once again, this finding matches Koger and Victor's (2009) study. They found that the contribution patterns of individual lobbyists are more polarized than the patterns found when aggregating to the group level. Although it is common for groups to give in a partisan manner, there are also a significant number of groups whose lobbyists contribute in a balanced manner, at least in the aggregate. Although we are looking at the private donations of individuals here, this is nonetheless consistent with the literature on campaign contributions, which finds that many groups follow an "access" strategy of giving to both parties, as opposed to an "electoral" strategy of supporting one party (Berry and Wilcox 2009).

Using four dummy variables, I identify each interest group according to which one of these identities was its primary branding type. I also identify each lobbyist according to the branding strategy of the interest group(s) on behalf of whom they lobbied.

Figure 2: Distribution of Contribution Imbalances, Aggregated by Interest Group



Representation was the most frequent branding type given by interest groups, with 64% of groups classified as such, and 77% of lobbyists working for one of these groups. Issue-oriented branding strategies were the second most common branding type followed by ideology and techniques. Table 1 gives frequency distributions for the four branding types among the interest groups in the dataset. Table 2 gives the frequency distribution for lobbyists.

Table 1: Distribution of Interest Group Branding Types

Brand Type	Number of Groups	Percentage of Groups
Representation	90	64.3%
Issues	42	30.0%
Ideology	5	3.6%
Techniques	3	2.1%

Table 2: Distribution of Interest Group Brands, by Lobbyist

Brand Type	Number of Lobbyists	Percentage of Lobbyists
Representation	1,620	77.2%
Issues	351	16.7%
Ideology	40	1.9%
Techniques	14	0.7%
Works for multiple group types	68	3.5%

I also examine the percentage of lobbyists who had served in a covered position. Of the lobbyists in this dataset, 954 (46%) held covered positions before becoming registered lobbyists. In addition, I create a variable indicating the **percent in covered positions** at the interest group level—that is, what percentage of an interest group’s lobbyists had served in such positions? Figure 3 is a histogram of the distribution of this variable, which has a mean of 0.45 and a standard deviation of 0.30. The histogram demonstrates a great amount of variance in this group characteristic: twenty-three (16%) did not have any lobbyists that held covered positions while ten (7%) had all lobbyists that had served in covered positions.

Finally, I create a series of dummy variables indicating interest group organization type Table 3 gives a frequency distribution of organization types, of which the most common types are professional groups, trade associations, and citizen advocacy groups. Table 4 shows the distribution of organization types at the lobbyist level, again accounting for the fact that many lobbyists work for multiple types of organizations. In comparing these two tables, we can see that a few groups, especially trade associations, employ a disproportionate number of the lobbyists, while most groups, especially professional and academic groups are under-represented.

Figure 3: Histogram of Lobbyists from Covered Positions, Aggregated by Group

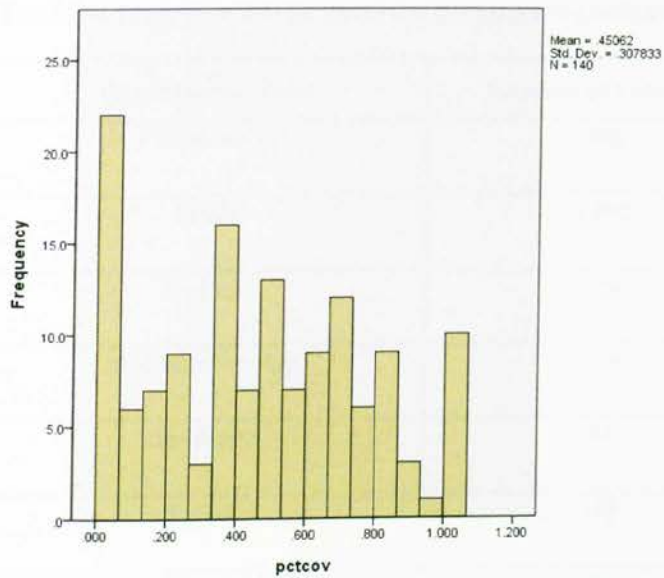


Table 3: Distribution of Interest Group Organization Types

Organization Type	Number of Groups	Percentage of Groups
Professional	41	29.3%
Trade	40	28.6%
Citizen	29	20.7%
Non-membership	9	6.4%
Academic	8	5.7%
Labor	7	5.0%
Veterans	5	3.6%
Government	1	0.7%

