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Perceptions of Power: Interest Groups in Local Politics

Christopher A. Cooper, Anthony J. Nownes, and Steven Roberts

WHAT IS THE extent of interest group activity and influence in local politics? Some claim that interest groups are not very active or influential in local politics (Peterson 1981). Others suggest that they can and do exert influence in the local political arena (Fleischmann 1997). Despite a long history of research on power in local politics on the one hand (Dahl 1961; Hunter 1953) and interest group influence on the other (for a review of the literature, see Cigler 1991), the answer to this question remains elusive. This article examines interest group activity and influence in 68 medium-sized cities. The kinds of interest groups that are active in local politics are cataloged, and the effects of institutional structures on interest group behavior are determined. Hypotheses about interest group activity are presented.

Background and Hypotheses

Scholars have identified various types of interest groups that exert influence in the local political arena. First among these are busi-

ness interests. Ever since the classic works on elitism and pluralism (e.g., Dahl 1961; Lynd and Lynd 1937; Hunter 1953), scholars have debated the role of business interests in local politics. Recent work suggests that business interests—including both individual business firms and trade associations—are the most active interest groups in cities (see, for example, Abney and Lauth 1986; Elkins 1995; Logan and Molotch 1987; Stone 1989). Moreover, case studies of specific regimes show that business interests are supremely important players in city politics (Ferman 1996; Judd 1983; Stone 1989). Recent research suggests that neighborhood organizations are also very active in local politics (Dilger 1992; Elkins 1995). They lobby public officials, mobilize citizens to attend meetings, and are consistently engaged in local governance (Mesch and Schwirian 1996). Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) find that neighborhood organizations are good for urban democracy, although they are not a cure-all for the ills of modern urban politics. In addition to business and neighborhood groups, faith-based organizations (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997; Sharp 1999; 2003), labor unions (DeLeon 1992; Regalado 1991) and minority groups (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003) seem to be important actors in local politics.

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The limited literature on interest groups in local politics suggests three specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Business groups are the most active and influential types of groups in local politics.

Hypothesis 2: Neighborhood organizations are very active and influential in local politics.

Hypothesis 3: Faith-based organizations, labor unions, and minority groups are also active and influential in local politics but somewhat less so than business groups and neighborhood organizations.

Group Activity in Local Politics

Interest groups are not equally active in all cities. The literature suggests that the structure, culture, and the unique circumstances of each locality produce different levels of group activity and influence. In particular, research suggests that three structures foster interest group activity and influence: mayor-council governments, nonpartisan elections, and the presence of direct democracy. The research also suggests that relatively high levels of interest group activity characterize cities with relatively high levels of citizen interest in politics.

Scholars of local politics have debated the effects of governmental structure for years but have not reached a consensus (DeSantis and Renner 2002). For example, there is an ongoing debate concerning the effects of structure on spending patterns (Clark 1968; Lineberry and Fowler 1967; Lyons 1978; Morgan and Pelissero 1980). A similar debate considers the effects of structure on interest group activity and influence. Clark (1968), Grimes et al. (1976), and Lineberry and Fowler (1967) conclude that reform governments are less susceptible to group activity and influence than nonreform governments. In contrast, Northrop and Dutton (1978) argue that because mayors and managers have different career ambitions, city managers are more

susceptible to interest group influence than mayors. Abney and Lauth (1985) ultimately conclude that structure makes no difference.¹ Clearly, there is disagreement among urban scholars regarding the extent of group activity in manager governments.

Another reform structure hypothesized to affect interest group activity is the nonpartisan ballot. When party affiliation does not appear on the ballot, voters rely on other cues to make decisions. As a result, the incumbency advantage is usually strongest in nonpartisan elections (Schaffner, Streb, and Wright 2001). The effects of party do not end at the voting booth. Council members use party identification to identify like-minded members and as a cue for their voting decisions. If they do not have party to guide their voting, they will rely on other cues such as those from interest groups. Research suggests that when parties are not present, interest groups exert more influence (Davidson and Fraga 1988). This conventional wisdom is widely accepted but has not been empirically verified.

