

REFORMERS OR ROADBLOCKS: EDUCATIONAL INTEREST GROUPS AND STATE POLICY FORMATION*

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Abstract

Given the overt political nature of this topic, an additional theoretical postulate, the Triadic Theory of Power was also presented as another framework to conceptualize the external and internal forces which shape the formation of contemporary education policy. Predicated upon the scholarship of Nobel laureate James Q. Wilson, Andrew McFarland (1987) a British scholar and political scientist postulated that legislation and policy development emerged from a continuous conflict between divergent forces such as grassroots political activists, appointed cabinet members, elected legislative representatives, and lobbyists employed by special interest groups. The utilization of either of these theoretical assertions would be extremely beneficial in the event of a partisan shift in any given legislative chamber. This literature review provides the documentation that creating legislation reflective of the electorate's values is not an easy process for the nation's cadre of elected officials. With perseverance, these leaders must attempt to maintain state constitutional fiduciary obligations, while securing the revenues necessary for implementing partisan proclivities and constituent programs. Within this system of policy development, the influence of lobbyists representing various special interest groups has created an additional layer of representation in the state capitals.



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The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required that Congressional representatives solicit and incorporate public comment from various segments of the education community. Parents, administrators, researchers, teachers, and students across the political spectrum proffered their opinions and recommended modifications to this landmark piece of education policy. Given that the federal government now has an expansive role in determining the long-term viability of the nation's schools it would appear there is marginal flexibility afforded to state governors and legislators to exert their constitutional responsibilities granted under the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

This has not always been the case; up until the ratification of NCLB, state governments were given an enormous amount of latitude to craft their own K-12 education policy. As part of this process, lobbyists from various educational interest groups tenaciously have attempted to persuade state lawmakers to advance and codify their specific policy agendas. Therefore, in order for scholars to understand the influence and leadership exerted by interest groups within state legislatures, it is necessary to examine the research regarding this topic that has been published in various books, journals, and dissertations. It also behooves scholars with a keen interest in the formulation of public policy to analyze pertinent primary sources. The goal of this literature review is to critique objectively the literature from purposely chosen publications, which focus on the philosophy of representation, interest group theory and practice, and state education policy formation.

To delineate the findings of credible scholars who have concentrated on interest groups' influences upon public policy formulation, this critique is comprised of three different sections. Each of the components is designed specifically to build upon the findings of the preceding segment. The first section is primarily historical and focuses on the philosophical ideas postulated by John Locke, including his concepts regarding an elected legislature. Building on this first section, the second portion examines critically the research regarding the theoretical concepts of interest groups and lobbyists. The third portion of the literature review is devoted specifically to the rise and influence of educational interest groups within various state legislatures.

The following three research methods were used to obtain the literature samples: traditional library inquiries, electronic database retrievals, and archival investigations. With the exception of the philosophical foundation section, key words such as "lobbying," "lobby strategy," "interest groups," and "education" were used as the subject identifiers in the Journal Storage (JSTOR) and Dissertations Abstracts International (DAI) databases. The terms "Madison," "faction," and "Federalist" were used as the research parameters in order to obtain the literature for the chapter's section establishing a historical foundation for interest group involvement within the policy process.

1 Historical Foundation and Madison's Admonition in The Federalist, Number 10

Gilderhus (1999) indicated that a historical methodology in critical examination of primary and secondary sources can help scholars to avoid "getting lost by locating us in time and figuring out where we have been" (p. 6). Whereas this research method employs a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources, the possibility exists that the authors' personal biases posed a threat to the validity of their findings. Therefore, the conclusions of the researchers using the historical methodology cannot be generalized. On the other hand, this lack of generalization does not diminish the importance of their theses. The findings of these historians have been offered for two specific purposes: to present an evolutionary explanation of Madison's argument against political factionalism, which he displayed within The Federalist, Number 10 (Madison, 1787), and to place Madison's argument within a larger historical context. Although several of the authors grounded their research in theory, only two authors' (Leech, 1998; Baxter, 1999) dissertations on interest group theory and practice formally mentioned Madison's philosophical concepts. Yet, neither Leech nor Baxter traced Madison's postulation back to its original philosophical source, the writings of John Locke.

In The Federalist, Number 10, Madison postulated that if the United States government failed to divest itself from a "factious spirit," the newly formed nation would fail in its experiment of providing effective government to its people. Madison (1787) defined these special interests as

. . . a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and

actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other Citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community. (Wills, 1982, p. 43)

Several paragraphs later, Madison (1787) indicated, “The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern Legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of Government” (p. 44).

Interestingly, although Ely (1980) and Stone, Seidman, Sunstein, and Tushnet (1986) all concluded that Madison’s preceding statements were a source of political concern, Isaac Kramnick (1987) surmised that special interest groups have positively served the nation as “the guarantors of American freedom and justice” (p. 57). Keeping this philosophical conflict in mind, practitioners of education policy need to understand the differentiating political forces that exert influence upon the development of education policy with state legislatures. Educational theorists also should have a working familiarity with the basic level of scholarship regarding the philosophies that influenced the creation of the American republic, including the principles of federalism and the separation of powers.

To place Madison’s argument regarding political factions in proper historical perspective, it is necessary to examine how Locke’s philosophical writings on political discourse nurtured the development of the United States Constitution. More than 225 years of American history have been predicated upon the rights of citizens, either individually or collectively, to seek an active engagement in the affairs of their government. This rationale was exemplified both before and after the American Revolution. The Founding Fathers, specifically Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, attempted to forge a doctrine of government influenced by the philosophical ideas of John Locke and James Harrington (Pole, 1966). Analyzing an expansive list of primary and secondary sources, Pole concluded that both Locke and Harrington believed “it was essential that representation should achieve the highest purity” within a republic (p. 12). Pole further noted that these two philosophers shared the common notion that the ultimate authority in all governmental matters was an active citizenry. Pole also postulated the notion that Harrington’s ideas were more widespread throughout the world, resulting from his leadership within the Commonwealthmen, a group of philosophers who shaped republican discourse in the 17th century. The central tenet uniting these philosophers was the promotion of a political theory dedicated to the “complete system of representation” (p. 17). Forrest McDonald (1985), the well credentialed professor of American history at the University of Alabama, concurred with Pole’s interpretation that the ultimate source of authority was a nation’s legislature. According to McDonald’s published analysis of Locke’s writings, the government’s power was derived from the people’s consent.

Grant (1987), an assistant professor of political science at Duke University, published a book entitled *John Locke’s Liberalism*. According to Grant’s findings, Locke believed any legislative decree was merely an extension of the people’s authority. Concurring with Pole’s (1966) conclusions, Grant wrote that Locke asserted, “Representation is required as a matter of principle in any legitimate government” (p. 96). Finally, Grant reiterated Locke’s notion that “any government that operates without the consent of the people is . . . illegitimate, [and therefore] a usurpation” of the people’s trust and political authority (p. 200).

Using an extensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, noted historian Gordon S. Wood (1969) also examined Locke’s influence on Madison’s political outlook as part of the research conducted for his book, *Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. Wood revealed that Locke’s theories on government profoundly influenced Madison’s fervent devotion to the establishment of a separate branch of government exclusively devoted to lawmaking. To support this notion, Wood cited a letter Madison penned, inferring that all legislatures serve the people as their “first principle of government” (p. 152).

The historical writings of Pole (1966), Wood (1969), and McDonald (1985) have each placed Madison as a central figure in the drafting of the Constitution. Moreover, historians universally have embraced the idea that Madison’s leadership in securing passage of the federal Constitution was due to his role as one of the three authors of *The Federalist Papers* (Bloom, 1937; Stone et al., 1986; Wills, 1982). According to Wills, these essays, written from October 1787 to May 1788, were designed to educate the citizens of New York on the merits of the proposed United States Constitution. Although historians have interpreted *The Federalist Papers* as a historical account of post-Revolutionary War America, these documents also have served as key components of various Constitutional law textbooks (Bloom; Stone et al.).

