What's the issue? : the lobbying and representativeness of political parties on specific policy issues

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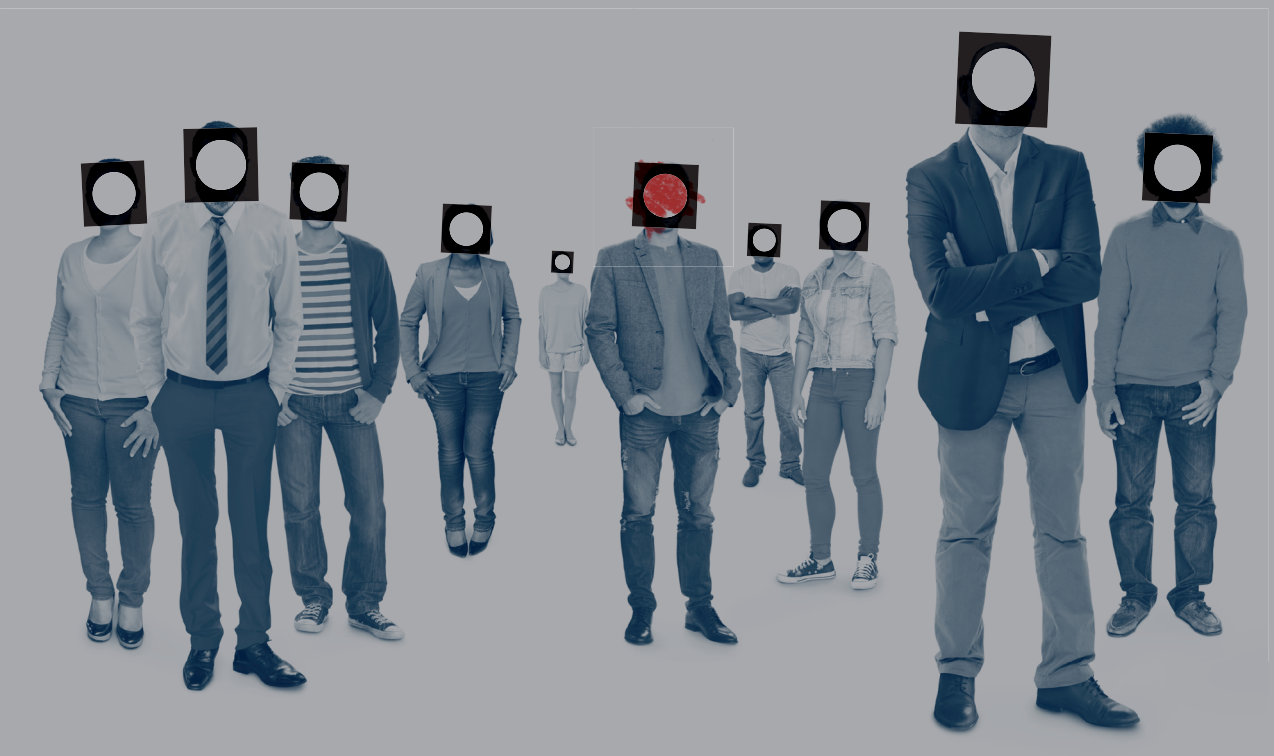

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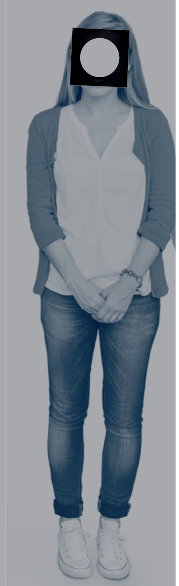
Party Collaboration as a Route to Advocacy Success? The Decision of Whom to Lobby

This chapter is co-authored with Anne Rasmussen.



ABSTRACT

Do policy advocates benefit from working together with (certain types of) political parties? Recent years have witnessed an expansion of studies mapping the ties between political parties and advocates but we know little about how these ties shape democratic decision-making. To address this lacuna, we analyze 50 specific policy issues across five countries relying on a survey of 478 advocates. We do not find higher levels of preference attainment for advocates who work with political parties. Despite frequent discussion whether groups should target friends or foes, there is also no strong evidence that preference attainment is higher for advocates working with either allied parties on an issue or powerful parties in the legislature. Instead, the two reinforce each other: advocates are more likely to attain their preferences when they emphasize the importance of working with powerful parties on the same side of an issue. Our study has important implications for not only the literature on party-interest group ties, but also the extensive interest group literature discussing whom to lobby.

Acknowledgements

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between organized interests and political parties is at the heart of representative democracy. Both types of actors help to ensure that the demands of different types of citizens and stakeholders are aggregated and translated into policy. However, rather than acting as alternative intermediaries (Schattschneider, 1960), these two types of political organizations are often complementary. Parties act as gatekeepers for organized interests to affect public policy, while organized interests offer resources to decision-makers that help them adopt complex policy decisions and cater to their voters (Allern & Bale, 2012, Witko, 2009). Policy is therefore often made in collaboration between organized interests and political parties, who benefit from mutual cooperation.

Despite strong interdependences between organized interests and parties, the study of these two types of political organizations was for a long period largely conducted in separate communities. However, recent research has demonstrated a renewed interest in studying collaboration between organized interests and parties from both party politics (e.g. Allern, 2010, Poguntke, 2002) and interest group scholars (e.g. DeBruycker, 2016; Marshall, 2015; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). These studies have examined the character of party-interest groups links as well as how these links vary across different types of parties, organized interests and political systems. The study of organized interests and political parties has also broadened from looking at traditional forms of institutionalized linkage between the two to examining the more informal, ad hoc types of contacts that dominate group-party interactions in the 21st century (Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013).

