# EXTREME VOICES: INTEREST GROUPS AND THE MISREPRESENTATION OF ISSUE PUBLICS

Author(s): RYAN L. CLAASSEN and STEPHEN P. NICHOLSON

Source: *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Winter 2013, Vol. 77, No. 4 (Winter 2013), pp. 861-887

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Association for Public Opinion Research

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24546176

*Public Opinion Quarterly,* Vol. 77, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp. 861–887

# EXTREME VOICES
## INTEREST GROUPS AND THE MISREPRESENTATION OF ISSUE PUBLICS

RYAN L. CLAASSEN*
STEPHEN P. NICHOLSON

**Abstract** Studies of issue publics suggest that widespread political ignorance does not matter because those affected by specific issues are involved and well informed, and can meaningfully shape policy in their policy area. However, research on civic participation raises important questions about whether the opinions of the active are representative of the less active. To examine whether meaningful differences in policy attitudes exist between the politically active and inactive within issue publics, we compare the policy attitudes of interest group members to nonmembers. Across ten interest groups we find uniformly consistent evidence of policy distinctiveness among group members and show that party identification and ideology largely account for the difference. We also find that the policy differences between members and nonmembers vary according to the primary incentive offered by an interest group. Groups primarily offering expressive benefits exhibit the greatest opinion differences within an issue public, whereas opinion differences are muted for groups emphasizing solidary or material incentives. Finally, we find evidence of attitude extremism among group members. Taken together, our study suggests that the voices of non-active citizens are not well represented within issue publics.

Converse's (1964) landmark essay on mass belief systems is best remembered for showing that public opinion is characterized by non-attitudes. In an otherwise pessimistic account, however, he finds unusually coherent

RYAN L. CLAASSEN is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA. STEPHEN P. NICHOLSON is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California–Merced, Merced, CA, USA. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, April 1–3, 2010, in San Francisco, CA, USA. The authors thank Tom Hansford, Ben Highton, Suzanne Mettler, Chris Parker, and Alexander Theodoridis for helpful comments and suggestions. *Address correspondence to Ryan L. Claassen, Kent State University, Political Science Department, 302 Bowman Hall, P.O. Box 5190, Kent, OH 44242-0001, USA; e-mail: rclaasse@kent.edu.

doi:10.1093/poq/nft032 Advance Access publication October 10, 2013

opinion within issue publics, "groups" of citizens that pay special attention to an issue. Since Converse (1964), scholars have largely investigated whether issue publics compensate for general political ignorance. Over time, evidence has accumulated that mass political ignorance may not be as bad as it seems because those with the most intense interest in an issue are well informed (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Holbrook et al. 2005; Hutchings 2001, 2003; Iyengar et al. 2008; Kim 2009; Krosnick 1990) and politically involved (Anand and Krosnick 2003; Campbell 2002, 2003; Highton 2004; Krosnick and Telhami 1995; Price et al. 2006).

The optimistic conclusions about the role issue publics play in democratic society, however, neglect the question of political voice inequalities (Schattschneider 1960; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). According to Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2012), questions of political voice are of huge consequence for democratic equality if the active and inactive hold distinct political preferences. As their research program demonstrates, such differences do exist and they can be substantial. Voice inequalities matter for democracy, "[b]ecause citizen activity functions not only to communicate information to public officials about citizens' interests, preferences, and needs but also to generate pressure on them to respond" (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 464). Furthermore, since public officials often look to interest groups to gauge opinion on issues (Herbst 1998), voice inequalities within an issue public may distort the policymaking process.

We advance research on civic participation and public opinion by investigating whether opinion differences exist between interest group members and nonmembers, the active and inactive denizens of issue publics. To explore whether voice inequalities exist within issue publics, we identify groups of people that are affected by a given policy using a key demographic characteristic and distinguish those that formally belong to interest groups from those that do not. Doing so enables us to compare the opinions of individuals who are active in interest groups to those of individuals in the relevant *latent* issue publics. We note that this research design is unique. While it is not unusual to use a demographic characteristic to identify the contours of an issue public, we could find no prior study that explicitly investigates the role of interest group membership within an issue public.

Using surveys with large national samples, we find consistent evidence of policy distinctiveness among interest group members across ten policy areas. We explored the origins of the difference between group and non-group members and found that party identification and ideology explain much of the difference. Compared to the inactive members of their issue publics, the opinions of interest group members are more extreme because groups attract likeminded partisans and ideologues. We also found systematic differences in opinion depending on whether the group primarily offers expressive, solidary, or material incentives. Although we do not claim to have a representative sample of groups offering different types of incentives, we found that

opinion differences between group members and their issue public are largest for expressive groups. Finally, members of expressive groups tend to express uniquely extreme views relative to both their issue public and members of other types of groups—even after controlling for partisan and ideological self-selection. We conclude by assessing what these results mean for policymakers.

## The Role of Issue Publics in Democratic Society

According to Converse (1964, 245), issue publics are the means by which the public has anything meaningful to say about public policy. Although "members" of issue publics are typically better informed about their issue (see Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Krosnick 1990; Hutchings 2001, 2003; Holbrook et al. 2005; Price et al. 2006; Iyengar et al. 2008; Kim 2009) and are more likely to vote for candidates (Anand and Kronsnick 2003; Highton 2004; Hutchings 2003; Krosnick 1990) and partake in other forms of participation on behalf of their issue (Campbell 2003; Krosnick and Telhami 1995; Price et al. 2006), questions about the representativeness of issue publics remain unanswered. Here, we examine whether active "members" of issue publics, those who belong to a relevant interest group, hold the same views as inactive "members," those who do not belong to a relevant interest group.

Motivating our inquiry into voice inequalities within issue publics is research on civic participation showing that politically active citizens hold different attitudes than the politically inactive (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). Although they do not compare interest group members to nonmembers, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2012, 266) suggest that expressions of preference through organized interests are the most likely to promote political voice inequalities because the voices of group members are typically the only ones that politicians hear or respond to, a potentially severe distortion of citizen preferences in the policy process. Research on interest groups also suggests that the preferences and concerns of group members will be different, and likely more extreme, than nonmembers (Schattschneider 1960). Sabatier and McLaughlin's (1990) commitment theory proposes that more politically active individuals are likely to have more extreme ideologies. Although their analysis focuses on differences between group leaders and group members, the logic of commitment theory applies equally well to differences between members and potential members: group members will be more extreme than potential members. Taken together, we expect that group members, those who are politically active, will express distinct, and more extreme, attitudes from potential members.

It is also likely that meaningful opinion differences between group members and nonmembers within an issue public will vary according to the primary incentive groups use to induce people to join. Whereas Olson (1965) identified material selective incentives as the key to inducing individuals to join a group

pursuing a collective goal, subsequent scholars have found that expressive or solidary incentives can also play an important role in the membership calculus of individuals (Salisbury 1969; Berry 1977; Clark and Wilson 1961; King and Walker 1992; Moe 1980). Building on this research, we expect that one of the keys to understanding whether interest group members will be distinctive in their policy opinions is the primacy of expressive benefits. For material or solidary incentives, we expect to find minimal opinion differences between members and potential members. In contrast, for groups in which expressive benefits are central, we expect members to be distinctive and more extreme.