In addition to usage of *The Federalist Papers* for historical analysis, sociological interpretation, and schol-

arly example of legal persuasion, Weaver (1997) found these essays to be beneficial to political scientists and scholars in developing a theoretical approach to political leadership and surmised that “leadership generically is a political process” (p. 420). He further hypothesized that The Federalist Papers “reflect important and related stages in the evolution of Liberal conceptions of leadership” and have “influenced leadership in the American polity from the presidency to interest group leaders” (p. 422). According to Weaver’s interpretation of The Federalist Papers, there are three distinct leadership components entrenched within these 85 essays: the need for both legitimate governmental institutions led by dedicated individuals, the necessity for a written covenant between the state and the people, and a thorough endorsement of republicanism over totalitarianism.

In developing his thesis, Weaver (1997) relied upon 37 secondary sources, including *Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Wood, 1969), cited earlier in this literature review. Six primary source documents, including original writings from James Madison and Alexander Hamilton (who coauthored The Federalist Papers with John Jay), and John Locke were also employed by Weaver to develop his assertions. Unlike some of the previously mentioned scholars, Weaver’s personal interpretation of The Federalist Papers perpetuated the idea that political leadership, especially the need for a strong presidency, is paramount to maintaining civic order and social discipline in an otherwise chaotic environment. Whereas Pole (1966) and McDonald (1985) both maintained Locke’s belief in the supremacy of the legislative branch of government, Weaver differentiated his scholarship by focusing instead on the leadership capacity within the executive branch. Nonetheless, Weaver concluded that his hypothesis did not contradict Locke’s original theories.

Although Weaver (1997) used a 1961 edition of The Federalist Papers as a basis for his journal article, neither the introductions to the Bantam (Wills, 1982) nor the Penguin Classics (Kramnick, 1987) editions substantiated Weaver’s hypothesis regarding these essays’ direct influence upon the development of quality leaders in contemporary American society. In spite of this lack of validation, Weaver did offer two important pieces of advice for those seeking to advance into positions of executive leadership: “Leaders holding formal positions of authority and those who aspire to them must be obliged to control themselves” (p. 436); and “Once in power leaders must remain the servants of the citizenry yet transcend their too often petty and conflicting interests” (p. 442).

2 Interest Group Strategy and Theory

James Anderson (2003), a political science professor from Texas A&M University, defined an interest group as an “organization or group that strives to influence the actions of government officials” (p. 304). According to the 5th edition of *Public Policymaking* Anderson postulated these political institutions are an integral ingredient for determining how the nation’s laws are developed and implemented within the halls of Congress and the state legislatures, or by city councils and school boards. Although this noted professor indicated that “interest groups appear to take an important part in policymaking in practically all countries” (p. 57), only 13 pages of his 300-page book were devoted to discussing the extraordinary pressures exerted by these organizations. Nonetheless, Anderson’s examination of the process employed by these organizations can assist scholars who wish to further study how trade unions, business councils, industrial cartels, and private citizens have influenced the outcome of statutory regulations and legislative codes.

Anderson (2003) noted that interest groups can be classified as either single-issue advocates or public-interest champions. The author indicated that one differentiating factor between these two categories is the amount of intense focus placed upon specific policy issues. Whereas single-issue groups tailor their concentration upon a single-policy issue such as K-12 education, public-interest groups advocate for causes “such as those of consumers, nature lovers, environmentalists, and ‘good-government’ proponents” (p. 58). Anderson further noted that the policy beneficiaries represent another distinguishing feature between the two classifications of organizations: The recipients of single-issue interest groups’ lobbying endeavors tend to be members of a specific group, organization, or industry, whereas, public-interest groups promote policies that help the greater community, such as the instigation of campaign finance reform and political disclosure laws.

Depending upon their orientation, single-issue or public-interest groups need to deploy a wide variety of

strategies to encourage passage or defeat of a targeted piece of legislation. To demonstrate the wide variety of tactics commonly used in the policy community, Anderson (2003) reprinted a 1993 survey originally published in a book entitled *The Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policymaking* (Heinz, Laumann, Nelson, & Salisbury, 1993). Although Anderson (2003) did not cite the specific number of respondents participating in the survey used by Heinz et al. (1993), the author did note that “more than seven hundred group representatives” (p. 59) responded to the questionnaire. According to the results of this survey, the percentages of respondents who believed interest groups’ priorities were informing members regarding legislation, developing position papers and policy strategy, sustaining positive relationships, and supervising regulatory modifications were 84%, 83%, 64%, and 62%, respectively. The survey also revealed that the four activities perceived to be the least important were distribution of political action donations (19%), opposition research (18%), litigation (17%), and completion of amicus briefs (5%). Anderson further indicated that “at the state level, interest groups may play a big part in formulating legislation, especially on complex and technical issues, because state legislators frequently lack the time and staff needed to cope with such matters” (p. 106). To conclude his exposition on interest groups’ influence, Anderson cited another study, which reported that the Illinois state legislature had traditionally codified labor policy once it had “been agreed to by representatives of [both] organized labor and industry” (p. 106).

Interest group communities have been composed of more than business leaders, teachers, and the small percentage of good-government activists. According to the study conducted by Leech (1998), nearly half of all Americans hold memberships in either one or the other of the two categories of interest groups categorized in Anderson’s (2003) book. To arrive at this percentage, Leech needed to broaden her definition of interest groups so that it contained “not only membership organizations, but also advocacy organizations that do not accept members, businesses, and any other organization or institution that makes policy-related appeals to the government” (p. 29). Although her expansive definition is important, the purpose of her dissertation was to determine the methods interest groups employed to wield their power and influence. Leech discovered that, depending upon the saliency of the policy issue and the available resources, interest groups were more apt to use a mixed approach to policy persuasion. Her data further revealed that although lobbyists are “most likely to target undecided legislators. . . the majority of interest groups say they target all three types of officials: undecided, allied, and opposing” (p. 90).

To collect the data, Leech (1998) randomly distributed a survey to 1,442 members of interest groups maintaining offices within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region whose names were gleaned from the Washington Representatives, 1985 directory. Leech indicated that of the more than 1,400 mailed questionnaires, 55% (n = 797) returned completed queries. The percentages for the number of respondents (n) for Leech’s survey identifying themselves as representatives of trade associations, professional associations, unions, and business corporations were 28% (222), 17% (137), 3% (21), and 19% (149), respectively. The author further noted that one goal of the survey was to “identify the issue with which they [the lobbyists] had most recently been involved, and then to answer a series of questions based on that issue” (p. 19). To gauge how the lobbyists conducted their jobs, Leech tested their responses with regard to the following variables: (a) staff, (b) grassroots membership, (c) patronage, (d) tax status, (e) business, (f) non-profit status, (g) committee structure, (h) public opinion, (i) media attention, (j) partisanship, (k) consensus building, (l) legislative allies, and (m) relationships with opponents.

According to Leech (1998), there were three specific categorical methods lobbyists used to pressure government officials: confrontational (n = 557), cooperative (n = 499), and traditional citizen participation (n = 557). Leech identified confrontational tactics as the most pressure intensive and precarious and, as such, those that were employed when interest groups believed their positions had been neglected by elected officials (p. 95). Writing letters, placing calls to legislators, participating in civil protests, and establishing coalitions were cited as examples of such tactics. Leech indicated that when lobbyists implemented these strategies, the potential existed for the political opposition to mobilize their supporters.

Whereas confrontational methods were used to exert pressure upon legislators by interest groups representing unconventional issues, Leech (1998) noted that lobbyists advocating favorable positions on policy issues implemented more cooperative strategies. Rather than exerting undue pressure, the techniques employed by cooperative lobbyists were designed to inform members of Congress and to help special interests

retain their political advantage over their legislative opponents. Maintaining direct contact, distributing political action contributions, disseminating favorable research, and offering technical assistance in drafting legislation were some of the examples Leech identified as cooperative strategies. Leech further discovered that interest groups relying upon conflictual methods needed tremendous grassroots efforts to ensure their legislative success whereas cooperative exchanges were characterized by very little antagonism and few participants.

Finally, Leech (1998) noted that the last category of lobbying strategies was employed by citizen groups. When surveyed, this army of ordinary citizens was less inclined to contribute directly to political candidates but was more likely to use some of the techniques associated with confrontational lobbyists, such as conducting letter writing campaigns.