Interest groups have recently become major players in initiative and referendum campaigns (Bowler, Donovan, and Tolbert 1998; Bowler and Donovan 1998; Gerber 1999). Most observers of direct democracy now agree that initiatives and referenda lead to relatively high levels of interest group activity. This hypothesis dates from David Truman's (1951) discussion of disturbance theory more than 50 years ago and has been confirmed by numerous empirical studies. Research shows that when policies are put to a vote, interest groups mobilize on both sides to try to influence voters. Cities in which there is a mechanism for direct democracy likely have higher levels of interest group activity than cities without initiatives or referenda.

Structure is not the only factor that may affect interest group activity. In localities in which citizens are active in politics, interest groups likely will find a more hospitable environment. Consequently, citizen interest in politics and interest group activity are hypothesized to be positively correlated.

The literature leads to four additional hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Levels of interest group activity are higher in cities with mayor-council or commission governments than they are in cities with council-manager governments.

Hypothesis 5: Levels of interest group activity are higher in cities with nonpartisan elections than they are in cities with partisan elections.

Hypothesis 6: Levels of interest group activity are higher in cities that have referenda and/or initiatives than they are in cities that have neither.

Hypothesis 7: Levels of interest group activity are higher in cities with relatively high levels of citizen interest in politics than they are in cities with relatively low levels of citizen interest in politics.

Despite substantial attention to interest groups on the one hand and power in American cities on the other, a number of important questions about interest groups in local politics remain unanswered. Among them are the following: (1) What sorts of interest groups are active in local politics? (2) In which policy areas are interest groups most active? and (3) Does governmental structure affect interest group activity?

Data and Methods

To better understand the influence and activity of interest groups in local politics, city council members in 68 medium-sized American cities were surveyed. The sample was determined by identifying every city in the *Directory of City Policy Officials and Resource Guide* (National League of Cities 1998) that had a population of 100,000–300,000. Eighty cities within the larger list of medium-sized cities were randomly sampled.

A random number of councilors were selected from each city. Of the 477 surveys mailed, 161 completed surveys were returned from 68 cities for a response rate of 33.8 per-

cent (see Table 1). This response rate is more than double that considered to be acceptable in marketing research (Baldauf, Reisinger, and Moncrief 1999). It also surpasses the response rates of several other surveys of political elites (see, for example, Abbe and Herrnson 2003; Kedrowski 1996). In short, the response rate was adequate for the purposes of this study.² Table 2 presents the major characteristics of sample cities and respondents³.

Three aspects of the research design are worth noting. First, many cities rather than just one were examined. Scholars of state politics have long recognized the advantages of comparative research and have learned a great deal about the effects of institutions and culture on behavior by examining a number of states that vary in theoretically important ways (Jewell 1982; Brace and Jewett 1995). Scholars of local politics, however, have been slower to adopt a comparative approach. Much of what is known about groups in local politics is based on in-depth case studies of one city and/or one policy area.⁴ Reflecting a particular place and point in time, single case studies are high in internal validity but low in external validity. Conversely, studies of many cities are higher in external validity but low in internal validity. A comparative approach allows past research to be evaluated and suggests areas for further research on groups in local politics.

Second, the research design relies on the judgment of city council members rather than lobbyists or other group representatives. Studies of city lobbyists show that the city council is the most frequent target of local lobbying (Abney and Lauth 1985). Moreover, research on interest group influence and activity at all levels of government is based almost exclusively on the opinions of lobbyists and/or group representatives (Kollman 1998; Nownes and Freeman 1998; Schlozman and Tierney 1983; 1986; Walker 1991). This approach may introduce some bias, as lobbyists and group representatives have an important but particular perspective on their own influence. Surveying the other side of the

