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REFERENCE No.

## End of Award Report

The mobilisation of organised interests in policy making:  
Access, activity and bias in the “group system”

RES-000-22-1932

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April, 2009

## Background

What organized interests are mobilized in influencing public policy? What does the map of organised interests – the ‘group system’ – look like? This has been a central concern in political science for decades. The reason for this preoccupation is clear. As Scholzman (2009) succinctly notes ‘... since organized interests are so important in informing public officials about the preferences and needs of stakeholders in political controversies and about how policies affect their lives and fortunes, the shape of the organized interest community matters crucially for the equal protection of citizen interests’. This broad area of scholarly endeavour has settled into a set of more or less well established focal points. Following Schattschneider (1960), there has been a consistent finding of a ‘business bias’ in the ‘group system’ (see also Scholzman and Tierney 1986, Browne 1990, Walker 1991, Baumgartner and Leech 2001). Others have focussed upon the declining centrality of ‘producer’ interests to policy making: suggesting that there is a ‘hollow core’ to policy communities (Heinz *et al.* 1993). It has been argued that the group system is characterised by the growth of niche or specialised policy actors (see Gray and Lowery 2000; Heaney 2004). These propositions and questions have rarely been explored empirically in quantitative studies outside of the US, and certainly not for the UK or Scotland.

The absence of studies of this nature in Britain *could* just reflect that groups and organised interests are simply a less important subject of study. The ascendancy of the ‘Westminster model’ has corralled scholarly attention in the direction of parliamentary output. Yet it has been long asserted that the ‘consultative’ system involving organised interests and the bureaucracy, (i) is important alongside the parliamentary (McKenzie 1958; Rose 1984), (ii) constitutes the British (and Scottish) ‘policy style’ (Richardson and Jordan 1979; Cairney 2008), and (iii) is the ‘orthodox’ UK public policy approach (Grant 2001). Others have highlighted the importance of the civil service in the legislative process (Page 2003). Perhaps, then, part of the reason for the absence of such studies is that data collection is difficult (May *et al.* 1998). Against this backdrop, the primary purpose of this research project was to deliver a dataset that would allow for a UK voice in this broad debate. The project has done just that by delivering a dataset that maps Scottish Government consultations. It spans more than two decades (1982-2007), covering almost 1700 discrete public consultations (issues) and includes more than 18,000 different organized actors engaging in more than 180,000 separate ‘influence events’.

This work is timely as several data collection projects have been completed that, in related but different ways, map the incidence of organised interests in public policy<sup>1</sup>. The research reported here contributes to work by comparative scholars of interest group/organized interests and public policy (particularly in the US): it will provide a

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, it connects with the expanding US ‘Policy Agendas’ project (managed by Baumgartner and Jones) and resonates with the long tradition of US studies of ‘bias’ in the US group system (work underway by Kay Scholzman and colleagues). Contacts have been made with both research projects.

related non-US literature. The work also has importance for other UK projects currently underway<sup>2</sup>.

## Objectives

The **first** objective was to *pilot* a process of policy issue-level data collection that could (eventually) be rolled-out UK wide, and perhaps on a cross-national comparative basis. As discussed in the 'Future Research Priorities' section below, this *pilot* project demonstrated that a broader UK project was practical and would yield valuable outputs.

The primary deliverable was to utilise records of Scottish Executive/Government consultations to generate a dataset of 'actors to policy-issues' for *both* the (1) pre- and (2) post-devolution time periods. A third (3) data collection objective was to leverage the list of *interest groups* generated by this mapping process as a population from which to randomly sample groups for the purposes of a postal survey<sup>3</sup>. The three data collection aims have been met in full: (1) a map of all participants active in Scottish public policy has been generated at an issue-level. This spans a 25-year period, includes 1691 policy-related consultation processes, and includes almost 18,000 discrete actors; (2) this dataset incorporates data for pre- and post-devolution periods, and enables a comparison between the two; and (3) a survey of a population of 1459 interest groups engaged in post-devolution Scottish public policy has been completed (response rate 32%, n=469) which provides the first such data on Scottish interest groups. In addition, and *beyond the project scope*, we collected data on (a) consultations undertaken by MSPs as part of formulating Members' Bills; (b) the consultations *mentioned* in the Policy Memoranda required for introduction of a Bill into the Scottish Parliament, and (c) (with Iain MacLeod) contributed to the development of a dataset mapping organised interests giving evidence to Scottish Parliamentary Committees (1999-2007).