Based upon a regression analysis, Leech (1998) reported that when lobbyists and interest groups engaged in conflictual tactics, they were more likely to require an expansive amount of media attention than were cooperative activists. The regression statistics for conflictual and cooperative interest groups' usage of the media were .16 and -.08, respectively. Leech noted that all of her alpha levels were set at the standard .05 level of significance typically used for the social sciences. The preceding statistic of .16 was significant with $p < .01$ using a two-tailed test. When the regression formula was factored for grassroots support, institutional opponents, and party conflict, the same outcome appeared. The regression statistics for conflictual and cooperative interest groups' usage of grassroots support were 1.49 and .26, respectively. Simultaneously, the results for the conflictual and cooperative strategies upon factoring in institutional opposition were .42 and .11, respectively, and upon factoring in partisan opposition, .38 and .01, respectively. Ironically, the methods tied with an r of .48, but the conflictual score was derived after applying a two-tailed test. In contrast, the results for professional staff were reversed. Applying a two-tailed test with $p < .01$, the regression scores for professional staff's engaging in conflictual and cooperative strategies were 1.29 and 2.42, respectively.

Although some issues lend themselves to one particular strategy over another, Leech (1998) concluded that "rather than debating whether interest groups cooperate or conflict with government officials, this analysis shows they do both" (p. 107). Policy issues, which necessitate a high level of partisanship and an extraordinary amount of media attention, might require that interest groups employ conflictual techniques; on the other hand, issues receiving bipartisan support, might require interest groups to invoke cooperative strategies.

For lobbyists and interest groups to achieve maximum success, they must effectively exert a maximum level of power and influence. To date, the most well known theorists regarding the concepts of power and influence have been John R. P. French, Jr. and Bertram Raven (1959). Their study on the degrees, or bases, of power can provide a very reliable foundation for scholars wishing to examine the impact policy entrepreneurs have upon the development and passage of legislation.

According to these theorists (French & Raven, 1959), power and influence are interchangeable terms. They indicated, "The strength of power of O/P in some system a is defined as the maximum potential ability of O to influence P in a " (p. 350). The authors of the definition offered the following formula to assist readers in visually interpreting this concept: "Power of O/P(a) = $(f_{a,x} - f_{a,x}) \max$ " (p. 350). When applied to the focus of this dissertation, this definition could be restated as the strength of a special interest group's power (O) to influence legislator (P) in the Palladian State Assembly (a). French and Raven went beyond offering a mere definition of power and influence; they also hypothesized the notion that leaders can assume one or more of the following degrees of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, or expert.

These theorists characterized reward power as "power whose basis is the ability to reward" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 353). To paraphrase their assertion under this hypothesis, the power of a leader is largely based upon his ability to offer positive inducements or to remove harmful sanctions. In contrast, coercive power could be seen as a leader's "ability to manipulate the attainment of valences" (p. 354). The theorists further noted that "reward power will tend to increase the attraction of P toward O; coercive power will decrease this attraction" (p. 355).

According to French and Raven (1959) the next two theoretical sources of power can be identified as legitimate and referent. The theorists described legitimate authority as "that power which stems from internalized values in P which dictate that O has a legitimate right to influence P and that P has an

obligation to accept this influence” (p. 356). French and Raven theorized that there are several different factors that lead to a leader’s or an organization’s legitimacy. These factors include culture, acceptance, and the specialization of knowledge. A leader’s designation as having legitimate power is not infinite. When a leader or an organization exerts influence outside their realm of expertise, there is a corresponding decrease in the amount of power. On the other hand, referent power was described by French and Raven as “the feeling of oneness of P with O or a desire for such an identity” (p. 358). Although referent power probably could not be used to study the realm of interest groups’ exertion, one possible application of this notion could be the examination of citizen activists’ personal identifications with the political leadership within their state.

Finally, “expert power [is] based on the credibility of O and informational influence which is based on characteristics of the stimulus such as... ‘self evident facts’” (French & Raven, 1959, p. 360). This category of power is based on the premise that the information held by one individual will directly and positively impact the behaviors of others. Since Anderson (2003) has indicated that lobbyists “may have strong or controlling influence on decisions in one policy area and little in another” (p. 59), French and Raven’s concepts of legitimate and expert power are applicable for scholars to incorporate in their study of interest groups’ impact within the policy process.

In addition to these political postulations, several social scientists renowned for their scholarship on the policymaking process have postulated numerous models regarding the impact of interest groups. For purposes of this literature review and dissertation, Andrew S. McFarland’s (1987) theory of triadic power has been deemed to be the most germane to the study of educational interest groups. According to McFarland, the following are the five elements regarding the triadic power theory:

1. The government policy process may be viewed in terms of specific area of policies;
2. Economic producer groups (abbreviated below as P) normally organize to lobby government agency policy-makers in the area of production;
3. But countervailing groups (abbreviated below as CV) will also be normally organized to oppose some of the interests of P;
4. State agencies are normally assumed to have a significant degree of autonomy (abbreviated as AA) in making policy, even if they are constrained by P or by CV; and,
5. This power triad is assumed to be a basic analytical unit, which is then complicated by adding such factors as legislators, presidential policy-makers, and the judiciary. (p. 141)

A review of McFarland’s published articles (1987, 1991) indicated this theoretical notion was gleaned from his interpretation of James Q. Wilson’s (1980) *The Politics of Regulation*. Wilson distinguished himself in the field of political science with his previous service as president of the American Political Science Association and his recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom (Pepperdine University School of Public Policy, 2004). A review of several biographic websites indicated that Wilson currently holds the title of Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy at Pepperdine University and is the chairman of the Board of Academic Advisors for the American Enterprise Institute (Faculty Expertise Guide, 2004). Although Wilson did not explicitly mention a theory of triadic power in *The Politics of Regulation*, he noted,

When both costs and benefits are narrowly concentrated, conditions are ripe for interest-group politics. A subsidy or regulation will often benefit a relatively small group at the expense of another comparable small group. Each side has a strong incentive to organize and exercise political influence. (p. 368)

In 1991, McFarland expanded upon his theory of triadic power. Again writing in the *British Journal of Political Science*, McFarland indicated there were two defining concepts of interest group power: the arrow theory and the circle theory. The arrow theory was defined “as something [that] is seen to develop from a simpler state to a more complex state over time” (p. 257). On the other hand, circle theories demonstrated that “as time passes, things go back to where they were before” (p. 258). McFarland reported that of these two theories, the circle theory had been deemed the most ideal by scholars. During his exposé of the circle theory, McFarland reiterated his position that interest groups form a power triad with opposing interest groups in an effort to exert influence throughout the legislative process.

Unlike McFarland’s earlier essay in 1987, his 1991 article entitled “Interest Groups and Political Time: Cycles in America” included more information detailing his triadic theory. One of these details was a chart,

which visually displayed the seesawing of influence held by the various countervailing (CV) and producer (P) interest groups, starting with the Gilded Age, progressing through the Progressive and New Deal eras, and concluding with the rise of the neo-conservative political movement. McFarland demonstrated how interest group power shifted along the political spectrum throughout each time period. The author reported that when the United States was in the midst of progressive change, “egalitarian social movements eventually produced actions. . .viewed as excesses by a great majority of the politically active public” (p. 268). According to McFarland (1987, 1991), this phenomenon would eventually lead to a strong countervailing dynamic, which in turn would produce another wave of opposing progressive legislation. Under these circumstances, progressive interest groups would have direct access to the corridors of power during Democratic administrations, and conservative interest groups would hold these same keys during Republican administrations.

3 Education Interest Groups

In her dissertation, Baxter (1999) once again reiterated James Madison’s prediction from *The Federalist*, Number 10 that interest group factions will make a substantial contribution to the formulation of public policy. To gauge the relevance of Madison’s theory in the late 20th century, Baxter conducted a series of interviews with members of the Colorado state legislature. The objective of the study was to identify specific sources of policy information employed by the state representatives and to “determine the perceived credibility” of the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado School Boards Association, the Colorado School Executives Association, and the Colorado Parent Teacher Association (p. iii). Another purpose of Baxter’s dissertation was to ascertain whether or not a significant relationship existed between those educational interest groups and the quality of information they provided. The author further tested the hypothesis that a relationship existed between each of the four organizations and the additional variables of bicameralism, political proclivity, and election district demographics. Since the dissertation focused on the policy process within the Colorado General Assembly only, its findings cannot be generalized across the wide spectrum of education policy formulation in other legislative assemblies.

