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The Role of Information and Voting Cues in the Decision Making Process of the Illinois Legislators 89th General Assembly

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The Role of Information and Voting Cues in the Decision
Making Process of the Illinois Legislators
89th General Assembly

BY
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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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ABSTRACT

The most important variable in a decision making situation is the role of information. On the strength of information received, choice between competing alternatives is made. One decision making situation that receives intense scrutiny, and is a subject of much debate is the passage of bills into laws. Legislative decisions are arrived at in a highly charged political environment. This paper explores the role of information and informants in the legislators' institutional and environmental arena, and the personal characteristics of the legislators that influence the decision making process.

The proceedings of the 89th Illinois General Assembly was observed and the data analyzed from the perspective of the legislators and lobbyists.

The study reveals that the structural aspects of the legislative environment play a significant factor in influencing the lawmakers' decisions. Legislators rely most on insider sources of information with peer influence playing the most important role. Legislators turn to colleagues, specifically, committee members for knowledgeable and trusted information. Legislators select information that is congruent with their experiences, belief system and attitudes. Personal attributes together with colleagues who validate those ideologies held by the legislator, thus, becomes the contributing factor in

influencing legislative strategies.

Politically relevant information, that is information received from constituents, media, and leadership is also utilized. These agents have the power to influence the political goals of the elected officials. Source valence is, therefore, relatively high in the legislative environment. Policy information is not extensively sought by the legislators as the credibility of the source is transferred to the message.

Lobbyists, however, have a personal stake in the passage of a particular piece of legislation. They seek and provide thorough information. Lobbyists view themselves as an influencing force promoting legislation, while lawmakers view lobbyists as only informational providers.

Decision making in the legislative environment is a complex activity. The flow of information is multidirectional, and the manner in which legislators make decisions is conditional on the individual legislator's personal attributes, the institutional characteristics, and the environmental factors.

DEDICATION

TO my parents, Asma and Husamuddin for their unconditional love, support and encouragement. Also to Rashida and Asif for being with me through my trials and tribulations and showing me that at the end of every tunnel there is light.

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CHAPTER I.

In the age of information overflow, possessing concise, accurate, and timely information is the key to influence, power, and decision making. One typical decision making situation is the passage of bills into laws. This process is the function of the Congress and the state legislatures. The lawmakers deliberate, debate, and vote on a variety of issues. These decisions are made in a highly charged political environment. The two invaluable elements that are required for making informed decisions involve investment of time and effort (Kingdon, 1973; Mondak 1993). It is within these constraints that the lawmakers function. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to understand how lawmakers prioritize, form, and shape various laws. To what stimuli do the Illinois legislators' respond when they make their decisions? Factors that influence a person's decision making are discussed in the following sections.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.Theories On Decision Making:

Radford (1989) defines decision making as making effective choices between alternatives based on the situation and the decision maker's objective. On the strength of information that one receives, choice between competing alternatives is made. The most important activity, therefore, in the decision making process is the

gathering of information. Information can be a rather nebulous term. Information has been defined as "a news report, an opinion, an idea, or a comment relating to a specific topic" (Lin, 1971, p. 35). For the purposes of this study, information in the legislative environment is also defined as any data, message, or research pertaining to bills and amendments.

A number of factors influence the acceptance of information by legislators. The first factor is grounded in cognitive psychology and suggests how an individual seeks and processes information depends on the person's level of involvement. Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Gelinas-Chebat & Charles-Chebat, 1992; Laczniak & Muehling, 1993) states that when the person's involvement with the message is high, the individual will engage in a rational processing of the message (central route). Individuals in low involvement condition will process information with less effort based on their likes and dislikes (peripheral route). Thus depending on the individual's motivation, ability, and opportunity to process the message, his/her attitude will be formed and/or changed according to the information received.

The second factor focuses on how an individual selects information. Petelle and Maybee (1974) state that human beings process information based on the "environmental stimuli" and that individuals bank on their "background of

experiences" (p.190). The researchers argue that this pattern of behavior reduces complexities in the environment. It eliminates the need of constant learning, and enables individuals to relate to new information by identifying the classes of objects and events to their existing knowledge. This strategy further acts as a compass in charting a course for future actions. Thus selective information theory states that we select information that "supports our attitude and belief system, or supports a decision alternative to which we are leaning" (Bradac, Sandell, and Wenner, 1979, p. 36). New information is processed and selected according to the existing knowledge we have on the topic. Grenzke (1983) illustrates the application of the theory through an analogy. A legislator who is pro-education will focus on the taxation aspect of a business policy, and the importance of these revenues to schools. Grenzke explains that the "relationship between an individual's attitude toward an object or action and his/her subsequent behavior is relatively close" (p. 74). The dominant or the central attitude will be interconnected to a variety of other attitudes. As a result, individuals will seek information from sources that hold similar viewpoint as themselves. Applying the selective information theory in the political arena, Swanson (1976) explains that political communication will (a) activate partisan attitudes, (b) animate a selective information search that is consistent

with one's attitudes (c) validate those attitudes, and (d) produce a vote that is congruent with original partisan attitudes (p. 95).

Another factor influencing acceptance of information states that individuals select information not only according to the existing knowledge possessed, but how the information is perceived also depends on the sender of the message. When we perceive the source as competent and trustworthy, information is accepted and attitudes change. Hass (1981) states that credibility produces attitude change through a "psychological process called internalization" (p. 143). Internalization occurs because the receiver of the information adopts and integrates the same beliefs and values as that of the informant. Besides credibility, competence, character, power, and social attraction of the source induce attitude change (Hass, 1981; Lashbrook, 1975).

Parallel to this body of literature is Bandura's (1983) Social Comparison theory which states that human beings indulge in self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms in relation to others. Social referents motivate and influence our judgment. This approach enables individuals to set their goals and make decisions, because they are able to envision the results of their action in relation to others. Thus, how the information is perceived depends on the sender of the message. When we perceive the source as competent and trustworthy, information is accepted and attitudes

changed. However if the receiver perceives the source as unworthy, the information is then rejected. Lord and Putrevu (1993) state that source credibility "yields positive advantage" (p. 73). The message is not elaborated upon because the "credibility of the source is transferred to the message" (p. 73). Source credibility removes the perceived bias and the message does not receive extensive scrutiny. Message acceptance via the source credibility is, therefore, the peripheral route to message acceptance.

In summary, one branch of literature states that human beings seek extensive information when the motivation is high. Search for exhaustive information results in rational processing of the information. The second factor states that we seek selective information so that we can simplify our complex environment and decisions. Besides being rational creatures, human beings are also emotional and social creatures. Depending on a credible source and comparing ourselves in relation to others facilitates decision making. Reliance on source credibility is the peripheral route to processing information.

Role of Information in the Legislative environment:

Researchers of Congress and state legislatures have offered differing viewpoints of the role of information in the enactment of a policy. Kingdon (1973) in his landmark study of the U.S. Congress, highlights the constraints the

lawmakers face. "Not every piece of information" or "every source of information" is useful to the lawmakers (p. 219). Bimber (1991), Denzau and Munger (1986), Kingdon (1973), and Shull (1987), state that information must meet three criteria to be useful:

- (i) information must be simple,
- (ii) it must be politically relevant, and
- (iii) information must be evaluative and not neutral.

The sheer volume of information necessitates simplicity as there are too many issues vying for legislators' attention. Many issues also have technical content. Therefore, information must be packaged and simplified so that it can be comprehended quickly. Information that enhances career prospects or is rewarding for the lawmakers and their districts, is politically sensitive information. Kingdon (1973) asserts that based on the political consequences that the lawmakers may incur, information is accordingly used or modified.

Policy information is "evaluative" (Kingdon, 1973; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985), or "technical and substantive" information (Bimber 1991, p. 585). Policy information evaluates the contents looks at the causes of the problem, and the probable effect of the proposed legislation on the society. Kingdon (1973) states that opposed to neutral information, lawmakers need to be presented with "biased" information (p. 219). The biased or the evaluative nature

of information aids in identifying the flaws, the merits, or the necessity for the proposed legislation. The lawmaker can then dig information from the "opposite side and confront the two in a kind of adversary process" (p. 220). Neutral information involves the allocation of time (a scarce resource) and effort as the lawmakers have to screen the evidence themselves. Besides a legislator may not be able to distinguish whether the valuation he/she had done would be reflection of his/her political leanings.