Table 1. Population of Cities in Data Set

City	Population	City	Population
Huntsville, AL	159,789	Bridgeport, CT	142,546
Mobile, AL	196,278	Hartford, CT	139,739
Montgomery, AL	159,789	New Haven, CT	130,474
Anchorage, AK	226,338	Macon, GA	106,612
Tempe, AZ	141,865	Savannah, GA	137,560
Little Rock, AR	175,795	Boise, ID	125,738
Anaheim, CA	266,406	Peoria, IL	113,504
Bakersfield, CA	174,820	South Bend, IN	105,511
Berkeley, CA	102,724	Cedar Rapids, IA	110,000
Chula Vista, CA	135,163	Des Moines, IA	193,187
Concord, CA	111,348	Kansas City, KS	149,767
El Monte, CA	106,209	Topeka, KS	119,883
Escondido, CA	108,635	Lansing, MI	127,321
Fremont, CA	173,339	Livonia, MI	100,850
Glendale, CA	180,038	Warren, MI	144,864
Hayward, CA	111,498	Jackson, MS	196,637
Huntington Beach, CA	181,519	Rochester, NY	231,636
Modesto, CA	164,730	Syracuse, NY	163,860
Moreno Valley, CA	118,779	Yonkers, NY	188,082
Oceanside, CA	128,398	Eugene, OR	112,669
Ontario, CA	133,179	Salem, OR	107,786
Orange, CA	110,658	Allentown, PA	105,090
Oxnard, CA	142,216	Erie, PA	108,718
Pasadena, CA	131,591	Beaumont, TX	114,323
Pomona, CA	131,723	Corpus Christi, TX	257,453
Santa Clarita, CA	110,642	Garland, TX	180,650
Santa Rosa, CA	113,313	Irving, TX	155,037
Stockton, CA	210,943	Laredo, TX	122,899
Sunnyvale, CA	117,229	Lubbock, TX	186,206
Thousand Oaks, CA	104,352	Mesquite, TX	101,484
Vallejo, CA	109,199	Pasadena, TX	119,363
Aurora, CO	222,103	Plano, TX	128,713
Colorado Springs, CO	281,140	Tacoma, WA	176,664
Lakewood, CO	126,481	Madison, WI	191,262

Note: Numbers are populations as reported in the *Directory of City Policy Officials and Resource Guide* (National League of Cities 1998).

influence exchange yields a complementary and oft-ignored perspective on interest group influence.

Third, this study focuses on medium-sized cities, which have been largely ignored in the scholarly literature. Recent work suggests that city size is an important variable that can help explain political activity (Oliver 2000; 2001). Because tens of millions of Americans live in medium-sized cities and city size has a substantial impact on politics, work on medium-sized cities is both theoretically and substantively important.

Results

Over 20 years ago Paul Peterson, currently Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government and Director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University, claimed, “local politics is groupless politics” (1981, 116). Although scholars have frequently taken issue with this statement and have identified a few areas in which groups are active, few have asked city council members about group activity in their city. To explore group activity in local politics, respondents

Table 2. Sample City and Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Percent
Respondents who come from a city that	
Allows direct democracy	92.0
Has mayor-council system	33.0
Has council-manager system	67.0
Has commission system	1.0
Has nonpartisan elections	85.0
Council members	
Percent male	67.0
Percent white	81.0
Mean age	53.3
Mean number of members on respondent's council	9.2

N = 161 (*N*s may vary for individual survey items).

Source: Authors' data.

were asked if the statement "Interest groups are active in my city" was a good description of their city, a bad description, or in between. For a subsequent multivariate analysis, the responses were combined to form a dichotomous variable (1 = good description and 0 = bad description or in between). Approximately 52 percent of respondents felt that the statement was a good description. Only 2.5 percent chose the bad description response. This finding that interest groups are quite active in local politics calls into question Peterson's conclusion.

The issues on which interest groups are active were then determined. Table 3 presents findings regarding how active interest groups are on a variety of policy issues and how influential they are on the same policy issues.⁵ The third column in Table 3 presents a differential score (i.e., the difference between the percentage of respondents who indicate that interest groups are "very active" in an issue area and the percentage of respondents who indicate that interest groups are "very influential" in that issue area). The final column standardizes the differential by dividing it by the percentage of respondents who indicate that interest groups are very active on that issue. The variation suggests that interest groups are not equally active on all policy issues. The first row of the table shows that over two-thirds of respondents perceive that interest groups are very involved in economic

development issues. Similarly, 58 percent perceive that interest groups are very influential in the area of economic development policy. Despite the differential ratio of .15, economic development is the policy area in which city council members believe interest groups are most active and influential.

The results in Table 3 are contrary to expectations. Sixty-two percent of city council members indicated that interest groups are very active on police/law enforcement issues, and over half reported that interest groups are very influential on police/law enforcement issues. Although there is little extant work on interest group influence in this area,⁶ given the increasing importance of homeland security issues, it is fair to conclude that interest group activity has only increased since the data were collected.