To collect the data for her study, Baxter (1999) distributed a self-constructed, two-page, seven-question survey. To ensure the instrument’s reliability, the author arranged for the questionnaire to be critiqued by a committee consisting of a former Colorado state representative, an elected member of the state’s General Assembly, a lobbyist, and two members of Baxter’s dissertation committee. All 100 members of the Colorado General Assembly were identified as the population for the study. Baxter reported a 49% response rate ($n = 49$) to her questionnaire. The survey’s first five items asked the participants to rank in order their responses using a Likert scale. These questions ranged from determining the perceived influence of the four identified educational interest groups within both chambers of the Colorado State Legislature to ascertaining the quality of their persuasiveness. Baxter also sought legislators’ perceptions regarding the four educational interest groups’ mutual cooperativeness during previous General Assembly sessions. The last three survey items were designed to identify each state representative’s legislative chamber, political affiliation, and election district’s demographic classification. Baxter further provided an opportunity for the subjects to volunteer additional feedback regarding the survey, the research questions, and the four interest groups. Of the 49 respondents, only 8 opted to provide supplemental commentaries. Baxter also requested information regarding the financial and research support the legislators received from the four interest groups’ respective political action committees.

Baxter (1999) reported that the responses were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of this study revealed that only the Colorado Education Association participated in the political and policy processes by employing an extensive barrage of political action committee donations while simultaneously fielding eight times as many lobbyists as their legislative competitors. In keeping with the tax code provisions, which prohibit nonprofit organizations from having active political action committees, the Colorado chapter of the PTA did not recommend candidates to its membership. Baxter also noted that the Colorado PTA did not employ a lobbying cadre during legislative sessions.

Despite the influence of political action committee donations and a gap of paid lobbyists hired by the Colorado Education Association (CEA), Baxter’s (1999) findings revealed mixed results. Although the CEA had

a greater influence upon the entire legislature as a whole, when the subjects' responses were disaggregated, Baxter indicated that the Colorado Association of School Boards had greater influence upon individual state representatives. The means representing the groups' influence upon the whole state legislature were 3.98, 3.58, 3.18, and 2.51 for the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives, and the Colorado Parent Teacher Association, respectively. Their respective standard deviations were .92, .92, .91, and .92. When individual legislators were queried regarding which specific interest group exerted the greatest amount of personal influence, the mean scores for the Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, and Colorado Parent Teacher Association were 3.45, 3.35, 3.20, and 2.86, respectively. Their respective standard deviations were 1.01, 1.18, 1.04, and 1.35.

To determine whether or not a significant difference existed in how Colorado's state representatives perceived the total influence exerted by the four selected educational interest groups, Baxter (1999) conducted a paired-samples t-test. With an alpha level of .05, the results for the Colorado Education Association, Colorado Parent Teacher Association, Colorado Association of School Boards, and Colorado Association of School Executives were .001, .01, .45, and .88, respectively. Using a two-tailed t-test, with the level of significance again established at the .05 level, Baxter reported that a significant relationship ($p = .042$) existed between the financial or research resource disbursements of the four Colorado interest groups and their levels of legislative influence.

Creditability is a key function for organizations in implementing a successful lobbying strategy. When Baxter (1999) queried the state legislators in Colorado as to which of the four identified educational interest groups had the greatest amount of creditability, all but the state chapter of the PTA were perceived by a majority of the respondents as being either trustworthy or highly creditable. The mean creditability scores for the Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Education Association, and Colorado Parent Teacher Association were 3.79, 3.77, 3.48, and 3.23, respectively. Baxter reported that urban and Democratic legislators viewed Colorado's state NEA affiliate with more creditability than any other educational interest group.

As previously noted, eight subjects accepted Baxter's (1999) invitation to volunteer personal commentaries and to clarify statements. One legislator, identified as "Subject 13," reported the Colorado PTA did "not provide credible information—only because I have never received any information from CPTA" (p. 88). On the other hand, "Subject 32" opined that the "CEA & NEA have to [sic] much influence on our educational system. They protect the unproductive educator at the cost of the student—their influence in subjects taught & methods of teaching should be curtailed" (p. 88). Finally, "Subject 47" reported "the history of the four organizations has been that for many years, they did not/would not/could not present a unified front to the Legislature on issues of mutual benefit. This was embarrassing to the education community" (p. 88).

Although Baxter (1999) selected the four most well known educational interest groups in her state, the business community was excluded from her study. Within the past decade business leaders' influence on the creation of education policy has been gaining attention. Cross (2004) detailed the role of the nation's most powerful business leaders during the 1988 national education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia. This high-level meeting was not only attended by the key leaders in American manufacturing and technology but also included several of the nation's leading Governors, including former President of the United States William "Bill" Clinton. Following the Charlottesville conference and throughout the 1990s, business interests initiated an extensive effort to shape education policy within various state legislatures.

Although Cross (2004) extensively reported the details surrounding the business community's influence on the creation of the Goals 2000 Standards, his findings were not the first published accounts of the 21st century to examine the educational policy objectives of the nation's business leaders. In 2002, McDaniel and Miskel conducted a longitudinal study focused on the emergence of the Michigan Business Roundtable as an important player in crafting education policy. Their findings were predicated upon four major variables of successful lobbyists: organizational legitimacy, legislative urgency, political power, and policy salience. Using these factors as the basis of an extensive survey, McDaniel and Miskel noted that the Michigan Business Roundtable evolved from a coalition exclusively focused on developing economic policy into a harbinger for public K-12 educational legislation in the Michigan state legislature.

The influence of educational interest groups has reached beyond the parameters of state legislatures and has extended into independent government commissions. One example of this phenomenon was found in “The Politics of Self-Esteem” (Kahne, 1996), an article published in the *American Education Research Journal*. Kahne’s study examined how educational, partisan, and ideological interest groups attempted to influence the California Task Force on Self-Esteem (California Task Force) in order to produce policy recommendations favorable to their own constituencies. This case study detailed the various ideological and factional struggles that prevented the California state government from recommending policies designed to improve student achievement. Some of the variables the California Task Force mentioned as having a negative impact upon students’ academic performance included (a) proliferation of illegal drugs, (b) premarital sexual relationships, (c) economic distress, and (d) child abuse. Kahne indicated that conservative and progressive interest groups differed on the definitions of good self-esteem as well as their assessment of how this psychological condition directly impacted students’ academic performance. Kahne surmised that the political struggle of defining self-esteem negatively inhibited the California Task Force’s public policy development goals.

Despite the ideological obstacles propagated by the political factions, the California Task Force continued to proceed with their investigation. Interpreting public records, Kahne (1996) discovered that former Governor Deukmejian, his political allies on the California Task Force, and the conservative educational interest groups successfully blocked this commission from making policy recommendations conflicting with their constituencies’ perspectives. The progressive members of the Task Force proposed legislation that focused primarily on the reduction of poverty, homelessness, and child abuse, but the legislation was shelved in favor of recommendations concentrating on California’s students taking “personal and social responsibility” (Kahne, p. 8).

Because this case study focused only on the history of the California Task Force on Self-Esteem, it cannot be a generalization for all legislative commissions proposing K-12 educational policies. Kahne’s (1996) study, nonetheless, can assist academic researchers in recognizing how educational research can be interpreted by partisan ideologues. The author hypothesized that political and educational interest groups from across the ideological spectrum will continue to mold legislative outcomes. In addition, Kahne further suggested that in order to de-politicize future reforms in K-12 public education, policy factions should shed their ideological blindfolds.

Just as organizations representing the interests of parents and the business community have emerged as policymakers, the nation’s two most powerful teachers’ unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also are considered by elected lawmakers to be powerful interest groups. Originally, the NEA and the AFT did not overtly participate in the political process. Rather than participate in the political game of formally endorsing and financially contributing to candidates for public office, these two organizations endorsed work stoppages as their prime method of securing an “improvement in salaries and benefits and win[ning] increased funding for [public] education” (Malloy, 1987, p. 25).