The **second**, and *substantive*, research objective was to utilise this mapping data to engage in key debates hitherto dominated by US scholars. The results below provide an overview of the way this data can be used to engage in scholarly debates. As discussed below (see Methods section), the process of collecting and compiling the data has occupied the *overwhelming* proportion of our time and resources, far beyond that which we anticipated. Consequently, data analysis is still at a preliminary stage. However, we are working our way through the data and generating project outputs as we go. We have involved overseas scholars in the analysis (Dr Anne Binderkrantz – Aarhus University, Denmark; Herschel Thomas III – University of Texas, US), which will serve to both disseminate results through the (non-UK) discipline, but also bring to the project new analytical and comparative perspectives. As discussed in the Outputs section below, we have generated several conference papers and this is ongoing. These will (over time) generate journal articles and a book proposal is currently with publishers.

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<sup>2</sup> Professor Grant Jordan has almost completed an ESRC project 'Group Metrics: Scoping the Scale, Types and Trends of UK interest group numbers' [RES 000 22 1959]. His results map UK associations and offer a complementary analysis of 'bias' in the group system. Links have been made with Professor Jordan.

<sup>3</sup> The dataset from such a survey would enable more general questions about the nature of groups themselves to be answered.

## Methods

As discussed above, there is a UK tradition of civil servants consulting with organised interests across all stages of the policy process (from agenda setting to implementation). Thus, consultation offers an important window into the extent and pattern of mobilisation by policy actors<sup>4</sup>. Consultations are undertaken by civil servants in government departments for various reasons – e.g. to gauge initial reactions to a broad agenda, to obtain comments on a draft Bill or on modifications to specific (and technical) government regulations. Our data incorporates examples of consultations in all these guises.

The project's primary deliverable was the generation of a dataset of all actors engaged in public policy consultations in Scotland between 1982 and 2007. This dataset was compiled largely using paper-based records held in the Scottish Government Library and its document storage facility in Edinburgh, but with the addition of some more recent documentation only available electronically on the *Publications* pages of the Scottish Government website. Some limitations are important to acknowledge. The Scottish Government's internal *Consultation Good Practice Guidance* (2008) recommends that departments, on completing a consultation exercise, should deposit copies of responses with the Scottish Government Library and also post them on the Scottish Government website. However, this guidance has not always been followed, and therefore not all consultation documentation has made its way into the public domain. No *definitive* list of consultations conducted by the Scottish Government exists. Using the only points of reference available<sup>5</sup> we estimate that our dataset contains the responses to around 60% of all Scottish Government (and Scottish Office) consultations conducted between 1982 and 2007<sup>6</sup>. But, this is simply an estimate. We can *definitively* say that we mapped each and every consultation where data is available in the public domain: it is as comprehensive as it can ever be.

Methodologically, it is important to note that the research has adopted an innovative research design that has corrected many of the deficiencies in past attempts to map mobilisation by policy participants. The literature has recorded the difficulty in getting beyond generalised accounts of mobilisation. Typically, surveys of known groups deliver a general take on mobilisation; for instance Walker's (1991) impressive study of Washington groups could tell us in which policy domains groups were 'interested': agriculture, health, etc. This could not say whether 'interest' led to actual mobilisation, nor could it deal with issue-level variation (e.g. in how many issues in the agricultural domain were they active?) or the intensity of group activity (e.g. how often were they active?). The Baumgartner and Leech study (2001) was the first to map actual issue level activity by policy actors; and, as such, could start to answer these questions. The data we

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<sup>4</sup> In other work we explore engagement by organized interests directly with the Scottish Parliament through its committee system. Initial analysis suggests similar results as presented in this report for government consultations.

<sup>5</sup> These are (i) The Scottish Government's internal *Consultation Registration & Evaluation System*, (ii) the *Consultations* pages on the Scottish Government website, and (iii) a 1999-2005 list of consultations prepared in response to a journalist's Freedom of Information request.

<sup>6</sup> Initially we had records for 2064 consultations. Of these, 1691 had responses recorded. We then compared this list to (i) the *Consultations* pages of the Scottish Government website, and (ii) a list published by the SE as a result of a Freedom of Information request by the *Scotsman* newspaper (July 2005). A lengthy comparison of our dataset with these lists shows that we have data for around 70% of each. This, in turn, suggests that overall we have responses to around 60% of all consultations which appear in one or other list. Details could *not* be found for the remaining consultations.

have generated is in a similar vein, and is the first such dataset for the UK. Thus, methodologically, it is significant (in UK and comparatively).

The secondary dataset is the result of a postal survey of 'interest groups' active in post-devolution Scottish public policy. Here, the sample was drawn from a list of those organisations who had responded to consultations in the period 1999-2007. A weighted sampling method was used, whereby the more active organisations in the sampling frame were more likely to be included in the sample. This approach to sampling addresses recent calls from group scholars to integrate the analysis of group organisations with policy activity (Beyers *et al.* 2008). Because our sample comes from a broader analysis of *actual* group activity over a 25-year period, we can explore the ways in which group organisational variables (measured in the survey) may explain policy activity (measured in the broader consultations dataset). This is the subject of a paper (with Anne Binderkrantz) to be delivered at a seminar at Aarhus University (May 2009) and at the ECPR General Conference (September 2009).