Sabatier & Whiteman (1985) further contend that sources of information differ depending on type of information. Committee hearings were useful for identifying the merits of proposed legislation, while interest groups were better at providing politically sensitive information (p. 397).

Role of Informants in the Decision Making Environment:

In the decision making environment, those who are in the position to supply the necessary information will exert greater influence. Many studies have identified the sources of voting cues (Kingdon, 1973; Mooney, 1991; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985; Songer, 1988; Ray, 1982). Mooney (1991) classifies legislative sources of information into three categories. These are the insiders, outsiders, and the middle rangers. Insiders are the legislators' colleagues and staff members. They have the same pressures and experiences as legislators, and are in daily contact

with them. Outsiders are the mass media, constituents, and bureaucrats from other branches of the government. They do not have an on-going contact with the legislators. The middle range sources operate under different constraints and experiences. However, they understand the legislative process, and interact with the lawmakers regularly. These are the interest groups and the executive agencies.

(I) The Insiders.

(a) Colleagues & Committee Members:

Literature on decision making and information sources show that legislators depend on their colleagues for voting cues (Kingdon, 1973; Mooney, 1991; Ray, 1982). The reason lawmakers turn to colleagues for advice and guidance is because they are of "equal status" (Kingdon, 1973, p. 70). Colleagues can be trusted for their judgment which is based on knowledge of facts, and their past performances. The specialist legislator who is a member of the committee is presumed to have knowledge that others do not possess about the policy.

Zweir (1979) categorizes members as "specialists" and "non-specialists" (p. 32). Members who sat on committees and sub-committees when the bill was being initially considered were labeled specialists. The specialist legislator is presumed to have knowledge that others do not possess about policy matters. Researchers have found that specialists

relied more on staff as their source of information, and also sought more policy information (Ray, 1982; Songer, Underwood, Dillon, Jameson, & Kite, 1985; Zweir, 1979). Non-specialists relied more on external sources of information. These are the special interest groups and the constituents (Kingdon, 1973; Ray, 1982; Zweir, 1979).

Bills are introduced and screened in the committees. During the spring session of the 89th General Assembly 2,509 bills were introduced. Lawmakers acted upon 443 bills. This process assists in weeding out the unnecessary legislation. Ward (1993) thus calls the various committees "clearinghouses" (p. 217). It is also in the committees that the party agenda is set.

Seeking information from colleagues results in communication networks being established. Communication networks and the formation of coalitions saves the legislators hours of legislative work in the form of reading and anxious deliberations (Feillin, 1966). A brief communication with colleagues facilitates "negotiations, compromises and developing legislative strategies" (p. 93). Committee members mobilize considerable influence through their formal positions and social networks.

(b) Leadership:

Ray's (1982) study of three state legislatures--the Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New Hampshire House of Representatives--has interesting significance. Ray (1982)

found that the pattern of decision making and their sources varied from one legislature to another legislature. Members of the Pennsylvania House turned to their peers for information, while members of the Massachusetts House turned more to party leadership as an important cue source. The Massachusetts leadership exerted its powers through committee assignments which was accompanied by financial benefits. Party leaders exert their formal power by granting favors and sanctions for and against rank and file members.

A test for political power for the leadership is the successful passage of key bills, and it also takes the form of symbolization (Shull & Vanderleeuw, 1987, Gioia, Thomas, Clark and Chittipedi, 1994). Of the total bills voted upon by members of the U. S. Congress, the rank and file members were called upon to vote in a certain manner by their leadership only on critical issues. Kingdon's (1973) results thus showed that leadership was "singularly unimportant" in the Congressmen's overall voting decisions (p. 105). Leadership influenced the outcome of the legislation only on key or controversial issues, as the successful passage of these bills was indicative of party unity and a strong leadership.

(II) Middle Range Sources:

Lobbyists:

Salisbury (1969) states that individuals join groups

and associations because they desire a "different set of social goals" (p.3). These goals may be material, solidary, or purposive benefits. Material benefits include jobs, increase in salary and so on. Solidary incentives are recognition of group's values and identity. Purposive incentives are suprapersonal goals such as state or civil liberty, good government and so on. Purposive benefits procured by the association/group are filtered to all levels of individuals, despite the fact these individuals did not expend any efforts to procure these benefits. Organizations or interest groups arrive on the political scene to "lobby for collective good" (p. 17). Zeigler & Baer (1969) thus define interest groups as "transmission belts between individual and the governmental institutions" (p. 3).

The role of the interest groups in the legislative activity is categorized as: informant, administrative, and contact person. (Zeigler and Baer, 1969). Lobbyists supply political and policy information. Administrative duties include research and planning strategies. In the role of contact persons, lobbyists build communication bridges.

In order to gain access and supply information to the legislators, lobbyists communicate through the constituency base, research, and campaign contributions. Zeigler & Baer (1969) suggest that "the efforts of the lobbyist are never the major reason for power," because "different groups receive their power from different sources" (p. 196).

Certain groups are powerful because of high membership, while others derive their power because of economical or ideological reasons.

(III) The Outsiders:

(a) Constituents:

Enzle, Harvey, and Wright (1992) state the elected officials have an "implicit obligation" to their constituents (p. 238). They discharge their duties by establishing policies that are beneficial for the public good. One reason legislators are motivated to shape good policies is because their personal goal of being reelected are determined by the constituents. Constituents, therefore, play an important role in the legislators' decision making processes. Denzau and Munger (1986) elaborate that the relationship among constituents, lobbyists, and the legislators is based on the exchange theory. Special interests offer contributions to legislators; voters offer votes; and legislators seek both vote and contributions in exchange for the groups' and the constituents' preferred interests.

(b) Media:

The trends in public opinion are often vocalized through the media. Certain issues and policies will receive tremendous coverage. The power of the media as an agenda setter is well known. Governmental bodies respond by taking

action on the issue. Manheim (1987) states that the link among the media, the public, and the policy, is through the flow of information. This link is also quite complex. How individuals or institutions respond to the stimuli depends on their pattern of behavior. Media functions as an informant in the legislative environment.

All of the above factors are classified into three broad variables by Ellickson (1992) and Meyer (1980). These are institutional, environmental and personal attributes. Personal attributes include education, expertise, personality, political experience, and political philosophy. Constituents, media and interest groups are classified as environmental factors. Institutional characteristics include party, leadership and formal positions of the legislator in the office.

The Role of Information and Voting Cues.

Political science researchers have identified the two factors that play a decisive role in the legislature. These two factors are information and the sources of voting cues that provide information to the legislators. Paucity of time and the profusion of information available to the lawmakers makes their task extremely difficult and complex. Several investigations (Bimber, 1991; Jones, (1976); Songer, 1988) have examined the lack of influence that information has in the legislative arena. The reasoning is associated

with the comfort level the legislator has with the information. In general, a legislator will only use the information with which he/she has developed a comfortable level. Information that is congruent with and the lawmakers' existing knowledge and experiences will be considered and incorporated. This strategy eliminates the need for extensive research, and aids in decision making.

Information cannot be divorced from the suppliers who provide the data. Research shows that committee members, leaders, constituents, staff, and lobbyists influence legislation. Source credibility is thus an important factor in the legislative arena (Kingdon, 1973; Songer, Underwood, Dillon, Jameson, and Kite, 1985; Ray, 1982; Ward, 1993). Having illustrated these facts, the basis for establishing the two criteria which are information and source valance has not been fully explained by researchers in the political arena. Enactment of laws will be better understood by providing a psychological perspective of the political behavior and the decision making process of the legislators. In attempting to link information and source valance with the decision making theories, the purpose of this paper is to go beyond the previous research.

The enactment of public policy without the input of the lobbyist is unthinkable. The common assumption of lawmakers and the lobbyists is that they are hand-in-glove, linked to the other, in the legislative activity through bribes and

vacation jaunts. What then is the input and influence of the pressure groups in the legislative environment? Past researchers have analyzed the political environment from the perspective of any one political agent. Few studies have examined the legislative environment from the perspectives of the lawmakers and the lobbyists. In order to draw an accurate picture of the legislative activity, the current research has been analyzed from the perspectives of both the lawmaker and the lobbyist.

