RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTEREST GROUP ACTIVITY IN THE NORTHEASTERN STATES: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This article uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the contemporary interest group systems of eleven Northeastern states and compares these with the interest group systems in the fifty states as a whole. It is found that recent changes in the socio-economic and political life of the Northeast have affected surface aspects of the region's interest group systems, such as the range of groups represented and the styles of representation, and has extended power to some new interests to an extent greater than in any other region of the nation. However, recent changes have not altered the fundamental dominance of the policy process by traditional economic and institutional interests which enjoy a marked advantage in the possession of the resources necessary for political influence. The findings from the research also call into question existing theories of an inverse relationship between group power and (1) socio-economic development, (2) government professionalism, and (3) political party power in the Northeast and the states as a whole.

Judging by the focus of most general textbooks on American interest groups, these groups operate only at the national level in Washington, D. C. (see for example, Mundo, 1992; Mahood, 1990; Berry, 1989; Schlozman and Tierney, 1986). Yet, interest groups have always been very active at the state level as well as in local politics. In fact, because the states have generally been less socially and economically diverse, and thus less pluralistic politically than the nation as a whole, the

political significance of interest groups has often been much greater at the state level. This alone makes state interest groups worthy of more attention by scholars than they have hitherto received.

There are three other compelling reasons for studying state interest groups in contemporary America. First, the media and several scholars have identified major changes in interest group politics, including those in state capitals, during the last two decades (Gray, 1984). Second, according to one generally accepted theory, there is an inverse relationship between the strength of political parties and the strength of interest groups (Zeigler and van Dalen, 1976). Given this situation, the decline of political parties in recent years should result in interest groups playing an even more significant role in state capitals. Finally, the increased role of the states in the social and economic policy arenas since the 1960s, plus the reduction in the federal government's role in these arenas since the early 1980s, has expanded the importance of the states in policy making.

This article assesses the significance of these changes and explores the contemporary importance of interest groups in the states by focusing on one region--the Northeast. Here we define the region as the eleven states of: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. While, like all regions of the country, the Northeast is amorphous and diverse (its two sub-regions of New England and the Mid-Atlantic states provide many contrasts, for example), it is seen as one of the four major sections of the nation because its states share common elements of heritage and development due largely to physical proximity. For research purposes the region is ideal as a microcosm of the nation: within its borders have existed every type of interest group system from the least to the most diverse, and from the least to the most competitive. Furthermore, previous research has identified the Northeast overall as having the weakest interest group systems (though not necessarily the weakest individual groups) due largely, it it argued, to the strength of the party systems in many of its states (Morehouse, 1981).

Two themes dominate this analysis of contemporary interest group activity in the Northeast. First, important changes have occurred in the interest group scene in all the region's states over the last twenty-five years. The second theme is one of lingering traditions within interest group politics. Besides identifying instances of these two aspects of interest group activity, this article has two other purposes. One is to explain the contemporary characteristics of interest groups in Northeastern states in

such areas as the types of active groups, group power and group tactics. The second is to seek an answer to the question: How different from other regions is the Northeast in regard to its interest group systems?

Previous Research on Northeastern Interest Groups

No book or article has ever been published on the subject of Northeastern interest group politics. The Northeast is not unique in this dearth of material on interest groups, however. The West, Midwest and particularly the South have numerous publications on their politics, parties, and regional issues, but very little material exists on their interest groups and group systems.

Seven types of studies have treated, or more often touched upon, interest group activity in the Northeast. First, there are a few books on the politics of the sub-regions of the Northeast, particularly New England. Duane Lockard's New England State Politics (1959) was the seminal work on the post-war politics of the sub-region. His work has been updated by two recent studies of New England parties and politics: Josephine Milburn and Victoria Schuck's New England Politics (1981) and Milburn and William Doyle's New England Political Parties (1983). However, interest groups are covered only tangentially in these books. This is also true of John Fenton's study of Border state politics which includes a brief discussion of Maryland's interest groups (Fenton, 1957).

Second, there is the treatment of interest groups in books on the government and politics of individual Northeastern states. Not all such books cover interest groups, however; and where they do the treatments vary widely. A third category consists of books which include Northeastern states as examples or case studies. But length limitations preclude these from paying more than cursory attention to interest groups.(1) Fourth, there is a small body of literature which has a public policy focus and has taken a case study approach to investigating the impact of individual groups. For example, William Browne's book (1988) on agricultural interest group politics provides information on agricultural groups and their role in both national and state political, economic and social life. A fifth category has taken what might be termed a micro approach to the study of group theory. These have looked at either some specific aspect of the internal organization and operation of groups, or how groups affect some specific part of the political process such as the legislature. Some of these studies have been

concerned solely with specific states such as Belle Zeller's study of lobbying in New York state (Zeller, 1937).

A sixth category, essentially journalistic treatments, also include information on Northeastern interest groups. John Gunther's 1940s survey of politics in America contains valuable insights on group activities in many states including those in the Northeast (Gunther, 1951). A 1970s version of the Gunther approach was the nine volume series by Neal R. Peirce on the people, politics and power of the various sub-regions of America.(2) A more up-to-date journalistic source on the Northeastern states (and occasionally on their major interests) are the state profiles introducing each state's congressional delegation in the Almanac of American Politics (Barone and Ujifusa, 1989).