Why does it matter whether interest group members hold distinct attitudes from nonmembers, the inactive denizens of issue publics? As Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2012, 6) remark, "government policy is likely to reflect more fully the preferences and needs of the active part of the public." These differences are crucially important when considering political voice inequalities because interest groups represent the voices of issue publics before public officials. Interest groups not only provide members with opportunities to participate directly (e.g., letter-writing campaigns), they also pool resources in order to provide members with indirect voice (e.g., professional lobbying efforts). For many public officials, interest groups are de facto official spokespersons for issues. Herbst's (1998) research, for example, shows that legislators look to interest groups as an indicator of opinion on an issue of importance to relevant segments of society. Thus, if interest group members hold opinions different from issue publics, interest groups introduce bias into the policy process by misinforming public officials about the nature of opinion among an issue public.

## Data and Methods

Our study takes advantage of two large samples—samples that are large enough to obtain sizeable numbers of members of interest groups—to compare the issue preferences of members of ten interest groups to associated issue publics. The bulk of our analyses involve the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES), a nationally representative sample of 36,500 U.S. adult residents (Ansolabehere 2008).[1] The 2006 CCES survey was conducted in the English language. For one of our interest groups, the NRA,

1. The CCES sample was constructed using sample matching. As Vavreck and Rivers (2008) explain,

> For [the 2006] CCES, the target population was the [adult] population and we wanted a 38,000-person sample ... Polimetrix drew a random sample of this exact size from the 2004 American Community Study (ACS), conducted by the US Bureau of the Census, which is a probability sample of size 1,194,354 with a response rate of 93.1%. For each respondent in the Polimetrix-drawn ACS sample, the closest matching active Polimetrix panelist was

we turned to the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) because the CCES did not include a question about a gun-related issue.[2]

The CCES is ideal for our purposes because it queried respondents about memberships in a variety of interest groups. We selected ten of twelve possible groups for our study. The key in selecting groups was the availability of a policy question important to each group. For example, we selected the AARP because of the availability of a companion question about privatizing social security (a topic of national policy debate on which the AARP took a public position—opposition). In addition to the AARP, the other nine groups and issues include (1) union membership and the minimum wage; (2) the Sierra Club and global warming; (3) NARAL and abortion; (4) National Right to Life and abortion; (5) the Christian Coalition and gay marriage; (6) the VFW and the Iraq War; (7) the American Legion and the Iraq War; (8) the Parent Teacher Association/Organization and a question about the importance of education; and (9) the NRA and gun control (from the 2004 NAES).[3]

We also identified the relevant issue public associated with each interest group. For several groups, the requirements are obvious: the NRA and gun ownership, the AARP and age over 50, the PTA and having children, union membership and employment, and the VFW/American Legion and military service (in all cases we restrict membership and key requirements to those of the respondent, not the household). For the remaining groups, we identified a characteristic that was both theoretically and empirically related to membership. For example, ideology is strongly correlated with membership in the Sierra Club, NARAL, National Right to Life, and the Christian Coalition. Fewer than

---

selected using a weighted absolute distance measure on four Census variables—age, race, gender, and education—plus on imputed values of partisanship and ideology. (361)

The 2006 CCES pre-election survey was conducted between October 6 and November 7, and the post-election survey was conducted from November 9 to November 29. The within-panel response rate (AAPOR's RR3) for the 2006 CCES was 36 percent (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2010, 254). The sample sizes in our analyses are somewhat smaller due to missing data and some items that were asked only of split samples.

2. The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) consists of phone interviews of 81,422 randomly selected U.S. adult residents (using RDD) and was conducted in both English and Spanish (according to the respondent's preference). The survey was designed as a national rolling cross-section with an average of 150–300 interviews conducted daily from October 7, 2003, through November 16, 2004. The response rate (AAPOR's RR1) was 22 percent (Romer et al. 2006; Stroud and Kenski 2007, 545). Again, because the gun-control-policy-related variables were asked only of split samples, sample sizes in our analyses are smaller than the total number of interviews.

3. Each opinion item is coded so that high values are the liberal response (e.g., increase gun control) and standardized to range from 0 to 1. For each item, "Don't know," "Other," or "Not sure" responses were placed in the middle category. We also note that the results are nearly identical if "Don't know," "Other," or "Not sure" responses are coded missing (see table 2 of the online appendix).

6 percent of Sierra Club members and less than 1 percent of NARAL members are conservatives (the most conservative two categories on a five-point scale). Likewise, fewer than 6 percent of National Right to Life members and about 3 percent of Christian Coalition members identify as liberal. Ideology performs reasonably well as a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for membership in these groups (see Hutchings 2001). However, we also identify potential members of National Right to Life and the Christian Coalition without using ideology (we were unable to find alternatives for the Sierra Club and NARAL). For National Right to Life, we use "born-again Christian" or Catholic identity to identify potential members, and for the Christian Coalition we use frequent attendance at religious services to identify potential members.[4] In the absence of better alternatives for NARAL and the Sierra Club, the fact that the results for National Right to Life and the Christian Coalition are nearly identical whether ideology is used or not increases our confidence that ideology is a reasonable proxy for defining some issue publics.

Finally, we categorized groups according to the *primary* benefit each provides. Although groups provide a variety of benefits, in most cases a scholarly consensus exists regarding the primary benefit. Though unions provide primarily material benefits, they are also unique in their ability to coerce potential members into joining. So-called "union shop" rules enable unions to force all members of a collective bargaining unit to join once 50 percent plus 1 have voted to join by secret ballot (Wagner Act of 1935, as amended by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947).[5] Therefore, we treat unions as a special type of material benefit group—one with a coercive "incentive." Material benefits are the primary incentive offered to potential AARP members (Dipak, Hofstetter, and Buss 1997). The single-issue groups, NARAL and National Right to Life, are primarily expressive (Skinner 2007, 27). In a similar vein, Layman notes that groups such as the Christian Coalition "exist for clearly political purposes" (2001, 275). The Sierra Club is often mentioned as a group that attracts members by offering Ansel Adams prints, but recent scholarship describes membership as an "expressive statement without incurring other organizational obligations" (Bosso 2003, 409). Although earlier accounts of the NRA categorized it as primarily emphasizing material benefits (Weil and Hemenway 1993), contemporary accounts have detailed its shift to emphasizing expressive incentives (Patterson and Singer 2002; Skinner 2007). Finally, Mettler (2011) describes the VFW and the American Legion as primarily solidary groups, and Clark and Wilson (1961)

4. Shared characteristics are coded as dummy variables. In most cases, the coding is described in the second column of table 1. However, several require additional comment. Liberals, for example, include only those in the most liberal two categories from a five-category variable. Conservatives include only those in the most conservative two categories from the same item. Frequent attenders include those in the most frequent two categories, and those who identify as "born-again Christians" and Catholic are coded 1 in the first National Right to Life row.