## Results

In what follows, we provide an overview of the type of key debates that this data can be used to engage in, and gesture to the preliminary findings. Of course, as was the stated intention of the project - analysis may be taken in a range of other directions. This will happen over time.

### *(A) Mapping the 'group system'*

The core literature this research set out to engage with is the (largely US) tradition of mapping the 'group system' or the system of 'organised interests'. So what is the shape of the 'group system'? The expectations of generations of group scholars have been shaped by Schattschneider's (1960) remark that the 'heavenly chorus' of organized interests speaks with an upper class accent. The consistent finding has been the level of 'business' dominance. For reasons outlined above, this has been a debate constrained to US studies of Washington lobbying – albeit that UK scholars are encumbered with the general finding which shapes expectations (see Jordan 2009). But what evidence is there that this finding holds for a non-US context like the UK?

Below, Table 1 reports the types of actors engaged in consultations using our data (pooled 1982-2007). It reports both overall activity (allowing multiple counts of each actor), and the number of discrete actors (single counts). We have coded our data in a variety of (more or less detailed) ways: but to aid comparability here we utilise the coding scheme adopted by Baumgartner and Leech (2001). It shows that 'Government' and 'Institutions' (composed of operational arms of government – in the education and health fields) constitute the majority of overall activity.

It should be noted that Tables 1, 2 and 3 omit data on individual citizens<sup>7</sup>. This is because to make coding manageable we coded each citizen as the same actor: so individuals count for only a single actor. In our data, we record activity by over 90,000 individual citizens: with the majority of this activity concentrated on a *single* issue (smoking in public places) and the balance distributed over a small clutch of issues.

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<sup>7</sup> Tables do, however, include data on anonymous responses, i.e. responses with no respondent's name attached and therefore unidentifiable as being from either an individual or an organization. These were coded as a single organization for actor counts, but included in the overall figures for activity.

Table 1. Composition and Activity of Mobilized Policy Actors\*

Type of Actor	Activity		Actors		Act. Ratio
	N	%	N	%	
Governments	32016	34.5	2590	14.0	12.4
Institutions	19575	21.1	5367	29.1	3.6
Non-Profits and Citizen Groups	14904	16.0	3850	20.9	3.9
Professional Associations	7721	8.3	1026	5.6	7.5
Businesses	7032	7.6	3748	20.3	1.9
Trade Associations	5819	6.3	1116	6.0	5.2
Other	4974 <sup>#</sup>	5.4	686	3.7	7.3
Unions	845	0.9	73	0.4	11.6
Total	92886	100.0	18456	100.0	5.0

\*Excluding individual citizens who were all coded as a single actor. <sup>#</sup>This figure includes anonymous responses (which could be organizations *or* individuals).

Table 2 compares our data (pooled 1982-2007) with data from Baumgartner and Leech (2001) based on congressional lobbying registrations (for 1996) and with Schlozman's (2009) analysis of the *Washington Representatives* directory (for 2006).

Table 2. Population of Organized Interests Mobilized: Comparison with US Lobby data\*

	Scottish Data (1982-2007)		US Data (1996)		<i>Washington Representatives</i> (2006)
	N	%	N	%	%
Institutions <sup>+</sup>	5367	29.1	450	8	9.8
Non-Profits and Citizen Groups	3850	20.9	552	9	8.8
Businesses	3748	20.3	2548	43	36.1
Governments <sup>^</sup>	2590	14.0	706	12	11.8
Trade Associations <sup>~</sup>	1116	6.0	948	16	10.7
Professional Associations	1026	5.6	336	6	5.2
Unions	73	0.4	60	1	0.8
Other <sup>#</sup>	686	3.7	317	5	16.8
Total	18456	100.0	5907	100	100.0

*Source:* US data is reported in Baumgartner and Leech (2001, Table 2 'Total Registrations'); Washington Rep's data is reported in Schlozman (2009, Table 1): this data was converted into different categories for comparison purposes.