These six categories are a useful starting point in a study of Northeastern interest groups. Yet, because of variations in methodology and scope and depth of analysis, they are of very limited value for purposes of comparative analysis and for individual state analysis too. There is, however, a seventh category of literature that has been comparative in focus and has included the Northeastern states as part of nationwide studies of state interest groups. These have taken a macro approach by attempting to understand interest groups in the context of the state as a whole and particularly in relation to its socio-economic and its political and governmental system. The most notable work here has been conducted by Belle Zeller (1954), Harmon Zeigler and Hendrik van Dalen (1976), Zeigler (1983) and by Sarah McCally Morehouse (1981).

Despite the valuable contributions of these studies, all suffered from the same weakness. Their attempts at comprehensive analysis of both the Northeast and other regions were based upon original data from only a few states and drew upon other information (mainly the six categories referred to above) that varied in its methodology from the impressionistic to the quantitative. Therefore, the theories and propositions developed from these studies were arrived at by extrapolation, or by reliance on secondary sources, and sometimes, in the absence of data, by speculation. Despite such weaknesses these studies made significant contributions. Each was a major source for the evaluation of interest groups at the sub-national level--including the Northeast--at a time when little other data existed. In combination they have provided a benchmark for scholars conducting subsequent research.

Data and Definitions

The major source of data used in this article is taken from the Hrebenar- Thomas study, the first study of interest groups in all fifty states.(3) The Northeast was the fourth and final phase of this study. Pre-1980 data on Northeastern interest groups was taken from historical background provided in the study and from previous writing, both academic and popular.

The project methodology involved five elements. First was a set of common definitions of terms such as interest group and lobbyist. Second, five common survey instruments were developed and made available to the researchers for use with legislators, legislative staffers, lobbyists, executive and administrative officials, and members of the press corps. These first two elements of the methodology provided the basis for a common core of information that facilitated comparative analysis. Third, each researcher was asked to gather as much empirical data as possible on lobby registrations, lobbyists and lobbying expenditures including political action committee (PAC) data from the appropriate state monitoring agency. The fourth aspect of the methodology was that each researcher was asked to identify ways in which his or her state's interest group system fit or varied from existing theories of interest group activity in the states as developed by researchers such as Zeller (1954), Zeigler and van Dalen (1976), Zeigler (1983) and Morehouse (1981). Fifth, we undertook a synthesis of all the data collected by using the first four elements of the methodology to produce the first comprehensive, comparative analysis of interest group activity in all fifty states including the Northeastern states.

As mentioned above, one major element of the methodology was the use of a common definition of interest group, interest, lobby, lobbyist and group power. Here the first four concepts will be defined; group power will be defined in a later section. Interest group was defined broadly to include the so-called "hidden groups" particularly government and especially state agencies (so-called institutional interest groups) as: an association of individuals or organizations, usually but not always formally organized, which attempts to influence public policy. The Delaware Bankers Association, the City of Manchester, New Hampshire and the State University of New York are all examples of interest groups. Interest groups are represented by one or more lobbyists. In our study a lobbyist was defined as: a person designated by an interest group to represent it to

government for the purpose of influencing public policy in that group's favor.

The terms interest and lobby are much more problematic to define precisely. Both are used in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are used to denote a specific interest group. But most often they are used as generic terms, and often synonymously and interchangeably, to refer to the collection of groups and organizations within a particular sector, such as business, labor or agriculture (the business lobby, the business interest, etc). While this may appear confusing, in most cases the particular meaning of interest and lobby is usually evident from the context in which it is used.

A Framework for Understanding and Comparing Interest Group Activity in the Northeastern States

In order to understand and to be able to compare interest group activity at the state level, including the Northeastern states, it is necessary to consider the major environmental factors that influence group activity. What determines: (1) the types of groups that are active in the states; (2) the methods (strategies and tactics) that they use in pursuing their goals; and (3) the role that groups play within state political systems and, in particular, the power that they exert within those systems. While little research has been conducted on this topic, scholars agree that the answers lie in a complex set of economic, social, cultural, legal, political, governmental and even geographical variables. And that these will vary in their combination from state to state, giving each state a unique interest group system.

Nevertheless, we have identified eight specific sets of factors which are of particular importance in all states. These we developed into a conceptual framework which is set out in Figure 1. This framework is a

FIGURE 1
EIGHT MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MAKE-UP, OPERATING TECHNIQUES AND IMPACT ON PUBLIC POLICY OF INTEREST GROUP SYSTEMS IN THE STATES

1 State Policy Domain: Constitutional/legal authority of a state affects which groups will be politically active. Policies actually exercised by a state affects which groups will be most active. The policy priorities of a state will affect which groups are most influential.

2 Centralization/Decentralization of Spending: This refers to the amount of money spent by state governments versus that spent by local governments. The higher the percentage of state spending on individual programs and overall on services, the more intense will be lobbying in the state capital.

3 Political Attitudes: Especially political culture and political ideology viewed in terms of conservative/liberal attitudes. Affects the type and extent of policies performed; the level of integration/fragmentation and professionalization of the policy making process; acceptable lobbying techniques; and the comprehensiveness and stringency of enforcement of public disclosure laws, including lobby laws.

4 Level of Integration/Fragmentation of the Policy Process: Strength of political parties; power of the governor; number of directly elected cabinet members; number of independent boards and commissions; initiative, referendum and recall. Influences the number of access and influence points available to groups: greater integration decreases them, while more fragmentation increases these options.