5. These rules have been modified in "right to work" states.

also classify the PTA as a solidary group. For the six groups in common that we study (AARP, Unions, NARAL, National Right to Life, NRA, and Sierra Club), our categorizations are identical to Skinner (2007, 27).

In sum, we restrict our comparisons to individuals with a characteristic that is relevant to the interest group's policy area—that is, we attempt to compare members and non-group members within each issue public. The defining characteristic we select not only links the individual to an issue public, but also links the individual to the side of the issue public represented by the interest group in question. In so doing, our research design attempts to identify the portion of the issue public represented by each group so that we can draw inferences about how well each interest group represents the wider issue public.

## Results

We rescaled each variable to range from zero to one to provide a graphic representation of the data. Figure 1 depicts the opinion of group members and potential group members, our comparison of active to inactive issue public "members," respectively. The bars on the left side represent each group, whereas the middle bars represent the latent group or non-active issue public "members." In the bars on the right side, we include public opinion (excluding the issue public and interest group respondents) on each issue to provide a sense of whether, and how, interest groups and issue publics differ from the general public. On most issues, interest group members appear to take distinctive positions in comparison to non-active "members" of the issue public. Not surprisingly, interest group members also appear to hold distinctive attitudes compared to the public.

Figure 2 depicts the same data from figure 1 reconfigured to examine whether interest group opinion introduces distortion into the policy process. As mentioned, Herbst's (1998) research suggests that legislators look to interest groups as an indicator of opinion on an issue of importance to an issue public, so examining whether groups have the same or different opinions as their respective issue publics helps us understand whether groups distort the policy process. Since the policy opinion questions are standardized to range from 0 to 1, we subtract .5 from each variable to provide a neutral midpoint.[6] In so doing, figure 2 illustrates whether an interest group opinion is on the same or opposite side of its issue public and how close or far apart group opinion is from the opinion of the relevant issue public. As seen in figure 2, interest groups and issue publics are on opposite sides for six of the ten issues. On the four issues for which opinion is on the same side, the opinions of group members are always more extreme. Although we do not provide statistical

6. The PTA is excluded from figure 2 because the middle of a "most important issue" item is not a neutral point (.5 would indicate that half of the sample feel education is the most important issue).

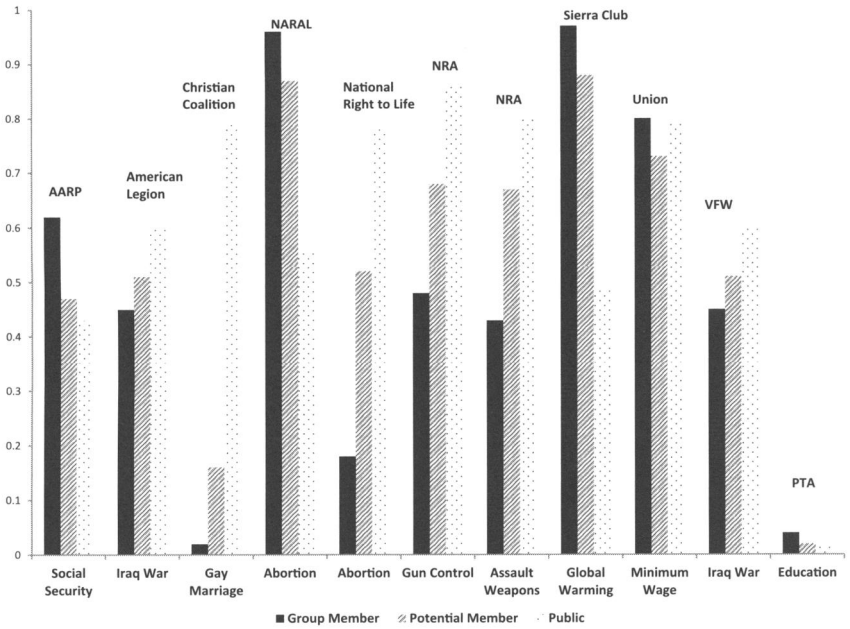


**Figure 1. Mean Policy Support by Interest Group Membership, Potential Group Membership, and the Public.**

controls in figure 2 (or figure 1, for that matter), they are irrelevant here since a hypothetical legislator is unlikely to apply controls when listening to group members.

In table 1, we test whether differences between the opinions of group members and potential members within the issue public are statistically significant with, and without, statistical controls. The estimates in the "Restricted Model" column are regression coefficients for membership dummy variables from bivariate regressions of opinion on group membership in samples limited to issue public members only. For example, in the NRA rows, the samples include only gun owners and the coefficients reported in the "Restricted Model" column capture opinion differences between NRA members and nonmembers within the issue public (e.g., gun owners). In this way, the estimates assess whether the differences between interest group members and their respective issue publics shown in figure 1 and figure 2 are statistically significant. The data speak loudly in the affirmative. The coefficients reported in the "Restricted Model" column of table 1 show that the opinions of interest group members are significantly different than the opinions of nonmembers within each of the thirteen comparisons we make for ten interest groups. Are these interest groups representative of their respective issue publics? The first column of results in table 1 raises a red flag for those concerned with equality

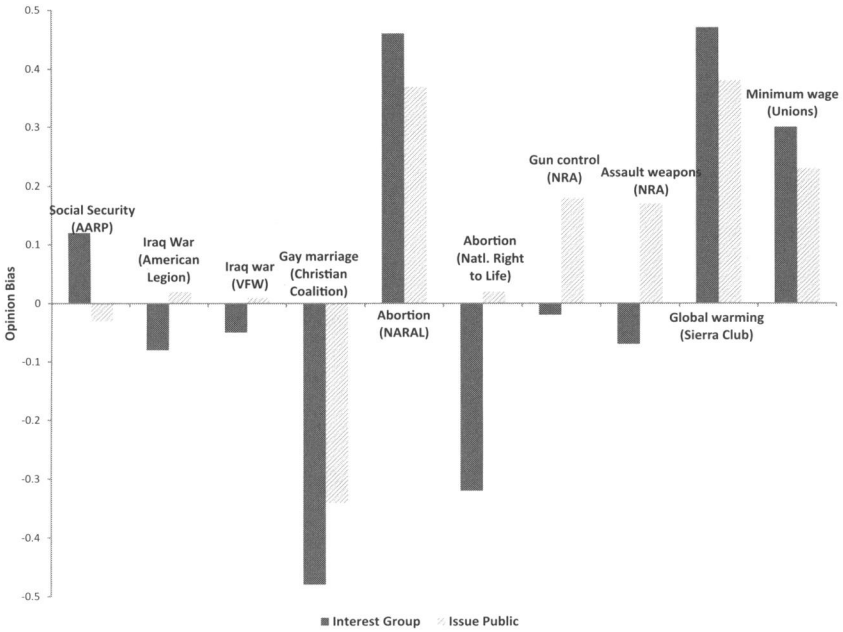


**Figure 2. The Direction and Extremity of Policy Opinion for Interest Groups and Issue Publics.**

and voice within issue publics. Within each of the issue publics we investigate, those with interest group representation express significantly different views than those without.