This study therefore attempts to investigate the following:

- RQ1. What is the role of the legislators and the various agents in the legislators' environmental and institutional arena?
- RQ2. How is information selected?
- RQ3. What method of information processing is most used by the Illinois lawmakers in their decision making process?
- RQ4. Politically relevant information or policy information: What type of information is utilized by the Illinois lawmakers in the enactment of laws?
- RQ5. What is the level of influence that lobbyists yield in the legislative arena?

CHAPTER II.

Method and Data Collection

All laws that impact society are enacted only when the General Assembly is in session. The finale is the deliberations that take place in the whole chamber when the legislators' cast their votes. The particular environment in which legislators operate involve debates, conflicts, and publicity. Every word, action, and behavior is closely scrutinized by the public and the media. Lawmakers are in great demand when the General Assembly is in session. The setting thus influences their behavior and affects their legislative activities. The behavior, voting patterns, and the decision making process of the governmental authorities would therefore be best understood in their natural setting. Furthermore, legislators return to their districts when the General Assembly is not in session. In order to gain access to legislators and lobbyists who arrive at the Capitol from all over the state, under one roof, field study was the logical choice.

The proceedings of the General Assembly were observed between May 12 to May 25, 1995. During the final weeks of the spring session, most of the bills were in their third reading in the House and the Senate. Data for analysis was collected through a two-fold process. Notes were taken of the floor debates, the committee hearings, and the activities and the interactions that were observed among

legislators and their colleagues, between legislators and lobbyists, and among fellow lobbyists. Blending into the environment as a member of the public, the activities and the behavior of the subjects were observed from the public gallery. The observational data was also supplemented by interviewing the subjects. My role in the study was thus of a third party observer and an interviewer.

The primary source of data came from the survey administered by interviewing legislators and lobbyists. Ten legislators were interviewed during and after the conclusion of the General Assembly. Time factors, plus politics, issues, and lobbyists vying for the members attention; made it extremely difficult to interview members during the concluding days of the session. Two legislators were interviewed in their offices after the General Assembly concluded its session. A mail-in survey was distributed to members' district after the adjournment of the General Assembly. Two legislators responded to the mail-in survey. Legislators and lobbyists were approached non-randomly for the interview/survey. This strategy facilitated in gaining access to the busy and often hard-to-get subjects, and the task of collecting data was made easier.

Interviews with the lobbyists were conducted in the public gallery, or when they were waiting outside the House and Senate chambers. Lobbyists were sometimes interviewed individually or in groups. Depending upon the response,

length of the interview varied from 10 minutes to around 30 minutes. Lobbyists who did not wish to be interviewed responded by writing on the survey. Of the 47 lobbyists approached, one lobbyist refused to be interviewed. Among the 46 lobbyists interviewed, five are liaison officers. Liaison officers categorize themselves as "protecting the interest of the government." They were from the Department of Revenue and from the Secretary of State's office. Lobbyists protect the interest of special groups. They ranged from business groups, to health industry, labor, and the Catholic Church among others. The legislative environment and the modus operandi of the lobbyists and the liaison officers are similar. Liaison officers and lobbyists both conduct research, provide information to the legislators, advocate or oppose to the enactment of bills by mobilizing support for their cause. Therefore for the purpose of this study, liaison officers are categorized with the lobbyists.

The core of the interview schedule designed for the legislators concentrated on the decision making process. The sources of information and influence; the constraints and motivation; the demands and compromises that legislators' encounter and consider when deciding on their votes, were probed. The interview format designed for the lobbyists was aimed at understanding their role and influence, the strategies they employed, and their

perceptions of the factors that influence legislative decisions. The interview format followed a deductible approach (see Appendix A-C). Respondents were requested to answer to the open ended questionnaire handed to them. Although the questions were structured, follow-up or in depth questions were asked. This enabled me to seek clarifications, get a feel of the system, and understand the legislative process from the viewpoint of the involved parties. Responses were noted and taped simultaneously. During the later stage, when the answers became repetitive, notes were taken.

The 32 tape recordings of the lobbyists, and the 10 tape recordings of the legislators were transcribed in their entirety to ensure accuracy, and to interpret their meanings and cues that may not have been apparent at the time of the interview. The data collected of the final 14 lobbyists was inferred from the notes. The responses were first tabulated by keeping a count on the number of times a source was mentioned, and their percentile was accordingly calculated. The data is further divided into specific categories based on the model adopted by Ellickson (1992) and Meyer (1980). These are personal attributes, institutional characteristics, and environmental factors. The sources of information and sources of influence are reported from the perspectives of the legislators and the lobbyists. Furthermore, sources that direct legislators attention

towards an issue in the decision making process are reported in the section, "issue prioritized." On the other hand, sources towards which lobbyists direct their attention in order to influence the decision making of the legislators are reported in the section, "lobbying strategy." The quantitative base that emerges from the frequency table thus constructed enables the investigator to identify factors in order of importance. The data also allows a basis for comparison between legislators and lobbyists, and among the various categories (environmental, institutional, and personal attributes) and their sub-categories (experiences, expertise, reputation, committee members, leadership, party, constituents and interest groups among others).

Additionally, using quotes extensively throughout the paper captures the legislative climate and reveals the essence of the decision making process. Secondly, data that is not quantifiable is discerned by the inferences from these quotes. The word or phrase was analyzed by counting the number of times it appeared in the category or sub-category of personal, institutional, and environmental factors. The theme was also a unit of analysis. Recurring similar assertions constituted to a theme. In the sub-category of constituents, for example, legislators made the assertion about "my community/district" several times. Quotes reflecting the constituency theme were thus analyzed. Thus, the qualitative descriptions add color and character

to the faceless respondents, thereby enabling a better understanding not only of the decision making process, but also of those who influence the legislative process.

Finally, supplementing data from the interview notes and the observations from the gallery allowed for a portrayal of a more complete picture. Thus, field observations and notes corroborate the cumulative data documented from various sources. The use of triangulation, or the use of multiple data collection techniques is a typical method to investigate the reliability and validity of a data set. Anderson (1987) and O'Hair and Kreps (1990) state that "combination of analyses offers a greater empirical and conceptual accountability on the part of the researcher" as a fuller and an accurate understanding is derived (p. 52). In this study, subjective interpretations are marginalized, through the use of overlapping methods, thereby, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research.

CHAPTER III.

FINDINGS.

Lawmakers' primary function is the enactment of good public policies. It is thus logical that environmental factors, 65%, be of highest consideration by the Illinois legislators. Institutional characteristics are rated at 22%, followed by personal attributes at 13% (see Table 1). Lobbyists are dependent on the lawmakers for the successful passage of the public policy. Institutional characteristics and personal attributes of the legislator are rated at 49 and 32% each, followed by environmental characteristics 19% (Table 1).

Table 1.

Factors that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists' decision making.

	Personal Attributes		Institutional Characteristics		Environmental Factors	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
Participants						
Legislators	13	13	23	22	66	65
Lobbyists	51	32	77	49	30	19

The sub-categories of each of the above factors are explained individually in the following sections.

Table 2

Personal Attributes that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists decision making

Subcategory	n	%	Total	
			N	%
Legislators			13	100
Previous Experience/ Beliefs	13	13		
Lobbyists			51	100
Expertise	14	27		
Reputation	14	27		
Political Experience	8	16		
Political Philosophy	12	24		
Education	3	6		

A. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES:

Decision making theories reveal that individuals when presented with competing choice rely on their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Information is also processed depending on the level of one's expertise and knowledge. Individuals are also affected and influenced by the credibility, education and social power that one exerts. Thus "certain personal attributes are advantageous for

obtaining legislative results" (Ellickson, 1992, p. 286). Table 2 focuses on these factors that will be discussed in this section.

Legislators simplify their task by appraising information based on their knowledge, beliefs and past experiences. The explanation being that limitations on time and cognitive constraints force the legislators to rely on simple rules of judgment. A representative said he made decisions:

mostly by information received as interpreted through a core set of belief. On many issues, there is some personal experience, and that plays a role.

During floor debates, the logic that members applied were: "according to my experience;" "as a former sheriff;" "my mom was a single mother, I know..." and so on. Legislators make sense of events, policies, and their environment through interpretations that are based on their attitudes, belief systems, and reinforced by personal experiences.