5 Level of Professionalization of State Government: State legislators, support services, bureaucracy, including the governor's staff. Impacts the extent to which public officials need group resources and information. Also affects the level of professionalization of the lobbying system.

6 Level of Socio-Economic Development: Increased socio-economic diversity tends to produce: a more diverse and competitive group system; a decline in the dominance of one or an oligarchy of groups; new and more sophisticated techniques of lobbying such as an increase in contract lobbyists, lawyer-lobbyists, multi-client /multi-service lobbying firms, grassroots campaigns and public relations techniques, and an overall increase in the professionalization of lobbyists and lobbying.

7 Extensiveness and Enforcement of Public Disclosure Laws: Including lobby laws, campaign finance laws, PAC regulations, and conflict of interest provisions. Increases public information about lobbying activities which impacts the methods and techniques of lobbying, which in turn affects the power of certain groups and lobbyists.

8 Level of Campaign Costs and Sources of Support: As the proportion of group funding increases, especially that from PACs, group access and power increases.

Sources: Developed by the authors from research conducted for the Hrebenar-Thomas study.

synthesis of the findings from our Hrebenar-Thomas study. While all eight factors and their various elements are not new, what is original is the way that many of these elements have been used here, and the integration of the eight factors into a single conceptual framework. These eight factors and their components are very much interrelated in that they influence each other. A change in one factor may result in a change in one or more of the other factors. Any change at all is likely to affect the nature of group activity and major changes will have a significant impact on the interest group and lobbying scene in a particular state or the states as a whole.

A brief comparative example will help illustrate the value of this framework. We can use it to help explain the different group systems existing in Pennsylvania and Vermont. Pennsylvania has a more diversified group system operating in Harrisburg than Vermont does in Montpelier. This is partly because Pennsylvania is more industrialized than Vermont

which has moved from an agricultural to a tertiary production society without experiencing traditional industrialization (factor 6 in the framework). But lobbying in Montpelier is every bit as intense, if not more so, than in Harrisburg, largely because Vermont is more centralized administratively than Pennsylvania (factor 2 and 4). Varying political attitudes between the two states (factor 3) help explain other differences in the two group system. Pennsylvania with its predominantly individualistic political culture which views politics as a for-profit business has much less stringent lobby laws and political action committee regulations (factors 7 and 8) than Vermont with its moralistic political culture which has only recently been diluted by individualistic attitudes. Finally, with its more professionalized state government (factor 5), also partly a product of political attitudes, Pennsylvania has a more professional lobbying corps and a less receptive attitude among public officials to amateur lobbying efforts than is the case in Vermont.(4)

This analysis can be applied to compare other Northeastern states and, indeed, any two or more states across the nation. With this information about the use of terms and the value of the conceptual framework in mind, we can turn to a comparative analysis of interest groups in the Northeastern states.

Public Disclosure of Lobbying Activity in the Northeastern States: Registered and Non-Registered Groups

To fully appreciate the contemporary group scene in the Northeastern states and to understand the changes that have taken place in recent years, we need to realize that the actual lobbying activity that takes place is much more extensive than an examination of public disclosure information about interest groups reveals. This is because several types of groups and interests are not required to register in the Northeast. Consequently, as in all states, there are many non-registered or "hidden groups and lobbies" at work in the region.

Lobby laws, conflict of interest provisions, campaign finance disclosure, and rules regulating the activities of PACs, are the four types of provisions that help provide some public monitoring of interest group activity. While the first three types of provisions existed in most Northeastern states before the 1970s, and were probably the most extensive of any region at the time (Zeller, 1954: 217-25), these laws were usually weak and laxly enforced. It took the Watergate affair of 1973-74 to

generate a reform movement across the nation against political corruption and in favor of more extensive and stringently enforced public disclosure.

Lobby laws provide the most specific and comprehensive information about interest group activity. Yet, these laws vary considerably in their inclusiveness, their reporting requirements and the stringency with which they are enforced. This is the case both across the nation and within the Northeast (Opheim, 1991; Thomas and Hrebenar, 1991). Variation in who is and who is not required to register as a lobbyist under Northeastern state laws produces a wide range across the region in the number of persons registering as lobbyists as well as those registering as lobbying organizations (the employers or clients of lobbyists, known in state capital parlance as principals). Pennsylvania law, for example, is loose enough not to require many social issue and public interest groups to register. No Northeastern state, including Vermont, requires public officials to register as lobbyists (COGEL, 1990: 149-52).

In fact, the largest of the non-registered or hidden lobbies in the states is government, particularly state agencies, boards and commissions, and local governments. Because of the increasing reliance of the Northeast on government, these are very significant lobbying forces in the region's states even those with diversifies economies like Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York. The Hrebenar-Thomas research on Northeastern states indicates that a rough estimate would be that as many as one fourth of those "lobbyists" working the halls of state government in the region on any one day represent government. So to obtain an accurate picture of interest group activity in the Northeast we cannot ignore government even though studying its lobbying role presents problems due to the absence of information.