In the next two columns of table 1, we identify that portion of member distinctiveness that is an artifact of other factors associated with both the opinions individuals express and whether individuals join groups. Multiple regression will "purge" the effect of membership by controlling for covariation in opinion that is shared by membership and other factors associated with joining, such as SES.[7] For example, if a portion of the effect of membership is actually because members tend to be wealthy, and wealth shapes opinion, then controlling for income will eliminate the portion of the effect of membership that is

7. We use the "KHB" command in Stata (see Kohler, Karlson, and Holm 2011) to make the multiple regression estimates comparable to the bivariate estimates. For nonlinear estimators (such as the ordered-logit estimates we report here), part of the difference in the effect of a variable evaluated in two nested models is due to the confounding effects of the other variables and part of the difference is a methodological artifact (Kohler, Karlson, and Holm 2011; Karlson and Holm 2011; Karlson, Holm, and Breen 2012). A method devised by Karlson, Holm, and Breen (the KHB method) eliminates the methodological artifact and ensures that the difference in nested model estimates is due entirely to the confounding effect of the other variables.

**Table 1. Comparing Members to Potential Members**

| Type of group | Issue public characteristic | Dependent variable | Restricted model (no controls) | Full model (w/ controls) | Difference in effect of membership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coercive** | | | | | |
| Union | Employed | Minimum wage | .49*** | .22** | .27*** |
| | | | (.08) | (.07) | (.04) |
| **Material** | | | | | |
| AARP | Over 50 | Privatize soc. sec. | .89*** | .38*** | .51*** |
| | | | (.04) | (.04) | (.03) |
| **Solidary** | | | | | |
| VFW | Military service | Iraq War | –.40*** | –.19 | –.21** |
| | | | (.10) | (.10) | (.08) |
| American Legion | Military service | Iraq War | –.56*** | –.19 | –.37*** |
| | | | (.10) | (.10) | (.08) |
| PTA | Children | Ed. most imp. problem | .97*** | .81** | .16* |
| | | | (.26) | (.25) | (.08) |
| **Expressive** | | | | | |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | Global warming | 1.58*** | 1.29*** | .29*** |
| | | | (.22) | (.22) | (.05) |
| NRA | Gun owners | Gun control | –1.00*** | –.85*** | –.15*** |
| | | | (.04) | (.04) | (.02) |
| NRA | Gun owners | Assault w. ban | –1.07*** | –.93*** | –.14*** |
| | | | (.04) | (.04) | (.01) |
| NARAL | Liberals | Abortion | 1.30*** | .69** | .61*** |
| | | | (.21) | (.22) | (.06) |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | Abortion | –2.28*** | –.96*** | –1.32*** |
| | | | (.11) | (.10) | (.06) |

*Continued*

**Table 1.** *Continued*

| Type of group | Issue public characteristic | Dependent variable | Restricted model (no controls) | Full model (w/ controls) | Difference in effect of membership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Right to Life | Conservatives | Abortion | –1.69*** | –.75*** | –.94*** |
| | | | (.11) | (.11) | (.05) |
| Christian Coalition | Conservatives | Gay marriage | –2.57*** | –1.51*** | –1.06*** |
| | | | (.42) | (.42) | (.10) |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent attenders | Gay marriage | –3.67*** | –1.58** | –2.09*** |
| | | | (.46) | (.42) | (.13) |

NOTE.—"KHB" command in Stata used to obtain restricted and full model estimates and to compute the difference in the effect of group membership once statistical controls are accounted for (restricted model estimate adjusted for scaling of control variables). Ordered logit estimators. Samples restricted to those in the issue public. Estimates for the coefficient for the membership dummy variable reported only. Also included, but not reported, are the control variables mentioned in the main text. Standard errors in parentheses. High values coded in liberal direction. CCES weight is V1001.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

actually due to wealth (proxied by income). What remains can be thought of as the independent effect of membership.

We have attempted to model a wide range of potential individual differences to ensure that the members and nonmembers we compare are statistically similar on many dimensions. Toward that end, we control for political awareness (0–1),[8] party identification (–3 to +3), ideology (0–4), age (in years), income (CCES 0–14, Annenberg 0–8), education (CCES 0–5, Annenberg 0–8), sex, marital status, occupation (dummy variables for retired, homemaker, unemployed), region (dummy variables for south, east, west), race, Hispanic ethnicity, attendance at religious services (CCES 0–3, Annenberg 0–4), religious identity (dummy variables for Catholic, Protestant, Jewish), and military service.[9]

We glean several noteworthy patterns from the last two columns of table 1. First, in absolute terms, the independent effects of membership are uniformly smaller in the "Full Model" column compared to the "Restricted Model" column. In fact, the differences in the effects of membership reported in the last column are uniformly statistically significant. As expected, a significant portion of member distinctiveness can be attributed to opinion variation caused by members' other distinctive characteristics. Also noteworthy in the "Restricted Model" column is the fact that, even after eliminating the significant confounding effects of a host of demographic and attitudinal factors, there remain substantively and statistically significant differences between members and nonmembers for most issue publics. Only members of the VFW and American Legion (two of our three solidary groups) express statistically identical opinions when compared to otherwise similar individuals who have also served in the military.

Table 2 presents changes in predicted probabilities associated with group membership from the "Full Model" depicted in table 1 with control variables set to their means. For liberal groups, we assess the change in the likelihood of expressing the most liberal opinion associated with group membership, and for conservative groups, we do the same but instead examine conservative opinion. As expected, the changes in predicted probabilities associated with membership in solidary groups are smaller than most of the others. The probability changes associated with membership in unions and the AARP are also small. Again, it makes sense that a coercive group would be less distinctive since "closed shop" rules circumvent self-selection processes (also note that ideological and partisan self-selection are already controlled statistically). Likewise, material groups appear to be less distinctive than expressive groups. Once again, it makes sense that near-universal desire for material benefits

8. See the online question and coding appendix for a detailed description of scale construction.

9. We used Stata's multivariate imputation command, "impute," to compute observations for missing cases for each control variable using the information available from all other control variables. The results are nearly identical when other methods of dealing with missing data, such as mode/mean substitution or listwise deletion, are used.

**Table 2. Substantive Effects of Group Membership on Policy Attitudes**

| Type of group | Issue public characteristic | Dependent variable | Chg. in likelihood assoc. w/ IG membership |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Coercive** | | | |
| Union | Employed | Minimum wage | 3% more likely lib. |
| **Material** | | | |
| AARP | Over 50 | Privatize soc. sec. | 8% more likely lib. |
| **Solidary** | | | |
| VFW | Military service | Iraq War | 4% more likely con. |
| American Legion | Military service | Iraq War | 5% more likely con. |
| PTA | Children | Ed. most imp. problem | 1% more likely lib. |
| **Expressive** | | | |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | Global warming | 19% more likely lib. |
| NRA | Gun owners | Gun control | 13% more likely con. |
| NRA | Gun owners | Assault w. ban | 22% more likely con. |
| NARAL | Liberals | Abortion | 9% more likely lib. |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | Abortion | 13% more likely con. |
| National Right to Life | Conservatives | Abortion | 13% more likely con. |
| Christian Coalition | Conservatives | Gay marriage | 17% more likely con. |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent attenders | Gay marriage | 31% more likely con. |

NOTE.—Changes in predicted probabilities (converted to percentages) computed using SPOST in Stata. Underlying model is the "Full" model from table 1. All control variables were set to their means. For liberal groups (positive coefficients in table 1), we assess the change in the probability of the most liberal response. For conservative groups (negative coefficients in table 1), we assess the change in the probability of the most conservative response.

within certain issue publics would mitigate self-selection processes that lead to distinctive opinions.