Table 4: Distribution of Interest Group Organization Types, by Lobbyist

Organization Type	Number of Lobbyists	Percentage of Lobbyists
Professional	308	14.7%
Trade	1,095	52.2%
Citizen	256	12.2%
Non-membership	124	5.9%
Academic	24	1.1%
Labor	129	6.2%
Veterans	46	2.2%
Government	1	0.1%
Worked for multiple types	116	5.5%

Data Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between interest group branding and private donating behavior, I begin by examining which individual lobbyists made a contribution to one of the two major political parties. Table 5 shows a cross-tabulation of the relationship between brand type and the variable **any contribution**. The cross-tabulation shows that private political contributions were far more common among lobbyists who worked for interest groups that maintained a “representation” branding. Conversely, there were few observations in the third and four brand categories which were “techniques” and “ideology.” To examine whether this relationship was statistically significant, I conducted a Chi-Square test of the relationship between brand type and whether a lobbyist made any partisan

contribution. The results ($\chi^2 = 74.830$, $p < .001$) indicate that this relationship is statistically significant. Since there were so few lobbyists in the final two categories, I conducted a robustness check comparing only the lobbyists in the first two categories, and the results remained statistically significant.⁴ This evidence supports the claim of my first hypothesis—that an interest's groups brand will influence the private donating behavior of its lobbyists.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of Branding Type and Propensity to Contribute

	Representation	Issues	Techniques	Ideology
Made contribution	638	66	1	2
Did not make contribution	982	285	13	38
Total	1620	351	14	40

Next, I examine whether this same relationship holds up when I examine the behavior of lobbyists aggregated to the interest group level. In other words, does the percentage of an interest group's lobbyists who make private donations depend on the interest group's style of branding? I conducted a mean comparison of **percent contributing** across categories of brand type. The mean comparison, shown in Table 6, shows that groups with representation and issue-oriented branding strategies have means of 0.39 and 0.31, respectively. To examine if this difference is statistically significant, I conducted a difference of means test in which I compare groups with representation branding against groups with issue branding. The

⁴ While it is odd that the lobbyists from the “ideology” interest groups are extremely unlikely to make contributions, the small number of such groups in the dataset makes me cautious to draw strong inferences from this result. In addition, some of the groups that identified their brands as ideological (The Seniors Coalition, Families USA, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America) might not be groups typically thought of as ideologically-oriented interest groups.

findings indicate that this relationship is statistically significant ($p=.003$). Again, this finding supports my first hypothesis.

Table 6: Propensity of Lobbyists to Make Contributions, by Interest Group Brand

Brand	Percentage of Lobbyists Making Contribution	N
Representation	39.2%	90
Issues	32.0%	42
Techniques	26.2%	3
Ideology	14.0%	5
Total	35.8%	140

In order to test my second hypothesis, I examine the relationship between organizational type and private donating behavior using the cross-tabulation in Table 7. This cross-tabulation shows that lobbyists in trade associations donate the most frequently by far. Lobbyists for professional and labor organizations are also fairly likely to contribute, while contributions from academic, non-member and veterans' groups are quite rare.

Table 7: Cross-tabulation of Organization Type and Propensity to Contribute

	Academic	Citizen	Non-Member	Government
Made contribution	3	52	12	1
Did not make contribution	21	204	112	0
Total	24	256	124	1

	Professional	Trade	Labor	Veterans
Made contribution	71	506	27	3
Did not make contribution	237	589	102	43
Total	308	1095	129	46

To examine whether this pattern is statistically significant, I conducted a Chi-Square test and found that the pattern ($\chi^2 = 74.830$, $p < .001$) is statistically significant.

Next, I examine whether this same relationship exists when I examine the behavior of lobbyists aggregated to the interest group level. That is, does the percentage of an interest group's lobbyists who make private donations depend on the interest group's organizational type? In Table 8, I calculate the mean level of **percent contributing** across categories of organization types. Among the groups with a meaningful number of cases, this mean comparison shows that trade association groups have the highest mean (0.54), with professional groups the next highest group at 0.32. To assess whether this difference is statistically significant, I conducted a difference of means test in which I compare the mean percentage of donor lobbyists among trade groups versus all other organizational types. The findings ($p < .001$) indicate that this relationship is statistically significant. Taken together, these findings support my second hypothesis and illustrate that donating patterns differ across organization types.