Interests Active in the Northeastern States Today

Although no comparative research exists on the development of interest groups in the states before the 1950s, the bits and pieces of information that are available suggest that, of the four major regions of the nation, the Northeast has always had the most diverse interest group system. However, even here a very narrow range of interests existed down to World War II, particularly in states like Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. As in other regions, business interests and agriculture appear to have been dominant in the Northeast in the early twentieth century. From the late 1930s on, these were joined by local government groups, labor unions and

education interests, especially school teachers. Together these five so-called traditional interests--business, agriculture, labor, local government and education--formed the major interests operating in state capitals in the Northeast, and in the states in general, as late as the mid-1960s (Zeigler, 1983: 99).

Of all the aspects of change in interest group life documented in the eleven Northeastern states in the last thirty years most striking is the considerable expansion in group activity. This expansion has had three dimensions. First, there has been a marked increase in the number of groups seeking to influence state government. Second, the range of interests has also expanded, as new interests, such as social issue, public interest, and single-issue groups entered the political arena, and as traditional interests fragmented. Fragmentation has been particularly evident within the business and local government lobbies. The third dimension is that groups are lobbying more intensively than was the case twenty or even ten years ago. They have more frequent contact with public officials and use more sophisticated techniques.

Given the shortcomings of lobby registration records, the definition of an interest group set out earlier is used to obtain as accurate a picture as possible of the range of groups and interests operating in Northeastern state capitals today. This range of groups is set out in Table 1. Interests are listed on the basis of two criteria. The first is the extent of their presence in the eleven states. This is indicated by the two columns. The second criteria is whether an interest is continually active in the states where it is present,

TABLE 1

INTERESTS ACTIVE IN THE NORTHEASTERN STATES TODAY

Present in All 11 States	Present in 1-10 States
CONTINUALLY ACTIVE	
Individual Business Corporations (1)	
Local Government Units (cities, districts, etc.)	Health Care Corporations
State Departments, Boards & Commissions	Agri-business Corporations
Business Trade Associations (2)	Latino Groups
Utility Companies and Associations (public and private)	Gaming/Race Tracks
	Commercial Fishing InterestsBanks and
Financial Institutions/Associations	Sportsmen's Groups (esp hunting & fishing)
Insurance Companies/Associations	

Present in All 11 States	Present in 1-10 States
CONTINUALLY ACTIVE (cont.)	
Public Employee Unions/Associations (state and local)	Mining/Quarrying Companies
Universities and Colleges (public & private)	Forest Product Companies
School Teachers Unions/Associations	
Local Government Associations	
Farmers' Organizations/Commodity Associations	
Traditional Labor Unions	
Labor Associations (mainly AFL-CIO)	
Environmentalists	
Oil and Gas Companies/Associations	
Hospital Associations	
Tourism Groups	
Railroads	
INTERMITTENTLY ACTIVE	
Doctors	Taxpayers Groups
Trial Lawyers/Stat'Bar Associations	Native American Groups
Retailers' Associations	Animal Rights Groups
Contractors/Real Estate	Welfare Rights Groups
Liquor Interests	Foreign Businesses (esp from Japan)
Communication Interests (telecommunication, cable TV etc.)	Children's Rights Groups
Truckers	Media Associations
Women's Groups	Pro & Anti Smoking Interests
Black American Groups	Groups for the Arts
Pro & Anti Abortion Groups	
Religious Groups	
Senior Citizens	
Social Service Groups & Coalitions	
Good Government Groups (League of Women Voters, Common Cause)	
American Civil Liberties Union	
Federal Agencies	
Groups for the Physically & Mentally Handicapped	
Student Groups	
Nurses	
Chiropractors	
Parent Teachers Associations	
Consumer Groups	
Veterans' Groups	
Moral Majority	
Community Groups	
Pro & Anti Gun Control Groups	

(1) An unavoidably broad category. It includes manufacturing and service corporations with the exception of those listed separately, e.g., private utilities and oil and gas companies. These and other business corporations were listed separately because of their frequency of presence across the Northeastern states.

(2) Another unavoidably broad category. It includes chambers of commerce as well as specific trade associations, e.g., Truckers, Air Carriers, Manufacturers' Associations, etc.

Source: Compiled by the authors from the eleven state studies of the Northeast conducted for the Hrebenar-Thomas study.

or intermittently active in some or all states, Both in the continually and the intermittently active sections, interests are listed in order of the estimated intensity of their lobbying efforts across the region.

Well over half of the interests appear in the first column, indicating that they are present in all eleven states. Although not all are continually active, this means that a very broad range of interests, both public and private, operate in the Northeast today, though as much as seventy-five percent of the lobbying effort in terms of time and money is probably attributable to the nineteen interests in the continually active section of column one.

It is important to note, however, that the diversity of the group system will vary from state to state. It is also important not to equate presence with power. Just because a group or interest is active in a Northeastern state does not by itself assure its success in achieving its goals. Anti-abortionist groups, for example, have been very active in Northeastern state capitals in recent years but, with the exception of Pennsylvania, they have met with little success.

Interest Group Influence on Public Policy in the Northeast

The concept of interest group power can denote two separate though interrelated notions. It may refer to the ability of an individual group or lobby to achieve its policy goals. Alternately, it may refer to the strength of interest groups as a whole within a state's political system; or the strength of groups relative to other organizations or institutions, particularly political parties.

The Influence of Individual Groups and Interests.