The next five policy areas in which interest groups were described as very active are land-use planning, public safety, zoning, housing, and recreation/parks. Lobbying on roads does not appear to be very widespread. Despite the perception that city council members deal mostly with "pothole politics," roads do not receive as much interest group attention as many other policy issues. Housing policy has the largest absolute and standardized differential score. This finding indicates that although councilors perceive that interest groups are extremely active in the area of housing policy, they do not view them as particularly influen-

Table 3. Policy Areas in Which Interest Groups Are Active and Level of Influence

Policy Area	Level of Activity			Level of Influence			Differential	Ratio
	Not at all	Somewhat	Very	Not at all	Somewhat	Very		
Economic development	3	29	68	3	39	58	10	.15
Police/law enforcement	6	33	62	7	40	54	8	.13
Land-use planning	4	38	59	5	44	51	8	.14
Public safety	6	36	58	5	46	49	9	.16
Zoning	8	36	57	9	45	46	11	.19
Housing	8	43	49	10	61	29	20	.41
Recreation/parks	8	44	47	13	47	40	7	.15
Fire	21	35	45	25	42	33	12	.27
Art/culture	7	50	43	14	56	31	12	.28
Traffic	13	46	41	18	58	25	16	.39
Education	16	44	40	19	50	31	9	.23
Taxes	21	44	36	22	50	29	7	.19
Roads	17	52	31	20	57	23	8	.26
Refuse collection	41	37	22	40	44	17	5	.23
Personal social services	18	60	22	23	60	17	5	.23
Health	21	60	18	28	57	15	3	.17
Electricity	54	30	17	51	33	16	1	.06
Public transportation	20	55	26	28	55	17	9	.35
Vocational education	57	37	6	55	41	4	2	.33

N = 161 (*N*s may vary for individual survey items).

Survey item wording: "Below you will find several issue areas in which local governments are active. For each of the issue areas, please indicate whether local interest groups in your municipality are not at all active, somewhat active, or very active. In addition, for each of the issue areas, please indicate whether local interest groups in your municipality are not at all influential, somewhat influential, or very influential."

Notes: Numbers are percentages. Differential = percent "very active" - percent "very influential." Ratio = differential/percent "very active." All entries are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: Authors' data.

tial. In general, there is a correlation between the proportion of respondents who indicated that interest groups are very active in a policy area and the proportion of respondents who indicated that interest groups are very influential in that policy area. ($r = .970$; $p < .01$ [two-tailed test]).

Types of Groups, Level of Activity, and Level of Influence

Types of interest groups active in local politics and the levels of activity and influence of these groups were then examined. The first row of Table 4 shows that councilors view neighborhood associations as the most active and influential types of groups in local politics. The second row indicates that councilors view business associations as second only to neighborhood groups as important players in

local politics. These are the only two types of groups that a majority of respondents indicated are very active in local politics. These findings are consistent with Abney and Lauth's work (1985) on group influence in city politics. Rounding out the list of the five most active types of interest groups are public employee unions, cultural/recreational groups, and ethnic/minority groups. The data show that councilors view professional associations, farm groups, and women's groups as the least active and influential types of groups.

The largest absolute gaps between activity and influence exist among antigrowth groups, neighborhood groups, business associations, environmental groups, single-issue groups, and public employee unions, all of which appear to be much more active than they are influential. The standardized ratio

Table 4. Types of Interest Groups, Level of Activity, and Level of Influence

Group Type	Level of Activity			Level of Influence			Differential	Ratio
	Not at all	Somewhat	Very	Not at all	Somewhat	Very		
Neighborhood associations	0	37	64	2	49	49	15	.23
Business associations	3	38	59	2	52	46	13	.22
Public employee unions	17	41	42	19	50	31	11	.26
Cultural/recreational groups	12	54	35	16	57	27	8	.23
Ethnic/minority groups	16	56	28	22	51	27	1	.04
Homeowner groups	21	52	27	22	52	26	1	.04
Environmental groups	17	48	35	23	54	23	12	.34
Antigrowth groups	36	34	30	44	44	12	18	.60
Private-sector unions	35	38	27	40	38	22	5	.19
Single-issue groups	15	59	26	22	65	13	13	.50
Utilities	34	48	18	34	47	19	-1	-.06
Taxpayer groups	34	48	18	36	53	11	7	.39
Religious/church groups	25	58	17	23	60	18	-1	-.05
Business firms	15	69	16	14	70	16	0	0.00
Women's groups	32	63	6	35	61	4	2	.33
Farm groups	87	12	1	86	11	3	-2	-2.00
Professional associations	73	26	1	70	28	2	-1	-1.00

N = 161 (Ns may vary for individual survey items).