Table 8: Propensity of Lobbyists to Make Contributions, by Organization Type

Organization Type	Percentage of Lobbyists Making Contribution	N
Academic	36.3%	8
Citizen	26.2%	29
Non-Member	22.1%	9
Government	66.7%	1
Professional	32.2%	41
Trade	54.6%	40
Labor	24.4%	7
Veterans	5.5%	5
Total	35.8%	140

In the next set of analyses, I examine the relationship between whether a person served in a covered position and whether they made a contribution. Table 9 shows the cross-

tabulation of the relationship between the variables **covered position** and **any contribution**, revealing that of the 954 lobbyists that held a covered position, 566 of them (59%) made a contribution. Conversely, among those who had not held a covered position, only 201 out of 1145 (17%) made a contribution. To examine whether this relationship is statistically significant, I conducted a Chi-Square test and found that the pattern ($\chi^2 = 391.64$, $p < .001$) is statistically significant.

I also examine whether this same relationship exists when I examine the behavior of lobbyists aggregated to the interest group level. In other words, do groups who tend to higher lobbyists from covered positions also tend to have lobbyists who make private donations? To investigate this relationship, I construct a scatterplot of the relationship between the variables **percent contributing** and **percent in covered positions**, which can be found in Figure 4. The scatterplot indicates a positive relationship with most cases falling in the lower left and upper right quadrants of the scatterplot. To examine whether this relationship is statistically significant, I calculate the correlation coefficient for this relationship, which is 0.531 and which is statistically significant ($p < .001$). This value of 0.531 indicates a moderately strong, positive relationship between **percent contributing** and **percent in covered positions**. In other words, interest groups who hire lobbyists from covered positions are also more likely to have lobbyists that make private donations. These findings support my third hypothesis.

Table 9: Cross-tabulation of Covered Position Service and Propensity to Contribute

	Served in Covered Position	Did Not Serve in Covered Position
Made contribution	566	201
Did not make contribution	388	944
Total	954	1145

I now turn my attention to the second aspect of donating behavior: the extent to which lobbyists make partisan or bipartisan contributions in their private behavior. I begin by examining the partisan imbalance in donation patterns across lobbyists and groups according to brand identities. In Table 10, I calculate the mean level of imbalance for lobbyists who work for representation-oriented groups and lobbyists who work for issues-oriented groups. (Since the number of contributions made by lobbyists from the other brand types was so small, I exclude these categories from the analysis of imbalance patterns.) This mean comparison shows that of the 638 lobbyists from groups with a representation identity, the mean imbalance score was 0.89. Conversely, among the 66 lobbyists from groups with issues-oriented brand identities, the mean imbalance score was 0.88. In and of itself, this result suggests a very small difference across the two groups. To assess whether this pattern is statistically significant, I run a difference of means test in which I compare the mean levels of imbalance for representation-branded groups and issue-oriented groups. The findings indicate that this difference is not statistically significant ($p=.90$).

Figure 4: Employing Covered Position Lobbyists and Contribution Propensity

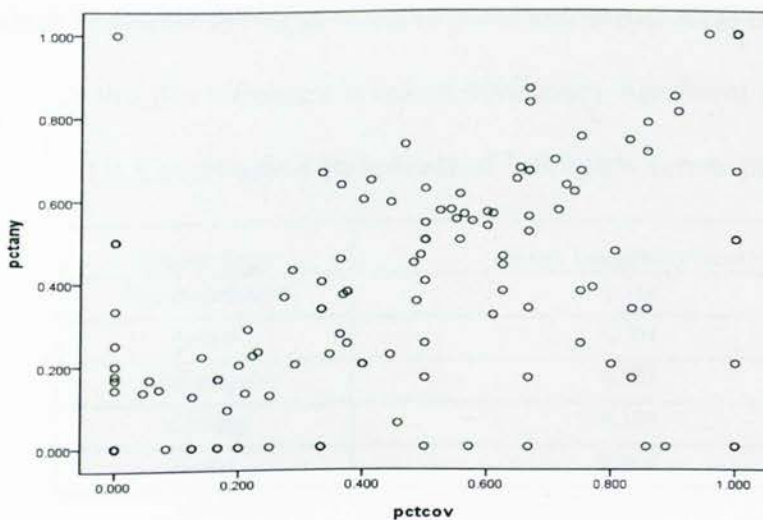


Table 10: Contribution Imbalance, by Interest Group Branding of Employer

Brand Type	Mean Imbalance Score	N
Representation	0.884	638
Other Brand	0.887	69

Next, I examined whether a relationship between branding and partisanship in donation behavior emerged at the interest group level. In Table 11, I calculate the mean level of imbalance among all lobbyists from representation-oriented interest groups and issue-oriented groups. This mean comparison shows that the mean level of **imbalance** for representation-oriented groups is 0.51, and 0.70 for issue-oriented groups. While no difference existed at the individual level, it appears that issue-oriented interest groups tend to employ a more partisan cadre of lobbyists than representation-oriented interest groups. Issue-oriented groups tend to focus on a single policy issue and tend to fall on a particular side of that issue. Perhaps we are seeing that more issue-oriented groups are donating with more imbalances because there may be a partisan divide on the particular issue. One political party may be more of a natural ally than the other or the particular is quite polarizing. To assess whether this pattern is statistically significant, I conducted a difference of means test in which I compare the mean levels of imbalance across these two brand types. The findings indicate that this difference is indeed statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Table 11: Contribution Imbalance of Lobbyists across Interest Group Branding Types