The status of the NEA and the AFT as highly credible political actors was achieved incrementally. In an article published in the *American School Board Journal*, Anne Bridgeman (1991) quoted former United States Vice President Walter Mondale: “If you want to go somewhere in national politics these days, you better get the NEA behind you” (p. 44). Members from both the NEA and the AFT have consistently constituted a significant percentage of the delegates attending various Democratic National Conventions (Weir and Ganz, 1997). This high percentage of unionized teachers attending an overt political function prompted former Republican Presidential nominee Bob Dole to paraphrase the *Nation at Risk* report by berating the teachers’ unions: “If education were a war, you would be losing it. If it were a business, you would be driving it into bankruptcy. If it were a patient, you would be dying” (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 34).

Peter Brimelow (2003), author of *The Worm in the Apple*, reiterated Senator Dole’s negative view of the two major teachers’ unions’ involvement in the political and policy process. Citing studies that exclusively confirmed his own bias, Brimelow proclaimed that both the NEA and the AFT had used their financial resources to advance their organizations’ own political agendas, at the expense of improving classroom instruction and increasing student achievement scores on standardized tests. Based upon his interpretations

of both organizations' budgets, proceedings of national conventions, newspaper accounts, and personal interviews, Brimelow suggested that the primary goal of these two unions, especially the NEA, had been the political domination of local school boards and state legislatures. It should be noted that when Brimelow was conducting his research, he was employed by *Forbes* magazine as a correspondent, not as a skilled educational researcher. Due to this bias, the findings of Brimelow's study should be read with a high degree of skepticism.

In the appendix of *The Worm in the Apple*, Brimelow (2003) included a list of policy recommendations that he believed would restrain the political influence of both the AFT and the NEA. Brimelow's assertion of the failure of the marriage between the NEA and the AFT can be historically validated: The competition between the NEA and the AFT to organize classroom professionals has consistently been intense, hostile, and often polarized. For example, the 1965 vote to represent the teachers of Philadelphia's school system was extremely close and racially divisive (Alvarez, 2003). In Alvarez's analysis of primary source records, the local AFT affiliate emerged as the recognized collective bargaining agent after employing "labor rights rhetoric that traditionally emphasized job security and worker seniority over civil rights" (p. 837). Many of Philadelphia's white teachers supported the AFT due to this union's position to use police officers in schools to curtail discipline problems (Alvarez). Although the merger between these two organizations ultimately failed, the NEA and the AFT jointly established the NEAFT, a project designed to foster the development of common political and policy objectives while remaining two distinct, autonomous organizations (NEAFT report: "Union Power on Campus, 2004").

With regard to Brimelow's (2000) criticisms of the nation's teachers' unions, the question arises as to why the political activities of the NEA and the AFT have come under attack. One possible answer could be the enormous political power some state NEA affiliates wield in developing state education policy. Many of the state affiliates of the NEA, such as the California Teachers' Association and the Tennessee Education Association, have eclipsed doctors and attorneys as the most significant source of political action committee (PAC) funds (Bridgeman, 1991). Bridgeman noted that "in a New Jersey survey of state legislators. . .84% of respondents identified the New Jersey Education Association. . .the most powerful lobby in the capitol" (p. 43). On the west coast, the influence of the California Teachers Association (CTA) was prominent in the June 1998 defeat of a statewide initiative entitled Proposition 226. Had this referendum been confirmed by the voters, the CTA would have been required to receive "written permission from each member for any political activity" (Swomley, 1999, p. 37). In 2004, the CTA played a key role in successfully negotiating a budget deal between the California state legislature and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, which saved the nation's most populous state from an impending fiscal crisis (Goldmacher, 2004).

Another possible reason for the criticisms levied against teachers' unions for their involvement in the policy process could stem from the public's perception that all facets of the educational community, including organizations representing teachers, contribute to diminishing student achievement scores (Urban, 1991). The findings of Nelson and Rosen (1996) seemed to refute this negative perception; they produced a report published by The Institute for Wisconsin's Future. Their findings revealed that "student performance on the [SAT and NAEP] tests is significantly better in states with high levels of unionization with all other variables held constant" (p. 1). According to this report, the achievement gap between African-American and White students is substantially reduced in schools with a high percentage of unionized teachers, when compared to districts without collective bargaining agreements.

Deborah Meier (2004), the noted theorist on education reform, authentic assessment, and charter schools, has refuted the notion that teacher unions hinder the pedagogical and structural reforms proposed by elected officials. Writing for the 50th anniversary edition of *Dissent*, a quarterly progressive public affairs journal, Meier cited two important case studies whereby the United Federation of Teachers and the Boston Teachers Union consistently demonstrated more loyalty than any other interest group when lobbying the New York City and Boston School Boards. Although Meier's commentary was well researched, it can not be regarded as empirical scholarship. Nonetheless, Meier's article did illustrate how classroom professionals have successfully lobbied local policymakers; therefore, her article has contributed an additional piece of literature in the field of educational interest groups. Furthermore, Meier's recommendations were differentiated from Brimelow's (2003) in that she hoped each state would codify pro-labor legislation. Meier further asserted that when

classroom teachers become politically active in their unions and professional associations, the democratic spirit is modeled for their students to witness.

Since the mid-1970s, state legislators have played an increasingly important role in drafting public education policy. Rosenthal and Fuhrman (1981) reported that most legislators received assistance from a wide variety of educational interest groups when they crafted education-related legislation. Using data compiled through a thorough and analytical examination of randomly selected legislatures, these authors postulated the existence of several key variables that have factored into lawmakers' voting behaviors. Rosenthal and Fuhrman's findings revealed that personal family history, district profile, and political seniority were most often the contributing variables in an individual state legislator's decision-making process. Finally, they surmised that as education policy becomes more focused, state legislative decisions are constructed by a relatively few people, especially legislative staff members.

When bills are debated in committee or come to the floor for final passage, state legislators often become bombarded with an enormous amount of policy information; this information can be conflicting. To determine the specific sources of data Mississippi's state legislators had relied upon when engaged in the creation of K-12 public education policy, Monique Robertson (2000) created the Legislative Educational Policy Issue and Information Survey (LEPIIS). This self-constructed Likert scale questionnaire asked the members of Mississippi's legislature to indicate the source from which they received information regarding the following ten educational issues: (a) charter schools, (b) student-teacher ratio, (c) technology infusion and integration, (d) school finance, (e) parental choice and vouchers, (f) teachers' professional development, (g) school construction, (h) student achievement in reading and math, and (i) school safety concerns. To assist her respondents, Robertson (2000) provided the following choices as possible answers: colleagues, interest groups, the business community, federal and state reporting agencies, constituents' viewpoints, and the Internet. Prior to its dissemination, the survey instrument was field tested with staff members employed by the Mississippi state legislature. Robertson (2000) reported a return rate of 45% ($n = 78$) from the entire 174-member legislature. A majority of the respondents had at least 5 years of elected seniority and were not members of either chamber's education committees.

In keeping with social science tradition, an alpha level of .05 was established throughout the examination. Descriptive statistics and results of independent sample t-tests were used to report the findings and to determine whether or not a relationship existed between information sources and committee assignments. The results of Robinson's study revealed that Mississippi legislators consulted their colleagues, business organizations, and local constituents more extensively than lobbyists, the Internet, and federal agencies; the respective percentages were 71.1%, 57.7%, 32.7%, 22.1%, and 18.2%. The low percentage for educational interest groups stands in contrast to the findings of the study conducted by Brimelow (2003).

After conducting the Levene Test for Equality of Variances, Robertson (2000) found that members of the education committee relied more heavily upon a variety of information sources, including educational interest groups, than did noneducation committee members. The mean and standard deviation for noncommittee members' reliance upon colleagues were .521 and .500, respectively. For usage of constituent viewpoints, the mean and standard deviation for noneducation committee members were .675 and .469, respectively; the mean and standard deviation for educational interest groups as a source for information were .238 and .427, respectively. In comparison, the scores were much higher for education committee members: The mean and standard deviation for education committee members' reliance upon colleagues were .661 and .474, respectively, whereas, the mean and standard deviation for their dependence upon their constituents were .781 and .415, respectively. These respective scores for educational interest groups were .461 and .499.