\*Excluding individual citizens who were all coded as a single actor. <sup>+</sup> To make this comparable to US data, this category includes the operational elements of government, such as schools, hospitals etc. <sup>^</sup> This includes central government departments, local authorities, parliament and NDPBs. <sup>~</sup> We adopt the US label, but this includes all collective business organisations. <sup>#</sup> This includes anonymous responses (which could be organizations *or* individuals)

The most obvious finding from Table 2 is the dominance of 'institutions' in our data compared to 'business' in the US data. There are some clear *methodological* and *contextual* reasons for this. Many operational elements of government<sup>8</sup> – which are coded as 'institutions' – are omitted from the directories counted by both US studies but prevalent

<sup>8</sup> For example, a high number of 'educational' related institutions - schools, school boards and related bodies - are in our data under the institutions heading.

in our data. But this alone cannot explain the finding. One contextual factor is the different role of the state in service delivery in the UK (versus US). Moreover, the fact that the operational functions of many of what are (governmental) institutions in the UK are performed by private sector businesses in the US, is probably also evident in the data. The broader conclusion from these two tables is that while interest group scholars say they are mapping the 'group system', in fact – if they pursue the idea of mapping more or less all *policy active* organisations – they end up mapping a small sector of collective interest groups surrounded by a broader population of 'institutional' policy participants (only around 33% of actors in our data are 'groups'). This recalls Salisbury's longstanding assertion that groups are important actors in public policy, but that institutions – he includes businesses, government and public sector organisations – are perhaps the most numerous and significant (1984).

The underlying processes that 'deliver' the observable 'group system' have also been hotly contested. Early pluralists assumed more or less automatic formation of groups to represent interests (Bentley 1908, Truman 1951). Others suggested that 'collective action' problems mean many interests would go unorganised: interests may exist but organisations may not form (Olson 1965). More recently Gray and Lowery (2000) argued that formation issues needed to be considered against the issue of 'mortality': the group system could not grow infinitely as there are limits in terms of the carrying capacity of any political system. However, Schlozman (2009) argues that none of these approaches really capture the *transitory* nature of policy active organizations: the complexion of the group system owes just as much to the ways in which actors – *often policy non-dedicated* – engage in policy life and then withdraw, going into *political* 'hibernation'.

The data generated from our study provides a unique window into the fluid process of entering and then emerging out of political 'hibernation' identified by Schlozman. We *cannot* assess *organisational* births and deaths: this is made easy by directories that note the entry and exit of groups from the 'system'<sup>9</sup>. But, that an actor is absent from the policy scene for a lengthy period – which our data catalogues – does suggest that it is in policy 'hibernation'<sup>10</sup>. Our approach is more sensitive than directories to this nuanced pattern of engagement (and disengagement) from the policy process. If we look at the number of times individual actors in our dataset engaged in consultations over a 25-year period, we find that 57% responded just a single time: they are like the Clydebank Youth Forum or the Annbank Primary School Board who engage in policy *only* as it comes to them – they are not policy dedicated actors. Only 6% of actors engaged more than 10 times over the 25-year period. Most are 'sporadic interventionists' in politics (Dowse and Hughes 1977).

The 'bias' argument is far more problematic to assess. There is a readiness in the US literature to read numerical head-counts of actors as a proxy for power (although see Lowery and Gray 2004). This infers a rather crude version of pluralism which, in a UK context, seems to ignore a range of alternative interpretations of numbers. For instance, the neo-corporatist tradition would read numerical superiority as weakness – unity is deemed crucial for 'bargaining' with government. A more suitable way to 'test' for the diversity of the system would be to look at the presence/absence of sets of interests on particular issues. The import of Schlozman's (2009) finding with respect to the intermittent hibernation of organised interests suggests that the production of 'bias' is

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<sup>9</sup> For instance the Washington Representatives directory notes 'registrations' and 'terminations' in real time on its web-site.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, it may be active in policy life in other guises, they may engage the media, lobby directly or any other strategy: this is unlikely, given the open access to consultations, but possible.

likely to be in the process of mobilisation (or lack of mobilisation) by specific sets of interests across the *spectrum* of policy issues within a policy system. Indeed, this is precisely what Baumgartner and Leech (2001) record when they note that business seems to be left to 'lobby alone' on issues with few participants. In general terms, our data shows a similar preponderance of business in those consultations with little mobilisation (see Halpin and Baxter 2008). Given our unease at reading off influence from basic 'head counts' of actors, making sense of this finding requires further case study analysis of mobilisation over specific issues.

*(B) Patterns of policy mobilisation?*

One of the innovative elements of this research was the choice to map actors at the issue level. Mapping the mobilisation of actors to specific consultations makes a link between mobilisation and a particular policy-issue context. This enables analysis of the *variation* in mobilisation across policy contexts. The only other study that we are aware of that has attempted a similar method is the work of Baumgartner and Leech (2001) who set about mapping 'how the involvement of groups is distributed across issues'. Their core finding was that most issues gathered small levels of mobilisation, while a handful of issues accounted for a disproportionately large degree of activity: there were a few 'bandwagon issues' accompanied by a large number of 'quiet corners'. We are able to test this finding for the UK context.