A particular issue that explains the role of personal experiences and beliefs is the legislation of the Chief Illini mascot. A Senator was being debriefed by her staff about the upcoming issues of the day. These issues were to be discussed in the Senate and in the various committees in which she was a member. One of the issues to be deliberated in a committee hearing was the issue of the Chief Illini

mascot. The senator mentioned to her staff that she did not wish to be involved in the discussion as the subject was an "emotional issue." She sought no further information as to the merits, flaws or the impact of this legislation. During the committee hearings, when the American-Indian students presented their arguments that the mascot portrayed their culture in a poor light, the senator was persuaded. She actively participated in the ensuing discussions, and voted with the stance adopted by the American-Indian students. She justified her actions by explaining that she too would be slighted, if the culture of the African-Americans was depicted in a detestable manner. The African-American senator simplified her decision of a complex ("too emotional") problem by relying on her past experiences, beliefs, and background.

Another legislator justifies personal beliefs as a yardstick for his voting stance by declaring, "I feel that if I vote the way I really believe, it will be much easier to explain to people why I did what I did."

Thus if the legislator was opposed to a cause, they argued that the bill was an "evil bill." If the legislator believed in the issue and was a proponent of the bill, then the bill was for the benefit of the society. The minority senator's reference to her background or a legislator's reference to his beliefs, explains that attitudes and beliefs are reinforced by past experiences, ideology, and

education. These factors, 13% (Table 1 and 2) become important variables in the influencing legislative behavior as legislators select information with which they are familiar.

Understanding human nature, the 46 lobbyists rely heavily the personal attributes of the legislators for a successful passage of their piece of legislation. Lobbyists consider the overall personal attributes of the legislators, 32% (Table 1), as the second most important factor when they solicit a legislator to sponsor their bills.

Expertise and reputation, 27% each (Table 2), are resources of influences, and are of equal significance to the lobbyists. Meyer (1980) explains that reputation and expertise gives "potential power to the reputed individual" (p. 565). Being "competent," "intelligent," "responsible," "articulate," "knowledgeable," and having the ability to "shepherd the bill we want, and bulldog the bill we don't want" are the qualities of expertise listed by the lobbyists.

Lobbyists also consider how the lawmakers are "perceived by their contemporaries." A legislator's "reputation," "credibility," whether they have "no slander" are "likeable," and "well accepted" are the attributes associated with the legislators' reputation. One lobbyist explained in great detail that "I do not get a sponsor for a bill who has more enemies than friends." He considered

"whether they (legislators) were well accepted by colleagues, or whether they make themselves distrusted and alienated."

Political experience, 16% (Table 2) is gained by seniority and formal positions occupied in office. Lobbyists woo governmental authorities based on "seniority", "tenure", and "clout" they exert. The newly elected legislators had a "learning curve" in the legislative process. They were labeled as "freshmen" by the lobbyists. According to them these freshperson legislators were "seeking direction," "harder to convince," and "apprehensive." A big difference between a senior legislator and a newly elected legislator was that one was a "realist," while the other was an "idealist." The following quote by a lobbyist demonstrates why seniority is considered a source of leverage:

A seasoned legislator is really a professional, much easier to deal with. You walk away from him, you know what he is really going to do. An incumbent legislator doesn't know what his leadership is going to tell him.

Political philosophy, 24% (Table 2), was identified as the interests towards the bill or issue that the "legislator care(d) about." The lobbyists' perceptions correlates with the legislators' criteria of personal beliefs. A particular rite, all lobbyists observed, was keeping a vigilance of roll-call data which tracks the voting pattern of

legislators on various issues. Lobbyists approached legislators to sponsor their bill, according to the realm in which the legislator was an activist, and a believer in an issue. Legislators were solicited, because they were "a supporter of the item," were "interested in my bill. A legislator who is interested in agriculture, you don't ask to sponsor a health bill." When lobbyists solicit legislators to sponsor their bill, the legislators' response usually varies depending on factors such as: the issue, politics, the interest groups, and other criteria. However, the overwhelming response the lobbyists receive is "generally favorable." This is because lobbyists approach legislators to sponsor their bill with similar ideological inclinations as themselves. Like the legislators, interest groups also turn to those sources for sponsorship of their bills with whom they have compatible ideology. Interest groups seek out legislators whose political philosophy is similar to their own.

B. INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Organizational influence is diffused through the formal positions occupied in the hierarchical order, and by virtue of being associated to the institution. The structural aspects of the governing institution which is comprised of colleagues and committee members, leadership and party, and staff will be reported in this section.

Table 3

Institutional Characteristics that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists' decision making.

Subcategory	Colleagues		Other Legislators		Committee Members		Leadership		Staff		Party		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Legislators													23	100
Source of influence	5	22	-	-	-	-	2	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Source of information	8	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	30	-	-	-	-
Issue Prioritized	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lobbyists													77	100
Source of influence	-	-	-	-	12	16	6	8	-	-	-	4	5	5

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)
Institutional Characteristics that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists' decision making.

Subcategory	Colleagues		Other Legislators		Committee Members		Leadership		Staff		Party		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lobbyists														
Source of information	-	-	10	13	16	21	1	1	18	23	-	-	-	-
Lobbying Strategy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	13	-	-	-	-

Note. Dashes indicate that the data was not reported.

Table 3 gives an overview of the institutional factors that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists' decision making.

Colleagues & Committee Members:

Colleagues are viewed as influential in two aspects of decision making, source information 22%, and source of influence (35%) (Table 3). Previous studies show that the lawmakers' peers are a strong, influencing force (Feillin, 1966; Kingdon, 1973; Mooney, 1991; Ray, 1982; Songer 1988). The data collected for this study shows consistent results. Legislators do not have knowledge on each and every issue. Different legislators have varying expertise. An opinion from a skilled legislator can be very important. A legislator explains:

If I have knowledge about an area, I try to impart it to others who ask; if I don't, I try to ask questions to better understand my votes.

Formation of coalitions and communications networks facilitates legislators in reaching a consensus. This factor can be understood by a legislator who remarked that "I have listened to colleagues and in return they respect my opinion on positions." Bimber (1991), Jones (1976) and Kingdon (1973) emphasize that members seek information from colleagues who have the same ideological and political positioning as their own. I observed that legislators voted

for colleagues who were not in their seats when the roll call was announced. Their votes reflected a similar pattern. Another aspect that was observed was the indecisive or the less informed legislator. During roll-call, the hesitant legislator would have hands on the switch, eyes trained on the electronic board, but would not punch the "yes" or the "no" button immediately. They would observe the general trend of their colleagues or party on the issue, and their decisions were accordingly made. The data highlights the influence of colleagues through coalition formation. Coalition formation, however, need not be from the members from the same party.

Lobbyists seek out legislators 50 percent of the time (committee members - 13%; and other legislators - 37%; Table 3). They are a source of information regarding the status of the bill, have the power to channel debates, and set the party agenda. This factor is highlighted by the following quote by a labor lobbyist:

Most of the legislation we have attempted to introduce this year has failed to get out of the Rules Committee, or failed in the assigned committee. If it goes to the committee, it fails to get called or when they do call it, the vote is seven to four. They have the seven and we have the four. When we go to the committee to testify against the negative legislation, it dies seven to four.

Bills and amendments are also drafted in the committees and sub-committees. Venting his frustration, another lobbyist complained that select members work out the amendments in the sub-committees. These amendments then become the key bill, while the bill that was introduced becomes the "shell bill."

What they often do is strike out everything that is in the original bill, and put things in the amendments ... Last night, the amendment that came was 144 pages. The amendment is the bill. This time round the session wait and watch the amendment, because they are the cues.

The "specialist" legislator is thus sought by other members for trustworthy information and advice. Lobbyists seek these legislators as they have the power to influence and mobilize support or opposition for their cause, and influence legislation.

Committee members have had many occasions to review the merits of the bills. Other members have been influenced by their colleagues through coalition formation, and lobbied heavily by interest groups. By the time the matter reaches the floor debate, members have reached a state of agreement or disagreement about a particular issue in majority of the cases. Kingdon (1973) calls this stage in the decision making a "pre-consensus(ual) process" (p.242).

Lobbyists, thus, consider the floor debates as

"unimportant" 68% of the time. The deliberations on the floor that can take the shape of screaming, shouting, and thumping was categorized as "show," "theatrics," "silly," "dog and pony show," "in love with their own voice," "political positioning," "chance to express their opinion for the media and their constituents" and "partisan."