### WHY ARE GROUP MEMBERS DIFFERENT?

Having noted that a variety of characteristics and attitudes account for many opinion differences between interest group members and nonmembers—and given the potential distortion these differences may introduce in the policy process—we investigate the confounding effects of these variables to understand why group members and nonmembers from the same issue public are different. To help understand what is causing what, on substantive grounds we can probably rule out that group membership caused any of our control

variables. For example, joining a group clearly does not cause one's age. If the reverse were true (if membership caused the control variables), then the addition of control variables would reveal the indirect effects of group membership through the control variables. Theoretically, the difference is important because indirect effects would be effects properly attributed to membership, notwithstanding manifestation through a mediating variable. Confounds, on the other hand, show the effect of membership to be spurious. Specifically controlling for age might confound the effect of membership if age is associated with *both* membership and opinion. Thus, one of the reasons group members might appear to be distinctive is because they tend to be composed of older individuals who tend to express different opinions than younger individuals. If both membership and opinion were functions of age, then a portion of the difference in the opinions of members and nonmembers would be due to age differences, not membership per se. In general, then, the reductions in the effects of membership associated with the statistical controls in the "Full Models" reported in table 1 are instances of spurious distinctiveness.

We begin in table 3 by assessing whether group membership is a function of each of six confounding variables.[10] Table 3 provides the results of regressing group membership on each of the six column variables. Clearly, most groups are stratified on most of these six characteristics and attitudes. However, where an attitude or a characteristic is not associated with group membership, it will not be a significant confound. Here, we highlight that the two variables that affect group membership most consistently are ideology and party identification—we do so because these will also prove to be the two attitudes that matter most when it comes to understanding why group members express distinctive opinion.

Having demonstrated the confounding *potential* of six characteristics and attitudes, we obtain the actual confounding effect of each.[11] Each estimate in table 4 describes the independent effect of the column variable on the "Difference" estimate reported in the last column of table 1. For example, in the first row of table 4, controlling for ideology was a significant part of the difference between the effect of union membership in the restricted model compared to the full model. Though we report only the six most important, the total of all twenty-three of the decomposed effects, for a given group, would be equal to the difference reported in table 1. So, for union membership, .12 of the total .27 difference reported in table 1 is due to ideology.[12] Put another way, the effect of union membership in the restricted model in table 1 would

10. There are twenty-three control variables, and space does not permit a detailed assessment of each. The six variables selected for detailed analysis were selected because, in nearly every case, they were the largest and most robust of the twenty-three confounding effects.

11. We again use the KHB method.

12. Note, however, that controls can have opposite confounding effects and so it is also possible for a single variable to have a larger confounding effect, in absolute terms, than the total difference reported in table 1.

**Table 3. Bivariate Estimates of Group Stratification**

| Group | Issue public characteristic | Political awareness | Ideology | Party ID | Age | Income | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coercive** | | | | | | | |
| Union | Employed | .53*** | .15*** | .14*** | .022*** | .02** | –.02 |
| | | (.08) | (.02) | (.01) | (.002) | (.01) | (.02) |
| **Material** | | | | | | | |
| AARP | Over 50 | .27** | .24*** | .13*** | .047*** | .02** | .10*** |
| | | (.08) | (.02) | (.01) | (.003) | (.01) | (.01) |
| **Solidary** | | | | | | | |
| VFW | Military service | –.06 | –.12** | –.06** | .005 | .01 | .11*** |
| | | (.15) | (.04) | (.02) | (.003) | (.01) | (.03) |
| American Legion | Military service | .29 | –.19*** | –.10*** | .025*** | .003 | .004 |
| | | (.15) | (.04) | (.02) | (.003) | (.011) | (.028) |
| PTA | Children | .27 | .21*** | .07** | .007 | .07*** | .22*** |
| | | (.16) | (.04) | (.02) | (.005) | (.01) | (.03) |
| **Expressive** | | | | | | | |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | 1.22** | .36** | .04 | .017*** | .04** | .19*** |
| | | (.29) | (.13) | (.06) | (.004) | (.02) | (.04) |
| NRA | Gun owners | .05 | –.23*** | –.14*** | –.012*** | .04*** | –.04*** |
| | | (.07) | (.02) | (.01) | (.001) | (.01) | (.01) |
| NARAL | Liberals | 1.71*** | .71*** | .21*** | .008* | .04** | .08* |
| | | (.21) | (.10) | (.05) | (.004) | (.01) | (.03) |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | 1.14*** | –1.06*** | –.40*** | .016*** | –.01 | –.08* |
| | | (.17) | (.06) | (.03) | (.003) | (.01) | (.03) |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent attenders | .05 | –1.33*** | –.46*** | .024*** | –.01 | –.22*** |
| | | (.34) | (.13) | (.08) | (.006) | (.02) | (.06) |

NOTE.—Bivariate logit models of group membership. Samples restricted to those in the issue public and those not missing on the issue opinion. Standard errors in parentheses. High values coded in liberal direction. CCES weight is V1001.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

**Table 4. Decomposing the Confounding Effects of Political and Demographic Variables**

| Type of group | Issue public characteristic | Dependent variable | Chronic political awareness | Ideology | Party ID | Age | Income | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coercive** | | | | | | | | |
| Union | Employed | Minimum wage | –.04*** (.01) | .12*** (.02) | .23*** (.02) | .02* (.01) | –.006* (.003) | .005 (.005) |
| **Material** | | | | | | | | |
| AARP | Over 50 | Privatize soc. sec. | .002 (.002) | .15*** (.01) | .28*** (.02) | .08*** (.01) | –.009** (.003) | –.003 (.003) |
| **Solidary** | | | | | | | | |
| VFW | Military service | Iraq War | –.002 (.005) | –.10*** (.03) | –.15** (.05) | .01 (.01) | .001 (.001) | .02* (.01) |
| American Legion | Military service | Iraq War | .01 (.01) | –.16*** (.03) | –.25*** (.05) | .07*** (.02) | .0003 (.0010) | .001 (.006) |
| PTA | Children | Ed. most imp. prob. | .005 (.010) | .04 (.04) | –.01 (.03) | –.02 (.02) | –.02 (.03) | .13** (.05) |
| **Expressive** | | | | | | | | |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | Global warming | .05* (.02) | .06** (.02) | .01 (.01) | .02 (.02) | .01 (.01) | .05* (.02) |