Understanding the influence of individual groups and lobbies has proven to be one of the most problematic aspects of the study of interest groups. The problems relate less to the question of definition than they do to the method of assessment. Three methods have been used to assess individual group power: purely objective or empirical criteria; the perceptual method, relying on the perceptions of politicians, bureaucrats and political observers; and a combination of these two approaches. The approach used here is the latter course: the perceptual method is combined with an attempt to inject objectivity and consistency into the research by using quantitative techniques to analyze the responses. The definition of individual group power used in this study, which also incorporates the

method of assessment is: a group's ability to achieve its goals as it defines them, and as perceived by those directly involved in or who observe the public policy-making process (e.g., present and former: legislators, legislative and executive branch staffers, bureaucrats, other lobbyists, journalists, etc.).

A decade ago, Sarah McCally Morehouse produced the first listing of the most influential groups and lobbies in the fifty states. A major aspect of the research for the Hrebenar-Thomas study was to compile a listing of the most influential groups in all fifty states as of the late 1980s. By comparing the two listings we can discern several trends regarding the influence of individual groups and interests in the Northeastern states.(5)

One major trend is that the days of states being run by one or two dominant interests--like the pulp companies in New Hampshire--are virtually gone. In other words, there are no longer any "company states." And unlike the South and West, there appear to be no Northeastern states with even one prominent interest these days--not even DuPont in Delaware. All interests must share power with other groups. Thus as the result of expanding political pluralism, the days when one or a few interests could dictate policy on a wide range of issues appears to be gone for ever. But we should not infer that the decline in dominance of individual interests has also meant the decline of group systems as a whole. This has not been the case, as we will explain below.

As to the power status of the so-called traditional interests in the region--business, education, local government, labor and agriculture--the first three of these have maintained or enhanced their power while one appears to have lost some ground, and another has declined markedly. Education interests, especially schoolteachers, and business remain very influential--in fact, these are the most powerful interests in the region and in the fifty states as a whole.

Contrary to some predictions, increased political pluralism and fragmentation within the business community has not significantly affected its power overall. Certainly, in some instances businesses like railroads and some natural resource enterprises (such as forestry in Maine and New Hampshire) have declined; but these have been replaced by service and other businesses among the ranks of the most powerful groups. The insurance business is particularly strong in the region. Overall, business groups are more powerful in the Northeast than in any other region. This continued power of business is one of the major threads of continuity in group life in the region.

On the other hand, traditional labor groups have suffered some loss of power even though they still rank among the most influential interests in most Northeastern states. In the last ten to fifteen years a new phase in the power of labor has emerged. This has been in the form of teachers' and state and local public employees' associations. The rise of state employees associations is a noteworthy phenomena in the changing configuration of group power in the region's capitals. It appears to be linked to the increased role of government since the 1960s. This rise has also enhanced the power of many state agencies, particularly departments of education and transportation and state university systems. However, this is not a trend peculiar to the Northeast. It is also a major trends in group activity in the other thirty-nine states.

Agriculture has suffered the greatest loss of power of the five traditional interests in the Northeast. The Hrebenar-Thomas study reveals that general farm organizations, like the Farm Bureau, are significant political forces in only a few states today; and no specialized farm commodity group (such as dairy farmers) was mentioned as influential in any of the eleven states. This, no doubt, reflects the changing economy even of the rural states of the Northeast.

As to newer groups and interests, the most notable gains have been made by environmentalists, senior citizens and good government groups. These groups rank higher in influence in Northeastern states than in any other region of the nation. This may reflect the relatively liberal orientation of the region. On the other hand, sportsmen's organizations, including anti-gun control interests, have also made gains As it did in the rest of the states, the issue of tort reform, particularly the desire by many to place a cap on awards in damage suits, brought three of the most well-financed and well-organized interests, doctors, lawyers and insurance companies, into the ranks of the most effective interests in the Northeast during the late 1980s. Then there have been a series of successes by single-issue groups as diverse as anti-ERA groups and MADD--Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Similar to the experience in other regions, in the Northeast the successes of other interests, including social issue, women's and minority groups have been much less significant. Part of the reason lies in the factors which constitute individual group power. The players in the game may have changed by the addition of new groups, but the rules of success, particularly command of resources and developing long-term relationships with public officials, remain virtually unchanged. Here is another aspect of continuity in Northeastern group politics and in the states as a whole.

Table 2 provides a comparison among the most influential interests in the Northeast, those in the fifty states as a whole, and those in the other three regions. From this we can see the dominance of certain economic interests in the region and the comparatively lower ranking or absence of other interests, such as agriculture. But perhaps the most enlightening aspect of the table is the similarity in power between interests in the Northeast, the other regions and the fifty states overall.

Group System Power

Understanding overall group power within a political system has proven even more problematic than that of individual group power. This is primarily because there are so many variables, many of which may still be unidentified. Consequently, assessments of overall group power are crude at best. While much important pioneering work has been conducted in attempting to assess overall group power, the methods vary and the results have been mixed leaving many unanswered questions.

The first attempt to assess overall group power was made by Belle Zeller. This was based entirely on the assessments of political scientists. Nevertheless, the study established the principle that group strength was primarily a function of political party strength and was inversely proportionate to it (Zeller, 1954: 190-93). Subsequent research built upon this and attempted to provide a more scientific basis. Work by Morehouse, for example, used measures of party strength to more accurately define the relationship (Morehouse, 1981: 107-17). Zeigler and van Dalen (1976: 94-110) and Zeigler (1983: 111-15) added the variable of economic and social development. These theories predicted the gradual transformation of strong group systems into moderate and eventually into weak systems as economic and social pluralism advanced. The results from the Hrebenar-Thomas study provide an alternative way of approaching and understanding overall group power.