Brand Type	Mean Imbalance Score	N
Representation	0.516	73
Issues	0.701	33
Techniques	0.502	2
Ideology	0.381	2
Total	0.569	110

Next, I examine the relationship between imbalance in donations and organizational type. In Table 12, I calculate the mean level of imbalance across organizational types. Table 12 indicates that lobbyists for professional and trade organizations tend to be the most balanced (although not particularly balanced) in their donating patterns, while academic, labor, and veterans groups tend to be the most partisan.

Since trade organization lobbyists are the largest single group in the dataset, I examine whether this group is significantly more balanced than other lobbyists. To assess whether this pattern is statistically significant, I run a difference of means test in which I compare the mean levels of imbalance between trade organization lobbyists and all others. The findings indicate that this difference falls just short of statistical significance ($p=.061$).

Table 12: Contribution Imbalance of Lobbyists, by Organization Type

Organization Type	Mean Imbalance Score	N
Academic	0.990	3
Citizen	0.918	52
Non-Member	0.924	12
Professional	0.855	71
Trade	0.886	506
Labor	0.954	27
Veterans	1.000	3
Worked for Multiple Types	0.863	92
Total	0.887	767

I examine this relationship further at the interest group level to see if this pattern holds. In Table 13, I calculate the mean level of imbalance, aggregated among all lobbyists in an interest group, across the different interest group categories. This mean comparison shows

that of the three groups with the most observations (citizen advocacy, professional groups, and trade associations), the lobbyist teams from trade groups are more likely to give in a balanced manner, with means of 0.72, 0.61, and 0.38, respectively. To assess whether this pattern is statistically significant, I run a difference of means test in which I compare the mean levels of imbalance between trade organizations and other organizations. The findings indicate that this difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Taken together, these findings lend support to my third hypothesis.

Finally, I examine the relationship between whether someone held a covered position within the government and whether or not they donated in a partisan manner. In Table 14, I calculate the mean level of imbalance for lobbyists who did and did not hold covered positions.

Table 13: Contribution Imbalance among Lobbyists, by Interest Group Type

Organization Type	Mean Imbalance Score	N
Academic	0.595	6
Citizen	0.723	20
Non-Member	0.652	7
Government	0.051	1
Professional	0.616	31
Trade	0.381	38
Labor	0.918	6
Veterans	0.854	1
Total	0.569	110

This mean comparison shows that of those who held covered positions, they tended to donate in a slightly more partisan manner (mean=0.89) than those who did not hold a covered position (mean=0.87). To assess whether this pattern is statistically significant, I run a

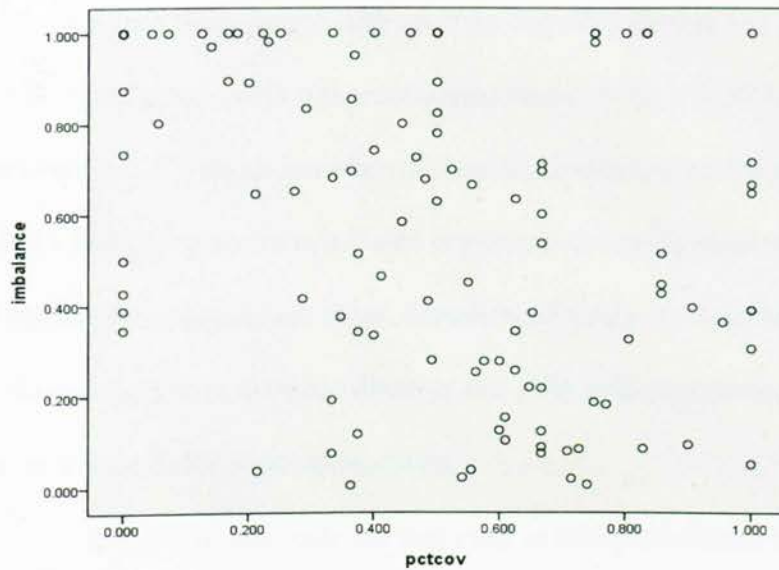
difference of means test; the findings indicate that this difference is not statistically significant ($p=.225$). This finding is somewhat surprising, given that many who serve in covered positions are serving in essentially partisan jobs. However, the fact that the other lobbyists are just as partisan in their donating patterns underlines the high overall level of partisanship in the current lobbying sphere.