*Continued*

**Table 4.** *Continued*

| Type of group | Issue public characteristic | Dependent variable | Chronic political awareness | Ideology | Party ID | Age | Income | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NARAL | Liberals | Abortion | .17*** | .07*** | .05*** | .02* | .03** | .03 |
| | | | (.03) | (.02) | (.01) | (.01) | (.01) | (.02) |
| NRA | Gun owners | Gun control | .0001 | −.04*** | −.08*** | .002 | .004* | −.002 |
| | | | (.0003) | (.01) | (.01) | (.004) | (.002) | (.002) |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | Abortion | .02* | −.58*** | −.34*** | .02* | −.01 | −.02* |
| | | | (.01) | (.04) | (.03) | (.01) | (.01) | (.01) |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent attenders | Gay marriage | .003 | −1.13*** | −.58*** | −.06** | −.002 | −.09** |
| | | | (.023) | (.09) | (.06) | (.02) | (.005) | (.03) |

NOTE.—"KHB" command in Stata used to obtain estimates of the confounding effect of each control variable. Samples restricted to those in the issue public. Also included, but not reported, are the control variables mentioned in the main text. Standard errors in parentheses. High values coded in liberal direction. CCES weight is V1001.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

be .12 smaller (union members would appear less distinctive) if a control for ideology were added.

Taken together, the results from tables 3 and 4 indicate that ideology and party identification are two consistent and important confounds associated with interest group distinctiveness. All of the groups are stratified by ideology. Even when the issue public is restricted to liberals, as in the case of the Sierra Club and NARAL, how liberal one is still predicts significant variation in the likelihood of membership. Likewise, every group except for the Sierra Club is stratified by party identification. Stratification on these two attitudinal dimensions produces significant confounding effects for each group except for the PTA and, of course, party identification does not produce a significant confound for the Sierra Club (since it is not associated with membership). Naturally, the size of the coefficients is sensitive to the range of the variables, but only age covers a substantially different range than the other control variables, and so the large and robust coefficients in the ideology and the party identification columns are suggestive of their leading roles in producing distinctive opinion among group members.

Also, the confounding effects in the ideology and party identification columns uniformly reinforce the effects of group membership for each group. For conservative groups, more conservative and more Republican members make their opinions appear more conservative on the group issue than they would otherwise. A similar trend emerges for liberal groups. This is in contrast to the mixed confounding effects of several of the other control variables. Income, for example, actually makes union members and AARP members appear more conservative than they would otherwise—less distinctive. Income also makes NRA members appear more liberal than they would otherwise—again, less distinctive. Although a portion of interest group members' opinions is different because of their higher SES (in most cases), they would actually be more, rather than less, distinctive if SES were not correlated with joining. Certainly this is a different pattern of income-related distortion than the type identified by Verba et al. (1995) and Schlozman et al. (2012). Yet, on balance, the confounds contribute to how distinctive members are—which is again suggestive of the larger role played by variables that reinforce opinion distortion, such as ideology and party identification.

To be clear, members of every group we study are distinctive (first column, table 1). But, many of the groups we study would appear much less distinctive if not for ideological and partisan self-selection into like-minded interest groups. In fact, if one adds the ideology and Party ID effects in table 4, their sum is very similar to the total coefficient reduction reported in the last column of table 1 for Union, AARP, VFW, American Legion, National Right to Life, and Christian Coalition members. Clearly, party identification and ideology have emerged as the major sources of spurious distinctiveness. More importantly, ideology and party identification contribute to a specific type of opinion distinctiveness—extremism. Self-selection into interest groups

by like-minded partisans and ideologues pushes members' opinions further toward an ideological pole than would otherwise be the case (the reinforcing effect discussed above). Previous scholars have noted that interest group members tend to express extreme attitudes (Schattschneider 1960; Sabatier and McLaughlin 1990); here, we identify an important mechanism behind the extreme attitudes of interest group members.

## EXTREMISM AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

As a consequence of partisan and ideological self-selection, group members express more extreme opinions than would otherwise be the case. For most coercive, material, and solidary groups, there is very little distinctiveness left after accounting for partisan and ideological self-selection. Otherwise, similar members of the VFW and the American Legion are not statistically distinctive in the second column of table 1. And, substantively, the non-spurious distinctiveness of union members, AARP members, and PTA members appears to be mostly trivial in table 2—even if technically robust in table 1. The distinctiveness that remains once we add our statistical controls appears to be concentrated in the expressive groups. More importantly, the type of distinctiveness in the expressive groups is of a kind with that of the other groups—extremism—even if it is less a function of the control variables. A glance at figure 2 reveals that group members express opinions that are further from the neutral point in every case except for the NRA. And even the NRA could be characterized as extremely conservative when compared to nonmember gun owners. Clearly, partisan and ideological self-selection explains a good deal of extremism for members of coercive, material, and solidary groups. Could it be that the primary incentive associated with expressive groups—expression of political views—produces extremism beyond that produced by partisan and ideological self-selection in the other groups?

In order to conduct a formal comparison of opinion extremism across group types, we constructed a general attitudinal extremism scale using respondents' views on all seven of the policy questions in the CCES.[13] Because liberal positions are associated with high values and each opinion item is scaled to range from 0 to 1, the range of the sum is 0 to 7—with 0 being the most extremely liberal overall position and 7 being the most extremely conservative overall position. In order to create a measure of distance from the midpoint, we zero-center the sum by subtracting 3.5 and then take the absolute value of the zero-centered sum. Thus, the final measure ranges from 0 to 3.5—with 0 being the most moderate overall position and 3.5 being the most extreme overall position. We regress this measure of

13. We use the six group questions and a question about affirmative action. Whether education is the most important issue is excluded because there is no neutral point at the center of the scale.

general opinion extremism on a set of dummy variables measuring the type of incentive offered by the group and our set of control variables. For this regression, we limited the sample to members of only a single group so that the dummy variables represent a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive group types. Solidary is the omitted category in the regression, so the coefficients test for significant differences between members of the indicated type of group and members of solidary groups.

The coefficient for expressive groups in table 5 indicates that members are significantly more extreme than otherwise similar members of solidary groups. Also, the size of the coefficient for expressive groups compared to the others indicates that members of these groups are more extreme than members of coercive or material groups. Finally, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that members of coercive and material groups are no more extreme than members of solidary groups. Although the results in table 5 suggest that expressive groups are more extreme, we acknowledge that our analysis includes only nine interest groups and we do not make any claims about how representative these groups are of the interest group universe.