Most problematic is the categorization of states into strong, moderate and weak group systems. This gives the mistaken impression that in some states groups are literally weak or virtually powerless and therefore of little, if any, significance in state politics. Morehouse classified five of the Northeastern states as having weak interest group systems: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island (Morehouse, 1981: 111-12). However, even in states where groups are not all-powerful, certain organizations may exert considerable influence, such as

TABLE 2

RANKING OF THE FORTY MOST EFFECTIVE INTERESTS IN THE NORTHEAST COMPARED WITH OTHER REGIONS AND WITH THE FIFTY STATES OVERALL

Interest and Overall Rank in the Fifty States	Overall Rank in the Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1. School Teachers' Organizations (predominantly NEA)	2	1	1	1
2. General Business Organizations (Chambers of Commerce, etc.)	1	4	3	3
3. Bankers' Associations (includes Savings & Loan Associations)	10	2	2	7
4. Manufacturers (companies & associations)	5*	9*	4	8*
5. Traditional Labor Associations (predominantly the AFL-CIO)	4	3	10	8*
6. Utility Companies & Associations (electric, gas, telephone, water)	9	11	7	2
7. Individual Banks & Financial Institutions	7	13	9	6
8. Lawyers (predominantly State Bar Associations & Trial Lawyers)	12	5	5	15
9. General Local Government Organizations (Municipal Leagues, County Organizations, etc.)	5*	17*	12	4
10. General Farm Organizations (mainly state Farm Bureaus)	26	6	8	11

Interest and Overall Rank in the Fifty States	Overall Rank in the Northeast	Midwest	South	West
11. Doctors	17*	7	6	16
12. State & Local Government Employees (other than teachers)	8	20	11	5
13. Insurance (companies & associations)	8	15	22*	17
14. Realtors' Associations	11	14	20*	22
15. Individual Traditional Labor Unions (Teamsters, UAW, etc.)	13	8	27	23*
16. K-12 Education Interests (other than teachers)	23*	16	16	19
17. Health Care Groups (other than doctors)	15	12	28*	31
18. Agricultural Commodity Organizations (stockgrowers, grain growers, etc,)	NM**	23*	20*	8*
19. Universities and Colleges (institutions and personnel)	23*	17*	22*	18
20. Oil and Gas (companies & associations)	30*	23*	19	13*
21. Retailers (companies & trade associations)	21	9*	17*	NM**
22. Contractors/Builders/Developers	16	33*	13*	20
23. Environmentalists	14	26*	25*	25*

Interest and Overall Rank in the Fifty States	Northeast	Overall Rank in the Midwest	South	West
24. Individual Cities and Towns	20	23*	34*	13*
25. Liquor, Wine and Beer Interests	30*	21	17*	25*
26. Mining Companies & Assoc.	NM**	22	28*	12
27. Truckers and Private Transport Interests (excluding railroads)	27*	28*	13*	29*
28. Public Interest/Good Government Groups	17*	NM**	25*	35
29. State Agencies	35*	28*	13*	NM**
30. Forest Product Companies	27*	NM**	28*	23*
31. Senior Citizens	17*	31*	34*	28
32. Railroads	NM**	31*	22*	33*
33. Women and Minorities	35*	NM**	32*	21
34. Religious Interests	28*	NM**	34*	27
35. Sportsmen/Hunting & Fishing (includes anti-gun control groups)	22	28*	34*	NM**
36. Gaming Interests (race tracks/casinos/lotteries)	30*	33*	32*	32

Interest and Overall Rank in the Fifty States	Overall Rank in the Northeast	Midwest	South	West
37. Anti-Abortionists*	NM**	19	NM**	NM**
Tourist Industry Groups*	27*	33*	NM**	29*
38. Newspapers/Media Interests*	35*	33*	31	NM**
Taxpayers' Groups*	35*	26*	NM**	33*
39. Tobacco Lobby	30*	NM**	NM**	NM**
40. Miscellaneous (All other groups mentioned)	30*(1)	NOM***	34*(2)	NOM***

*Tied ranking

**NM Not mentioned as an effective interest in any state in the region.

***NOM No other groups mentioned as effective in the region.

(1) The only other two groups mentioned in the region were Certified Accountants in Rhode Island and a group in Vermont for the mentally ill.

(2) The only other group mentioned in the entire region was legislative caucuses in Louisiana.

Source: Rankings for the fifty states and for the regions are based on Appendix A "The Most Effective Interests in the Fifty States," and Table 4. 2, "Ranking of the Forty Most Effective Interests in the Fifty States" in Clive S. Thomas and Ronald J. Hrebenar, "Interest Groups in the States," Chapter 4 of Virginia Gray, Herbert Jacob and Robert B. Albritton, eds., Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis, Fifth Edition (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, 1990).

manufacturers in Massachusetts and insurance in Connecticut. What is needed is a terminology to describe the overall impact of groups which avoids the misimpressions given by existing designations and which conveys the degree of their combined significance in state public policy making vis-a-vis other political institutions. A way to do this is to designate the impact

of the group system as having a dominant, a complementary or a subordinate impact in relation to other aspects of the system, or a combination of two of these.