Yet, even if it is widely believed that collaboration between parties and organized interests is not merely symbolic but shapes democratic governance (e.g. Allern & Bale, 2012; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017; Thomas, 2001), we have limited systematic knowledge of the impact of such collaboration. Rather than being the object of analysis, the relevance and importance of interest group-party contacts are often taken for granted and used as a motivation why we should study these relations in the first place. As a result, we cannot say whether and how these contacts actually affect political decision-making. Importantly, we know little about whether they matter for the preference attainment of policy advocates on specific policy issues.

This may seem surprising since the literature on organized interests makes clear that lobbying success is strongly affected by support from other players, such as the rest of the group community (Mahoney, 2007, Dür & Marshall, 2015, Furlong, 1997) or public opinion (Rasmussen, Mäder, et al., 2018). Yet, contact with some of the key players in decision-making processes, i.e. the political parties themselves, is not considered in the models. Moreover, while a voluminous interest group literature is devoted to discussing which types of legislators organized interests should benefit from lobbying, the overwhelming majority of this research focuses on contact with individual legislators as

opposed to parties (e.g. Baumgartner & Leech, 1996; Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998; Wonka, 2017). The few studies that consider contact between political parties and organized interests are exclusively interested in explaining the shape and intensity of group contacts with the different types of parties rather than the consequences of these interactions (e.g. DeBruycker, 2016; Marshall, 2015; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). This means that while recent research has expanded our knowledge of whether groups interact with allied or powerful parties, we know little about how these efforts ultimately affect their likelihood of obtaining their desired policies. Finally, while there has been a growth in research on the relationship between organized interests and political parties, only a limited share of this research is conducted at the level of specific policy issues despite the fact that there may be substantial variation in group-party connections across different issues (for exceptions, see Beyers, De Bruycker, & Baller, 2015; DeBruycker, 2016). The aim of this chapter is therefore to analyse whether working with political parties helps policy advocates attain their preferred outputs on specific policy issues and to consider differences in the gains derived from working with allied and powerful parties.

As a result, we theorize about not only why organized interests should benefit from political parties in their lobbying efforts but also how the potential gains of collaboration with parties may depend on the type of party. Specifically, we formulate expectations that these gains are larger for organized interests whose work on an issue involves friendly parties and/or more powerful parties. Moreover, we expect these two factors to reinforce each other so that the positive effect for groups of building up a working relationship to parties they agree with is stronger, the more powerful these parties are.

We test our predictions on a sample of 50 policy issues across five Western European countries, which have different systems of interest representation. We rely on a new dataset including a cross-national survey of 478 advocates that were active on these issues and asked how important different political parties were for the advocates' work on the issues. The survey is supplemented with data on public opinion about our issues, party characteristics, detailed coding of policy outputs and interviews with civil servants in all five countries.

Our cross-national study shows that groups do not benefit from interacting with all types of parties. We find no main difference in levels of preference attainment between advocates who emphasize the importance of parties for their work on an issue compared to those who do not. This main finding remains similar when comparing advocates who had direct contacts with members of parliament or the cabinet to those that did not report such contacts. Similarly, there is no clear relationship between working with powerful *or* allied parties and lobbying success. Instead, the two types of parties may have an effect in combination: advocates working with both types of parties are more likely to attain their preferences than those that do not, or work only with one or the other. Importantly, this result holds even when we control for the share of political parties

(both in total and amongst government parties) that already supports the advocate's position. As such, the chapter offers a first assessment of whether and how political parties matter for the preference attainment of policy advocates.

4.2 GROUP-PARTY LINKAGE IN EXISTING RESEARCH

Many of the seminal studies in the discipline of political science took a broad perspective on the political system paying attention to the role of both political parties and organized interests (e.g. Schattschneider, 1960; Truman, 1951). Later, the study of parties and interest groups became more "polarized" with scholars splitting into two different communities (Allern, 2010, Allern & Bale, 2012, Heaney, 2010, Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013, Witko, 2009). Recent years have witnessed something of a revival in studies that take an interest in the links between policy advocates and parties. For a while, most of this work discussed these links with parties as the starting point (Allern, 2010, Katz & Mair, 1995, Poguntke 2000, 2006), not least because many interest group scholars considered them less relevant in the era of corporatism (Allern & Bale, 2012). However, the interest group literature on the interaction between parties and organized interests has recently grown (e.g. Beyers et al., 2015; DeBruycker, 2016; Marshall, 2015; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013; Wonka, 2017). Many studies have moved beyond a focus on formal, institutionalized links to considering a broader range of actors and types of contacts (e.g. Allern, 2010; Marshall, 2015; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013).

Yet, most studies focus on links between organized interests and parties without considering specific policy issues (e.g. Marshall, 2015; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). As a result, they make general assumptions about which parties and interest group types should be ideologically aligned (trade unions and social-democratic parties) rather than consider that the congruence of the positions of these actors may vary between policies. On some issues these political organizations may not follow what would be expected from their ideological predispositions and side with their traditional allies. Recent years have witnessed important exceptions to this pattern with issue specific studies examining both which parties and groups are aligned (Beyers et al., 2015) and the frequency of contacts between them (DeBruycker, 2016). Yet, similar to the remaining literature these studies pay little attention to the outcomes of interest group-party interactions.

A comparative study of Western democracies by Thomas acknowledges this challenge emphasizing how "the importance of the party-group connection has long been taken for granted, falling largely into the realm of intuitive axioms" (Thomas, 2001: 1). While a study of the systematic impact of relations between parties and organized interests on democracy was also beyond the scope of their study, Thomas and coauthors make considerable progress by explicitly discussing the impact of party-group connec-

tions in their country chapters. One of the conclusions that emerges from their study is that organized interests with close and cooperative relations to parties are generally better able at securing benefits and resources in their political systems. Similarly, a study by McMenamin and Schoenman (2007) of firms' perceived lobbying success of Polish executives finds that big firms without relations to powerful politicians estimated their own success to be weaker than those with such relations, even if these firms are not significantly less likely to lobby than firms with party connections.