Table 14: Contribution Imbalance by Prior Covered Positions

Held Covered Position?	Mean Imbalance Score	N
Yes	0.893	566
No	0.871	201

I then study this relationship between covered position service and partisan donating patterns at the interest group level. Figure 5 shows a scatterplot of the relationship between the percentage of a group's lobbyists who held a covered position and the imbalance in the group's lobbyists' contributions. The scatterplot shows a negative relationship, indicating that groups with more lobbyists from covered positions tend to have lower imbalance scores. To examine whether this relationship is statistically significant, I calculate the correlation coefficient for this relationship, which is $r = -0.36$ ($p < .001$), and which indicates a moderately strong and statistically significant relationship between **aggregate imbalance** and **percent in covered positions**. Once again, this finding exposes a difference between findings at the lobbyist level and the findings aggregated to the group level. This could reflect that fact that interest groups who hire experienced insiders wish to have representation from both sides of the aisle. Taken together, then, these findings offer mixed support for my third hypothesis.

Figure 5: Employing Covered Position Lobbyists and Contribution Imbalance



Conclusion

The findings of this paper suggest that patterns in the private donating behavior of lobbyists are far more nuanced than has previously been suggested. While it is true that many lobbyists give in a partisan manner, this is far from a universal pattern, and most importantly, these patterns differ depending on the type of organizations for whom lobbyists work. The results of my research allow us to peer deeper into the lobbying profession and the effects of branding and identity on the private donating behavior of lobbyists. The results shed light on how branding and organizational type may not only serve to differentiate interest groups from their peers and competitors but perhaps also how their lobbyists donate in their private lives.

Branding and identity appear to play a major role in lobbyist giving. The results indicate several meaningful relationships between brand identities, organization types, and donation patterns. The representation-oriented branding strategy was associated with more

individual contributions than the issue-oriented branding strategy. Yet the findings also show that lobbyists from groups with an issue branding donate in a more partisan manner than those from groups with a representation brand. Why is this? Lobbying on behalf of an interest group with an issue brand requires in-depth knowledge about the topic. It could be that a lobbyist at an issue branded organization is truly passionate about their work and their legislative colleagues are allies. Members of Congress want to transact with groups that help them connect with their constituents and offer policy expertise but lose interest if the group does not facilitate these connections.

My results also indicate that even as lobbyists donate in a partisan manner individually, interest groups tend to hire a more balanced cadre of lobbyists, a finding that mirrors those of previous studies (Koger and Victor 2009). Interest groups, or at least a significant subset of them, appear to maintain an interest in communicating with both sides of the aisle. This finding reminds us that whatever shifts have occurred in Washington, they are only a matter of degree. Interest groups have not abandoned bipartisan lobbying altogether, even if the individual lobbyists they hire have becoming increasingly partisan actors.

In addition to the brand identities, organizational identity proved to be a significant predictor of private donating behavior. More specifically, lobbyists associated with the business community were the most active, but also the least partisan. These findings echo traditional concerns about the disproportionate influence of business and the notion that the business community is apt to follow bipartisan strategy in both lobbying techniques and campaign contributions (Berry and Wilcox 2009).

Finally, the findings of this paper speak to concerns over the “revolving door” phenomenon in Washington. Lobbyists who have held covered positions within the government prior to lobbying donated more than those who held no covered position, although interestingly, they were not more likely to contribute in a partisan manner. What this suggests is that lobbyists with no prior affiliations are just as polarized as lobbyists who worked on Congressional staffs and in other positions that would be naturally tied to partisanship.

Given the short history of research on this subject, we also cannot be sure that this is a new phenomenon or that is related to the increasing polarization in Washington. Although data limitations make the study of lobbyists contributions over time somewhat challenging, an examination of lobbyists’ donations prior to 1994 would give us more confidence that the portrayal of lobbyists as “polarized agents” is actually tied to party polarization. To the extent that lobbyists have indeed become *more* polarized, it is equally important to examine the effects that this has on the lobbyist-legislator relationship. If lobbyists are increasingly becoming part of “partisan networks” (Koger et al. 2009), to what extent does this undermine traditional conceptions of lobbying?

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