Drawing on the research from the Hrebenar-Thomas study we classified the fifty states according to their impact on their respective state policy making systems. This is presented in Table 3. For purposes of comparison, the Table is organized by region. This enables us to place the Northeast in perspective with all other regions and states. States listed in

TABLE 3

CLASSIFICATION OF THE ELEVEN NORTHEASTERN STATES BY OVERALL IMPACT OF INTEREST GROUPS AND COMPARISON WITH STATES IN OTHER REGIONS

States Where the Overall Impact of Interest Groups is:

Dominant	Dominant/ Complementary	Complementary	Complementary/ Subordinate
NORTHEAST			
		Maine	Connecticut
		Maryland	Delaware
		Massachusetts	Rhode Island
		New Hampshire	Vermont
		New Jersey	
		New York	
		Pennsylvania	
MIDWEST			
	Nebraska	Illinois	Minnesota
	Ohio	Indiana	
		Iowa	
		Kansas	
		Michigan	
		Missouri	
		North Dakota	
		South Dakota	
		Wisconsin	

SOUTH		
Alabama	Arkansas	North Carolina
Florida	Georgia	
Louisiana	Kentucky	
Mississippi	Oklahoma	
South Carolina	Texas	
Tennessee	Virginia	
West Virginia		
WEST		
Alaska	Arizona	Colorado
New Mexico	California	
	Hawaii	
	Idaho	
	Montana	
	Nevada	
	Oregon	
	Utah	
	Washington	
	Wyoming	

Note: The subordinate column contains no states and has been consequently left out of this table.
Source: Compiled by the author from the research for the Hrebenar-Thomas study.

the dominant column are those in which groups as a whole are the overwhelming and consistent influence on policy making. The complementary column contains those states where groups have to work in conjunction with or are constrained by other aspects of the political system. Most often this is the party system; but it could also be a strong executive branch, competition between groups, the political culture or a combination of all these. The subordinate column represents a situation where the group system is consistently subordinated to other aspects of the policy making process. The absence of any states in this column indicates that research reveals that groups are not consistently subordinate in any state. The dominant/complementary column includes those states whose group systems

alternate between the two situations or are in the process of moving from one to the other. Likewise with the complementary/subordinate column.

Seven of the eleven Northeastern states appear in the complementary column, the other four in the complementary/subordinate category. This places the Northeast fourth out of the four major regions in the overall power of its interest group system, behind the South (with by far the most powerful system) the West, and the Midwest. Interestingly, while she used a different terminology and a impressionistic methodology, these findings are similar to those of Morehouse a decade ago. This is another example of some continuity in Northeastern interest group politics. Overall, however, and using the Morehouse assessment as a benchmark, there has been a general increase in the power of Northeastern interest group systems over the past decade.

Yet, while the general findings of the Morehouse and the Hrebenar- Thomas studies may be similar, these mask difference in the reasons for shifts in group system power. Furthermore, the Hrebenar-Thomas study takes issue with previous explanations by other scholars in regard to group system power. Existing research would argue that the decline in party strength in some Northeastern states over the last decade is responsible for the slight increase in overall group system power. The affect of party is far from clear in this regard, however, as we will see below. Moreover, existing explanations predict that the increased socio-economic diversity and governmental (especially bureaucratic) professionalism that have occurred in the Northeast would have produced even weaker systems than a decade ago. In fact, the very reverse has been the case.

The fifty state findings from the Hrebenar-Thomas study strongly suggest that the inverse relationship between party strength and group impact does not always hold, and socio-economic development and increased professionalization in government does not always lessen the impact of groups on a state's political system. This is not to argue that these variables are not significant; rather, it is to say that their effects on overall group power appear to be different than originally predicted. For instance, it is generally the case that party strength has considerable influence on the overall impact of groups; and it could be that in the case of the Northeast the party strength-group strength inverse relationship is still significant. However, while weak party systems are invariably accompanied by dominant group systems, strong parties do not always mean weak interest group systems, as New York and Pennsylvania attest. Furthermore, recent

political history in Vermont demonstrates that increasing party competition and bureaucratic professionalism may not result in a decrease in overall group influence, and can be accompanied by the reverse situation.

Consequently, another key finding from the Hrebenar-Thomas study is that there is no automatic progression from dominant to subordinate status resulting from socio-economic development and increased professionalization of government, or to use the old terminology, from strong to moderate to weak systems. In fact, groups often increase their influence as such developments occur. The rise of PACs, for example, may, in part, be countering the other forces that would normally produce weaker interest group systems. And increased bureaucratic professionalism my encourage legislators to seek out lobbyists to obtain countervailing sources of information to the administration's point of view. All this leads to the conclusion that party strength, socio-economic development and professionalization are not the only factors that influence overall group power, and in some circumstances they may not be the most important variables. What is needed is a more extensive explanation. However, one major problem in developing such an explanation is that the impact of the many variables that influence overall group power appear to vary from state to state and from time to time within a state, and so the combined influence of these variables will vary accordingly.

Interest Group Tactics and Lobbyists in the Northeast

In the Northeast, as elsewhere, by far the most common and still the most effective of group tactics is the use of one or more lobbyists. In fact, until very recently it was the only tactical device used by the vast majority of groups, and it remains the sole approach used by many groups today.