Yet, we do not know whether party-group relations are related to the preference attainment of a broad range of different organized interests on specific policy issues, nor whether there is variation in lobbying success of organized interests depending on the type of political party. Looking at specific issues allows us to take into account that collaboration patterns between parties and groups vary between policy issues (DeBruycker, 2016). It also allows adding to existing research on the lobbying success of organized interests. This literature has emphasized how preference attainment is not only a consequence of group and issue characteristics but also affected by support for advocacy positions by other actors (e.g. Dür, 2015, Furlong, 1997, Mahoney, 2007, Rasmussen et al., 2018). Yet, it has not systematically considered the role of group-party contacts.

4.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE BENEFITS FOR ORGANIZED INTERESTS OF WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

Parties and organized interests can be seen as intermediary organizations that in a representative democracy help aggregate and transmit the views of their constituencies into policy (Schattschneider, 1948, 1960). At the same time, they also differ in important respects. First, while interest organizations are external to the political system, parties run for public office. Second, organized interests typically represent a more narrow substantive focus than political parties, which need to relate to the broader political agenda to gain and maintain office (Allern & Bale, 2012; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). We use a behavioral and broad definition of advocates in this chapter including all organized non-state actors with an interest in influencing policy (Baroni et al., 2014). In addition to traditional membership based interest groups, we also include experts and individual firms, all of whom we refer to as (policy) advocates or organized interests.

We assume that policy advocates are interested in affecting the content of policy-making to satisfy their stakeholders and ensure their long-term survival. To determine lobbying success, we rely on the strategy of preference attainment, which has been frequently used in recent studies (e.g. Dür et al., 2015). This approach aims to establish

the preferences of advocates or other actors on specific issues and then compares these to the final policy outputs. To assess whether advocates attained their preferences we compare the rates at which policy changed (or did not change) in line with the preferences of different sets of advocates. Even if our analysis includes a series of controls we do not assume a causal link between the actions of specific advocates and final policy. As a result, our analyses refer to "preference attainment" rather than "influence" (e.g. Mahoney, 2007). De Bruycker (2016) explains how even if interactions between groups and parties can be initiated by parties, organized interests often make the first move. Advocates have strong incentives to contact parties since they cannot introduce legislation, suggest amendments to legislative proposals or vote on such proposals. Through contacts with parties they therefore try to affect both a) which items (do not) appear on the political agenda and b) the content and fate of these items (Witko, 2009). They can do so in numerous ways e.g. by putting forward draft legislation and amendments or by presenting statistics and studies (Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998).

Political parties are expected to be interested in helping organized interests fulfill their policy goals since they provide them with valuable resources. Advocates can for example offer technical expertise, information about voter preferences and financial contributions (Allern & Bale, 2012) or help parties increase the public legitimacy of their policy decisions (Witko, 2009). Hence, we understand their decision to engage with political parties from an exchange perspective where advocates and parties exchange useful resources with one another (Allern & Bale, 2012, Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013, Warner, 2000, Witko, 2009). This means that rather than seeing the relationship between organized interests and political parties as a zero-sum game, we expect the two to engage in a plus-sum game where they mutually benefit from interacting (Allern & Bale, 2012).

According to Heaney, parties and organized interests act as "brokers" within one another's network and in the policy process. He mentions how "parties may help to put some interest groups into key positions of influence or exclude others from decision making" (2010: 56). Yet, policy impact is not the only good that parties offer to policy advocates. The parties themselves can also be seen as information providers. Hence, through party contacts, advocates can get valuable access to information about party preferences and future political agendas, which may help them develop more effective lobbying strategies (Witko, 2009). Moreover, Klüver (2018) demonstrates that the attention that German political parties pay to policy issues is in part determined by interest group mobilization on the issue: the more organized interests mobilize on an issue, the more political parties pay attention to it. This suggests that organized interests can indeed get their issues on the agendas of parties – a first step towards influencing policy outputs. In sum, because parties enjoy control over the policy agenda and can provide policy advocates with important information about policy processes, we would expect

advocates who work with political parties to experience a higher degree of lobbying success:

> *Hypothesis 1: The likelihood of congruence between the position of an advocate and the policy outcome on an issue increases when advocates work with political parties.*

While we might expect organized interests to benefit from working with any political party, advocates should get more out of certain types of parties. A substantial share of the literature on lobbying by organized interests has focused on the decision of which legislators (e.g. Austen-Smith, 1994, Crombez, 2002, Gullberg, 2008, Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998), or parties to lobby (DeBruycker, 2016; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). While these studies are not about lobbying success as such, the arguments stating 'who to lobby' are ultimately motivated by an expectation of which types of legislators/parties would help groups obtain the biggest impact on policy.

According to one logic, advocates should be more likely to attain their preferences if they work with parties that are powerful and control decision-making within the legislature. In the US literature it has been suggested that it should be particularly beneficial for policy advocates to lobby legislators who hold powerful positions in Congress since they can decide on the future agenda and affect the decisions of their colleagues (e.g. Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998, Kingdon, 1989, but see Wonka, 2017). Although more unitary political parties, as opposed to individual legislators, are the focus of this chapter, this logic should also apply to parties, where certain types of parties may be more decisive for both whether legislation gets introduced and whether it gets adopted.

There are several potential sources of party power in (Western European) political systems. Firstly, the government status of parties should influence their impact of on policy. For one, it is the responsibility of the government to present an overall plan for their period in government and a corresponding budget proposal for each legislative term (Peter Bjerre Mortensen et al., 2011). Hence, they often act as gate-keepers determining which items appear on the legislative agenda. Empirically, too government parties are much more likely to fulfill their election pledges (Thomson et al., 2017)[24] than parties in opposition – underlining their influence over political decision-making. Due to this central role played by government parties at all stages of the policy process, advocates should therefore benefit especially from working with this set of parties.