Lobbyists thus remarked that they watched the floor proceedings for "fun." It was the "committee hearings and the staff members" that the lobbyists "watched" to ascertain the status or the fate of their bill. However, 28% of the lobbyists considered the floor proceedings as "critical to the process," "democratic," and "fair, although it may not seem to be so." The functional value of the floor debates, on the other hand, for the lawmakers is indeed meaningful. Besides filtering out bad legislation, the floor debate was a decisive venue that swayed the direction of their votes, asserted the legislators.

Leadership

Legislators, in this study, do not consider party leadership as a major source of influence in their voting decisions. Only two legislators mentioned leadership as a source of influence (13%, Table 3). One legislator confirmed that leadership and committees set the party agenda and prioritize issues. Interest groups also consider leadership together with political party, 14% of the time

in their calculations (Table 3). Lobbyists appraise whether the "the member is in hot water with their leadership," "the favorability of the leadership," or "member of party caucus is important to me." A lobbyist explained that:

a lot of time we go to the leaders, and ask whom would you like to sponsor, sometimes they say it doesn't matter. Sometime they say give to this person. It will be good to their district.

Legislators responded that there was no organizational or environmental pressure when they made their decisions. They voted under "no constraints" 100% of the time. During the spring session, 99% of the time they had not "purposely" changed their position from support to opposition and vice versa on any issue. One legislator acknowledged that in light of new information presented, one may have to "change their viewpoint, but that's very seldom." However, a quote from a lobbyist rejects the above data. A lobbyist was relating some of the typical responses of the legislators:

Yes, I am with you. I like the legislation, but I have to vote against you. I think this is a terrible piece of legislation, but I am going to vote for it. Well, whatever the speaker says, or whatever the leader says or whatever the president says. I am going to do whatever I am going to do.

Despite their emphatic denial, the above quote highlights that legislators do have constraints under which

they operate. Legislators do not wish to acknowledge that they may have succumbed to leadership or to environmental demands. A plausible explanation could be that their contrary actions would mean a loss of reputation, and that they were puppets in the hands of their leaders and pressure groups.

Leadership sets the party agenda. Party leadership and strength is determined by the successful passage of controversial issues. Lawmakers require detailed information and are "hard to get" when the issue is a matter of prestige for the party. An intern explained that "leaders do not want to be embarrassed bringing up an important issue and not winning." The strategy adopted by leaders on controversial issues is to bring the bill on the floor, only when the necessary support has been garnered for the successful passage of the bill. The episode that illuminates this factor is the issue of the workmen compensation bill.

The sponsors of the workmen compensation bill were the business, insurance, and the medical groups. The labor group was opposing the legislation. A circulating piece of information heard from a lobbyist, who had drafted the workmen compensation bill, was that the bill was "two votes short." The bill was shelved until the last day of the session. When it was finally called for floor debate, it failed to muster enough votes. This factor illuminates how

leaders set the party agenda, though they may not be successful all the time.

The influence of leadership was intensely visible in the 89th General Assembly. Republicans for the first time in a decade were controlling the House and the Senate. They had an ally in the Governor who was also a Republican. Taking advantage of the structural changes, the Speaker wanted to implement his fast-track agenda. One of the goals was to end the session on schedule. Being able to conclude the session as per plan, thus took on the symbolism of Republican strength and leadership. In their new-found defensive role, the Democratic agenda was to embarrass the Republican leadership. The main Democratic ploy was to stall the floor proceedings as long as possible, so that the Assembly would not adjourn as publicized. Thus, partisan politics was unusually high in the 89th General Assembly. All the lobbyists interviewed complained about the heightened partisan activities indulged by both parties. A lobbyist who was returning to the arena after seven years found that politics had become more refined:

It's more difficult game they play these days. It's not antagonistic, its more of a gentleman-ladies type of game. It probably has more finesse.

The art of playing politics had been cultivated and cultured. Though some lobbyists expressed that good partisan politics served a function, other lobbyists

maintained that politics was more like "Harvard playing Yale". Internal dynamics, partisan composition, and structural changes resulted in partisan cohesion being high on both sides. Acknowledging that members may vote differently despite leadership pressure, a legislator remarked that "I owe it to them (the leaders) to explain why I'm doing what I'm doing. But the times that happened last session were no problem." Members may not have felt the leadership pressure, because of high party allegiance by the members.

Staff:

Staff is rated at 30% as a source of information, however they are not a source of influence in the Illinois legislators' voting decisions (Table 3). Staff is an important entity to the interest groups. A strategy that lobbyists employ in order to ensure legislators' attention is cultivating and maintaining relationships with the staff. Conveying clear, concise and truthful information to the staff especially during crunch time, served the lobbyists' purpose of ensuring attention of a legislator (13%, Table 3). Staff functions as a very important cue (23%) to the lobbyists in informing them about the status of the their bill. Lobbyists gain access to the legislators through their bill. Staff serves as a reservoir of information.

Table 4

Environmental factors that influence and inform legislators' and lobbyists' decision making.

Subcategory	Constituents		Media		Mail		Interest Groups		Total	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>N</u>	%
Legislators									66	100
Source of influence	11	17	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Source of information	13	20	10	15	6	9	6	9		
Issue prioritized	14	21	2	3	4	6	-	-		
Lobbyists									30	100
Source of influence	16	54	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Source of information	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-		
Lobbying strategy	4	13	1	3	9	30	-	-		

Note. Dashes indicate that the data was not reported.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES:

Legislators are influenced and constrained by their environment. The legislators' district influences and motivates legislative behavior (Ellickson, 1992; Meyer, 1980). The interest groups add pressure and influence (Langbein & Lotwis, 1990; Smith, 1984), and the media influences its power through agenda setting (Manheir, 1987). Constituents and mail, media and interest groups will be discussed in this section. Table 4 illuminates the data of each of these factors.

Constituents:

In their representative role, legislators are bound to their districts. Information is viewed from the telescopic lens of their constituents is exemplified by the data in Table 4. A Legislator's constituency is the most valuable source of information and influence. Many legislators declared, "I respond to the wishes of my district/community," "I believe in giving services back to my community," "My influence is my district." On occasions when personal beliefs clashed with the legislator's attitude, a legislator expressed that "I do not let personal interests be involved. I may have personal concerns on an issue, but, when I hit that button, I am taking into account what my district wants me to do, not what I want to do."

The ideology of the legislators is often shaped by the

make-up of the legislator's district. A Chicago legislator from the "lake-front area," who had a large population of gays, was liberal. An Hispanic senator's concern was providing bilingual education and elimination of poverty from his district, and the concerns of the legislators from southern Illinois was the high level of unemployment in their districts. Depending on the needs of their districts, varying issues have different degrees of importance to the legislators. This factor is confirmed by the fact that 21% of the time, issues are prioritized depending upon the cues received by the legislators' constituents.

Electoral competition also plays its role in the resolution of an issue. Those members who have been reelected a number of times are more secure in their politics. The margin of votes by which a legislator is elected, is also appraised. A lobbyist explained that legislators who win by a large majority are usually more "responsive" than the legislators who have "squeak(ed) by." Legislators having won by a narrow margin of votes are, therefore, "nervous about anything they say or do." Another lobbyist highlighted a legislator who was elected by a margin of 80% votes from a competitive district is more confident, than a legislator elected from a non-competitive district.

Lobbyists understand that the elected officials have loyalty to their electors. Constituency, 67% (Table 4) is

the sole instrument that lobbyists wield to mobilize influence in the category of environmental factors. They use strategies for the passage of a particular piece of legislation as "popular," "unfavorable" or that there was "no organized opposition" in the legislator's district. Without the constituency support, it is difficult for the lobbyists to garner support for their cause.

Mail

A tool that propels constituency influence is in the form of mail, fax and telephone calls to the representative. Issues are brought to members' attention by mail and telephone calls. Through this form of communication, legislators gauge the direction of constituents' thinking. During session time and depending on the issue, communication from the constituents is in greater volume. Telephone calls may range from 300 calls to 500 telephone calls, approximately 500 to 1000 pieces of mail, and 20-30 faxes a week. Controversial issues generate intense and greater volume of mail and telephone calls.