Overall, the state capital lobbying community has become much more pluralistic and has advanced greatly in its level of professionalism during the last twenty years. Contract lobbyists (those hired for a fee specifically to lobby) appear to have made the greatest strides in professionalism, but in-house lobbyists (regular employees of businesses, organizations or associations), particularly those representing associations, have also made such advances. While the level of professionalism varies from state to state, its general increase among contract lobbyists is evidenced by several developments. These include: an increase in the number of those working at the job full-time; the emergence of lobbying

firms which often provide a variety of services and represent up to as many as twenty five clients, such as Carroll J. Hughes in Connecticut; and an increased specialization on the part of many contract lobbyists in response to the increasing complexity of government. There has also been an increase in women acting as lobbyists. The Northeast has more women lobbyists than any other region.

Since the 1960s increased competition between groups as their numbers expanded, the changing needs of public officials, and an increased public awareness of both the activities and potential of interest groups, have spawned other tactical devices to supplement the work of the lobbyist. These include: mobilizing grass-roots support through networking (sophisticated member contact systems); public relations and media campaigns; building coalitions with other groups; and contributing workers and especially money to election campaigns particularly by establishing a PAC. Yet it is important to note that such tactics are not viewed as a substitute for a lobbyist. Rather, they are employed as a means of enhancing the ability of the group's lobbyists to access and influence public officials. Shrewd and experienced group leaders and lobbyists choose the most cost efficient and politically effective method that they can to achieve their goals. In most cases this means establishing lobbyist-public official contacts that involve a minimum of other group members. They employ the newer techniques only if absolutely necessary. This is partly because public relations campaigns, setting up networks and contributing to election campaigns are all very costly. Equally important is that, the more people involved in a campaign and the more complex the strategy, the harder it is to orchestrate. Nevertheless, for the reasons we related above, these new techniques are being widely and increasingly used in the Northeast as elsewhere. We might also speculate that the use of these new techniques and the increased intensity of lobbying is another reason why groups and group systems have tended to enhance their power recently, both in the Northeast and elsewhere.

How Different are Interest Group Systems in the Northeastern States?

As with most aspects of its politics and government, the interest group systems and interest group politics in the Northeastern states exhibit both similarities and differences when compared to the other thirty nine states. However, if we ask the question: Are there any features of interest group activity that are uniquely Northeastern, the answer is probably no.

This is because, while there are certainly variations in group systems and activity between regions, these are essentially circumstantial rather than indigenous or uniquely regional. This is illustrated by the fact that Pennsylvania's and New York's interest group systems are far more akin to populous and economically and socially diverse states like California, Illinois and Florida than to states like New Hampshire, Maine or Vermont. As in any region of the country, it is a state's level of socio-economic and political development that is the primary determining factor in shaping its interest group system, and less so the region in which it is located. Thus, differences between the more rural and the more industrialized states of the Northeast can be explained mainly by reference to differences in their economies and social make-up as set out in the conceptual framework earlier in this article. Furthermore, developments in the past twenty-five years have tended to reduce differences in group systems and group politics across the states as these become more like their counterpart in Washington, D. C.

Traditional economic and institutional interests still exert the most consistent influence on public policy in the Northeast. These are primarily business and professional groups, as well as state and local government agencies. It is primarily their command of extensive resources that has enabled these interests to maintain, and in some cases enhance, their influence. On the other hand, there have been major developments over the last two decades in the range of groups operating in Northeastern state capitals resulting in increased political participation for causes and individuals not previously represented. In fact, some new groups--environmentalists, senior citizens and good government groups--fare better in the Northeast than in any other region. Women also appear to have a greater presence as lobbyists in the Northeast than in any other region. These unique features probably reflects the liberal orientation of some of the region's states and the fact that the Northeast's economic and social diversity has given it the most diverse interest group system of any region in the nation.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Rosenthal and Moakley (1984) which contains chapters on New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Vermont.
2. Peirce's books relevant to the Northeast are Peirce (1976, 1975, 1972) and Peirce and Barone (1977). Also see, Peirce and Hagstrom (1983).

3. This study which took eight years to complete (1983-91) involved seventy eight political scientist. The researchers for the eleven Northeastern states, upon whose work this article is based, were: Connecticut, Sarah McCally Morehouse, University of Connecticut, Stamford; Delaware, Janet B. Johnson and Joseph A. Pika, University of Delaware; Maine, Douglas I. Hodgkin, Bates College; Maryland, Ronald C. Lippincott and Larry W. Thomas, University of Baltimore; Massachusetts, John Berg, Suffolk University; New Hampshire, Robert G. Egbert and Michelle A. Fistek, Plymouth State College; New Jersey, Barbara Salmore, Drew University and Stephen Salmore, Rutgers University; New York, David L. Cingranelli, State University of New York at Binghamton; Pennsylvania, Patricia M. Crotty, East Stroudsburg University; Rhode Island, Mark S. Hyde, Providence College; and Vermont, Frank Bryan and Ann Hallowell, University of Vermont.

   The full results on the Northeast can be found in Hrebenar and Thomas, (1993).

4. The information on Pennsylvania and Vermont in this paragraph draws heavily on the work on those states conduced for the Hrebenar-Thomas study. See note 3 above.

5. Morehouse's listing of the most significant groups in state politics, (Morehouse, 1981: 108-12) was based largely on secondary sources particularly the series of books on the regions of the United States by Peirce. See her list of sources (Morehouse, 1981: 112). The Hrebenar-Thomas listing, including the eleven Northeastern states, can be found in Gray, Jacob and Albritton (1990: Appendix A, 560-67).

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