Survey item wording: "Below you will find several types of interest groups that are active at the local level. For each type, please specify whether, in your opinion, that type of group is not at all active, somewhat active, or very active. Also, for each type, please specify whether, in your opinion, that type of group is not at all influential, somewhat influential, or very influential."

Notes: Numbers are percentages. Differential = percent "very active" - percent "very influential." Ratio = differential/percent "very active." All entries are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: Authors' data.

measure indicates that cultural/recreational groups and taxpayer groups also have fairly high differentials.⁷ To determine the overall fit between activity and influence, the correlation between the proportion of respondents who suggested that a type of interest group was very active and very influential was calculated. Once again, it appears the two are highly correlated ($r = .946; p < .01$ [two-tailed test]). In general, it appears that the types of interest groups that are most active are also most influential.

Factors Associated with Group Activity

Finally, the factors that lead to varying levels of interest group activity across cities were considered. By examining several cities with varied institutional structures, the variables that lead to active and influential interest groups may be discerned. Cities with initiatives and/or referenda, cities with council-

manger governments, and cities with high levels of citizen interest were expected to have relatively high levels of group activity. To test these hypotheses, respondents were asked whether interest groups are active in their city. In the subsequent logistic regression model, the dependent variable represents whether interest groups are active (= 1) or not (= 0) in the respondent's city. Independent variables were included for whether the city has direct democracy (1 = direct democracy; 0 = no direct democracy), whether the city has council-manager government (1 = council-manager government; 0 = other type of government), whether the city is in California (1 = California city; 0 = not California city), and to what degree citizens in the city take an interest in politics.⁸ Also included were three individual-level variables for each respondent—age, sex (1 = female; 0 = male), and race (1 = white; 0 = nonwhite). These

demographic variables were included to determine whether different types of city council members view interest group activity in different ways.

Table 5 presents the results of this analysis. The table presents the odds ratios and robust standard errors for each variable. To gain a better understanding of the results, Table 5 also presents the predicted probabilities for the significant variable. These probabilities were computed using CLARIFY, software for interpreting and presenting statistical results, and they represent the predicted probabilities for the low and high values of the independent variable while holding all other variables

Table 5. Logistic Regression Results for Interest Group Activity

Factors	Odds Ratio (SE)
City	
Direct democracy	1.710 (.924)
Council-manager government	.805 (.397)
Nonpartisan elections	.504 (.257)
"Citizens take an interest in politics" ^a	2.38* (.689)
California city	1.710 (.854)
Individual	
Age	.992 (.017)
Female	1.850 (.836)
White	.711 (.328)
Percent correctly predicted	67.9
Proportional reduction in error (PRE) ^b	31.4
chi-square	20.74*
N	140

* $p < .01$ (two-tailed test).

Note: Standard errors are robust standard errors with clustering on city.

Source: Authors' data.

^a The low-high probability for this variable is .41 – .79. It refers to the predicted probabilities of high interest group activity for the low and high value of the independent variable, holding all other variables at their means.

^b PRE is calculated per Hagle and Mitchell (1992).

at their mean (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003).

The results of the model indicate that cities with initiatives and/or referenda do not have higher relative levels of interest group activity. This finding suggests that the presence of direct democracy is less important in local politics than some scholars suggest.

Second, the results suggest that city structure does not influence interest group activity in the hypothesized direction. Cities with council-manager governments are not substantially less likely to see high levels of interest group activity than cities with mayor-council governments. The increased incidence of chief administrative officers (CAOs) who oversee the day-to-day operations of government may have rendered structure less important in local politics.

Third, the data suggest that neither the presence of nonpartisan elections nor the demographic characteristics of respondents affect perceptions of interest group activity. The hypothesis that cities with nonpartisan elections would see higher levels of group activity than cities without partisan elections was not confirmed. The demographic characteristics of respondents do not appear to affect perceptions of interest group activity.