A second potential source of party power is the share of parliamentary seats a party controls. Of course, this is related to government status in the sense that larger parties

24 We do not distinguish between majority and minority governments, as both can fulfill their pledges at comparable rates (Thomson et al., 2017) and are legislatively equally effective (Cheibub, Przeworski, & Saiegh, 2004).

are also more likely to enter government. Still, party size has traditionally been seen as linked to the political relevance of parties (Sartori, 1976). Larger parties often also have more resources at their disposal, at least in part because in many parliaments funds are allocated in proportion to party size (Brauninger & Debus, 2009), which should help them in their ability to introduce and develop legislative proposals.

Empirically, these characteristics often correlate strongly, which is why we follow the approach of previous studies (Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017) and combine party size and government status to identify more powerful political parties. Such an index has the added benefit of indirectly capturing other sources of party power. For example, larger government parties are statistically speaking also more likely to provide the prime minister (giving additional control over the policy agenda (Glasgow & Golder, 2011) and more likely to include the median legislator. We thus expect that working with powerful political parties should help advocates attain their preferences.

Hypothesis 2: The likelihood of congruence between the position of an advocate and the policy outcome on an issue increases when advocates work with powerful parties.

While working with powerful parties might be beneficial for groups, an alternative logic would argue that organized interests would benefit if they worked with parties which share their policy views. In the US literature discussing which individual legislators organized interests lobby, this is the perspective that has found most support (see Baumgartner & Leech, 1996; Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998). As an example, Hall and Deardorff (2006) describe lobbying as a process where lobbyists provide information to like-minded legislators as a "legislative subsidy" in return for policy influence. Parties with similar positions to the advocate's might ultimately be the ones most likely to grant access and help them attain their preferences. Hence, even if advocates can choose on a case by case basis who to work with "party-group relations are not one-shot contacts and 'collaboration' often has a longer time horizon than ad hoc lobbying contacts" (Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017: 98). Importantly, the lobbying process also involves creating and maintaining "relationships of trust" (Baumgartner & Leech, 1996: 531-32).

It can be expected that when it comes to persuading someone to table and introduce new legislation and keeping issues of the agenda, reliance on traditional likeminded allies is important (Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998). Hence to affect these processes requires more than persuading a certain party to change its vote. Relying on allies may have the spin-off effect that groups can also rely on these parties as *agents* that negotiate and bargain on their behalf (Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998; Wonka, 2017). Working with allied parties can therefore enable them to exert an impact on the efforts of a broader set of parties than the ones directly targeted by the groups. Even if the policy advocates have the resources to address different political parties, it may still be beneficial for them to

have other MPs act on their behalf and contact their fellow members of parliament. Hence, allied parties can often present their views in a more legitimate fashion than the advocates themselves who may be regarded as representing particularistic interests only. In sum, our third hypothesis therefore argues that working with likeminded political parties can be expected to result in substantial benefits for groups.

Hypothesis 3: The likelihood of congruence between the position of an advocate and the policy outcome on an issue increases when advocates work with parties with which they agree.

We expect that there should be independent benefits of working with both powerful and allied parties, but these effects may also re-inforce each other. Imagine a scenario where an advocate has convinced a party on its side of the issue to push for its introduction. This ally will be much more effective if it is not a small opposition party, but is instead a large government party enjoying more direct control over the policy agenda. The reverse is also likely. Working together with a government party will be more effective if the party is already positively predisposed towards the advocate and/or its policy position. In such a scenario, the advocate 'only' has to convince the party to actively push for the policy, rather than achieve a much more difficult position shift from the party in question. Summarizing, we expect the independent effects of working with a powerful or a party on the same side of an issue to re-inforce one another, leading to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: The positive impact of working with allied parties on the likelihood of preference attainment is stronger, the more powerful these parties are.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Case selection and sampling

We inc lude five countries in this study: Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. Although we do not expect large cross-national differences, the countries vary on a number of variables to ensure that our results are likely to travel beyond their immediate context. The first is whether interest representation is organized in a pluralist (the UK) or corporatist (the other countries) fashion (Siaroff, 1999), as this may influence whether advocates rely on political parties as the main targets of their lobbying activity (Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013). Our study also contains countries with patterns of wholesale government alternation where new governments tend to be comprised of different parties than the incumbents (UK, DK, SE), a system where this replacement

is usually partial (NL) and one where both scenarios occur (DE). This matters, because organized interests may approach parties differently based on the pattern of government alternation (Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017).

As mentioned, we focus on specific policy issues. Whereas some organized interests might have an interest in pushing policy in a more left- or right-wing direction, most of their activities are directed at influencing specific policies (Berkhout et al., 2017). Unlike recent studies adopting an issue-level approach (Beyers et al., 2015, DeBruycker, 2016), we do not start from issues on the legislative agenda, but focus on 50 policy issues on which public opinion data was available (Appendix 4.1 contains a list of all issues and a description of the selection process), since the amount of public support for an advocate's policy position may affect its lobbying success (Rasmussen, Mäder, et al., 2018). Further criteria were that the policy issue should include a change to the status quo to allow us to track policy (change), that it fell under the national government's jurisdiction[25] (for a similar approach, see Gilens, 2012). This allows us to include issues at different stages of the policy process, rather than only those that have on the legislative agenda. It means that we can also study the preferences and activities of advocates who tried to get their issues on the agenda, or keep them off it (Berkhout et al., 2017). We also ensure variation in terms of the type of policy issue (Lowi, 1964), as redistributive issues may generate more contestation and debate than regulatory and distributive issues. There are some concerns that issues included in polls are more salient than the average issue (Burstein, 2014). To address this, we have selected policy issues that vary in terms of the amount of media attention they attracted and our analyses control for the media salience of a policy.