Of course, general policy extremism need not mean that members of expressive groups stake out more extreme positions on their group's issue. To test whether members of expressive groups are more extreme on their issue, we created another indicator of extremism by folding the opinion scales associated with each group.[14] In this way, we measure each respondent's distance from each scale's neutral point. We then regressed these quantities on membership and repeated the process again with the control variables. Once again,

**Table 5. Extreme Policy Attitudes and Type of Group Incentive**

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of group | |
| Coercive | .13 |
| | (.07) |
| Material | .05 |
| | (.06) |
| Expressive | .39** |
| | (.09) |
| Clusters | 9 |
| *N* | 4,135 |

NOTE.—OLS estimators. Clustered standard errors in parentheses adjusted for membership in each of the nine groups (PTA excluded). CCES weight is V1001. Sample restricted to members of only one group. Solidary is the reference group for the set of "group type" dummy variables. Also included, but not reported, are the control variables mentioned in the main text.

**$p < .01$

14. The assault-weapon-ban question has too few response categories for folding.

we restrict the samples to the issue publics and use the KHB method to compare the effect of membership with and without controls. Table 6 presents the results of the analysis of attitudinal extremism on the relevant issue. With the exception of the NRA (as expected, given figure 2), membership in the other expressive groups is consistently associated with extremism. Moreover, for these groups, the robust association between membership and extremism remains even after controlling for a wide range of other attitudes and characteristics. Finally, we confirm that ideology and party identification are, in each case, significant predictors of a portion of membership-related extremism—though again, significant extremism remains unexplained for these groups.[15] Though we have not identified the specific mechanism, we note that extremism beyond that produced by ideological and partisan self-selection is concentrated in expressive groups. To be clear, we are not claiming that extremism is the mechanism that causes extremism—that would be tautological. Some process that has not yet been identified leads individuals both to stake out more extreme positions on political issues and to join expressive groups.

All in all, our data allow us to make the following observations: interest groups distort the opinions of their respective issue publics in a variety of ways, but generally tend to stake out more extreme positions. Moreover, this tendency is especially apparent in expressive groups.

## Conclusion

The literature on issue publics has optimistically concluded that widespread political ignorance is not a problem for democracy because those affected by specific issues are well informed, involved, and represented. Yet, guided by insights from research on civic participation, we explored whether active members of issue publics, those in formal membership groups, held the same opinions as those "members" of an issue public that were not interest group members. On the whole, they are not. In our examination of ten membership groups, we find consistent evidence that group members hold policy attitudes that are distinct from their counterparts in a broader issue public. In fact, figure 2 demonstrates that a policymaker guided by interest group representation, rather than a more comprehensive survey of issue public opinion, might actually come down on the wrong side of an issue in most cases. Clearly, opinion distortion could be problematic.

We also found that interest group members are more extreme than nonmembers of the same issue public. In contrast to research on civic participation (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), the roots of the difference are not socioeconomic. Instead, we found that the

15. We also used the KHB method for this analysis.

**Table 6. Extremism on Group-Related Issues**

| Group | Issue public characteristic | Folded scales | Restricted model (no controls) | Full model (w/ controls) | Difference in effect of membership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NRA | Gun owners | Gun control | −.28*** | −.16*** | −.12*** |
| | | | (.04) | (.04) | (.01) |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | Global warming | 1.52*** | 1.25*** | .27*** |
| | | | (.22) | (.22) | (.05) |
| NARAL | Liberals | Abortion | 1.15*** | .67** | .48*** |
| | | | (.22) | (.22) | (.05) |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | Abortion | .27* | .57*** | −.30*** |
| | | | (.11) | (.11) | (.03) |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent attenders | Gay marriage | 1.95*** | 1.59** | .36*** |
| | | | (.51) | (.51) | (.05) |

NOTE.—"KHB" command in Stata used to obtain restricted and full model estimates and to compute the difference in the effect of group membership once statistical controls are accounted for (restricted model estimate adjusted for scaling of control variables). Ordered logit estimators. Samples restricted to those in the issue public. Estimates for the coefficient for the membership dummy variable reported only. Also included, but not reported, are the control variables mentioned in the main text. Standard errors in parentheses. High values coded in liberal direction. CCES weight is V1001.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

extreme attitudes of group members can be attributed to ideology and party identification. Because party identification is a relatively stable disposition (Campbell et al. 1960), we surmise that the distinct and often extreme attitudes of group members are more likely to be a product of selection. Furthermore, in the online appendix, we provide an analysis of non-group-related issues to examine further the question of selection or persuasion. For most of the groups we examined, we found that the opinions of group members were significantly different on non-group-related issues, suggesting that people with distinct preferences join groups rather than groups creating distinct preferences.

Taken together, the results suggest that the policy distortion produced by interest groups may ultimately stem from those who are different, and more extreme, in their opinions, self-selecting into groups. For coercive, material, and solidary groups, policy distortion appears to be primarily a function of ideological and partisan self-selection into like-minded groups. This is also the case for expressive groups, but, in addition, we found policy distortion beyond that produced by ideological and partisan self-selection in expressive groups. Yet, we wish to stress that we cannot rule out alternative mechanisms, including persuasion or recruitment, without additional research. Identifying the mechanisms that make interest group members distinctive from nonmembers will no doubt be an interesting avenue for future work investigating interest group distinctiveness.

Thus, opinion distortion wrought by interest group representation is likely to contribute to political polarization more generally. When policymakers rely on interest groups to communicate the positions of issue publics, they perceive greater polarization than they would if they had a more accurate measure of issue public opinion. Fiorina (2005) highlights a disconnect between elite-level polarization and a comparatively moderate public. This study suggests that elites may also be misinterpreting the positions of issue publics because of interest group dominance in the policy process.

The implications of these differences are potentially important for understanding the policy process. Although interest groups do not always influence policy (see Schlozman, Verba, and Brady [2012] for a review), they sometimes do. In those cases where interest groups matter, especially on issues that involve mass membership groups such as those featured in our research, legislators who attend to interest group members are listening to unrepresentative voices. In this way, interest groups distort the views of the broader, attentive public on a particular issue. We agree with Converse that aggregate opinion on any given issue is more meaningful when shaped by those for whom the issue matters most—the issue public (1964, 246). However, our results suggest that issue publics fall prey to some of the same problems they are credited with solving. A uniformly active issue public would ensure that the voices of those for whom the issue matters most are heard. But issue publics are not uniformly active. More problematic, those active in interest groups hold positions that are more extreme than, and often at odds with, the positions of less active members within the issue public.