In a report published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, Sheila Kennedy (2001) concluded that the policy debates over school choice had transcended mere political rhetoric. Citing her own analysis of political contributions of various educational interest groups, Kennedy ascertained that political organizations advocating support for private school vouchers had an intense distrust for all government institutions, especially K-12 public education. Consequently, Kennedy reported that public education activists such as the NEA, its state affiliates, and ethnic minority organizations tended to have a more favorable outlook toward the government's role in promoting equality, distributive economic policies, and active citizenship. Kennedy concluded her report by suggesting that vouchers and tuition tax credits had the potential to emerge as unifying issues for

libertarian ideologues and religiously conservative political activists.

As Bridgeman (1991) previously noted, the nation's two largest teachers' unions are a major source of campaign contributions for candidates vying for public office. Although some political leaders, such as former Vermont Governor Howard Dean (2004) and Arizona Senator John McCain (2002), have shied away from relying upon an excessive amount of special interest donations to finance their presidential campaigns, an astute scholar might question the existence of a positive relationship between an interest group's political donations and the passage of their legislative agendas. In a dissertation for the University of Kentucky, Louay Constant (2002) hypothesized that a positive correlation existed between the Florida Education Association's (FEA) political donations and legislators' opposition to vouchers and charter schools. Constant wrote, "Contributions from interest groups are based on some expectation that the legislator will vote favorable on a bill of interest to them at some point in the future" (p. 72). Therefore, the study's author rationalized that "teachers' unions are likely to exert influence on roll call voting on a voucher bill. . .but significantly less so on a bill related to charter schools" (p. 4). Constant did admit that studying such a possible relationship could be arduous since the connection "between contributions and roll call voting on a particular issue has been found not to be simultaneous" (p. 78). Although the procedures employed by Constant can be replicated in future studies seeking to examine other state legislatures, the findings gleaned from this dissertation pertain only to the Florida legislature and therefore can not be generalized.

To conduct her study, Constant (2002) matched the campaign donations of all educational political action committees for the 1996, 1998, and 2000 Floridian legislative races with the winning candidate's legislative voting record. As Constant indicated, the records of the campaign contributions were available on Florida's state board of elections website. After identifying the names and expenditures of various political action committees devoted to public education, Constant reviewed the voting records of every Florida state legislator on voucher and charter school legislation from the years 1995 through 2001. The study's author noted, "Most of the contributions from the educational interest groups pertain to PACs affiliated with the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers" (p. 74). The mean amounts for all educational interest group contributions to state legislators for the 1996 and 1998 election cycle were \$835, \$1,393, \$1,306, and \$2,502. These contributions constituted a minute percentage of the overall total contributions for that election cycle, which were \$97,997, \$78,580, \$99,175, and \$77,508.

To ascertain the relationship between legislative voting records and PAC contributions, elected officials who had cast an affirmative vote for either the voucher or charter school bills were given a designation of Vote = 1. Those legislators who voted against either of these proposals were scored Vote = 0. Other variables such as political affiliation, percentage of electoral victory, ethnic heritage, demographic composition of the election district, and the number of registered Independent voters were also used as variables to determine statistical significance.

A regression analysis of the voting records of individual legislators and educational interest groups' contributions to their opponents produced parameter coefficients for both the voting equation and the contribution equation of educational interest groups on the 1996 Florida charter school bill of 29.07 and .57 at a $p \leq .01$ level of significance. According to Constant's (2002) study, educational interest groups were more likely to contribute to candidates running as Democrats and to candidates running with a higher level of Democratic Party registrants. The parameter coefficients for both the voting and the contribution equations of Democratic Party standard bearers were 35352.2 and 796.93, respectively. Meanwhile, the parameter coefficients for election districts demonstrating a substantial increase in Democratic Party registrants were 6.66 and 4000.8, respectively. The levels of significance for the contribution equation parameters of Democratic nominees and the increase in identified Democrats were critical at the .05 level of significance.

When Constant (2002) completed the regression analysis for the 1998 voucher bill, the parameter coefficients for the voting equation and contribution equation of educational interest groups' donations to legislative challengers were .0001613 and .14, respectively, at a $p \leq .01$ level of significance. The parameter coefficients for the voting equation and the contribution equation of Democratic Party nominees and districts with an increasing number of Democratic registrants were 5.61 and 4112.9, respectively. Constant reported that the extraneous variables for both the voucher and charter school bills were "not found to be significant at the 10% level or below" (p. 89). It was also reported that any "relationship between campaign contributions

and roll call voting for the charter school bill is not simultaneous” (p. 89). According to Constant’s research, educational interest groups tend to support candidates in districts with a higher percentage of Democratic voters than Republican registrants regardless of a candidate’s personal political identification. Ironically, when political identification was not factored as a variable, “educational interest group contributions [had] a negative and significant effect on the likelihood of voting” in favor of vouchers for private schools (Constant, p. 94). As evidence to support this statement, Constant reported a parameter coefficient of .13758 when $p \leq .01$. Constant further noted that when political donations contributed by educational interest groups were increased by \$3,000, no statistical shift in the legislator’s voting pattern was demonstrated. Only when educational interest groups increased their donations by \$45,000 did a statistical change in legislative voting behavior occur. The marginal educational interest group contribution effects for the \$3,000 and the \$40,000 levels were 7.06 and -0.29, respectively. The probabilities of voting in favor of the charter school bills at these same respective levels were .99 and .24, respectively.

In comparison to the charter school bill, the vote on the voucher bill would have been more expensive for Florida’s educational interest groups to defeat. Using \$200 increments, Constant determined that educational interest groups opposed to vouchers would have needed to contribute an additional \$3,000 to candidates to make a statistically significant impact. The marginal educational interest groups’ contribution effects at the \$1000, \$1,400, \$2,000, and \$3,000 levels were .57, .40, .15 and -.27, respectively. The probabilities of voting “yea” at these respective contribution levels were .71, .66, .56, and .39, respectively.

Although the charter school bill was eventually defeated, the voucher bill was passed in the legislature and signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush. The defeat of the charter school bill was a major component of the FEA’s legislative package. As a result of her study, Constant (2002) found that a significantly negative relationship existed between the FEA’s campaign contributions and the passage of their legislative agendas.

Terry Arbogast (2000) traced the role of educational interest groups in his dissertation entitled “An Historical Analysis of the Development of Charter School Legislation in Virginia.” According to this qualitative examination, long before the enactment of Virginia’s charter school legislation, there was an extreme amount of contentiousness in the state legislature regarding Virginia’s movement toward the establishment of favorable charter school policy. Using a two-step qualitative research process, Arbogast examined the legislative history of the charter school movement, beginning with the introduction of the original bill in 1994 and concluding with the passage of legislation in 1998. Recognizing that his research findings could not be generalized and might have the potential for bias, Arbogast triangulated his findings by employing a series of “elite interviews” with key educational leaders in the state legislature and with representatives associated with the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) and the Virginia Education Association (VEA). Arbogast noted that after each interview, he proceeded to uncover documentary evidence that substantiated any questionable statements the interviewees offered during their discussions. This archival investigation included legislative voting records and a thorough review of the minutes from both House and Senate Education Committees’ hearings and the floor proceedings from both legislative chambers. Arbogast’s interview questions were developed with the assistance of his dissertation committee and were reviewed for validation by three leaders from Virginia’s public policy community including a past research director for the VEA.

Eleven questions were crafted to solicit legislators’ responses to questions varying from requests for a brief explanation of the respondent’s personal “vision to improve education in the Commonwealth” and “the main influences that supported charter school legislation” to the identification of specific interest groups that were adamantly opposed “to the adoption of charter school legislation” (Arbogast, 2000, p. 153). It should be noted that the subjects for Arbogast’s study were purposively sampled, thereby limiting Arbogast’s ability to generalize the findings to a wider population. Before the commencement of his investigation, three experts within the policy community were asked to identify potential interviewees. Arbogast then instituted a snowball sampling technique in which legislators were asked, “Whom would you recommend I speak with about the development of Virginia charter school legislation?” (p. 153). In total, eight elite interviews were conducted by the study’s author. Again, Arbogast recognized that by conducting a small number of interviews, there was the potential for defective data; however, throughout the dissertation, Arbogast continually reinforced the notion that elite interviews held scholarly importance due to the subjects’ privileged knowledge and unique insights.