Figure 1. Distribution of actors across issues, 1982-2007 (pooled).

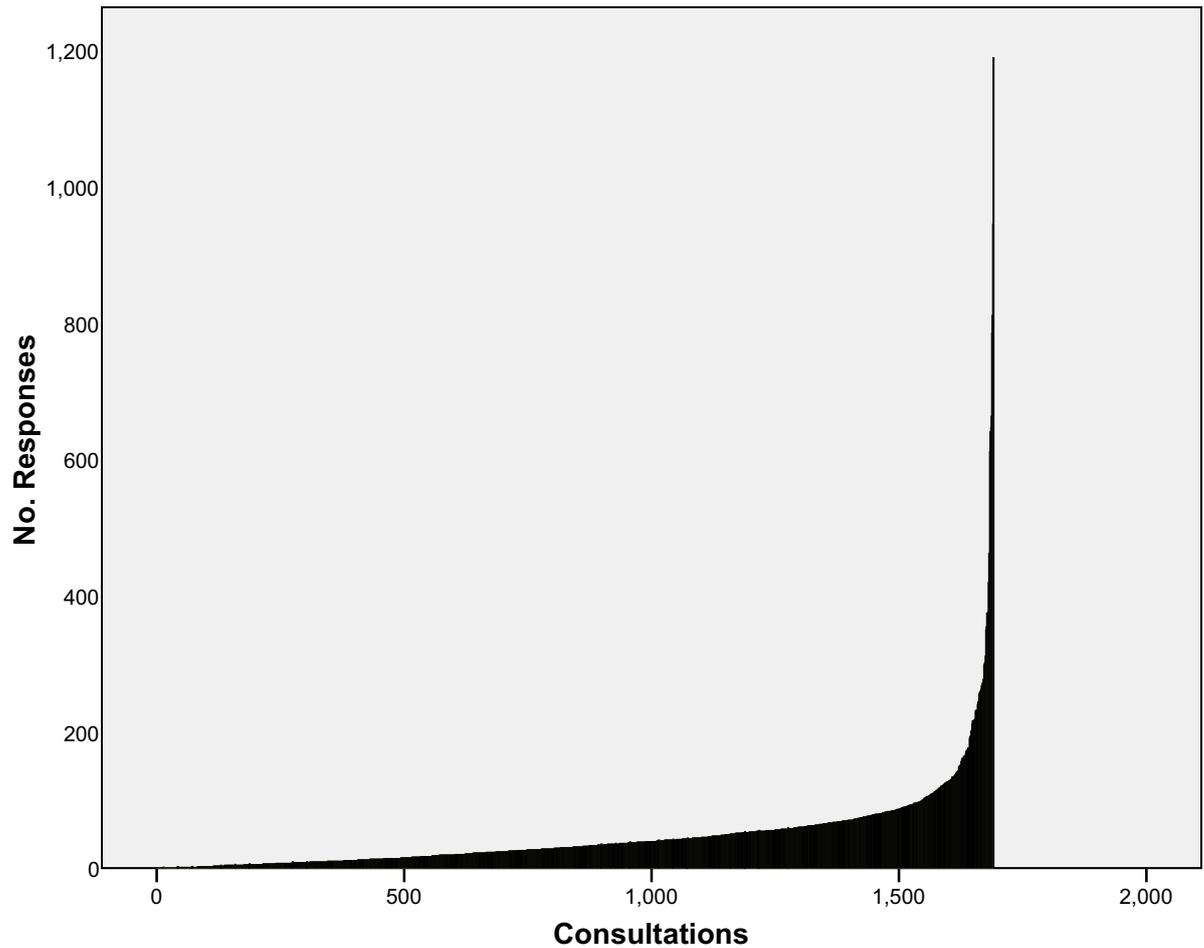
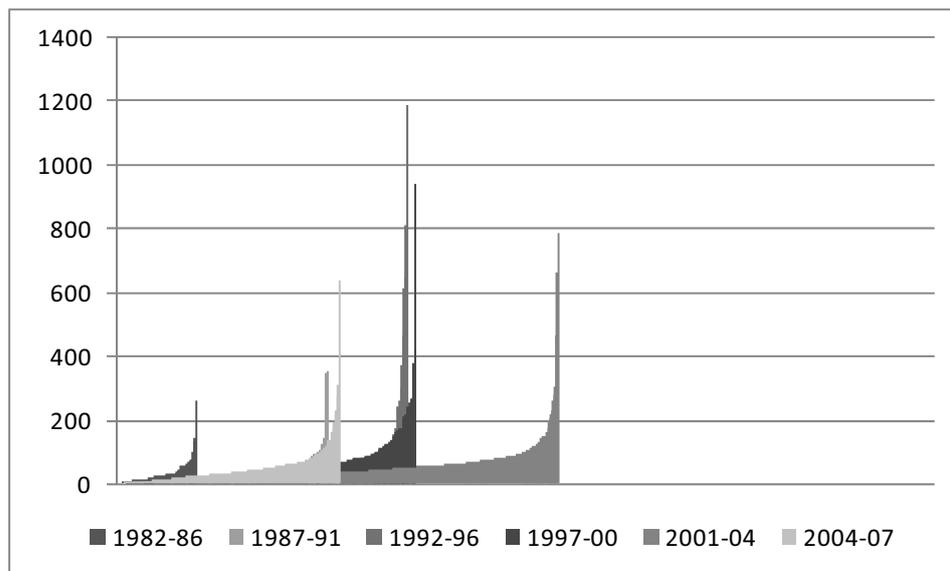