Our final unit of observation is an advocate on a policy issue. To identify advocates active on our issues, we tracked three sources over a four-year period after the poll, or until policy change occurred following the approach of Gilens (2012). Firstly, student assistants hand-coded all newspaper articles about the issue in two major newspapers in each country to record statements about the issue[26]. This coding was complemented with a face-to-face interview with a civil servant who worked on the issue (response rate of 82%). In a third step, we identified advocates that used formal consultation tools available in their countries (such as consultations on legislative proposals, or hearings in parliament). Through December 2016 and the first months of 2017, an online survey was sent to the 1,410 advocates that were identified as active on our issues. As mentioned, we

25 The data were collected for the GovLis project (www.govlis.eu).

26 We selected one left-leaning and right-leaning broadsheet newspaper per country to avoid bias in the coverage certain types of organized interests receive. The newspapers were *Politiken* and *Jyllandposten* in Denmark, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Germany, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* in the UK, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* in Sweden, and *de Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* in the Netherlands.

included not just traditional membership associations, but focused on a much broader set of advocates including experts and businesses. A total of 410 advocates responded to the questions regarding political parties (29%, excluding "don't knows"), with 478 finishing the survey. Appendix 4.2 shows a non-response analysis of the likelihood of responding to the survey. The model shows that an advocate's likelihood of responding was not dependent on whether policy change occurred on the issue, nor on its media salience or policy type. However, firms and business groups were significantly less likely to respond to our survey than others, which means that we are more confident generalizing our results to non-business advocates. Similar to what we have seen in other interest group surveys, responses vary between countries (Binderkrantz & Rasmussen, 2015) with Dutch, Danish and to a lesser extent Swedish advocates significantly more likely to respond to the survey than invitees from Germany and the UK. Although this may limit generalizability, the fact that the UK and German respondent samples are similar to those in the other countries means that results are likely to apply to these countries, too. In the survey, we included all parties that were represented in parliament during the observation period, with at least 1% of the total vote share during the observation period[27].

Measuring preference attainment

As a first step, we measured whether the position of an advocate is congruent with the policy outcome on an issue. The positions of advocates were coded as in favor, neutral, or against changing the status quo on the policy issue. We initially relied on coding the positions from written sources (like the newspapers and consultations mentioned above). Where we identified the advocate but not their position or a neutral position, we complemented these with self-reported positions from the survey. To determine whether policy changed we used minutes of parliamentary meetings, legislative texts, and media sources and corroborated our coding during the interviews with civil servants. Our final dependent variable measuring preference attainment takes on a value of 1 if the final policy output was in the advocate's preferred direction, and 0 if it was not.

4.4 MEASURING THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Research on the collaboration between organized interests and political parties has relied on both attitudinal and behavioral measures (see also Allern & Bale, 2012; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). Behavioral measures focus on interactions between organized

27 With the exception of the SNP and DUP in the UK and the Socialistisk Folkeparti in Denmark, which were not included in the interviews with civil servants.

interests and parties (e.g. Allern, 2010), whereas attitudinal ones typically ask organized interests to rate the importance and degree of cooperation with parties (e.g. Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). Without discarding the value of behavioral measures, this chapter relies on an attitudinal approach, because we believe it best fits our research question. For one, it is complicated to retrospectively map all interactions between advocates and parties – especially on our specific policy issues. Although some formal communication might still be retrievable, many informal channels through which advocates may have worked with parties would be difficult to systematically assess. Secondly, the channels through which advocates sought to contact parties may vary across countries, further complicating the construction of a valid behavioral measure. The difficulty of pre-defining a set of possible contact channels is demonstrated by Rasmussen and Lindeboom (2013) who found that even when using an extensive list of possible contacts and parties based on previous studies, the "other" category was still selected most often. Moreover, Otjes and Rasmussen (2017) show that their measure, which asks about intensity of cooperation between an interest group and a party correlates very highly with measures enquiring about specific points of contact.

We therefore asked advocates to indicate how important each political party in their country was to their "work on the issue". We expect most advocates who say a party was important to their efforts to have at least (tried to) engage(d) with parties they deemed (very) important. This formulation has the dual advantage of not probing any specific activities, whilst at the same time still requiring that the party was important to a respondent's advocacy *work* on the issue.

However, there is a risk that parties that influenced policy-making on the issues are rated as "important" by advocates, independent of whether the party was contacted. We have taken two steps to address this concern. Firstly, all our analyses include a control variable that measures the share of political parties that was on the same side of the issue as the advocate. This should help ensure that the simple fact that many parties may have independently pushed for a policy does not affect the main effects[28]. Secondly and importantly, we also asked whether *direct contact* with both members of parliament and members of the government on the issue were important to the advocate. These measures correlate significantly and strongly with our measure; 85% of advocates who indicated at least one party was (not) important or very important to their work on the issue, also indicated that *direct* contact with members of parliament was (not) important or very important, and a Kruskall-Wallis equality of populations rank test of ordinal versions of the measures was significant ($p < 0.001$). Correlations are slightly less strong but

28 We also estimated our models using a measure that includes the share of parliamentary seats controlled by parties on the same side of an issue as the advocate, a measure for whether at least one and the number of government parties sharing the advocate's position (models not shown). All results remain substantively unchanged.

still significant for our question about direct contact with members of the cabinet. The full question formulation and alternative analyses are presented in Appendix 4.6

To measure whether advocates worked with political parties (H1), we construct a binary variable for all respondents who answered that at least one party was important or very important for their work on the issue (1) and those that did not (0).

For the hypotheses related to the power of the political party (H2) we create an index to measure the strength of how powerful the average party that advocates said was important to their work was. It is composed of two measures: the first related to the size of the average important party, the second to whether the average important party was in government[29].