Once the interviews were concluded, the transcripts were entered into the QSR NUD*IST program for qualitative research. Based upon the triangulation of the data, Arbogast (2000) reported that the following themes emerged from the various elite interviews: funding, opposition, accountability, choice, local control, and partisanship. For the purposes of this literature review, only the items detailing the legislative influences of these specific educational interest groups and their lobbying practices were examined. The findings from Arbogast's dissertation revealed there was consistent opposition to all pieces of charter school legislation from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a majority of the African-American legislators in both the House of Delegates and the State Senate. Arbogast reported that their opposition stemmed from a fear that such educational institutions would serve a restricted and exclusive segment of Virginia's school-aged population. The NAACP's opposition was so intense that the organization threatened "to unseat them [supporters of charter school legislation] in the next general election" (p. 74).

Meanwhile, the researcher (Arbogast, 2000) noted that as political reality became increasingly apparent, both the VEA and the VSBA moderated their positions. Arbogast discovered that during the four preceding General Assembly sessions before this bill's final passage, the VSBA "was extremely influential in defeating [all] charter school legislation" (p. 74). The VSBA's position regarding charter schools stemmed from the organization's adoption of a policy statement "to oppose all charter school legislation" (p. 74). In addition, the VSBA also believed "the same laws and regulations that [regular] public school systems" must comply with must also be adhered to by any charter school established within the Commonwealth (p. 74). Without this provision, the VSBA deemed charter schools to have an unfair advantage over traditional public K-12 institutions. Arbogast indicated that although the VSBA was viewed by most members of the General Assembly as "very influential" (p. 81). A representative from the VSBA, indicated his organization felt uncomfortable in lobbying the state legislature on an educational issue it knew would eventually be enacted.

Besides the Virginia School Boards Association, another educational interest group embroiled in the charter school debate was the Virginia Education Association (VEA). Arbogast's (2000) interview with the chief lobbyist for the VEA, revealed that this organization's opposition to charter school legislation resulted from the inclusion of three key provisions in the bill: the maintaining of local control, a financing system that was fair for both traditional and charter schools, and a granting of equitable grievance procedures for charter school teachers. According to Arbogast, of the three primary concerns expressed by the VEA, the most important issue regarded local autonomy. When Arbogast summarized the various opponents' viewpoints, the author offered a different premise for the VEA's opposition by reporting that "the Virginia Education Association strongly opposed charter school legislation when former Governor Allen recommended decreasing funds for K-12 public education" (p. 76). This latter position confirmed an earlier interview statement by Rob Jones in which he reiterated the position that "the VEA did not have a problem supporting charter school legislation until Governor George Allen introduced in December 1995. . . a funding cut of \$50,000,000 for public education" (p. 70). Arbogast reported there were strong factions within both the House Democratic and Republican caucuses in favor of final passage of some form of charter school legislation.

Following amendments that limited each school division to only two charter schools and placed the charter schools under the direct supervision of each local school board, the VSBA and the VEA endorsed final passage of the charter school bill. Another caveat of the bill's final version required that at least one of the institutions be reserved for students deemed at risk of not achieving academic success. Unlike the VSBA and the VEA, the NAACP consistently held an opposing view regarding the enactment of the bill (Arbogast, 2000). Although this case study applied only to the development of charter school legislation in Virginia, it offered illuminating insight with regard to the ways in which educational interest factions wield legislative and political influence during a particular legislative session.

Earlier, Rosenthal and Fuhrman (1991) had reported on three factors impacting legislators in the education policy development process. Although their study did not focus on one particular state, Sally Boese (1979) had conducted a similar study, which examined the external and internal factors impacting the legislative process during the 1979 Virginia General Assembly session. Using a qualitative approach, Boese conducted extensive interviews with the following leaders in the Virginia legislature: the chairmen of the House of Delegates and the Senate Education committees, budget committees, and finance committees. Boese's dissertation revealed several variables that influenced key Virginia lawmakers during the 1970s.

These factors included political ideology, personal connections with public school teachers, constituent viewpoints, and the judicial decision in the *School Board of the City of Richmond v. Margaret W. Parham et al.* (1978). In this court case, the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled public school teachers had limited rights when challenging contract dismissals and other grievance procedures. Boese asserted that the efforts of the two specific educational interest groups, primarily the Virginia Education Association and the state chapter of the Parent-Teacher Association, played significant roles in establishing Virginia education policy in the 1970s. Following the Parham decision, the VEA persuaded several members of the Virginia General Assembly to draft legislation to overturn the decision. Boese noted that this particular policy proposal stirred an extensive amount of debate within the state legislature. Several members of the General Assembly viewed such a provision as a state infringement upon local control of daily school operations. Further, an unnamed member of the legislature asserted that passage of the grievance bill would strongly affirm this state government's perseverance with "minimum [educational] standards" (p. 110).

In a dissertation entitled "The Relationships Among Selected Influences upon Legislative Decision-Making and Selected Educational Issues During the 1986 Virginia General Assembly," Sean Roberson (1987) wrote, "Interest groups are a central figure of the political process in the United States" (p. 35). The legislative and policy pressures exerted by lobbyists are just one key ingredient of the system by which the nation's laws are constructed on both the federal and state levels. Despite this notion, Roberson identified two prime, yet conflicting, theoretical assumptions employed by elected officials when making legislative decisions. In yielding to the philosophical theories established by Locke and accepted by Madison, Roberson confirmed that legislatures are the ultimate lawmaking branch of the government with the exclusive mission of representing the political and policy interests of their constituents. In contrast with this idealistic vision, Roberson further asserted that due to legislators' requests to codify public policies based upon their individual viewpoints, elected officials have often "demonstrated over the years a profound capacity to obstruct popular desires and serve private interests at public expense" (p. 16).

In developing the preceding argument, Roberson (1987) cited two primary sources: a Supreme Court case and an article by Ward Edwards. In *Baker v. Carr*, the high court affirmed the principle of one man-one vote when crafting legislative district boundaries. The second source of Roberson's theory of legislative decision making was Edwards' article delineating the various endeavors by economists attempting to craft a formula detailing the decision process used by individuals when confronted with two conflicting alternatives. According to Roberson, this report found there were three overriding factors that have directly impacted how elected officials perform their duties when crafting education policy: issue salience, a state's political culture, and the daily communication between individual legislators.

The primary intention of Roberson's (1987) study was to determine which policy entrepreneurs exerted the greatest amount of political influence upon members of the 1986 Virginia General Assembly. Rather than randomly select his subjects, Roberson decided to survey all 140 members of the state's legislature. Although this process did not enable Roberson to generalize his findings to the entire national population of all state legislators, his results are important in helping scholars, citizen activists, and educational advocates craft a successful lobbying strategy.

As part of his methodology, Roberson (1987) distributed a self-constructed, Likert-scale survey to each member of the Virginia House of Delegates and the Virginia State Senate. To ensure validity of the questionnaire, Roberson requested that the instrument be reviewed by several employees of the Virginia School Boards Association; however, the author failed to indicate whether or not the survey was field tested before its official distribution. Roberson's query was six pages in length and asked each subject to rank the importance of the following issues: (a) amending the Standards of Quality regarding teacher salaries, (b) requiring the Standards of Quality and the goals of the Board of Education to have a standardized language, (c) codifying English as the official language of the Commonwealth, (d) prohibiting school boards from opening school before Labor Day, (e) mandating that local school divisions provide a public hearing regarding their budget, (f) requiring local school boards to provide professional development on child abuse prevention, (g) studying the feasibility of a seven-period instructional day for secondary students, (h) incorporating the study of dementia in the state's Family Life Education curriculum, (i) revising various higher education programs for licensure and certification in geriatric nursing, (j) establishing a review of public and private

driver education programs, (k) strengthening the state's laws regarding home schooling, and (l) mandating auditory screening procedures for infants. The author of the study reported that due to a death in his population, only 139 of the 140 surveys were mailed. A response rate of 55% ($n = 77$) was reported.

The second portion of the survey asked the subjects to rank the order of importance of the preceding issues. Roberson (1987) also asked the key actors, "What influence did you believe to be the most important when deliberating how you would vote on these items?" (p. 109). Given the definitions for constituents, interest groups, colleagues, staff, and personal feelings, the legislators once again ranked which educational interest group exerted the most pressure with regard to each issue.