Lobbyists consider direct communication as an effective technique. Many lobbyists were in the business ranging from 10 to 35 years. Therefore, they considered the "first call" or the "first mail" as effective. A lobbyist from the Illinois Bar Association said, "we have a lot of credibility behind us," while another explained that flooding the

representatives with mail could "sometimes be counterproductive." Instead of 1000 faxes to one legislator, the lobbyist explained that it would be far "more important, if the priest, lawyer, or the teacher at the local level" were to send the mail. A secretary described mail sent by lobbyists as "junk mail." Her quote explains that mail generated by special interest groups do not have as much authenticity as the mail sent by a member of the representative's district.

However when grassroots mobilization is involved, lobbyists operate under different set of circumstances. The 32,000 members of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association inundated members with telephone calls, mail, and personal appearances. AFL-CIO has a membership of 300,000. They mailed 85,000 pieces of mail and called 34,000 people who received that mail to make telephone calls to their legislators in opposition of the workmen compensation bill. The 6600 management employees of United Airlines were asked to call their representatives in support of a strong O'Hare airport. Advertisements in the newspapers, and commercials on radio and television were broadcast. The lobbyist of United Air said, "we know they are effective, because the legislators told us about it." Fifteen percent of the time, mail is a source of information and also serves as a device in directing legislators' attention (Table 4).

The goal of all the legislators, in the survey, is to

serve the people by being the "best representative" and to be "re-elected." Constituents together with mail are a vital force in the decision making calculus of both the legislators and the lobbyists.

Media.

The power of the media and its role as an agenda setter is understood by the valance attached by the legislators. Media is rated at 18% by representatives. A surprising factor is that media is acknowledged as a source of information, and issues are also prioritized based upon the cues received by the media. However, media is not considered as a source of influence. This is surprising because during floor discussions, quotes and articles such The Chicago Tribune, The Sun Times, and other media were often cited as their basis for discussions. A major pre-occupation of the legislators was reading various newspapers and their editorials. A feasible explanation is that media serves as a channel in directing the legislators' attention to salient issues. Media influences legislators indirectly through public opinion and editorials.

According to the lobbyists, the floor debates are also shaped for the benefit of the media and the lawmakers' constituents. Media enhances or diminishes the legislators' image and role. Legislators' use media to promote their causes and image.

The biggest contrast between the role of the public officials and the lobbyists is depicted by the valance attached to the media. Legislators rate the media highly, while media is not a factor considered by the lobbyists. The only lobbyist who mentions media as a cue for tracking their bills, is the labor lobbyist, who has a high rate of membership. This factor highlights that the trend of public opinion is closely monitored by interest groups with large membership, while the majority of the lobbyists work closely for their clients interests.

Interest Groups:

The most striking aspect of the finding is the ranking of the interest groups. Lobbyists are rated only 9% as the source of information (see Table 4). As a source of influence, interest groups have no ranking in the legislators' cognitive map. However, an indirect reference by a legislator suggests the influence that lobbyists exercise. "Unfortunately, politics have gotten away from the interest of the people to that of special interests." The legislator further explained that he did not succumb to pressure group tactics because he made "intelligent decisions" on behalf of his constituents, and that "they kept voting me back in." Another quote from a lobbyist from the Bar Association highlights the power of special interest groups.

It's gotten too far off hand, because it appears that special interests now make all the decisions, and legislators are so beholden to them that they fall right into their plan. Lobbying is not a profession, but its gotten to a point where legislators are taking them seriously.

As legislators ultimate goal is reelection, groups that have clout to sway the electorate will influence legislative decision making. Explaining the typical response of a legislator when approached, a lobbyist related:

They want to know who is opposed to this. If I tell them Chamber of Commerce is opposed to it, Farm Bureau is opposed, AFL-CIO is opposed to it. They probably would not do anything to work on that project. They want to gauge what their decisions would testify.

Another lobbyist remarked:

A lobbyist's job is to explain to the legislator that the group that the lobbyist is representing is really the influential group. They will influence the election. Because that's the language the legislators understand. Legislators understand votes and how to get votes."

Legislative decisions are often determined by the group that is in support or in opposition of a particular bill. Ideological positioning also determines that certain groups will be favored with one party over other groups. The

Democratic party has traditionally been associated with "have nots." During the current session the labor group maintained that their role had primarily been "defensive." Instead of being one of the top three interest groups in Illinois, the labor group occupied the number six position. As Medicaid reform was a Republican agenda, many lobbyists interviewed were from the health industry. All lobbyists, however, insisted that they worked with members from "both side of the aisle." A lobbyist explained that they "were loyal to no one," because of electoral uncertainty and outcome.

A majority of the lobbying activities are, however, concentrated toward whichever party is in power. It was observed that members of the majority party were paged and wooed more than members of the minority party. This was evident from the fact that there were more bouquets on the Republican side of the aisle. When the House is in session, members can be paged by sending visiting cards in the chamber. Republican members received more requests from lobbyists wanting to meet them.

Lobbyists view themselves as informants, administrators, and contact persons (see Table 5). A lobbyist said they considered themselves as agents "promoting and processing progressive legislation" by either being proactive, or maintaining status-quo.

Table 5

Role of the Lobbyists.

Category	<u>n</u>	percentage
Informants	28	61
Informative		
Educator		
Technical Advisor		
Experts		
Administrative	12	26
Researcher		
Resource		
Proactive		
Contact Person	6	13
Facilitator		
Negotiator		
Political Agent		

The data is consistent with Zeigler and Baer's (1969) categorization of the lobbyists. In the role of informants, 61%, Table 5, the lobbyists see themselves as experts on the issue. Lobbyists explained that the plethora of information vying for the legislators' attention and the technical nature of many issues, made it extremely difficult for

legislators to be knowledgeable on all the policy matters. A factor that is not often associated with lobbyists, but was insisted by almost every lobbyist interviewed was the "credibility" of the information, and having a "truthful" relationship with legislators and staff. Ability to provide information that was accurate, concise, and at short notice, especially during "crunch time" served as an instrument of persuasion. Information that was not credible could embarrass the legislator. Legislators will never trust a lobbyist who jeopardizes their career goals. Explaining the valuable role that lobbyists play as informants, a lobbyist articulated that a "good legislator will try to find out the leading proponent of the legislature, and the best opponent. The lawmaker then has a real good criteria in order to determine the best legislation." The quote reiterates Kingdon's (1973) observation that legislators need evaluative information for decision making. Besides channeling communication to the decision makers, special interests groups provide a system of check and balances. They help check demands made by others, and help to compose alternative policies in their role as educators and experts.

The administrative role, 26%, involves research, preparing testimony, speeches, and writing letters. A lobbyist explained that lobbying is "an extremely demanding occupation. I educate, I strategies, I prepare testimony, I give testimony."

Lobbyists use research 87% of the time to persuade, protect, and promote their interests. Tracking bills and amendments through research serves as an important cue in alerting the lobbyists about the status of their bills. The sources of information for the lobbyists are: Legislative Information Services, various agencies, legislation in other states and Congress, staff, bills, and the members themselves. Lobbyists spend a lot of time discharging their administrative duties. Contrary to popular belief, much of the legislation is enacted because the lobbyists are able to provide credible information. In contrast, personal investigation, bills and reports and reading as a source of information is rated only 13% by the legislators.

It was in the role of the contact person, 13% (Table 5) that the behavior, the rites and the ceremonies of the lobbying profession was most observed. In trying to build contacts, lobbyists linger in the corridors, the public galleries, and outside the chambers, waiting to get the attention of legislators. The key word among lobbyist is "watch." Armed with cellular phones and pagers, lobbyist scrutinize the legislative calendar and alert their clients about various bills. Describing their job as a "marathon," lobbyists maintained that to gauge, protect, and promote legislation their task involved full-time, personal presence at the Capitol. Lobbyists "watched" the committee hearings,

the floor debates, the bills, the staff, the amendments, the legislators, and other lobbyists.

Direct communication in the form of personal contact is the most effective technique. Indirect communication takes the form of entertainment through luncheons, vacation jaunts, and campaign contributions, generating mail, and conducting town hall meetings. "High level of personal contact" according to the lobbyists served as a means to gain access and facilitate communication. Building contacts could prove slightly more difficult for women lobbyists. Female lobbyists said that they were treated equally with male lobbyists. However, two female lobbyists acknowledged that many female lobbyists had taken to playing golf, and it was difficult to be a member of the "old boys club." A female lobbyist responded that:

Its very awkward to be a good old boy, and go out to the golf course, show up at the tavern and whatever. And just be the old buddy ... It's not a disadvantage, but I don't have that edge.