Figure 1 graphs the number of responses<sup>11</sup> (level of mobilisation) across all our issues for the 25-year period. It reveals the same skewed pattern found by Baumgartner and Leech (2001) in their US data. But they only had one year's worth of data, and we have 25 years. Further analysis establishes that this skewed pattern is repeated for *any* particular period of time. As Figure 2 below shows, it is repeated when data is organised roughly into UK parliamentary periods (it also holds for a single year, like that of 2006).

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<sup>11</sup> This particular figure is calculated by counting single actors once per consultation. We also remove individuals from the data. However, the shape of the distribution looks similarly skewed regardless of whether we include (i) multiple responses by the same actor to a given consultation (activity) or (ii) include individual citizen responses.

Figure 2. Distribution of actors across issues, by UK parliamentary terms.



The degree of skewness is demonstrated numerically in Table 3. It records the cumulative percent that each 169 consultation issues (10% of all 1691 issues) add to overall mobilisation (measured as activity or actors). It shows that the 30% of issues with the lowest mobilisation levels account for under 5% of all activity. By contrast, the 10% of issues with the highest mobilisation levels account for over 30% of all activity.

Table 3. The Proportion of Mobilization by Issue

Percent of Issues	Actors			Activity		
	Number	Percent	Cum.	Number	Percent	Cum.
Lowest 10 percent (169 issues)	469	0.57	0.57	492	0.53	0.53
10.1 to 20 (issues 169 to 338)	1,318	1.63	2.21	1,401	1.51	2.04
20.1 to 30 (to issue 507)	2,223	2.73	4.94	2,357	2.54	4.58
30.1 to 40 (to issue 676)	3,408	4.19	9.12	3,670	3.95	8.53
40.1 to 50 (to issue 852)	4,930	5.85	15.18	5,091	5.48	14.01
50.1 to 60 (to issue 1021)	6,207	7.62	22.8	6,612	7.12	21.13
60.1 to 70 (to issue 1190)	7,854	9.65	32.45	8,420	9.06	30.19
70.1 to 80 (to issue 1359)	9,982	12.26	44.71	10,818	11.65	41.84
80.1 to 90 (to issue 1528)	13,279	16.31	61.02	14,482	15.59	57.43
90.1 to 95 (to issue 1613)	9,629	11.83	72.84	10,704	11.52	68.94
95 to 99.9 (to issue 1690)	20,923	25.7	98.54	27,412	29.51	98.46
Top issue	1,190	1.46	100.00	1,428	1.54	100.00
Totals (1691 issues)	81,422	100.00	100.00	92,887	100.00	100.00

This finding links with a broader, and much expanding, literature on policy attention and cascades (see Jones and Baumgartner 2005). The next challenge is to explore the mechanisms behind why some issues emerge as bandwagons. Seasoned observers of UK policy mobilization note that trying to pick the 'interesting' issues at the outset is difficult. Jordan and Richardson note that '...there is almost an iron law that the politics of detail have the capacity to arouse unexpected controversy' (1987, 149). Initial case study work supports this caution; suggesting that exogenous factors – 'size or scope' of the issue

being consulted on – do not seem to account for bandwagons emerging<sup>12</sup>. Issues that are of the *same* general type (e.g. initial position papers or 'small' regulatory amendments) seem to generate *different* mobilisation patterns. This suggests, consistent with Jones and Baumgartner (2005), that endogenous factors, such as the way policy actors monitor and cue-take, are likely factors in decisions to mobilise on a given policy issue. However, more work is needed; and this will be one area of future work.