We operationalized the size of the party as the average share of seats controlled by the parties that were deemed important or very important by the advocate. Since our observation period varies per issue and sometimes spans an election, the size of a party is measured as the average proportion of seats in the national parliament that was held by the party during the observation period, weighted by the number of days the party held those seats. So a political party that held 20% of all seats during half the observation period and 30% during the second half, is scored as having held 25% of all seats on the issue. The final advocate-level variable is then the average size of the average party that was deemed (very) important. To illustrate this, imagine advocate A, who deemed parties A and B important. Party A held on average 20% of all seats in parliament during the observation period, and party B held on average 10% of seats in the observation period. Advocate A is then scored as 15% on this variable, since this is the average share of seats held by the parties it deemed important. To measure working with government parties, we look at the share of all important parties that were in government at least 30% of the observation period. The cut-off point is set to ensure that we capture working with parties that spent a reasonable amount of time in government to make it feasible that the party could have pushed for a policy change. Both measures run from 0-1 (and are correlated at .78), which is why we summed them and divided by two to create our index. It runs from 0 (no party was important) to 1 (the average "important party" controls all seats in parliament and is in government). In our data, the variable runs from 0 to .78.

To capture whether advocates worked with parties they agreed with (H3) we first measured the positions of political parties through expert judgements. In interviews we asked civil servants to assess the positions of parties (against, neutral or in favor) on the issue. These expert assessments correspond well with our impressions from the

29 The centrality of a party in the political system is another potential source of party power. However, it is not immediately clear which party controls the median legislator on a specific policy issue, especially given that our observation period sometimes spans elections.

extensive coding of newspapers and other documents, giving them a high face-validity. Relying on interviews does mean that we did not obtain positions for some parties on some issues, leading to a lower number of parties included in the calculation of this variable. However, it has the advantage that we measure these positions relying on experts with considerable public and hard to access private information. Moreover, the amount of missing data would have been higher had we relied on party manifestos, which do not mention the vast majority of the issues in our sample. Expert interviews for the mapping of policy positions have successfully been used in studies of EU policy negotiations where experts have located actors' policy positions spatially (Thomson, 2006, Dür & Marshall, 2015). The final variable "Worked with parties on the same side" was then operationalized as the share of parties the advocate agreed with, out of the total number of political parties that the advocate found important for their work on the issue, meaning that the variable measures whether the advocate focused more (or less) on parties they agreed with.

Finally, we test whether the effect of working with parties with which advocates agree is stronger when these parties are powerful (H4) by interacting our measure of "Worked with parties on the same side" with the index of party power. Appendix 4.3 provides a full overview of our variables.

Control variables

Our analysis contains a number of controls. As mentioned the first control variable is the share of political parties in the system that agreed with the advocate, regardless of whether the advocate worked with them. The second control is the media saliency of an issue, which is measured as the average number of articles about the issue in the two coded newspapers per day during the observation period. We also include the type of advocate since business actors may be more likely to attain their preferences (but see Dür et al., 2015; Yackee & Yackee, 2006). Based on an organization's website, we distinguish the following actor types: a) trade unions and occupational associations, b) expert and think tank organizations and institutional associations, c) business associations, d) firms, e) religious, identity and hobby groups and f) public interest groups. An overview of the advocate coding is provided in Appendix 4.4.

Moreover, we control for resources, which have been linked to the preference attainment of advocates, although the evidence is mixed (e.g. Baumgartner et al., 2009). We use two survey questions to capture different types of resources. The first probes the extent to which an advocate agreed that they spent "a large amount of economic resources" on the issue to capture whether their advocacy was backed by financial resources. The second question asks whether the advocate agreed that they had "a large amount of media attention" for their work on the issue, to measure whether the advocate perceived their outside lobbing as successful. For the final binary variable those

who said they neither disagreed nor agreed, agreed or agreed strongly were coded as possessing these resources on the issue.

We also include the share of other advocates on the same side of an issue as the advocate, which should be positively related to the likelihood that the advocate gets its way (e.g. Mahoney, 2007). In addition, we control for whether advocates who have strong public support are more likely to attain their preferences (Rasmussen, Mäder, et al., 2018). The variable indicates the share of the public (as indicated in the opinion poll) that was on the same side of an issue as the advocate.

Finally, studies on policy change and organized interests show that, at least in the US, there is a considerable 'status quo bias' meaning that actors who want to change the status quo are at a disadvantage (Mahoney, 2007; Rasmussen, Mäder, et al., 2018) (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Gilens, 2012). We thus include a measure indicating whether the advocate wants to change the status quo.

4.5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results of a series of logistic multilevel models predicting whether an advocate attained its preference, with random-intercepts for policy issues to account for the nesting of our advocates in policy issues (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). Models 1 through 3 each investigate the effects of hypotheses 1 through 3 separately. Models 4 and 5 then include interaction effects to test our fourth hypothesis arguing that there are additional benefits of working with parties on the same side as an advocate when they are also powerful.

Our results tell a somewhat different story than expected based on existing research arguing that party-group connections should increase the ability of organized interests to secure benefits and resources in their political systems (Thomas, 2001) and increase the perceived degree of lobbying success (McMenamin & Schoenman, 2007). Hence, against the expectations formulated in hypothesis 1, we see that – at least on specific policy issues –working with political parties on an issue is generally not related to higher rates of preference attainment, as there is no significant relationship between working with any party and preference attainment in model 1.