## Appendix. Descriptive Statistics

| Type of group | Characteristic | Shared issue | Group (1 = liberal) | Range public | Gen. (nonmembers) | Shared characteristic members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coercive** | | | | | | |
| Union | Employed | Minimum wage | 0–1 | .79 (12,625) | .73 (15,523) | .80 (1,973) |
| **Material** | | | | | | |
| AARP | Over 50 | Privatize soc. sec. | 0–1 | .43 (14,479) | .47 (9,601) | .62 (5,573) |
| **Solidary** | | | | | | |
| VFW | Military service | Iraq War | 0–1 | .60 (23,214) | .51 (5,258) | .45 (990) |
| American Legion | Military service | Iraq War | 0–1 | .60 (23,130) | .52 (5,121) | .42 (1,127) |
| PTA | Children | Ed. most imp. issue | 0–1 | .02 (24,828) | .02 (3,192) | .04 (663) |
| **Expressive** | | | | | | |
| Sierra Club | Liberals | Global warming | 0–1 | .49 (10,265) | .88 (3,002) | .97 (343) |
| NRA[a] | Gun owners | Gun Control | 0–1 | .86 (21,280) | .68 (10,889) | .48 (2,695) |

*Continued*

**Appendix.** *Continued*

| Type of group | Characteristic | Shared issue | Group (1 = liberal) | Range public | Gen. (nonmembers) | Shared characteristic members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NRA[a] | Gun owners | Assault w. ban | 0–1 | .80 | .67 | .43 |
| | | | | (24,133) | (12,682) | (3,100) |
| NARAL | Liberals | Abortion | 0–1 | .56 | .87 | .96 |
| | | | | (21,466) | (5,980) | (419) |
| National Right to Life | Born again & Catholics | Abortion | 0–1 | .78 | .52 | .18 |
| | | | | (14,918) | (13,802) | (548) |
| National Right to Life | Conservatives | Abortion | 0–1 | .79 | .40 | .17 |
| | | | | (17,562) | (9,944) | (516) |
| Christian Coalition | Conservatives | Gay marriage | 0–1 | .79 | .16 | .02 |
| | | | | (8,399) | (5,278) | (196) |
| Christian Coalition | Frequent Attendees | Gay marriage | 0–1 | .66 | .35 | .03 |
| | | | | (8,855) | (4,842) | (179) |

NOTE.—Cells in the last three columns are means; number of observations in parentheses.

[a]The NRA models come from the 2004 Annenberg survey because the CCES did not ascertain views on gun-related issues. All others come from the 2006 CCES survey. CCES weight is V1001.

## Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are freely available online at http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/.

## References

Anand, Sowmya, and Jon A. Krosnick. 2003. "The Impact of Attitudes Toward Foreign Policy Goals on Public Preferences among Presidential Candidates: A Study of Issue Publics and the Attentive Public in the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33:31–71.

Ansolabehere, Stephen. 2008. *Guide to the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey.* Data Release No. 2.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Brian Schaffner. 2010. "Residential Mobility, Family Structure, and the Cell-Phone-Only Population." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74:244–59.

Berry, Jeffrey. 1977. *Lobbying for the People.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bosso, Christopher J. 2003. "Rethinking the Concept of Membership in Nature Advocacy Organizations." *Policy Studies Journal* 31:397–411.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. *Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2002. "Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens." *American Political Science Review* 96:565–74.

———. 2003. "Participatory Reactions to Policy Threats: Senior Citizens and the Defense of Social Security and Medicare." *Political Behavior* 25:29–49.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter.* New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Clark, Peter B., and James Q. Wilson. 1961. "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6:129–66.

Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Public." In *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by David E. Apter. New York: Free Press.

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dipak, K. Gupta, C. Richard Hofstetter, and Terry F. Buss. 1997. "Group Utility in the Micro Motivation of Collective Action: The Case of Membership in the AARP." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 32:301–20.

Fiorina, Morris. P. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America.* New York: Pearson Longman.

Herbst, Susan. 1998. *Reading Public Opinion: How Political Actors View the Democratic Process.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Highton, Benjamin. 2004. "Policy Voting in Senate Elections: The Case of Abortion." *Political Behavior* 26:181–200.

Holbrook, Allyson L., Matthew K. Berent, Jon A. Krosnick, Penny S. Visser, and David S. Boninger. 2005. "Attitude Importance and the Accumulation of Attitude-Relevant Knowledge in Memory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88:749–69.

Hutchings, Vincent L. 2001. "Political Context, Issue Salience, and Selective Attentiveness: Constituent Knowledge of the Clarence Thomas Confirmation Vote." *Journal of Politics* 63:848–68.

———. 2003. *Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability: How Citizens Learn about Politics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Iyengar, Shanto, Kyu S. Hahn, Jon A. Krosnick, and John Walker. 2008. "Selective Exposure to Campaign Communication: The Role of Anticipated Agreement and Issue Public Membership." *Journal of Politics* 70:186–200.

Karlson, Kristian B., and Anders Holm. 2011. "Decomposing Primary and Secondary Effects: A New Decomposition Method." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29:221–37.

Karlson, Kristian B., Anders Holm, and Richard Breen. 2012. "Comparing Regression Coefficients Between Same-Sample Nested Models Using Logit and Probit: A New Method." *Sociological Methodology* 42:286–313.

Kim, Young Mie. 2009. "Issue Publics in the New Information Environment: Selectivity, Domain Specificity, and Extremity." *Communication Research* 36:254–84.

King, David C., and Jack L. Walker. 1992. "The Provision of Benefits by Interest Groups in the United States." *Journal of Politics* 54:394–426.

Kohler, Ulrich, Kristian B. Karlson, and Anders Holm. 2011. "Comparing Coefficients of Nested Nonlinear Probability Models." *Stata Journal* 11:420–38.

Krosnick, Jon. 1990. "Government Policy and Citizen Passion: A Study of Issue Publics in Contemporary America." *Political Behavior* 12:59–92.

Krosnick, Jon, and Shibley Telhami. 1995. "Public Attitudes Toward Israel: A Study of the Attentive and Issue Publics." *International Studies Quarterly* 39:535–54.

Layman, Geoffrey. 2001. *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Mettler, Suzanne. 2011. Personal communication with the author, February 7.

Moe, Terry M. 1980. *The Organization of Interests*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Patterson, Kelly D., and Matthew Singer. 2002. "The National Rifle Association in the Face of the Clinton Challenge." In *Interest Group Politics*, 6th ed., edited by Allan J. Cigler and Burdett Loomis. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Price, Vincent, Clarissa David, Brian Goldthorpe, Marci McCoy Roth, and Joseph N. Cappella. 2006. "Locating the Issue Public: The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Engagement with Health Care Reform." *Political Behavior* 28:33–63.

Romer, Daniel, Kate Kenski, Kenneth Winneg, Christopher Adasiewicz, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2006. *Capturing Campaign Dynamics, 2000 & 2004: The National Annenberg Election Survey*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sabatier, Paul A., and Susan M. McLaughlin. 1990. "Belief Congruence between Interest-Group Leaders and Members: An Empirical Analysis of Three Theories and a Suggested Synthesis." *Journal of Politics* 52:914–35.

Salisbury, Robert H. 1969. "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 13:1–32.

Schattschneider, Elmer E. 1960. *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realists View of Democracy in America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Schlozman, Kay L., Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. 2012. *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Skinner, Richard M. 2007. *More Than Money: Interest Group Action in Congressional Elections*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stroud, Natalie Jomini, and Kate Kenski. 2007. "From Agenda Setting to Refusal Setting: Survey Nonresponse as a Function of Media Coverage across the 2004 Election Cycle." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71:539–59.

Vavreck, Lynn, and Douglas Rivers. 2008. "The 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties* 18:355–66.

Verba, Sidney, Kay L. Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weil, Douglas S., and David Hemenway. 1993. "I Am the NRA: An Analysis of a National Random Sample of Gun Owners." *Violence and Victims* 8:353–65.