### *(C) The 'group system' under devolution?*

The literature on Scottish politics has developed largely bereft of any systematic mapping of organised interests. Seasoned observers have speculated, with good cause, that the richer institutional context offered by devolution (with its parliament and bolstered civil service) would generate *more* Scottish groups (see Lynch 2001). The survey of groups active in post-devolution consultations has allowed us, for the first time, to test this prediction. Of our sample of 469 groups (32% response rate), only 17.5% are 10 years old or less: which means more than 80% were formed *before* devolution in 1999. There seems to be little support for the suggestion that devolution led to outright 'interest group system' growth. This finding fits arguments that suggest existing groups have enhanced the capacity of their Scottish offshoots (see Cairney, Halpin and Jordan 2009).

There is also a presumption that the Scottish Parliament will act as a magnet for organised interests. But, our survey, which asked groups to indicate the frequency with which they had engaged in policy-influencing strategies over the preceding 12 months, showed that (only 'very often' or 'fairly often' reported) participating in public consultations (76.7%), responding to requests for comments (68.8%), and making contact with civil servants (65.9%) are the most popular strategies. Contacting parliamentarians or ministers was adopted by 43%, while only 27% said that they engaged with parliamentary committees. This does lend considerable weight to the argument that consultation – with the bureaucracy – is the usual form of policy making (Richardson and Jordan 1979).

## **Activities**

### *Academic Conferences/Meetings*

Within the confines of the project budget, we have been very active in engaging the scholarly community over our project by attending several academic conferences and meetings (see Outputs section below).

### *User-Engagement*

From the initial project design and application, we have maintained contact with key stakeholders. We have had several meetings with the Participation Unit at the Scottish Government to report progress. Additional meetings were held with various groups *within* the Executive and Parliament; including meetings with the Scottish Government Library and Web Team (October 2008) to discuss information management and communication issues throughout the consultation process, and meetings with staff at the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (June 2008), to discuss, and collect data on,

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, invitations to respond do *not* seem to explain actual responses. On a sample of 173 consultations, we noted that 76% of those that *did* respond to a consultation were invited to do so. But 24% of those responding *were not* invited to do so. The analysis also establishes that the overwhelming majority – we have yet to calculate the precise figure – of those invited to respond in fact *do not respond*. Of course, more recently, consultations are available on the web (and one can register to receive invitations routinely via email) which means there are very few impediments to 'access' to consultation processes.

responses to Members' Bills public consultation exercises. Meetings were held with key interested parties outside of government. These included COSLA, SCVO (both February 2009). Plans are currently underway for us to give a workshop to policy officers of SCVO members (June 2009).

## Outputs

### *(a) Publications*

In relation to scholarly publications we have been productive given the short period of time we have had a final dataset to work with.

### *Conference papers*

The following conference papers were delivered during the project:

- Halpin, D. (2007) 'Counting policy active organisations in Scotland: Definitions, coding and comparison', paper presented to the ESRC Research Seminar Series 'Interest Groups and Democratic Governance', convened by Prof William Maloney, held at University of Aberdeen, 2-3 June 2007.
- Halpin, D. and Baxter, G. (2008) 'Searching for 'Tartan' Policy Bandwagons: Mapping the Mobilization of Organized Interests in Public Policy', Prepared for delivery at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston M.A., August 28-31, 2008.
- Halpin, D. Thomas, H. and Baxter, G. (2009) 'Hunting Haggis? In search of the "Hollow Core" in Scottish public policy', Prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, January, 2009.

The following papers are being prepared for delivery at meetings/conferences during 2009:

- Halpin, D. and Binderkrantz, A. "Linking Interest Group Characteristics with Patterns of Political Engagement: Evidence from Scottish Public Policy" prepared for Workshop on "Current Issues in Interest Group Research", Convened by Dr Anne Binderkrantz, held at Aarhus University, Denmark, May 12th 2009.
- Halpin, D. 'Mapping Public Policy Consultation: Who mobilised over what in Scotland?', Prepared for the 'British Politics Group' roundtable entitled "Pressure Groups and the Policy Process" at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, August, 2009.
- Halpin, D. and Binderkrantz, A. 'Towards Explaining Policy Specialization: Evidence From Scottish Public Policy' prepared for delivery at the European Consortium for Political Research, General Conference, University of Potsdam, September 2009.
- Baxter, G. (2009). 'The Best Laid Schemes: the Provision and Accessibility of Government Consultation Information in the UK', prepared for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 'Information: Interactions and Impact' Conference, Aberdeen, June 2009.

The funding proposal indicated that several journal papers and a book would be produced. At this stage, the publishing plan is as follows:

- The SPSA paper on policy specialisation to be submitted to *British Journal of Political Science* or *Journal of European Public Policy* [summer 2009].