We also find little evidence that working with powerful parties is directly related to preference attainment (H2) in model 2, even if the effect is close to significant ($p < 0.1$) when we introduce the control variables (model 2 in Appendix 4.5). When it comes to working with parties on the same side, the results are somewhat mixed. The relationship between working with friends and preference attainment (H3) is not significant in Model 3 ($p<0.1$), but does become significant when the control variables are added to the model (see model 3 in Appendix 4.5). While we assume the full model including controls

Table 4.1: Multilevel logistic regression models for the preference attainment of an advocate on an issue.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
H1: Worked with any party	-0.04				
	(0.32)				
H2: Party power		0.40		-1.26	-0.92
		(0.64)		(0.91)	(1.08)
H3: Worked with parties on same side			0.91+	-1.13	-1.14
			(0.55)	(1.18)	(1.43)
H4: Worked with parties on same side*party power				6.97*	9.15*
				(3.35)	(4.22)
Controls					
Parties on same side	1.45***	1.45***	1.27**	1.18**	1.04*
	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.46)	(0.53)
Articles per day					1.25
					(0.98)
Economic resources					-0.42
					(0.35)
Perceived media attention					-0.74
					(0.55)
Other actors' support					3.26***
					(0.97)
Public support					2.25**
					(0.78)
Pro policy change					-0.76*
					(0.34)
Actor type (ref: business)					
Religious & identity groups					-0.40
					(1.11)
Public interest groups					0.88
					(0.76)
Trade unions & occupational groups					-0.63
					(0.68)
Firms					-0.60
					(0.79)
Experts, think tanks and institutional associations					-0.02
					(0.64)
Constant	-0.58	-0.75	-0.87	-0.78	-2.88*
	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.58)	(0.62)	(1.15)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Issue random intercepts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of advocates	264	264	264	264	264
Number of issues	34	34	34	34	34
AIC	357	357	354	353	320
BIC	386	385	383	389	395

Standard errors in parentheses. + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

is the correct specification, the relatively large number of variables and low number of observations at the issue-level does make us reluctant to draw too firm conclusions about the effect of working with friends. If anything, however, the data are somewhat more consistent with the pattern that working with friends is related to preference attainment on an issue than vice versa.

In models four and five we assess the expectation that the effect of working with parties on the same side of an issue is stronger the more powerful these parties are on average (H4). The significant interaction term in model 4 supports this expectation ($p<0.05$). Moreover, we demonstrate that the effect holds once we add our remaining control variables in model 5. Figure 1 shows that the marginal effect of working with parties on the same side increases the more powerful they are. We also see that the effect of working with a party on an advocate's side is only significant when the advocate works with parties scoring on above 0.27 on our power index, although this exact point does vary somewhat depending on the specification of the model. Appendix 4.8 shows the inverse relationship: the effect of working with powerful parties only becomes significant when on average 36% of those parties are also on the same side of the issue as the advocate, again keeping in mind that this cut-off point is somewhat sensitive to different model specifications. These results confirm the expectations that the effect of working with parties on the same side of the advocate becomes stronger once those parties are also powerful.

Regarding our control variables we find a strong and significant effect of the share of parties that share the advocate's position on the issue. Keeping all other variables at their mean and based on model 5, the predicted probability of an advocate attaining their preferences when no parties support its position is around 47% and increases to 66% when all parties are on the same side as the advocate.

In addition, the share of organized interests on the same side as an advocate increases its likelihood of preference attainment. Similarly, the stronger the public's support for the advocate's position, the higher the likelihood that the latter attains its preferences. We also find evidence for a status quo bias (Mahoney, 2007; Rasmussen, Mäder, et al., 2018): advocates who want to change the status quo are less likely to attain their preferences than those who want to maintain it. We find no evidence of an effect of media salience, nor any systematic differences between business groups and the other types of advocates. Similarly, we echo recent conclusions in the literature that the relationship between lobbying resources and success might be less straightforward than often expected (Baumgartner et al., 2009). None of our measures of self-reported resources are significantly related to an advocate's preference attainment. Finally, we do not find any significant cross-national differences.

Taken together, the results provide very limited evidence that working with political parties is effective per se. The same applies when it comes to simply working with

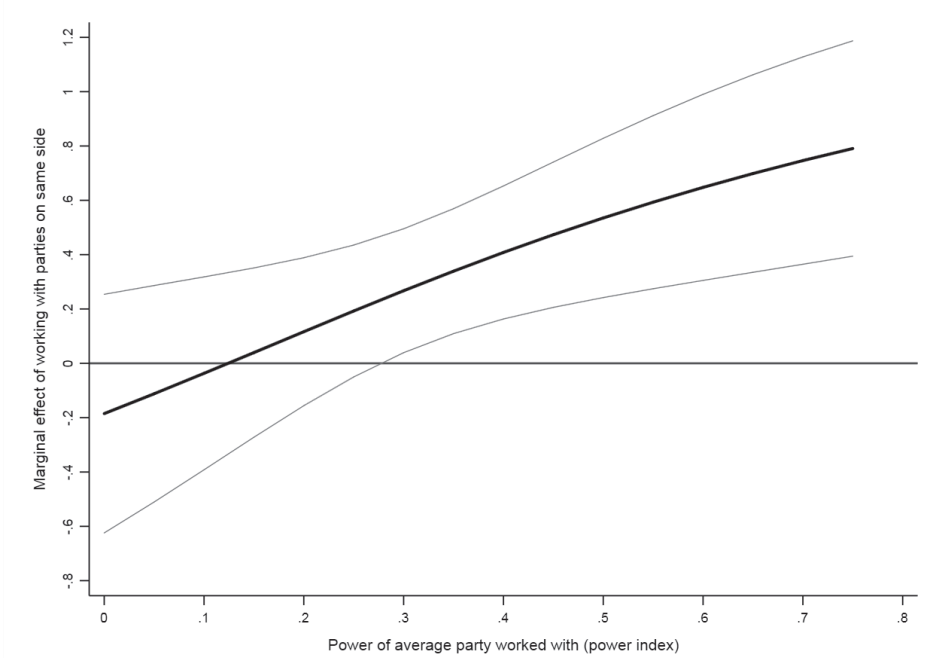

Figure 4.1: Marginal effect of working with parties on same side on preference attainment, by the power of the parties with 95% confidence intervals. Based on Model 5.

powerful *or* friendly parties, where we find only weak evidence for the latter. Instead, our results suggest that the strategy is only related to preference attainment under certain conditions: when organized interests work with parties that are on average both powerful and on the advocate's side.

