Sociological Approaches to Private Politics

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Overview

• Bird’s eye view of central questions in the sociological literature
• Exemplars of research on these central examples
  – Not an exhaustive literature review!
• Some new questions that sociologists might be well-positioned to answered
• [Suggested reading]
The Nexus of Social Movement and Organization Theories

Social Movement Scholarship Drawing on Organization Theory
- Ecological Approaches
- Institutional Approaches
- Network/Field Approaches

Organizations Scholarship Drawing on Social Movement Theory
- How do SM and corporations influence each other?
- How do SM influence other organizations?
- How do SM influence markets?
- How do SM influence the development of new forms?
The Nexus of Social Movement and Organization Theories

- Ecological Approaches
- Institutional Approaches
- Network/Field Approaches
- Social Movement Scholarship Drawing on Organization Theory
- How do SM and corporations influence each other?
- How do SM influence other organizations?
- How do SM influence markets?
- How do SM influence the development of new forms?
How do social movements, as outsiders to corporations, influence corporations?
How do social movements, as insiders to corporations, influence corporations?
How do corporations influence social movements?

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**Putting a Face on the Issue**

**Corporate Stakeholder Mobilization in Professional Grassroots Lobbying Campaigns**

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Business scholars pay increasing attention to the expanded influence of stakeholders on firm strategies, legitimacy, and competitiveness. At the same time, analysts have noted that the transformed regulatory and legislative environments of recent decades have encouraged firms to become much more politically active. Surprisingly, relatively little research has tied together these two trends. The present study integrates perspectives on stakeholder management with research on corporate political activity to develop an understanding of the structural sources of stakeholder mobilization in professional grassroots lobbying campaigns. This study employs a unique, original data source to consider how the adoption of grassroots lobbying by a firm relates to its industry, degree of inside lobbying, partisan PAC contributions, and more. This research shows that corporate grassroots lobbying is shaped most significantly by a firm’s degree of inside lobbying, as highly active firms take a diversified strategy for gaining influence. Firms in industries with a heavy public presence as well as those concerned with taxation, government appropriations, and economic development also adopt these strategies readily. PAC contributions to Republican, but not Democratic, candidates also heighten firms’ propensity to lobby the public.

*Keywords: corporate political activity; stakeholders, grassroots lobbying; civic engagement; political action committees*

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How do social movements influence other types of organizations?
How do social movements influence the creation of new organizational forms?
How do social movements influence markets?
Some new questions that sociologists may be well-positioned to answer

- Firm reactions to movements (beyond acquiescence or cooptation)
  - Repression
    - Private policing of outsiders, retaliation against insiders
- More sophisticated thinking/measurement of corporate opportunity structures
  - CEO ideology (per our earlier discussion)
  - How do movements alter the COS for subsequent movements?
    - “Social Management Devices” project
- More sophisticated thinking/measurement of outcomes of activism
  - Financial, reputation, concrete
- Stages Approach
  - At precisely which points might movements matter? Which firms are chosen?
    - Shareholder resolution project
- Multi-level Analysis
  - Supra-firm, Inter-firm, Intra-firm
- Theory development (esp. formal theory)
  - Partnering with economists and political economists?
- Better understanding of the “legal environment” and how this impacts the outcomes of social movements.
  - Partnering with legal scholars?
Suggested Overview Readings: Sociologists’ Take on Private Politics

• 3 Special Issues of Journals:
  – *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2008, Edited by Rao, Morrill, Davis, and Soule
  – *Business and Society*, 2008, Edited by de Bakker and den Hond
  – *Organization Studies*, 2012, Edited by de Bakker, den Hond, King, and Weber