- A revised version of the 2008 APSA paper focussing on Policy Bandwagons to be submitted to *West European Politics* or *Journal of Politics* [summer 2009].
- A revised version of the 2009 APSA paper reporting an overview of mapping findings, and comparing to US 'bias' findings, to be submitted to *British Politics* or *Political Studies* [summer 2009].
- A book proposal tentatively titled 'Interest Mobilization and Public Policy: Mapping the "British" Policy Style' is with publishers, with the intention to have a final manuscript completed by the middle of 2010.

#### *Newspaper article(s)*

A feature article was published in a Scottish broadsheet newspaper reviewing the projects initial findings: Gordon, B. 'Who shouts the loudest?', *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday 21, Oct 2008. The *Glasgow Herald* is keen to run further stories as the analysis progresses. Media releases have been circulated at the start and end of data collection.

#### *(b)Project Reports*

To date, the project has generated one project report, which summarised the results of the Interest Group Survey. This report was printed and disseminated to *all* participants in our survey. It was also posted on our project website.

#### *(c)Web-site*

As outlined in the proposal, we constructed a project web site [[www.organisedinterests.co.uk/darrenhalpin/mobilisation](http://www.organisedinterests.co.uk/darrenhalpin/mobilisation)]. The site has posted up all outputs listed above and below. It has now been linked to other sites, such as the SCVO's research site.

#### *(d)Datasets*

The two datasets elaborated above are the primary outputs of the project. We are currently in discussions with the ESRC data archive at Essex University with respect to lodgement. As the project develops we will post amended, or enhanced, datasets via the project web-site.

## **Impacts**

As discussed above, the primary purpose of this research project was to generate a dataset that in turn would enable the injection of a UK voice in scholarly debates that have largely been the preserve of US researchers (using US Congressional data). Needless to say, fostering such a voice is not a short term task. As such, the impact of this work is best judged in the medium term. The impact of this project depends on:

1. **having US scholars become familiar with the data:** this is happening via attendance at US conferences, meetings with key researchers in the field – such as Prof. Frank Baumgartner, and having the data available for use by selected US graduate students,
2. **developing the means for comparative analysis:** which is facilitated by coding UK data in ways that make it easy to compare with the findings of influential US studies (such as Baumgartner and Jones's *Policy Agendas Coding*, and Prof. Scholzman's study of *Washington Representatives*). We have utilised the project's international advisory board to disseminate interest in the data (and the broader approach of which it is a pilot). I am working on analysing the group survey dataset with a Danish colleague (Dr Anne Binderkrantz) who has similar data for Denmark: the intention is to do some comparative analysis in the future.

### **3. authoring and publishing our own articles and a monograph that utilise the data to intervene in key debates: see Outputs.**

The impact on the Scottish context is significant. We have provided a data table to a Masters student at Glasgow University. A request was made by Prof. Paterson (Edinburgh) for copies of outputs and he has quoted these in a forthcoming book chapter (Paterson 2009). Non-academic users have been interested in the results. The Citizen Participation Unit at the Scottish Government and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) have also asked for a copy of the results. The latter have also requested that they link from their research portal to our results. The results of this project have been picked up by the general media in Scotland. Our survey of Scottish interest groups asked for expressions of interest to be involved in future interviews we will be conducting – almost 50% indicated interest in future cooperation.

#### **Future Research Priorities**

As this project has evolved, some very productive avenues for future research have recommended themselves. Given the design of the study, it is clear how additional work could be integrated into the existing dataset. We outline these below:

- A. The objective of this work was to pilot an approach to data collection on consultations. The logical development is to collect similar data at the UK level. To this end we have already applied to the *British Academy* for funding (the result of our application is in June 2009).
- B. It is clear that there are different *types* of consultations. Some are related to Bills, others to EU Directives and still more are simply looking for ideas to flesh out early or emerging policy agendas. But, the project did not provide sufficient resources to investigate individual consultations in detail. We have dipped into several cases to illustrate this variation, but a more in-depth treatment is important. We have collected a representative sample of 173 issues across the 25-year period and we would like to collect a full case analysis of each one.
- C. Jones and Baumgartner (2005) discuss the ways in which 'cascades' of policy attention (or policy bandwagons) emerge. We have started to explore the micro-processes of policy mobilisation by developing media data on all consultations in 2006, but more work is needed. This involves undertaking some interviews with policy participants and civil servants to explore mobilisation processes.
- D. The broader issue that has been left untouched by this project is the overall significance of consultations for the British policy process. Interviews with policy staff and organised interests are necessary to explore case study issues, and to see the role of consultations in the evolution of the policy issue. We have been able to pursue some of this on our own account. However, given the scale of the task, this would be part of a subsequent project proposal.
- E. Further research is required into the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of potential and actual consultation respondents, and the extent to which the accessibility and communication of consultation information impacts upon the participative process. This will also form the basis of a future research proposal.

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