Gender differences highlight that many of the personal relationships are built outside the legislature. Campaign contributions do play a role in amassing influence. A statement by the president of AFL-CIO reveals the importance of campaign contributions. The governor was complaining that the labor group made no contribution to the Republican candidates:

I said, many times we do. When Jim Thompson was governor, we have endorsed candidates. Sometimes we don't endorse candidates because we know it's a Republican seat, at other times the candidate lost in the primaries... I had a long discussion with Governor Edgar, two months ago.

Campaign contributions are also a factor that influences legislative judgment. Table 6 reveals that 37% of the lobbyists directly endorsed and funded candidates, 46% lobbyists supported candidates through Political Action Committees (PAC). The data reveals that the majority of the lobbyists believe in maneuvering support through these channels.

Table 6

Lobbyists' campaign contribution to candidates.

Campaign contribution	N	percentage
Endorses candidates	17	37
Does Not Endorse	6	13
Political Action Committee	21	46
No Answer	2	4

However without other resources, such as: the constituency base; the ideology or the merits of the bill;

the credibility of information; and building of truthful relationship; the lobbyists' persuasive skills do not have much significance. The common assumption of lobbyists as powerful and influential, and legislators as mere puppets swayed by campaign contributions is, therefore, not entirely true. Lobbyists rank much lower than all the other sources, and is also not considered an influential lever by the lawmakers (Table 4).

Lobbyists do have certain rules and protocol that they adhere to. A lobbyist explained that they had a "strict code of ethics," and all his activities were in accordance with the law. They could not by-pass federal regulations. Providing "credible" information was the number one rule of survival. Other subtle rules that they observed were never to page a legislator whose bill was scheduled for floor debates, and never to eavesdrop on a conversation between another lobbyist and the legislator. Another rule was that legislators were never tapped on the shoulder, or addressed by their first name in public. They were always addressed as "representative" or "senator."

An occupational hazard that lobbyists faced was that legislators never made commitments. A lobbyist who was also an ex-legislator remarked, "One thing you learn early as a legislator that you do not make a firm commitment. Most of them, unless they are fairly new, never make a firm commitment. Because they never know what's going to happen

unless they know." The main activity of the lobbyists was therefore to "watch" and be alert to proceedings, understand words and body language, track the bills and amendments, be sensitive to unspoken messages and have a finger on the pulse of the circulating gossip and stories. Various lobbyists mentioned that there was a "lot of floating information," "information here was a bombshell," "communication is the world we live in," and "you would be amazed at the grapevine."

Communication, resources, and information vary depending on the range of the issue. They can take many forms depending on the lobbyists agenda. The strategies varied if the objective was to "pass" or "kill" legislation. Certain issues required grassroots mobilization, while other issues required gaining influence through different avenues discussed earlier.

It is extremely interesting that the legislators' perception of the lobbyists is only informational, (9%, Table 4). On the other hand, lobbyists also see themselves as a strong force, influencing legislative decision making. Eighty-eight percent of the interviewed lobbyists believe that their presence has a great impact in the legislative process. However, four percent state depending on the issue, and another four percent state depending on the party in power, the lobbyists presence is an impetus in persuading the lawmakers. Two liaison officers (four percent),

however, state that they are "probably not" a source of influence in swaying the government authorities. A probable explanation could be because they are from the Department of Revenue, they do not have much input in the budget policies which are framed largely by the Governors' office.

There is a certain invisible hierarchical structure among lobbyists. Their modus operandi thus depends on the nature of the issue and the clients they handle. Among the contract lobbyists, the ex-legislator turned lobbyist was deemed more powerful than other hired guns. Special interest groups having citizens as active participants such as the Illinois Retired Teachers Association, the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois (CCDI), and other such groups operated through grassroots mobilization and personal appearances in large numbers. The lobbyist having executive agencies as their clients operated as the sole instrument in influencing the government authorities.

The public image of the interests groups is negative. Lobbyists as "stodgy built with pocketful of cash," "one rug below the car salesmen and lawyers," "having \$300 luncheons," and "spending a lot in reelection" are myths, stressed the lobbyists. Lobbying was a constitutionally protected right. The First Amendment states that citizens have the right to petition their grievances to the government. Lobbyists asserted that they were the "voice of

the people ... representing a common interest." Lobbyists insisted that "like them," the general public should vote, talk and write to their elected officials in order to influence the legislation. Lobbyists emphasized that it was because "citizens get locked out of the process," the public did not like the governmental authorities and the interest groups.

Thus it is seen that lobbyists bring conflict to the environment. Conflict is created because for every proponent of an issue, there is an opponent. As the general conception of conflict is bad, legislators and the lobbyists receive negative publicity. Lobbyists have an important role that helps determine, evaluate and influence the merits or the flaws of an issue.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION:

In chapter one, a number of research questions were outlined which examined the interlocking issues associated with legislative decision making. Chapter three included a description of the sources of legislative influence as discovered by the author. In this chapter, the merger between the two are explored in an effort to develop a more complete picture of how legislatures enact legislation. To begin this exploration we will first review the research question as asked earlier, then outline some conclusions from this analysis, and finally, discuss some limitations to this research.

Based upon the data discussed in chapter three, we now focus on research question one, which looks at the role of various actors to legislators. Lawmakers' utilize colleagues, leadership, and lobbyists in descending order of importance in their decision making processes. Peer influence has significant impact in the legislative decisions. Lawmakers turn to their colleagues who are knowledgeable to verify the authenticity of information. Social networks and coalitions, therefore, become important communication channels through which lawmakers develop strategies. Leadership is not a source of information, however it influences the outcome of the legislation through its power base. Lobbyists rank lowest in order of

importance. However they gain access to the legislators through the constituency base (67%, Table 4), and by exploiting the personal factors (32%, Table 2) of the legislators.

Research question two, enquires how lawmakers select information. The data reveals that personal attributes though acknowledged only at 13% (Table 2) by the legislators play an important role in influencing legislation. Legislators select information that will support their attitudes and beliefs. They turn to colleagues who validate those ideologies. Thus personal attributes together with peer and leadership influence highlight that though constituents are the guiding force in terms of prioritizing issues (21%), as source of information (20%), and as source of influence (17%) (Table 4), members rely most on insider sources of information. Lawmakers seek selective information that is congruent with their experiences and belief systems. This comfort level "reduces complexities" in their environment (Petelle & Maybee, 1974, p. 95), and facilitates in simplifying their judgments.

These factors further illuminate that source valance is relatively high in the legislative environment. The problem posed by research question three as to what method of information processing is used by the Illinois lawmakers is thus answered. Committee members because of their competence, leadership because of their power base (Table

3), and media because of its credibility (Table 4), are held in high esteem. As representatives of the people, lawmakers live in a fish bowl and are dependant upon public opinion for the realization of their personal goals. They endeavor to seek credible information by transferring the credibility of the source to the credibility of the message (Lord & Putrevu, 1993). The data determines that legislators process information via the peripheral route. Information is not elaborated upon or extensively sought. Table 2 depicts that lawmakers bank on personal and party ideologies and their experiences. Tables 3 and 4 reflect that lawmakers rely on the influential providers of information. Legislators thus indulge in "satisficing strategies" (Mooney, 1991, p. 446).

Research question four enquires whether politically relevant information or policy information is utilized by the lawmakers in the enactment of laws. This question can be explained by focusing on the importance of information in the legislative environment. If information is power, it is surprising that interest groups and analysts are not acknowledged as sources of influence. Additionally, only one legislator acknowledged that one may change their position on a particular issue in view of new information received, while 99% of the legislators vote according to the original stance they had adopted. Thus, we find that information in the political environment is "useful in only

supporting decisions, rather than arriving at decisions" (Bimber, 1991, p.). This factor is further substantiated by the fact that media (18%, Table 4) is ranked higher than bills and reports, personal investigation, and reading which are the basis of policy information. Leadership (13%, Table 3), and interest groups (9%, Table 4) are also ranked lower than the media. This is a surprising factor because media focuses on a general and a broader range of issues. Media would not have the in-depth knowledge that leaders or lobbyists will possess about the bill. The data implies that lawmakers closely monitor the trend of public opinion. The importance to media confirms that lawmakers are conscious of the image they wish to project to the masses. The importance to seniority, committees, leadership, constituency, and media reveal that legislators are seekers of politically relevant information. These sources have the power to influence the goals of the elected official.