The null hypothesis for Roberson's (1987) first research question stated there would be "no influence or combination of influences that was significantly related to the importance of the selected educational issues" (p. 65). Once the surveys were returned, Roberson completed a regression analysis for each of the 12 issues. In accordance with traditional social science research, the dissertation's author set the level of significance at .05. Afterwards, Roberson ran t-tests and an analysis of variance to determine if a "statistically significant difference in the means of legislators" existed regarding the 12 previously stated issues (p. 81). The author also performed this same statistical test to determine if a "significant difference in the means of the legislators' ratings" existed regarding the salience of each pressure group. Although Roberson rejected the null hypothesis for the latter two research items, the null was retained for interest groups' exertion regarding legislation to open school before Labor Day, professional development requirements for child abuse, geriatric nursing requirements, driver education review, and home schooling instruction.

When the results related to each issue were disaggregated, educational interest groups contributed a statistically significant amount of influence on how the Commonwealth's legislators voted on the preceding issues. The mean, standard deviation, and the level of significance for interest groups' influence in amending the Standards of Quality to ensure their consistency with the Department of Education's official language were 2.740, 1.380, and .031, respectively. The mean, standard deviation, and the level of significance for interest groups' influence regarding legislation to codify English as the state's official language were 2.2657, .9714, and .022, respectively, and for interest groups' influence in mandating that local school divisions start their instructional calendar after the Labor Day holiday, 2.662, 1.382, and .016, respectively.

On his survey, Roberson (1987) defined interest groups as organizations "having an interest in adopting a policy which will benefit a certain segment of the public" (p. 109). Unfortunately, Roberson failed to mention specific names of any educational, ideological, or partisan interest groups that could serve as examples for this definition.

Wendy L. Poole (2000), a professor of education at the University of British Columbia, conducted a case study analyzing how classroom teachers from that Canadian province viewed the role of their union's leadership in representing their professional concerns. Poole's report entitled "The Construction of Teachers' Paradoxical Interests by Teacher Union Leaders" was published in the Spring 2000 edition of the *American Education Research Journal*. The researcher theorized that although "much speculation has been made, little is known about how teacher unions understand their role in education and education reform" (p. 94).

Regardless of this notion, Poole (2000) did not completely assess blame for teachers' unions' failure to comprehend the enormous external pressures that had prevented these organizations from emerging as successful policy advocates. Nonetheless, Poole mentioned in her literature review that teacher unions had continually faced conflicting internal factors "between the self-interests and broader educational interests of teachers" (p. 96). Citing previous research studies, Poole surmised that teachers' unions could resolve their dilemmas by either merging their individualistic concerns with the overall mission of educational reform or recognizing that "teachers' self-interests and educational interests are always present and that the union's emphasis cycles back and forth depending on contextual conditions" (p. 98).

As part of Poole's (2000) methodology, several interviews, in a process similar to that Arbogast (2000) used in his study of charter school legislation, were conducted. Participants in the case study included the elected leaders ($n = 11$) of a western Canadian provincial union, several paid staff members ($n = 4$), the immediate past president, and the leader of the union's more radical faction. Poole noted that as her investigation progressed, several union members were added to the study until a total of 20 subjects were questioned.

As did Arbogast (2000), Poole (2000) triangulated her interviews with limited archival investigations focused on internal memos, press releases, and position papers. In contrast to Arbogast, who transliterated his interviews into the QSR NUD*ST program for qualitative research, Poole opted to return her interview transcripts for purposes of member checking (p. 99). Although she further reported that her notes and information were “managed via qualitative data management software” after the data collection (p. 100), Poole failed to mention the specific program used in this endeavor. Subsequent to this statement, the author reported that “the primary instrument of analysis was the researcher who read and reread the data, immersing herself within the data for several months” (p. 100).

Despite Poole’s (2000) lack of generalization, her findings revealed that leaders of teachers’ unions face inconsistent policy challenges. The author found that although “union leaders did not distinguish between teachers’ interests and union roles” (p. 100), the interviewees participating in her study agreed that the teachers’ union has dual roles: to achieve the economic interests of “teachers, which participants generally described as ‘ec welfare’ (economic welfare) and to improve professional development, or ‘PD’ for teachers” (p. 100).

Poole (2000) noted this conflict had served as a crux of the union’s overall vision and mission. Therefore, the following question was raised: Should this organization serve its membership as a professional association seeking to advance pedagogical research and improve classroom instruction, or is its objective to passionately articulate a broader scope of policy concerns including economic, social, and political justice? The author indicated that the grassroots membership resolved this dilemma themselves by indicating that policy issues for both professional development and economic security were equally important and by informing their leadership not to abandon one for the other. Poole reported that one participant believed the teachers’ union should serve as “a voice for education,” whereas another interviewee asserted, “We [the teachers’ union] have a broader mandate in that sense that if we don’t stand up for the social and economic rights of working people who will?” (p. 104).

One of the major themes Poole (2000) discovered was the link between political action and students’ attainment of an equitable education. In the section of findings related to promoting educational quality, the author discovered that many of her respondents believed that “speaking out is an important means by which teachers contribute to the quality of education” (p. 108), thus confirming Meier’s (2004) previously mentioned statement. Based upon the analysis of her interviews, Poole noted that the following factors have continued to place pressure upon the union’s leadership in advancing educational policy initiatives: membership distress, general public or media cooperation, and the provincial government’s acceptance.

4 Conclusion

Ironically, Poole (2000) asserted in her qualitative examination of a local Canadian teachers’ union that “in the literature, little attention has been given to the union’s role in education reform at the state or provincial level” (p. 98). As this review has demonstrated, an extensive body of scholarship focused on the impact and the influence of state educational interest groups, including teachers’ unions, exists for scholars to examine and critique. For example, Baxter (1999) focused her study on the perception of credibility of four specific educational interest groups in Colorado. One of those four was the Colorado Education Association, that state’s affiliate of the National Education Association. Peter Brimelow’s (2000) commentary was entirely devoted to the political and policy roles of the NEA and its state affiliates in state legislatures. The same year that Poole’s (2000) case study was published, Robinson (2000) used the Mississippi Education Association as one variable in her dissertation regarding the sources of policy information utilized by Mississippi legislators. Constant (2002) hypothesized that correlations existed between the contributions of the Florida Education Association’s Political Action Committee and its success with regard to vouchers and charter schools. Arbogast’s (2000) qualitative examination advanced the empirical literature regarding the influential role of educational interest groups regarding the adoption of charter school legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Long before Arbogast conducted his investigation, Boese (1979) reported that several Virginia state legislators expressed the idea that the organization representing their state’s teachers was a significant political factor within the Virginia General Assembly.

Moreover, embedded within this review of the literature are two potential conceptual frameworks for researchers interested in the roles interest groups have in educational policy formation to adopt and utilize as they begin their own individual scholarly endeavors. To date, the most well known theory regarding the concepts of power and influence have been expressed by French and Raven (1959). Their groundbreaking study promoting the “Bases of Power” can serve as a valid foundation for scholars desiring to investigate the external political forces which execute a significant impact upon legislative policy development. This research team hypothesized that leaders can independently or simultaneously exert one or more of the following categories of power: referent, coercive, legitimate, reward, or expert.

Given the overt political nature of this topic, an additional theoretical postulate, the “Triadic Theory of Power” was also presented as another framework to conceptualize the external and internal forces which shape the formation of contemporary education policy. Predicated upon the scholarship of Nobel laureate James Q. Wilson, Andrew McFarland (1987) a British scholar and political scientist postulated that legislation and policy development emerged from a continuous conflict between divergent forces such as grassroots political activists, appointed cabinet members, elected legislative representatives, and lobbyists employed by special interest groups. The utilization of either of these theoretical assertions would be extremely beneficial in the event of a partisan shift in any given legislative chamber.

Creating legislation reflective of the electorate’s values is not an easy process for the nation’s cadre of elected officials. With perseverance, these leaders must attempt to maintain state constitutional fiduciary obligations, while securing the revenues necessary for implementing partisan proclivities and constituent programs. Within this system of policy development, the influence of lobbyists representing various special interest groups has created an additional layer of representation in the state capitals.

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