Fourth, the analyses suggest that cities with high levels of citizen interest in politics are more likely than cities with lower levels to have active interest groups. Specifically, the data show that cities with high levels of citizen interest in politics have a 79 percent chance of being perceived as having active interest groups, whereas cities with low levels of citizen interest have a 41 percent chance of being described as having active interest groups.

Finally, because California is overrepresented in the sample, an independent variable indicating whether a respondent's city is located in California was included. The odds ratio indicates that California cities are almost twice as likely as cities in other states to experience high levels of interest group activity. However, because the coefficient is not significant, it cannot necessarily be con-

cluded that California cities are, *ceteris paribus*, different than cities in other states.

Conclusion

In all, the data provide mixed support for Hypothesis 1 and unqualified support for Hypotheses 2 and 3. While the data suggest that business organizations are indeed active in local politics, they also indicate that other types of interest groups are quite active and influential as well. As for the effects of city characteristics and governmental structure, there is support for Hypothesis 7. Structure does not seem to affect levels of interest group influence and activity.

In addition to providing support for many of the hypotheses, the data also provide new insights into the nature and extent of interest group activity in localities. The findings show that a multicity approach to the study of local politics is worthwhile. In order to move beyond description and develop more broad-ranging theories of local politics in general and interest group activity in local politics in particular, case studies must be supplemented with comparative research. Table 3 suggests that issues that are heavily lobbied for are understudied in political science and urban studies. In particular, issues of police and law enforcement engender extremely high levels of interest group activity. Scholars who wish to understand the influence and behavior of interest groups in local politics should focus on this understudied policy area. Table 3 highlights a number of other policy areas in which interest groups are active but about which little is known, including recreation/parks, fire, and art/culture.

Recent research suggests that because of the rise of CAOs and other “hybrid offices,” city structure may be less important than it used to be (MacManus and Bullock 2003; DeSantis and Renner 2002; Frederickson and Johnson 2001). The findings of this study indicate that city structure is not an important determinant of interest group activity. Conventional wisdom about local

politics also is called into question—that is, in cities in which parties are less important, interest groups “pick up the slack.” The presence of nonpartisan elections appears to have no effect on levels of interest group activity. Scholars should reexamine this issue, possibly using a more objective measure of interest group activity, such as the number of registered groups per city.

This study highlights a paradox of local interest groups. Specifically, it shows that something that citizens seem to like (an informed citizenry) is associated with something that citizens claim not to like (interest group influence). Political reformers should therefore consider increasing social capital (i.e., the social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness). Putnam (2000) discusses the ability of groups to promote social capital, but he does not differentiate between politically active interest groups—which Americans claim not to like—and other types of groups. If groups and participation go hand-in-hand as Putnam suggests, then increased interest group activity is a natural feature of cities that are high in social capital.

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Steven Roberts is an instructor of political science at Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee. His research interests include urban politics, public administration, and interest groups.

Notes

1. Abney and Lauth (1985) do find, however, that interest groups in manager cities have less influence over the bureaucracy.
2. For a review of surveys of state legislators, see Maestas, Neeley, and Richardson (2003).
3. The sample is not identical to the overall population; specifically, California is overrepresented. While 27 percent of the population of medium-sized cities is in California, 37 percent of the sample cities are in California. This limitation is inherent to the study design, but California is controlled for in the multivariate model.
4. Many other studies employ this approach (for example, Oliver 2001; Clingermayer and Feiock 1995). The case studies are much more common in the urban politics literature.
5. The data used in this study can be found at paws.wcu.edu/ccoooper and web.utk.edu/~anownes.
6. An exception is Abney and Lauth's (1985) work on interest group influence in cities. Their results are dissimilar to those of this study.
7. Although the standardized differentials are instructive, they are not definitive. Some groups that have very low levels of activity and influence have elevated ratios. For the types of groups near the bottom of the list, the differential may provide a better guide.
8. Respondents were presented with the following statement: "Citizens take little interest in politics in my city." They were then asked to indicate if this was a good description, bad description, or in between. The responses were recoded to make a higher value consistent with a more active citizenry.

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