According to the ELM model, when motivation, opportunity and ability are high; individuals will seek extensive information. In contrast to the legislators, lobbyists have a personal stake in the outcome of a policy. They seek extensive policy information through research and analysis of various bills. Lawmakers, on the other hand, seek extensive information when issues are controversial in nature. These issues generate more scrutiny from the leaders, media, and the constituents. The successful

passage of controversial issues reflects party and leadership strength. Lawmakers are therefore motivated to seek policy information on controversial issues. Committee members elaborate upon the information, because of their high level of involvement in framing a policy.

The level of influence that lobbyist wield in the legislative arena is examined by research question five. Contrary to common assumption, lobbyists rank lowest in the order of importance among all the information providers in the legislative arena. This implies that the power of the lobbyist may not be as large as is generally conceived. Lobbyists bring conflict to the environment, and enable the lawmakers to evaluate and shape public policy. Lobbyists provide both policy and political information. Lobbyists perceive themselves overwhelmingly as informational and influencing levers. Lawmakers view them only as an informational source. This perception has not been altered since Zeigler & Baer's study of 1969. However, certain interest groups are influential and powerful. Party ideology also determines the favorability of some groups over others. Langbein & Lotwis (1990) state that the "influence of the lobbyists is both greater and both limited" (p. 59). Without other bases of support, the influence of the lobbyists can be limited. However working through the leverage of constituency and leadership, and campaign contributions, the lobbyists' power can be

extensive.

Lobbyists have their own rites and culture that are adapted to survive in the legislative environment. The emphasis on constituents, committee members, personal attributes, and the close matching of the various criteria with the legislators, explain the understanding the special interest groups have of the proceedings. However differences in their opinion about the floor debate, media, leadership, and viewing themselves as an influencing force highlight the differences between the influencing lever and the decision maker.

A common assumption that the concerns of the general public are not heeded in the murky game of politics, is not entirely true. Constituents set the political agenda. They are the most powerful force that motivates and molds legislative agenda, because the constituents determine the legislators' political future. Staff though rated at 30% as a source of information, like the lobbyists are not acknowledged as a source of influence. Kingdon (1973) explains the information that the staff/analysts provides is under the direction of their bosses. The services of the staff are therefore taken for granted. Staff is rated slightly higher by lobbyists. Staff functions as a conduit for information flow.

All the above factors highlight that there are many sub-processes in legislative decision making. To ignore a

source or a cue and highlight a particular factor, would be like taking out a vital bolt from the legislative machinery. Also, it is too simplistic to assume that non-committee members do not have all the necessary knowledge, and do not make policy decisions. Information flow, in the legislature, is multi-directional. The institutional factors such as: various committee hearings, bills being read on three occasions, the approval of the bill from both Houses, together with all the various agents involved in informing the legislators' decision making process, assist the lawmakers in examining the authenticity of information. The manner in which legislators function thus depends on individual legislators' personal values, their goals and motivation, and their affiliations with the party and the governmental institution.

Thus the present decision making theories have a very narrow focus. Source credibility theory is based on the receiver's perception. Acting on information based on one's attitude and beliefs does not explain whether the decision was rationally processed or the decision was based on one's biases. The ELM theory though has a broader range. However, it does not explain the phenomena that one could seek elaborate information, yet one would make decisions based on the peripheral route. Human beings act within the parameters set by personal, institutional and environmental factors. Decisions are made depending on the personal

attributes of the individual, the institution to which we are affiliated, and the societal norms where we live. Decision making is, therefore, a complex activity. A theory that addresses all the above factors may probably shed more light on this perplexing activity.

Much of the above results are consistent with previous research. However, past studies have identified the source of information, and presumed that the source of information also influences the final decisions. However, the actors acknowledged as informational cues are not decreed as influential cues in this study. Future research should be conducted to find out the link between influence and information.

Coalition building and social networks have a relatively high place in the legislative environment. Many of the policy decisions are worked out behind the scenes. In order to get the work accomplished it is presumed that the legislators will support each other, while the rhetoric is reserved for the benefit of the public. How are votes traded between legislators and their colleagues? Inter-party and intra-party trading of votes needs further investigation.

Many studies have scrutinized the behavior of the legislators and the lobbyists. The role of the staff as an information base has also been studied. However, lobbyists gain access to the legislators through staff. What

strategies do lobbyists employ to woo the staff? How much information supplied by lobbyists is utilized by them? The relationship with staff and the lobbyists needs further investigation. It may be stronger than the relationship between the legislators and the lobbyists.

The foremost limitation in this study is that the sample size of the legislators is relatively small. This may have resulted in the data being skewed. Secondly, the observations were conducted in the final days of the session. Most of the bills were in their third reading. Thus, I did not have the opportunity to observe the issues being developed and negotiated from introduction to the final vote. Thirdly, the observations are based from the interactions viewed from the public gallery. The perceptions gathered from a distance may not be accurate. However, data collected through observations has been sparingly reported. The primary source of data are the quantitative and the qualitative analysis that was gathered from the viewpoint of the representatives, and the lobbyists. Attempts have thus been made to bridge the inaccuracies that may have occurred. The exploratory emphasis, the descriptive analysis, and the spontaneous responses of the participants gives a comprehensive and detailed insight about the legislative culture and the decision making processes.

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APPENDIX A

Farida Kapasi.
2417 Ladley Court, Apt. # 1
Springfield, IL 62703.

May 1995.

Dear Senator/Representative:

I am a graduate student in Speech Communication at Eastern Illinois University. I am studying the communication processes involved in the Illinois Legislature as part of my thesis project.

The information the public receives about the legislators is through the media. I would like to interview and find out about the daily activities in the life of a senator/representative. Enclosed please find a broad list of questions. Your response to them will enable me to research the information bases and the deliberations involved in the decision making process which is the purpose of my thesis.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Farida Kapasi.

APPENDIX B.

**Purpose: Information Bases in the Decision Making Process
in the Illinois Legislature.**

LEGISLATORS.

1. Your term in office?
2. What motivated you to join public office?
3. How many committees and boards do you serve?
4. How much daily mail, telephone, and faxes do you receive?
5. What is the percentage of time that you spend on an average on a daily basis on the following activities:
I) writing (ii) small group (iii) public speaking
(iv) listening?
- 5a. Examples of different types of speaking:
(I) interpersonal (ii) small group (iii) public speaking
(iv) media.
- 5b. In terms of interpersonal speaking, the average amount of time spent with:
(I) staff (ii) public (iii) other legislators (iv) others.
6. How do you decide which issue needs priority attention?
7. What are your sources of information and advice?
8. How do you cope with the demands placed upon you by the external environment:
e.g. new problems/new arena of conflict/press
the constituents/the opposition from fellow
legislators and the opposite party/pressure
groups.
9. What influence or motivates you to vote in a particular manner on a certain policy? Is it defined by events, previous experiences?
10. What constraints do you have to observe when voting?
11. Have you in this session changed your position from support to opposition and vice versa on a particular bill?
If yes - which bill was this and what made you change your stance?
12. How do you view your role in the decision making process?
14. If the legislative process was to be defined in one word- what metaphor would you use as related to the legislature or life, in general? (e.g. tidal wave).
15. What are your aspirations and goals?
16. Do you intend to stand for reelection next term?

APPENDIX C.

LOBBYISTS:

1. When the General Assembly is in session, how often do you come to the Capitol?
2. Do you travel to Springfield every session or do you have your headquarters in Springfield?
3. How do you view your role in the legislative process?
4. Does your presence provide an impetus/an initiative for the activities in the lawmaking process?
5. What protocol/red tape do you need to observe to get a legislators attention?
6. What are the typical responses you receive when you contact a legislator?
7. How do you view the entire proceedings -- the controversies, the debate on the floor?
8. Do you consider it as time consuming?
9. What strategies do you need to employ to ensure that your interests are articulated and protected?
10. How many telephone calls, mail, faxes - do you need to send to ensure legislator's attention?
11. What cues would you be alert or be sensitive to that would make you aware that your group's interest are being threatened or favored?
12. Does your group endorse candidates during election time?
13. What factors do you consider when you ask a legislator to sponsor your bill?
14. What are your views on the
Republican party.
Democratic party.
15. What are the procedures you need to follow if your bill has passed/failed?
16. The general public has a particular view about the lobbyists, what is your response to them?