Robustness and model checks

We have run a number of robustness checks, which are shown in Appendices 6 and 7. Importantly, we considered more behavioral measures of working with political parties, relying on survey questions asking about the importance of *direct contact* with MPs and members of the cabinet. The models in Appendix 4.6 show that, in line with our findings regarding H1, there is also no difference in levels of preference attainment for advocates that directly contacted either MPs or the national government and their preference attainment.

To test the robustness of our interactions (H4), models 1 and 2 in Appendix 4.7 show that the results are robust to replacing the power index with each of its components. Model 1 interacts the party size component with the share of parties a group worked with that were on the same side of the advocate. Model 2 does the same for the share of parties a group worked with that were in government. Both interaction terms are

positive and significant, underlining that the findings are not driven by just one of these (correlated) aspects of party power. In addition, we reconstructed the index for party power counting parties as "in government" that were in government at least 20% of days of the observation period (instead of 30%) in model 3. Moreover, model 4 uses the *number of parties* a group worked with on the same side as the advocate rather than *the share of parties*. Both models produce results similar to those presented above.

To ensure that the interactions in our logistic models are accurately estimated (Ai & Norton, 2003), we also ran multilevel OLS regressions instead of logit models which does not change the main findings either, although p-values for our interaction effects do increase to just over 0.10 when we use clustered standard errors instead of random intercepts for issues (not shown). Our interaction effects also meet the assumption of linearity. To test this, we used the Interflex package by Hainmueller et al. (2018) and estimated models 7 and 8 as OLS regressions with robust standard errors for policy issues confirming that the interactions are indeed linear in this specification. Finally, some advocates indicated that no single party was important to their work on the issue. These advocates were scored a "0" on the power index and "worked with parties on their side" variables. To ensure that these observations do not affect the results in models 4 and 5, we re-ran the analysis with only the 150 advocates who said at least one party was important to their work on the issue and found similar results.

4.6 CONCLUSION

While interaction between organized interests and political parties is widely perceived as shaping democratic governance, the relevance of interest group-party linkage is often "taken for granted" in existing research (Thomas, 2001). We examined one important way in which interest group-party collaboration might matter by conducting the first systematic, cross-national study of how it affects the preference attainment of advocates on specific policy issues.

Our analysis finds little evidence to suggest a general relation between working with political parties and preference attainment. Even when replacing our survey measure about the "importance of a party for an advocate's work on the issue" with questions asking about direct contact with members of parliament or the cabinet, we still do not find higher levels of preference attainment for advocates using this strategy. There is also no strong evidence that groups benefit from working with either powerful or allied parties only, even if there is some indication that working with parties on the same side as the advocate may be related to preference attainment. The two do seem to work in combination, however: advocates stating that both powerful and allied parties are

important for their work on an issue are more likely to attain their preferences than advocates who state none or only one of them was important.

This chapter has important implications for not only the study of party-interest group links, but also the interest group literature discussing whom to lobby. It is particularly interesting that there is no general benefit of working together with powerful parties. Hence, findings that organized interests are more likely to collaborate with larger parties (DeBruycker, 2016; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017) would suggest that at least the advocates themselves *expect* to gain more from working with such parties. It is possible, however, that working with powerful players matters less in our sample of policy cases which includes issues at all stages of the policy cycle rather than just those that have made it on to the legislative agenda. Hence, it has been argued that lobbying powerful legislators should mainly be effective at the later stages of the decision-making process (Crombez, 2002), which is something future studies could consider.

The chapter also qualifies the view that advocates should lobby their friends (Baumgartner & Leech, 1996; Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998). We add that this strategy is more strongly related to preference attainment if the parties with which actors work are also powerful enough to affect policy. In this way, our study emphasizes an image of lobbying where preference attainment is more likely when advocates reach out to parties sympathetic to their policy ideas and influential enough to influence policy (change). Affecting policy outcomes through working together with allied powerful parties can be seen as a subtle form of lobbying success, because these parties and advocates held the same preferences from the outset (Kollman, 1997, Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998). It suggests that the influence of advocates on policy (through the lobbying of political parties) may work mainly through reemphasizing existing preferences, or by influencing whether issues make it on to the legislative agenda (Kollman, 1997, Klüver, 2018). At the same time, our findings are robust to controlling for the overall support of either all or only the governmental political parties for an advocate's position on the policy issue. This lends support for the conjecture that what (also) matters is working together with powerful allies and not just co-incidental agreement between advocates and parties.

There are two limitations that are worth emphasizing here, however. The first is the relatively low response rates among business. This means that we are less confident generalizing our findings to this particular set of policy advocates. Secondly, our survey measure does not allow us to disentangle the many possible ways in which advocates may seek to lobby political parties (for example: contacting members of parliament, working groups, or manifesto committees). Although we confirm our main finding regarding the lack of a main effect of lobbying parties with measures of direct contact with parliament and government, future studies could include more detailed strategy measures.

While this chapter presents an important step forward by considering the importance of political parties for the preference attainment of policy advocates, there are still many other questions that future research could take up. For one, although we ensured cross-national variation on a number of important variables, our study cannot fully distinguish important potential institutional factors. This matters because there are indications that such institutional mechanisms shape tie formation between advocates and parties (Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). Future research could also examine in more detail which possible sources of a party's political power matter most, or compare issue at different stages of the policy cycle.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that while our examination of interest group-party ties and lobbying success makes an important contribution to the existing literature, this is only one possible way that such relationships may shape democratic governance. Future research should therefore also consider how (different types of) group-party interaction may affect more general patterns of influence between policy makers and organized interests and the effectiveness of democratic policy-making.